

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2003

GREAT VICTORY FOR GLOUCESTER

DOMINANT GLOUCESTER ARE FAR TOO GOOD FOR LEICESTER

GLOUCESTER 24 LEICESTER 3

GLOUCESTER : J. Goodridge; M. Garvey, R. Todd, H. Paul, J. Simpson-Daniel; S. Amor, A. Page; N. Wood, C. Fortey, A. Deacon, A. Eustace, A. Brown, J. Boer (c), A. Hazell, J. Forrester.

Reps.: A. Olver, S. Brotherstone, M. Cornwell, P. Buxton, W. Matthews, J. Frape, R. Teague.

LEICESTER : L. Myring; T. Stimpson, G. Gelderbloom, D. Gibson, J. Holtby; S. Vesty, H. Ellis; G. Rowntree, G. Chuter, R. Nebbett, J. Hamilton, L. Deacon, H. Tuilagi, J. Kronfeld (c), A. Balding.

Reps: J. Richards, D. Morris, R. Ryder, W. Johnson, D. Hipkiss, W. Skinner, T. Tierney.

Referee : A. Rowden (RFU).

Leicester became the latest victims of Gloucester's relentless home dominance – the 33rd successive team to be found wanting at their raucous Kingsholm residence.

Gloucester were savage in the way they set about the Tigers and scored two tries – they could have had at least two more – but were dominant and in control throughout.

It was a thoroughly earned and well-merited victory, sealed by scores from Marcel Garvey and Robert Todd and 14 points from Henry Paul.

For the connoisseurs of the distinctly meatier side of the game, the biting intensity of the first half would have had those purists rubbing their hands with glee.

If Andy Deacon had a pound for every time he has looked up in disgust to see the referee's arm pointing skywards, he would be a seriously rich man.

But among all the gesticulating, mainly towards Graham Rowntree, the grand old servant was loving it and so was everybody else clad in Cherry and White.

The confrontation was so fierce, the application so great and determination never anything than full-on, that neither side gave an inch during an enthralling first period.

Deacon was not the only one in the thick of the action. Nick Wood, making his first start, stood up well, Chris Fortey and Adam Eustace got through an ocean of work, while Alex Brown was his usual unstinting self in the line-out.

Leicester stumbled from one wonky set-piece to another. Their line-out was awash with problems, where both Eustace and Brown did damage, and the scrum was physical but unsteady.

Their uncertainty was summed up by two hugely wayward kicks at goal by Luke Myring, who must have been wearing 10-pin bowling shoes such was his inaccuracy.

They also spilt a terrible amount of first phase ball – particularly Henry Tuilagi – and although they got into a series of threatening positions, could not keep the ball long enough to threaten.

Gloucester meanwhile, chipped away with points. A fifth minute penalty from Henry Paul got the machine rolling and then they pounced on a wayward Sam Vesty clearance to score an outstanding try after 15 minutes.

Jon Goodridge swooped from full-back and linked with the heavy-duty carrying Robert Todd up the far touchline.

Gloucester recycled the ball to the right, James Forrester escaped Tuilagi's tackle and Marcel Garvey stepped out of a desperate lunge to crown the move brilliantly.

The rest of the half sunk deep into set-piece warfare but Gloucester were feverish in their domination. Jake Boer and Andy Hazell worked hard around the breakdown, and so did Alex Page, so encountered no end of arms and feet in the rucks and maul.

Gloucester had not allowed Leicester to get going and pressed home their pressure. Hazell's tackle on Josh Kronfeld brought a penalty when the Tigers were penalised for diving on the ball.

Paul kicked it for 11-0 and added three more points five minutes later to send Gloucester down the tunnel knackered but happy men.

HALF-TIME :
GLOUCESTER 14
LEICESTER0

While they had drilled Leicester for points to establish a comfortable advantage, it was Gloucester's defence that was so impressive.

After their woefully leaky performance against Newcastle the week before, the home side were back to their frugal best.

It took Leicester 53 minutes to breach the home goal – a penalty from Tim Stimpson – but they thumped into everything at move[*sic*].

From the durability of the men up front, where Andy Hazell slowed things down, chased and harried, to Todd and James Simpson-Daniel, tackles poured down with biting force.

The Tigers had been shaken out of their stride by Gloucester and only Kronfeld, a perpetual busybody, made much of an impact in terms of yards gained.

We saw nothing of the threat Daryl Gibson possesses in mid-field and Leicester were so short of any quality set-piece ball, they lived off scraps at the breakdown and it was not enough.

Gloucester weathered a bit of a storm but were back to 14 points ahead with Paul's fourth successful penalty.

When Deacon and Eustace were replaced, they were greeted by a huge ovation but Gloucester's work was not yet done.

Todd capped a seriously hard working performance when he was quickest to react to a Vesty pass and went away behind the posts to score.

And the home side, after building up a stack of pressure, will be disappointed not to have earned a bonus point.

What should have been their third try came when Boer made a stunning counter-attack and fed Simpson-Daniel. The winger cut past Stimpson like he was not there and made it over the line but did not ground the ball.

The decision was made via the video referee and seconds later they should have been in again. Adrian Olver, on for Deacon, emerged through a thicket of bodies and found Forrester on the burst.

The number eight looked to be heading into the corner but checked to come back inside and lost his footing. But the game finished with Leicester beneath their own posts a well beaten side.