

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2001

GLoucester MAKE SENSATIONAL START AND NEVER LOOK BACK
IN KINGSHOLM VICTORY

FORWARD POWER SEES OFF WASPS

GLoucester 43 WASPS 13

You might know what to expect at Kingsholm, but it is another thing trying to stop it and Wasps found that out as Gloucester's relentless forward platform destroyed them last night.

Gloucester were irresistible up front and managed two tries in each half to move up to fourth in the Premiership after another special night under the Kingsholm floodlights.

They made a quite sensational start after a missed Ludovic Mercier penalty in the opening minute.

Patrice Collazo and Rob Fidler set play up and Oliver Azam, 25 metres from the line, came off the side of the maul with terrifying force, put his head down and slammed his way through Martyn Wood, off the left post and over for an amazing try. Mercier converted and Gloucester already had the blood well and truly in their nostrils.

They were powerful in the scrum and more controlled in the loose. Wasps could not establish any control up front, despite a malfunctioning home line-out and Mercier made it 10-0 with a towering drop-goal.

Collazo looked to have scored, but Wasps were penalised for pulling down the drive and following a scrum, Mercier kicked a penalty to extend their lead to 13-0.

Wasps had to be content with [an] Alex King penalty, but it did not matter as Gloucester simply hammered them up front.

There was more conviction and intent and Gloucester found there was no substitute for relentlessly driving hard at the visitors.

Andy Hazell was involved in his own personal duel with Paul Volley, but, just about, Gloucester walked the tightrope of discipline.

Gloucester grabbed their second try four minutes before the break. Matthew Leek missed his touch and Mercier ran possession back, before finding Hazell who went on an arching run away from Volley.

Henry Paul and Terry Fanolua drove on and Daren O'Leary took possession before Wasps were penalised for killing the ball. Azam, on the spot, decided there was only one thing for it. The burly hooker tapped to himself, and this time only managed to take half of the Wasps pack over the line with him for the score.

Mercier converted and not even a King drop-goal could deny Gloucester, who led 23-3 at the break.

Wasps needed an immediate response, but it took them 13 minutes. Will Green and Simon Shaw made good their ground in the middle of the field to take play to beneath the Gloucester posts. Wood fed King and his pass allowed Stuart Abbott to score.

Through the work of Fidler, Ed Pearce, Federico Pucciariello and the rest of the forward muckers, Gloucester still tore Wasps apart up front – Hazell tackled himself to a standstill – but were disappointed to have two tries disallowed.

Firstly, Paul moved play to the left and Fanolua came in on the dummy to block Phil Greening as Todd touched down and, minutes later, Mark Cornwell was denied a score after Gomarsall was penalised for a forward pass.

It was tough on Gloucester who had even managed to reduce Ian Jones to a bit-part player in the line-out.

But a Mercier drop-goal and penalty extended the lead before Boer added their third try three minutes from time.

James Simpson-Daniel swapped passes in midfield before chasing up on Leek. Simpson-Daniel robbed him in the tackle and as Hazell and Boer arrived, the Gloucester skipper ripped the ball away to score. Mercier converted.

The task now was for a bonus point and it arrived in the last minute when Jones knocked down and the referee awarded a penalty try. Mercier converted for a points tally of 15 as Wasps were sent packing.

GLOUCESTER: R. Todd; D. O'Leary, T. Fanolua, H. Paul, D. Albanese; L. Mercier, A. Gomarsall; P. Collazo, O. Azam, F. Pucciariello, R. Fidler, R. Pearce, A. Eustace, A. Hazell, J. Boer (captain).
Reps.: D. Yachvili, J. Simpson-Daniel, J. Goodridge, J. Forrester, M. Cornwell, C. Fortey, T. Woodman.

WASPS: M. Leek; S. Roiser, F. Waters, M. Denney (captain), K. Logan; A. King, M. Wood; C. Dowd, P. Greening, W. Green, S. Shaw, I. Jones, R. Jenkins, P. Volley, M. Lock.
Reps.: M. Friday, S. Abbott, M. Offiah, C. Allen, J. Beardshaw, A. McKenzie, T. Leota.

REFEREE: D. Pearson.

STAR MAN: Olivier Azam.