

NEWCASTLE FALCONS V GLOUCESTER RUGBY

£3.00

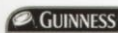
FALCONS

northern
rock

Official
Club Sponsor



KINGSTON PARK • SUNDAY 11TH JANUARY 2009 • KICK-OFF 3PM



Bank of America



www.guinnesspremiership.com



Alasdair Strokosch

Gloucester Rugby

Since Gloucester's last visit to Kingston Park, Dean Ryan's side have won seven of their eight matches and will be gunning for their third successive Guinness Premiership victory this afternoon.

Their one defeat in that time was a particularly harrowing one – the mother and father of all hidings away to current leaders London Irish. But since that reverse five days before Christmas, Gloucester have won away to Bristol and most recently at home to Saracens last weekend.

It has been a busy few weeks at Castle Grim. No sooner had Greg Somerville, the most capped prop in All Black history landed, than he was a long-term casualty after detaching the retina in his left eye at Irish, while Lesley Vainikolo's season came to a premature end last Saturday with an Achilles injury.

However, if you had muttered to a Gloucester supporter in or around the uniquely atmospheric delights of Kingsholm at the end of September that Ryan's side would be second in the table at the turn of the year, 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 twice in all competitions and have re-discovered the movement game that made them such a threat last season.

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 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 via 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 before Christmas.

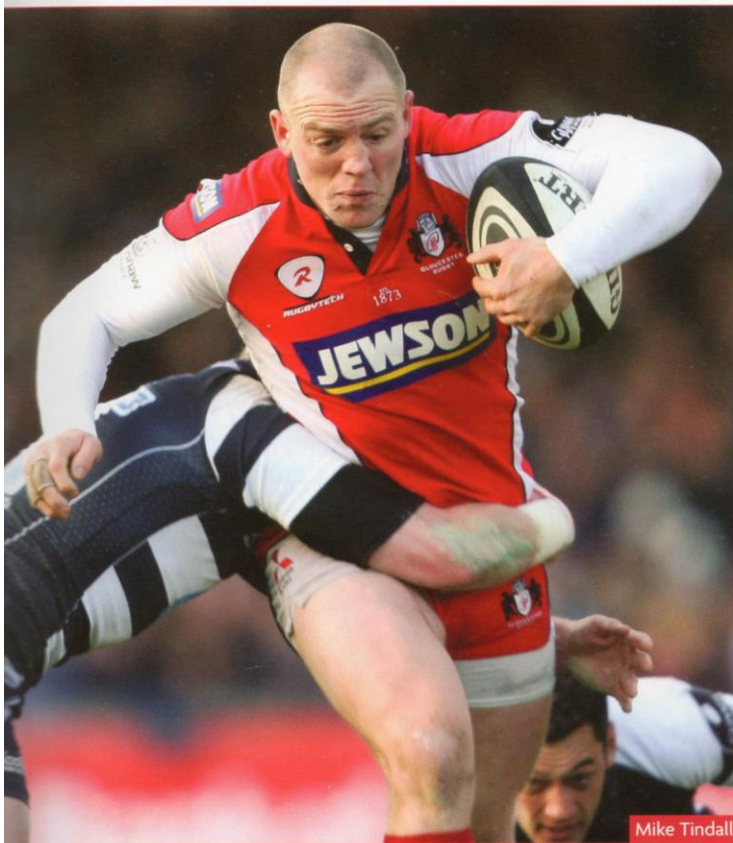
Somerville is the most capped prop in All Black history and alongside Dave Young – the young and aggressive tight forward from Leicester – Gloucester kept their summer additions to a minimum.

But the most striking advances have been made by players already in situ. The increasingly influential Luke Narroway is maturing into a leader, while the safe as houses Olly Morgan is a year older and a year wiser and attracting the attentions of the England selectors. His try last weekend was his sixth in the Premiership so far this season and he has been one of Gloucester's most complete performers.

Gloucester's 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.



Lesley Vainikolo



Mike Tindall

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.

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 Satala'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 latest journey of 2009 in good heart and shape. →



SQUAD LIST

Surname	Christian name	Position	Height (Metric)	Height (Imp)	Weight (Metric)	Weight (Imp)	DOB	Honours
Adams	Jack	Centre	1.82m	6ft 1in	96kg	15st 0lb	17/09/86	
Allen	Anthony	Centre	1.80m	5ft 11in	92kg	14st 7lb	01/09/86	England
Azam	Olivier	Hooker	1.85m	6ft 1in	120kg	19st 0lb	24/10/74	France
Balshaw	Iain	Full back/Wing	1.85m	6ft 1in	94kg	14st 2lb	14/04/79	England/ Lions
Barkley	Olly	Centre/Stand-off	1.78m	5ft 10in	92kg	14st 6lb	28/11/81	England
Bortolami	Marco	Lock	1.95m	6ft 5in	112kg	17st 5lb	12/06/80	Italy
Brown	Alex	Lock	2.01m	6ft 7in	116kg	18st 1lb	17/05/79	England
Buxton	Peter	Back row	1.92 m	6ft 4in	115kg	18st 1lb	21/08/78	
Cooper	Gareth	Scrum half	1.72m	5ft 7in	84kg	13st 0lb	07/05/79	Wales/ Lions
Delve	Gareth	Back row	1.91m	6ft 3in	115kg	18st 1lb	30/12/82	Wales
Dickinson	Alasdair	Prop	1.84m	6ft 0in	112kg	17st 5lb	11/09/83	Scotland
Eustace	Adam	Lock	1.95m	6ft 5in	107kg	16st 12lb	09/01/79	
Forrester	James	Back row	1.95m	6ft 5in	110kg	17st 4lb	09/02/81	England
Forster	Jack	Prop	1.86m	6ft 1in	120kg	18st 11lb	19/03/87	
Foster	Mark	Wing	1.83m	6ft 0in	100kg	15st 10lb	02/09/83	
Hazell	Andrew	Back row	1.83m	6ft 0in	95kg	14st 13lb	25/04/78	England
James	Will	Lock	1.99m	6ft 6in	120kg	18st 11lb	22/12/76	Wales
Lamb	Ryan	Stand-off	1.76m	5ft 9in	85kg	13st 5lb	18/05/86	
Lawson	Rory	Scrum half	1.73m	5ft 8in	85kg	13st 5lb	12/03/81	Scotland
Lewis	Dave	Scrum half	1.70m	5ft 7in	80kg	12st 8lb	29/04/89	
McMillan	Ross	Hooker	1.85m	6ft 1in	104kg	16st 7lb	02/06/87	
Morgan	Olly	Full back	1.89m	6ft 2in	94kg	14st 2lb	03/11/85	England
Narraway	Luke	Back row	1.90m	6ft 3in	108kg	17st 0lb	07/09/83	England
Nieto	Carlos	Prop	1.86m	6ft 1in	110kg	17st 4lb	28/04/76	Italy
Norton	Dan	Wing	1.79m	5ft 10in	80kg	12st 8lb	22/03/88	
Qera	Akapusi	Back row	1.94m	6ft 4in	103kg	16st 0lb	24/04/84	Fiji
Sharples	Charlie	Wing	1.84m	6ft 0in	93kg	14st 9lb	17/08/89	
Simpson-Daniel	James	Wing	1.82m	6ft 0in	92kg	14st 6lb	30/05/82	England
Somerville	Greg	Prop	1.86m	6ft 1in	115kg	18st 2lb	28/11/77	New Zealand
Stroskosch	Alasdair	Back row	1.91m	6ft 3in	107kg	16st 11lb	21/02/83	Scotland
Titterrell	Andy	Hooker	1.78m	5ft 10in	94kg	14st 11lb	10/01/81	England/ Lions
Tindall	Mike	Centre	1.88m	6ft 2in	102kg	15st 12lb	18/10/78	England
Trinder	Henry	Centre	1.83m	6ft 0in	85kg	13st 5lb	14/04/89	
Vainikolo	Lesley	Wing	1.88m	6ft 2in	112kg	17st 8lb	04/05/79	England
Walker	Willie	Stand-off/Full back	1.83m	6ft 0in	88kg	13st 12lb	19/05/78	
Watkins	Matthew	Centre	1.83m	6ft 0in	92kg	14st 7lb	02/09/78	Wales
Williams	Dan	Number 8	1.97m	6ft 5in	104kg	16st 7lb	01/02/89	
Wood	Nick	Prop	1.86m	6ft 1in	112kg	17st 5lb	09/01/83	
Young	Dave	Prop	1.85m	6ft 0in	117kg	18st 6lb	18/12/85	