



OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY 2008/2009 ISSUE 04 • £3.00



Gloucester Rugby  
v London Wasps

4.10.08 14.30



# IAIN BALSHAW

Hat-trick HERO against the Falcons

## DEAN RYAN

Looks back at the Falcons game

## NEWCASTLE

Feel the backlash

## DANNY CIPRIANI

On his return

## STEVE COTTON

The Wild West



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**PLUS:** Community news, A team latest, Peter Arnold, Fans Zone and much more.



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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.

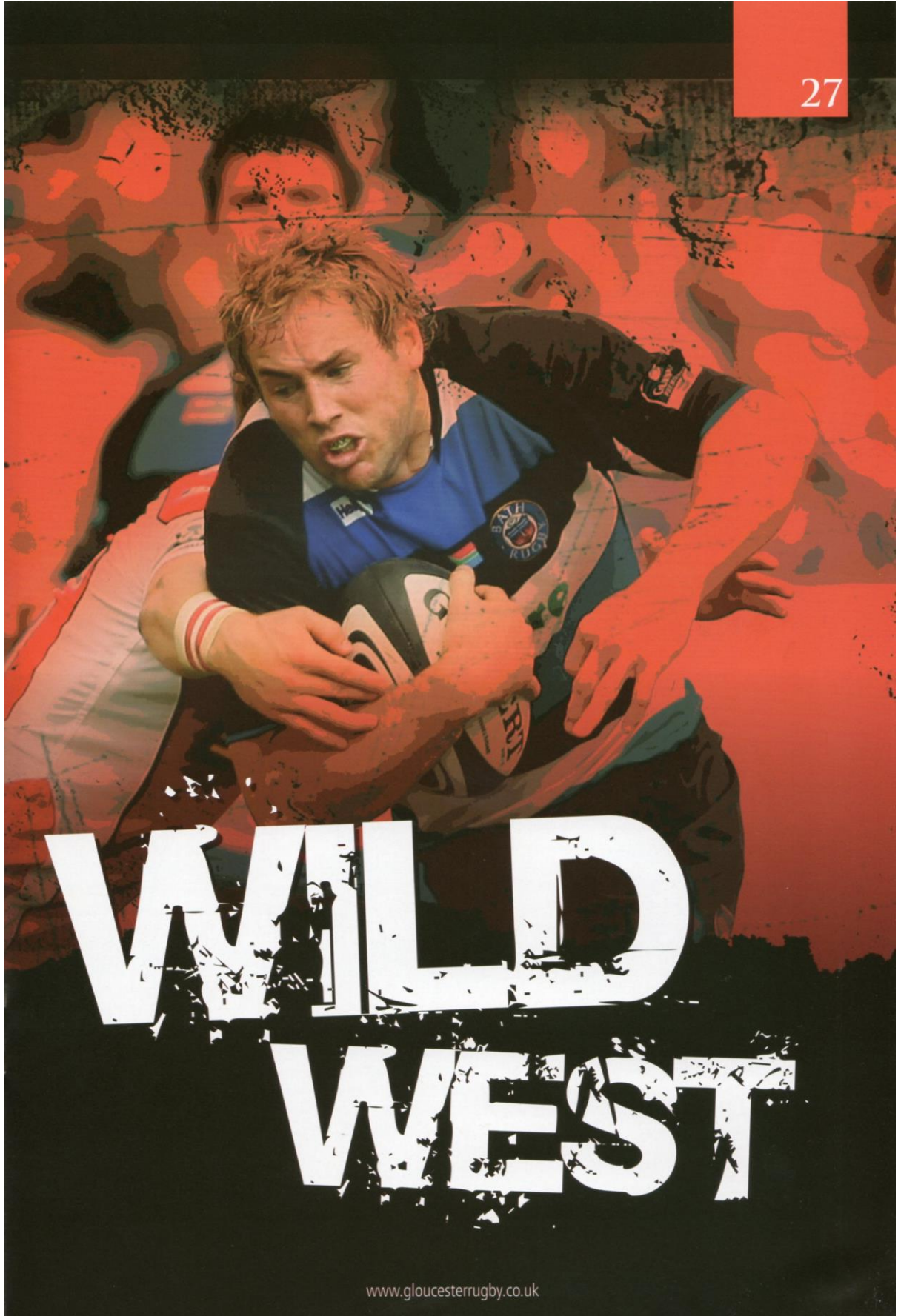
A bit like Gloucester, they are still searching for the right balance under the new law interpretations but one thing is for sure, with Wasps you are guaranteed a wholly committed and full-on effort and if they can combine that physicality with their cutting edge now Danny Cipriani is back from injury,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





 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

## THE WILD WEST



REPORTING on all three of the west country's Guinness Premiership clubs can throw up a fairly hefty list of pros and cons.

On the negative side, I am always being accused of bias toward one or more of them. Bristol supporters jokingly accuse me of preferring Bath – as do some Gloucester supporters, actually – while those at the Recreation Ground will casually throw in a sly “well, you’re a Bristol/Gloucester (delete as appropriate) fan aren’t you?”

Even Gareth Delve, upon signing for Gloucester from Bath, half-jokingly told me: “I always got the impression when I was at Bath that you were a bit of a Gloucester supporter!”

The truth, of course, will forever remain secret, but impartiality is a necessary skill, particularly when reporting on a derby. Spreading yourself equally across the three clubs can also provide a few difficulties, particularly when the pursuit of fairness means the political decision when it comes to which match to report on denies you the chance to see the game you would prefer to watch.

Today provides a different kind of issue – two cracking fixtures (on paper, at least) being played at more or less the same time. The fact I will be reporting on Bath versus Leicester, rather than Gloucester versus Wasps, pretty much came down to a tossed coin.

But the negatives are minor when compared with the positives – and the main one is the opportunity to watch three traditional, proud rugby clubs on a regular basis.

The start to the new season has been particularly interesting given the implementation of the game's Experimental Law Variations (ELVs) – and

watching how the west sides have come to terms with them.

The complaints all seem to be the same – the interpretation of the ruck area is confusing and inconsistent, with one of the more obvious knock-on effects being teams' reluctance to run the ball from deep for fear of being penalised in their own territory.

As a result we are seeing a lot of matches which resemble aerial ping-pong, kickers

**Even Gareth Delve, upon signing for Gloucester from Bath, half-jokingly told me: “I always got the impression when I was at Bath that you were a bit of a Gloucester supporter!”**

sending the ball back and forth with little thought of running it up-field.

The Bath centre Alex Crockett said before his side's match against Worcester last weekend that “the centres are doing shuttles up and down the pitch at the moment – games feel like a bleep test a lot of the time!”

But Bath – and Shedheads may not forgive me for raising this point – went out against Worcester on Saturday and gave the first positive display of counter-attacking from deep I have seen so far this season. Rather than choosing to kick every time they received the ball in their 22, they often ran it back, with the in-form Nick Abendanon looking particularly threatening.

The result was a 37-19 victory with five tries to show for their efforts – many of them scored as a direct result of backing

themselves to carry the ball from their own half.

Steve Meehan, the head coach at the Rec, seems to be urging his players to back their convictions – to show restraint and kick the ball if a feasible counter-attack is not on, but also to run it if there is the slightest hint of a midfield gap opening up.

Whether such a high-risk policy will work all season remains to be seen, and it is a shame that I have had to write this before the clash of styles between Wasps and Bath at Adams Park on Wednesday.

It is difficult to see how the laws staying the same would have aided Bristol, who have sadly made a very poor start to the new season, and Richard Hill's squad looks light on the type of quality needed to compete at Premiership level. True, they have shipped an awful lot of penalties – something Hill put down to their bright white away shirts, albeit perhaps with his tongue in his cheek – but Bristol have also created very little in attack so far this season.

Their midfield is lacking penetration, and while they have some of the most dangerous attacking back-three players around in David Lemi, Tom Arscott and Luke Arscott, there is little they can do if they are not seeing much of the ball.

As for Gloucester, it seems Dean Ryan has adopted a deliberate policy of minimising the attacking risk in an attempt to cut out the penalties. That seems a sensible policy, but the question is whether refereeing interpretation will soon settle into a familiar pattern, allowing sides to be more carefree in attack.

The hope has to be that it does, giving teams the opportunity to get back to creating chances from deeper on the field without the constant threat of being penalised and shipping a cheap three points.





## RYAN'S REVIEW



**Five points against Newcastle was very welcome, how did you rate the performance?**

**DR:** WE have been trying to interpret where we think the game is going. Somewhere along the line we lost a bit of what we were as a side who liked to attack and keep the ball live. We're aware of that and have worked hard to achieve it but it has been difficult under the new ELV's to get the balance in our game we have been looking for.

We certainly came second best in a kicking contest at Sale but in many respects that didn't shock me because they have chosen to play that way for a while. What probably frustrated me more

was that we came off the field having not really had a go at them but we got a lot of our characteristics right against Newcastle which meant we were more of a consistent threat.

But at the same time we still underpinned it with some basic errors which allowed a side to be in the contest for longer than they should have been. At 16-6 ahead we had the opportunity to really grow out our advantage but we made some soft mistakes that kept the score closer than it should have been given our superiority.

That's something which we've got to get rid of because otherwise we will get burnt when Europe comes around. But overall it was an encouraging performance considering the start we had.



**There were some injuries on Tuesday night, will that affect the thinking for the EDF Energy Cup?**

**DR:** IT has left us stretched in certain areas that is for sure. We were already light at lock with injuries to Will James and Adam Eustace and obviously in the back row. It doesn't give us a great deal of room for manoeuvre for this fixture, particularly with Europe just around the corner.

I don't think we are in a position to dramatically alter the outlook of the side for a game such as this. We are still searching for our best rugby at the moment in a lot of ways. We were closer against Newcastle but there is still plenty we need to work on and



Balshaw just about to score against the Falcons



Sinbad just about to score against the Falcons

today gives us another chance to do that against very good opposition.



**Apo Satala has now signed until the end of the season – that could be a crucial signing?**

**DR:** APO is a big man who has added greatly to what we can offer. He comes to us with a great pedigree from the Army and will still be available for their significant matches this season. He has a lot of skills and seeing a big man charging around knocking into people is something we all like to see.

With the injuries to Delve, Q, James Forrester and the knock Naz took on Tuesday night it is vital we have that flexibility in our back row options. He is registered for Europe so I am sure we will see more of him in the coming weeks.



**Any game against Wasps is a pretty special occasion, what do you expect this afternoon?**

**DR:** PRIMARILY, two teams who are still searching for the best ways to operate this season, two teams who are improving and two teams who both desperately want to win. We have build some momentum and then lost it again, whereas Wasps are traditionally slow starters who don't panic when things don't run smoothly. A bit like us, they were a side who liked to play last season through phases. They have had to compromise that style so far this season but they will be what you would expect – abrasive, direct and committed.

It is up to us to take forward the good things from our performance against

Newcastle and raise it again today. This is another very good examination of us at this stage of the season.



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# TODAY'S TEAMS

Saturday 4th October 14.30  
Gloucester Rugby v London Wasps

**REPLACEMENTS**

- 16 S LAWSON
- 17 THOMAS
- 18 EUSTACE
- 19 BUXTON
- 20 LEWIS
- 21 TRINDER
- 22 MORGAN

**REPLACEMENTS**

- 16 VARLEY
- 17 FRENCH
- 18 SKVINGTON
- 19 LEO
- 20 RESIDAN
- 21 WALZER
- 22 CIPRIANI

**Guinness Premiership Table** *as of 2nd October*

Pos	Team	Pld	W	D	L	F	A	TF	TA	TB	LB	Pts
1	Bath Rugby	5	4	0	1	134	59	16	9	2	1	19
2	Leicester Tigers	5	4	0	1	111	94	10	8	0	0	16
3	Sale Sharks	5	4	0	1	70	67	3	4	0	0	16
4	Saracens	5	3	0	2	129	84	10	5	1	2	15
5	London Irish	5	3	0	2	120	91	14	9	1	2	15
6	Gloucester Rugby	5	3	0	2	101	103	10	13	1	0	13
7	Harlequins	4	2	0	2	102	86	13	8	1	2	11
8	Newcastle Falcons	5	2	0	3	95	122	9	12	0	1	9
9	Northampton Saints	5	2	0	3	98	120	7	9	0	0	8
10	London Wasps	5	1	0	4	95	107	7	11	0	3	7
11	Worcester Warriors	4	1	0	3	60	87	5	9	0	1	5
12	Bristol Rugby	5	0	0	5	58	113	4	11	0	2	2

**Today's Officials**

**Referee:** Martin Fox

**Touch Judges:** Andrew Pearce & Kevin Stewart

**4th:** Mark Tovey

**Replacement Ref:** Chris White

**Today's Sponsors**

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24(14) - 19(13)

# PERSONAL FILES

with James Simpson-Daniel



by Ian Randall

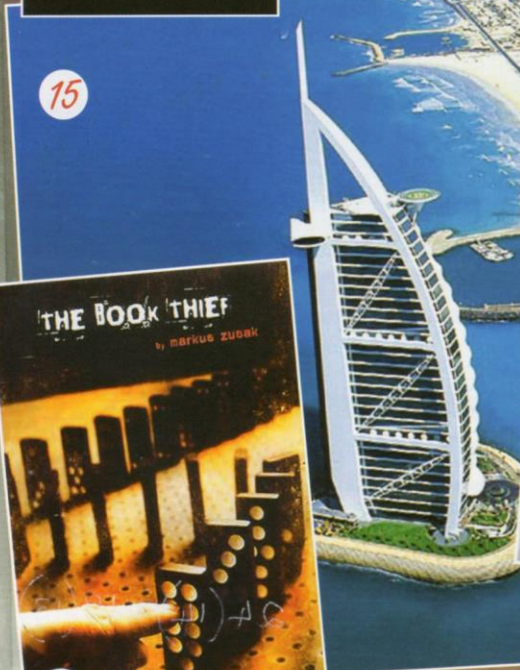
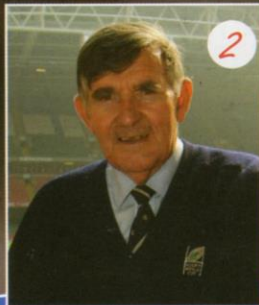
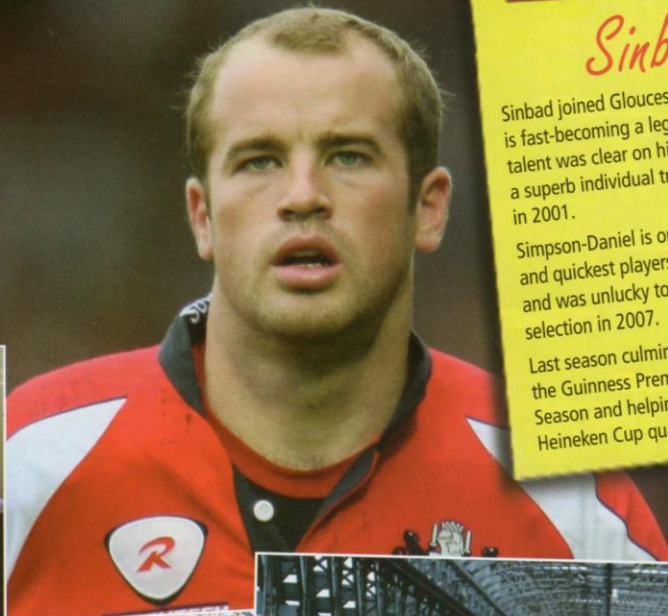


## Sinbad

Sinbad joined Gloucester as a teenager and is fast-becoming a legend of the club. His talent was clear on his debut as he scored a superb individual try against Rotherham in 2001.

Simpson-Daniel is one of the most electric and quickest players in the modern game and was unlucky to miss out on World Cup selection in 2007.

Last season culminated in Sinbad claiming the Guinness Premiership Player of the Season and helping Gloucester to the Heineken Cup quarter-finals.





*1. What is the first match you remember watching?*

It would have been watching my older brother play when I was about 4 years old. I used to watch him play when he was playing at 8, cheering him on but not quite understanding the rules.

*2. Who is your sport's best pundit?*

Probably Bill McLaren for the classic lines he comes out with. There still there on Jonah Lomu's rugby computer game, which I play with my brother.

*3. Can you explain cricket?*

Yes. I've played it since I was younger. I don't even think you can call it this anymore but I used to be a fielder because I was never a great batsman and I wasn't really a bowler but I kept playing first XI cricket. We used to have a nasty teacher at school who could be very strict if you were to get out cheaply. It was the same on the rugby pitch if you did something disastrous he'd have a go at you so I think if I played now I'd be a slogger.

*4. Who has the flashiest motor at the club?*

Les (Vainikolo) has got his Escalade but I think there's only one winner and that's Mike Tindall with his

Range Rover Sport, the Audi A3 - which I know he shares - his motorbike and his quad bike. So I'll say him...for now.

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

It would be a close one. Probably an Aston Martin first. A race horse would be on my list of things to buy, a good one that you know could win a race as opposed to the one I owned which ran around the back all the time.

*6. What charity do you support and why?*

There's a few. The Injured Jockey Fund. You get so many terrible falls.

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

I'll say Jamie Fox the actor because I get called Jamie a lot.

*8. Can you play a musical instrument?*

No but I'd love to be able to play one well. The piano would be great.

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

I've got to imagine I've got the talent first. I want to say something like an R&B group, nothing like Limp Bizkit. Or I could be the token Eminem I suppose.

*10. How would you improve the play offs?*

I think you could improve it by having an outright winner and then keep the play offs exactly the same

way and have a play offs winner. That's how I would change it... nothing drastic.

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

Sinbad. I'm not really sure where it comes from. Obviously it's something to do with Simpson-Daniel. My older brother was called it, usual story, I got tagged it after him, Mark got tagged it after me and then Charlie after him. Nothing to do with sailing put it that way.

*12. What was the last book you read?*

A book called the book thief. It's a fictional book I read in Barbados on holiday.

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

I'd do something different like having roofs on stadiums so rugby could be played all the time.

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

Just something like ruining set pieces or miss tackles.

*15. Where in the world is the best night out?*

I've had some great nights out. I haven't done Vegas yet, I'm waiting for that. Hopefully I'll be going this summer on a stag. So far for me though, I'll say Dubai. A warm evening in an open top club...it was just a tip top night - but - looking forward to Vegas.

24(14) 10(13)



# EXPECTATION? OF COURSE

 Radio Gloucestershire's Andy Wyman takes a look at what has happened to Gloucester so far this season and comes to an interesting conclusion



**FLICKING**  
through a  
training handout  
in my other

life, I came across a section entitled, 'Learning To Control Expectation'. As my focus drifted a little, it occurred to me that the author probably wasn't a supporter of Gloucester Rugby, otherwise he wouldn't have set out with such an impossible aim.

Think back four weeks to when time had taken the edge off the déjà vu disappointment at the end of last season. Optimism started to bubble nicely with the prospect of instant payback as Leicester Tigers opened the new campaign at Kingsholm. Let's not dwell on that match for too long, but I do want you to consider the effect it had on even the most die-hard supporters' enthusiasm to travel to the Recreation Ground.

Now I'm not saying that you're a fickle bunch, but my pre-match task was to collect some sound bites in order to pass on the expectations of the visiting "Cherry and White" fans. Let's just say that the feedback was less than optimistic – and on what grounds should it have been any different?

What a result! What a surprise? One lady told me that this was the best day of her life. Better even than her wedding day! On spotting my smirk of disbelief, she invited me to check with her husband who beamed satisfaction and nodded in agreement. The post match interview revealed that Dean Ryan thought the result would see fans celebrate with a quiet drink in their local hostelry – he's a funny man when he wants to be!

Obviously expectations were kept in check for the visit of Harlequins. By half-time the relatively new blend of running rucker and Dean Richards' more hard-nosed approach had caused some consternation in The Shed. This was soon blown away by some crowd pleasing skill and the foresight of that coven of supporters to change the face on the Butch James voodoo doll.



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Two wins from three games, but nobody thought that things had really clicked yet. A testing journey up the M6 to visit Philippe brought a lesson in tactical kicking and more confusion over what's legal at the breakdown. Sale hadn't conceded a try in the league all season and in truth we didn't trouble that record with any period of sustained pressure.

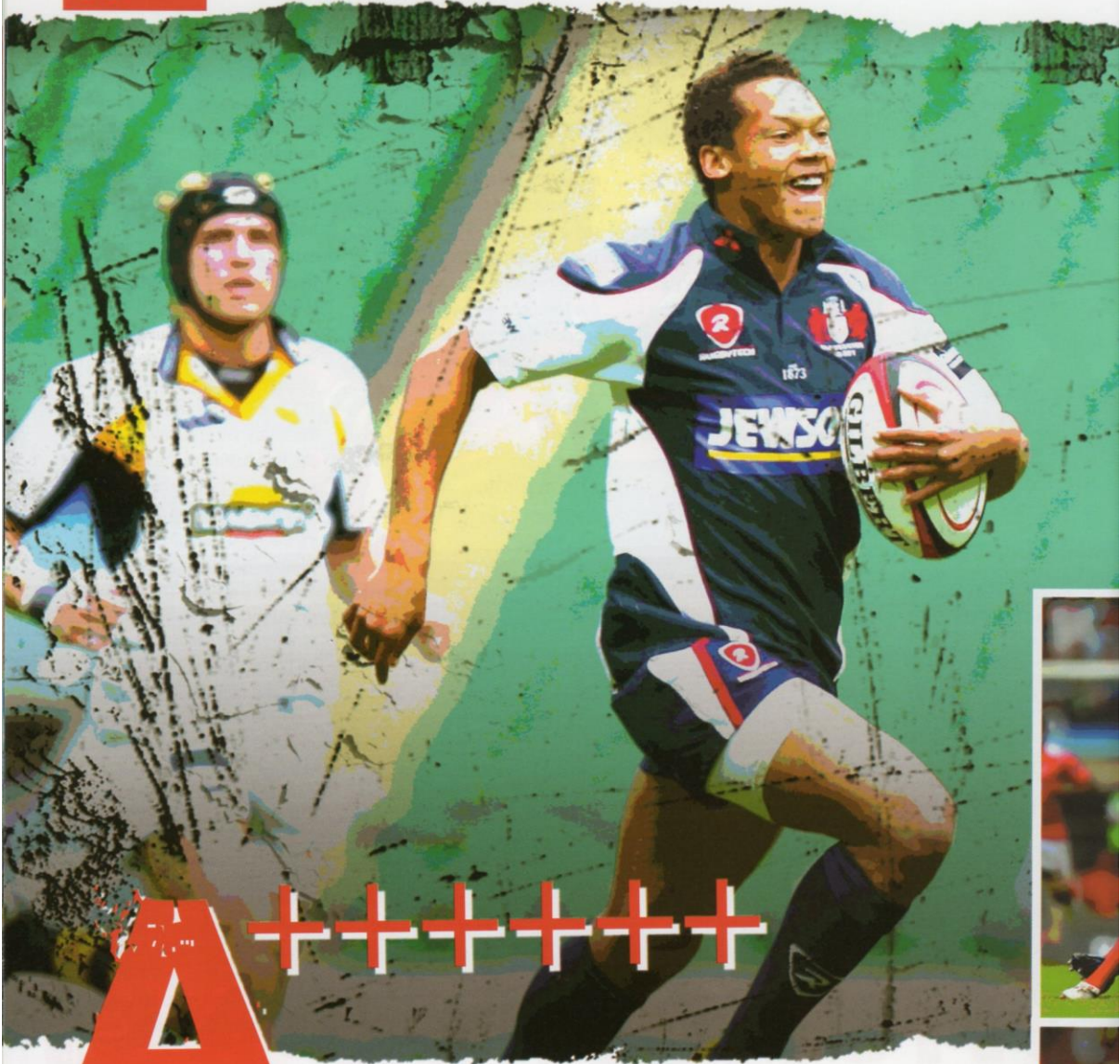
As I'm writing this, both the team and supporters are working on a very short turn around to prepare for the arrival of Newcastle Falcons on Tuesday evening. They haven't had the best of starts so what expectation here? Surely a home win, but I don't suppose it would do any harm for "the creepy crew" to adjust the voodoo doll again – double strength this time!

Well here we are anticipating the first fixture of the EDF Energy Cup competition with the visit of the reigning Guinness Premiership Champions London Wasps. They are notoriously slow off the mark, but ended a disastrous start to the season with a win at Welford Road of all places. We constantly hear that one man doesn't make a team, so they can't be missing dear old Lol that much. I wonder if the Shed will feel the same? Can anyone emerge to shoulder a similar amount of cutting wit? It's said that McGeechan's men are a team that rise to the big occasion. They surely won't need Phil Vickery to convince them of the consequences of not "stepping up to the plate" as they jog out onto the Kingsholm turf.

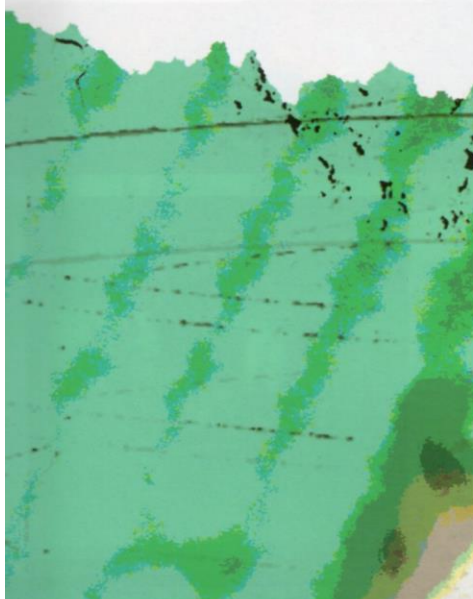
So, how are you controlling your expectations for today's game. I suppose it could depend on the events of Tuesday's encounter. Even then performance might override the actual result, whichever way it went.

Controlling expectations – where's the fun in that?

*Andy Wyman commentates for BBC Radio Gloucestershire, who cover all Gloucester's games home and away on 1413AM and online.*



**Gloucester go into Monday's encounter with Sale Jets top of their Guinness A League section. Coach Mark Cornwell is delighted with their progress.**



IT MIGHT be a touch too early to predict another crop that rivals the vintage year of Ryan Lamb, Anthony Allen, Olly Morgan and Jack Adams but it has been a good way to start.

Mark Cornwell's Guinness A League side, made up of some of the brightest prospects in the Academy, Hartpury College and players aiming for senior rugby at Kingsholm, have won their first three games of this season's competition and will look to continue that run against Sale at Hartpury College on Monday night.

Victories away to Saracens and Sale and home to Leicester have shot them to the top of the table. It has given the likes of Charlie Sharples, Henry Trinder, Freddie Burns, Yann Thomas, Tristan Roberts and Andres Pretorius a chance to shine and they have gleefully accepted the opportunity.

"We have got a talented group of players," Cornwell said. "We haven't attempted to recruit them by accident – we want to try and make Gloucester a breeding ground for excellent young players who can then prosper in a senior environment."

"It is unrealistic to expect a group of players like Lamb, Allen and Morgan to come through every season but it is a development path into first team rugby – very much like the ones we have set-up with Moseley and Cinderford.

"The pleasing aspect from a coaches point of view is that they have all bought into the importance of it and that instantly raises the standard. That does not mean to say every performance has been how we would have liked but they have stuck together and that has been great.

"To see so many people at Kingsholm the other night for the Leicester game was fantastic and I hope we can attract another good crowd at Hartpury on Monday. A fourth successive victory would be great for us."

The likes of Sharples, who scored a hat-trick in Gloucester's 45-8 win over Leicester, and Trinder, have been playing regularly for Moseley. Freddie Burns has been one of England Under-20s stand-out players, while Roberts, Thomas and Dan Williams have all impressed.



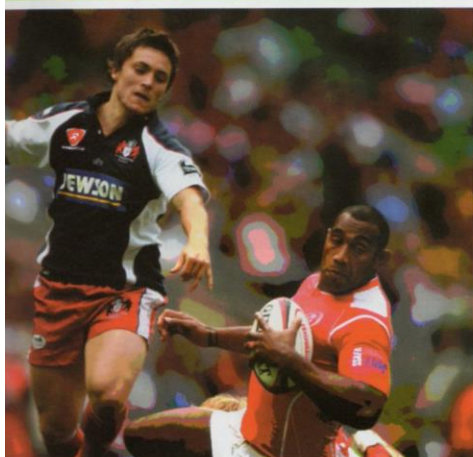
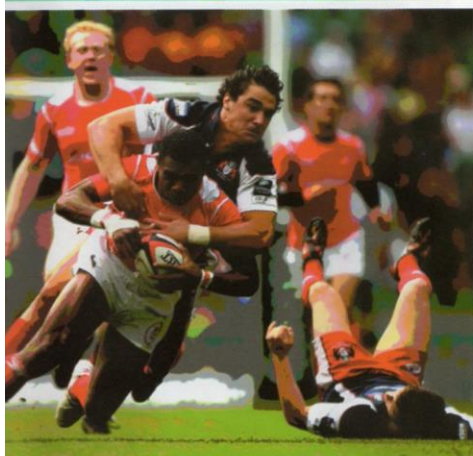
**We haven't attempted to recruit them by accident – we want to try and make Gloucester a breeding ground for excellent young players who can then prosper in a senior environment.**



Cornwell has also been able to call on the likes of Iain Balshaw and Lamb as they search for fitness and form.

"Having senior players involved is a huge bonus because it allows the younger players to learn so much during a game situation," Cornwell said. "We have also seen Apo Satala in action and he now has a senior contract until the end of the season.

"That is what is on offer provided these guys work hard enough and play well. I am really, really pleased we have made such a solid start and Monday is a chance for us to carry that forward."



GLOUCESTER RUGBY 39  
NEWCASTLE FALCONS 23



## Brilliant Balshaw

Tuesday, September 30, Attendance: 12,861  
Kingsholm, Referee: David Rose



IAIN BALSHAW claimed a hat-trick and James Simpson-Daniel added a brace as Gloucester over-whelmed Newcastle with five tries at Kingsholm.

For the first time this season, Gloucester struck a much better balance between their natural instincts to attack and play through phases and the required kicking game under the new ELV's.

For all their obvious advantage and potency, they are still too cheap at times and Newcastle's three tries means there is still work to do. But this was quite comfortably their most potent performance of the season – underpinned by Balshaw's finishing qualities, some outstanding link play from Simpson-Daniel and another rock solid effort from Olly Morgan.

Newcastle gave it a right old go but once they lost Jonny Wilkinson, who had operated close to the maximum, with a knee injury they were never the same side.

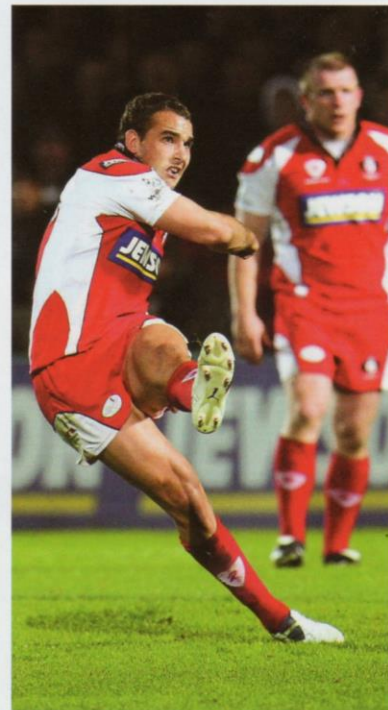
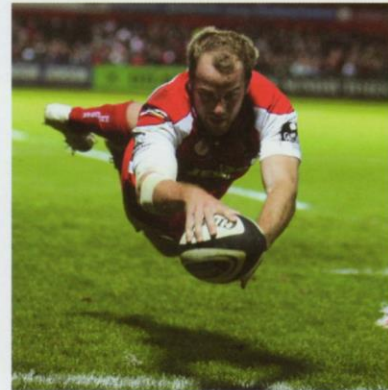
Olly Barkley cancelled out a first minute penalty before Balshaw grabbed his first try when he rounded off great

approach work by Simpson-Daniel to take Morgan's scoring pass. Gloucester went in again three minutes before the break when Balshaw again rounded off good work from Gareth Cooper, Barkley, Alasdair Strokosch and Matthew Watkins.

Barkley then kicked a 40th minute penalty to establish a 16-6 lead but Newcastle hit back when hooker Matt Thompson went over down the short side from a line-out and when Tom May gathered his own chip and chase before heading on the outside of Willie Walker to reduce the scores to 19-16.

But Gloucester then responded when Balshaw crossed for his hat-trick after more outstanding work from Simpson-Daniel and then it was Sinbad's turn to turn the screw. First, he dived over in the 71st minute when he broke to the right of a scrum and then finished off a long-range move started by Rory Lawson from a scrum deep in Gloucester territory.

That took Gloucester 39-16 ahead and was far more reflective of the difference between the teams. But Gloucester's deficiencies reared themselves again in the close stages to allow Phil Dowson in for a third Falcons try.



### Man of the Match



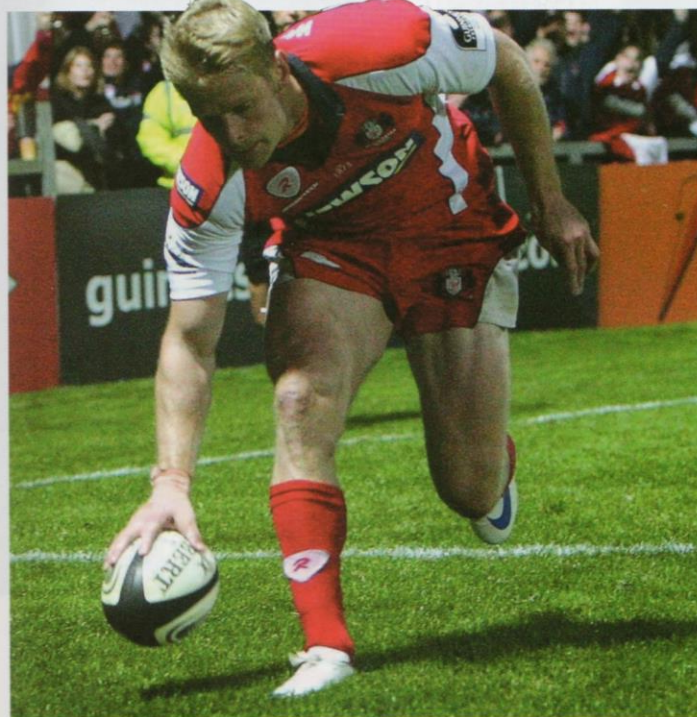
James Simpson-Daniel. Scored twice and was a huge threat all night



### Coach's Comment

"We tried to strike a better balance between our running game and kicking game and we did it well at times," head coach Dean Ryan.





## Timeline

1 mins	
Wilkinson PEN	0-3
13 mins	
Barkley PEN	3-3
19 mins	
Balshaw TRY	8-3
30 mins	
Clegg PEN	8-6
37 mins	
Balshaw TRY	13-6
40 mins	
Barkley PEN	16-6
45 mins	
Thompson TRY	16-11
48 mins	
Barkley PEN	19-11
51 mins	
May TRY	19-16
63 mins	
Barkley PEN	22-16
67 mins	
Balshaw TRY	27-16
71 mins	
Simpson-Daniel TRY	32-16
75 mins	
Simpson-Daniel TRY, Walker CON	39-16
78 mins	
Dowson TRY, Clegg CON	39-23

## Gloucester Line-up

15	Olly Morgan	
14	James Simpson-Daniel	(2t)
13	Matthew Watkins	
12	Mike Tindall	(capt)
11	Iain Balshaw	(3t)
10	Olly Barkley	(4p)
9	Gareth Cooper	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Scott Lawson	
3	Alasdair Dickinson	
4	Marco Bortolami	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Peter Buxton	
7	Alasdair Strokosch	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Olivier Azam	(S. Lawson)
17	Dave Young	(Wood)
18	Apo Satala	(Buxton)
19	Andy Hazell	(Narraway)
20	Rory Lawson	(Cooper)
21	Willie Walker (1c)	(Watkins)
22	Mark Foster	(Barkley)



## PETER ARNOLD



**ELV's, player release dates, victories for the**

**A team and yet another different competition at Kingsholm today – Peter Arnold rounds up the action.**

### CONFUSED

THERE is an annoying bloke who keeps popping up on my TV screen telling me that he's "confused-dot-com". It pains me to say it, but I'm beginning to have some sympathy for him. Not the dot-com bit. I'm in danger of becoming just plain confused.

Here we have three games in around ten days, each one of them in a different competition. I can just about get my head around that, although I do have to think to remember the difference between the Anglo-Welsh and European varieties of Cup, but I wonder how the players feel about it?

We haven't yet come to terms with the Experimental Law Variations as they are interpreted in the Premiership. If you are naïve enough to believe all you read in the media, then you'd think that Dean Ryan gave the referee in the Quins game a right going over on the subject at half time, to such an extent that the said official leaned over backwards towards Gloucester in the second half. That was Dean Richards' contention anyway, again according to the media, and if true then represented, frankly, an insult to an experienced referee. He, himself, confirmed that both coaches asked him about interpretations of the law, but both did so very politely, and there doesn't seem much wrong with that.

And that's just in the Premiership, an English competition controlled by English referees. I shudder to think what could happen if, say, we play against a French side with an Italian referee. Interpretations are bound to vary widely, and that's true even if such games are played under last season's rules. You can't expect a referee to switch his head on and off between two codes just like that.

Just to confuse things further, the Australians and New Zealanders are imposing even more ELVs, trying to limit the number of penalty kicks, I believe, and the French intend to trial those too. Now, the South Africans have added a fly to the ointment, by saying that they want no truck with the latest raft of law tampering. I do wish the IRB would get its act together and call a halt to the whole thing so we all know where we are.

### HOOTS MON!

AS IF all that weren't enough, we have an attack from the frozen north. Premier Rugby advised that Premiership clubs should not release players to a Scotland training session, so they didn't. "Hoots mon!" (and other Caledonian expressions) cried the Scots, "Ye cannae do that!" But they could and they did. Both sides contend they acted within agreements, which I, in my innocence, thought had been settled months ago. Both parties can't be right.

I'm confused.

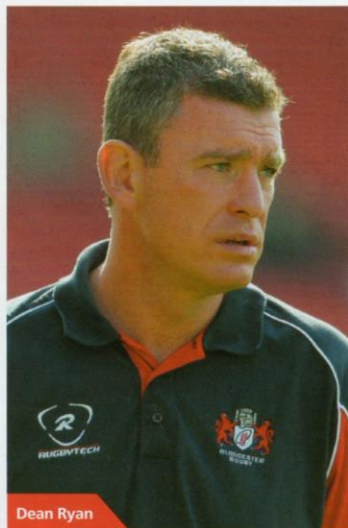
Dot com.



Action v Quins



Henry Trinder



Dean Ryan



Dean Richards

## GOOD START

HAVE you noticed how well our 'A' side has started the season? Gloucester might not have been able to beat Leicester, but the second string did with some ease. Of course, we shouldn't read too much into the situation because the quality of these 'A' teams varies so widely, what with coaches using them to try out youngsters and newcomers while also easing established first team players back into action after injury. I'm told, for example, that the Leicester squad was particularly weak.

Nevertheless, the whole thing is very encouraging, and has made names such as Sharples, Norton and Trinder almost as familiar as those of first team regulars.

Let's face it; we might well have to call on some of these up-and-comers for top-flight action before very long. The highly regrettable injury to the in-form Will James (best wishes and get well soon) provides a case in point. With Adam Eustace also injured, our resources at lock are looking a wee bit stretched. So keep on keeping on lads. You're

certainly providing one of this rather odd season's highlights.

**//**  
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## INTERPRETATION

IF people are having trouble with interpretation of the Laws in 2008, just

take a look back in time. I've recently been given a little book called 'The Original Rules of Rugby', which is fascinating. It starts off with the "Rules of Football as played at Rugby School in 1845". Here is the rules governing the scoring of a 'Try at Goal'.

*"A ball touched between the goalposts may be brought up to either of them, but not between. The ball when punted must be within, when caught without, the line of goal, the ball must be place-kicked but not dropped, even though it touch two hands and it must go over the bar and between the posts without having touched the dress or person of any player. No goal may be kicked from touch"*

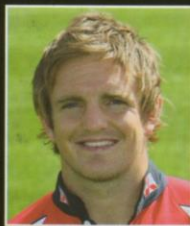
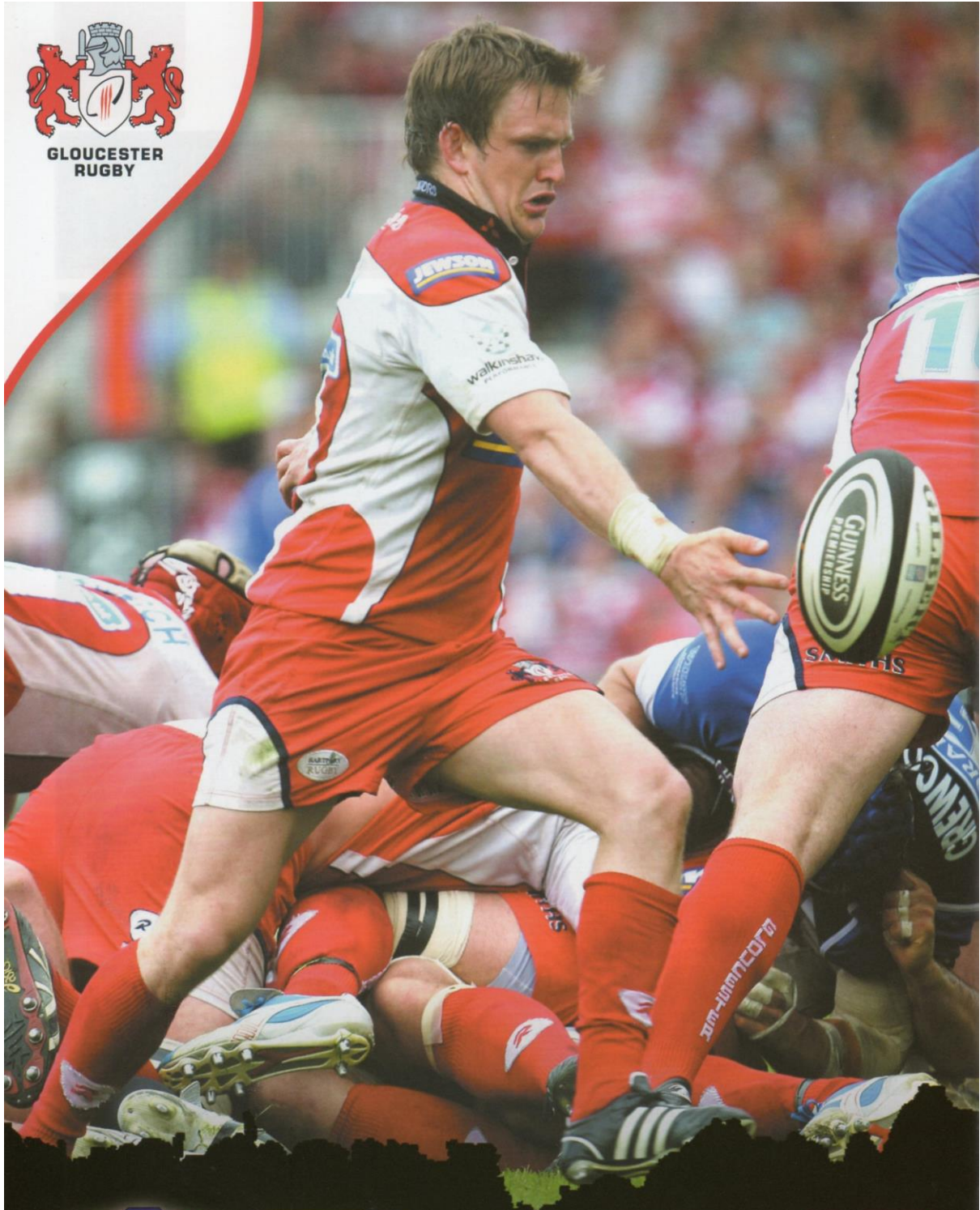
Well, I've no doubt they knew what they were talking about. Rule No. 20 also caught my eye.

*"All matches are drawn after five days, but after three if no goal has been kicked."*

Presumably, it was getting boring by then. Doing anything next week?



**GLOUCESTER  
RUGBY**



## RORY LAWSON

**DOB:** 12.03.81    **Weight:** 13st 5lb

**Height:** 5'8"    **Position:** Scrum-Half

Player Sponsor



**CAMION**

## FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

**Bob Fenton hopes that a bit of sense prevails following Gloucester's start to the season – but is not holding his breath.**

AT THE time of writing (i.e. before the Newcastle match) all is not well in the world of Gloucester Rugby. Well that is if you believe everything you read.

Of course us supporters are a fickle bunch, so a 50 per cent strike rate in the opening four games was never going to be good enough for some. We should, surely, have put 50 points on Bath and Leicester, at least a hundred on Harlequins and somewhere between the two up at Sale. And if we haven't broken the scoreboard during the midweek match against Newcastle I fully

expect to see burning effigies of various coaches and players lining the route to Kingsholm today.

But that's our job – to be totally myopic and see everything in black (or cherry) and white. While I personally think it's best to judge things at the end of the season rather than four or five games in, there are many who take an opposite view. And, of course, that's their right.

What does annoy me though, is when the local media get in on the act and start running "Is time running out for Dean Ryan" stories. Just tell me, please, what is that designed to do? Sure it's an easy way to get lots of people to log on to your website and voice their opinion and I suppose those statistics may encourage a few people to place a bit more advertising with them, apart from that what else does it achieve?

I'm not suggesting that the newspapers should follow a slavish non-critical line, and everyone expects – and deserves – a word in their shell like if they make a hash of things, but this is different. This is bringing the football sack 'em all mentality into a sport that doesn't need it.

Do we really want to go that way, become a laughing stock along the lines of Newcastle FC or any other club who, at the first sign of a bad result start slinging everyone out? Well I can't speak for you, but I don't. I think the guys concerned need to have a bit of a hard look at themselves.

Okay, rant over.

Cup time then, EDF Energy today a visit from our dear friends from Adams Park. I don't think I will be breaking any secrets when I say that the format of this competition is not all that popular with every supporter. Many would prefer a straight knock-out, but these mini-leagues are nothing new, after all we've been playing them in European competitions for ages.

This year we're the lucky ones with two home games, so you have to fancy our chances of progressing through to the next stage, that's not to say that it means we take Wasps lightly today – anyone who does that would have clearly lost their grip on reality.

The competition does present probably the easiest route into the Heineken Cup next year, after all you only need to win five games rather than the twenty two in the league and then a few in the play-offs. Not only that the financial rewards are huge for the winning club – more than the European competitions.

I'll guess we'll see a bit later on



Dean Ryan



David Strettle tries to tackle Lesley Vainikolo

whether this means that there is a change in selection policy with a more first team pick rather than a side based on some of the other younger and fringe members of the squad. Given today's opposition I hope it's the former, don't want to give these insect boys an inch.

Talking of fringe and younger players, what about the achievements of our 'A' team (queue old jokes about George Peppard and Mr T), played three, won three and sitting pretty on top of their league with Leicester Extra's stuck to the bottom. Unfortunately I didn't make it to the game here a few Monday's ago when we put 45 points on the Tigers, but I am assured by those that were there I missed a cracker.

According to the fixtures we should have an 'A' team fixture against Sale on 6th October before a break in matches until January next year. If we win that one, and with more home games than away games

to come, we must put ourselves in a very strong point to progress through to the finals – work commitments allowing, I'll



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be there and strongly encourage everyone else to get along too. It's a great chance

to see some good rugby and it always amuses me to see us getting crowds at an 'A' fixture that some sides would long for a league match.

Finally, seeing as Wasps are in town, a mention for the man we love to hate: Lawrence Dallaglio. He's either still cycling or will have just completed a 933 km cycle ride across the Pyrenees to raise money for BLISS, the charity that cares for premature and sick babies.

This is a great effort on his behalf even though we all know he's been over the hill for years so should not find it that difficult. It's not too late to make a donation should you be so inclined, he has a page set up on the Just Giving network, you can find it by going to [www.justgiving.co.uk/lawrencedallaglio](http://www.justgiving.co.uk/lawrencedallaglio).

And you get a chance to leave him a rude message too!