

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 1985

GLOUCESTER'S CUP OF WOE

GLOUCESTER 11 Pts., BATH 12

A despairing tackle by John Hall, with assistance from Paul Simpson, ended Gloucester's hopes of winning the John Player Special Cup, even though it failed to prevent a try.

There were 16 minutes left when Ian Smith regained possession for the Cherry and Whites with some neat work in the mud. Mike Teague and Marcus Hannaford were involved in a move which left Mike Hamlin with a clear run to the line.

The fly-half looked certain to touch down under the posts until Hall pulled Hamlin down and Simpson fell on him. Gloucester forced the ball out again and full-back Tim Smith went over in the corner, but it was not enough.

Smith failed with a difficult conversion, while a Hamlin try would have left Gloucester with a simple conversion and a possible 13-12 victory.

"I was certain I would score," admitted Hamlin, "I felt I was clear until I went down."

Bath produced a dour performance, coming out on top in the scrummaging [to] shatter Gloucester's dream of a Twickenham final. Yet Gloucester, bitterly upset at defeat, can look back on their display with pride.

Their 15-man game flowed. They threw the ball around at every chance and scored two quality tries, both from Tim Smith.

But Bath's ability to contain Gloucester pressure and kill the game kept them ahead after they had opened a nine point lead.

And delighted Bath skipper Roger Spurrell said: "Gloucester are known for their forward play, but today Bath played Gloucester-style, while they played the expansive, running game we usually adopt.

"In the end it worked in our favour and we defended well with John Horton kicking superbly for touch."

MISSED

Tim Smith scored all the Gloucester points, scoring two tries and kicking a penalty, but he missed other chances which could have turned the match.

None were simple and on a greasy surface Smith's job was far from easy, but he saw two early attempts slide inches wide of the post and had the chance to win the match from a penalty in the last minute.

It was a long way out, though, and the kick was sliced leaving Bath the winners and boosting their hopes of retaining the Cup.

Lock John Brain, full-back Smith, number eight Mike Teague and scrum-half Marcus Hannaford all did well in a committed Gloucester display, although Hannaford was given close attention by the Bath players.

"We knew Hannaford was a danger to us and we closed him down at every chance," said Bath coach Jack Rowell.

On the day, though, the speedy Hannaford was outshone by Teague, who won a lot of line-out ball and battled fiercely in the Gloucester cause, and Brain, the former England under-23 international who played a powerful second row game.

The match started badly for Gloucester when Bath scored from each of their only two attacks during the first 20 minutes. A drop goal from John Horton put Bath three points ahead and then came the try after fly-half Horton hoisted a high kick towards the Gloucester line.

It was a tactic which worked superbly for Bath and their forwards were quickly under the ball as it dropped. Richard Hill drove over for the try and John Palmer converted easily.

At that stage Gloucester looked in trouble, but they stirred into action. Suddenly Gloucester stepped up the pace and shook the visitors.

Tim Smith kicked a penalty and a try came after 35 minutes when Smith fooled the Bath defensive cover, breaking inside when they expected a pass outside to winger Derrick Morgan. The conversion attempt faded wide, but Gloucester were back in the match.

An offside decision against Teague gave Bath a penalty which Palmer converted after 51 minutes to put Bath 12-7 ahead, but once again Gloucester fought back.

Smith was again the scorer, but if only Hall had failed with that last ditch tackle on Hamlin, Gloucester could now be celebrating a fourth Cup final appearance.

GLOUCESTER : T. Smith; D. Morgan, R. Mogg, P. Taylor (capt.), N. Price; M. Hamlin, M. Hannaford; P. Blakeway, K. White, R. Pascall, D. Burn, J. Gadd, I. Smith, M. Teague.

BATH : C. Martin; D. Trick, J. Palmer, A. Rees, B. Trevaskis; J. Horton, R. Hill; G. Chilcott, G. Bees, R. Lee, N. Gaymond, N. Redman, R. Spurrell, J. Hall, F. Simpson.

REFEREE : L. Prideaux (North Midlands Society).

MAN OF THE MATCH : John Brain.