

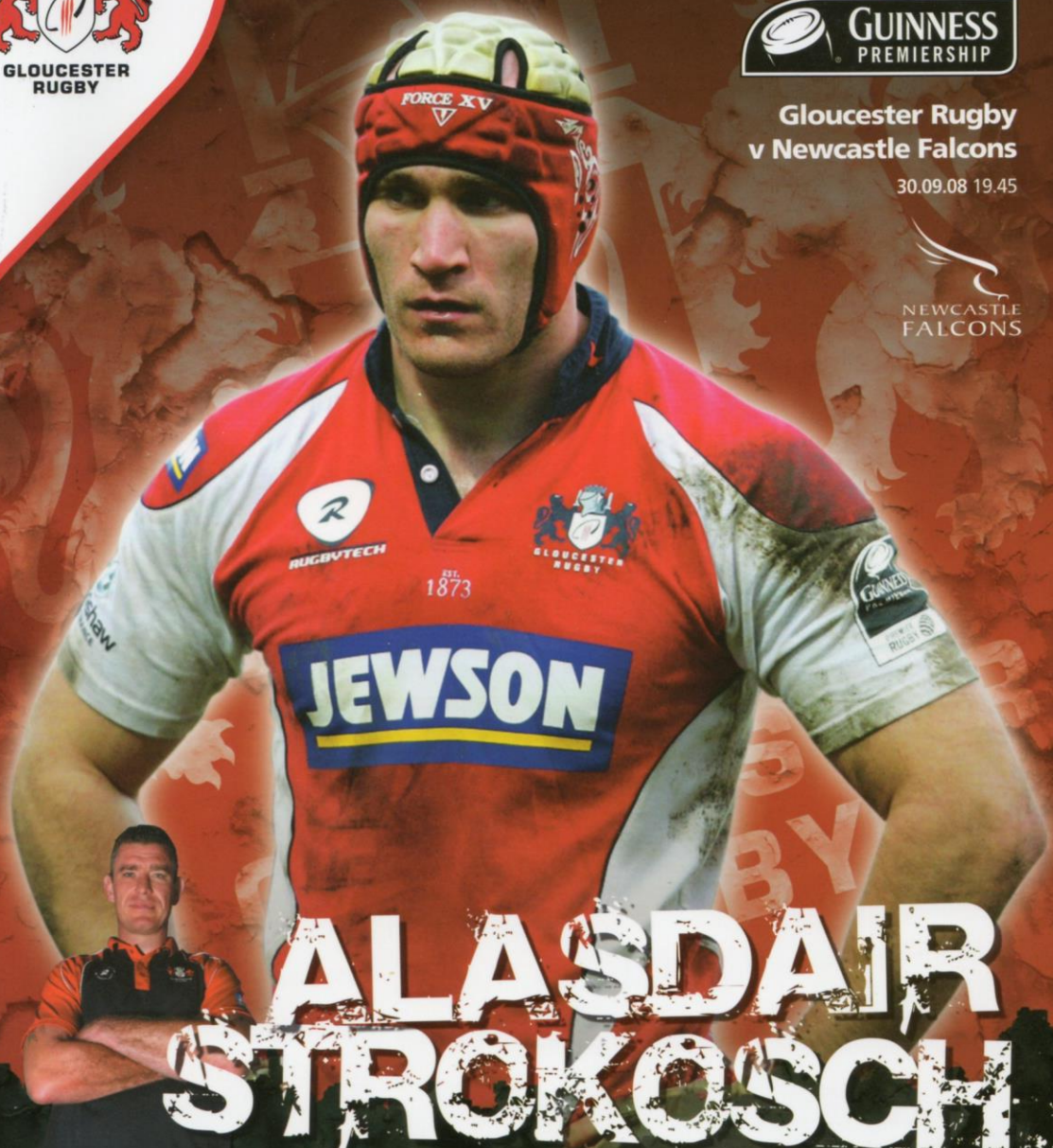


OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY 2008/2009 ISSUE 03 • £3.00



Gloucester Rugby
v Newcastle Falcons

30.09.08 19.45



ALASDAIR STROKOSCH

DEAN RYAN

Looks back at the games against Quins and Sale

GET TO KNOW

Dave Young

INSIDE THE FALCONS

All you need to know about tonight's opponents

STEVE BALE

Gloucester Rugby and me

PLUS: Match Action, Fans Zone, Peter Arnold, ticket news, community update



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CAPTAIN'S CORNER



THE GAMES are coming thick and fast – tonight is our second in a 10-day period when we play three times – and that stretches resources to the limit.

We have had a very quick turn-around following our Friday night defeat away to Sale Sharks. The intensity of these games take their toll physically and mentally very quickly which is why you can expect team changes tonight.

Although I was a replacement against Sale, I got some action in the second half before coming off with a bang to the head but I was very impressed with their game management, kicking qualities of Charlie Hodgson and one-on-one physicality levels.

They have game ideally suited to the new ELV's and when Hodgson kicks as well as he did against us they dominate territory too. At the moment, we are having to rethink

our approach to certain elements of the game but I am positive we will get it right.

There were certain parts of our game



Newcastle have made a similar sort of start as us but their victory over Bristol last weekend was vital. Last season they came to Kingsholm with not a great deal to lose, were very good with ball in hand and clever up front.



against Sale that operated as well as they have done all season and tonight we get the opportunity to put it right immediately.

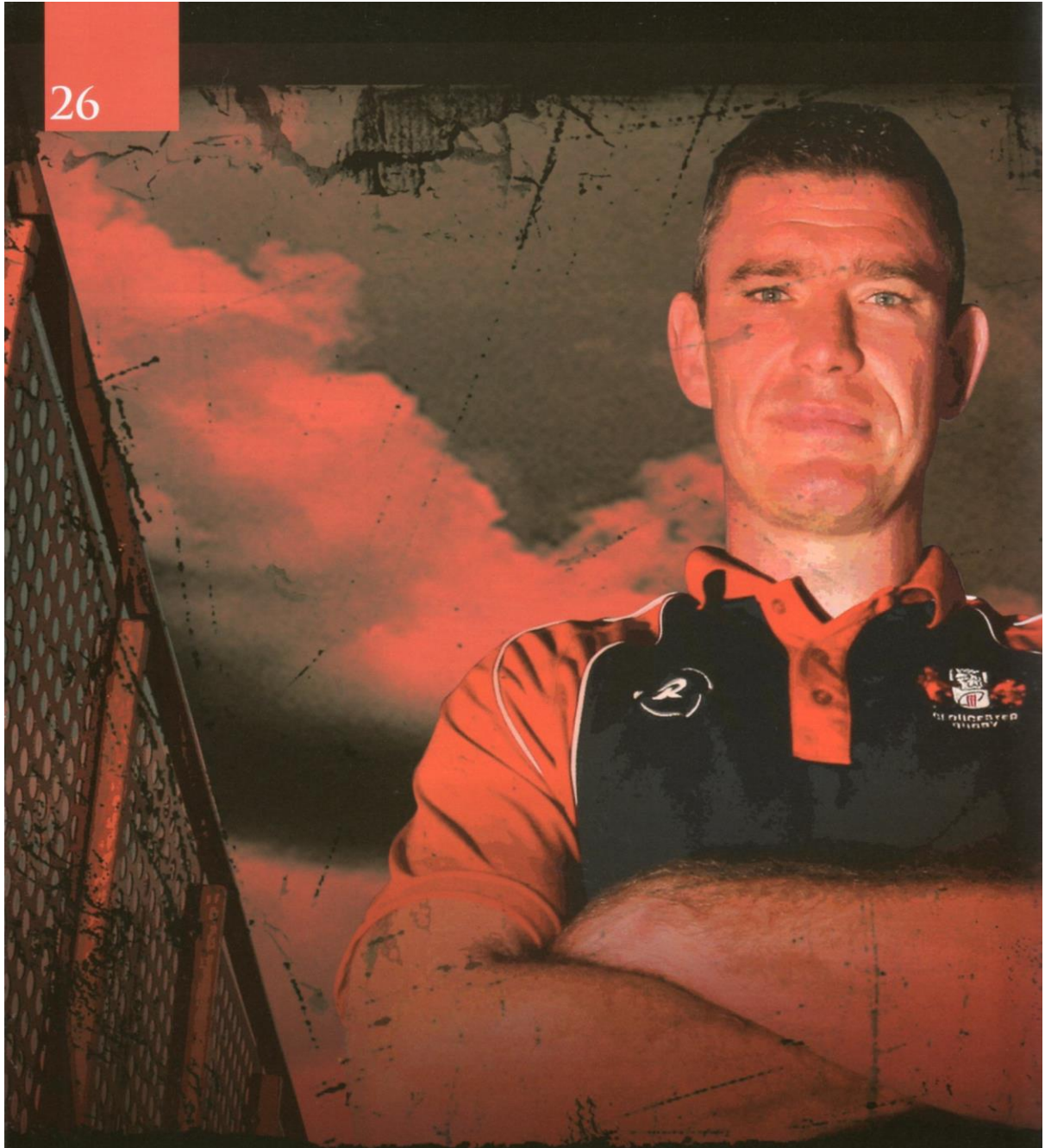
Night matches at Kingsholm are very special and today will be no exception. There just seems to be something a little bit mysterious about these occasions and we want to use that to our advantage.


Newcastle have made a similar sort of start as us but their victory over Bristol last weekend was vital. Last season they came to Kingsholm with not a great deal to lose, were very good with ball in hand and clever up front.

We will need to be right on our game tonight, try and make the most of our chances and build on the good things we have done this season. It is still early days, we are still getting better and one thing is for sure we will not rest until it clicks.

Please get behind the boys tonight. Your support under lights will be crucial.





 **Mark Souster of the Times talks to Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan about the dramatic changes of the ELV's and their impact on the game.**

ROAD TO NOWHERE

ROAD TO NOWHERE



DEAN RYAN fears for the future of rugby because of the raft of new laws being introduced this season

which he believes are killing the game as a spectacle and which pose a real threat to the sport.

"The whole package has dragged the game down to the lowest common denominator," Ryan, Gloucester's head coach, said. "Decisions are being taken by (people) operating in a black hole. Games this season have been a mess." He might well have added: "This is rugby Sir, but not as we know it."

Ryan is not a lone voice in questioning why change has been so fundamental and does not believe that New Zealand and South Africa really support the IRB initiatives which critics feel are being driven by Australia and its need to produce a 'product' that appeals to television.

While he accepts there is a bedding down period, Ryan's thoughts echo concerns across the rugby world and the belief that the ELVs are being enforced unnecessarily, without proper consultation and crucially with no apparent opportunity for direct feedback from those on the front line.

Having been introduced in their entirety in the south to at best mixed reaction, several new laws are being trialled in the northern hemisphere for the first time this season. Ryan is certain that now in place they will not be overturned with other more controversial initiatives in the pipeline.

"I don't think there are many people that are comfortable with the amount of change we have got in what was already a productive game," Ryan said. "Any of the bits and pieces taken in isolation could have a positive effect. The whole package though has brought a negative effect. That's where the whole thing is being lost.

"The ruck interpretation on its own may have been a significant positive in keeping people on their feet with a more dynamic game. But as a whole what we see are sides struggling for set piece possession, struggling with scrums, no proper rucks. You can see why the game is so ugly because you are playing off something that is not as solid and efficient as last year."

He feels that the laws have had the opposite effect to what was intended and that the dynamics of the game have



Any of the bits and pieces taken in isolation could have a positive effect. The whole package though has brought a negative effect. That's where the whole thing is being lost



changed with structure lost and a greater and 'exaggerated' emphasis now on kicking. This he added militates against sides like Gloucester and London Wasps who play through the phases, and which may help to explain the champions poor start to the defence of their title. Allied to the stricter policing of the breakdown, the game has become more stop-start and messy.

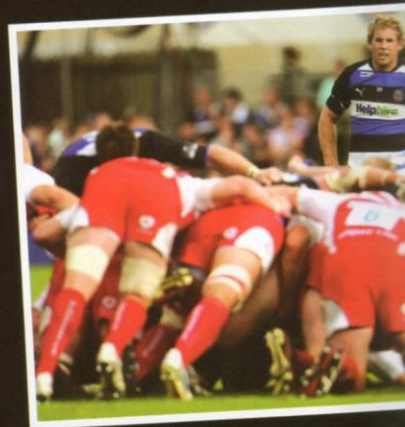
"You start to question motives when you don't understand why something has come in," Ryan added. "For instance I don't understand why the line-out law has come in. It has been wrapped up as making things easier for the referee. It hasn't. It has made it a non-contest. You start to say what's going on. You start to sift other proposals such as the free kick law and realise it removes some of the true values of the game.

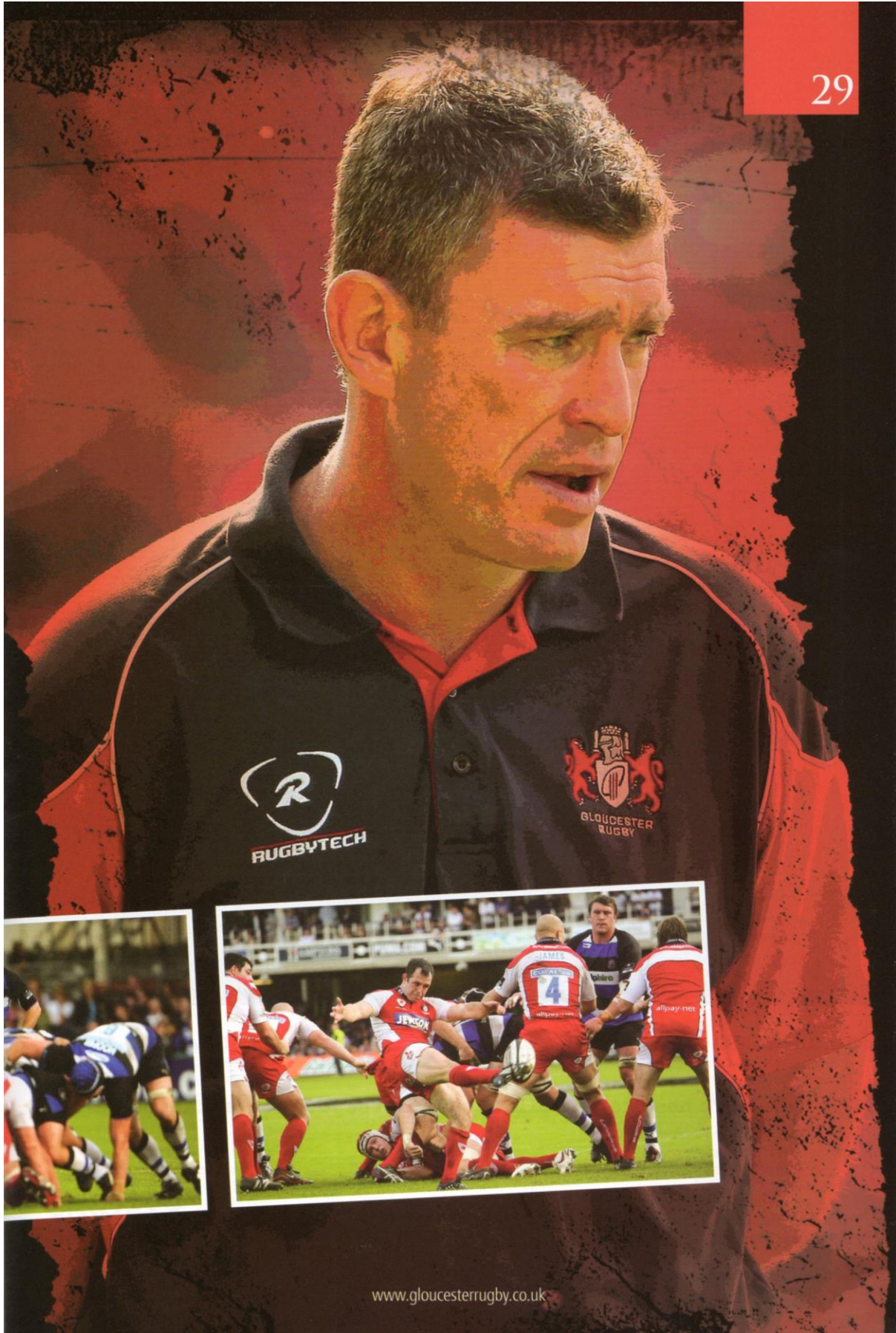
"What are we looking at in the southern hemisphere in terms of the whole package? It looks horrendous. The Tri Nations and the Super 14 don't resemble the game that I know. And here we are only dealing with half the package. We already had a really successful game in the northern hemisphere.

"It is not right to say the southern hemisphere is in support of it all because I don't believe it is. From a coaching and playing side I don't believe South Africa and New Zealand really support this.

"I am afraid in the decision-making process for the game because it seems to be a black hole in which these crucial decisions are being made. We don't have any opportunity for direct feedback. That is dangerous.

"If we are involved at an elite end of the game I don't know of anybody who has had an opportunity for dialogue. That worries me because it makes a body (the IRB) fairly disconnected from the day-to-day running of the sport making some rather major decisions."







RYAN'S REVIEW



First things first, what were your thoughts about the defeat at Sale last Friday?

DR: SALE'S game is perfectly suited to the new ELV's because they have not been required to change their out-look or style much. They have used Charlie Hodgson's ability to kick long and kick often for seasons so they were already prepared to operate without the ball.

We knew they would be pretty physical and that physicality increases in importance and in frequency with the amount of time they can spend in your territory because of Hodgson's kicking game.

They are a not a side like us or Wasps, teams who liked to play phases and potentially attack from deep. The new law variations means protecting the ball at the tackle area is more difficult which in turns



NOT quite, no. For us as a group it was vital we backed up what we achieved away to Bath with a home victory, particularly after the defeat against Leicester in round one.



means we have to think about how we approach certain elements of our game.

I was pretty impressed with them but at the same time I thought we did things better than we had done. We are asking to change the way players have always done things and are four games into it – it will take time but we will get there, I am sure of that.

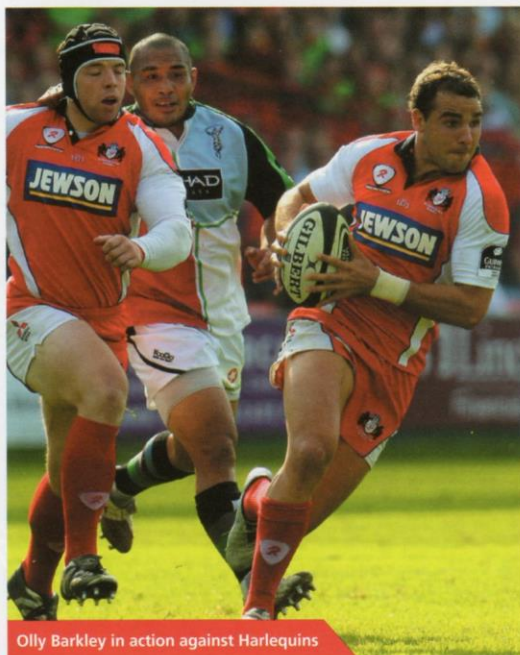


We did beat Harlequins, was that a game more about the result than the performance?

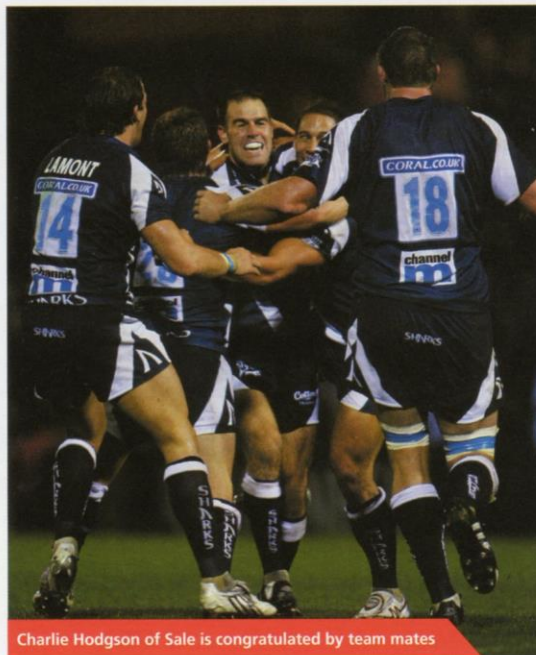
DR: NOT quite, no. For us as a group it was vital we backed up what we achieved away to Bath with a home victory, particularly after the defeat against Leicester in round one.

It was an interesting contest because we controlled it in the second half but were never more than a score in front. We appreciate the threat Harlequins could be if we kicked badly to the likes of Mike Brown or Dave Strettle but apart from a couple of kick returns we didn't field well enough, I didn't think they were a threat from anything structured.

Once we got to grips with the contact area after a couple of adjustments



Olly Barkley in action against Harlequins



Charlie Hodgson of Sale is congratulated by team mates



Action versus Leicester

we were the better side but the new variations mean games are staying close for much longer and that is something we are all beginning to understand.



With three competitions in the next 10 days, how difficult is it to manage the squad?

DR: I wouldn't say it was difficult – there are certain players like Barks and Sinbad who cannot play in all those games anyway under the agreement with the RFU – but we do have some injuries within the squad at the moment.

Losing Will James for what looks like four to six weeks is a significant blow because he was operating really well and gave us a significant physical presence. Carlos Nieto missed the game against Sale with a sore back so there are elements within

the squad we need to protect and in some respects we did that against Sale with the likes of Tins on the bench.



What do you expect from Newcastle tonight?

DR: SECOND guessing anything at the moment is difficult so I won't. They obviously beat Bristol on Friday and any team with Jonny Wilkinson in it will be guaranteed a certain number of points and field position.

In the games we played against them last year I was pretty impressed with their willingness to have a real go when they got the ball so if they do the same again it could be a good game.

I am more concerned that we get our game right and start putting together a

little run of form before the Heineken Cup starts. That process must start tonight so we can move forward.



Once we got to grips with the contact area after a couple of adjustments we were the better side but the new variations mean games are staying close for much longer and that is something we are all beginning to understand.



TODAY'S TEAMS

Tuesday 30th September 19.45
Gloucester Rugby v Newcastle Falcons



GLoucester RUGBY

NEWCASTLE FALCONS

REPLACEMENTS

- 16 AZAM
- 17 YOUNG
- 18 SATALLA
- 19 HAZELL
- 20 LAWSON
- 21 WALKER
- 22 FOSTER

REPLACEMENTS

- 16 LONG
- 17 WARD
- 18 SWINSON
- 19 WINTER
- 20 CHARLTON
- 21 DAVEY
- 22 CLEGG

Guinness Premiership Table

Pos	Team	Pld	W	D	L	F	A	TF	TA	TB	LB	Pts
1	Sale Sharks	4	4	0	0	64	39	3	0	0	0	16
2	Bath Rugby	4	3	0	1	107	76	12	7	1	1	14
3	Leicester Tigers	4	3	0	1	82	75	7	7	0	0	12
4	Saracens	4	2	0	2	106	68	9	4	1	2	11
5	Harlequins	4	2	0	2	102	86	13	8	1	2	11
6	London Irish	4	2	0	2	92	85	10	9	0	2	10
7	Newcastle Falcons	4	2	0	2	72	83	6	7	0	1	9
8	Northampton Saints	4	2	0	2	79	91	6	6	0	0	8
9	Gloucester Rugby	4	2	0	2	62	80	5	10	0	0	8
10	London Wasps	4	1	0	3	72	80	5	7	0	2	6
11	Worcester Warriors	4	1	0	3	60	87	5	9	0	1	5
12	Bristol Rugby	4	0	0	4	42	90	3	10	0	1	1

Today's Officials

Referee: David Rose

Touch Judges: Stuart Terhegge & Roger Bailiff

4th: Mark Tovey **39-23**

Replacement Ref:



PERSONAL FILES

with Dave Young

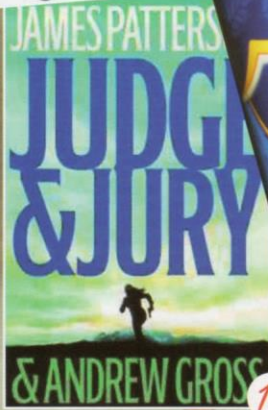
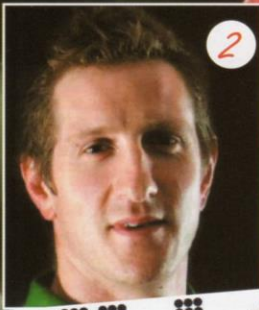


by Ian Randall

Dave Young

Young is the latest addition to Gloucester's growing stable of highly regarded props and will join the likes of Nick Wood and Jack Forster at Kingsholm this season on a one-year contract.

In total, he made 13 appearances for Leicester following his senior debut in 2005-06 and has graduated from Murray Mexted's International Rugby Academy and was a key member of Leicester's triumph in the northern conference of the Guinness A League.





1. What is the first match you remember watching?

I watched Scotland against England on television. It was a Calcutta Cup match at Murrayfield. It was raining very heavily and I must have been about 14 or 15 years old. Scotland won because it stopped England winning the Grand Slam.

2. Who is your sport's best pundit?

I think Will Greenwood is pretty good. He's alright.

3. Can you explain cricket?

No I'm Scottish so we don't play it. I don't know the rules or anything. I've never played it, never held a cricket bat – I don't have a clue.

4. What's been your worst fashion crime?

Everyday probably because I have the worst fashion sense ever.

5. Who has the flashiest motor at the club?

It has got to be Lesley (Vainikolo). I don't know what it is but it's a big, massive black thing. I'm not a big cars man but apparently it is worth a lot of money.

6. If money was no object, what would be the first thing you would buy?

Private jet.

7. What charity do you support and why?

The Matt Hampson Trust Fund. A good mate of mine had a neck injury a few months back.

8. What's your favourite biscuit?

Hob Nobb.

9. Who is the most famous person with your christian name?

David Young ex Welsh International.

10. Can you play a musical instrument?

No.

11. If you could be in a band, which one would you choose?

The Killers. They're a good, cool band.

12. How would you improve the play offs?

I wouldn't. I think they're a good set up I just think it's a fair way to do it. I think it's a good way to decide who the best team in England is.

13. What is your nickname at the club and how did it come about?

I don't really have one. Youngy? Not very exciting.

14. What's your party trick?

Being very drunk and falling over.

15. Which 2 of your team mates would you want with you on a

quiz team?

Nick Wood, he's pretty intelligent - so I've heard anyway and Ross McMillan.

16. What was the last book you read?

Judge & Jury by James Patterson. Very good book.

17. If there was one rule or law you could change what would it be? (sport related only)

Get rid of the ELV's, that would probably be the best one. I'm a prop so I just do what I'm told and run around and hit things. I don't really think about the rules that much.

18. What's the most common mistake you see people making in your sport?

Dropping the ball. I think that over the northern hemisphere that's something we're a little behind on along without skill level. But that's improving all the time and I think the game's going more skill based especially here where we emphasis a lot on our skills.


19. Where in the world is the best night out?

Edinburgh when the festival is on. Great night out.





GLOU

 It has played a part in his life for almost 35 years and as Steve Bale of the Express explains today, Gloucester and its rugby have provided some very happy memories



CESTER AND ME

GLOUCESTER AND ME



PLEASE don't take this the wrong way but at the start of a rugby-reporting lifetime that now stretches to an alarming 35 years I quickly came to regard Gloucester as being as Welsh as the Welsh. In purely rugby terms, of course.

It's OK, this is a compliment. Where else in England, at the top end anyway, is rugby union the sporting heart and soul of its community? Look at the Guinness Premiership: almost everywhere there is at least one league football club.

Bath? Never, I hear them say in the Shed, and anyway Bath City, like Gloucester City, don't count in this context and the Roman city is about sweeping Georgian terraces as much as the Rec/Wreck. There was a time within my professional experience when Gloucester would play a Wednesday game against Welsh opposition more or less every week, and there was nothing to distinguish between them.

Pontypool? Pontypridd? Kindred spirits. When Gloucester had one of these fixtures against Pontypridd, there had been a bit of bother at Bath about Ponty players' conduct during their previous game. There I was in the old press-box next to Peter Butler. I had better watch what I say as Peter's son Gareth is now doing the Kingsholm honours for the Citizen, but when I mentioned this to Butler senior, he looked at me and (almost) snarled: 'At Gloucester, we regard Bath as squealers.'

This last word was uttered with a venom the Shed sometimes reserves for referees who do not take their fancy and quite possibly reflects the very point I was making above. Gloucester is the very antithesis of the 'well-bred' caricature of English rugby. We go back a long way, Gloucester and me, and it has not always been pleasant - for Gloucester, I mean. How about October 1980, when a teenage wing called Robert Ackerman scored six

tries for Newport at Rodney Parade?

'I didn't have much to do, really,' said Ackerman. 'The other 14 players ought to take the credit. The ball just kept coming my way.' And Gloucester, led that day by Steve Mills, could do nothing about it. Can you believe Preedy, Orwin, Boyle, Teague and Watkins were also in that pack?



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The unduly modest Ackerman swiftly lost his modesty after making his Wales debut against New Zealand at Cardiff Arms Park a couple of weeks later and impressing in what for the time was an unusually bad result. Shedheads may not wish reminding that this was not the only time Gloucester played a role in changing the course of Welsh rugby. (Ackerman, now coaching in Christchurch, New Zealand, has been forever grateful.) Next I give you Mike Watkins, who would never have been played for Wales but for an incident at Gloucester in which he had no involvement. These were the pitch-dark stressed-out days when, as soon as a game was concluded, every outside light at Kingsholm was extinguished just as copy was being dictated. Some of us brought a torch.

Watkins was a player whose

misbehaviour on a Wales B trip to France in the late 1970s had caused him to be cast into outer darkness by the Big Five, as the selectors were then grandly known. Watkins had sat 10 times on the Wales bench but the fact that he was the best hooker in the country had no effect until Pontypool played here in October 1983 and Steve Jones was sent off in company with Gloucester's Kevin White.

Two-and-a-half hours before it happened, Jones was included in the Wales squad, to Watkins's customary exclusion. The corollary of the dismissal was his withdrawal, and Watkins's inclusion. This was how rugby was played in those happy times. That game began as a running skirmish and continued with an exchange between Malcolm Preedy and John Perkins that ended in a handshake before a general brawl two minutes later.

After referee Tony Trigg's (remember him?) general warning, White and Jones set to again two more minutes later and Trigg pointed the finger of doom. The law of unintended consequences worked perfectly for Watkins.

He was again on the bench behind Billy James for a Welsh debacle in Romania the next month and a home defeat by Scotland and was finally summoned, as debutant captain, for the last three games of the '84 Five Nations. Typically, Watkins - not one to forget a slight - had the last laugh by snubbing the Big Five with his abrupt retirement as an international just as they were laying plans for '85. He won his fourth and final cap against the 1984 Wallabies and carried on captaining Newport instead.

Jones, a fine player in that fearsome Pontypool pack, never did win his cap after his Kingsholm calamity, an omission made poignant a quarter-century later by his premature death at 55 last year.



GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HARLEQUINS

24
20



Quins conquered

Saturday, September 20, Attendance: 12,260
Kingsholm, Referee: Rob Debney



A SECOND half try from Alasdair Strokosch and first points in Gloucester colours from Olly Barkley eased Dean Ryan's side to their second successive Guinness Premiership victory.

Against one of the form sides in the country and the then leaders, Gloucester required all their expertise to over-turn a 10-point deficit after two smash and grab tries from Danny Care and Mike Brown.

Gloucester needed all the forcefulness supplied by Will James and Olivier Azam, the hard running of Strokosch and the efforts of Peter Buxton up front, not to mention the goalkicking qualities of Willie Walker and the marshalling of Mike Tindall and Barkley.

However, it was Harlequins who burst out of the box with two first-half scores that threatened to maintain their good run going. First, Brown scored down the left after Chris Malone's kick had come back off a post and then Care reacted quickest to a loose-ball following a series of high kicks to score try number two.

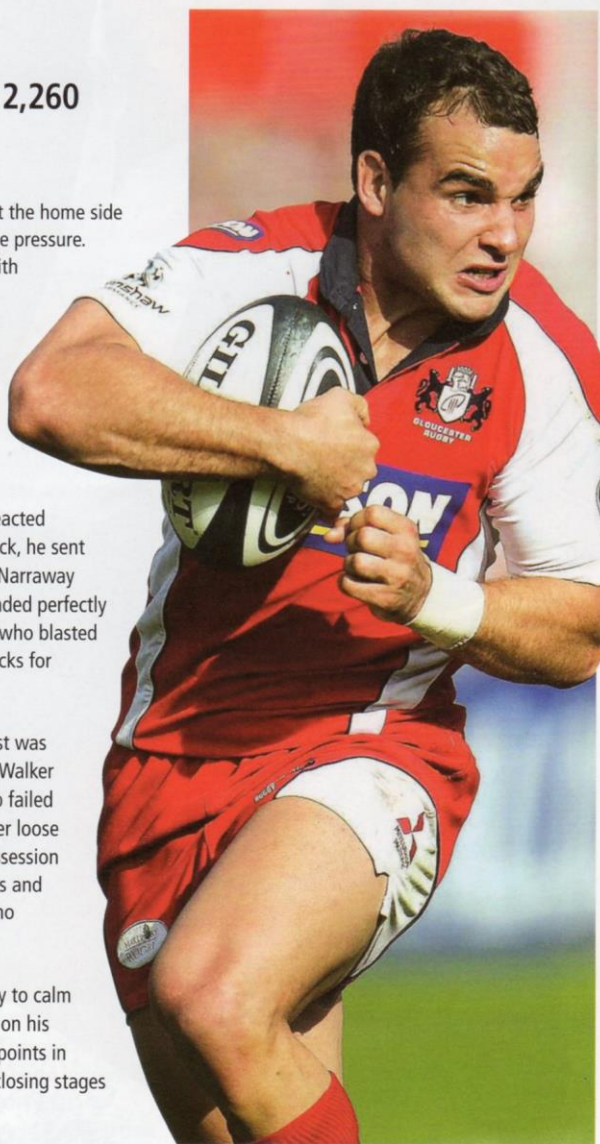
Gloucester rallied when Olly Morgan stretched home to score on the left after a long pass from Tindall but it was not until

the second half that the home side began to turn up the pressure. They got to grips with the contact area sufficiently well to allow Walker to land a drop-goal and two penalties.

And when scrum-half Rory Lawson reacted quickest at a free kick, he sent number eight Luke Narryaway away and he off-loaded perfectly towards Strokosch, who blasted 40 metres to the sticks for the try.

However, the contest was still not over. When Walker and Lesley Vainikolo failed to Hoover up another loose ball, Quins took possession to beneath the posts and Care fed Malone who scored to the left.

It was left to Barkley to calm Gloucester's nerves on his debut with his first points in club colours in the closing stages to cement the win.



Man of the Match



Will James produced another powerful performance in the second row.



Coach's Comment

"Sometimes it is just important to get the win – we had to work very hard for it," head coach Dean Ryan.



Timeline

🏆 13 mins	
Brown try	0-5
🏆 16 mins	
Care try	0-10
🏆 24 mins	
Morgan try	5-10
🏆 26 mins	
Malone pen	5-13
🏆 44 mins	
Walker pen	8-13
🏆 47 mins	
Walker drop-goal	11-13
🏆 58 mins	
Walker pen	14-13
🏆 60 mins	
Strokosch try, Walker con	21-13
🏆 62 mins	
Malone try and con	21-20
🏆 72 mins	
Barkley pen	24-20

Gloucester Line-up

15	Olly Morgan	(1t)
14	Matthew Watkins	
13	Mike Tindall	(capt)
12	Olly Barkley	(1p)
11	Lesley Vainikolo	
10	Willie Walker	(1c, 2p, 1dg)
9	Gareth Cooper	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Will James	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Alasdair Strokosch	(1t)
7	Andy Hazell	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Andy Titterrell	(James)
17	Alasdair Dickinson	(Nieto)
18	Marco Bortolami	(Brown)
19	Peter Buxton	(Hazell)
20	Rory Lawson	(Cooper)
21	Ryan Lamb	(Walker)
22	Mark Foster	



PETER ARNOLD

An evening under lights at Kingsholm is always a special atmosphere and Peter Arnold cannot wait for tonight's little get together with Newcastle

LIGHTS FANTASTIC

THIS is the first game under lights that Gloucester has had for quite a while. I, for one, welcome it because Kingsholm becomes an even more special place on this sort of occasion. Some years ago, one press reporter, (it might have been Peter Jackson, although I wouldn't be sure), referred to 'the cockpit of Kingsholm', a phrase which was regarded as derogatory by some, but one does have to confess that the phrase is entirely appropriate, and probably more so since the stands grew higher.

Some of the most memorable Kingsholm occasions have erupted during evening games. Many people will remember, for example, the sight of Phil Greening going bald-headed, in every sense of the word, for the line, well into injury time, and touching down to beat Leicester, some years ago.

If you're a bit older, you will recall an absolutely monstrous struggle one evening when Pontypool visited. At the time 'Pooler' were regarded as just about invincible, a reputation earned mainly through the efforts of one of the best packs of forwards ever to come out of the Valleys. We won that one, too, but only just. My favourite moment was the sight of a very young Malcolm Preedy nicking the ball off the great Graham Price in the line out and diving over the line for a try. The temerity of it!

In the old days there was usually a game on a Wednesday evening, in the autumn and

spring before floodlights were installed, and just about any time afterwards.

It isn't always appreciated that the arrival of floodlights has had a crucial role in the development of the game. In the amateur days, before the arrival of lights, it wasn't possible to train in the evenings, except at the beginning and end of the season. The vast majority of players had to be at work in the afternoons, so it was very difficult to train at all for most of the season. Consequently, players were often not as fit as they might be, and certainly didn't have the opportunity to develop the sort of skills we see week in and week out these days. Of course, the professional era changed all that, but don't underestimate the influence of the humble light bulb.

I just hope someone's got 50p for the meter.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

PERSONALLY, I thought the win over Harlequins was a good one. That's not to say that everything in the garden is lovely by any means, but there's no denying that

the Stoop outfit is the form team at the moment, even including the performances of Leicester and Sale. To come back from a 10-0 deficit while the dew is still on the grass, so to speak against a side with the most exciting set of runners in the Premiership to date, isn't a performance which can just be written off.

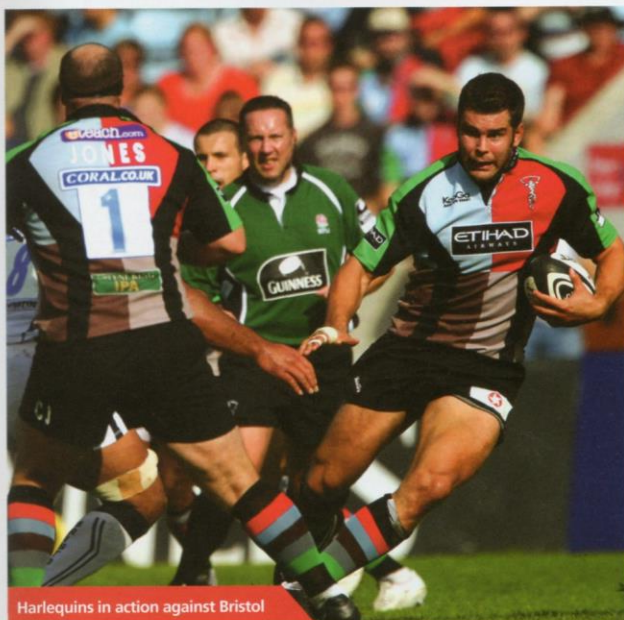
It's also worth remembering that we had no Sinbad to give them pause for thought, Matthew Watkins was playing out of position, and that Olly Barkley was playing his first game for us, considerations which may well have been significant.

One of these days, when the refs' interpretations of the ELVs have become more consistent perhaps, everything is going to click and then someone is going to suffer.

We're now at the end of the first clutch of Premiership matches, so it's a good time to consider what's going on so far. We've had a couple of wins, including that longed-for one at the Rec, against top opposition, achieved while not playing



Jonny Wilkinson



Harlequins in action against Bristol



Rob Andrew

to anywhere near our potential, and that must bode well for the trials to come. The fact that we're currently lounging along in mid table doesn't really worry me all that much. It could be worse. I could be a Wasps supporter.

Think back to this time last year. Wasps, frankly, didn't look as if they were in with a light, but we all know what happened as the season wore on.

Admittedly, their situation is a little more dire, this time round, and they don't have the inspirational Florence to drag them out of it. But would you really bet against them being in the mix come next May? I wouldn't.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

TALKING about Wasps reminds me of an incident which occurred in the 'Jockey' years ago. There was I, savouring a little pre-match lubrication on the day of the annual Wasps visit. About half way down our second pint,

It's also worth remembering that we had no Sinbad to give them pause for thought, Matthew Watkins was playing out of position, and that Olly Barkley was playing his first game for us, considerations which may well have been significant.

the door opened to admit a cheerful little bunch of opposition supporters.

"Oh, hello," ventured my friend, Mark Payne. "Nice to see you. I don't think

we've played Newcastle seconds before!" The remark was well, if ruefully, received, but must have hurt a bit.

At the time, the old Gosforth side was undergoing a sea change. After the arrival of a new owner, the side had a name change and launched the most audacious raid on the Premiership in history. The new Newcastle set-up started their mayhem by recruiting Rob Andrew from Wasps to take charge of the playing side. He immediately seduced a whole clutch of his former Wasps colleagues to join him, and the rest is history.

One of the defectors was our own Dean Ryan. Rob came down here several times after that, as player and manager, and didn't always have the happiest time of it. Let's just say that he never appreciated losing very much.

Dean Ryan is still here, but whatever happened to Rob Andrew?



GLOUCESTER
RUGBY



OLLY BARKLEY

DOB: 28.11.81

Weight: 14st 6lb

Height: 5'10"

Position: Centre/ Stand-Off

FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

Night matches at Kingsholm are a bit special – and Bob Fenton hopes a dark, dank evening is enough to spook Newcastle tonight.

IT MUST be a very long time since there was a full midweek set of league fixture in the Premiership – in fact has there been a week like this with all the teams in midweek action?

I was trying to remember the last time we had an evening Guinness Premiership game at Kingsholm the other day – apart from 'A' games and the like I think the last one we were due to play was a couple of years ago when the visitors were Newcastle.

If I remember correctly, and at my age there is a distinct possibility that I don't, that was the match that fell victim to the blanket of fog that descended over most of the country. I do remember seeing Patrice (TV Licence, moi?) Collazo lumbering out of the mist alongside Mike Tindall only for the bloke standing next to

me to shout: "Look, Gorillas in the mist". Well it was funny at the time.

Hopefully the weather will be a bit better this evening, if it isn't chances are that I won't be standing in my usual space as I am making a last minute dash back from Amsterdam. Flights and car park spaces allowing I should be in for kick off, but if I am late can someone stop the teams coming out, please.

Even though they can be a bit inconvenient – especially for away supporters – I love night games. They tend to be memorable for all sorts of reasons. You only have to wander to the back of the Shed Bar to see pictures of one of the most outstanding matches – day or night – that has been played at Kingsholm, when we pipped Leicester with the last kick of the game. Not long after that we put a highly fancied Bath side away in another evening game.

It'll be interesting to see what difference the new floodlighting and grandstand has on the place. The old stand looked quite spooky in the half-light – like something

out of an old Hammer Horror film - and the old floodlights left an eerie gloom over parts of the ground that seemed to compress the space even more. The atmosphere seemed to be enhanced and, especially on damp evenings, the sound of the crowd hung in the air. Hopefully some of that special feeling will remain.

So Newcastle then... Unfortunately for them they seem to be many pundits hot tip for the drop come the end of the season. The summer comings and goings saw Toby Flood and Mathew Tait moving on, plus the retirement of one of my favourite all time players – Matt Burke. They've got a couple of new faces though, including Adam Balding who not all that long ago was crashing his huge frame around in a cherry and white jersey.

Bar and terrace chatter has this one down as a pretty straightforward home win. As always, I am confident that come 9:30 tonight that will be the case. Don't expect it to be a walk in the park, though.

Long gone are the days when you could look at a fixture list, take out a magic marker



Matt Burke of Newcastle scoring a try



Jonny Wilkinson of Newcastle charges upfield against Saracens

and pick the matches that you knew were going to be winning bankers. After all not that long ago Harlequins would have been included into that bracket and look how close they ran us the other day.

If you cast your eye over the Newcastle squad in today's programme there are many familiar names – the human tank Jamie Noon is still there despite all the speculation that he was also heading out in the summer and they have a couple of heavyweight former All Black props in the considerable shape of Joe McDonnell and Carl Hayman who are more than capable of giving any front row a torrid time. And let's not forget that little number 10 who runs out for them every now and then. I'm sure that he has achieved one or two successes in his career, just can't remember his name though.

Actually that's a bit unfair. Jonny Wilkinson



Long gone are the days when you could look at a fixture list, take out a magic marker and pick the matches that you knew were going to be winning bankers. After all not that long ago Harlequins would have been included into that bracket and look how close they ran us the other day.



is one of the true greats of the modern game. He's one of those players who, in years to come when you sit with your grandchildren watching re-runs of the World Cup final and that drop-goal, you will say "Yeah, I saw him play at Kingsholm. Never

finished on a winning side, mind..."

These games tend to be interesting affairs with more than a bit incident. Wasn't the great Serge Simon's first appearance for Gloucester against Newcastle? I'm pretty sure it was, and his first action was to flatten one of their second rows for some minor indiscretion. And what about that blatant trip by their prop, someone Van Zandfeldt, when Tofty was dancing his way to the line for a certain try. Didn't even get a penalty for that one!

And they tend to be very close run things, barring a couple of occasions nothing more than a few points tends to separate the teams at no side. We definitely hold the whip hand when it comes to recent results though, in the last ten league encounters we have won seven and had one draw.

Let's make that one in the win column this evening.

SALE SHARK
GLOUCESTER RUGBY

23
9



Shark's bite

Friday, September 26, Attendance: 9,019
Referee: Andrew Small



CHARLIE HODGSON produced an outstanding display of tactical kicking to

navigate Sale to their fourth successive Guinness Premiership victory.

The team yet to concede a try created yet another shut-out as Gloucester were restricted to three Olly Barkley penalties. Sale's game is perfectly constructed under the new law variations and they simply produced a more all-round kicking game that kept Gloucester on the back foot for long periods.

Hodgson's kicking game and Sale's physicality were crucial and although there were some neat returns from Barkley and Ryan Lamb, some savage effort from the likes of Peter Buxton, Luke Narryway and Andy Hazell, Gloucester were well beaten.

They sat in the contest at 6-6 at the start of the second half – Barkley cancelling out two from Luke McAlister – but Sale's first try effectively killed the game in middle of the third quarter.

Gloucester failed to control a line-out and when Sale turned the ball over,

replacement scrum-half Dwayne Peel fed Sebastian Chabal on the charge and he blasted home to provide Sale with a commanding lead.

Although Barkley reduced the deficit immediately with another penalty, Sale's territorial dominance a number of Gloucester mistakes kept the hosts on the front foot. The constant kicking ping pong did nothing for the spectacle but the Sharks won the game with a second try 10 minutes from time.

Gloucester turned the ball over and McAlister ran from deep, brilliantly slicing past the cover defence to create space before off-loading to David Doherty and he had the pace to reach the line.

There was still enough time for Gloucester to launch a series of late attacks through Matthew Watkins and Barkley but although they had a number of good attacking chances close to the line, the closest they came was when Gareth Cooper burst down the short side from a line-out but Sale's immaculate defence held out.



Man of the Match

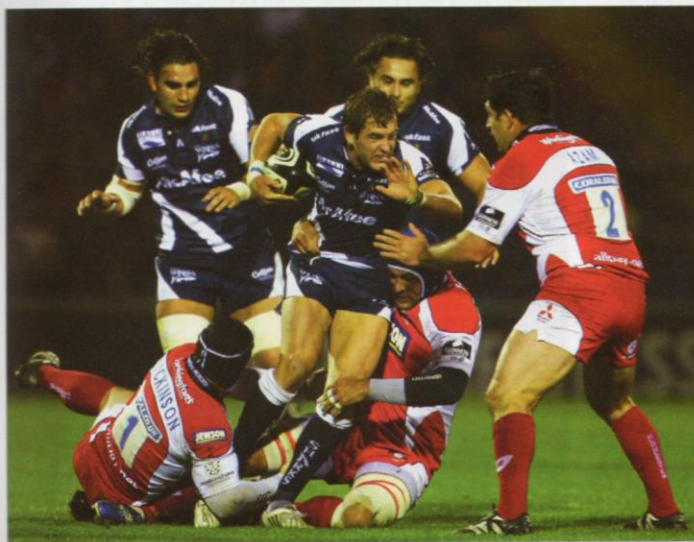
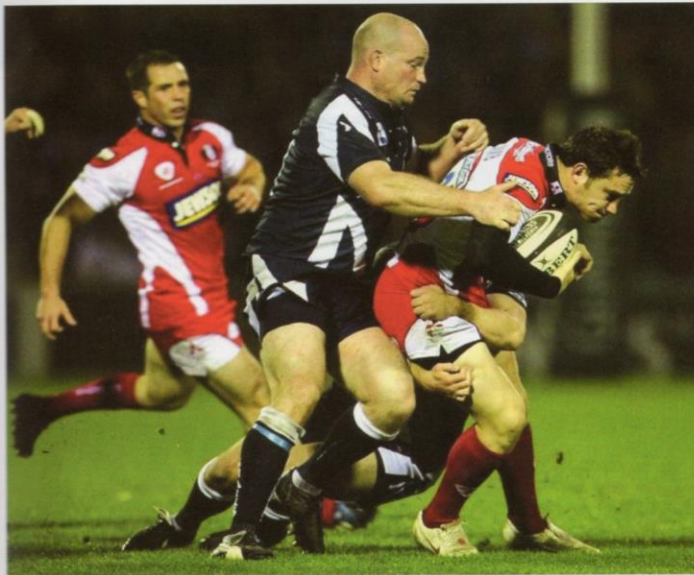


Matthew Watkins was excellent in defence and carried hard

Coach's Comment



"I thought we lost out in a high class kicking contest in which Charlie Hodgson was outstanding," head coach Dean Ryan.



Timeline

3 min	
McAlister PEN	3-0
27 MINS	
Barkley PEN	3-3
30 MINS	
McAlister PEN	6-3
34 MINS	
Barkley PEN	6-6
49 MINS	
Chabal TRY, Thomas CON	13-6
50 MINS	
Barkley PEN	13-9
67 MINS	
Thomas PEN	16-9
70 MINS	
Doherty TRY, Thomas CON	23-9

Gloucester Line-up

15	Iain Balshaw	
14	James Simpson-Daniel	
13	Matthew Watkins	
12	Olly Barkley	(3p)
11	Lesley Vainikolo	
10	Ryan Lamb	
9	Rory Lawson	
1	Alasdair Dickinson	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Dave Young	
4	Marco Bortolami	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Peter Buxton	
7	Andy Hazell	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Mike Tindall	
17	Willie Walker	
18	Gareth Cooper	
19	Andy Titterrell	
20	Olivier Azam	
21	Nick Wood	
22	Alasdair Strokosch	

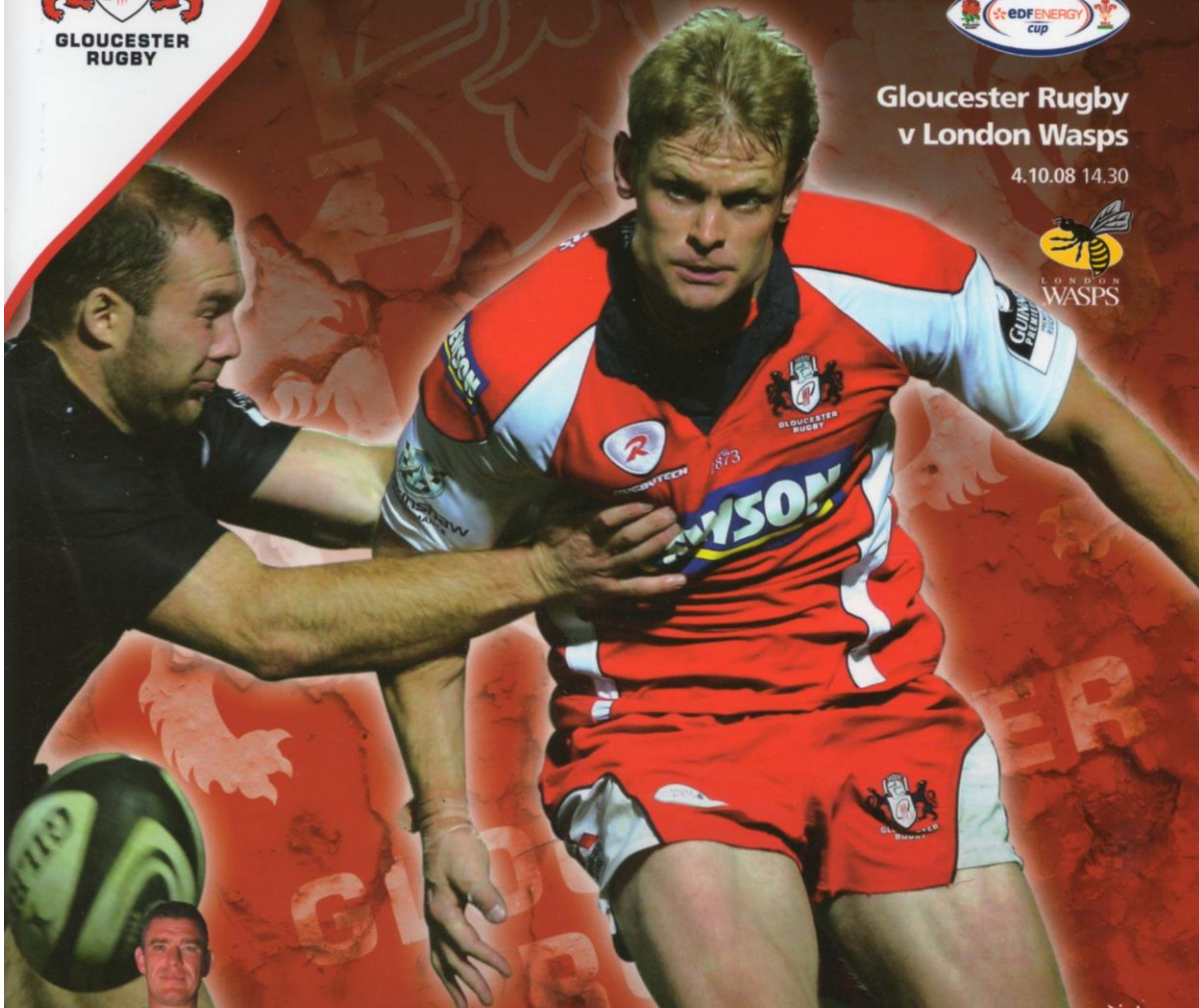


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Gloucester Rugby
v London Wasps

4.10.08 14.30



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CAPTAIN'S CORNER



WE COULD THE GUINNESS Premiership has proved to be as riveting and competitive as ever and with three wins we can be pleased with our start to the season.

Our victory over Newcastle on Tuesday night was much-needed following our defeat at Sale and in fits and starts we played with more fluency and invention and struck a better balance between the need to kick for territory and when to run with the ball.

Not everything we did was executed with maximum precision but the willingness to attack was there and that was very positive. The results this week have shown what a tight, unforgiving league this is which means our bonus point win was priceless considering Sale's defeat to London Irish and Bath's win at Wasps.

Today is our third game in eight days and the start of the EDF Energy Cup. The

preparation time for all the sides has been minimal and the injuries the squad is currently carrying means we are down on resources ahead of the Heineken Cup next week.



Our victory over Newcastle on Tuesday night was much-needed following our defeat at Sale and in fits and starts we played with more fluency and invention and struck a better balance between the need to kick for territory and when to run with the ball.



We just have to get on with the job because this afternoon is another major competition for us. Wasps have made

a slow start to the new season – their defeat to Bath on Wednesday was their fourth in five games – but there is nothing particularly new about that because they are traditionally slow starters.


A bit like Gloucester, they are still searching for the right balance under the new law interpretations but one thing is for sure, with Wasps you are guaranteed a wholly committed and full-on effort and if they can combine that physicality with their cutting edge now Danny Cipriani is back from injury, they can be a threat from anywhere on the field.

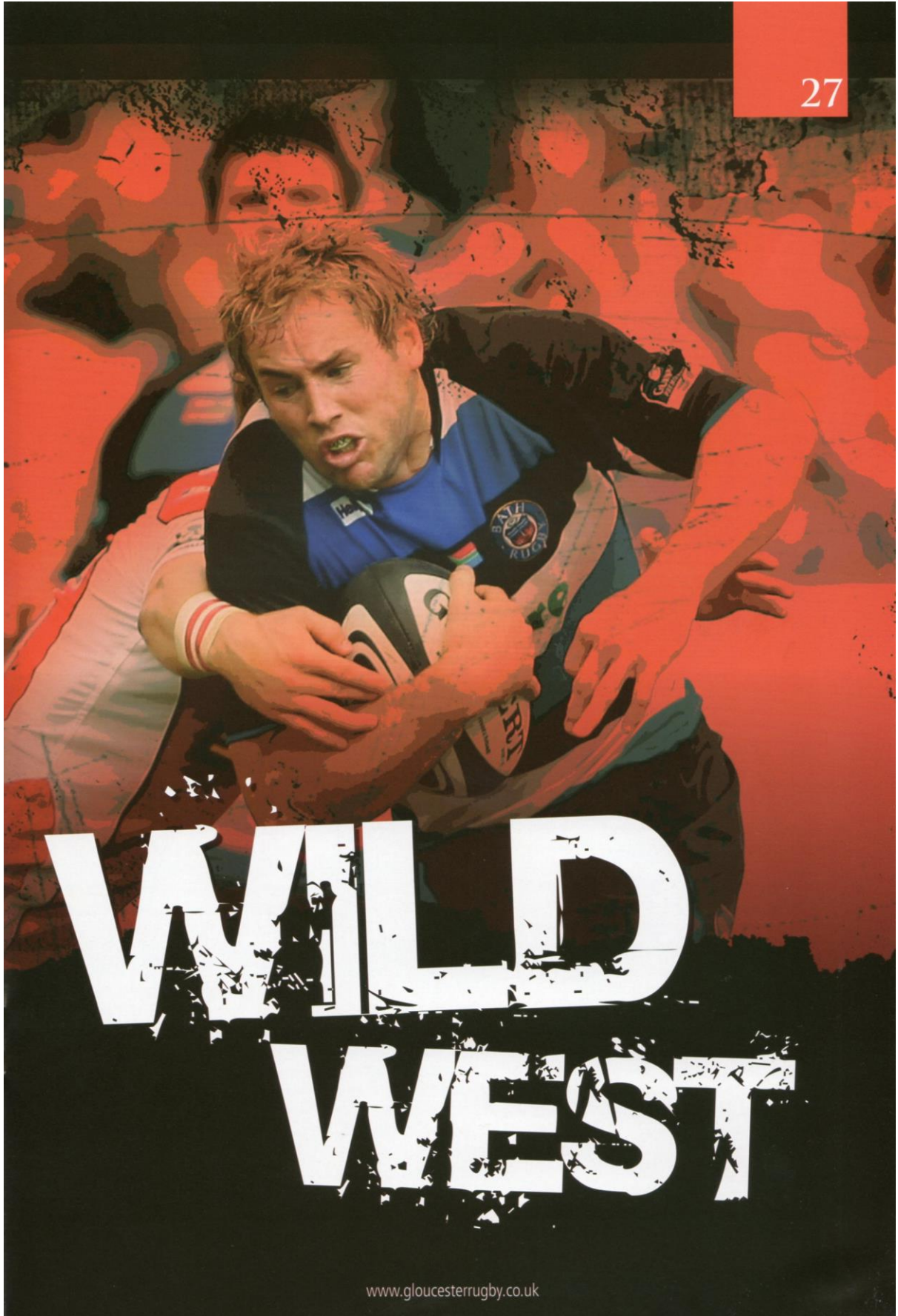
But this afternoon is all about us and improving on the good things we did against Newcastle and eradicating the errors that denied us momentum. If we can do that, I am positive we can make a good start in this competition. The atmosphere was great on Tuesday, please get behind the boys again – games between Gloucester and Wasps are always special.





THE

 Steve Cotton is the rugby writer for the Western Daily Press and is required to spread his time between Gloucester, Bath and Bristol. As he explains today, each team has made a different start to the season under the new ELV's.



WILD WEST