

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2004

## ANOTHER MASHING IN MUNSTER

### DEJA-VU FOR CHERRY AND WHITES AT MISERLY MUNSTER

GLOUCESTER'S Heineken Cup hopes were severely dented when they were thrashed for the second successive season in Munster.

Jon Goodridge scored a try for the Cherry and Whites but they were well beaten by a strong Irish side.

#### MUNSTER 35

15. S. Payne  
14. J. Kelly  
13. M. Mullins  
12. R. Henderson  
11. A. Horgan  
10. R. O'Gara  
9. P. Stringer  
1. M. Horan  
2. F. Sheahan  
3. J. Hayes  
4. D. O'Callaghan  
5. P. O'Connell  
6. J. Williams (c.)  
7. D. Wallace  
8. A. Foley

#### GLOUCESTER 14

15. J. Goodridge  
14. M. Garvey  
13. T. Fanolua  
12. H. Paul  
11. J. Simpson-Daniel  
10. D. McRae  
9. A. Gomarsall  
1. T. Woodman  
2. C. Fortey  
3. A. Deacon  
4. A. Brown  
5. M. Cornwell  
6. J. Boer (c.)  
7. P. Buxton  
8. J. Paramore

#### Replacements:

J. Blaney  
G. McIlwham  
D. Pusey  
S. Keogh  
E. Reddan  
J. Staunton  
J. Holland

C. Collins  
P. Vickery  
P. Johnstone  
A. Eustace  
J. Forrester  
A. Page  
R. Todd

Referee : Joel Jutge (France).

Whatever Gloucester do, Munster do better. If people actually believe lightning does not strike twice, they have obviously never been to Thomond Park in Limerick.

A year ago to the weekend, Gloucester's Heineken Cup road show was dismantled by Munster's red tide, and a year later, although it should not cost them a place in the quarter-finals, it happened again to equally delirious scenes of delight.

When Mike Mullins – so impotent at Kingsholm a week before – blundered through midfield before picking out JOHN KELLY on the right wing, Munster secured a bonus point try they fully deserved to confirm their dominance that establishes them as Pool Five favourites.

It might have been Kelly who scored it, but he would have been the first to say a word of thanks to his forwards, who produced another simply remarkable home-based performance that dismantled Gloucester.

Gloucester were also not helped by two yellow cards – one for Henry Paul and one for Chris Fortey – which meant they played 60 minutes a man down. In this sort of environment, that is as dangerous as it gets and they paid the ultimate price.

When Ronan O'Gara found his range, Munster controlled the second half in virtually its entirety – save for a brilliant individual try from JON GOODRIDGE, who was the first to react to a loose ball and hurtled away between Shaun Payne and Anthony Horgan for the score.

At that stage, Gloucester looked capable of some sort of recovery, but Munster's forward platform was so strong, where Frankie Sheahan and Marcus Horan were outstanding, they strangled Gloucester out of the game and could have extended their victory.

It means Gloucester will require a positive result in France next weekend – not the easiest assignment on the planet by any stretch – to retain their hopes of finishing top of the pool.

Thomond Park's unique reverence witnessed another mouth-wateringly physical opening that stretched the boundaries of endurance to the limits early.

Despite a magnificent level of organisation and tackle count early on in defence, Gloucester conceded three first-half tries to a Munster pack driven to the ends of the earth by Horan and Sheahan. Horan, the loosehead prop, scored twice and caused no end of problems in the tight, while John Hayes and Donnacha O'Callaghan also operated at high temperature in a remarkably competitive opening.

Munster's pack were better in every department – from their burgling abilities in the line-out to their presence in the scrum, and Gloucester could not escape their strangling qualities.

It was such a shame they could not have controlled what ball they had better because when they emerged from the confines of the midfield, James Simpson-Daniel, Terry Fanolua and Marcel Garvey looked capable of producing the required cutting edge. As it was, they disappeared down the tunnel 10 points behind when Horan was the first to react at a penalty, tapped to himself and ploughed beneath the posts at the end of the first half.

It completed a remarkable turn-around in the second quarter. Munster's explosive start was met by some outstanding Gloucester defence around the fringes and in mid-field, where Henry Paul and Alex Brown made at least two crucial smothering tackles, before they stole the lead.

PAUL kicked a 10th minute penalty after Andy Gomarsall and Marcel Garvey had combined down the right to send the winger scuttling away to the corner where full-back Shaun Payne was penalised. But their solid start would not continue. O'Gara, a perplexing mix of the sublime and the ridiculous, aimed a side-footed kick for John Kelly in the far corner that required every ounce of Simpson-Daniel's awareness to save the try, before hooker Frankie Sheahan kept the pressure on with a steaming attack that ended with a Munster penalty.

It ended with a line-out and a yellow card for Chris Fortey who was adjudged to have taken out O'Callaghan in the air. From the re-set, Munster powered forward and HORAN was driven over for the score.

A rare Gloucester sortie allowed PAUL to kick them ahead again after 26 minutes when Munster were penalised for off-side, but they were making fewer mistakes than Gloucester and were exceptionally good at the set-piece and clinical at the breakdown, where the back row was outstanding.

It was one such member, skipper Jim Williams, who created the second try. He was in the vanguard of a staggering line-out drive that ended when SHEAHAN emerged from the steaming pile with the score.

The try took Munster 12-6 ahead and although PAUL cut the deficit five minutes later with his third penalty, the tide was turning. David Wallace, a key forward component, was then at his best, plunging through midfield and with Gloucester struggling to clear, they were penalised and HORAN reacted quickest to score as Gloucester retreated, expecting O'Gara to kick the goal.

Munster's platform could not be broken and they turned a 10-point advantage into a thoroughly emphatic victory with a bonus point and 15 points for O'Gara.

It will leave Gloucester in a considerable state of shock, and despite the usual effort from Jake Boer and Pete Buxton, they were a shattered team at the end.

JC