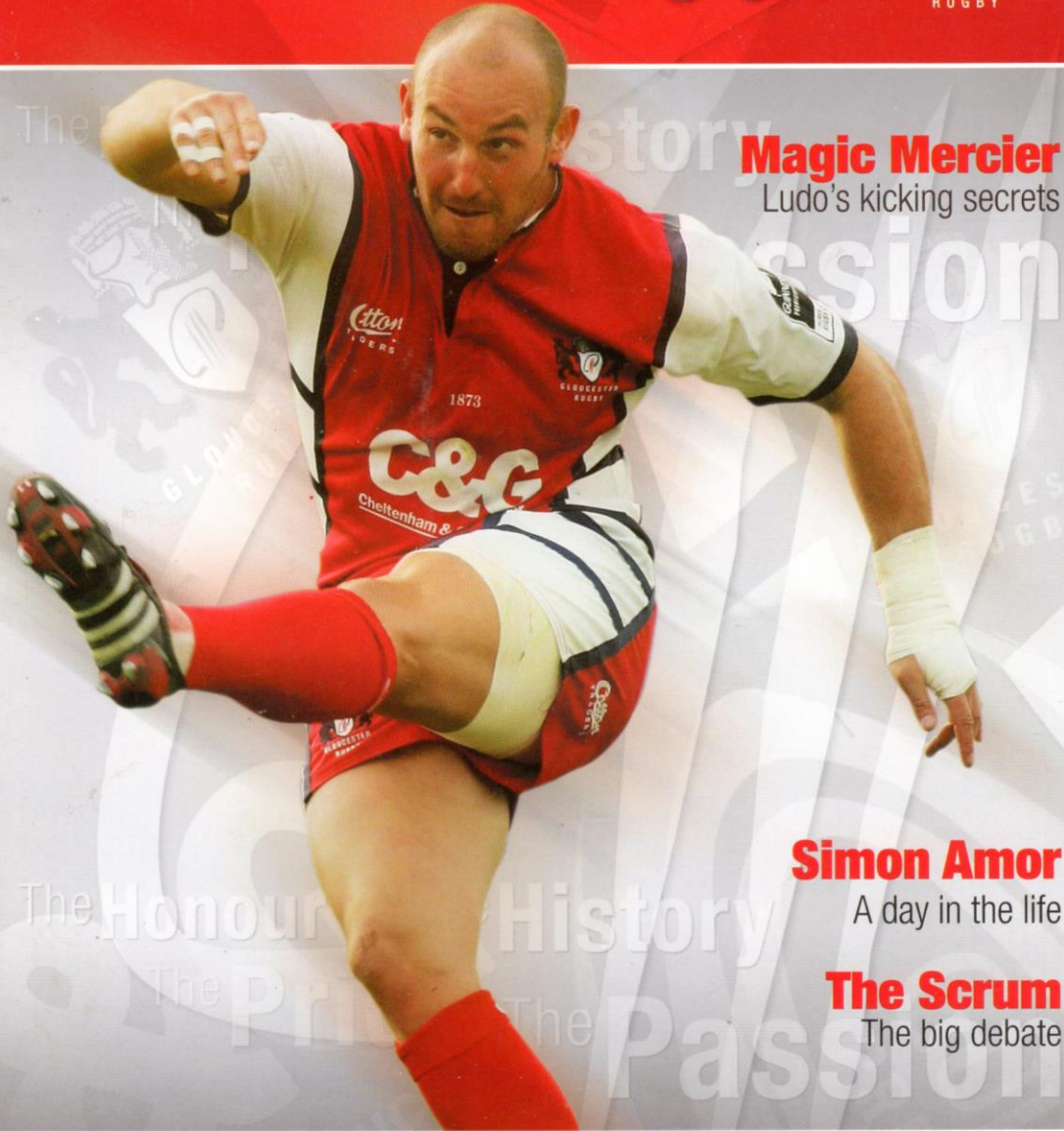


Gloucester Rugby

Gloucester Rugby Official Matchday Magazine | 2005/06 Season | Issue 03 | Price £3.00



Magic Mercier
Ludo's kicking secrets

Simon Amor
A day in the life

The Scrum
The big debate

Matchday Sponsor



vs **Ospreys**

Saturday 1st October | Kick Off 14.30pm



Club Sponsor

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Captain's Corner Adam

In association with

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Balding

MATCHES, at Kingsholm should probably come with a health warning these days – given the fact both games against Sale and Northampton have gone right to the wire.

Neither encounter has been without its talking points but we have emerged unbeaten from our first four Guinness Premiership matches and sit in the very healthy position of third in the table.

We have not yet hit the level of consistency we would have wanted but can take positive elements out of all games we have played. Against

Worcester, in a dour stalemate, we kept our discipline and composure, in the victory over Sale we displayed superb character to keep going through injury time, at Bristol we were devastating with turnover ball and on Saturday dominated up front to claim our third victory.

We now just have to try and bring all the elements of our game together in one performance. I seem to say it every week, but there is no faulting the work ethic or commitment and we will need to be fully focused today.

I was at the launch of the

Powergen Cup in Cardiff on Monday – one of only three Premiership teams present – and I can tell you we are taking this competition very seriously and will name a strong, experienced and talented side.

Nobody in the squad needs telling this afternoon's game will be of the full metal jacket variety. When you strip the contest down to the basics, it becomes England versus Wales – and there really is no tougher challenge in club or international rugby than that.

Although the Ospreys could be without a number of

key players, this is a huge occasion for both teams today. The Powergen Cup also represents a way into Europe and that will act as a massive incentive for both clubs.

Hopefully, we will see some of our talented youngsters on show today and build on our excellent start to the season. Although there is a switch in competition, winning breeds winning and confidence and we certainly don't want to come unstuck today.

We are aiming to establish Kingsholm as an uncomfortable place to be for visiting teams and that must continue today.

Once again, get behind the boys and help us get off to the best possible start in the Powergen Cup.

The **Passion**

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News Round-up

Today's Matchday Mascot



Adam Greenslade

TODAY'S mascot is 11-year-old Adam Greenslade who simply cannot wait to lead the team on to the field against the Ospreys this afternoon.

He wanted to be mascot because of the honour of leading the team alongside the Gloucester skipper onto the field and to hear the famous Kingsholm roar as he does it.

He plays for Widden Old Boys Under-12s and his favourite players are French points machine Ludovic Mercier and lock Mark Cornwell, who is currently in his Testimonial Year at the club.

When he is not watching Ludo and Pasty, Adam's other interest is golf.

Injury Shocker

GLOUCESTER'S Jack Adams will be out of action for up to nine months after damaging his AC ligament in what has been described as 'a freak' injury on Monday.

The vastly talented centre suffered the injury when he twisted badly on duty for the A team against Saracens. He has made two Guinness Premiership appearances this season as a replacement against Sale and Bristol and may have figured against the Ospreys this weekend.

"It's a significant injury and he faces between six and nine months recovery," said head coach Dean Ryan. "It is very

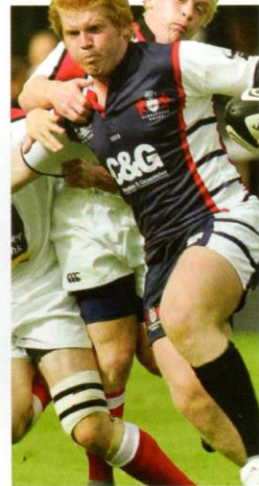
sad because he is quite a talent. The saddest thing is, is that he has lost his opportunity this year."

Gloucester have been picking through the injury list this week after skills coach and stand off Duncan McRae underwent knee surgery.

The former Australian A back had some cartilage tidied up and some bone shaved off the side of his knee. He faces six weeks recovery time and will hopefully be back in action by November 12.

Meanwhile, the club's medical team is monitoring the progress of full-back Olly Morgan, who

has bleeding on the thigh. He will be out of action for another three or four weeks as he gets assessed.



Six Get Call

ALEX Brown and Peter Richards were this week called into the England squad for the autumn internationals. They were joined in the squad by Phil Vickery, Mike Tindall, James Simpson-Daniel and James Forrester.



left out of the EPS squad at the start of the year.

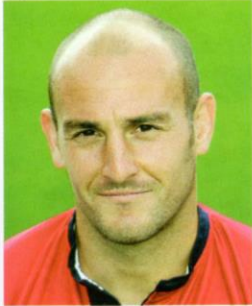
"Squads change so often that I thought I still had a chance but it's still brilliant news. I just had to go away, get my head down, do my best for the club and concentrate on playing well.

"I am really pleased – it's awesome," Brown said. There are a lot of quality locks around and I was really surprised to be included, especially after I was

"If I played well there, success would come off the back of it and hopefully it has. I look forward to this as a great opportunity in the autumn and hopefully build on it."

Ludovic flying high!





He is one of the deadliest and most prolific marksmen in the Premiership. Here, Ludovic Mercier tells the matchday programme that practice makes perfect when it comes to the precious art of goalkicking.

IT'S TUESDAY. It's 6.15 in the evening and the September sun is gently setting on a lovely autumn afternoon.

Kingsholm looks a picture. On the freshly mown grass stands a lone figure who goes through precisely the same routine – placement, stance, composure, approach, swing – conversion.

Ludovic Mercier has with him a bag full of balls and as he goes through his routine with almost religious conviction, the angle gets gradually narrower until he is almost level with the posts – heightened specifically to accommodate his remarkable kicking – and a near-impossible angle.

There is more to Mercier's game than simply kicking goals but he is one of the deadliest and most consistent points gatherers in the Premiership. It comes down to practice and a study of what makes a player successful.

"I practice for an hour every day – always," Mercier said. "I

will do at least an hour in every session – sometimes more, sometimes less. If I am kicking well, I will do less but practice is important because it is exactly the same in a match.

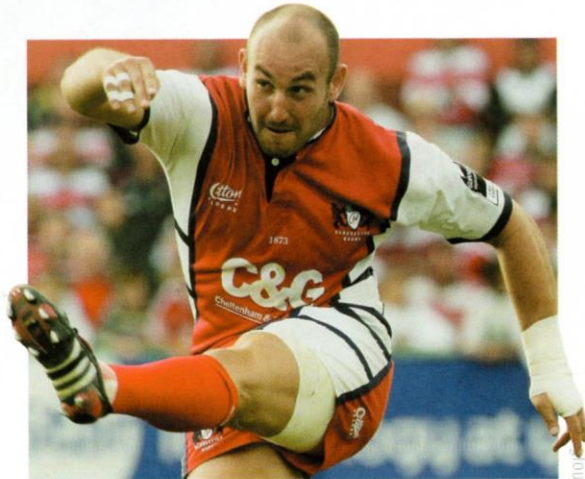
through – the same repetition all the time.

"Everybody has their own technique and mine is always the same."

"When I am kicking in front of a big crowd, I am totally relaxed. In my head, all I am concentrating on is the ball and kicking it between the posts, nothing else."

"For me, balance is everything. When I am kicking in front of a big crowd, I am totally relaxed. In my head, all I am concentrating on is the ball and kicking it between the posts, nothing else.

"I try and copy perfectly what I do in training so nothing is different. It is a motion that is like the swing of a golfer. My shoulder has to be straight onto the ball and my head down. My leg comes through and down like a swing and it is the same way a golfer may swing



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The History

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Mercier's ability to stick the ball through the sticks is well known. During his first spell with the club between 2001-3, he became the second fastest player to 500 Premiership points and resumed where he left off this season.

On the opening weekend of the Guinness Premiership campaign, he kicked Gloucester to a 15-15 draw at Worcester with a deliberate mix of low, skidding efforts and high,

hanging kicks he also uses to maximum effect at the re-start.

But where does the range and power come from? Mercier is not a big man – he is roughly the same build as Jonny Wilkinson – but puts his ability to hoof the ball miles, down to his upbringing in France.

"When I was young, I played in the back row at 6 or 8 but could always kick," he said. "When I was with Aurillac, I did

a lot of squats to increase the power in my legs and then just began to kick more.

"I am a perfectionist so when I started to kick I practiced a lot. My job is to try and do the best I can each week for the team, whether it be in defence, attack or kicking – for a line-out, re-start, drop-goal or penalty.

"When I feel I can kick a goal I will discuss with the captain what he wants me to do – if he wants me to go for the posts then I will go through my routine. It is also good when the forwards are in front of me, so if I kick the ball down the field it helps them, that is also my job."

There is more to Mercier's game than simple points accumulation. He is considerably a better player now than during his first stint in English rugby and will come to Gloucester's aid again this season.

"I had my own kicking coach when I was young and if it's not going too well for me I will speak to him," Mercier said. "I send him videos of my performances and if he spots something wrong, he will tell me.

"He looks at how I kick but the key is to work hard and train well."

And with that, Mercier gathered up his balls and set about the process all over again, thudding balls between the posts from all angles hoping that practice does indeed make perfect.



"I am a perfectionist so when I started to kick I practiced a lot. My job is to try and do the best I can each week for the team."



A high pulse rate, cold sweats and near heart failure - it was just another normal afternoon in the Shed for Bob Fenton last weekend during Gloucester's latest victory over Northampton.

Fan Zone

THE VITAL signs took another hammering last week then, much more of this and I am going to start following the inter-county tiddlywinks championship or crown green bowls – anything to get my blood pressure down a bit.

Having had a nail-biting draw at Worcester and a skin of the teeth win over Sale, I had kind of hoped that the pretty

straightforward romp over Bristol (the Memorial Ground must be James Forrester's favourite venue – five tries in two games there!) signalled the end of the nerve-shredding games for one season.

Then along came Northampton. If the heart-attack inducing sight of us gifting three first half tries to them wasn't bad

onwards was mind bending. Dave Pearson's flurry of yellow cards, the uncontested scrums, the big screen showing Dean Ryan having a few err... quiet... words with 4th official Chris White and anyone else who was within earshot, took the pulse rate beyond what is normally considered possible for a mere mortal.

“The final whistle signalled the fact that it was OK to breathe out again.”

enough, what followed from half-time

The tension was finally relieved by seeing first Jake and then Sinbad crossing the line. After what seemed like a year of injury time - and thank you to Graham Spring for pointing out over the tannoy that there were 20 seconds left to play, he repeated it twice to make sure Mr Pearson got the message – the final whistle signalled the fact that it was OK to breathe out again.

All I can say is that I am glad Whispering John was on holiday, had he been there watching that mad 15 minutes during the second half he would have (a) probably caused an outbreak of mass deafness across much of Gloucester and (b) probably imploded in a blur of cherry and white indignation at the injustice of it all.

And to today then – the new look Powergen Cup competition. I have to say that



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The Honour

I haven't quite got to grips with how it all works yet and why we seem to be playing two away and one home game this season, but then I find most things outside the normal home, away, home kind of arrangement kind of baffling.

And come the end of the season when we try and work out all the permutations that relate to the Heineken Cup I will become even more confused. No doubt I will find someone who will be kind enough to explain it to me in words of no more than two syllables so I should be OK.

But the good thing is that the competition has opened up and invited in more teams that we would not normally get the chance to play – like the Ospreys today – and that has to be a good thing for everyone involved. It's always good to see Welsh opposition here. We've had some great games over the years with our counterparts from the wrong side of the



A quiet word with Steve Thompson

Severn Bridge, usually followed by some excellent beer drinking afterwards.

Recently we've welcomed Cardiff and Llanelli in the Heineken Cup competition and Caerphilly and Ebbw Vale in the European-Cup-For-Teams-Not-Good-Enough-For-The-Heineken or whatever it's called these days. Going back further into the mists of time we have the infamous midweek

games against the teams from the valleys – matches where the ball was optional for the first half hour because the players were busy knocking lumps out of each other.

And we've beaten them all – well nearly all, and now it's the turn of the Ospreys. They seem to be going well at the moment and will be no pushover, that's for sure. Unfortunately stellar supermodel and

sometime centre Gavin Henson is not going to be gracing us with his presence today, I think he has lost his hair band, mislaid his gel or broke a nail or something similar. That means we probably won't enjoy the dulcet tones of Ms Church urging him on during the match. Good thing or bad thing – you decide.

Actually I've been a little unfair on Gavin. There is no doubt that he is a class act, the question though is whether the whole sport of rugby union is ready for that sort of Posh 'n' Becks style paparazzi nonsense. Having tried and failed to turn Jonny Wilkinson into a gossip-page regular, and ignored the craven attempts of Matt Dawson to get the "Beckham-wannabe" gig, our red-top tabloids have fixated on Gavin.

Mind you he doesn't help himself when he happily poses for pictures getting his nails done or lazing around on a sun bed and the like.

Remember those scary forwards from Pontypool and the like – the ones who used to enter the scrums with their heads swinging from side to



Tension at Kingsholm

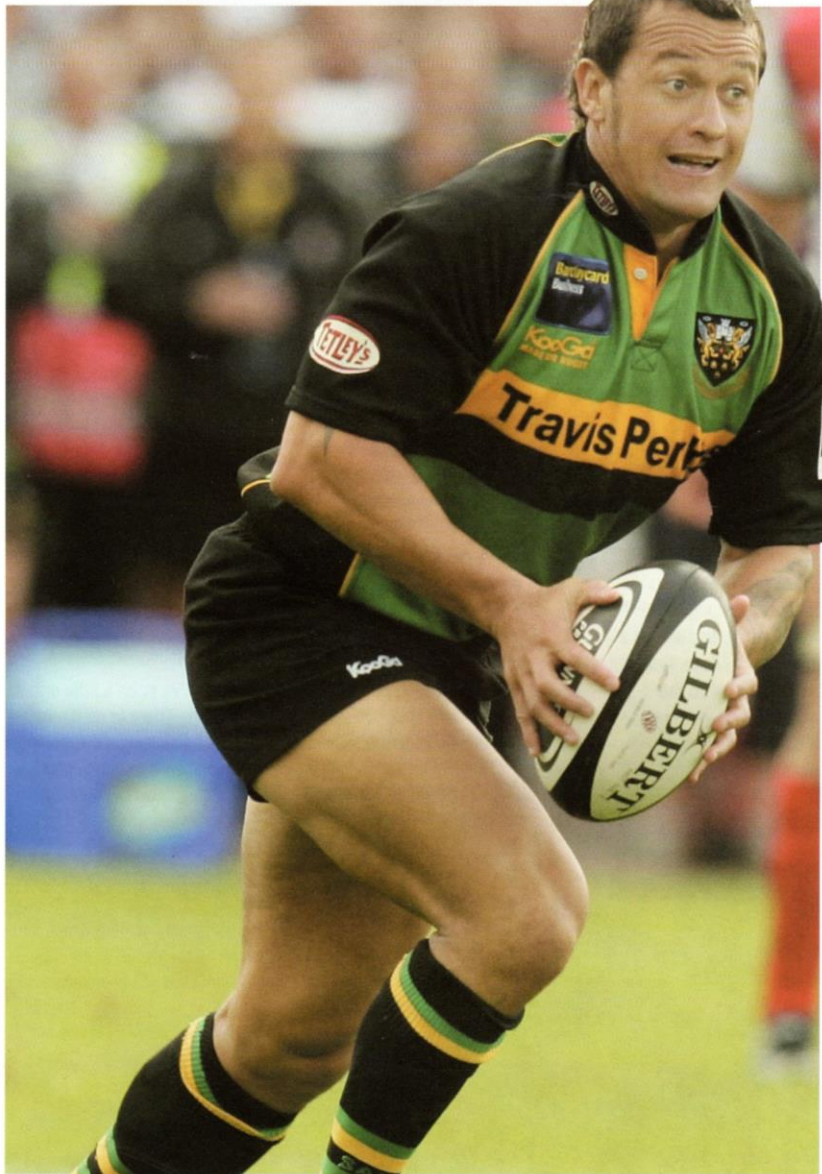
The History

side like a bunch of Farmer Vickery's prize cattle? I wonder what they would have made of it all!

Looking ahead to the next Guinness Premiership match, it's time for our annual trip

to The Wreck and our good friends from Bath. I was thinking the other day that it is one of the only grounds where I have yet to see Gloucester record a league victory.

Carlos Spencer



Some years ago I went down and saw us win a cup game there, only to return a week or so later and get beaten in the league. Not so long back, in our league winning (but no trophy) season we went as hot favourites and still managed to lose. So surely it's time to rid ourselves of this unwanted statistic.

It's so depressing coming away from there with nothing to show for our ventures year in, year out and each year I question the wisdom of buying a ticket to put myself through this mad torture. But in case you are wondering, I've got my ticket already.

A couple of little things to finish off – nice to see the band back playing before the game last weekend, but I was a little surprised to see Ludo playing the base drum. Take a look the next time they are here and you'll see what I mean.

And finally, just to pick up where I left off in the last programme, you may recall that I invited Carlos to join me for a pint in the new Shed bar after the game. Unsurprisingly he failed to show up to put his hand in his pocket...That's him off my Christmas card list!

“Unsurprisingly he failed to show up to put his hand in his pocket...That's him off my Christmas card list!”

Match Action



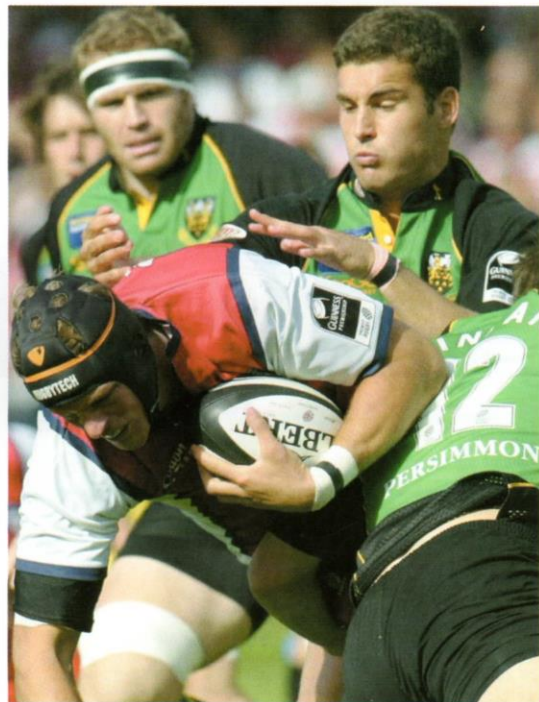
Gloucester Rugby 28 Northampton 24

Saturday, September 24

Attendance: 11,056

Referee: Dave Pearson

Pictures by Bruce Seabrook – GPA Images info@gpaimages.com



GLOUCESTER remain unbeaten and in third place in the Guinness Premiership following their third victory in four matches last Saturday.

Three tries - two in the second half from Jake Boer and James Simpson-Daniel - finally ended the resistance of the Saints in a frenetic, fractious afternoon at Castle Grim.

Northampton lost four players to the sinbin at various stages and claimed they were unable to field a sufficiently strong enough front row that resulted in uncontested scrums and significantly reduced Gloucester's effectiveness.

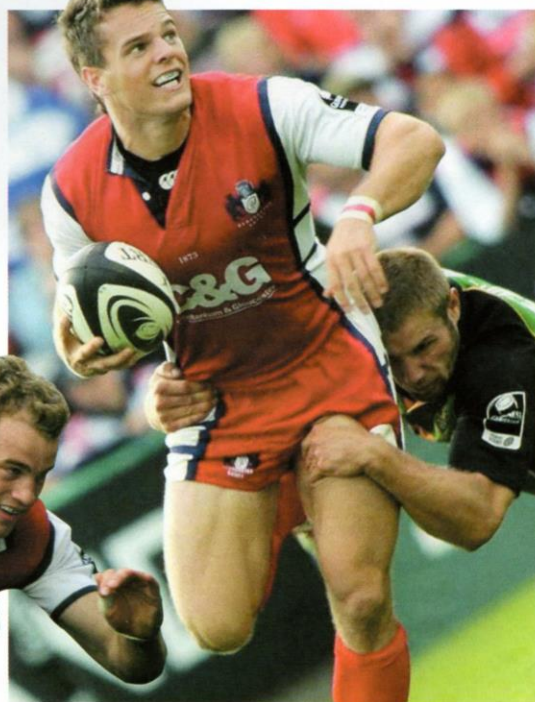
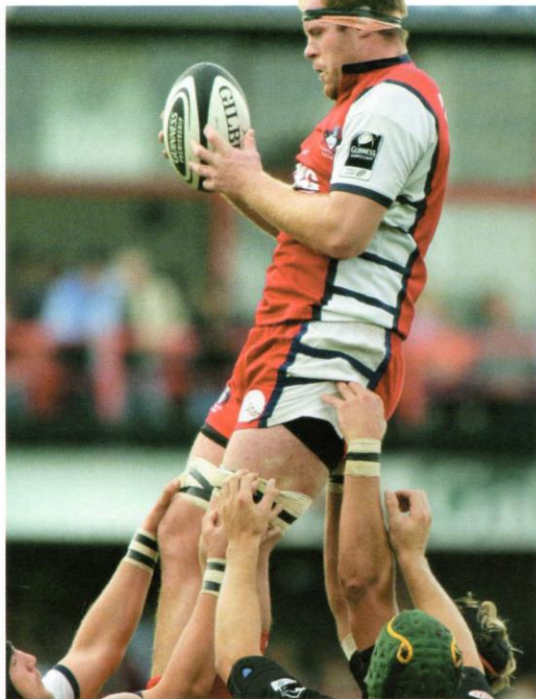
But the home team were more dominant in the forward exchanges thanks to a towering performance

from Alex Brown, energetic displays from Jake Boer and James Forrester and a front row dominance established by Gary Powell and his French chums Olivier Azam and Patrice Collazo.

However, Gloucester trailed 21-13 at the break after gifting Northampton's play-maker Carlos Spencer possession and room in which to work. The

first came when he returned a clearance from Ludovic Mercier, gathered his own chip and fed Steve Thompson to score.

Despite an equalising score from Peter Richards, who burst away from a tap-penalty, Spencer and the Saints scored twice more before the break. Jon Clarke finished off a flowing move after Spencer



had robbed possession deep in his own half before lock Damien Brown took the visitors 21-13 ahead.

But the game changed at the start of the second half when the home forwards cranked up the pressure. Forrester's pick and inside flick allowed Boer to score from close range and under increasing pressure, the returning

Simpson-Daniel stole a pass from Bruce Reihana and beat Ben Cohen to the line. Reihana and Mercier swapped penalties before the end but Gloucester emerged narrow winners.

Simpson-Daniel said: "The most important thing was that we got a win playing badly. We didn't sit back and defend, we had to

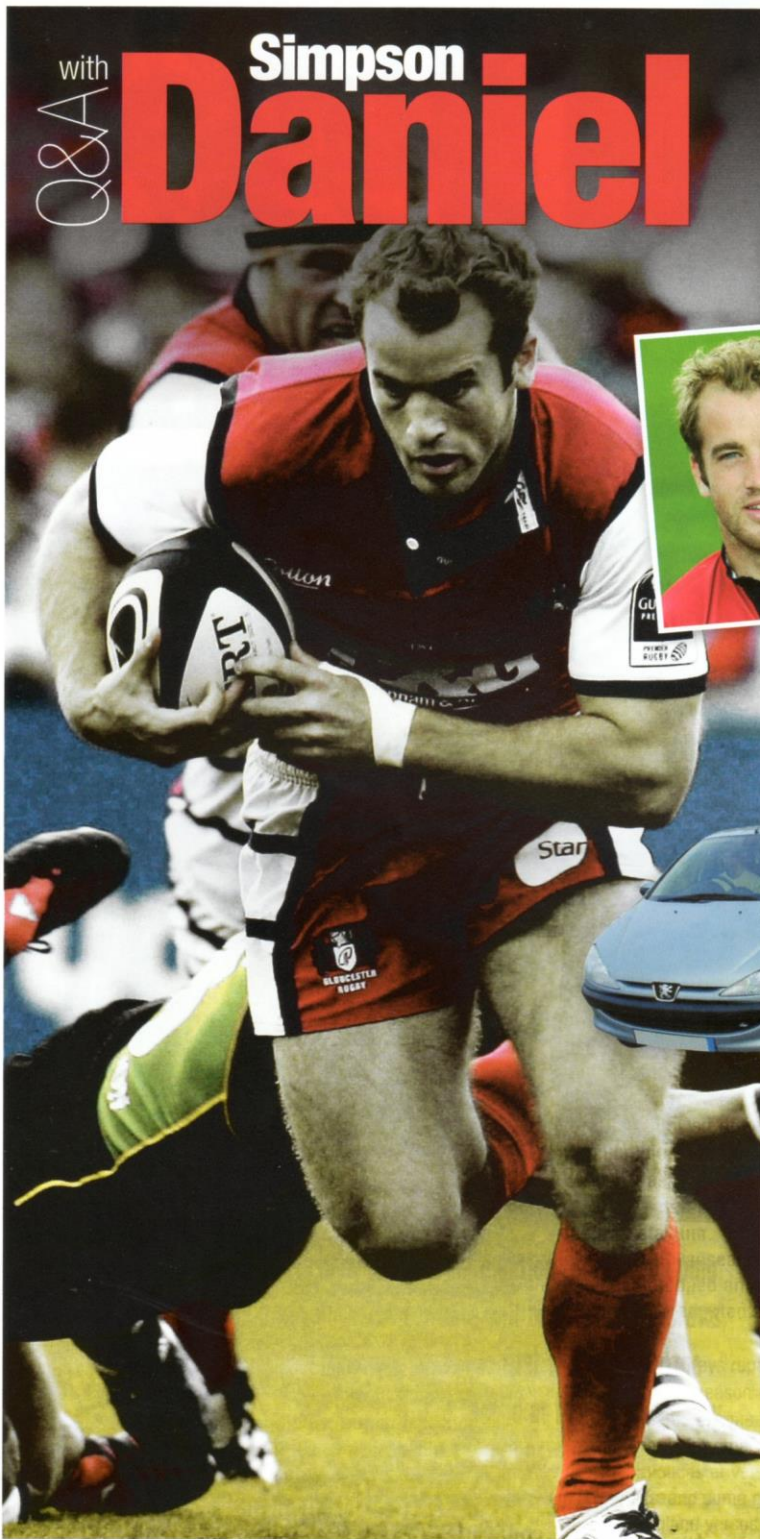
be careful not to try 50/50 passes when we were ahead. "But we know that if we play like that against Leicester or Wasps we will lose.

I looked at the scoreboard when Northampton were sorting out their scrum and we were behind and the minutes were ticking away. I just wanted to get on with it."

The History

on-line newsletter **ezine** - visit www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk

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with **Simpson**
Q&A Daniel

By Ian Randall



Q How did you get introduced to rugby?

A It was my elder brother. We used to play in the garden and then progressed to the local rugby club. My elder brother was rugby

mad so it sort of followed that I would play with him.

Q What was the first car you owned?

A I'd like to claim it was a Toyota Celica, but that was my brother's first car. Mine was a sky blue Peugeot 206. It was a bit feminine - but perhaps I was in touch with my feminine side back then!



Q What was the worst album you ever bought?

A I've got some pretty bad albums in my collection, and there are a couple of classical ones that haven't been out of the cover yet.

Q Which of your team mates has the most annoying habit?

A If you ask anyone in the squad, it has to be James Forrester sucking his thumb.



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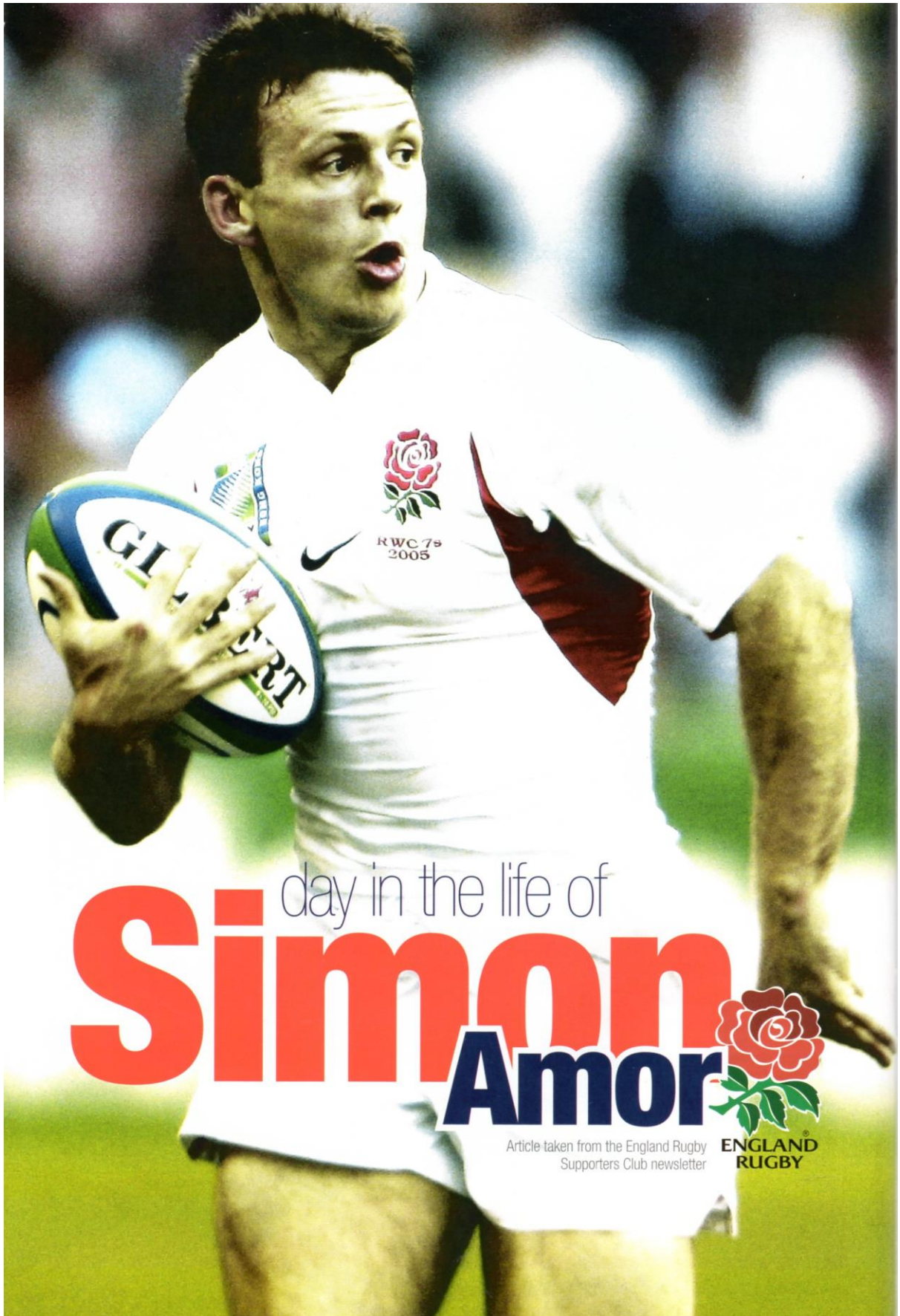
Q What's the most money you've ever won?

A I remember winning about £900 at a casino one night. I was there about seven hours. It was worth it in the end but I was exhausted and I remember having to walk home because there was no taxi's working at 5am.

Q What mundane task do you struggle with?

A Where do I start? There's so much I hate doing. I hate cleaning the house - my girlfriend always does it, and I hate washing up with a passion. I've tried just about everything in the dishwasher - including clothes.





day in the life of

Simon Amor

Article taken from the England Rugby Supporters Club newsletter



ENGLAND RUGBY

Scoop caught up with Gloucester fly half and England Sevens Captain **Simon Amor** to find out what he gets up to on an average day...



USUALLY get up about 7.30am and have breakfast which is three weetabix and a bottle of actimel. We have two training sessions a day with Gloucester and the morning session lasts about an hour and a half. We train at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire and will usually spend the morning doing a rugby session which involves drills and practising set pieces.

At about 11am we break for an hour and have ice baths which are never enjoyable but are a very good way of helping your body recover after exercise. Not all of our time is spent on the pitch as we also watch our last match back to see how we performed, as well as studying our opposition ahead of the next match. It is important that we take on a lot of fluid during the day so I will drink a couple of protein shakes during the day as well as drinking lots of water and energy drinks.

Our second training session will focus on fitness and we will do weights in the gym and aerobic training such as a sprint session. It will last about an hour and on a good day we will have finished training by about 1.30pm.

Then I drive home and have lunch. I normally have a couple of chicken and salad sandwiches as well as a yoghurt, some fruit and a carton of ribena. In addition to ensuring we eat a healthy diet and drink protein shakes there are a number of vitamins and supplements we have to

monkey nuts so we are all becoming quite good chefs!

I try and be in bed by about 11pm but I find I don't need much sleep so often get up if I can't sleep and do some more reading or studying, before waking up and doing it all over again!

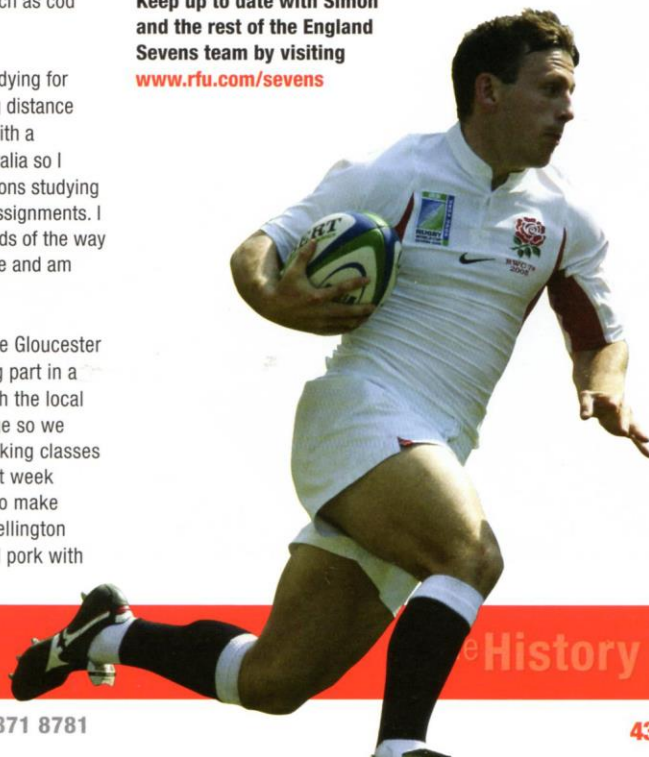
“I normally have a couple of chicken and salad sandwiches as well as a yoghurt, some fruit and a carton of ribena.”

take every day such as cod liver oil tablets.

I am currently studying for an MBA via a long distance learning course with a university in Australia so I spend the afternoons studying and completing assignments. I am about two thirds of the way through my course and am really enjoying it.

At the moment the Gloucester players are taking part in a cookery class with the local community college so we have evening cooking classes once a week. Last week we learned how to make fish balls, beef wellington and lemon glazed pork with

Keep up to date with Simon and the rest of the England Sevens team by visiting www.rfu.com/sevens



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The Big Scrum **debate!**

Are teams beginning to morally damage the game by devaluing the scrum? Last week, during Gloucester's victory over Northampton, the Saints were awarded uncontested scrums despite having two props and a hooker on the field. The matchday programme investigates.

WHEN DOES a scrum not become a scrum? Last Saturday Gloucester's scrum was vastly superior to that of Northampton's in a thrilling Guinness Premiership match at Kingsholm.

But when both prop Tom Smith and hooker Dylan Hartley were dispatched to the sinbin for foul play, it left Chris Budgen on the field as the only first choice

prop from their starting XV.

Dan Richmond and Brett Sturgess were required as replacements but when Richmond was also dispatched for foul play, it deprived Northampton of another front row forward.

It left them with Budgen, Sturgess and Steve Thompson – England's hooker who

was playing in the back row because of a neck injury. But Northampton's touchline man Lennie Newman said the Saints had 'run out of hookers' which caused referee Dave Pearson to award uncontested scrums.

The problem arose because Hartley was declared injured and did not return from the sinbin and, after Richmond and Smith picked up yellow cards, Northampton moved Budgen to the middle of the front row and used fellow prop Sturgess and lock Selborne Boome.

Throughout all this Thompson stayed where he had started at blindside flanker, with Saints director of rugby Budge Pountney refusing to move Thompson forward because he had a bad neck.

Chris White, on the touchline last weekend, told in an interview this week: "We have to take their [Northampton's] word for it," White said.

"We are required to follow the law and protocol and we did that correctly. We went through the sequence of events that



occurs in law and that's all we can do."

Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan was incensed that Northampton were legitimately able to exploit the law to counteract Gloucester's dominant scrum.

The bone of contention is Law 3.14 of the International Rugby Board's Laws of the Game, an amendment of which came into force in June 2004.

It was amended following a series of cases where injuries were sustained by unqualified players standing in as front rowers.

Law 3.14 (a) now states: "If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered. It is not the responsibility of the referee to determine the suitability of trained front row."

But it is leaving clubs with a convenient loophole if they are struggling in that area. The question has to be asked: Do the tactics morally devalue a major area of the game where certain teams are naturally strong because Worcester were similarly hindered against Saracens the week before who were without Cobus Visagie.

As long as the weapon is available to clubs in order to cut the threat, teams may continue to use it and that cannot be good for the game.

The referee did everything right at the weekend and as the law states above, if there was a serious injury, he would be held responsible.



Tom Smith, the Northampton prop is sin-binned by referee Dave Pearson

"As long as the weapon is available to clubs in order to cut the threat, teams will continue to use it and that cannot be good for the game."

However, Northampton hid behind the regulations when Hartley was tactically replaced and then could not come back on because of injury despite having Thompson available.

How can the situation be solved? Could teams be offered the line of touch in place of a scrum to make their advantage

tell but they then face the chance of losing a line-out throw?

A change in the law would require the involvement of the IRB but unless the problem is addressed there may be more scenes like the ones at Kingsholm last weekend, and nobody wants that.

The **Passion**

