

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2002

RAMPANT GLOUCESTER DESTROY NEWCASTLE
ANDREW HAS TO WATCH A NINE-TRY DISPLAY
FROM THE CHERRY AND WHITES
GLOUCESTER 60 NEWCASTLE 9

'Are you watching Rob Andrew' was the chorus as Gloucester completed a nine-try demolition of hapless Newcastle Falcons.

Tries from Robert Todd, Jamie Forrester, Tom Beim, Junior Paramore, Daren O'Leary, Phil Vickery, Ludovic Mercier, Henry Paul and Terry Fanolua ensured a place in the Zurich Premiership play-off semi-finals.

Mercier kicked four conversions and a penalty with Paul putting over the final two kicks.

The tie gained more significance when it was announced that Bristol had pulled off an unlikely victory at Leicester.

Supporters were quickly aware of a possible West Country final at Twickenham on June 8.

It was a scrappy opening with O'Leary failing to pick up a powerful pass from Ludovic Mercier.

Paul though intercepted a Jonny Wilkinson kick to boot Gloucester into a good position.

Gloucester edged ahead with a Mercier penalty after five minutes and the home side appeared to go up a gear after this score.

Good ball was won by the forwards to enable Mercier and Terry Fanolua to link well but Paul was unable to set up O'Leary for the try.

A turning point in the game came after 15 minutes when Wilkinson suffered had to be helped off with a suspected ankle injury after being stretch tackled by Junior Paramore[sic].

The Falcons though levelled with a Dave Walder although his kick did not show a lot of elegance[sic].

Gloucester gradually got the ascendancy and it was no surprise when they grabbed the opening try in the 25th minute.

After winning a line-out Gloucester exerted pressure on the Newcastle line and Paramore was unlucky not to be awarded a try when he appeared to touch down.

A further penalty was awarded and the Gloucester pack again pushed and clinched good ball for the backs.

Mercier fed the backs, Paul came close to losing possession but centre Robert Todd was on hand to blast his way through the Newcastle defence for a fine try, which Mercier converted.

Newcastle reduced the deficit two minutes later with a penalty but Gloucester were soon on the attack.

Olivier Azam won turnover ball with Simpson-Daniel gaining good ground to set up an excellent try for Jamie Forrester in the 30th minute. Mercier was unable to convert.

Gloucester lost Todd with a blood injury and he was replaced by Tom Beim, who showed his class during injury-time of the first half.

Beim finished off a good move which started with a drive by Phil Vickery. Andy Gomarsall fed Beim before good ground was gained to set up Beim for his touchdown, converted by Mercier.

The floodgates appeared to be opened as the Falcons defence collapsed to allow Paramore to score Gloucester's fourth try with Mercier kicking the conversion.

Half-time: Gloucester 29, Newcastle 6.

Gloucester had a scare in the opening minutes of the second half when Michael Stephenson was allowed to chase a kick ahead unopposed.

But fine covering work by Simpson-Daniel prevented Stephenson from gathering.

The Falcons continued to threaten with centres Tom May and Jamie Noon linking well. They rallied again when scrum-half Hall Charlton, Walder and May put together a good move as Gloucester struggled to get out of their way.

Their pressure was rewarded after 50 minutes when Walder slotted over his third penalty; 29-9.

If there was any doubt in the second half this was extinguished after 52 minutes when Gloucester charged forward with Paul and Forrester driving forward to allow O'Leary to force his way over for the home side's fifth try, again converted by Mercier.

It was now almost exhibition stuff but you could not doubt the strength put in by captain Phil Vickery to power over for his try after 56 minutes.

The entire ground saluted their appreciation to the popular prop with loud cheers of applause.

Forrester came close to his second try but was held up. From the resultant scrum, Mercier, who had earlier notched up his 500th point of the season, charged over for a try.

Paul then joined in the act by racing in for the eighth try and adding the conversion.

In the final minute Fanolua went over after collecting a pass from Forrester with Paul producing the conversion from an acute angle.

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

NEWCASTLE: D. Walder; L. Botham, J. Noon, T. May, M. Stephenson; J. Wilkinson (capt.), H. Charlton; G. Graham, S. Brotherstone, M. Hurter, D. Weir, S. Grimes, H. Vyvyan, R. Devonshire, R. Arnold.
Reps.: G. Armstrong, G. Maclure, D. Richardson, P. Lam, T. Kirkham, N. Makin, A. Springgay.

REFEREE: Steve Lander.

STAR MAN: Phil Vickery.

JC