

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2004

FIVE TRY GLOUCESTER THRASH NEWCASTLE

CHERRY AND WHITES SIMPLY TOO GOOD FOR THE FALCONS

GLOUCESTER 36 NEWCASTLE 12

Gloucester ran in five tries to demolish Newcastle in the Premiership.

Robert Todd, Duncan McRae, Marcel Garvey, Terry Fanolua and James Forrester made sure it was a good day for the Cherry and Whites.

Buzzing, absolutely buzzing, Gloucester produced a devastating endorsement of their Premiership credentials with a five-try dismemberment of Newcastle.

Fired by the forwards and finished by the backs, Gloucester simply had too much in their armoury and thoroughly deserved their victory.

Amid the tries there were some excellent performances – from Robert Todd and Henry Paul – who crucified Newcastle's sloppiness, and any member of the pack you care to mention.

Frenetic and fast-paced, fumbling and fallible, Newcastle were taken to the cleaners in the first period. They paid the heaviest of prices for a stream of errors in and around the contact area and at the breakdown – a cardinal sin in these parts – and were considerably second best in almost every other department.

Away from a passable first phase, they were tossed around in the tackle, shunted back in the drive and cut to pieces in the wide channels.

Their generosity started as early as the second minute when Todd chased McRae's hopeful down-field punt and kept going when flanker Warren Britz took an age to get his pass away to Dave Walder who took an eternity to get in his clearance kick.

Todd charged down, was the first to locate the spinning ball and reacted quickest to pounce for the try.

Henry Paul converted and Gloucester could hardly believe their luck. With the bonus of a give-me try, the temperature rose. Both Paul and Todd were emphatically physical in midfield, while any number of tackles forced Newcastle onto the back foot from the Kingsholm hard-heads.

Newcastle did have plenty of possession – driven into the tackle by either Britz or Jon Dunbar, but behind the forwards, the Falcons were desperate.

James Grindal, the scrum-half, struggled to control the ball, while passes hit the deck in the off-load and in the tackle. But there was plenty to enthral for Gloucester – from the presence of Junior Paramore to the ball carrying efforts of Chris Fortey and the scavenging of Andy Hazell, the home side dominated.

After Paul made it 10-0 with a penalty and generally confirmed the wide-held belief he should at least make it into Clive Woodward's squad next weekend with some dextrous attacking running lines[sic], Gloucester went in again.

Grindal was turned over at the breakdown and Gloucester went right at great pace. McRae fed Adam Eustace and he put Marcel Garvey into a fraction of space.

He still had work to do but in the batting of an eye-lid, turned on the after-burners to scoot around Martin Shaw from 50 metres for the score. Paul converted again.

It wasn't all totally precise but Gloucester were bruising in the tackle and adventurous in attack – one passage of play involved almost every pair of hands and half the length of the field. The only Newcastle could point to[*sic*] was their ability to slow the ball down but when Gloucester got rolling, could not match them.

And it was Paul who created their third try when he used his power to cut through a gap and come inside, find Todd on the burst whose reverse pass sent McRae in for the try. Paul converted via the left post for a 24-0 lead.

Newcastle did have something to show for their efforts – skipper Hugh Vyvyan bursting up the middle and finding Tom May who scored. Walder converted.

Half-Time: Gloucester 24, Newcastle 7

To be fair to Newcastle, it was not up front where they had the problems. Their forwards fronted up pretty well in slowing it down and the line-out functioned with particular credit.

Hall Charlton replaced Grindal and at least gave Newcastle some shape and control, but they could simply not live with the vitality Gloucester poured into their game.

It took them 23 minutes to score after the re-start and it gave them a bonus point. Fanolua, a remarkably powerful runner, took possession up the left following a period of intense pressure and fed James Forrester, who sped in for the try.

There then followed a quite ludicrous passage of play that indicated at the difference[*sic*] between the two teams. If Fortey was not burrowing for possession at the bottom of a ruck he was charging at the midfield gap, if Vickery was not making a tackle he was acting as a number 10, if McRae was not slanting lovely passes across the backline, he was chipping into space, if Garvey was not frightening with his pace, he was taking high balls.

The runners came from everywhere and were of every size and shape. Some of the handling skills were simply breathtaking, the pace of the play never stopped.

Andy Gomarsall, once again the eyes and the ears of the effort, was constantly involved as were Paul and Todd – the midfield marauders – while everybody in between had an input.

Fortey had been particularly impressive as Gloucester pick-pocketed at the breakdown and ran Newcastle ragged outside, Fanolua glorying in the slaughter.

He had covered more ground than most and was deservedly rewarded with Gloucester's fifth try when he slammed up and inside Shaw before rolling over to score. Paul added the conversion to take Gloucester 36-7 clear.

It would have been easy for them then to let up but the tackles kept coming – from Pete Buxton and Alex Brown – and the space was still run into –by anybody in Cherry you care to mention.

Gloucester simply had too much about them – were too powerful and direct, cutting and incisive.

Newcastle did have one final say and fittingly it was their best player – Britz, who was driven over close to the corner flag from a quickly taken penalty.

GLOUCESTER: J. Goodridge; M. Garvey, R. Todd, H. Paul, T. Fanolua; D. McRae, A. Gomarsall; T. Woodman, C. Fortey, P. Vickery (capt.), A. Eustace, A. Brown, P. Buxton, A. Hazell, J. Paramore.
Reps.: C. Collins, A. Deacon, R. Roncero, M. Cornwell, J. Forrester, A. Page, J. Frape.

NEWCASTLE: J. Shaw; T. May, J. Noon, M. Mayerhofler, M. Shaw; D. Walder, J. Grindal; I. Peel, M. Thompson, M. Hurter, G. Archer, S. Grimes, J. Dunbar, W. Britz, H. Vyvyan (capt.).

Reps.: D. Wilson, N. Makin, C. Hamilton, G. Parling, H. Charlton,
P. Godman, M. Wilkinson.

JC