

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2001

PLAN B IS ENOUGH TO SINK BRISTOL AGAIN

FORRESTER STARS WITH A HAT-TRICK AS GLOUCESTER PRODUCE
A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE TO WIN CUP DERBY

BRISTOL 23 GLOUCESTER 37

So that's plan B then. Gloucester won the latest round of this west country tribal dispute with a marauding performance of bewitching intensity at the Memorial Stadium yesterday.

On a bitingly raw day, Gloucester's spirit and collective will shone through like a beacon as they gradually tightened their vice-like grip to pen one of their greatest cup triumphs of all time.

Leading their relentless drive was a young man from Oxford, tall and angular with a natural well of talent that allowed him to claim a hat-trick. This was no Parker Pen Shield run-about, but an intimidating domestic cup fight and James Forrester answered every question thrown at him.

With a nose for adventure and blinding pace, he claimed a treble of scores, all vastly different in their execution and construction, that were the spine of Gloucester's success.

In terms of vitality and effort, it even eclipsed their victory at Bath last season.

From the moment Andy Deacon led his troops around for the warm-up until they bowed in union to the Cherry and Whites legions at the final whistle, there was a sense of complete togetherness and bond. Gloucester appeared a family in everything they did.

There were performances of immense durability from Adam Eustace, who really is as good as they come in Gloucester's engine room, and Pierre Caillet at number eight, who considering this was his debut, knitted together a terrific display in driving play. To a man, the forwards were outstanding.

The 'Jackson Two' in the centre – Terry Fanolua and Robert Todd – held the midfield together with a clinging relentlessness in attack and defence as Gloucester wore their hosts down.

Fanolua claimed their first try and Marcel Garvey completed what in scoring terms was a rout at the final whistle.

It was not perfect because Gloucester never really threatened from set phases, but they were able to dominate in broken field play – when it fragmented, they were irresistible.

Surely Gloucester were supposed to kick long and rely on the superiority of the forwards ? What was happening ?

This was real rugby with a real fluidity to it.

Not that it started well for them. Their inexperienced side were hit by an opening try from David Rees, who took Phil Christopher's pass to break free and score in the far right corner in the second minute.

The microscope of intensity was already homing in on Philippe Saint-Andre's experimental line-up.

But no matter Felipe Contepomi and Henry Paul, who moved Gloucester well at stand-off, swapped penalties, before Gloucester hit back with their first try.

Eustace drove the ball tight to set up Gloucester's platform. Dimitri Yachvili swung play left where Koli Sewabu fed Caillet.

The move could easily have broken down, but the young Frenchman gathered himself and set off down the touchline. With the cover converging, he gave a wonderful overhead pass to Fanolua who ploughed over for the try.

The Forrester show had not begun yet, but he was there – tackling and hitting mauls and rucks with the rest of his men.

Gloucester were forced into some desperate defence as Bristol mounted a series of raids, led by the outstanding Christophers, but Bristol were not quite on song and could not match Gloucester for desperation, before the visitors scored again.

Rees came right again, only to be hit by James Simpson-Daniel. The ball spilled free and the Gloucester winger gathered before speeding away down the flank. It was now pupil against mentor – Simpson-Daniel twisting Little inside and out en route to the line.

As he was caught, Forrester, who had shown blistering pace, took the ball and made the line. The stadium erupted and Gloucester, to a man, converged on the pair.

Fourteen minutes into the second period and he was at it again. Gloucester were behind now, thanks to a try from Lee Best from a multi-phased attack, but Forrester found himself in space from a free-kick and spun away from Neil McCarthy to score in the far right corner.

Bristol were still burning. Contepomi levelled the scores at 23-23, but Saint-Andre had timed his replacements to perfection and with Phil Vickery, Federico Pucciariello and Junior Paramore all adding their weight, the momentum was with Gloucester.

Forrester broke Bristol when he profited from one of Eustace's many midfield turnovers to chase his own kick and score a try of questionable legality for his hat-trick.

Garvey completed the rout when he took possession from a stampede by Vickery.

This was a stampeding performance by Gloucester and a victory chiselled from the very heart of Kingsholm.

BRISTOL : L. Best; D. Rees, P. Christophers, J. Little (capt.), S. Brown (A. Higgins, 46); F. Contepomi, A. Pichot; P. Johnstone (T. Payne, 62), S. Nelson (N. McCarthy, 46), D. Crompton, B. Sturnham, A. Brown, C. Short, A. Vander, J. Brownrigg.

GLOUCESTER : J. Goodridge (L. Mercier, 47); J. Frape (M. Garvey, 78), T. Fanolua, R. Todd, J. Simpson-Daniel; H. Paul, D. Yachvili (A. Gomarsall, 51); T. Woodman (F. Pucciariello, 62), C. Fortey, A. Deacon (capt.) (P. Vickery, 62), M. Cornwell, A. Eustace, K. Sewabu (A. Hazell, 73), J. Forrester, P. Caillet (J. Paramore, 55).

REFEREE : S. Lander (Liverpool).

ATTENDANCE : 5,363

STAR MAN : James Forrester.

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