



The Official Programme
of Gloucester Rugby

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Gloucester Rugby v London Irish

8.03.08 17.30



INSIDE

Willie Walker

Opens up

Ryan's Review

Gloucester's head coach looks back

London Irish

All you need to know about today's visitors

Kingsholm Venues

Business opportunities

PLUS: Bob Fenton, Match of the Days, Peter Arnold and much more

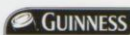
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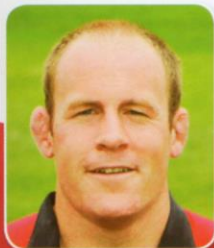
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CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Peter Buxton knows that Gloucester are in a bit of a sticky patch but is desperate for his side to start working through it today.

▶ THERE IS no getting away from the fact we are struggling for a bit of form.

We have mixed some really good rugby in devastating patches with periods of mistakes and errors that have deprived us of momentum in the last couple of games.

But we need to get a few things straight. We have only lost five matches in the Guinness Premiership this season and are still top of the league and that occupies a home tie in the semi-final stages of the competition.

Although there are issues we are working on as a group, we have not become a bad team or squad simply because we have produced a series of mistakes in the last couple of games.

No team has the ability or right to go through a season without the odd choppy patch and we are working through ours now. The situation is obviously not helped at this stage of the season with the

international call-ups we have faced but that is part and parcel of being a successful side – we want players to go and represent their countries and we just have to manage without them.

This afternoon we welcome London Irish to Kingsholm and after a bit of a rocky start to the season have really found their form. They beat us in a low-quality game back in October and present the sort of challenge we need to positively react to today.

Their forward unit is one of the most combative and well-drilled in the business and they have a cutting edge that is capable of going head to head with anything in the country.

But this is our home and we are in front of our supporters. We are hurting from our defeat against Harlequins last

weekend because we got ourselves in a position to win the game and win it well. It is up to us to produce the sort of positive

reaction that has been our foundation over the last couple of seasons.

We all have a responsibility to get on with the job and get the result we are all searching for. Please use your support to get behind us today – with so many players unavailable and new faces in the side we need every ounce of noise possible – please give it your best today.





RYAN'S REVIEW

Gloucester's Head Coach Dean Ryan admits it has been a tough week but that his side are ready for the challenge today.

This must be one of the most difficult weeks of the season so far given the numbers of international call-ups and injuries, how have you coped?

DR: "NO, IT has not been easy but we always appreciated this stage of the season was likely to test the squad depth to its fullest. We want to create an environment and a platform from which our players can press their international claims and that has started to happen with guys like Alasdair Strokosch. We really value what these individuals offer us, that may not have been the case before and that is why they have pushed their cause internationally.

We know injuries also play their part given the length of the season but we have integrated a number of players in recent weeks and that will be of a huge benefit to guys like Jack Forster and Jack Adams in the long-term. It is up to us to manage the situation without a key member like Alex Brown, he has already shown tremendous powers of recovery this season and we wish him all the best in the coming weeks."

There is a view now we are beginning to wobble following defeat against Harlequins, how did you view that defeat?

DR: "THERE were lots of opportunities where we should have won the game but we didn't. Our game management wasn't really good enough and we got pulled into a fragmented game which we didn't want.

In the first 30 minutes we got dragged into sevens which suited Harlequins more than us. We always say if you think something is on then go for it and that's not going to change because we want to maximise the attacking threat from our

back five. But if the end product becomes a wildly thrown inside pass when we've got no idea of the defence and we don't know what's happening next, it's wrong and that is what happened.

We made too many errors and that was disappointing because we didn't have to play through a huge number of phases to get the likes of James Simpson-Daniel and Lesley Vainikolo into the game as threats. At 20-10 ahead we should have managed the game better and that is something we have looked at.

But it is impossible to win every single game. There are some good teams out there all fighting for a play-off place.



But it is impossible to win every single game. There are some good teams out there all fighting for a play-off place.



Iain Balshaw



Alex Brown



James Simpson-Daniel

There has been a big clamour for James Simpson-Daniel's inclusion in the England squad – how do you view it?

DR: JAMES is one of the best outside backs in the country and has been in really good form for us in recent weeks. There is no doubt he has the potential to be an international player, but to get the best out of him and those of his kind there needs to be a system in place that maximises their strength. I think it would be unfair to put a guy like him in the side and simply expect him to replicate the things he does at club level without slightly changing the system.

I would like to see all of them with the ball as often as possible with us and we use their strengths accordingly. In some respects the system has to fit around the players and then you would see the best of James in a national shirt.

London Irish were the first team to beat us this season, what do you expect from them today?

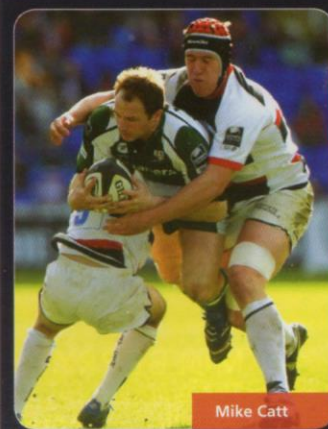
DR: YOU know what you get when you play against them and that is a team big on physicality, big on aggression and big on being able to compete at the set-piece. They have one of the best organised line-out operations in the Premiership and after a bit of a slow start have really been tough to beat. They have qualified for the knockout stages of the Heineken Cup for the first time and that signals their development in knockout rugby against some really good sides.

I think they are well coached and combine their forward aggression with some very inventive players out-wide. On their day they are capable of beating some very good teams and we have to be at our best today with a lot of players missing to compete. That is the challenge we face.

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Peter Hewat



Mike Catt

TODAY'S TEAMS

Saturday 8th March 2008 17.30

Gloucester Rugby
v London Irish



Gloucester RUGBY  34

London IRISH  14

<input type="checkbox"/>	James BAILEY	15	Full Back	15	Peter HEWAT	<input type="checkbox"/>
	James SIMPSON-DANIEL	14	Right Wing	14	Topsy OJO	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack ADAMS	13	Centre	13	Gonzalo TIESI	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Anthony ALLEN	12	Centre	12	Seilala MAPUSUA	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark FOSTER	11	Left Wing	11	Sailosi TAGICAKIBAU	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Willie WALKER	10	Fly Half	10	Mike CATT	
	Gareth COOPER	9	Scrum Half	9	Warren FURY	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nick WOOD	1	Prop	1	Tonga LEA'AETOA	
	Andy TITTERRELL	2	Hooker	2	David PAICE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack FORSTER	3	Prop	3	Faan RAUTENBACH	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dan TUOHY	4	Lock	4	Nick KENNEDY	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Will JAMES	5	Lock	5	Bob CASEY ©	
<input type="checkbox"/>	© Peter BUXTON	6	Flanker	6	Kieran ROCHE	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Andy HAZELL	7	Flanker	7	Steffon ARMITAGE	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Akapusi QERA	8	No 8	8	Richard THORPE	<input type="checkbox"/>

Replacements

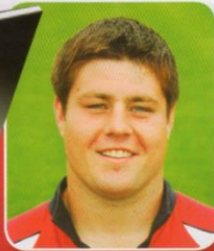
	Olivier AZAM	16		16	Dan MURPHY	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Christian CALIFANO	17		17	Stuart MACKIE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jonathan PENDLEBURY	18		18	Richard SKUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Jeremy PAUL	19		19	Phil MURPHY	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mike PRENDERGAST	20		20	Declan DANAHER	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charlie SHARPLES	21		21	Ross BLAKE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dan NORTON	22		22	Ross BROADFOOT	<input type="checkbox"/>



HEAD COACH
Dean RYAN



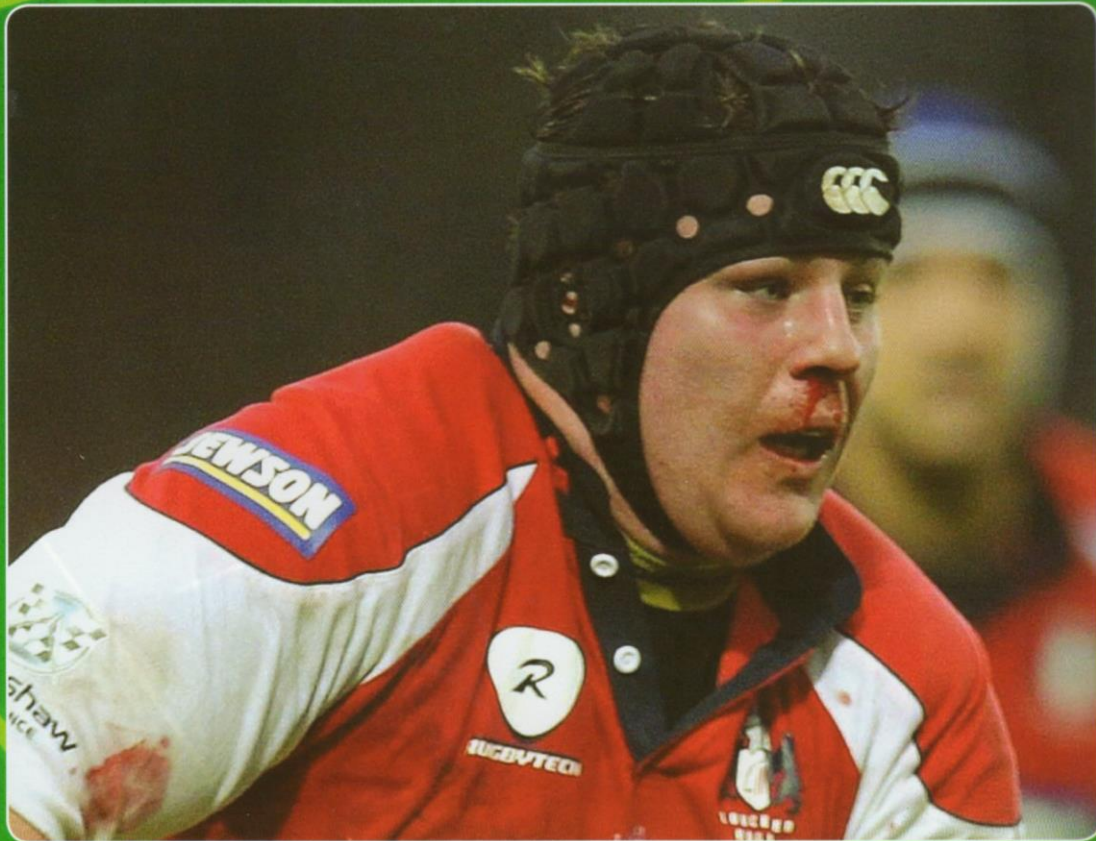
HEAD COACH
Brian SMITH



SPOTLIGHT

with Jack Forster

by Ian Randall



WHAT'S THE MOTTO YOU LIVE BY ?

I don't have a particular motto, but I just try to work hard. If you train hard, you generally play hard, and that's the main foundation for anything. If you work hard at the basics that should improve your game.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION ?

My European Challenge Cup winners medal. We won the final in my first year at the club, and it's always nice to get some silverware. It would be good to improve that to the Heineken Cup this season, but time will tell on that one.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BREAKFAST CEREAL?

Porridge. I'm trying to improve my diet. My weakness was too much toast.

ARE YOU A SPENDER OR A SAVER?

When I came to Gloucester and you're being paid for the first time I was definitely a spender, but over the last 12 months I've become a saver. I'm trying to look towards the future a bit. I rent a house at the moment with two other guys from Hartpury but the chances are we'll be going our separate way next



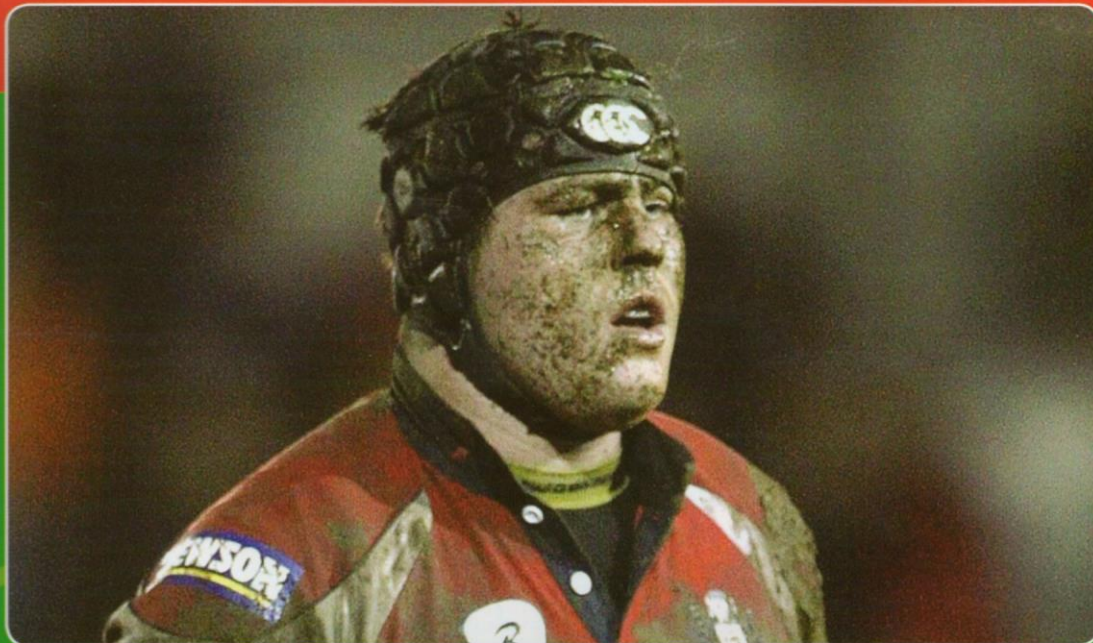
year, so I'll be looking to maybe buy my first house.

WHAT MADE YOU LAST LOSE YOUR TEMPER?

Watching the match at Bristol from the bench. It's frustrating not being able to do anything.

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

Probably Who Wants to be a Millionaire. Somehow watching at home you know all the answers, but I imagine it's different if you're in the hot seat.



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

My Dad. He somehow knows anything to do with anything. If I've got a question, he's the person I ask.

IF YOU WENT TO UNIVERSITY, WHICH DEGREE WOULD YOU DO ?

I'm doing agricultural land management, but since I started playing more rugby it's become part time. It'll probably turn out to be a five year course rather than three. Mum



and Dad still farm - they do organic beef and lamb - and at the end of my rugby career, whenever that is, that's what I'll go back to.

WHAT PART OF TRAINING DO YOU ENJOY MOST?

Scrummaging. As a prop if you don't enjoy scrums, it isn't worth playing. Generally when we train in the season, we're scrummaging against a machine, but however you do it, when you hit a good scrummage it gives you a real buzz.



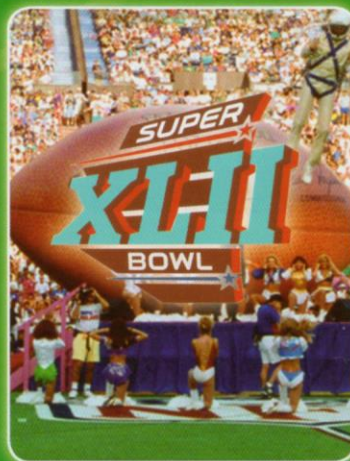
IF THERE'S A PRANK TO BE PLAYED, WHO'S USUALLY THE CULPRIT?

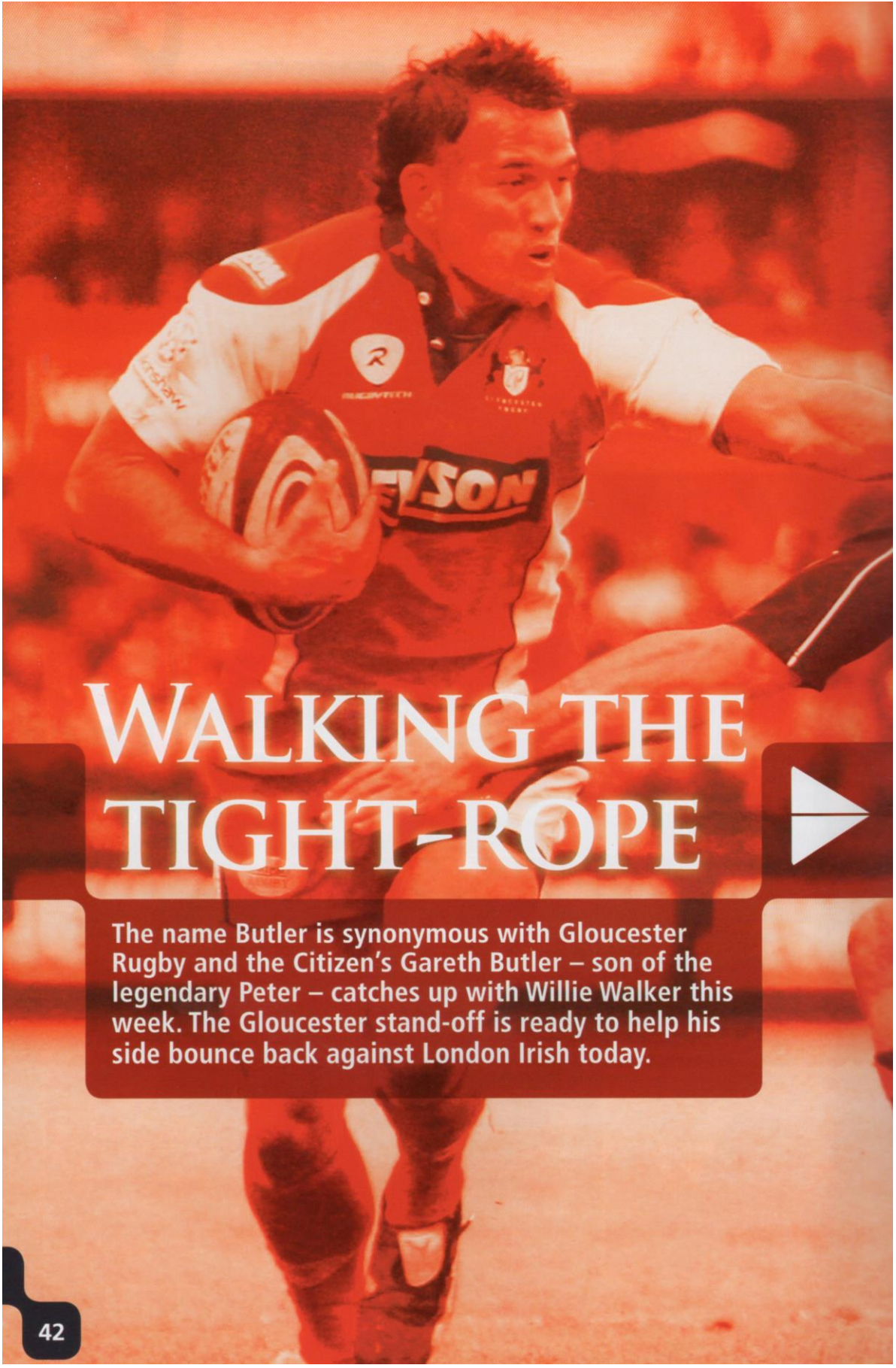
It's got be Califano or Hazell. they're always trying to think of something, particularly Cally. You can see it in his face when he's got something planned so we know someone has got something to look out for.



WHICH OTHER SPORTING EVENT WOULD YOU LOVE A TICKET FOR?

Probably something like the NFL. I've not been to America, so it would be great to go and perhaps watch one of the Superbowl matches.





WALKING THE TIGHT-ROPE



The name Butler is synonymous with Gloucester Rugby and the Citizen's Gareth Butler – son of the legendary Peter – catches up with Willie Walker this week. The Gloucester stand-off is ready to help his side bounce back against London Irish today.



WALKING THE TIGHT-ROPE



▶ WILLIE Walker will be back at Kingsholm today for another vital Guinness Premiership clash and is determined to bounce back from defeat against Harlequins after admitting his kicking wasn't good enough.

The New Zealander blamed Gloucester's inability to play in the right areas of the pitch for the 30-25 reverse last weekend.

But the utility back, called in to action at fly-half last week in the absence of the injured Ryan Lamb, says his preparations for today's game are no different.

Walker said: "Missing five kicks out of seven as this level is not acceptable. I'll put my hand up and say because of my kicking we lost the game.

"Not only because of my kicking - but had I made a few kicks perhaps the result would have been different. I haven't changed much training wise this week.

"You have a look at a few things. It was quite a challenging wind but you can't use that as an excuse because their kickers got their goals.

"I pretty much go back to basics and don't change too much.

"I kicked really well in the warm up but obviously in the match it didn't happen so I've had a look at what's going on - but I am sure I can bounce back."

Walker couldn't under-estimate the importance of today's game against London Irish, and next Friday's encounter with Sale, in shaping the end of Gloucester's

season, when the internationals will be consistently available again.

He said: "I think these games can decide how far we go. It would have been good to have the luxury in the last few weeks to have won all of our games - we put ourselves in the position to do that.

"Then going into these two games knowing we wouldn't have our international players we would have more confidence knowing that we were heading the right direction.

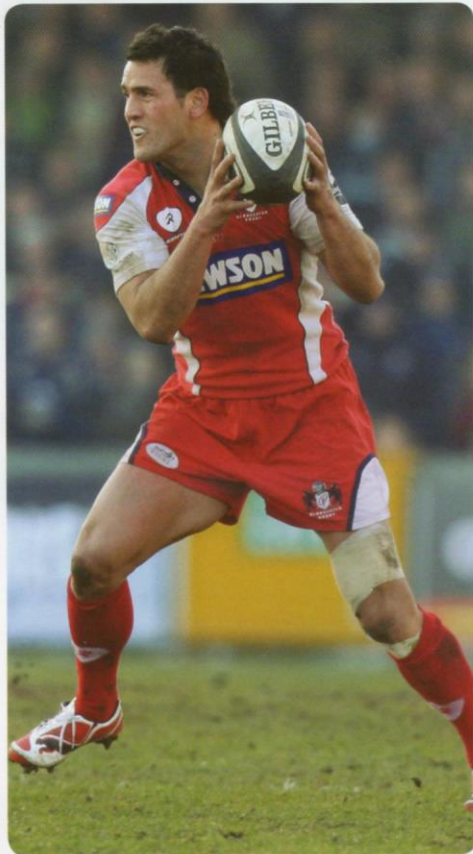
"Because we've put ourselves under a bit of pressure it's going to be tough but we've got to dig in. All the boys are pretty keen to get it on and get stuck in."

In recent defeats against Leicester, Bristol and Harlequins Dean Ryan's side have been in positions to win all three games.

"It's frustrating knowing we put ourselves in positions to win but didn't capitalise on those opportunities," Walker added. "We've done a lot of hard work previous to the last two weeks and we can't let it all slip away.

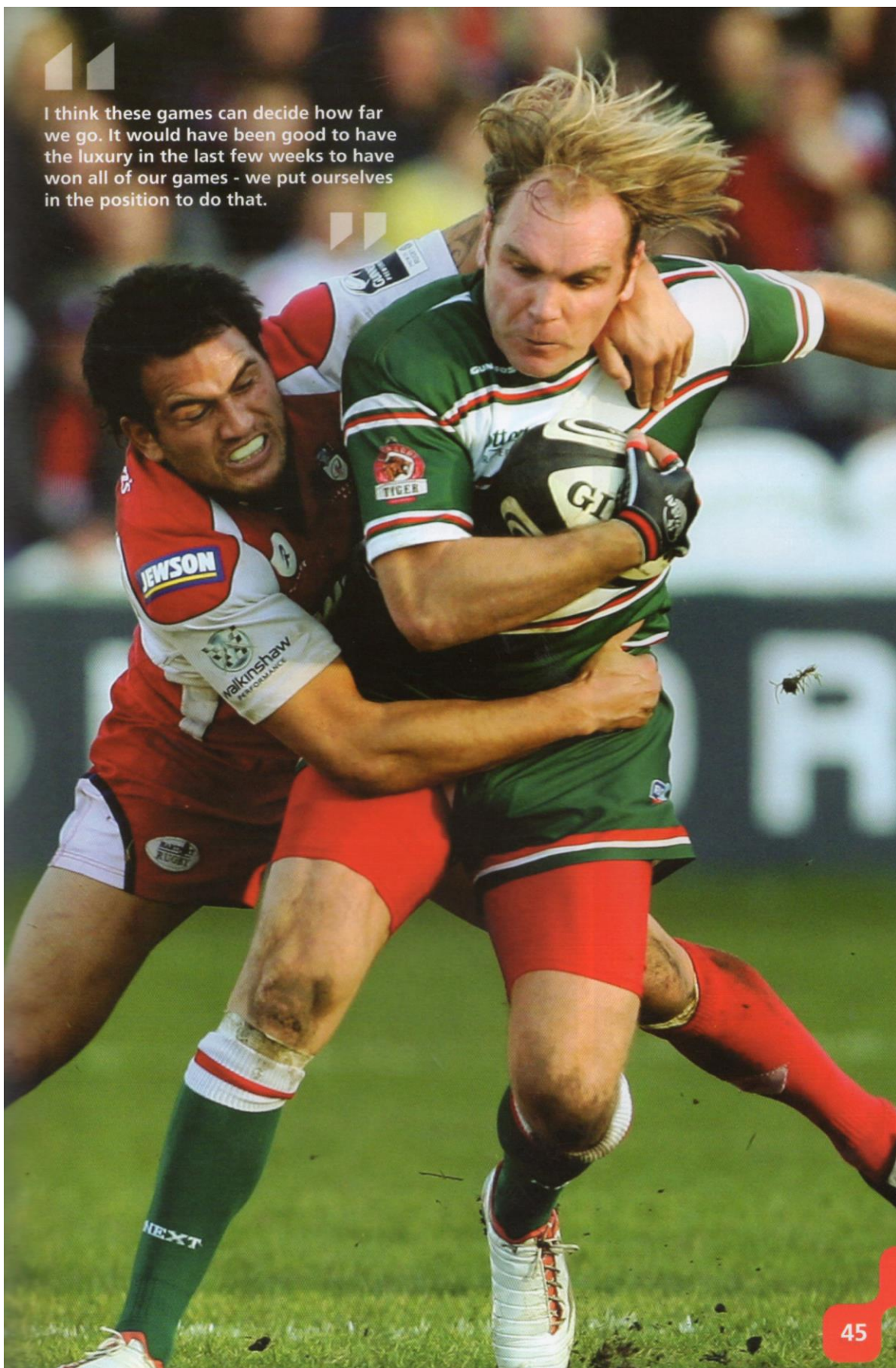
"But at the same time the boys just have to be confident that we are not that far away from getting things right. I don't think playing 10 I put us in the positions where we were able to attack properly.

"We played in the wrong areas of the field. In the first half we tried to run from our half and put ourselves under pressure with turnovers they capitalised on."





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MATCH ACTION

Gloucester Rugby
Newcastle Falcons

28
20



Time line

11 mins	Walker PEN	3-0
21 mins	Walker PEN	6-0
33 mins	Walker PEN	9-0
36 mins	Phillips TRY, May CON	9-7
39 mins	May TRY, May CON	9-14
46 mins	May PEN	9-17
53 mins	May DROP-GOAL	9-20
62 mins	Simpson-Daniel TRY, Walker CON	16-20
73 mins	Bailey TRY	21-20
80 mins	Qera TRY, Walker CON	28-20

Gloucester Line-up

15	Walker	(2c, 3p)
14	Simpson-Daniel	(1t)
13	Adams	
12	Allen	
11	Foster	
10	Lamb	
9	Cooper	
1	Wood	
2	Titterrell	
3	Forster	
4	W. James	
5	Brown	
6	Buxton	
7	Hazell	
8	Narraway	
REPS		
16	Bailey	(1t) (Lamb)
17	Azam	(Titterrell)
18	Qera	(1t) (W. James)
19		
20		
21		
22		

Falcons flattened

Saturday, February 23, Kingsholm

Attendance: 13,047, Referee: Martin Fox

▶ GLOUCESTER required three tries in the last quarter of a see-saw encounter to see of a resilient and thoroughly committed Newcastle side at Kingsholm.

The fightback was led by James Simpson-Daniel who not only scored a try but was perhaps the ultimate attacking threat on either side. He was a danger whenever he received the ball and eventually Gloucester had enough about them to beat a team who played it fast and loose without their international contingent.

Gloucester were nervous and out of kilter and needed two Willie Walker penalties for a 6-0 lead. They were just finding their feet thanks to a couple of lovely breaks by Jack Adams and Simpson-Daniel when they turned over possession and Newcastle went the length to score.

Gareth Cooper lost the ball and Ollie Phillips picked up and kicked forward, beat away Ryan Lamb and managed to rob Walker to go under the sticks. When Newcastle scored again – this time Carl Hayman and Phil Dowson established a



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platform for Tom May to thread his way through to score and take Newcastle 14-9 ahead at the break.

And when May landed a penalty and a drop-goal, Gloucester were 11 points adrift and facing a second successive defeat before the home side raised themselves for one last effort. First, Cooper and Ryan Lamb combined and then Adams straightened the attack for Simpson-Daniel to touch down.

To Newcastle's credit they defended very well. Simpson-Daniel attacked to the right,

Andy Hazell had a go and when play came to the right, the flanker fed in replacement James Bailey, who scored.

Gloucester were now 21-20 ahead and had seven minutes left to defend. The home side attempted to close the game down but Newcastle turned them over in the final stages. They went right but May took an age over his drop-goal, Luke Narraway hurtled through, charged down and set off for the posts. Akapusi Qera arrived in support and sealed the victory with a third try.



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Man of the Match

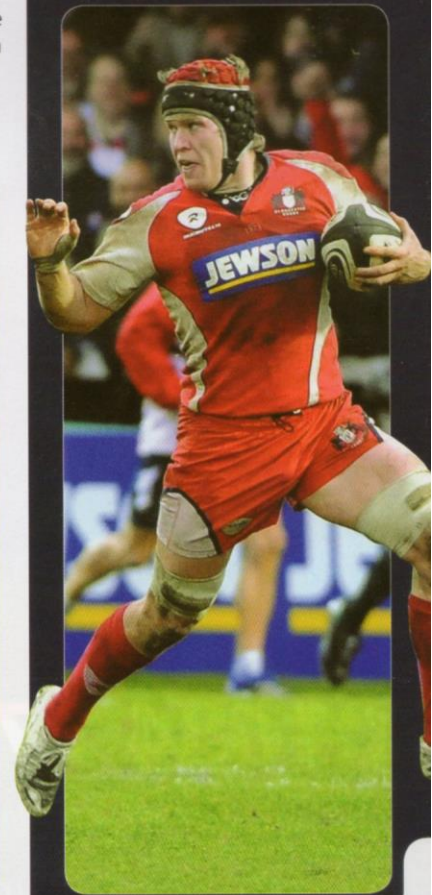


James Simpson-Daniel proved to be Gloucester's attacking inspiration.

Coach's Comment



"We were 9-0 ahead and could have grown the lead out had we managed to score a try in the first-half," head coach Dean Ryan.





PETER ARNOLD

Peter Arnold knows a thing or two about Gloucester through the ages but even he is turning back the clock this week – and also delights at James Simpson-Daniel's call-up to the England squad and Olly Barkley's summer arrival from Bath.

HANDS OFF!

IT WAS good to see Mr. Fletcher, coach of Newcastle Falcons, singing the praises of James Simpson-Daniel following their game at Kingsholm. It's about time someone in some sort of authority gave him the credit he deserves, and wondered, in public and in front of the media, why he's been given

the proverbial cold shoulder by England. I wonder what Rob Andrew thought of his old club's mentor's opinion, bearing in mind that Rob himself has put his foot in it at times at Kingsholm.

However, although it may have been kindly meant, I do think that it was a bit over

the top to imply that there would be a job waiting for Sinbad in the land of brown beer and singing hinnies if he felt inclined.

I think he'd probably cock a quizzical eyebrow if Dean Ryan issued the same invitation to Toby Flood or Jonny Wilkinson. Not that, in the light of recent events, we need either of them.

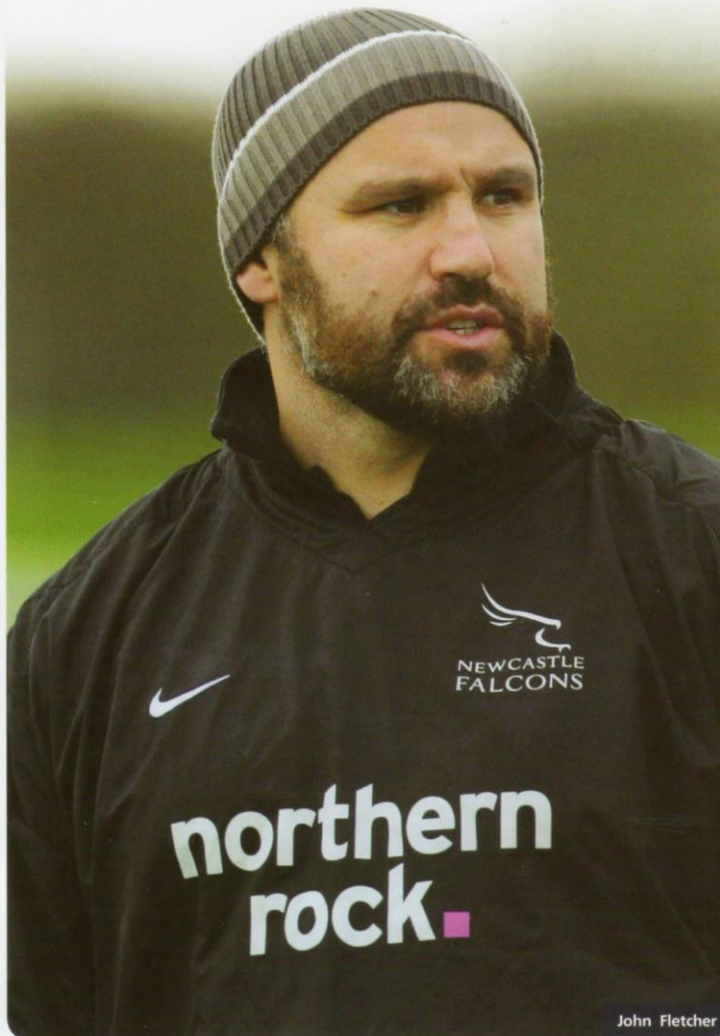
And, talking about recent events, perhaps Rob Andrew was, after all, influenced by Fletcher's comments, and passed his opinions to the England coach. Something certainly seems to have changed Brian Ashton's mind about the voyage of Sinbad.

OLLY, OLLY OLLY! (Oy, Oy, Oy!)

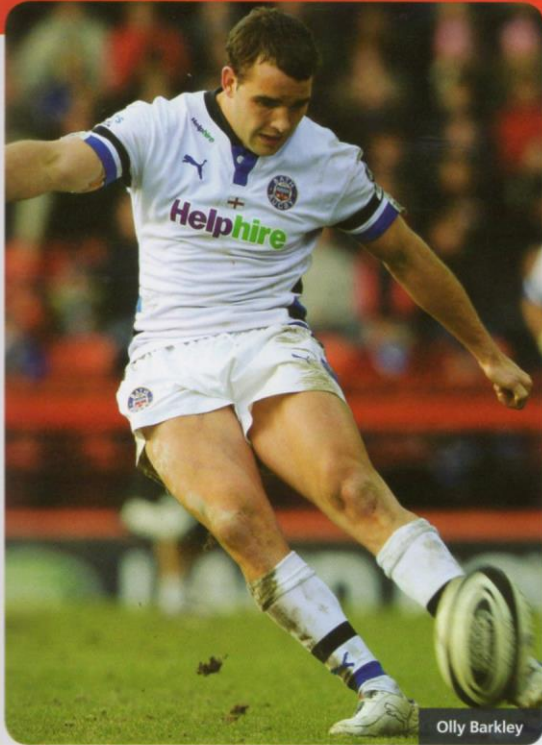
IN HIS playing days, the great Richard Sharpe used to call his native Cornwall 'Oggieland'. With the heralded arrival of Mr. Barkley from Bath next season, we are in some danger of becoming 'Ollieland' Azam, Morgan and now Barclay.

But enough of this frivolity. There's no doubt that the signing of Olly Barkley from Bath is a major coup, and represents a significant strengthening of our back resources. You will recall that Barkley, whether at inside centre or outside half, has been a consistent pain in the aspidistra for us over the past several seasons, and it will be good to have his talents on our side. If you can't beat 'em, get 'em to join you, I say.

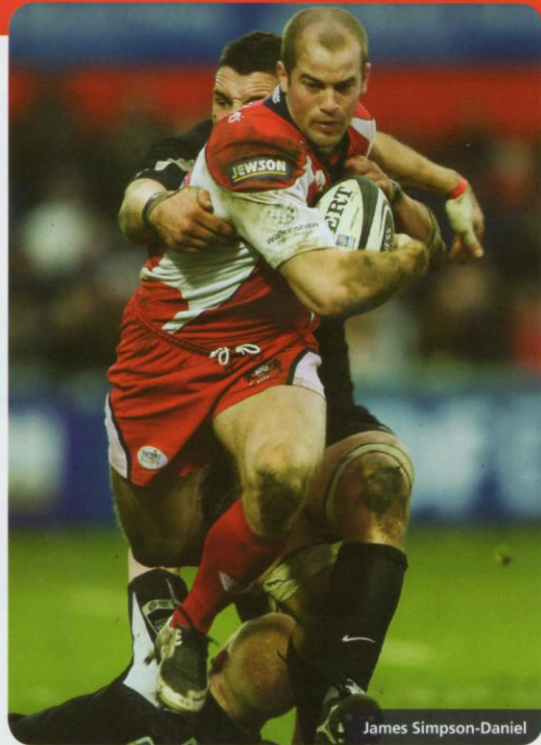
I don't wish to intrude on private grief, but Bath's management must be wondering if it's something they said. The exodus of good players from the Rec is really verging on the extraordinary. Gloucester, alone, has offered new homes to Messrs. Cooper, Delve, Balshaw (via Leeds), Tindall



John Fletcher



Olly Barkley



James Simpson-Daniel

and now Barkley. Another thorn in our flesh as he painfully reminded us last Saturday, Malone, defected to Harlequins, and Borthwick is off to Saracens. It's all a bit odd.

I took a peek at the Bath website as soon as I heard about the Barkley signing, and before the news appeared on our own. I was fascinated to note that, while acknowledging that Olly was leaving at the end of the season, they resolutely refused to disclose that he was coming to Kingsholm.

Are the grapes becoming a little sour Recwards?

GONE TO POT

I WAS very interested to see a picture in last week's Citizen showing an array of Roman pottery unearthed during the construction of our new stand. Having watched 'Time Team' from time to time, I think I recognised some fragments of red Samian ware among the finds, which is interesting.

It would all make sense. The very first Roman settlement hereabouts is said to have been near the river at Kingsholm.

However, I have always associated this area of Gloucester with Saxons rather than Romans. The very name 'King's Holm' refers, I am led to believe, to a 'place of the King'. It is said that the remains of a Saxon palace lie here somewhere.

We may also be able to come much closer to our own time to find elements which have archaeologists salivating. I was told by a professional in that field that a Victorian council tip may well lie somewhere under the pitch area, and rubbish tips are like gold to historians revealing much about the social history of their period.

But to return to the Saxons, I think that when the time comes to redevelop the Shed area, we could find archaeologists buzzing around like bees round the proverbial honey pot.

Kingsholm Square isn't much more than a long drop goal from the ground, and the tennis courts in that very pleasant square are actually scheduled as an ancient monument. Not that there is anything special about the courts themselves. I gather that, years ago, the area was pinpointed as a likely site for the remains of part of the Saxon king's palace.

That's a bit close for comfort for our developers. And we're not talking about a few Roman pots here, but about a Saxon site which could be of national importance.

No doubt all interests can be satisfied, but it's going to need careful consideration.

DILEMMA

IT'S IRONIC that Sinbad and Big Les seem to be competing for one England spot. I suppose it's too much to ask that both of them play.

MATCH OF THE DAYS

A horrendous defeat at home to West Hartlepool left Gloucester staring at relegation. Could they respond against Pontypool in a game that may have shaped their season? Dave King finds out



Richard West



Tony Windo



Dave Sims

▶ THE STONE-COLD silence of Gloucester's changing room lasted a full 15 minutes. Following a demoralising Kingsholm defeat, dejected players sat with their heads down reflecting on a performance which would surely consign them to Division Two. The defeat was inflicted by West Hartlepool – 21-6 in October 1992 and Gloucester's world looked bleak.

If they could not defeat bottom of the table West Hartlepool there appeared to be little or no prospect of an improvement. The next match was regarded as crucial. It was a visit to Pontypool who were lying in a mid-table position in the Heineken League First Division in Wales, a ground where in the previous decade Bobby Windsor, Graham Price, Jeff Squire, David Bishop and Eddie Butler had reigned supreme.

Few would have forgotten a previous October visit in 1982 when the Welshmen had inflicted a 52-15 defeat on Mike Teague, John Orwin, Steve Mills and co.

In that season of 1992-93 the 'Poolers' had defeated Bridgend 24-13, Pontypridd 29-24 at home and won 26-11 at Aberavon. Gloucester chairman Micky Booth and his fellow selectors debated at length what changes, if any, should be made to the Gloucester XV. After a lengthy discussion the axe fell and eight changes were made to the team that had dismally succumbed to the visitors from the north east.

Booth said after the defeat: "We have picked this team with the idea of seeing plenty of our other players. We have some young players who might grab their chance."

Gloucester provided the answer with a much improved performance. A deserved win was recorded and several of the first team newcomers gave the selectors food for thought.

Those few fans who made the journey marvelled at the performance of Gloucester's number eight Peter Miles – "positive words were what

we wanted and we were glad to hear the 'Glawster' cheer on the terraces at Pontypool, it helped us a lot," he said.

In fact Miles was one of the most impressive players as the visitors outscored the home team by four tries to one. The match was played at a frantic pace, the second half was a scrappy affair but pride was restored.

Martin Jones gave Pontypool the lead with a penalty after five minutes but Gloucester hit back immediately from the restart. A charge by Dave Kearsey with Richard West and Andy Deacon in support saw Neil Matthews break two tackles to put full-back Martin Roberts through for a try which he also converted.

Pontypool struck back before the interval with a try from Jon Leonard from a tapped penalty, A try which Jones converted which enabled Pontypool to reduce the arrears to 14-10 at the break.

The second half was a rough and ready



Positive words were what we wanted and we were glad to hear the 'Glawster' cheer on the terraces at Pontypool, it helped us a lot

Gloucester's number eight Peter Miles

forward affair and when Neil Matthews kicked expertly to the corner, West won the line-out and Gloucester secured a scrum. Sharp work by Julian Davies enabled the scrum-half to secure the ball as it bobbed out and the fine try heralded the club's new arrival.

A last minute winger Derrick Morgan slipped three tackles after a sweeping Gloucester move to score and confirm a 24-10 victory. It was a flattering score line for the Welsh club as they almost conceded two or three more tries.

Gloucester coach Keith Richardson recalled, "It was an excellent performance, a lot of people had a lot

of things to prove and I thought a lot of them did exceptionally well and proved they were in contention for first team places in the future."

Miles believed that Gloucester's first team at that time could have benefited from the United teams expansive style of play: "We always tried to play running rugby in the United and we played it pretty well."

Miles was one of seven second team players included in the revamped first team that late October day and he added: "There were a lot of negative comments after the West Hartlepool defeat, they did not help the lads to

improve – positive words were what we needed and those supporters who travelled provided that."

So the League campaign that had sunk to new depths the previous week was cast aside and a spirited performance in the valleys helped get Gloucester's league campaign back on track.



Andy Deacon

MATCH OF THE DAYS

THE TEAMS

PONTYPOOL:

A.CARR
S.WHITE
P.TAYLOR
B.LEWIS
M.JONES
S.HANSON
M.CHAPMAN
A.DIBBLE
T.ROGERS
P.TAYLOR
N.JONES
C.CRANE
S.JACKSON
R.GOODEY (CAPTAIN)
J.LEONARD

REPLACEMENTS:

W.RICHARDS
L.WOODS

GLOUCESTER:

M.ROBERTS
D.MORGAN
D.CASKIE
D.CUMMINS
S.MORRIS
N.MATTHEWS
J.DAVIES
T.WINDO
D.KEARSEY
A.DEACON
D.SIMS
R.WEST
P.GLANVILLE
A.STANLEY (CAPTAIN)
P.MILES.

REPLACEMENTS:

J.PERRISN
M.WADLEY

REFEREE: HUW LEWIS (PONTYPRIDD)



Pontypool Park - Picture by Ian Cooke, Blaenavon

FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

Bob Fenton is back today and believes 11 other Guinness Premiership clubs may just swap places with Gloucester – despite defeat at Harlequins last weekend.

▶ THE OLD transfer merry-go-round seems to have started a bit earlier this season, with new signings and a million rumours sweeping the airwaves at any given time.

I think, though, that the announcement of the capture of Olly Barkley's signature a couple of weeks ago is very good news indeed. Here we have a proven talent who will add a huge amount of experience to our backline, not to mention another kicking option in midfield. Perhaps uniquely for a Gloucester player (with the exception of Mike and Iain) he will know what it is like to win at The Rec on a regular basis!

It does seem, though, that not everyone is happy. Perhaps the fact that he is coming from a club down the A46 is clouding judgement somewhat, or maybe it's some well publicised scrapes off the field. Perhaps it's because he has been

our nemesis on too many occasions in the past – who knows. Still, I firmly believe that the vast majority of people are very glad to have him on board, and will make sure he gets a warm welcome when he turns up at Kingsholm.

Turns up to play for us, that is – not when he runs out for Bath when they are up here at the end of the season.

It's interesting to note the number of players who have moved this way over recent seasons – Dougie Woodman was on Bath's books before he came here, as was Ed Pearce, Steve Ojomoh and Audley Lumsden. More recently we've picked up Tins and Iain Balshaw who learnt their trade at The Rec before seeing the light and moving our way.

Given all that activity I guess the idea that Bath have become a feeder club for us have some credibility. We'll let them find

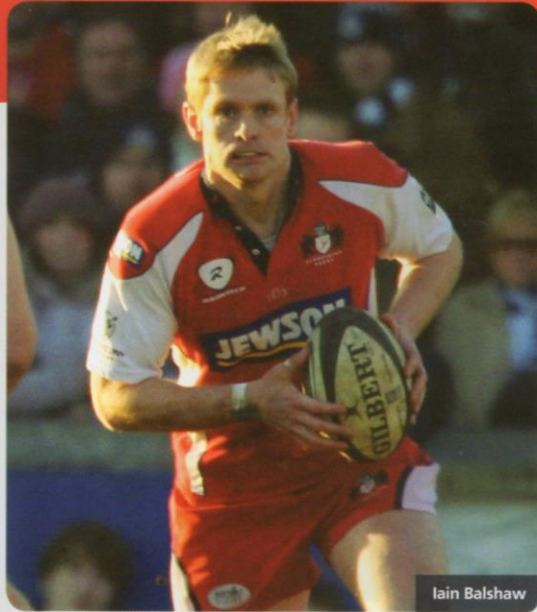
one or two good players and give them some big match experience and once they are ready they can move on up to a proper rugby club and Castle Grim.

And to complete the premiership triangle (or perhaps more accurately – line) once they leave Gloucester they can go to Worcester...

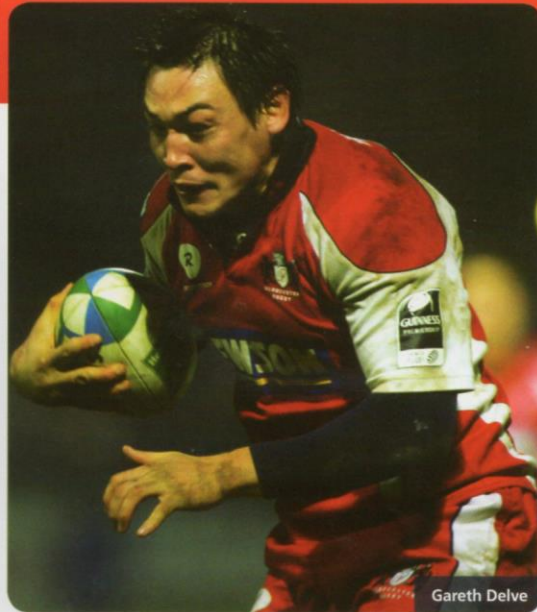
Rumour has it that Olly decided to come to Gloucester after last year's match at Kingsholm. Apparently he heard everyone chanting "Olly Olly" and thought we meant him! Next year is going to be a bit difficult, with so many Olly's on the squad we're going to have to have some sort of differentiator to avoid confusion.

So that's one definite signing, now all we have to do is wait for the influx of Irish and New Zealand internationals who are reported heading for us and we will be well away.





Iain Balshaw



Gareth Delve



As wiser people than me have said, it's the way that you deal with the set-backs that show how good you really are. For what it's worth I think we have the personnel on and off the field to steady the ship.

Bob Fenton on Gloucesters Future



I love rumour time, not least because it takes your mind of the nerve-fraying tension of the Premiership. Every game is like a cup final at the moment, everyone is tough. Long gone are the days when you could look at an opposition team and think that the points were in the bag before kick-off.

Our last home game – against Newcastle – is a great case in point. If you still have the team sheets take a look at them, we fielded almost a full side of internationals, they had less than a handful. Yet they scrapped every inch of the way and were mighty unlucky not to leave with all the points, let alone one.

It just goes to show that there is really not that much difference between most of the teams in the Premiership these days, and pretty much any team can get a good result in almost any fixture – okay with the possible exception of Leeds who seem almost dead and buried. But then

only last weekend Sale got turned over at home by Worcester, and there are more than a few places between them in the Premiership table.

Which makes the comment of one of my fellow Gloucester supporters on the way up to Quins last week even more laughable "Any Gloucester XV should be able to beat a Harlequins side on any day of the week," this knowledgeable sage assured me. I can tell you he was a lot quieter on the way home!

We're still top of the table and there to be shot at, it's up to us to rise to the challenge. And the challenge is not going to come much tougher than London Irish today. For several seasons they have been building towards becoming one of the better sides in the Premiership – nothing flash but very effective rugby built on their not inconsiderable strengths.

It seems odd to talk about a wobble in

confidence when you have led the table for so long, we should not lose sight of the fact that we are one of the best sides in the country – maybe not the best yet but we're getting there. And on any journey like this there will be set-backs, that's a fact of life.

As wiser people than me have said, it's the way that you deal with set-backs that shows how good you really are. For what it's worth I think we have the personnel on and off the field to steady the ship. We may not end up at the top of the Premiership table, we might not win the play off final and we might not win the Heineken Cup this season. Does this make us a bad side? Not in my book, it makes us one that is building an outfit that will dominate in years to come.

And finally ask yourself this – how many teams would want to swap places with us despite this supposed crisis? My guess it would be quite a few.

So, like the first rule of Italian driving – what's behind doesn't matter it's what is in front that counts (sorry Marco). Let's forget yesterday, let's stop the grumbling in some sections and let's concentrate on 100 per cent support.

You know it makes sense.

MATCH ACTION

Harlequins
Gloucester Rugby

30
25



Time line

14 mins	Jarvis PEN	3-0
17 mins	Allen TRY	3-5
19 mins	Jones TRY, Jarvis CON	10-5
22 mins	Balshaw TRY, Walker CON	10-12
31 mins	Walker PEN	10-15
36 mins	Allen TRY	10-20
39 mins	Brown TRY, Jarvis CON	17-20
54 mins	Jarvis PEN	20-20
58 mins	Simpson-Daniel TRY	20-25
69 mins	Jarvis Pen	23-25
75 mins	Robson TRY, Malone CON	30-25

Gloucester Line-up

15	Iain Balshaw	(1t)
14	James Simpson-Daniel	(1t)
13	Jack Adams	(1t)
12	Anthony Allen	(1t)
11	Lesley Vainikolo	
10	Willie Walker	(1c 1p)
9	Rory Lawson	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Peter Buxton	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Alasdair Strokosch	
7	Akapusi Qera	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Alastair Dickinson	(Wood)
17	Andy Titterell	(Azam)
18	Marco Bortolami	(Qera)
19	Gareth Delve	(Narraway)

New Header???

Saturday, March 1, The Stoop

Attendance: 12,638, Referee: Sean Davey

DESPITE scoring four tries and earning two points, Gloucester suffered their fifth Guinness Premiership defeat at the hands of Harlequins last Saturday.

Harlequins, playing a broken game and using the qualities of Danny Care, Mike Brown and Ugo Monye, created the opportunity for Quins to snatch a late victory thanks to George Robson's try four minutes from time.

If Gloucester had managed the game better they would surely have won because they

were a threat whenever they managed to string more than two or three phases together. They took a 17th minute lead when Willie Walker charged down Adrian Jarvis' cross-kick and Jack Adams picked up before running 70 metres to score.

But Gloucester drifted in and out of the game and immediately from the re-start Monye out-jumped Adams and raced to the line. Only a brilliant tackle saved the day but from the ruck, prop Ceri Jones dived into score.

However, Gloucester hit back three minutes



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later with a peach of a try. Peter Buxton fed Vainikolo with an over-head pass and the winger bashed it forward, smashed his way down the left before feeding Buxton inside and he put out Iain Balshaw in for the try.

When Willie Walker landed a penalty after 31 minutes Gloucester were 15-10 ahead and they extended that with another try. This time, James Simpson-Daniel came in off his wing and delivered the scoring pass to Anthony Allen.

But Quins, to their credit, responded immediately when Brown raced through

from a ruck right on the interval. Jarvis did level the scores to 20-20 with a 54th minute penalty before Gloucester sealed a bonus point with a fourth try. Alasdair Strokosch hit up the middle from a line-out and from the recycled ball, Simpson-Daniel broke a tackle and went to the line.

Walker missed the conversion and Gloucester then simply failed to shut the game down. Quins got within two points with a 69th minute penalty before Robson scored to the left of the sticks thanks to some neat work from Care and some punishing forward momentum.



Man of the Match



James Simpson-Daniel

Coach's Comment



"We lacked the control of the game to manage it properly when we were ahead and it cost us." head coach Dean Ryan.

