

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1984

GLOUCESTER LEAVE IT LATE AGAIN

COVENTRY 6 PTS., GLOUCESTER 10 PTS.

'Saving the best till last' – that's rapidly becoming the maxim of the Cherry and Whites so far this season.

Against Swansea they waited until just a little too late to swing into action; at Stroud, the bulk of their scores came near the end – and the trend continued at Coundon-rd.

But 'better late than never' could just as well have been Gloucester's war cry against their old Midland adversaries.

For after almost an hour of inconsequential play, the Cherry and Whites finally did what they had to and left their supporters with a far rosier overall impression.

Nevertheless, there must be worries in the Gloucester camp as they plan for the next three weeks of daunting clashes with the Welsh and the best of the English.

This close encounter with a badly weakened Coventry side exposed their problem areas. Not least of these is the line-out where the departure of John Fidler has left a gap which, so far, has not been easy for Steve Boyle and skipper John Orwin to fill.

Coventry's Graham Warrington and Tony Gulliver must have been surprised at how much of a look-in they got at the line-out ball.

It was strange, too, to see Coventry able to withstand the power of the Gloucester eight in the scrums.

Only in the final 20 minutes – as it was against Swansea – were the front five able to dominate and even then there were anxious moments – as in injury time when there were three scrums on Gloucester's line, with Coventry putting in twice.

However, there was encouragement in Gloucester's back row play. Mike Longstaff had a splendidly ubiquitous time and his verve and energy were eye-catching.

John Gadd, too, despite a lecture for punching, was showing flashes of his finest form and all the signs were that they and Mike Teague will soon be back at their formidable best.

Behind the scrum Gloucester had much to be pleased about. The half-back combination of Mike Evans and Marcus Hannaford worked smoothly while the speed of ex-Lydney winger Andy Richards once again left an indelible mark on the proceedings.

Tim Smith was forced to work hard in defence during the first half of persistent Coventry offensives and he never failed in his task.

Despite the reservations, then, Gloucester deserve credit for sticking resolutely to the task and denying Coventry a score after the first 10 minutes.

The match began with a penalty for Martin Fern after Gloucester collapsed the scrum and then a 10 minute drop goal by Mark Lakey to give Coventry their six points.

It was then 40 minutes before another score came. From a scrum close to Coventry's line, the ball moved sweetly along the threes and Andy Richards, with Lakey clinging to his back, was through for a try at the corner flag. Smith was wide with his side-line conversion shot.

The position for that winning scrum, incidentally, had been created by a 40-yard run by Longstaff, after he stood out from a scrum to receive a decisive pass.

Five minutes later Gloucester took the lead for the first time when Hannaford, despite having just been floored in a bruising clash of heads, found a gap in the close Coventry defence and leapt high above his rivals' heads to pass down to Gordon Sargent. The bearded prop was 10 yards out and clear to run through for the score which Smith converted.

It was an unfortunate debut for Coventry prop Gary Smith. The 24-year-old front row man's nose was broken by the fist of his own hooker, Andy Farrington. Cynical Gloucester fans felt the blow might have been intended not for Smith, but for Gloucester hooker Steve Mills.

MAN OF THE MATCH : Mike Longstaff.

#### NINE-TRY UNITED

GLOS. UTD. 44 Pts., COVENTRY EX. 1STS. NIL

Gloucester United overwhelmed their visitors with the power of their forwards and direct running by the backs who ran in nine tries.

The back row of skipper Paul Wood, Larry Cummins and Ian Smith were in tremendous form. In the backs winger Jim Breeze made some surging runs to gain a hat-trick of tries.

In the first half United established a 14-nil lead with tries by Nick Price, Jim Breeze and Steve Baker. Paul Ford converted one.

In the second half Coventry were ragged and conceded a further six tries scored by Price, Breeze (2), Baker, hooker Glyn Mann and Ian Smith. Ford added three conversions.