

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2002

VICKERY AND PARAMORE STAR IN CRUSHING WIN FORWARDS DOMINATE AS MELVILLE WITNESSES A FINE VICTORY AT KINGSHOLM

GLOUCESTER 42 SALE 14

Gloucester produced a clinical forward-dominated performance to crush Sale and move ever closer to the Heineken Cup.

Inspired by huge performances from Phil Vickery and Junior Paramore, Gloucester cut Sale to pieces in the tight to score five tries in a totally convincing display and only the lack of a serious killer edge denied them the chance of further tries.

Paramore scored one of the tries and there were also scores for Andy Gomarsall, James Simpson-Daniel, James Forrester and Federico Pucciariello, but they could have scored 60, however; there was just a glimmer of what this squad can achieve. Ludovic Mercier completed the scoring with 17 points.

The era might be changing but the principles remained the same. Nigel Melville was introduced to his new band of followers and received a raucous ovation. It must have made Loftus Road look like a local park.

They made an unconvincing start as Sale controlled possession and territory for the first four minutes. Gloucester could not get a hand on the ball and there needed to be some telling tackles from Phil Vickery and Robert Todd to keep Sale out.

But Gloucester were penalised for not rolling away and Vaughan Going struck the visitors ahead.

If anything, it settled Gloucester down. The principle was that Gloucester would have too much fire power for Sale up front and in the tight. Full of vim and vigour, Gloucester thundered back.

They should have scored when thumping breaks from Junior Paramore and Jake Boer created space [for] Ludovic Mercier and he sent Robert Todd hurtling through the gap, but he was somehow held up just short.

But the die had been cast, From the scrum, Patrice Collazo forced Adam Black into collapsing and Mercier converted the penalty.

Gloucester dominated thereafter through the edifying efforts of the forwards, particularly in the scrum, where the front five were mean and aggressive.

They were playing more rugby than they had in any of their previous couple of matches and a line-out drive from Rob Fidler set up another crushing forward platform. Todd, Paramore and Henry Paul all went for the line in a series of swinging attacks, but Sale held out and Gloucester had to make do with another Mercier penalty.

Going levelled again when Gloucester were penalised for playing the ball on the floor, but it could not alter the tide.

Vickery led the charge, crashing into contact in midfield, but the damage was being done in the tight.

Sale could not keep the ball away from the scrummage, rucks or mauls, and Gloucester's superior power had to tell.

They again missed a great chance when James Forrester scampered down the blindside, but hit the tackle when Todd was screaming outside him and when play was recycled, Gloucester spilt the ball.

But they changed the game with three tries in the last 14 minutes of the half.

Firstly, Paramore rounded off a fine half when he dived over to score following a series of scrums Sale could not handle. Andy Gomarsall grabbed the second when he pounced on the blindside of a Sale scrum five metres out after another squeeze from the home pack. Mercier converted both and suddenly Gloucester were 20-9 ahead.

It was riveting stuff and lovely inter-play between Olivier Azam, Boer and the thumping Todd enabled James Simpson-Daniel, on for Terry Fanolua, to score from close range down the left, Mercier again converting.

Half-time: Gloucester 27, Sale 9.

The match was really over as a contest now as Vickery had led his charges superbly from the front, but Sale, to their credit, rallied at the start of the second period and scored their first try.

They kicked a penalty to the corner and from the throw, Bryan Redpath fed Going who stepped inside and somehow got the ball down.

Gloucester did not have to wait long for a reply. They kept the ball tight through several phases that included Gomarsall and Paul, before finally the number nine broke right and put Forrester through a gap for their fourth try that gave them their bonus point.

For the rest of the period, Sale battled manfully in face of the onslaught. Paramore and Vickery were the outstanding Gloucester forwards, but separating the eight was almost impossible considering their dominance.

Gloucester's intent was there. but they could not add to their tally and Paul Turner made a raft of replacements in the closing stages.

Mercier collected his fourth penalty with a sweetly struck effort from the 10 metre line after 65 minutes to take Gloucester 35-14 ahead, and there was still time for a fifth try.

It looked like the move was going to break down when Simpson-Daniel's pass went astray, but Forrester picked up and hurtled through the middle and got his pass away in the tackle for Federico Pucciariello to score.

Until that point, Sale had only lost the second period 8-5, but there was to be no denying them, even in the last few minutes when Sale applied the pressure.

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

SALE SHARKS: J. Robinson; M. Cueto, M. Shaw, M. Deane, S. Hanley; V. Going, B. Redpath (capt.); K. Yates, C. Marais, A. Black, I. Fullerton, M. Giacheri, S. Lines, R. Wilks, A. Sanderson.
Reps.: A. Dickens, J. Bramhall, A. Elliott, C. Jones, P. Davies, S. Turner, A. Titterell.

REFEREE: J. Barnard (RFU).

STAR MAN: Junior Paramore.

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