

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 2001

## BRAVE GLOUCESTER FALL TO THE TIGERS

LEICESTER FORCED TO FIGHT HARD  
BY THE CHERRY AND WHITES

LEICESTER 19 GLOUCESTER 15

They were brave and they were committed, but Gloucester's Heineken Cup dream was extinguished at Vicarage Road where Leicester won a thrilling semi-final to book a final place against Stade Francais.

Finally, the day was here. The possible salvation to Gloucester's season arrived but it dawned with fitness worries hanging over the squad.

Rory Greenslade-Jones came in on the wing and Byron Hayward at full-back.

It seemed to matter little when Gloucester made a white-hot start. They kicked blind from the first whistle and claimed a line-out.

Gloucester drove beautifully infield with a powerful forward drive and the Tigers were penalised for pulling down the maul. Simon Mannix made no mistake from the front of the posts and the Cherry and Whites were away.

However, the threat to their lead lasted barely minutes. Leicester almost scored when Pat Howard engineered a miss-move in the centre and Geordan Murphy was only stopped just short.

They levelled shortly afterwards when Stimpson landed a penalty when Gloucester were penalised for pulling down a maul after losing a line-out.

It was high-octane stuff from both sides and when Gloucester lost their second line-out, Stimpson kicked Leicester ahead when Jason Little was penalised for killing the ball.

That was where Gloucester were having their problems. They could not control their line-out and despite the scrummage working with its usual power, Gloucester struggled to establish a platform in their play.

However, Mannix drew the teams level with a monster penalty from wide on the right.

You could hardly catch your breath. It was bruising, but highly entertaining stuff, but it was Leicester who were beginning to wrestle control.

They were far more secure at the line-out and with Howard sniping for openings in midfield, Gloucester faced their first real questions.

Leicester split the game wide open by scoring a sensational try after 21 minutes. Gloucester had wrestled back possession but ran out of options on the open side and Jake Boer's pass put James Simpson-Daniel in trouble, but he did well to clear his lines.

However, his kick was fielded by Stimpson who launched Leicester forward on what turned out to be a try-scoring break. He brushed aside the tackle from Simpson-Daniel and raced away, before cutting infield.

Gloucester had run out of defenders and Stimpson put Leon Lloyd away beneath the posts for a wonderful try. It was brilliant and ripped the game wide open.

It was just what the Tigers needed and exactly what Gloucester did not because it hammered home their superiority in midfield and carved open a crucial advantage at 13-6.

However, Gloucester did not panic and came back with powerful runs from Little, Boer and Junior Paramore, and after missing a penalty, Mannix hauled Gloucester within range with his third successful kick after Gloucester had disrupted in the tight.

However, Stimpson restored their seven point advantage when he slotted over in front of the posts, following another rickety Gloucester set-piece. The work ethic was exhausting and Gloucester clung on manfully to remain in the game at the break.

Half-time:  
Leicester 16, Gloucester 9

The biggest 40 minutes of their season lay in front of them and Gloucester knew it. Despite the morbid predictions the men from Kingsholm were still in the Heineken Cup.

They made a barnstorming start. Terry Fanolua shot through a gap in midfield and hared forward. Mannix and Little were both involved before Darren Garforth made a tremendous stop on Azam.

But Gloucester secured their vital first points with a Mannix penalty to leave them trailing by only four points.

Gloucester were doing everything within their power to disrupt Leicester's usually watertight basics and Ian Jones was leading the way with a Herculean effort around the fringes.

They strung together some of their best rugby of the season with an astonishing move involving Fanolua, Little and Simpson-Daniel as they took the game to the Tigers.

It was a far better game than the first period and the temperature rose as Leicester grabbed the ascendancy. It took a magnificent tackle from Simpson-Daniel to prevent a certain try from Geordan Murphy after Neil Back's little chip.

Gloucester chipped and battled away, taking the game to the Tigers and the mercury rose even further when both sides slugged it out in a fight away on the far side that resulted in a sinbinning for Junior Paramore and Martin Johnson.

Leicester were in command now, and it took another splendid tackle from Simpson-Daniel to prevent Ben Kay scoring in the corner. But they couldn't hold the scrum, and Stimpson took Leicester a score clear again with his fourth penalty.

The tension could be cut with a knife, it was that tight, but still the men in Cherry were not out of it. Paramore had a seriously tough game from the back of the scrum and Gloucester dug in and drove on.

They took play to the left of the Tigers' posts where Mannix slashed the deficit to four points with his fifth penalty.

The finale could hardly be scripted because, here we were, Leicester, the champions, being run all the way by an inspired Gloucester effort.

Fanolua and Little led the midfield charge with some unstinting work and Gloucester kicked a last ditch penalty to touch. They drove forward before moving the ball wide where Mannix's chip reached the corner.

Unbelievably, Jones claimed possession, sending the Gloucester supporters through the roof, but although they took play infield with Boer, Leicester snatched back possession and cleared.

It was too late, Gloucester were beaten in a quite astonishing contest.

LEICESTER: G. Murphy; W. Stanley, L. Lloyd, P. Howard, T. Stimpson; A. Goode, A. Healey; G. Rowntree, D. West, D. Garforth, M. Johnson, B. Kay, W. Johnson, N. Back, M. Corry.

Replacements: J. Hamilton, G. Gelderbloom, P. Gustard, L. Moody, R. Nebbett, R. Cockerill, P. Freshwater.

GLOUCESTER: B. Hayward; R. Greenslade-Jones, T. Fanolua, J. Little, J. Simpson-Daniel; S. Mannix, A. Gomarsall; A. Deacon, O. Azam, P. Vickery, R. Fidler, I. Jones, J. Boer, K. Jones, J. Paramore.

Replacements: E. Moncrieff, C. Yates, N. Cox, A. Hazell, C. Fortey, S. Ojomoh, M. Cornwell.

REFEREE: Joel Dume (France)

STAR MAN: Ian Jones

JC