

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2003

DEBUT JOY FOR TEAGUE AFTER GRUELLING DAY AT KINGSHOLM
GLOUCESTER 22 ROTHERHAM 8

GLOUCESTER : R. Teague; M. Garvey, T. Fanolua, H. Paul, J. Goodridge; B. Davies, S. Amor; P. Johnstone, S. Brotherstone, A. Deacon, A. Eustace, A. Brown, J. Boer (c), A. Hazell, J. Paramore.
Reps: A. Page, S. Thomas, R. Todd, C. Collins, J. Forrester, N. Wood, M. Cornwell.

ROTHERHAM : J. Benson; A. Elliot, J. Pritchard, P. Jorgensen, M. Wood; J. Strange, J. Rauluni; M. Lloyd, C. Johnson (c), C. Loader, D. Cook, L. Gross, L. Greeff, N. Spencer, G. Lewis.
Reps: P. Smyth, S. Bunting, G. Kenworthy, J. Cockie, C. Harrison, P. Jones, M. Oliver.

Referee : R. Maybank (RFU).

The pulses did not exactly race and at times they were far from convincing, but Gloucester produced a winning start in the Zurich Premiership.

A solitary try, created by Marcel Garvey and finished by Rory Teague on his debut, was all the Cherry and Whites had to show for a gruelling and hard working afternoon against Rotherham.

The promoted side gave a splendid account of themselves and trailed by just a point at the interval, but could not recreate their pressure and Henry Paul's accurate kicking stretched Gloucester to a comfortable if disjointed victory.

Kingsholm can be a far from intimidating place during the early exchanges of the season and as the late summer sun drenched God's little acre, Rotherham announced their return to the Premiership with a considerable effort at Castle Grim.

The mere fact that they trailed by only a point at the interval was down to their workaholic attitude and relentless determination at the breakdown that caused a raft of mistakes. By slowing the game down to a manageable pace, Rotherham were far more than the sum of their parts.

They earned the only try of the first period and through number eight Geraint Lewis, the scorer, and blindside Leon Greeff, the Titans were a considerable nuisance at the breakdown.

By the end of the half they were on top, keeping the ball alive well in contact and popping short passes around the fringes that forced Gloucester into a good deal of defending.

Gloucester, the side who finished a colossal 15 points ahead of nearest rivals Wasps last season, whipped an early frenzy in the opening minutes but gradually slipped off the pace.

Junior Paramore carried with considerable aggression as did Jake Boer in a powerful start that suggested Rotherham may struggle.

Henry Paul also looked to get involved early and after one neat break, kicked a penalty when the Titans came round off side.

They doubled their advantage from the re-start when Andy Hazell's awareness[sic], Paul and Boer carried possession deep inside Rotherham territory and Paul kicked another penalty.

But that was as good as it got for the home side. The pack, apart from Alex Brown who looked a real handful at the line-out, struggled to impose any real authority and Rotherham's confidence grew.

Behind, Simon Amor and Brad Davies struggled with distribution and control while the remainder of their back-play was lateral and easily defended.

With a quarter of the game gone, Rotherham got the break they deserved. Brown's control of the line-out saw him steal possession, but Amor's attempted reverse pass ended in the arms of Lewis who went in to score.

Those things might work in Hong Kong, but not at Kingsholm, and Gloucester never recovered. They only went down the tunnel in front because Paul landed his third penalty that was cancelled out by Jason Strange.

HALF-TIME :

GLOUCESTER	9
ROTHERHAM	8

The draining heat also played a significant part in proceedings but if Gloucester thought Rotherham's far from tough pre-season would make it easier for them to be broken down, they were wrong. They refused to wilt under the pressure and a near-capacity crowd began to get more than restless with the problems the home side faced.

What they required, above all, was a spark of inspiration and eight minutes into the second half they found it.

Marcel Garvey had received little in the way of possession but changed the course of the game with an explosive piece of skill.

Picking up the ball way inside his own half, the winger picked his way through some heavy traffic first with some powerful strength and then an explosive turn of speed to cut up the ground ahead of him.

His break took him inside the 22 where Paul Johnstone picked and Boer straightened the attack to the line. When play was recycled, Teague arrived on an angled run to score on his debut.

Paul added the conversion and Gloucester found themselves 16-8 ahead.

But the blow did not deter Rotherham. They enjoyed long periods of possession but lacked the vital killer instinct to create a try.

But in Greef and Luke Gross they have the potential to cause some real problems at Millmoor.

Gloucester inched themselves further ahead with two Paul penalties but there was not the clattering intensity usually associated with the forwards or the cutting edge out wide.

Boer was his usual desperate self at the breakdown and Johnstone worked hard, as had Davies and Teague, but Gloucester were still searching for their second try in added time.

It almost arrived when Paul's angled break fed Brown on the burst but Teague somehow spilt the ball with the line at his mercy.

Gloucester's pressure continued to grow in the dying moments and although they will be far from pleased with the performance, a winning start is far better to build on.

JC