

The Official Matchday Programme

C'MON BRIS

Saturday 27th December 2008
Kick off 3pm

**BRISTOL
RUGBY**
V
Gloucester



OFFICIAL MAIN SPONSOR



MATCHDAY SPONSOR



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GLOUCESTER

If you had muttered to a Gloucester supporter in any pub, snug or smoking room around the uniquely atmospheric delights of Kingsholm at the end of September that Dean Ryan's side would be joint top of the Guinness Premiership five days before Christmas, they may well have just carted you off to the funny farm.

Defeats against Leicester and Sale Sharks had left one of the most fancied sides in the country staring up from the uncomfortable position of seventh place, struggling to adapt to the new Experimental Law Variations (ELV's) and generally fumbling around for cohesion and reliability.

But since that Charlie Hodgson-inspired defeat at Edgeley Park, Gloucester have lost just once since in all competitions – away to Cardiff in the Heineken Cup – and have re-discovered the movement game that made them such a threat last season.

Last Saturday's 48-5 victory over Calvisano was their seventh in a row in all competitions and means they come into today's red-hot collision with leaders London Irish in good form and good heart.

The close season was not so much about what happened at Gloucester as what didn't happen. Despite finishing top of the Guinness Premiership pile again at the end of the regular 2007-8 season, Gloucester again failed to transfer their obvious potential into a dividend during the play-offs – it was a familiar, unfulfilled ending to what threatened to be a triumphant season.

By that time, head coach Dean Ryan had done the majority of his recruiting – a policy that included nabbing one of Bath's diamonds in Olly Barkley – Llanelli centre Matthew Watkins and former Gloucester second row Adam Eustace – also from Stradey Park.

When he completed negotiations to bring Canterbury prop Greg Somerville to Kingsholm, the general thought was that Gloucester's squad was stronger than last season's and well capable of challenging again this season.

Barkley has been brought in to provide a tactical nous and big-game understanding that so often seemed to evaporate and as a left-footed kicking option, will vie with Ryan Lamb and Anthony Allen for the 10 and 12 positions respectively – but it is the inside centre position he covets and kicked Gloucester to an opening round Heineken Cup win over Biarritz and then piloted them to success over Northampton a fortnight ago.

Somerville is the most capped prop in All Black history and alongside Dave Young – the young and aggressive tight forward from Leicester – Gloucester kept their summer additions to a minimum.

With the likes of the emerging and increasingly gifted Luke Narry, the robust Anthony Allen and

the safe as houses Olly Morgan a year older and a year wiser, Gloucester's squad is up there with anything in the Premiership.

Gloucester completed their preparations with a 30-8 victory over Glasgow under the new ELV's but their Premiership campaign got off to the worst possible start with a home defeat to those Tigers – their third successive victory at Kingsholm in eight months.

Tries from Geordan Murphy and Toby Flood sealed a 20-8 victory – Gloucester's only try coming from the outstanding Morgan in the first-half. But they responded by winning for the first time ever at the Rec in league rugby in a spot of west country tribalism unique to the people involved. They backed that up with a tense victory over Harlequins, the Premiership pace-setters, with tries from Morgan and Alasdair Strokosch before Hodgson subjected them to a withering kicking assault at Edgeley Park as they struggled to come to terms with the ELV's. They have won games but have not been convincing so far this season – as the Falcons will testify.

That defeat, at the end of September, has been their last in any competition since then. They re-grouped with a 39-23 win over Newcastle at Kingsholm that included a bonus point and then built on that success with a 24-19 victory over Wasps in the EDF Energy Cup with tries from Willie Walker and Lesley Vainikolo. James Simpson-Daniel's 18th Heineken Cup try established the platform for their opening European win of the season – 22-10 over Biarritz. However, they lost a high-scoring contest in Cardiff before two tries from Lesley Vainikolo and a brilliant performance from Iain Balshaw set-up a 25-20 win over the Dragons and then Apo Satuala's score ensured a semi-final place against the Osprey's next year.

Victories over Saracens and then back-to-back bonus point successes over Bristol and Northampton means Gloucester make their most important trek of the season to Irish today in extremely good heart.



Olly Morgan of Gloucester scores a try against Bristol Rugby, November 21, 2008 in Gloucester.



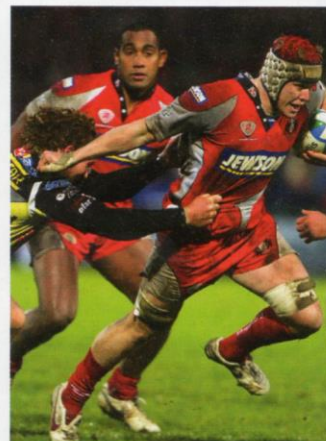
PLAYERS TO WATCH

LUKE NARRAWAY

The England number eight is a vital member of the Gloucester squad. Shot to prominence on England's summer tour to New Zealand in the summer, Narraway is an athletic ball carrier and outstanding athlete. He reads the game well and runs excellent support lines in either the 10 or 12 channel and is a line-out option.

He made his Gloucester debut in 2003 against Leeds and will fight it out with Gareth Delve when the Welshman returns to full fitness next year.

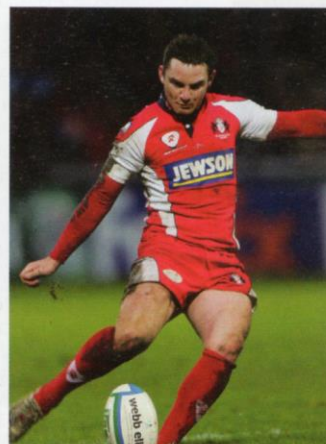
Scored three successive tries this season against Northampton and Calvisano twice. He is a member of England's EPS squad but did not feature in the autumn international series.



RYAN LAMB

The stand-off is a key component to Gloucester. His awareness, passing qualities and ability to unlock defences with his distributional qualities means he is central alongside Barkley in Gloucester's midfield.

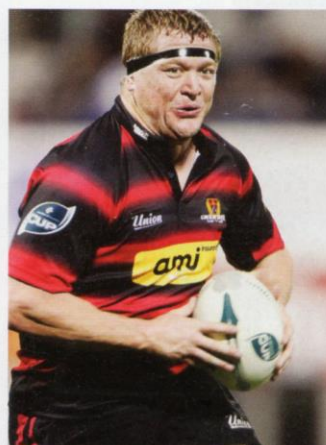
He made his debut in 2005 against Brive and has since gone on to represent England Saxons. In all, he had made 72 appearances and has scored 15 tries. The master of the intercept, Lamb scored against Bristol at Kingsholm back in November.



GREG SOMERVILLE

The 30-year-old is the most capped All Black prop in history, having made 67 appearances for New Zealand. He has joined Gloucester from the Canterbury Crusaders on a two and half year deal. Able to play on either side of the scrum, Somerville

made his debut against Calvisano in the Heineken Cup before Christmas and will provide a huge amount of experience for Gloucester's young crop of props.



HEAD2HEAD



HEAD2HEAD



Luke Arcsott

Olly Morgan

7	Matches	6
19	Total Tackles	19
8	Total Misses	1
71	Total Carries	38
431	Total Metres	427
27	Total Passes	14
10	Defender Beaten	9
0	Clean Breaks	5
5	Turnover Conceded	3
0	Try Scored	4



HEAD2HEAD



Ed Barnes

Ryan Lamb

8	Matches	7
45	Total Tackles	28
5	Total Misses	8
50	Total Carries	16
188	Total Metres	89
114	Total Passes	126
28	Total Kicks in Play	70
6	Defender Beaten	0
2	Clean Breaks	1
0	Try Scored	1



HEAD2HEAD



Dan Ward-Smith

Luke Narray

8	Matches	7
48	Total Tackles	56
1	Total Misses	6
72	Total Carries	55
306	Total Metres	217
22	Total Passes	51
10	Turnover Conceded	10
4	Off load	8
5	Defender Beaten	3
1	Try Scored	2

TEAMS



BRISTOL RUGBY

BRISTOL RUGBY

27.12.08
Kick Off 3PM

VS



GLOUCESTER RUGBY

GLOUCESTER

1	ALEX CLARKE	PROP	NICK WOOD	1
2	MARK REGAN	HOOVER	SCOTT LAWSON	2
3	JASON HOBSON	PROP	GREG SOMERVILLE	3
4	MARIANO SAMBUCETTI	LOCK	MARCO BORTOLAMI	4
5	ROBERT SIDOLI	LOCK	ALEX BROWN	5
6	ALFIE TO'OALA	BLINDSIDE	PETER BUXTON	6
7	REDFORD PENNYCOOK	OPENSIDE	ALASDAIR STROKOSCH	7
8	DAN WARD-SMITH	NO.8	LUKE NARRAWAY	8
9	SHAUN PERRY (C)	SCRUM HALF	GARETH COOPER	9
10	ED BARNES	FLY HALF	RYAN LAMB	10
11	DAVID LEMI	LEFT WING	LESLEY VAINIKOLO	11
12	LUKE EVES	CENTRE	MIKE TINDALL	12
13	NEIL BREW,	CENTRE	MATTHEW WATKINS	13
14	LEE ROBINSON	RIGHT WING	MARK FOSTER	14
15	LUKE ARSCOTT	FULL BACK	OLLY MORGAN	15
16	SCOTT LINKLATER	REPLACEMENT	OLIVIER AZAM	16
17	DARREN CROMPTON	REPLACEMENT	ALASDAIR DICKINSON	17
18	NATHAN BUDGETT	REPLACEMENT	WILL JAMES	18
19	JAMES PHILLIPS	REPLACEMENT	APOLOSI SATALA	19
20	GRAEME BEVERIDGE	REPLACEMENT	RORY LAWSON	20
21	ADRIAN JARVIS	REPLACEMENT	WILLIE WALKER	21
22	GREG BARDEN	REPLACEMENT	JACK ADAMS	22

TODAY'S OFFICIALS

Referee - David Rose
Touch Judge 1 - Stuart Terhegge
Touch Judge 2 - Bob Mullis
Fourth Official: Andy Weymouth

Final Score