



Travis Perkins



SAINTS



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Review

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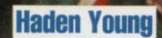
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SAINTS v GLOUCESTER

Saturday 3rd March 2007 KO 3pm

GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP



GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP FINAL, TWICKENHAM, 12 MAY 2007

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Ones To Watch

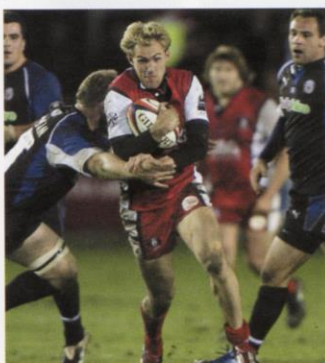
Gloucester's Young Guns

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review



Ordinarily Saints Review turns the spotlight on a particular opposition player who has made their mark on the season to date.

Today, however, we fix our attention on four of Gloucester's youngsters who have taken the GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP by storm over the past 12 months.



Olly Morgan is battling it out with Iain Balshaw not only for the Gloucester full-back berth but for the England 15 shirt as well. When

Balshaw pulled out of the Six Nations opener against Scotland, former Millfield pupil Morgan stepped up to the mark, so much so that when Balshaw again had to miss the trip to Croke Park last weekend England head coach Brian Ashton again placed his faith in the 21-year-old.

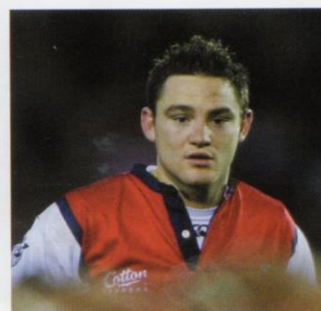
20-year-old Anthony Allen signed a full professional contract last summer. Another player from the Millfield production line, Allen had already made his first team debut last season. And helped by the injury absence of Mike Tindall he racked up 18 appearances and six tries. This season he has formed a powerful midfield partnership with Tindall, scoring eight tries to date. Allen also made his England debut in the autumn internationals against the All Blacks.

Every backline needs a pivot, and Ryan Lamb is another player without whom the GUINNESS



PREMIERSHIP would be a poorer place. Educated at St Peters' School, fly half Lamb made his first team debut aged only 19. This season he has started the majority of matches ahead of more experienced colleagues Ludovic Mercier and is regarded by many seasoned watchers to be one of the brightest young talents in England today. A full cap no doubt beckons soon...

Conventional wisdom has props reaching their prime in their late-20s. Jack Forster has bucked this in a big way and not just by his 6ft 1 inch, 119kg frame. He made 11 appearances in Gloucester's first team last season and is nearly in double figures this term. All this before he turns 20 later this month! He has already represented England at Under-16 and 18 level and is now a member of the Junior National Academy.



Today's Opponents

Had Worcester done the unthinkable – but at one stage highly probable – and won at Kingsholm last Saturday, the fine folk of Northampton would have been justified in feeling slightly aggrieved following their victory over Leicester.

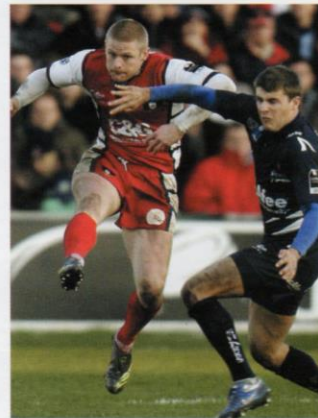
But Gloucester make the trip to Franklin's Gardens this afternoon in third place in the GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP following their 33-19 win over the Warriors.

Gloucester's victory last weekend was vital because it followed on

from a controversial 24-22 defeat against Saracens that threatened to deny them much-needed momentum as they hunted down a play-off place.

They now don't have the distraction of the Heineken Cup to get in the way having failed to progress from a pool which included the might of Leinster and the power and physicality of Agen.

Before the first leg of Europe intervened in October, Gloucester were unbeaten in the GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP with four victories



and a draw, and have won 10 of their 15 games in all.

They opened their season with a West Country derby victory over their nearest and dearest from Bath – youngsters Jack Adams and Olly Morgan scoring the tries in their 24-19 success. They then got the better of Harlequins at the Stoop in a far more disjointed performance that was revved up by a virtuoso performance from scrum-half Peter Richards, who produced one of the tries of the season and an outstanding performance against Worcester.

It was a solid if unspectacular start for Dean Ryan's side. The Kingsholm head coach has concocted one of the most exciting groups of players in the country, blending a mixture of youthful swagger and talent with high-quality experience in key positions.

From the beginning of the campaign they have been tagged as one of the favourites for the final stages of a number of competitions but Ryan is only too well aware that his group of players have only just begun their journey.



Saints hotline: 09068 555 808



Gloucester



"Our ambition is to be at the top end of Europe but our journey has only just begun," he has said. "There will be some pain along the way but we have an exciting and developing group of players who all work tremendously hard to try and be successful."

Italian duo Marco Bortolami and Carlos Nieto joined from Narbonne and Viadana respectively in two of the highest profile signings of the close season.

Bortolami has already shown what an outstanding athlete he is and is a natural leader of growing reputation in Gloucester's pack and Nieto is regarded as one of the best tighthead props in the Six Nations.

Christian Califano, once voted in the all-time best French front row, switched from Agen and has been a revelation – offering immediate



set-piece quality and a perfect learning base for youngster Jack Forster.

There have been other additions too. With Ryan Lamb initially out of action with an ankle injury, Willie Walker has taken his opportunity in the number 10 shirt, while both scrum-half Rory Lawson and lock

Will James have the potential to make serious impacts.

Iain Balshaw completed the summer recruitment drive from Leeds and with the likes of Andy Hazell, Peter Buxton and Alex Brown playing some outstanding rugby up front, Gloucester have enough quality all over the field to do some real damage as victories over Sale and Wasps would testify. It has meant that Ryan's biggest job has been managing the vast expectation on his squad.

"There is an awful lot this squad can achieve but we must not get ahead of ourselves – we have a long way to go and a lot of development to go through," Ryan said.



Head to head

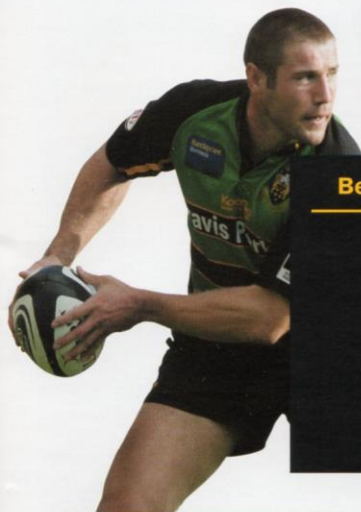
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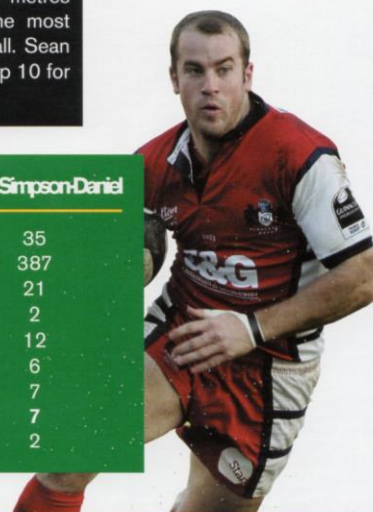
Northampton	Lineout stats	Gloucester	Northampton	Scrum stats	Gloucester
256	Throws	250	157	Put ins	121
194	Won	195	141	Won	112
9	Not straight	8	90	Percentage won	93
12	Quick throws	4	28	Penalties won	16
54	Won on oppo ball	55	13	Won opposition ball	14
21	Percentage stolen	22			



Northampton grabbed a crucial win against the odds at Welford Road but face another tough game this week. Saints' problems are obvious – they cannot score enough points but the loss of their best attacking players for large parts of the season has hit them hard. Last year Spencer, Clarke and Reihana were in the top 11 players in the league for defenders beaten and in the top six for metres made. This year Spencer has beaten the most defenders for the Saints but is 17th overall. Sean Lamont is their only representative in the top 10 for metres made.



Ben Cohen	Player	James Simpson-Daniel
71	Total carries	35
523	Total metres	387
39	Tackles	21
4	Missed tackles	2
13	Defenders beaten	12
4	Clean breaks	6
4	Offloads	7
7	Turnovers conceded	7
3	Tries scored	2



Top tackles
Darren Fox 116
David Quinlan 74
Paul Tupai 71

Top total metres
Sean Lamont 581
Ben Cohen 523
Carlos Spencer 458

Top total carries
Paul Tupai 119
Sean Lamont 79
Mark Robinson 78

Top lineouts won
Christian Short 43
Damien Browne 33
David Gerard 23

Northampton	Match averages	Gloucester
68	Tackles	94
9	Missed tackles	10
81	Ball carries	64
368	Metres	328
10	Defenders beaten	9
12	Turnovers	11
9	Penalties conceded	9

Top tackles
Andy Hazell 143
Peter Buxton 128
Alex Brown 76

Top total metres
Anthony Allen 442
James Simpson-Daniel 387
Mike Tindall 364

Top total carries
Peter Buxton 89
Anthony Allen 63
James Forrester 59

Top lineouts won
Alex Brown 60
Marco Bortolami 44
Peter Buxton 18

Saints



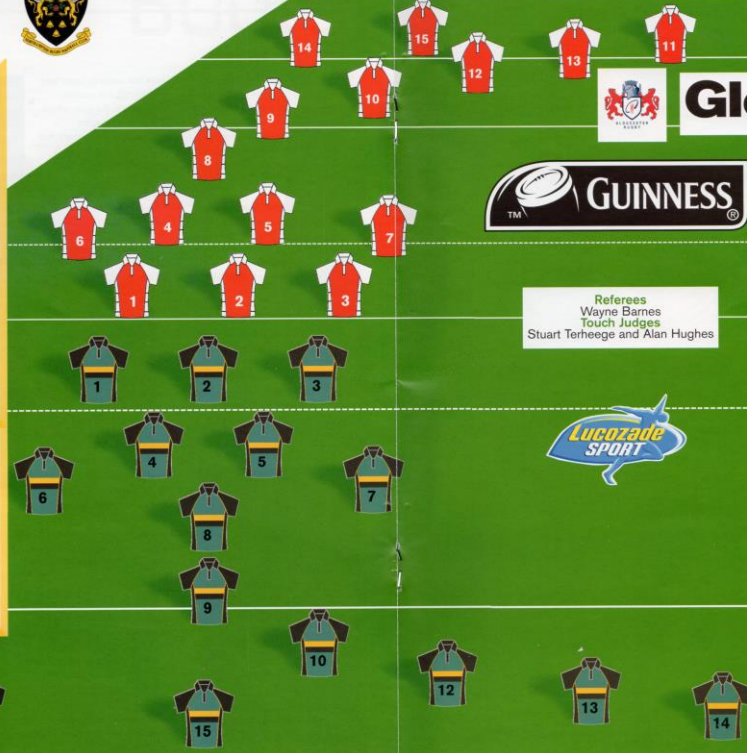
Today's Teams



- 15 Carlos Spencer
- 14 Bruce Reihana (c)
- 13 Seamus Mallon
- 12 David Quinlan
- 11 Ben Cohen
- 10 Stephen Myler
- 9 Mark Robinson
- 1 Tom Smith
- 2 Dylan Hartley
- 3 Soane Tonga'uiha
- 4 Damien Browne
- 5 David Gerard
- 6 Paul Tupai
- 7 Ben Lewitt
- 8 Mark Hopley

Replacements

- 16 Matus Cortese
- 17 Chris Budgen
- 18 Matt Lord
- 19 Christian Labit
- 20 Alex Rae
- 21 Johnny Howard
- 22 Sean Lamont



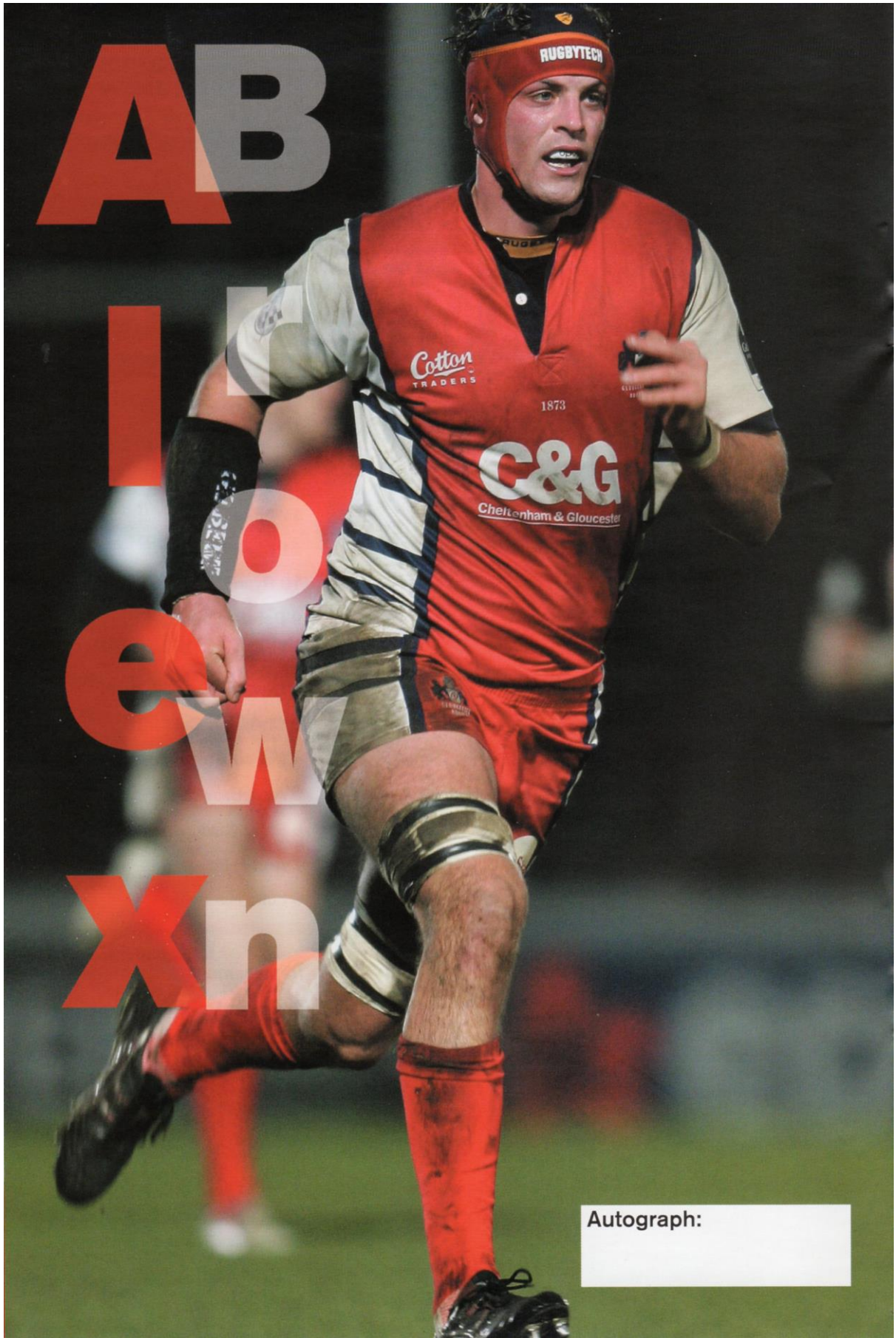
Gloucester

- 15 Jon Goodridge
- 14 James Simpson-Daniel
- 13 Jack Adams
- 12 Mike Tindall
- 11 Mark Foster
- 10 Ryan Lamb
- 9 Peter Richards
- 1 Nick Wood
- 2 Olivier Azam
- 3 Christian Califano
- 4 Marco Bortolami (c)
- 5 Alex Brown
- 6 Peter Buxton
- 7 Andy Hazell
- 8 Luke Narryway

Replacements

- 16 Mefin Davies
- 17 Jack Forster
- 18 Jonathan Pendlebury
- 19 Adam Eustace
- 20 Rory Lawson
- 21 Ludovic Mercier
- 22 James Bailey

Referees
Wayne Barnes
Touch Judges
Stuart Terhegge and Alan Hughes



Autograph:

The man on the other side

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review



They say lightning doesn't strike twice – but Alex Brown can testify that old wives' tale is a load of old nonsense.

Regardless of the controversy surrounding Kris Chesney's try and Glen Jackson's winning conversion for Saracens last month, it was the third time this season that Gloucester have been beaten by the final kick of the game.

When Jason Strange popped over a drop-goal for Bristol in the eighth minute of added time back in November to seal a 14-12 victory, Gloucester's unbeaten GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP record was over.

And when Sale over-turned a 16-3 half-time deficit with a last-minute

penalty from Richard Wigglesworth to win a dramatic and no less controversial game in Stockport at the start of the year, the curse had struck again.

But the Vicarage Road defeat was the straw that broke the camel's back – and seriously dented Gloucester's play-off push, although they are still in the top four and there is enough about them to bounce back quickly. For Brown, defeat was even tougher to take, particularly after he had unloaded a mammoth performance full of all the good things an international coach usually dreams about.

His first-half try was the icing on the cake because his ultra-physicality, defensive awareness, line-out

manipulation and utter determination were the watch words he played his game by.

One monstrous tackle on Census Johnson lives vividly in the memory but his all-round effort was remarkable and he carried that forward last weekend when Gloucester put behind them the defeat at Saracens with a workmanlike victory over Worcester.

There is even greater emphasis on Brown maintaining his current form in the coming weeks. His partner, the equally brilliant Marco Bortolami, is on Six Nations duty with Italy which means Brown shoulders even great responsibility.



The man on the other side

Continued

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review



"We have been beaten in the last minute before but we simply have to move on now," he said. "I was pretty sure we had learned our lessons the first time but this time we really have – and believe we have."

"We have been within touching distance in these games so we probably need to be a bit more clinical and finish them off."

There is no now let-up for Brown and he will face another overtly physical challenge from Northampton this afternoon.

"Worcester were desperate for points and threw everything at us. They are a big, physical unit and it was tough. There was a lot of passion flying about and they are difficult occasions to come out on top in."

"Local derbies are never really great games but we were focused on the job we have to do and got the result we needed."

Brown has always been regarded as a multi-faceted modern day forward and has one England senior cap to his name. He has recently represented England Saxons in their two internationals but is thrilled to be back at Kingsholm – at home in the club environment and eager to push on towards the end of the season.

"It is really nice to be back at Gloucester – we got a massive lift before the Six Nations when we beat Sale, I really feel the club is going places and it is great to be a part of it."



"That makes everything worthwhile really because we are really making progress. It can obviously be frustrating for a player because you want to be involved playing for your country."

"But I am going to remain positive, play as well as I can for Gloucester and just see what comes off the back of that – that's all I can do."

Gloucester have a series of home games in March that will define their season and Brown is ready for the challenge.

"Clearly our home games will be crucial. We have a good home record at the moment and we need to continue it. Back at Kingsholm we play some dangerous, attacking rugby and generally we play really well."

"We need to do the things we are comfortable with and make sure we control the game. We really want to get back enjoying what we are good at and aim for a top-four finish."