

## TOULOUSE BATTLE PAST FAX

HALIFAX 10  
TOULOUSE OLYMPIQUE 12

## MATTHEW SHAW

The Mal Shay, Sunday

WITH one stroke of Tony Maurel's right boot, the complexion of an enthralling Championship campaign took yet another twist.

There have been some early perceptions quickly associated with Toulouse Olympique. The most pressing characteristic tagged to their name was their inability to play away from home. Their performances in France to those on English soil had been polarising. It was an argument hard to argue: until now.

On a boggy pitch in bitterly cold conditions, this was by far the surroundings Toulouse are usually acclimatised to. Nevertheless, they fronted up to Halifax, controlled the game well and ultimately earned a win that evidently meant so much to them once the hooter sounded.

Halifax, on the other hand, were crestfallen. They entered the game on the back of consecutive wins after a shaky start. They were excellent in certain aspects: their goal-line defence, a weakness throughout 2016, was excellent, but some of the old frailties reared their ugly head again. Their lack of composure and control in critical moments resulted in them just coming up short in a game they will feel that they should have won.

Nevertheless, in what is already promising to be a season full of twists and turns, head coach Richard Marshall was relatively satisfied with the progress his side made.

"We were up against it and they were desperate to win away from home, but I can't question our commitment," he said.

"I'm not too despondent, I think we're improving. That was a tough game today, they're a spirited team, but our skill level needs to improve. We just need to move on, we did that against Batley and I'll be looking for a response this week."

As for Toulouse, the return of half-back Johnathon Ford was crucial. His kicking, organising and leadership was evident from the start, and it looks like he will be a mighty fine player at this level.

The hosts, who played Chester Butler and Connor Robinson instead of the injured Rob Worrincy and Adam O'Brien, were unchanged from their victory at Rochdale seven days earlier, were dealt an early blow when Australian forward Mitch Cahalane was forced from the field for a concussion assessment test, one that he subsequently did not pass, which left them a substitute light after 90 seconds.

However, it did little to faze Richard Marshall's side, who took the lead in the seventh minute through Steve



Kalausa Leha stopped by Luke Ambler

Tyrer. Luke Ambler's offload caused disarray in the Toulouse defence, and Scott Murrell duly capitalised as his devious kick in-goal was raced on to by Tyrer to score.

Fax remained on top thereafter and created another opportunity minutes later. Again Murrell was the creator as his deft grubber found Saltonstall along the right wing, but he dropped the ball on the slippery surface.

That missed chance proved costly, as Toulouse hit back in the 25th minute. They did so in controversial circumstances, however, as the visitors were awarded a try through Greg White, although it didn't appear that he grounded the ball from the kick in-goal, with the decision to award the try leaving Fax fans in disbelief.

"He didn't get anywhere near the ball," Marshall bemoaned afterwards.

Toulouse subsequently grew in belief, which forced Halifax to spend the next 10 minutes on the back foot, but they stemmed the tide with a Tyrer penalty six minutes before the break, which gave them an 8-6 lead.

Nevertheless, they couldn't hold onto the lead as Sylvain Houles' side went ahead a minute before the break.

Murrell's fumble of the ball on his own 40 gave Toulouse territory, and they capitalised as stand-off Johnathon Ford worked space for an offload after running to the line, and he found Bastien Ader, who scored in the left corner to give Toulouse a 10-6 lead.

The momentum remained with the visitors into the second-half. Three

repeat sets on Halifax's line came to no avail after they had a try chalked off from a kick for offside, but even when Fax gained possession, they failed to see out sets, gifting the visitors further spells attacking their line.

But Fax never wilted. For a side so suspect at defending their own line last year, their defence was unrelenting, immune to the barrage of attacks thrown at them.

They were rewarded for their courageous efforts with 12 minutes remaining. Having gradually worked their way upfield, a penalty 20 metres out allowed Tyrer to kick for goal and level the game. A grandstand finish awaited.

It was Halifax who threatened first, James Woodburn-Hall went close but failed to ground Ben Johnston's kick

## MATCHFACTS

HALIFAX	OLYMPIQUE
2 Will Sharp	4 Tony Maurel
5 James Saltonstall	8 Greg White
3 Steve Tyrer	3 Bastien Ader
22 Chester Butler	11 Sebastien Pians
21 James Woodburn-Hall	20 Paul Maaron
6 Scott Murrell	6 Johnathon Ford
1 Ben Johnston	7 Stan Robin
14 Ryan Boyle	8 Clement Boyer
9 Ben Kaye	24 Anthony Marlon
8 Mitch Cahalane	10 Bastien Carret
10 Adam Tangata	26 Constantine Mika
12 Simon Grix	12 Ryns Durran
13 Jacob Fairbank	13 Andrew Bentley
Subs (all used)	Subs (all used)
20 Elliot Morris	14 Mourad Kriouache
26 Alex Mammone	15 Maxime Puech
15 Luke Ambler	16 Tyle Heipi
19 Connor Robinson	17 Kalausa Leha
Tries: Tyrer (7)	Tries: White (25), Ader (39)
Goals: Tyrer 3/3	Goals: Maurel 2/3

## SCORING SEQUENCE:

6-0, 6-6, 8-6, 8-10, 10-10, 10-12

Penalty count: 10-10, Half-time: 8-10

Referee: Chris Campbell, Attendance: 1,271

Rugby Leaguer &amp; League Express

Men of the Match: Johnathon Ford

Halifax: Will Sharp; Olympique: Johnathon Ford

Penalty count: 10-10, Half-time: 8-10

Referee: Chris Campbell, Attendance: 1,271

in-goal cleanly.

Nevertheless, it was Toulouse who earned the win. A penalty conceded 40 metres from goal gave Maurel a chance to win it, and he did so with a superb conversion.

## GAMESTAR:

Johnathon Ford's game-management was imperative for the hosts. Had he been wearing Halifax colours, they would have left victorious.

GAMEBREAKER: Halifax had been in control until a controversial try was awarded to Greg White that pulled Toulouse level at 6-6. The momentum shifted after that.

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