

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2003

EUROPEAN GLORY FOR CHERRY AND WHITES

SAINT-ANDRE'S HOMECOMING SPOILT BY GLOUCESTER'S GRIT

GLOUCESTER 49 BOURGOIN 13

James Simpson-Daniel scored two of Gloucester's six tries as they stormed past Bourgoin in the second half of their Heineken Cup match at Kingsholm.

The Cherry and Whites only led 9-6 at the break but were well worth the win, helped by Henry Paul's personal tally of 24 points.

GLOUCESTER

15. T. Delport
14. M. Garvey
13. R. Todd
12. H. Paul
11. J. Simpson-Daniel
10. D. McRae
9. A. Gomarsall
1. T. Woodman
2. [C.] Fortey
3. [P.] Vickery
4. [A.] Eustace
5. A. Brown
6. J. Boer
7. P. Buxton
8. J. Paramore

BOURGOIN

15. A. Peclier
14. M. Forest
13. G. Davis
12. F. Fritz
11. J. Coux
10. B. Boyet
9. A. Forest
1. F. Pucciarello
2. B. Cabello
3. P. Peyron
4. J. Pierre
5. J. Bonnaire
6. S. Chabal
7. P. Raschi (c)
8. J-P. Bonrepaux

REPLACEMENTS

C. Collins
A. Deacon
R. Roncero
M. Cornwell
A. Hazell
A. Page
T. Fanolua

W. Bonet
M. Stoltz
P. Caillet
M. Campeggla
K. Zhakata
M. James

Referee : Alan Lewis (Ireland).

The homecoming of Philippe Saint-Andre was left in complete disarray after Gloucester produced a thunderous second half endorsement of their Heineken Cup capabilities.

In a rousing second half, they plundered six tries and 40 points to transform a dogged kicking match between Henry Paul and Alexandre Peclier into one of their most emphatic European victories.

Paul landed 24 points, including a try, but it was James Simpson-Daniel, who scored twice, who dazzled. He caused havoc whenever he was called into action and once the pack also got to grips with a fierce French eight, there was no stopping the home side.

If Gloucester had left no European stone unturned to avoid what would be a catastrophic home defeat, the same could [be] said of Philippe Saint-Andre and Bourgoin.

They discovered last week, despite their bonus point in Treviso, that nothing is given away in the Heineken Cup and Saint-Andre's new side hinted enough to suggest they could cause a severe upset at Kingsholm.

After receiving a rapturous reception from the home supporters, his side set about delivering a game plan that is above and beyond most French sides.

We always knew they would be hugely physical around the contact area and relish the fiendish confrontation at scrum-time, but they also brought with them an organisation and attitude that was outstanding.

Gloucester never got a hint of an attacking platform established at the line-out and although Phil Vickery and Trevor Woodman had the edge at the scrum, Bourgoin, through the efforts of Sebastien Chabal, Julien Bonnaire and skipper Pierre Raschi, competed like devils at the breakdown.

It seriously affected Gloucester's continuity and they were unable to build on a hat-trick of penalties from Henry Paul.

He hit the first after only a minute after good work from Thinus Delpont and Peter Buxton had forced Bourgoin to come in from the wrong side.

They then launched a pacy assault that involved both Jake Boer and Andy Gomarsall before James Simpson-Daniel was given his first chance to test the Bourgoin defence but Trevor Woodman's inside pass could not find a team-mate.

But then Gloucester hit the buffers. Todd was lucky not to get sin-binned when he hit Alexandre Peclier late and they drew level after 14 minutes when the full-back kicked a penalty for an offence at the ruck.

To be frank, the French side had been the better side in the opening half-hour and had it not been for Peclier's profligacy with his boot, Bourgoin would have been ahead.

Instead, Paul's accuracy did not waver. He was on target again after 28 minutes as the home side shook off some wayward line kicking to establish the lead and despite Peclier drawing the sides level again, Paul made no mistake with his third attempt to hand Gloucester a three-point lead at the break.

Half-time :
Gloucester 9 Bourgoin 6

Despite the physicality and competitiveness of the first half, it would hardly demand a second look, but from the moment Adam Eustace plundered the first try of the game, the contest exploded into life.

It was a try Gloucester drastically needed because it finally provided some sort of insurance policy – the longer the game went on, the more confident Bourgoin would have become.

But Gomarsall spotted a slight opening and made ground before Alex Brown came in to support. Gomarsall came again, finding Boer and although Simpson-Daniel got close, it needed the support and weight of Adam Eustace, who scored.

PAUL belted a terrific conversion from the touchline but the score did not act as an immediate steadying influence.

Bourgoin responded when Mickael Forest, the scrum-half, chipped in behind Gloucester and with Delpont nowhere to be seen, Gomarsall let the ball bounce and Chabal went in to score.

The conversion brought Bourgoin back to 16-13 behind but Gloucester suddenly clicked through the gears. Boer had been magnificent for the home side and despite losing Phil Vickery, Gloucester bit into the challenge.

Their intent allowed McRae, looking increasingly more at home in every passing game, to strut his stuff – his range of passing was mostly good but it was his eye for a break that delighted.

Just when Gloucester craved a stamp of authority, the Australian provided it. It was his slaloming break that allowed Todd to chip through and Simpson-Daniel was awarded a try of considerable importance. It was scruffy but delightful for Gloucester.

The wing man was in again three minutes later when he picked off Benjamin Boyet's pass and made his way between Forian Fritz and Peclier to run 60 metres for the try. Simpson-Daniel caused panic all afternoon and on this evidence it is impossible to fathom the decision to take Dan Luger to the World Cup ahead of him.

Paul's conversion made it 30-13 and the centre was the next to profit from McRae's awareness when he won the race to collect his prod-through to score. Paul himself landed the conversion for a personal haul of 22 points to leave Bourgoïn stunned.

The importance of the score could not be devalued because it handed Gloucester a bonus point and rewarded Paul for a diligent afternoon.

It was some turnaround considering the disjointed nature of the first half but there was still work to be done. Terry Fanolua, freshly back after a broken arm, linked with Delport and Marcel Garvey took the full-back's pass for Gloucester's fifth try.

Bourgoïn were a dispirited and broken side – the efforts of Bonnaire were a distant memory – but the loudest cheer was reserved for Fanolua who grabbed an astonishing sixth try in the final minute.

Paul's conversion was the 40th point Gloucester had earned in a rampaging second half – the centre finishing with 24 points.

JC