



GLOUCESTER RUGBY

The Official Programme
of Gloucester Rugby

Issue 11 • £3.00



Gloucester Rugby v Newcastle Falcons

23.02.08 15.00



INSIDE

To Hell And Back

James Forrester
Exclusive

Derby Nightmare

Dean Ryan looks back
to Bristol defeat

Get To Know

Willie Walker

Newcastle Falcons

All you need to know about
today's visitors

PLUS: Fans Zone, Peter Arnold, ticket news, community update, match of the days

Club Sponsor



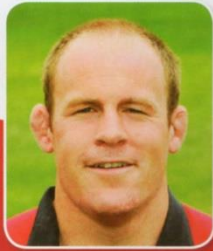
Match Day Sponsor



Match Ball Sponsor



www.guinnesspremiership.com



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

It's been a difficult fortnight but skipper Peter Buxton is looking forward to today's clash against Newcastle.

▶ I THINK everything has already been said about last weekend's defeat against Bristol – and I am not going to wash our dirty linen in public.

What I will say is that we have all got to take responsibility for what happened. We simply didn't perform to the levels and standards we set ourselves as a group of players and we must accept the criticism and move on.

On the day Bristol played very well, we got into an arm wrestle with them and couldn't get ourselves out of a scrap. That was very disappointing because I think man for man we are as good as anyone in the Premiership.

The defeat was even more frustrating because although we lost to Leicester a fortnight ago, our shape, energy levels and potential threat gave a great indication of what we are able to offer in the long-term.

That game obviously ended our 22-match unbeaten

sequence at Kingsholm and was our first Premiership defeat here since May 2006. Our task today is to take the first steps back to re-establishing an unbeaten record at Kingsholm.

There is enough motivation from the last couple of weeks to ensure we get a positive and right reaction this afternoon.

We will need it too. Newcastle are unbeaten in five Premiership games, have won away at Saracens recently and did the double over them at Kingston Park on Sunday.

They will obviously be without their England contingent but we know from pretty recent experience that counts for nothing and the way they approached the EDF Energy Cup game here before Christmas means we need to be right on our game this afternoon.

As a group of players we are determined to produce the right reaction. As supporters, please get behind the

guys this afternoon. The support at the Memorial Stadium was fantastic and we will need that again today.



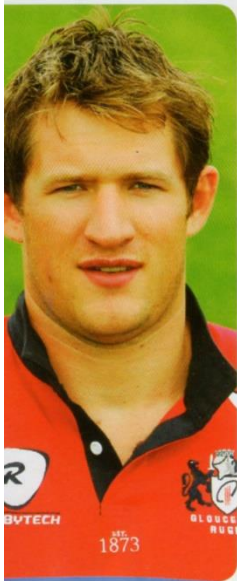


TO HELL AND BACK



He is one of the games most gifted talents, blessed with an explosive mix of pace and game-breaking ability. Last April James Forrester suffered a horrific knee injury but as he explains today, the number eight is winning his fitness fight.





JAMES FORRESTER

▶ HE REMEMBERS the moment almost too vividly for words. And then his world went black.

The incident was so innocuous that the severity of the injury that followed defied belief. On a glorious April afternoon almost 12 months ago, James Forrester's rugby world came crashing down.

Gloucester were playing Bristol at Ashton Gate – for Forrester, the Andy Ripley come Michael Jones number eight with the remarkable skill set and blistering ability to change the very course of a match with one moment of brilliance, the lights were about to go out.

"I was in our defensive line and as play came across, someone stepped inside. As I turned to make the tackle my left leg moved but my right foot stayed in the turf and I collapsed," Forrester said this week with remarkable certainty.

"From the pain I knew it was serious but I had no idea how complicated the injury was – I don't think anybody did."

He says now he suffered three of four separate injuries that caused massive internal trauma. His ACL joint was ruptured, but of perhaps more significance was that his patella tendon was completely snapped.

"I thought I had just done my ACL but when I saw a consultant for an ultra-sound just to check for any further damage they couldn't find my patella tendon – it just wasn't there – it was only then the seriousness of the injury began to sink in," he said.

"Guys who do the ACL can be back in six months. The complications with this injury meant it would be

much longer – basically, I had no idea how long it would be."

Forrester expected to be in hospital for a day to have his operation. He remained there for a week as his body began the painfully slow recovery process that is now inching its way slowly to a potential return.

The injury robbed Gloucester of perhaps the most naturally energetic and free-spirited back row forwards in the country. There are precious few who can do the things Forrester does with such remarkable brilliance and every supporter who regularly sardines themselves inside Kingsholm will be praying for the day he ambles onto the field again.

At the moment, he is confined to the gym at Hartpury College – a lonely existence and frightening glimpse at rugby mortality. He works daily with Bob Stewart, Gloucester's highly regarded head of medical services, and the rest of the back room staff on his recovery programme.

Despite his apparent ease and relaxed nature there is an inner core of steel to Forrester. He refused to wither and is now making encouraging progress – that has been enhanced by a trip to knee specialist Bill Knowles in Vermont, who has also worked with Austin Healey, Charlie Hodgson and Richard Hill.

"It can go one of two ways," he said. "You can either shrivel up or get on with it. For me, Gloucester is such a unique place, such a great club that I think the desire to get back again is understandable.

"I talked a lot with someone like Jack Adams who also suffered a long-term injury and that helps. When you see someone go through

that sort of thing you wonder to yourself if you could ever do it but human nature takes over and you just get on with it.

"I obviously miss the team environment and being around them, but Bob [Stewart] works me very hard and to be honest I cannot say enough thanks to everyone involved with this – they have been fantastic."

The opportunity to work with Knowles for three weeks was also too good to miss. He trained him for up to five hours each day and the specialist advice was crucial.

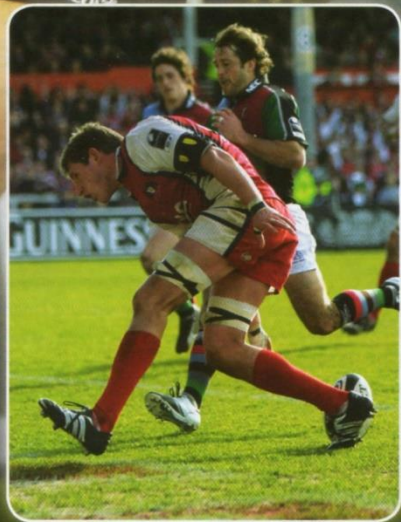
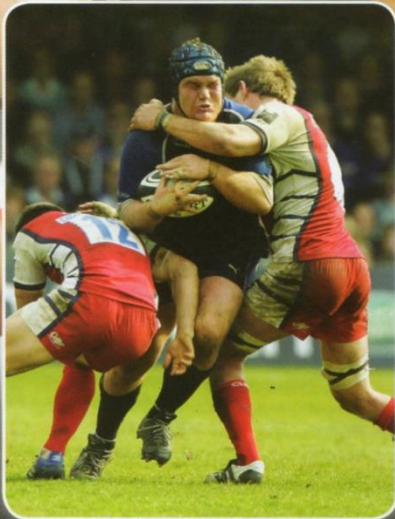
"He is very experienced at dealing one on one with players and to have that opportunity was fantastic. He has a great attitude and hopefully he has sped up the recovery a bit. Both he and Bob will talk about my programme so I am in great hands.

"Every time I see my surgeon he is encouraged with the progress I am making and that is great."

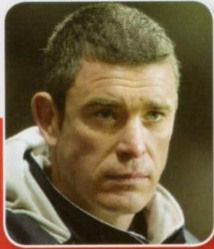
The question now is whether Forrester will be fortunate enough to make a return this season. Although he is not ruling it out, he remains naturally cautious.

"I would obviously love to make myself available again, and if I did it would be towards the end of the season," he said. "There are a lot of factors to take into consideration. Would the coaches pick someone in my position for a Guinness Premiership semi-final when I hadn't played all year?"

"I would obviously love to do it but I could give myself an extra four months over the summer for the sake of two matches. I am desperate to get back, believe me, but realistic at the same time."



“I would obviously love to do it but I could give myself an extra four months over the summer for the sake of two matches. I am desperate to get back, believe me, but realistic at the same time.



RYAN'S REVIEW

Dean Ryan pulled no punches following defeat against Bristol but believes Gloucester will learn their lessons.

We have had two games since the last Ryan's Review and both have been defeats – can we start with the Leicester game?

DR: I THOUGHT it was an excellent advert for the Guinness Premiership first and foremost. It was based on our movement game against their static-based game that strikes from set-pieces and although we lost, we saw an image of what we want to be as a side.

We did pretty much everything we set out do except win the game, but as a group we can all deal with that because the processes we had in place were right. Had a couple of little things gone our way we would have won but we are not going to beat ourselves up over a defeat like that.

It was fantastic to see the likes of Jack Forster exposed to a front row of Leicester's quality, Jack Adams has come in because of Mike Tindall's injury and has been really, really positive and they are things we want to see happen.

Nobody wants to lose an unbeaten record but those things happen and now it is up to us to go out and re-establish it again.

Why did your reaction to Sunday's defeat at Bristol differ so much?

DR: WE SIMPLY didn't go out and execute what we had set out to do, and obviously my post-match comments left little room to manoeuvre in terms of how I felt.

I was disappointed we were unable to impose our personality on the contest because we had enough of them in the side to do that. We strolled in there thinking we could just do what we liked, and that is what I found unacceptable because we didn't give the game enough credit against a side who scrap and fight for everything at home.

I can accept defeat if we approach a

game in the right way and execute things we can improve on, but on Sunday we failed to do that and I won't allow it to happen again. The fact we remained top of the Premiership was not a comfort for me – there we fundamentals in our game we got wrong – that is what I am keen to focus on.

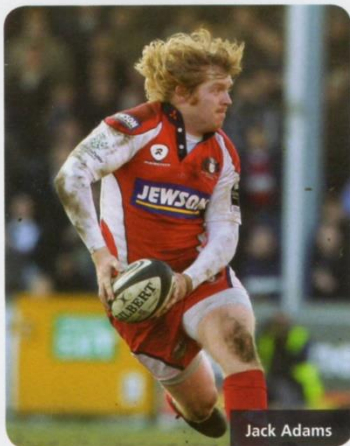
We have all taken responsibility this week and have moved on. We have to understand and appreciate these lessons.

How do you approach today's game and what do you expect from Newcastle?

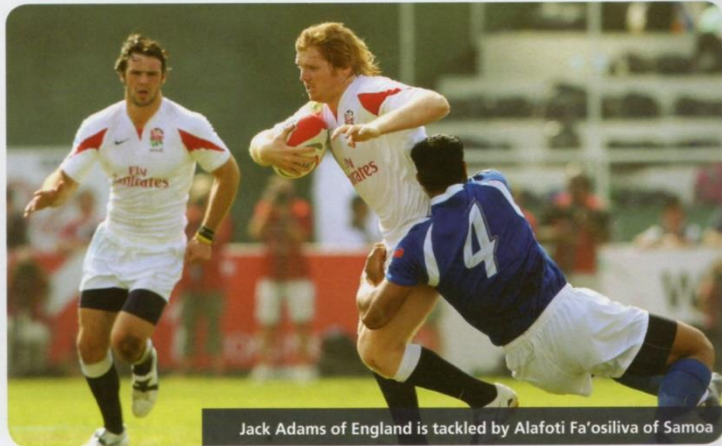
DR: I THINK the key is in the question. If we approach it in the right way and bring



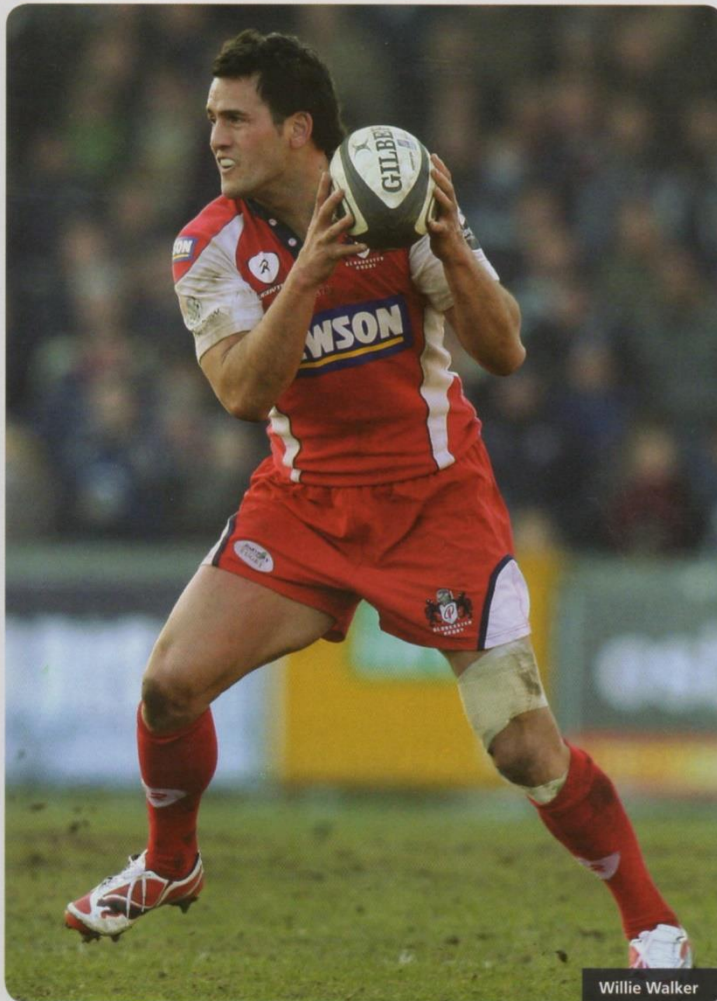
We did pretty much everything we set out do except win the game but as a group we can all deal with that because the processes we had in place were right. Had a couple of little things gone our way we would have won but we are not going to beat ourselves up over a defeat like that.



Jack Adams



Jack Adams of England is tackled by Alafoti Fa'osiliva of Samoa



Willie Walker

personality to our performance then we are good enough to give anyone in the Premiership a contest.

We will obviously be without our internationals this afternoon, which means the focus will once again be on a group of players who may have not had much exposure this season but as they showed against Leicester they are hungry for the opportunity and that is great.

If we get our game right then we are a match for anyone – even with players unavailable against a side like Newcastle. I have been pretty impressed with them

this season. They are on a very good little run of form and I think they have won their last five games so their confidence will be high.

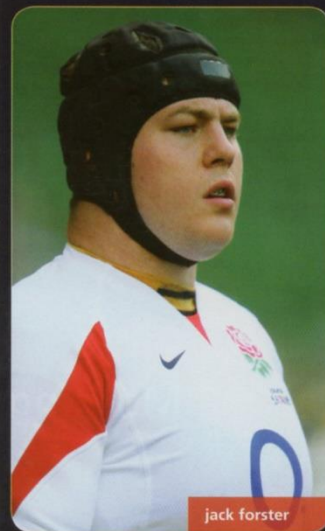
They have coped well with the loss of their England players and showed against us at the start of the season they have some very good players, who like us, will enjoy the opportunity today.

When you have the likes of Carl Hayman also involved it will ensure a level of competitiveness that means they will be a danger and we have to be ready for that.

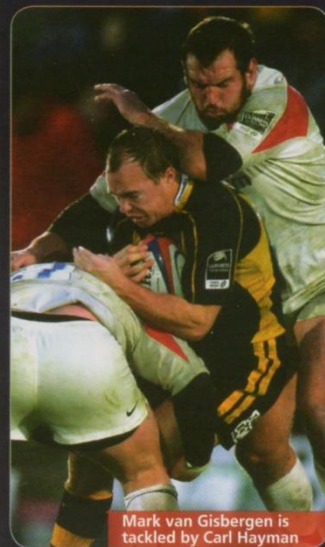
www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk



If we get our game right then we are a match for anyone – even with players unavailable against a side like Newcastle.



jack forster



Mark van Gisbergen is tackled by Carl Hayman

TODAY'S TEAMS

Saturday 23rd February 2008 15.00

Gloucester Rugby
v Newcastle Falcons



28



Newcastle
Falcons

20

<input type="checkbox"/>	Willie WALKER	15	Full Back	15	Tom MAY	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	James SIMPSON-DANIEL	14	Right Wing	14	Ollie PHILLIPS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack ADAMS	13	Centre	13	Alex TAIT	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Anthony ALLEN	12	Centre	12	Tom DILLON	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark FOSTER	11	Left Wing	11	John RUDD	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ryan LAMB	10	Fly Half	10	Steve JONES	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gareth COOPER	9	Scrum Half	9	Lee DICKSON	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nick WOOD	1	Prop	1	Joe MCDONNELL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andy TITTERRELL	2	Hooker	2	Andy LONG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack FORSTER	3	Prop	3	Carl HAYMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will JAMES	4	Lock	4	Andy PERRY	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alex BROWN	5	Lock	5	Mark SORENSON	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peter BUXTON ©	6	Flanker	6	Geoff PARLING	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andy HAZELL	7	Flanker	7	Ben WOODS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Luke NARRAWAY	8	No 8	8	Phil DOWSON ©	<input type="checkbox"/>

Replacements

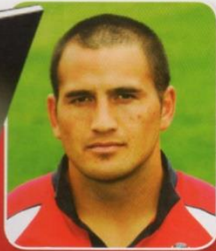
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Olivier AZAM	16		16	Matt THOMPSON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Christian CALIFANO	17		17	Jon GOLDING	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jonathan PENDLEBURY	18		18	Andy BUIST	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Akapusi QERA	19		19	Brent WILSON	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mike PRENDERGAST	20		20	James GRINDAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ali JAMES	21		21	Joe SHAW	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	James BAILEY	22		22	Tim VISSER	<input type="checkbox"/>



HEAD COACH
Dean RYAN



DIRECTOR OF RUGBY
John FLETCHER



SPOTLIGHT

with **Willie Walker**

by Ian Randall



WHAT'S THE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY?

I suppose just take every day as it comes and be the best you can, I'm a fairly relaxed character, so I just play it as I see it and whatever comes up comes up and you deal with it at the time.

WHAT'S YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION?

My son Parma, Parma Walker. He's not quite 2, so he'd be my most prized possession at the moment.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BREAKFAST CEREAL?

Ha ha ha, Weetabix Minis - the chocolate

chip flavour. Kind of keep that one quiet, but I suppose they'll know now.



WHICH COMPANY WOULD BE YOUR IDEAL SPONSOR?

Any car sponsor I suppose, that'd be ideal.



ARE YOU A SPENDER OR A SAVER?

I'm a spender, my wife's a saver, so we have quite a tough time at



home when I'm spending a bit, but I think I've got better over the years, hee hee. I've got an attitude that if I'm making the money, then I should be allowed to spend it!

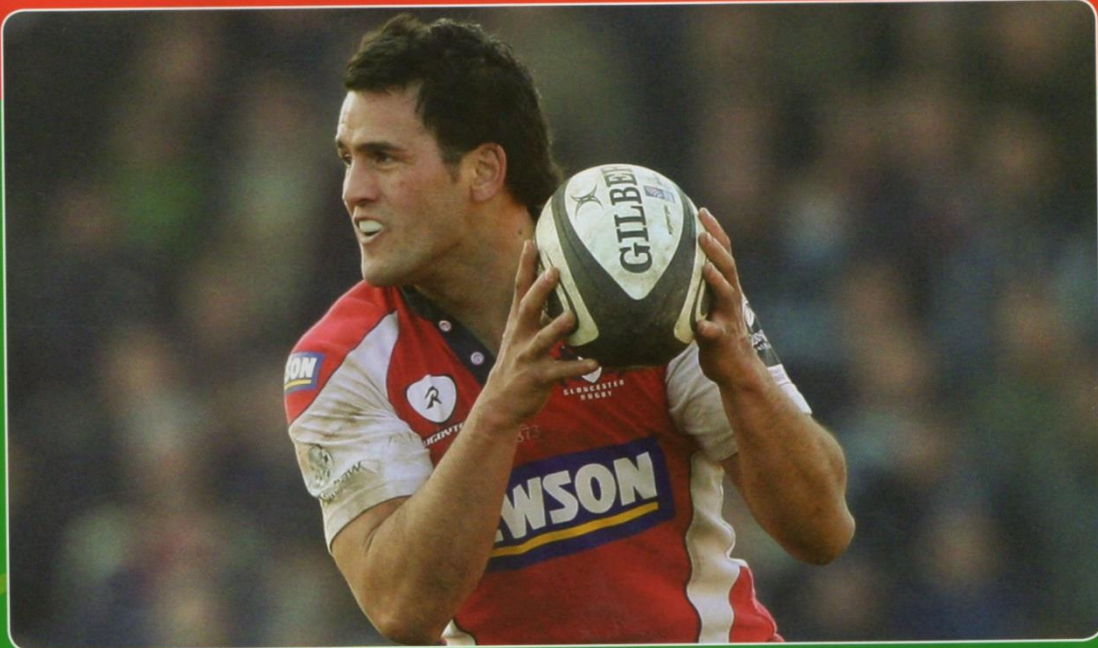
WHAT MADE YOU LAST LOSE YOUR TEMPER?

Probably Bucko getting in the way at training, as he usually does, trying to injure people.



TELL US SOMETHING YOUR TEAM MATES DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I don't know if there would be anything they don't know about me - nothing that I can put down in writing, no.



WHO'S YOUR FAVOURITE PERSON ON TV?

Ross Kemp, the guy that does all the gang programmes and he's in Afghanistan on TV at the moment. He gets himself into the mix with all the most dangerous gangs around the world and I think it takes a lot of guts to put yourself in that kind of situation.

WHICH TV SHOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CONTESTANT ON AND WHY?

Back in the old days, when Krypton Factor was on.

I liked the look of the assault course and thought that would have been quite fun.



WHO IS THE MOST INTERESTING PERSON YOU'VE EVER MET?



Mark Foster, he's got some stories that keep you on

your toes, every day he's got a new story and he keeps the boys amused every week.

IF YOU WENT TO UNIVERSITY WHICH DEGREE WOULD YOU DO?

I suppose I'm one of the older guys, I've been there and done that, I'm a Bachelor of Business and Commerce in New Zealand, so I'm looking now to not go back to university, but perhaps do something the lines of a course in joinery.



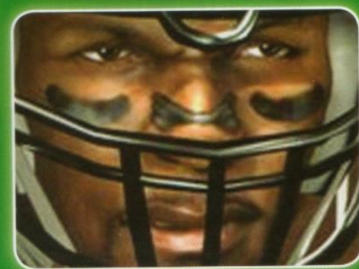
IF THERE'S A PRANK TO BE PLAYED, WHO'S USUALLY THE CULPRIT?

Yeah, the usuals - Califano or Andy Hazell. They're up to mischief all the time, Califano mostly, but Hazy's got a few pranks going. I've been lucky enough to escape the wrath - they pick on the younger guys - so I kind of get out of it.



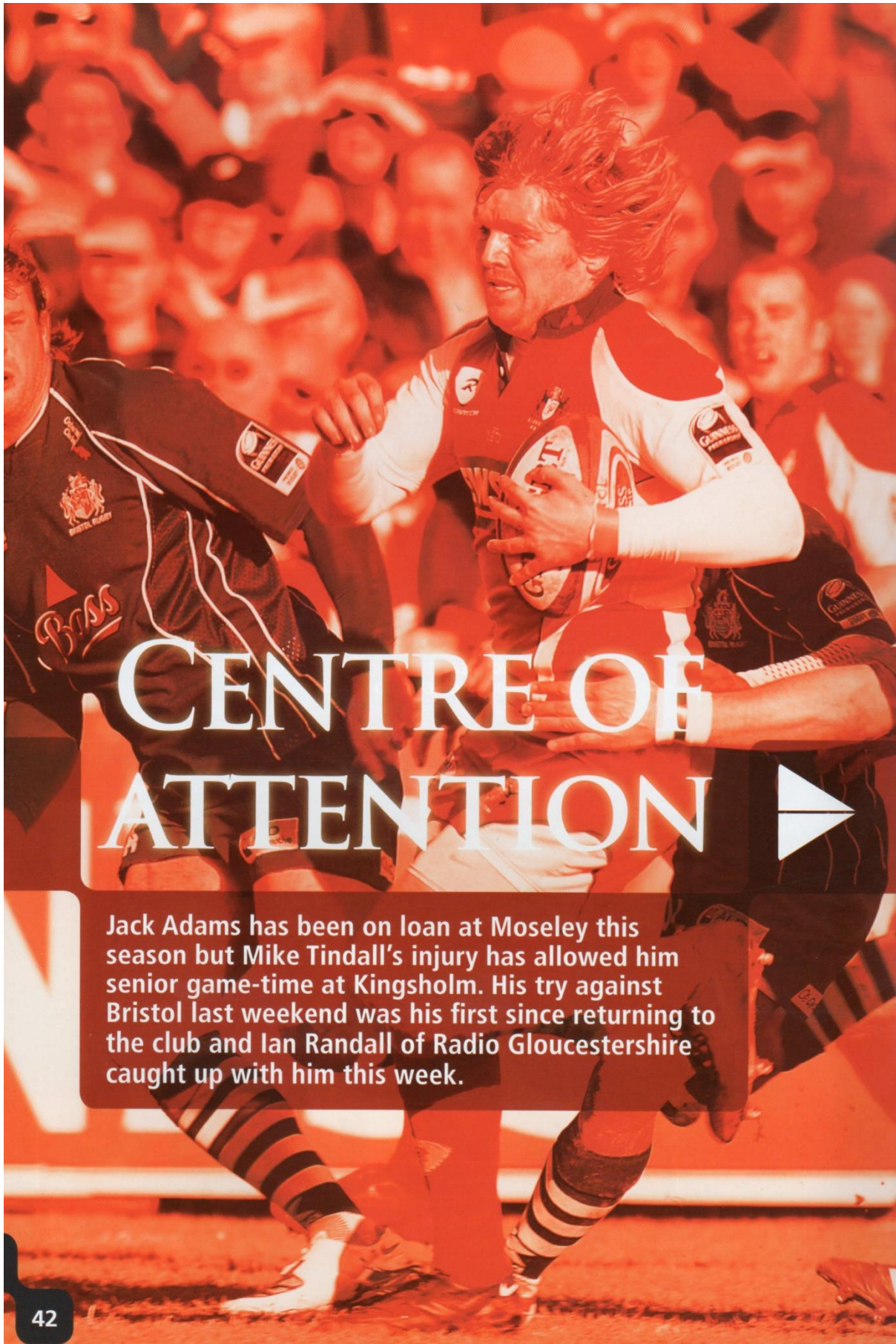
WHICH OTHER SPORTING EVENT WOULD YOU LOVE A TICKET FOR?

Does the poker champs count as a sporting event? ha ha. No, I'm a big NFL fan, so I suppose the Super Bowl. We were lucky enough to get to the Wembley match last year when the NFL teams came over, but going to America and watching the Super Bowl would be pretty big.



WHAT PART OF TRAINING DO YOU ENJOY MOST?

The end! Ha, ha, ha! The end of training, that's the best part.

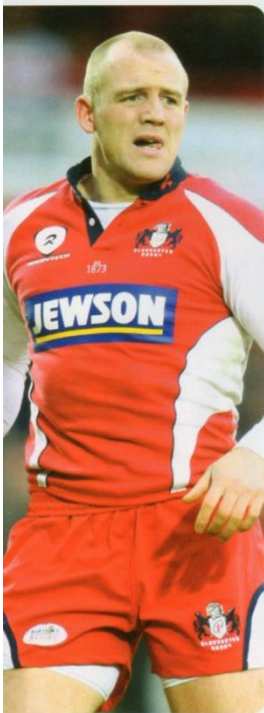


CENTRE OF ATTENTION ►

Jack Adams has been on loan at Moseley this season but Mike Tindall's injury has allowed him senior game-time at Kingsholm. His try against Bristol last weekend was his first since returning to the club and Ian Randall of Radio Gloucestershire caught up with him this week.



CENTRE OF ATTENTION



Q: What has been the message from the coaches after last Sunday?

JA: It's pretty clear, you could see on the pitch what happened and Dean has let us know quite openly and apologised for the way the players conducted themselves last week, but I think we've moved on quite quickly because obviously we have to. We go week by week and start again on Monday and are just looking forward to playing again today.

Q: Did you feel the lead was rocky after Anthony Allen's try?

JA: Not really, as you would probably see from watching, I think we scored three tries in the space of 14 minutes - something like that - and we were looking to get more points but we just seemed to fizzle out I think and that was obviously very disappointing.

Q: What have you done this week?

JA: We've gone back to a few basics. Obviously we've got the internationals out which means we will be using pretty much the same structure as we used against Leicester I think. The way that we're looking to play is quite obvious and we just have to forget about last weekend, start again fresh and look forward to this weekend.

Q: How do you go about replicating the level of performance of the Leicester game?

JA: We played well against Leicester with a few players out and obviously it was during an international weekend. We had a set of things we were going to do against Leicester and hopefully that is how we're going to play this weekend against Newcastle, or attempt to. You can tell by the performance and the result that we didn't play too well against Bristol, so hopefully we can get back on that level like we were playing against Leicester.

I think we approached Leicester really well and it was just a bit disrupted with players coming in and out with the internationals coming back. Obviously we've got a stronger team with the internationals here, but we just got disrupted a little bit and hopefully we can concentrate on this weekend as we did against Leicester.

Q: How has the step back up to Premiership after being at Moseley:

JA: It is a big difference coming back into the Premiership, especially coming back against a team like Leicester and then a local derby like Bristol. But obviously there's a good standard of rugby down at Moseley and stepping back is quite easy for me because of training week in week out here with Gloucester. I'm back here and just seem to have slotted back and I'm really enjoying it.

Q: Has National One toughened you up?

JA: Yeah, obviously there's a few disagreements on the pitch in National One and there is obviously some off the ball stuff but Premiership rugby is more physical and I just have to be ready for that.

Q: What do you expect from Newcastle without their England stars?

JA: It'll be a similar story to us really, we've got 2 of our main players with England but we just want to go at it like a normal game, we don't just look at it like they haven't got their strongest team out. If you go into the game thinking they're going to be weaker then that's when things start to go wrong.

Q: What help and advice have you had from Mike Tindall this season?

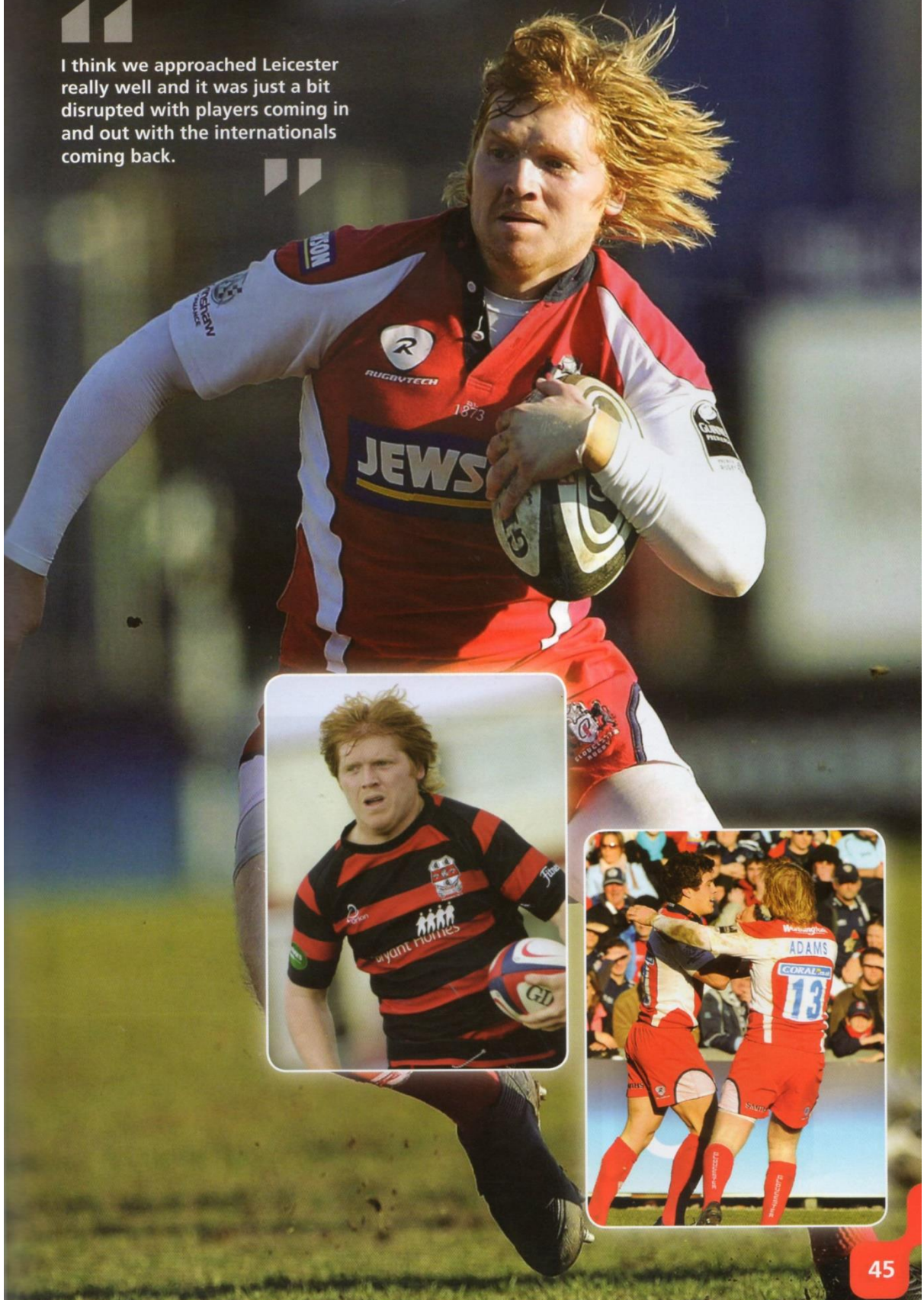
JA: He hasn't been to many sessions since he's been injured because he's been having treatment, but since he joined the club I've been watching him, talking to him and going through stuff with him - it's just helped massively to have a player like that to influence my game. Little tiny things that you notice - running moves against each other, I'm at 13, he's at 13, just the little things that he does when he is against you, does help my game. It's similar for everyone who watches players involved in international rugby just to see how they go about themselves on and off the pitch.

Q: Finally, can the next game come quick enough after a defeat?

JA: We're top of the Premiership so we want to prove that we are the best in the Premiership at the moment, so we can't wait for today.



I think we approached Leicester really well and it was just a bit disrupted with players coming in and out with the internationals coming back.



MATCH ACTION

Gloucester Rugby
Leicester Tigers

13
20



Time line

34 mins	Smith try, Goode CON	0-7
16 mins	Walker PEN	3-7
48 mins	Azam try, Walker CON	10-7
54 mins	Goode PEN	10-10
62 mins	Walker PEN	13-10
65 mins	Goode PEN	13-13
67 mins	Erinle TRY, Goode CON	13-20

Gloucester Line-up

15	James Bailey	
14	James Simpson-Daniel	
13	Jack Adams	
12	Anthony Allen	
11	Mark Foster	
10	Willie Walker	(1c, 2p)
9	Rory Lawson	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	(1t)
3	Jack Forster	
4	Peter Buxton	(capt)
5	Will James	(yellow card)
6	Alasdair Strokosch	
7	Andy Hazell	
8	Adam Balding	
REPS		
16	Ali James	(Adams)
17	Gareth Cooper	(Lawson)
18	Jeremy Paul	(Azam)
19	Alasdair Dickinson	(Forster)
20	Jonathan Pendlebury	(Balding)
21		
22		

The eye of the Tiger!

Saturday, February 9, Kingsholm

Attendance: 12,597, Referee: Tony Spreadbury

▶ LEICESTER ended Gloucester's 22-match unbeaten home run thanks to two second half tries in a thrilling Kingsholm contest.

Despite a raft of changes because of injuries and international commitments, Gloucester produced an excellent performance that asked plenty of questions of an international-quality pack and regularly kept the likes of Aaron Mauer, the celebrated All Black, Ollie Smith and Tom Vardell on their toes.

They were energised, physical and

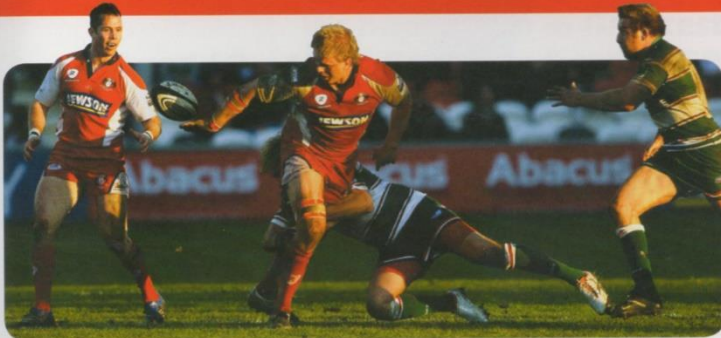
stayed in shape very well and had James Simpson-Daniel managed to get to the line after gathering Willie Walker's little chip, Gloucester would have salvaged a draw.

After Leicester had weathered a particularly belligerent home-town storm that involved Simpson-Daniel, Andy Hazell, Walker and Rory Lawson, they struck first with a very neat little try.

Andy Goode took possession from a line-out and used Vardell as the extra man off his wing. That created space on



www.gloucester rugby.co.uk



the outside and Ollie Smith scored past James Bailey.

Walker did cut the gap to 7-3 before the break with a penalty and then Gloucester took the lead with a try at the start of the second half. Hooker Olivier Azam swapped passes with Peter Buxton from a line-out and powered over in the corner.

Although Walker and Goode swapped penalties to level the scores at 13-13, it was Leicester who struck the decisive blow. Goode broke clean away from a scrum, Mauger gathered his little pass

and then sent Ayoola Erinle hurtling into score the winning try.

Gloucester gave everything in the close stages. Leicester lost flanker Ben Herring to his second yellow card offence when he prevented Gareth Cooper making ground from a quickly taken penalty and then John Murphy and Erinle got back brilliantly to make a try-saving tackle on Simpson-Daniel following Walker's chip.

Leicester closed the game out leaving Gloucester to wonder what might have been.



www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk

Man of the Match

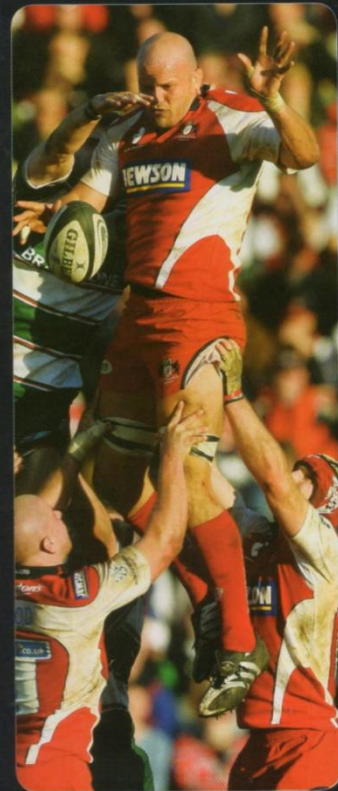


Alasdair Strokosch continued his emergence with another very good showing.

Coach's Comment

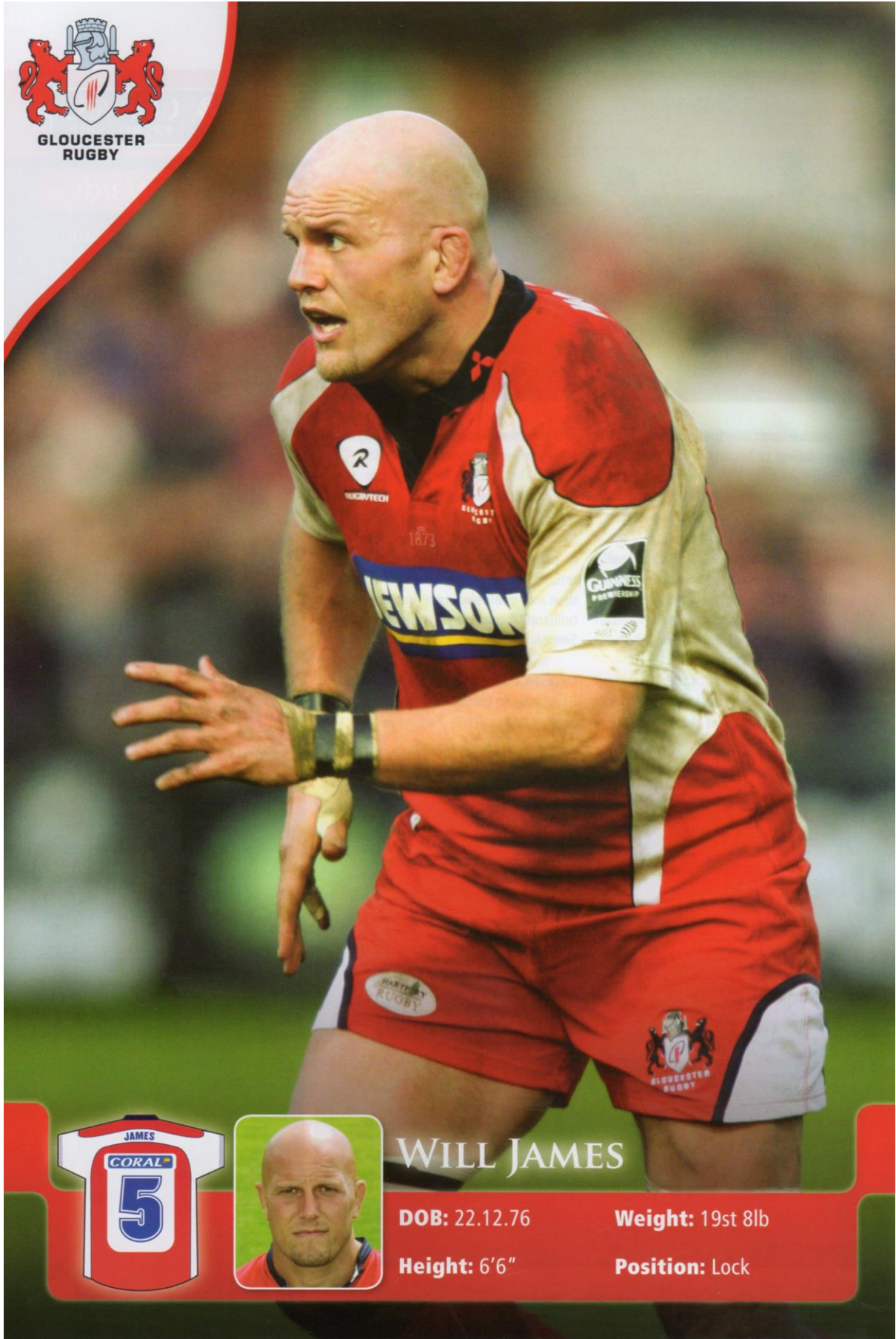


"I think we can be really proud of our performance against a very good side," head coach Dean Ryan.





**GLOUCESTER
RUGBY**



WILL JAMES

DOB: 22.12.76

Weight: 19st 8lb

Height: 6'6"

Position: Lock



PETER ARNOLD

Defeats, injuries and returning players has meant it has been a busy fortnight in the life and times of Gloucester Rugby, as Peter Arnold looks back on.

BEST WISHES 'TINS'

WHEN we first heard details of Mike Tindall's injury after the Wales debacle, things didn't seem too bad. A bruised liver, we were told, and having suffered a similar injury as a schoolboy, I recall it as painful, debilitating, but not what you'd call serious. Then further details became

available and the picture changed considerably. It appears that Mike had sustained an inches-long gash in his liver, displaced ribs and suffered a punctured lung, as well as significant internal bleeding.

In fact, I was surprised to see Mike up

and about so quickly. Yet there he was, on the telly, making light of the whole thing, and insisting that things weren't really as bad as all that and that he hoped to be playing again before the end of the season. Of course, we know he's as tough as a particularly obdurate old boot and that he's certainly no stranger to serious injury. However, I don't think he should be too anxious to get back on the field again.

It's understandable. He's been having a fine season and has contributed mightily to our successful campaign so far. He certainly won't want to miss our appointment with Munster in the Heineken quarter finals, and is obviously keen to re-ignite his England career after a broken leg kept him out of the World Cup. I suppose there is a summer tour to take into account, too.

However, a busted liver and a pneumothorax aren't things to take lightly. Perhaps he should consider knocking this season on the head and concentrating on getting thoroughly fit for next time round. One thing's for sure – he'll be getting the best medical attention there is, so we can be sure that the medics won't let him come back too early.

Meanwhile, we'll miss you Mike. As any side in the world would.

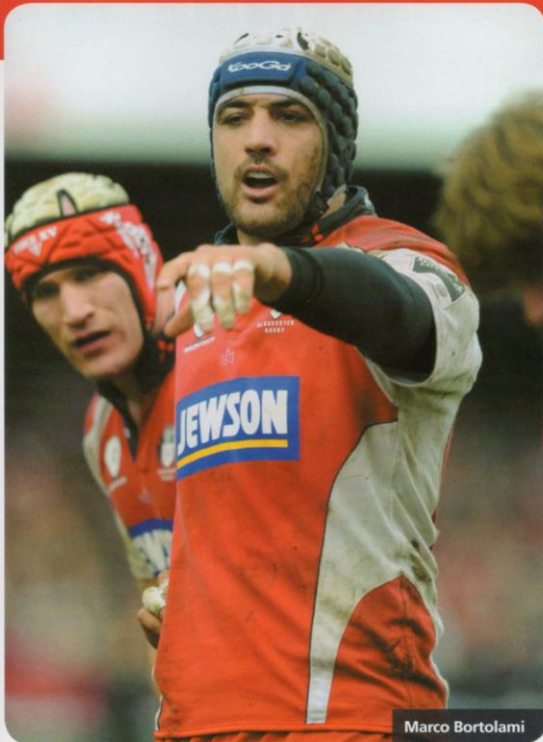
THE EYES HAVE IT

THE other side of the coin is that Marco Bortolami seems to have recovered from his fractured eye socket more quickly than was anticipated. It will be good to see him back.

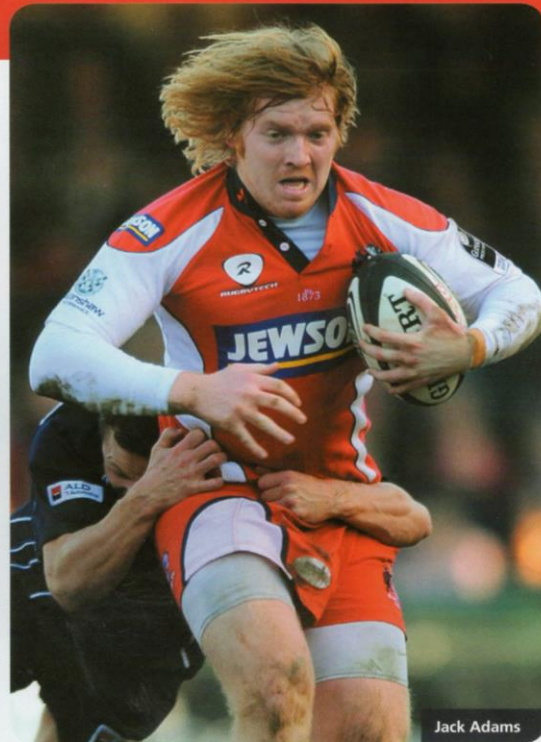
It occurs to me that he seems to have shrugged off the problem more quickly than Phil Vickery did after suffering a similar injury. Is the Italian Stallion tougher than the Raging Bull?



Mike Tindall



Marco Bortolami



Jack Adams

UP WITH THIS I WILL NOT PUT...

...as Winston Churchill once famously wrote when something had displeased him.

I can put up with losing to Leicester, even at Kingsholm, in a hard-fought game, but I find surrendering to Bristol the following week very hard to take. Judging by the published remarks of Dean Ryan so does he.

DR pointed his finger, it is alleged, at what he called an "appalling" first half hour, and I wonder if that contention provides a clue to the reasons for the debacle. Certainly, the two penalties conceded in that period made the difference in the scoreline, but why did it take the lads so long to get going?

It was noticeable that Leicester had similar problems last weekend, so is there a common factor between the two experiences? I can only think of one. Both sides drafted their contingents of returning international players straight into their Premiership sides.

One is tempted to theorise about that. There must be a danger that returning layers, subconsciously or not, relax a little when coming back to their clubs after the high intensity of international rugby. Half an hour into the game they realise they've got a fight on their hands and up the tempo. By then, it may well be too late.

Over the last couple of seasons, much has been made of the increasing quality and intensity of Premiership rugby. Could it be that the unthinkable is now happening, and the gap between international and club rugby is now narrowing? You'd think that the extra quality coming through would translate itself into even higher standards in the national squad, but perhaps it doesn't work that way. Certainly, there have been periods in the second half of both England matches thus far which would have had most Premiership coaches tearing their hair out.

Players could be pardoned for expecting to be able to relax a little when returning to their clubs from the international arena but perhaps life ain't like that any more.

One consolation. Last week's results have increased our lead at the top of the table by 100%. From one point to a whole two.

JACK'S THE LAD

ANOTHER good thing to come out of recent events is the re-establishment of Jack Adams as a serious contender for a centre spot, and it wasn't international calls which gave him his chance so much as injuries to Mike Tindall and Leon Lloyd.

It was noticeable last Sunday that all three Gloucester tries were scored by chaps who aren't in the England squad. And young Mr. Adams was one of them. Good on you Jack. Keep on keeping on and I'm sure plenty more chances will come your way.

WORD TO THE WISE

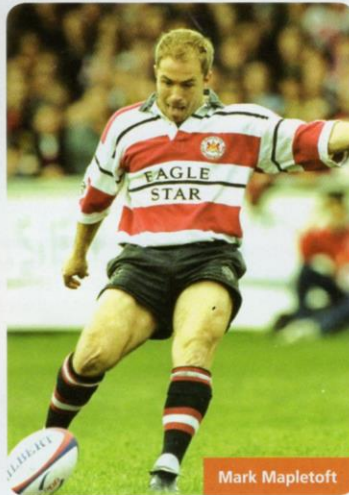
I hope you haven't forgotten that this is a Leap Year and that next Friday is February 29th. Better watch your backs lads. I'd hate unlooked for marital complications to get in the way of your regular attendance at Kingsholm next season.

MATCH OF THE DAYS

It was a day of destiny for Gloucester. They needed to beat Saracens at Kingsholm in 1996 to avoid relegation – and it went to the wire – as Dave King uncovers



Tony Windo



Mark Mapletoft

It was a day where the home passion of the club's largely local pack of forwards saw off the threat of Saracens in a 17-10 victory. A look at the relegation scenario with Saracens pre-match ensured it was not difficult to imagine that nerves were shredded prior to the 3pm kick off.

Both teams were understandably nervous and Gloucester were tentative but the ever reliable Mark Mapletoft soothed the nerves with two penalties. However, Saracens full-back Matt Singer, who later became a schoolmaster at Wycliffe College in nearby Stonehouse, immediately cut the deficit with three points.

▶ THERE HAS probably never been a more tense or defining moment in Gloucester's recent history.

A do or die occasion against Saracens was all that stood between them and relegation to the second division. Although Bath were way out on top, Gloucester and Saracens were locked together on 10 points each – the winners at Kingsholm would be guaranteed survival and the losers would be cast into oblivion.

For Tony Windo, it was a magical moment. His try is arguably the most important in

Gloucester's history and allowed more than 12,000 followers the chance to let go a huge out-pouring of emotion on that Saturday afternoon of April 27, 1996. For Richard Hill, Gloucester's director of rugby, who had been given a five year contract to resurrect Kingsholm fortunes on the strength of masterminding a Houdini-like escape from relegation, it was an incredible escape.

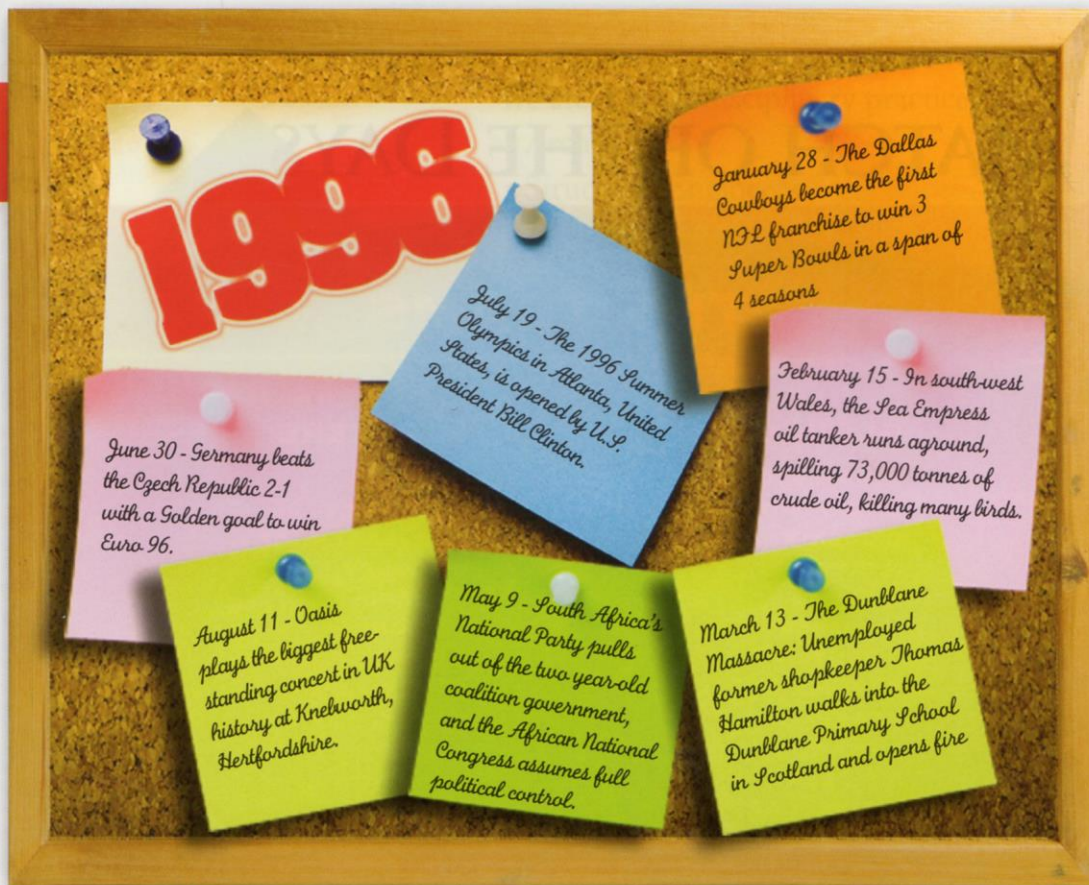
In his seven month, two-day-a-week spell at Kingsholm, Hill had dragged Gloucester, led by skipper Dave Sims, from the brink of relegation to the brink of safety.

The tensions remained – both packs waged a ferocious war against each other and with 10 minutes of the first-half remaining and Dave Sims dominant in the line-out, the visitors were driven back to their line. Phil Greening, Andy Deacon and prop Windo were all held up but it was the evergreen Windo who eventually forced his way through for a try to send Kingsholm wild. Mapletoft missed the conversion but with Gloucester remaining on the attack Martyn Kimber dropped a goal to give the Kingsholm men a 14-3 interval lead.

Soon after the re-start the irrepressible

LEAGUE TABLE

POSITION	TEAM	PLAYED	WON	DRAWN	LOST	FOR	AGAINST	POINTS
1	BATH	17	15	0	2	537	238	30
8	GLOUCESTER	17	5	0	12	258	360	10
9	SARACENS	17	5	0	12	274	434	10
10	W.HARTLEPOOL	16	0	0	16	270	563	0



It was an ultimate challenge and the champagne corks popped. Kingsholm was a cauldron of fear and Tony Windo's try secured a lucrative share of the top flights professional spoils for the following season.



Mapletoft landed another penalty then failed with another while Kimber missed two more drop-goal attempts as the pressure mounted on the visitors.

But the anxiety soon turned to the home side when Richard Hill ran in from a tap penalty to leave the London club only one score adrift. But Sims and co held out and the delirious scenes about Kingsholm summed up the feeling of relief.

The victory saw the elevation of Hill into a full time post. He had been coaching part time as well as working as an independent financial advisor. Neither Richard Hill or the Gloucester faithful

wanted to witness another relegation dog fight.

There was a tinge of disappointment on that day for full-back Tim Smith who was involved in so many campaigns for the club. He was one appearance away from his 350th Gloucester first team match. Although he was on the bench he did not appear and was set to adjust to life away from Kingsholm. Tim readily acknowledged life would never be the same again. A phase in life had ended.

With the advent of professionalism the impact of going full-time as Director of Coaching was not lost upon a prophetic Hill: "With the game going pro the

consequences of losing and going down are severe," he said.

Even former Bath supremo Jack Rowell was confident of Gloucester's survival – "When the need arises fortress Kingsholm puts up its walls and it cannot be breached."

Scrum-half Benton recalled the day with clarity, "I was really happy we won we played the tactics we wanted to play and won. Me and Chris Raymond (he is now headmaster at Nailsworth Primary School) knew what we had to do. Keep the ball at the back of the scrum, waste time and we were laughing. Our supporters were nervous but outstanding. They were worth a seven point start. It was a massive game. Fortunately we came out on top."

It was an ultimate challenge and the champagne corks popped. Kingsholm was a cauldron of fear and Tony Windo's try secured a lucrative share of the top flights professional spoils for the following season.

MATCH OF THE DAYS

THE TEAMS

GLOUCESTER:

M.MAPLETOFT
P.HOLFORD
D.CASKIE
M.ROBERTS
M.LLOYD
M.KIMBER
S.BENTON
T.WINDO
P.GREENING
A.DEACON
R.FIDLER
D.SIMS (CAPTAIN),
P.GLANVILLE
A.STANLEY
C.RAYMOND

REPLACEMENTS:

L.BECK
H.BROWN
M.CORNWELL
T.SMITH

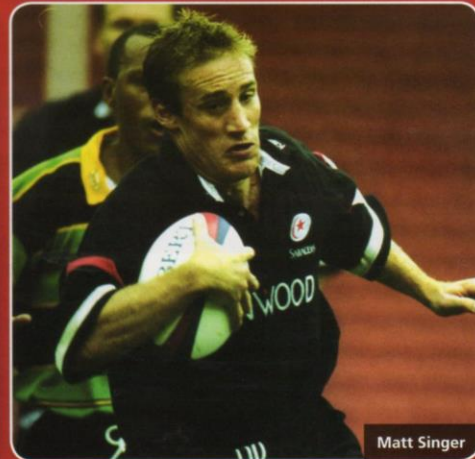
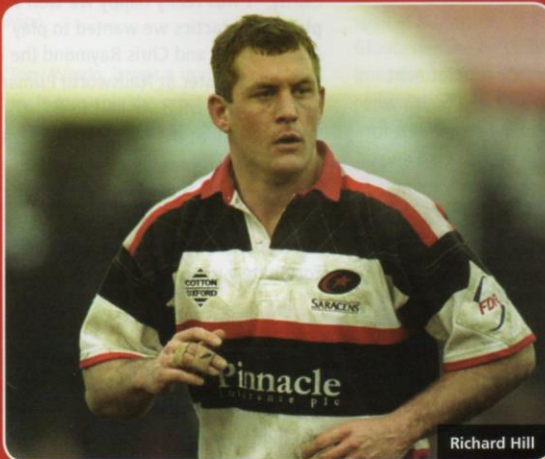
SARACENS:

M.SINGER
K.CHESNEY
S.RAVENSCROFT
D.DOOLEY
P.HARRIS
G.HUGHES
B.DAVIES (CAPTAIN)
G.HOLMES
G.BOTTERMAN
S.WILSON
M.BURROW
T.COPSEY
E.HARVEY
R.HILL
T.DIPROSE

REPLACEMENTS:

P.FRIER
J.BUCKTON
C.OLNEY
J.GREEN

REFEREE: S.LANDER (LIVERPOOL SOCIETY)



FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

The extent of Mike Tindall's injury has come as a shock and as Bob Fenton says today, he will view the contribution of both sets of players in a new light this afternoon.

▶ LIKE A lot of people I was really shocked to learn of the extent of the injury Mike Tindall suffered when he got crocked playing for England against Wales a few weeks back. While he has been suitably modest – if that's the right word – I downplaying the injury, talk of broken ribs and punctured livers conjures up some pretty scary images.

I guess that everyone who has played the game has some tale to tell about this or that injury (don't get me started about the state of my back) but to learn that a seemingly run of the mill tackle could result in a potentially life threatening injury was truly scary.

It makes you think how much us supporters

take that for granted – we go on about the need for players to put their bodies on the line all the time without really thinking about the possible consequences that could befall them.

Yes they get paid pretty well for the job they do, I don't know what the bottom line is on Mike's payslip at the end of his tax year, but I bet you anything you like that it's not as much as Wayne Rooney earns in a couple of weeks. I won't ask you to consider which of the two sportsmen is worth more.

Among the endless stream of garbage uttered by Eddie Butler a few weeks ago was one little nugget on the subject of injuries. You may recall that Jamie Noon

was caught by a flying boot and jogged off with blood streaming down his face. A few stitches and a few metres of tape later he was running across the turf to rejoin the fray. "If that was a footballer he would have been in intensive care by now..." said the verbally challenged one. He's right too.

I guess what I am saying in a roundabout sort of way is that I'll look at the players from both sides in front of me today with a bit more respect than previously. They risk an awful lot so I can get 80 minutes of enjoyments on a Saturday afternoon. I'm not going to say that the words "Get stuck in" will never cross my lips again, but when they do I'll quietly add the word 'safely'.

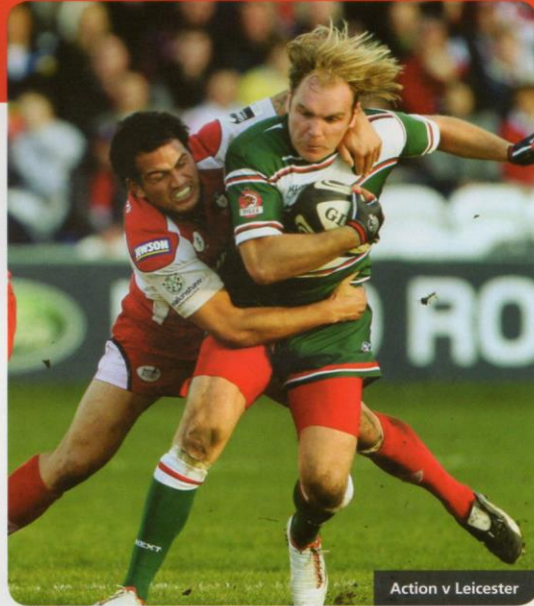
Get well soon, Mike.



Mike Tindall



Action v Bristol



Action v Leicester



Newcastle will be coming to town today hoping that there is a hangover from the last two games and of taking a major scalp. This is our third meeting of the season, and anyone who was here at the EDF Cup a few months ago will remember that their backline was amazing.

Bob Fenton on Newcastle Falcons



Newcastle would have left Gloucester thinking they should have won.

As it is, though, it being a Six Nations (grr...) weekend both sides will be without key players, you get the feeling though that the men in black are the ones who are really going to suffer today. In all likelihood they will be without Wilkinson, Tait, Noon and Flood – very much the cutting edge of their backline.

But back to matters Premiership... Losing our home record to Leicester was disappointing though to be honest I can't get too worked up about records like consecutive home wins, they are always going to break at some point. It was, though, a great game of rugby to watch

It was very much a reversal of previous meetings when they were weakened by international call-ups and we were at almost full strength. Although the result didn't go our way it was good to see the likes of Jack Adams waltz past Aaron Mauger as if he wasn't there, and to see Mark Foster completely smash the walking ego that is Tom Vardell.

And my lad said from his position behind the posts he could see that Sinbad got the ball down for a try that dear old Tony Spreadbury missed (Quelle surprise). So it should really have been a draw anyway...

Then last Sunday... Family commitments meant that I was reduced to scrambling for information via the web / radio at odd moments and from a pretty euphoric state after the first third of the game things came off the rails big time.

I think Dean Ryan has pretty much said all that there is to be said – and very publicly too if Monday's papers were anything to go by. I suppose the silver lining was the fact that everyone around us at the top of the table dropped points too, so the status quo was maintained.

But we have to pick up the winning habit again – and quickly. Newcastle will be coming to town today hoping that there is a hangover from the last two games and of taking a major scalp. This is our third meeting of the season, and anyone who was here at the EDF Cup a few months ago will remember that their backline was amazing.

But that doesn't mean we should be taking anything for granted. The players that come in are not that shabby and – after last weekend's performance, the fact that they are currently at the wrong end of the table does not mean that we can take anything for granted.

However we have to believe that we can come away with a win today, we have the squad and the players to do it. And in among the doom and gloom of a couple of defeats we should not lose site of the fact that we still top the table and we have more home than away games left on our calendar.

So come on, last week has long gone. Let's concentrate on today and what is in front of us. We know that Newcastle are not use to playing in front of a crowd, so let's generate some good old Kingsholm atmosphere and drive the boys on to victory.

MATCH ACTION

Bristol Rugby
Gloucester Rugby

29
26



Time line

4 mins	Strange PEN	3-0
8 mins	Strange TRY	6-0
12 mins	Simpson-Daniel TRY	6-5
15 mins	Adams TRY	6-10
21 mins	Strange PEN	9-10
27 mins	Allen TRY Paterson CON	9-17
32 mins	Linklater TRY Strange CON	16-17
37 mins	Hobson TRY Strange CON	23-17
45 mins	Strange PEN	26-17
47 mins	Paterson PEN	26-20
64 mins	Strange DROP-GOAL	29-20
69 mins	Walker PEN	29-23
71 mins	Walker PEN	29-26

Gloucester Line-up

15	Iain Balshaw	(1t)
14	James Simpson-Daniel	
13	Jack Adams	(1t)
12	Anthony Allen	(1t)
11	Lesley Vainikolo	
10	Chris Paterson	
9	Gareth Cooper	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Jeremy Paul	
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Will James	
5	Marco Bortolami	
6	Luke Narraway	
7	Andy Hazell	
8	Gareth Delve	
REPS		
16	Andy Titterrell	(Paul)
17	Alastair Dickinson	(Wood)
18	Peter Buxton	(James)
19	Alasdair Strokosch	(Narraway)
20	Rory Lawson	(Cooper)
21	Willie Walker (2p)	(Paterson)
22	Mark Foster	

Derby disappointment

Sunday, February 17, Memorial Stadium

Attendance: 11,419, Referee: Wayne Barnes

GLOUCESTER suffered their second successive Guinness Premiership defeat in a row – producing a performance they will want to forget against Bristol last Sunday.

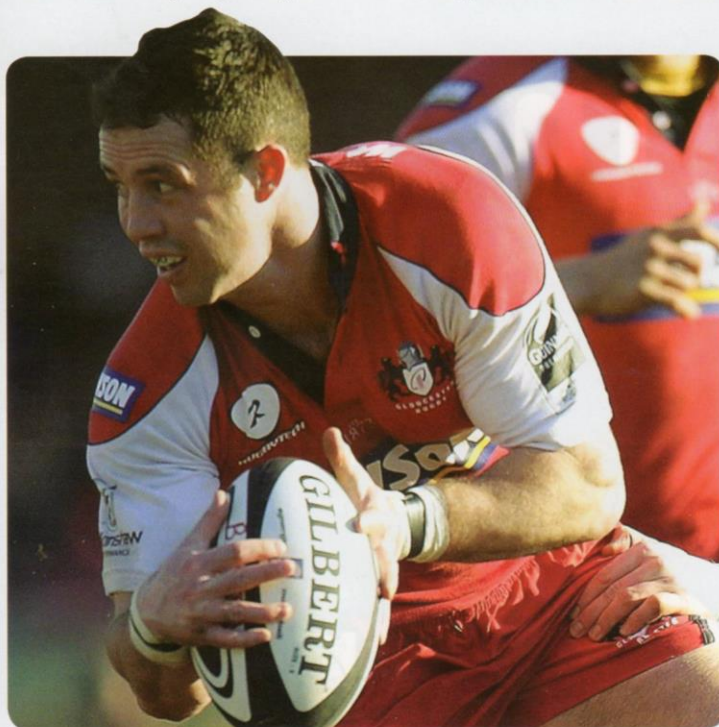
Despite three tries in 15 first-half minutes, Gloucester failed to match Bristol's all-round enthusiasm and energy – particularly up front – and paid the heaviest of prices for the second successive year at the Memorial Stadium.

Bristol were brilliantly led by Andrew Blowers and he was given great support

from hooker Scott Linklater, Roy Winters and Sean Hohneck as the home side got Gloucester into an arm wrestle they failed to recover from.

Gloucester were already 6-0 down when they scored their opening try. Lesley Vainikolo drove possession in-field from a line-out, the impressive Jack Adams broke up the centre and from a ruck close to the line, James Simpson-Daniel went over.

They followed that with a second try when Vainikolo returned a long kick, Simpson-Daniel chipped forward and Adams scored



www.gloucester rugby.co.uk



following up. A third was to follow when Anthony Allen picked off Jason Strange's midfield pass to go 50 metres to score.

It established a 17-9 Gloucester lead but that evaporated in the space of three minutes before the break. First, Linklater was driven over for a score from a line-out and when Marco Bortolami was yellow carded, Bristol produced a carbon copy drive for prop Hobson to score.

And with Strange adding a series of penalties, Bristol's foundations for victory had been laid. Their forwards upped the

pressure in the second half to maintain possession and territory for long periods and it was not until the latter stages when Alasdair Strokosch, Willie Walker and Andy Titterrell came on that Gloucester threatened a recovery.

Walker kicked two penalties and with nine minutes remaining Gloucester threatened an unlikely victory but with the clock ticking against them, Bristol kept out a series of moves before running the clock down and sealing a famous victory.



Man of the Match



Jack Adams. Not only did he score a try but his defence was outstanding.

Coach's Comment



"We strolled into town with 10 internationals and strolled into a car crash. That performance was unacceptable." head coach Dean Ryan.

