

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2002

GLOUCESTER SHOW NO MERCY TO THE TYKES

DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR SIMPSON-DANIEL AS GLOUCESTER
INFLICT THRASHING

LEEDS 17 GLOUCESTER 50

It is a good job Leeds already knew the safety net was spread comfortably beneath them before their end-of-season tribulations yesterday.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Rugby Football Union's decision last Thursday to preserve the Tykes' Premiership status – or any team who finished bottom – Gloucester showed very little mercy at Headingley in this end of season slaughter.

Director of rugby Nigel Melville will again, quite rightly, regard this as progress.

Away victories at Bristol and Leeds in quick succession should act as a tremendous fillip to his squad – they can do it and they can do it anywhere in the land if they so desire.

When play fragmented into broken passages immediately after the re-start, Gloucester looked a clinically incisive unit and the rate at which they rattled up the points was quite staggering.

Gloucester were galvanised by the electric intensity of James Simpson-Daniel who scored a double, and the sprightly heads-up link play of James Forrester.

Add to that a couple of meaty interventions from Terry Fanolua and Junior Paramore and the Cherry and Whites were sailing along quite nicely.

It was a far cry from the opening. Knitted together by the footballing expertise of Steve Bachop, Leeds began at a rattling good pace.

Bogged down by indecision at half-back and exploited down the blindside, Leeds dominated the first quarter and were solid and dependable in everything they did.

They scored their first try after 15 minutes when Bachop fed in Braam van Straaten in the centre. The South African's pass found Dan Scarborough on the burst from full-back, but he had the awareness to pass back inside for Chris Hall to surge home past Henry Paul.

In their outstanding period, Leeds played some of the best supporting rugby of the season and Gloucester, to be frank, were thankful to find themselves only 10 points behind following a van Straaten penalty with 10 minutes of the period remaining.

Then it all changed for Gloucester and ironically it came from a mistake by Bachop.

He looked to slide a kick over the Gloucester defence, but Paul read it well from full-back, danced through a couple of tackles and allowed Forrester to jink his way past Scarborough and score. Game on.

Ludovic Mercier kicked the conversion and then levelled things with a penalty, before Gloucester nicked the lead.

The move looked to be petering out before Andy Gomarsall threw a reverse pass to Mercier in centre field.

The Frenchman drew van Straaten and found Paramore who used his strength to crash over.

Gloucester had not been tight enough in the opening period. They were loose in their execution and not tight enough in their driving before snatching the advantage.

Gloucester should have extended their lead shortly after the break when Paul spotted a gap and burst away but slightly delayed his pass to Diego Albanese who was stopped quite brilliantly by Hall for the second time.

But no matter. Forrester, Paramore and Simpson-Daniel cultivated their third try with a super passage of play down the left.

Federico Pucciariello set up the ruck before Gomarsall, Mercier, Paul and Albanese all combined to send Trevor Woodman barrelling over from close range.

It created an advantage Gloucester would not relinquish. In broken field play Gloucester were quite exhilarating.

Eight minutes later, they smuggled back possession for Woodman and Paul to create the slightest opening for Forrester.

But in an explosion of pace and movement the young flanker tore a huge hole through midfield and sent Simpson-Daniel scooting away.

There was still plenty for him to do, but he drew Jon Benson before stepping away from Phil Murphy – it was a brilliant try.

Daren O'Leary, a replacement for Albanese, was next to profit when he took Fanolua's inside feed after the Leeds defence had been drawn to the near side and cruised over.

Fanolua was having a hand in everything and with 14 minutes to go, enabled Simpson-Daniel to claim his second with another smart piece of finishing.

Koli Sewabu barely had time to tie on his head gear before accepting a Simpson-Daniel pass for Gloucester's seventh and final try in a blur of total dominance.

If Gloucester wanted to go out on a high this was the perfect way.

Not even a disjointed final 10 minutes in which Leeds bagged a score from Scarborough could sully the outcome.

Perhaps they should have secured runners-up spot to Leicester Tigers, but they will fancy their chances of reaching the semi-finals of the play-offs when their old pal Rob Andrew comes back to Kingsholm with Newcastle next Saturday.

LEEDS: D. Scarborough; O. Bartolucci, J. Mulder, B. van Straaten (J. Benson, 49), C. Hall; S. Bachop (T. Davies, 68), S. Benton (J. O'Reilly, 49); J. Wring, M. Holt (M. Luffman, 48), M. Shelley, C. Murphy, P. Murphy (C. Mather, 60), D. Hyde (K. Fullman, 60), J. Ponton (Mather, 40-41; Jones, 60), Hogg (Mather, 43-50).

GLOUCESTER: H. Paul; D. Albanese (D. O'Leary, 65), T. Fanolua, R. Todd, J. Simpson-Daniel; L. Mercier, A. Gomarsall (D. Yachvili, 68), T. Woodman (P. Collazo, 62), C. Fortey, F. Pucciariello (P. Vickery 62; O. Azam 76), E. Pearce (P. Caillet, 40), R. Fidler, J. Forrester (K. Sewabu, 69), J. Boer, J. Paramore.

REFEREE: D. Pearson.

ATTENDANCE: 4,144

STAR MAN: James Simpson-Daniel.

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