

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1984

GLO'STER PAY THE PENALTY

SUNK BY SUCKER PUNCH

PONTYPRIDD 12 Pts., GLOUCESTER 10 Pts.

Gloucester flattered to deceive at Sardis-rd. on Saturday and will be kicking themselves for not winning a tense and exciting game.

Fortunately rugby is not quite a win at all costs affair, and this defeat will rankle more with supporters than the players who must have picked up a valuable lesson in opportunism.

Gloucester won the best share of good possession; set up some splendid attacking platforms; put together some exciting attacks; had the misfortune to hit an upright with a penalty attempt – and still lost !

Past Gloucester packs might have beat their way to the line with repeated back-row attacks, but at Pontypridd the Cherry and Whites made a concerted effort to involve all the side.

PLAN

Gloucester's reputation as England's 'Pontypool' will take some living down and a pre-match conversation with a Welshman who had heard all about the plan for a more expansive game brought a wry comment that it was rare for Gloucester props to know the christian names of the wingers !

For effort and entertainment Gloucester were value for money but the temptation to revert to power rugby must be great when matches are lost which could have been won.

There were occasions when Pontypridd looked as though they would be taken to the cleaners, but they bounced back strongly and won an increasing share of possession in the second-half.

Both sets of half-backs played neatly. Gloucester's Hannaford and Evans linked well and were always prepared to run while Pontypridd's Williams and Crane were slightly less adventurous and once they had taken the lead opted to keep the pressure on by kicking to the corners.

The forwards scrummaged well and John Brain won some excellent line-out ball with good two-handed catching. Flankers Longstaff and Gadd also did a lot of good work and the forwards must have felt they had won enough ball to earn victory.

The problems came in pressing home the attacks. Pontypridd defended well and successfully covered good runs by wingers Morgan and Richards, including one outstanding attack instigated by Evans from inside his own 22 and which swept almost to the home team's line.

Gloucester had taken the lead with a Tim Smith penalty with Crane replying in like style for the home team. He nudged them ahead with another penalty goal early in the second-half before Morgan intercepted and put Gloucester on the attack. From a maul Hannaford put Gadd over – and signalled the Pontypridd revival. The Welshmen played their best rugby to get on equal terms but their conventional attacks were all beaten off.

In the end it took a sucker punch from a tap penalty move. With the ball hidden in a wall of four forwards, Pontypridd weaved some pretty patterns off the ball. Gloucester defenders chased them in all directions, prop forward Neil Wilding eventually appeared with the ball and trundled over virtually unopposed.

Crane converted and though Gloucester did everything they could to pull the game out of the fire the Welshmen hung on for their second victory of the season.

Teams : -

Gloucester: – T. Smith; D. Morgan, R. Mogg, P. Taylor (capt.), A. Richards; M. Evans, M. Hannaford; G. Sargent, S. Mills, M. Preedy, S. Boyle, J. Brain, J. Gadd, M. Longstaff, L. Cummings.

Replacements : S. Parsloe, K. White.

Pontypridd: – I. Walsh (capt.); A. Cartwright, M. Oliver, M. Davies, R. Chillcott; R. Crane, T. Williams; A. Edwards, A. Witts, M. Wilding, K. Williams, S. Duke, G. Jones, R. Bennett, C. Groves.

Replacements : S. Smith, W. Davies.

MAN OF THE MATCH : John Brain. . . some superb two-handed line-out work.

OLD RIVALS BEATEN

GLOUCESTER UTD. 44 Pts., PONTYPOOL ATH. 12 Pts.

United gained a great win over their old rivals at Kingsholm with some brilliant attacking rugby. Well served by their forwards where the front row of Peter Jones, Glyn Mann and Rob Phillips won the tight heads, and locks Nigel Scrivens and newcomer Dick Barn won good line out ball United went ahead with two penalties by Peter Wickenden before Pontypool kicked a penalty.

United went further ahead with tries by Phillips, from a heel against the head and Mike Hamlin after a break by Steve Baker.

Centre Russ Ellis raced 45 yards after a charge down kick to add another try. Scrivens went over for a try but was obstructed and the referee awarded a penalty try.

Just before half-time Jones went over for a try. Wickenden added four conversions to give Gloucester a 34-6 interval lead.

In the second half winger Nick Price raced through for a try and Glyn Mann finished the scoring with a try converted by Wickenden to take his tally to 16 points.

JC