

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2001

**CHERRY AND WHITES BOOST PLAY-OFF HOPES
WITH VICTORY AT SALE**

LITTLE DOUBLE SETS UP GLOUCESTER WIN

SALE 16 GLOUCESTER 24

Gloucester have a good chance of reaching the play-offs after this solid if unspectacular victory.

It was a tense affair but the Cherry and Whites always had the edge with centre Jason Little going over for two tries with fly-half Simon Mannix weighing in with four penalties and a conversion.

Sale full-back Jason Robinson was always a threat and went over for the Manchester club's only try with stand-off Charlie Hodgson kicking a conversion and three penalties.

There was a big blow to Gloucester when prop Phil Vickery went off in the first half and to hospital fitted with a neck brace.

Sale had the early advantage when they took the lead after a minute when Gloucester failed to deal effectively with the kick-off and conceded a simple penalty for Charlie Hodgson to put over.

Gloucester responded in style with Paramore breaking down the right but the visitors were held up. The ball was recycled with good hands from Jason Little and Terry Fanolua to give Simpson-Daniel space on the left wing.

Simpson-Daniel popped the ball back to Little with the Sale defence in disarray and the Australian charged in for a well-executed try after five minutes, but Mannix was unable to kick the difficult conversion.

Gloucester suffered a blow after 15 minutes when England prop Phil Vickery was helped off the pitch with an injury in the neck region. He was replaced by Andy Deacon.

Immediately Sale took advantage of Gloucester's re-organisation with their former rugby league star Jason Robinson making a sprint down the middle before off-loading the ball to loosehead Duncan Bell.

After withstanding a brief spell of Sale pressure, Gloucester clawed their way back into their opponents' half with Little and Fanolua linking well.

Gloucester failed to take advantage of a scrum in the 25th minute when after some neat handling by the backs, Mannix managed to lose possession and the impetus again was lost.

Hodgson missed a speculative penalty effort after 29 minutes allowing Gloucester to attack again with blindside Jake Boer making good ground with a charging run.

Again Sale were let off the hook and Hodgson put Gloucester under immense pressure in their 22 with a well-directed long kick. Gloucester lost hooker Chris Fortey for retaliation after 33 minutes as a fight broke out between Sale's Pete Anglesea and Ian Jones but Hodgson could not slot over the penalty from the touchline.

Robinson was becoming difficult to handle with jinking runs in tight confines before passing to Hodgson, forcing Gloucester to concede a penalty. Hodgson slotted over in the 36th minute to give Sale a 6-5 lead after 37 minutes but Mannix had a quick chance to regain the lead for the Cherry and Whites with a penalty as the game went into injury-time for the first half.

Gloucester looked the better side as the interval approached with the pack, particularly Paramore and Deacon, gaining good possession before Catling and Little combined well together. Vickery was taken to hospital for a precautionary X-ray.

Half-time:
Sale 6, Gloucester 8.

The second half started in dramatic fashion with a flurry of scoring after Little had gone on a brilliant run but Simpson-Daniel was unlucky not to finish the move off.

Impressive Robinson then tore through the Gloucester defence after accepting a pass from centre Jos Baxendell to outsprint his opponents for a brilliant try, which Hodgson converted to lead 13-8.

Gloucester edged back with a Mannix penalty and the visitors again applied the pressure with a long build-up with some good play by Woodman, but it was Mannix who made good ground to set up Little for a scorching run after 51 minutes to go over for his second try. Mannix converted to give Gloucester a narrow 18-13 lead.

Hodgson reduced the deficit further to 18-16 with a penalty on the hour but Mannix edged Gloucester further ahead with another well taken kick in the 63rd minute.

Gloucester had a good phase of play with Fanolua making a good break followed by good contributions from Little and Gomarsall, while young openside Andrew Hazell drove hard to gain extra ground in the home side's 22, but Sale were allowed to regain possession.

A series of changes for Gloucester saw Richard Todd[*sic*] coming on for Ewens while Adam Eustace replaced Jake Boer and Steve Ojomoh took Junior Paramore's place in the back row.

Gloucester's territorial advantage continued with Eustace battling well and they [were] rewarded with another Mannix penalty after 74 minutes to increase the scoreline to 24-16.

Despite their advantage it was a nervy time for Gloucester particularly with the constant threat of Robinson making a telling run.

Replacement Niki Little failed with a penalty opportunity for Sale but Gloucester hung out for a deserved victory.

SALE: J. Robinson; A. Elliott, J. Baxendell, D. Harris, S. Davidson; C. Hodgson, S. Hatley; D. Bell, B. Jackman, J. Thiel, S. Lines, P. Anglesea, R. Appleyard, A. Morris, A. Sanderson (capt.).
Reps.: P. Knight, N. Little, M. Deane, A. Perelini, D. Baldwin, A. Black, A. Titterell.

GLOUCESTER: C. Catling; J. Ewens, T. Fanolua, J. Little, J. Simpson-Daniel; S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall; T. Woodman, C. Fortey, P. Vickery, R. Fidler, I. Jones, J. Boer, A. Hazell, J. Paramore.
Reps.: B. Hayward, J. Djoudi, R. Todd, K. Jones, A. Eustace, S. Ojomoh, A. Deacon.

REFEREE: R. Goodliffe (RFU)

STAR MAN: Jason Little

JC