

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2004

GLOUCESTER REMAIN IN FOURTH

MAYBANK EARNS FEW FRIENDS AT KINGSHOLM

GLOUCESTER 28 LONDON IRISH 13

Those gentle Cotswold folk who count their subtleties of lip-reading among their many talents and can pick a Lawrence Dallaglio expletive from 50-yards, will have offered their own silent four-letter outburst at yesterdays slip, slide offering from Kingsholm.

The England captain was for once not at the top of their hate list but referee Roy Maybank will have received any amount of advice from a capacity 11,000 sell-out and, although they would not like to admit it, so will have their cherry-clad heroes for a display that offered much but delivered not quite enough, despite the fact they remain in fourth place.

It would be an interesting poll to see who commands the most anger among the Cherry and White faithful – Dallaglio or Maybank – and although the man from the garden of Eden seriously frustrated Gloucester at scrum-time, let Irish get away with almost murder at the line-out and similar around the rucks, Gloucester huffed and puffed to a victory that in truth does little for their hopes of a top three finish without the benefit of a fourth try.

Dallaglio will shoulder the abuse as the leader of the best club in the country – perhaps the only one at the present time who are playing at full capacity. Their narrow victory at Leeds yesterday, a venue where Gloucester have already lost, arrived courtesy of an under-strength team to give an idea of the gap between Wasps and everybody else currently scrapping it out at the top of the Premiership.

Gloucester really needed a bonus point yesterday to increase the pressure on Northampton, who beat Bath, and the fact it never came will be a major concern considering the potency of the start.

They won as comfortably as humanely possible in evil conditions that made flowing rugby an impossibility, but without securing the points they deserved or desired after controlling the key areas of the game for long periods.

After two and a half months away from Kingsholm, normal service seemed to have been resumed when Marcel Garvey chased up Henry Paul's kick and won a dubious line-out close to the Irish line in the third minute.

Mark Cornwell, as hard working as anybody won possession from Chris Fortey's throw and Paul chased through to collect Duncan McRae's grubber kick almost at a canter to score – the glories of home comforts.

But Gloucester never built on their start against a physical but limited Irish side.

Despite a blitzkrieg at the scrum and a good deal of territory, they kicked away far too much primary possession which meant they were defending too often because Irish earned the ball back too easily. Not only did they fail to build on the pressure but conceded a silly try that levelled the scores after 28 minutes.

Phil Murphy, the giant Canadian number eight and a real stand-out for the Irish, created it with a bone-crushing run before Gloucester were sucked in at the breakdown, Michael Horak slipped the tackle of Andy Gomarsall and beat Phil Vickery and Terry Fanolua to the line. It was as easy as that.

Murphy, Ryan Strudwick and Kieran Dawson were the pick of the Irish forwards but Gloucester marmalised them at the scrum, and dominated possession but were all too messy when they required composure.

To suggest Dean Ryan was more than a little frustrated with the official would have been a considerable understatement.

"We are a little disappointed with a couple of the game's key areas," he said.

"The scrum was a virtual non-contest area and we had some great field position, but were not allowed to dominate which is frustrating.

"This is no criticism of the Irish front row, but I would expect Phil Vickery and Trevor Woodman to be dominant in that area."

And so they did but Maybank did little to prevent Irish wheeling the scrum when the pressure came on.

Gloucester did score again before the break, the heavy carrying of Jake Boer and Junior Paramore earning a field position from where Fortey, as good as anybody, was driven over to score from a line-out.

Paramore was also denied a try when he flew over from a ruck only to be called back for obstruction, Garvey spilled the ball close to the line and Boer's touchdown was ruled out after Andy Gomarsall's neat chip touched a corner post.

But the try set-up what should have been the chance to earn a bonus point but Gloucester simply could not score quickly enough after the re-start to press their advantage home[*sic*].

However, it was a performance that summed up their season – they go through too many peaks and troughs to be truly effective and have been under pressure for too long chasing Northampton.

A Paul penalty after 64 minutes took Gloucester 21-13 ahead but it was all very messy as Irish got bodies across the ball at the contact area and generally slowed the whole thing down in sheeting rain.

There was some powerful running from Riaan van der Bergh, who had his best game for the club at full-back, but Gloucester offered little in the wide areas until the seventh minute of stoppage time.

McRae and Paul combined to send van der Bergh on [an] angled run and his pass found James Simpson-Daniel who slid in to score. Paul landed the conversion to give the score a hint of respectability but with Wasps and Bath to come, nothing gets easier in Gloucester's charge towards the play-offs.

They will be pleased with the victory and will fancy their chances of giving Dallaglio and his chums a Kingston going over, but they will hope for better conditions and a better performance in a fortnight.

#### MATCH FACTS

GLOUCESTER : R. van der Bergh; M. Garvey, T. Fanolua (R. Todd 68), H. Paul, J. Simpson-Daniel; D. McRae, A. Gomarsall; T. Woodman, C. Fortey, P. Vickery, M. Cornwell, A. Brown (A. Eustace 58), J. Boer (capt.), A. Hazell (P. Buxton 47), J. Paramore.

LONDON IRISH : M. Horak; P. Sackey, G. Appleford, N. Mordt (M. Mapletoft 67), J. Bishop; B. Everett, D. Edwards; D. Wheatley (A. Halsey 74), A. Flavin (N. Drotske 47), R. Hardwick, R. Strudwick (capt.), B. Casey (N. Kennedy 75), D. Danaher, P. Murphy (C. Sheasby 67).[sic]

STAR MAN: Riaan van der Bergh.

Referee : R. Maybank (Kent).

Attendance : 11,000

THREE MINUTES: Gloucester make a powerful start and go ahead after three minutes. Riaan van der Bergh carried possession into a ruck, Andy Gomarsall and Duncan McRea combine and Henry Paul kicks ahead for Marcel Garvey. From the line-out, Mark Cornwell takes the catch and McRae prods through for Paul to gather and score. He converts his own try.

GLOUCESTER 7, LONDON IRISH 0

SEVEN MINUTES: Chris Fortey then takes a strike against the head and after Junior Paramore gathers the ball; Paul gathers and feeds McRea, who drops a goal from 30 metres.

GLOUCESTER 10, LONDON IRISH 0

12 MINUTES: However, the Irish hit back when scrum-half Darren Edwards makes a break and when Gloucester are penalised, Barry Everett lands a simple penalty.

GLOUCESTER 10, LONDON IRISH 3

23 MINUTES: And it does not take long for Irish to level the scores with their first try. Number eight Phil Murphy, their heavy hitting ball carrier, straightens an attack and with Gloucester pulled into a ruck, full-back Michael Horak breaks through, beats Gomarsall's tackle and out-runs Phil Vickery and Terry Fanolua to score. Everett converts.

GLOUCESTER 10, LONDON IRISH 10

38 MINUTES: Paramore and Jake Boer set up a rumbling Gloucester attack and when Irish come off-side, Paul kicks the penalty.

GLOUCESTER 13, LONDON IRISH 10

40 MINUTES: Gloucester are then penalised for killing the ball at the breakdown and Everitt levels the scores again after his penalty flicks off the cross-bar.

GLOUCESTER 13, LONDON IRISH 13

40 (plus one) MINUTES: However, Gloucester end the half on a high when Alex Brown catches a line-out and is driven towards the line. Irish cannot stop the drive and Chris Fortey emerges with the try. Paul misses the conversion.

GLOUCESTER 18, LONDON IRISH 13

53 MINUTES: Gloucester increase their lead when Ryan Strudwick is penalised for a stamp at a ruck and Paul lands the penalty from distance.

GLOUCESTER 21, LONDON IRISH 13

61 MINUTES: Everitt has the chance to hit back when Irish win a penalty after Gloucester are penalised for coming in from the side but the stand-off is off-target.

80 MINUTES: Everitt is again only fractionally off-target with a penalty after Phil Vickery is penalised for holding down a player.

80 (plus seven) MINUTES: Gloucester finally earn a third try when McRae, Paul and van der Bergh combine to send James Simpson-Daniel surging home. Paul lands the conversion to complete the scoring.

GLOUCESTER 28, LONDON IRISH 13

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