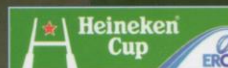


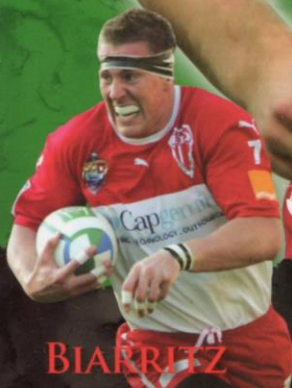
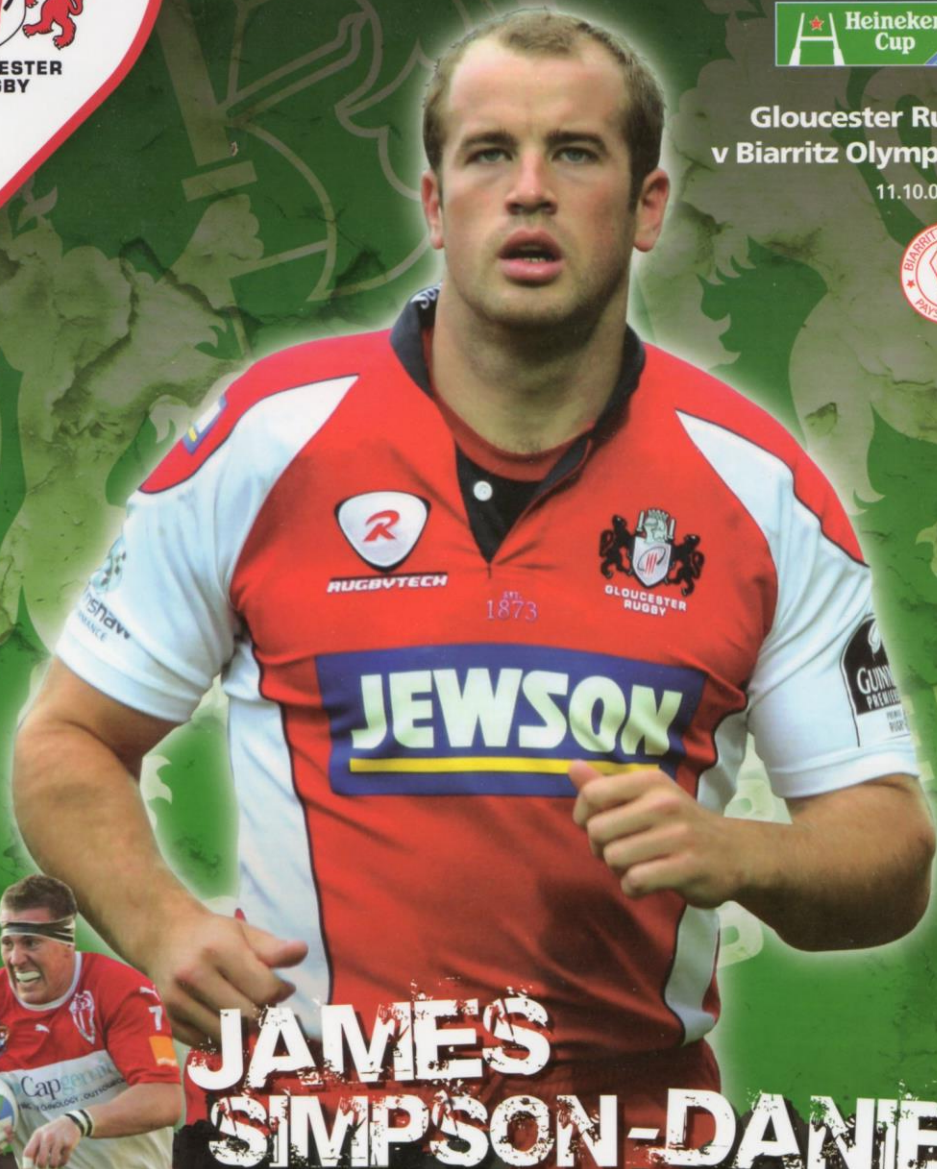


OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY 2008/2009 ISSUE 05 • £3.00



Gloucester Rugby
v Biarritz Olympique

11.10.08 17.30



JAMES SIMPSON-DANIEL

BIARRITZ

Chris Hewett gives his low down

HORSE POWER

James Simpson-Daniel gets away from rugby

DEAN RYAN

Looks ahead to Europe

PLUS: Match action, community news, ticket information and much more.

Heineken Cup Round One



ercrugby.com



CAPTAIN'S CORNER



THE HEINEKEN Cup – almost certainly the most testing club rugby tournament in the world – is back across Europe this weekend for the start of the 2008-09 competition.

I make no apologies for the fact this competition is capable of stirring emotions like no other. Its demands are massive, as a player you test yourself against a glittering array of talent from all over the world, it asks more of you than any other club competition and is the closest thing to international rugby.

We come into today's game on the back of two successive victories in the Guinness Premiership and EDF Energy Cup and that means, slowly but surely, we are gathering momentum at just the right time.

I said coming into the Wasps game last Saturday that we were attempting to

strike a better balance between our kicking game and running threat and we took more encouraging signs last weekend. If we can get the foundations



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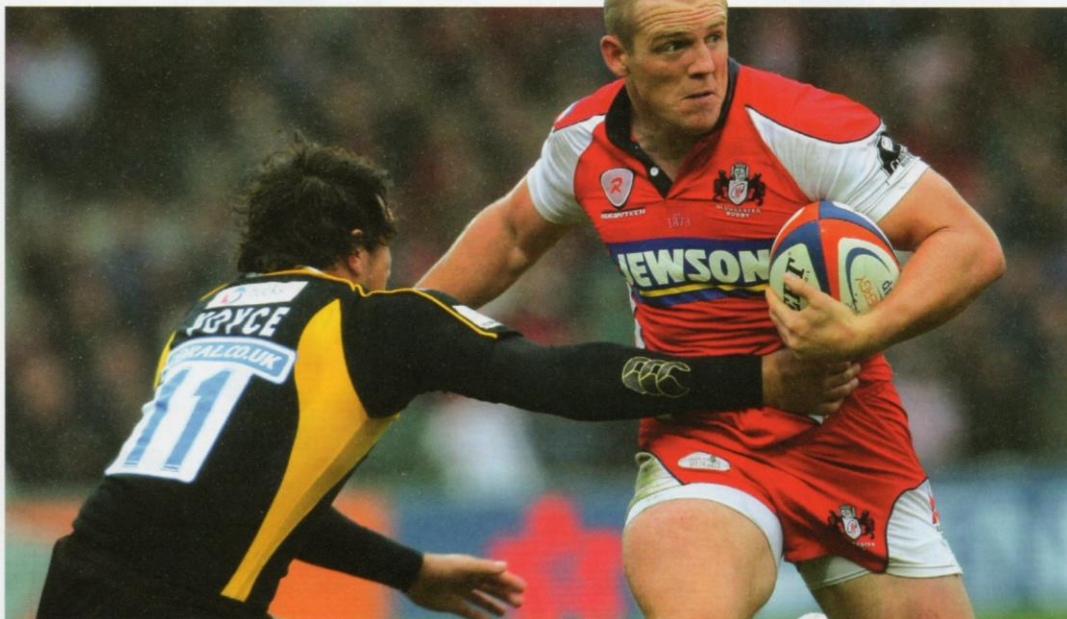
of our game right then I am confident we can be a threat against anyone.

At the competition launch in Edinburgh this week I said

it was time for Gloucester to deliver and I truly believe it. We have an exceptional group of players, have gathered plenty of experience over the last three or four years and now want to take those few extra steps.


We are ready to launch our assault this afternoon against a very good, well drilled and physical French side who have a wonderful European pedigree. They are probably slightly further forward than ourselves in terms of development and know what it is to feel success. It is a great start to the competition but all we are focused on is producing another performance and result we can really take forward in this competition.

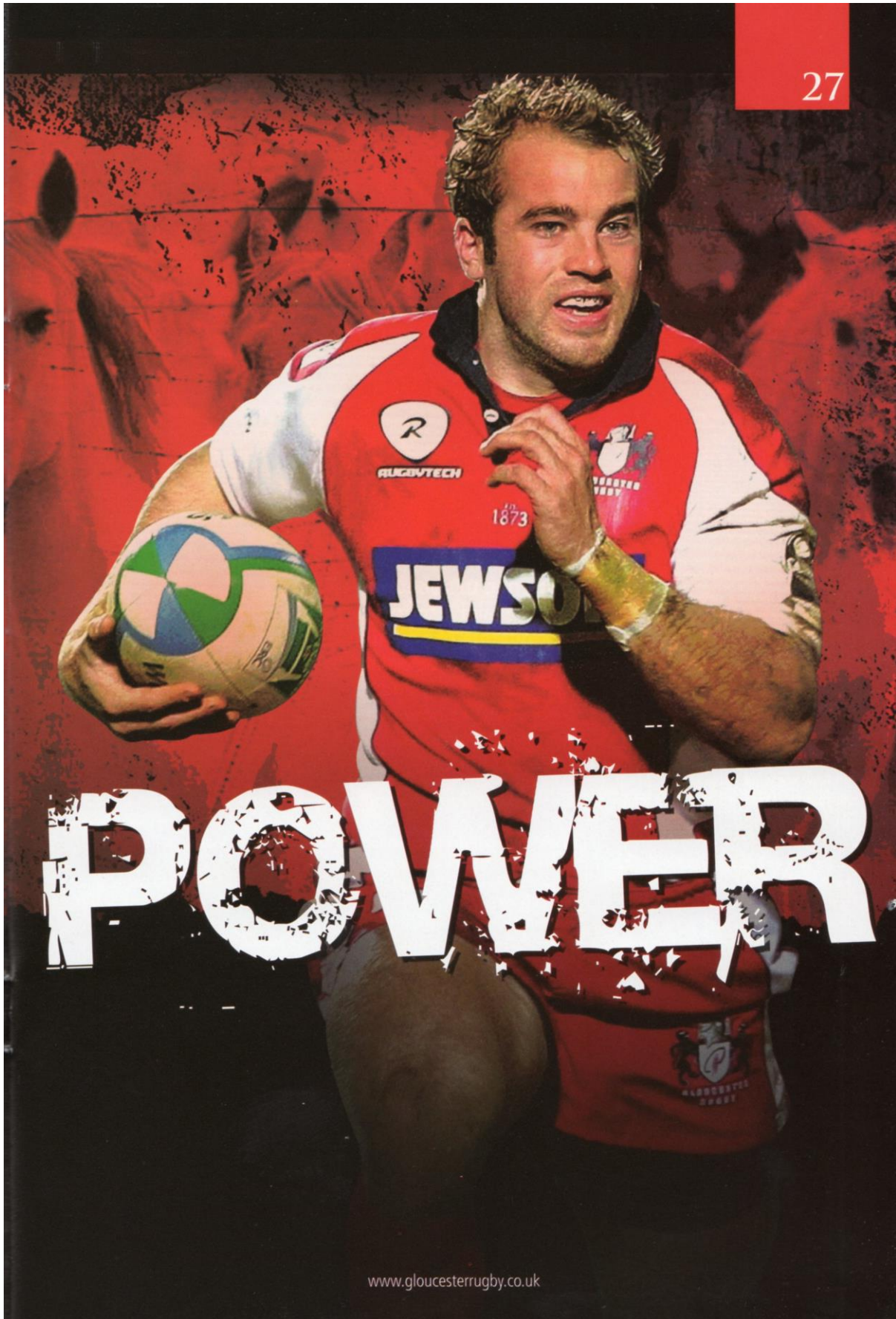
The Heineken Cup is back today – it demands everything from players and supporters alike – so please get right behind us this afternoon and make it special.





HORSE

 He might be regarded as one of the most devastating wingers in the game but James Simpson-Daniel's other love is horses and here he tells the matchday programme about his plans for the future.



POWER

HORSE POWER



IT MIGHT not be the first place you would expect to find James Simpson-Daniel five days shy of a razor-sharp Heineken Cup tie against those expert ruckers and maulers from Biarritz, but Gloucester's most potent attacking thoroughbred is leafing through a copy of the Racing Post and talking horses.

This is a million miles away from a seething Kingsholm in the world's most competitive rugby tournament but it is a testament to Simpson-Daniel that he is equally at home in both environments.

On a cool and cloudy Monday afternoon, Simpson-Daniel kicks back with a coffee in the beautifully atmospheric yard of trainer Michael Scudamore on the outskirts of Gloucester to indulge in his other passion – a passion for racing and horses that is about to launch a new business partnership and opportunity. The pair are about to launch Simpson-Daniel and Scudamore Racing, a syndicate that will invite interested parties to help purchase two horses that will run from the Scudamore yard.

As the pair are followed by a trio of excitable dogs to where a collection of Scudamore's horses are resting after a morning on the gallops, it is clear that Simpson-Daniel's love-affair is considerably deeper than a punter who likes a flutter. He talks with assured terminology, is inquisitive and knowledgeable about a range of leg strains, dietary habits and recovery techniques that instantly narrows the gap from Simpson-Daniel's field of expertise to the wonderfully honed horses he is busy admiring. There are more similarities than he cares to mention.

"You only have to look at them to appreciate their magnificence, they are beautifully honed animals and just coming here to the yard is a great way to get

away from rugby," Simpson-Daniel said.

It is hard to disagree. There is a rare majesty up close to these animals as they are fine tuned and prepared for their next outing but this is not just an opportunity for a spot of escapism – Simpson-Daniel is deadly serious about this latest business idea.

"We are in the early stages of starting this venture and the main aim is to try and join



We are in the early stages of starting this venture and the main aim is to try and join together like minded people who enjoy being involved in rugby and racing. We are now in a position to invite people to join this syndicate.



together like minded people who enjoy being involved in rugby and racing. We are now in a position to invite people to join this syndicate.

"It is our intention to purchase two dual purpose horses so they would run both National Hunt and flat to give us the best racing options. This is a great opportunity for people to get involved with two sports. "I am sure people will get hooked on the place like I have once they come out and see it. The work that goes on here is tremendously hard but the rewards when you see a horse run and run well is fantastic.

"I love the yard and the surroundings – it is a real working farmhouse and yard – I feel really at home here.

"They all have their individual requirements when it comes to training needs and what

is best for them. Very much like rugby players, they are all different and that is what is so fascinating – they have their unique personalities and traits."

Scudamore, the youngest son of legendary trainer Peter Scudamore, is all things to the yard he has lived at for five years. Trainer, part-doctor, part-physician, part-dietician, part-sounding board – it is an exhaustive and unforgiving role but it's also his life. There are almost 40 horses under his command and as we stand on the gallops, he watches two undergoing their exercise regime with a knowing nod of appreciation.

"We bought the place because of the gallops," he said. "It has a natural gradient that is perfect for sprinting – when we saw it, we knew it was right.

"The process is never ending and always evolving. You are hoping to unearth the next big thing – you never know when that might be but you always know when you have got it. That is what we are all searching for and what drives us forward. "This partnership may allow us to do it – we are both hugely excited about it and what it may create in the long-term."

It is soon time for Simpson-Daniel, who is likely to lead Gloucester's attack against Biarritz this afternoon, to head for home. He will enter this season's Heineken Cup with 17 tries to his name in 25 appearances – one of the best strike rates in Europe – and will hope to create and score more in the coming campaign.

Gloucester's thoroughbred is ready for another long race and may soon have more to celebrate – albeit this time on a different track.

For more information about joining Simpson-Daniel and Scudamore Racing, please log onto www.scudamoreracing.co.uk





RYAN'S REVIEW

Last Saturday's victory over Wasps has set you up for a real tilt in the EDF Energy Cup now?

DR: IT has yes. What we have been searching for is a more solid foundation so we can run our attacking options and in parts we found it against Wasps. Against Newcastle we struck a much better balance between knowing when to kick and when to run and we continued that against Wasps. It was an important result because we backed up what we did on the Tuesday night and it gives us some momentum to take into Europe.

We want to target every match we play in – it was a real battle against Wasps but

the result was very pleasing given the fact we had lost to them in the last minute last season. Gloucester against Wasps doesn't de-value anything – they are always massive games and a difficult way to start the competition.

There have obviously been injuries ahead of today's game, has that been a concern?

DR: THERE is always an element of concern when you are operating with reduced numbers.

We have had our injuries in key areas where we are already stretched but we have coped with that well. We had to ask certain individuals to front for us

again and they did that. If you want to be successful long-term then that has to happen on occasions.

We have monitored Carlos Nieto, Nick Wood and Luke Narryway this week and we hope a couple of them will be fit.

Today is our third different competition in a week – how does the Heineken Cup retain its appeal?

DR: I THINK it is widely regarded as the best club competition in the world. It has an intensity level that essentially mirrors international rugby, you are asked to jump into the unknown with regard to the opposition and being consistently



Mark Foster v Wasps



Dimitri Yachvili v Northampton Saints

competitive demands a huge amount of qualities. Some of our best performances last season were in the Heineken Cup but at the same time it also taught us some of our most valuable lessons.

Each year the standards seem to improve, the depth of quality increases and the demands grow. These are the sort of occasions you want to be involved in as a player or a coach – we are trying to build something special at the club and challenging in Europe is central to that.



What do you expect today from Biarritz?

DR: It seems to be quite widely documented they may not have made the best start to their domestic season but they will come with a legacy that would be the envy of many clubs.

I think I am right in saying they have won the French title three times in the last seven years so when you throw teams of the calibre of Toulouse, Stade Francais and Clermont in to that, it is a considerable achievement.

It means they are very capable of mixing their game up to be competitive over the long-term. They recently contested the final in this competition too so they are a very good side. If you can call on the likes of Yachvili, Masi, Traille, Thion and Hardinordoquy to name just a handful of players, then you are going to be competitive.

I expect them to be physical and confrontation but we just need to concentrate on what makes us a good side and if we can do that I have no doubt we can be a threat.



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TODAY'S TEAMS

Saturday 11th October 17.30
Gloucester Rugby v Biarritz Olympique



Gloucester

Biarritz Olympique

TODAY'S OFFICIALS
 Referee: Peter Allan Touch Judges: Rob Dickson & Ronnie Dumma
 4th Official: Bruce Robertson 5th Official: Mark Tovey

Gloucester Replacements

S. LAWSON 16, YOUNG 17, EUSTACE 18, HAZELL 19, B. LAWSON 20, WALKER 21, VANHOOD 22

Biarritz Replacements

AUGUST 16, BARACELLA 17, ROBOT 18, VAMPOLOU 19, COURRENT 20, CABANNES 21, GIBELLY 22

Heineken Cup

22(9) 10(3)

PERSONAL FILES

with Nick Wood



by Ian Randall

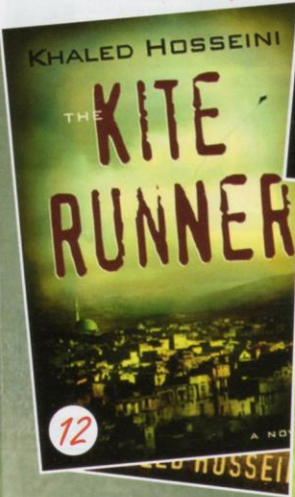
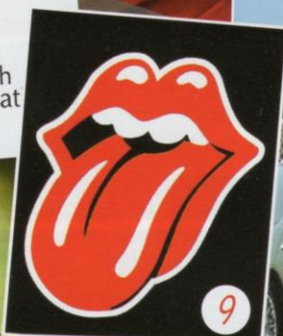
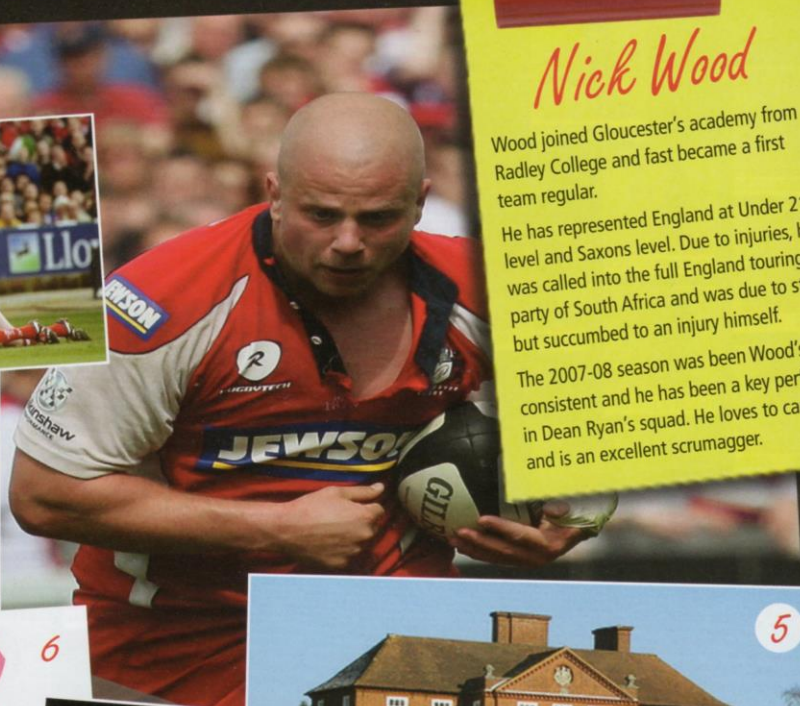


Nick Wood

Wood joined Gloucester's academy from Radley College and fast became a first team regular.

He has represented England at Under 21 level and Saxons level. Due to injuries, he was called into the full England touring party of South Africa and was due to start, but succumbed to an injury himself.

The 2007-08 season was been Wood's most consistent and he has been a key performer in Dean Ryan's squad. He loves to carry ball and is an excellent scrumagger.





1. What is the first match you remember watching?

The first one that really jumps out at me was watching Wales v Ireland at Wembley when they were building the Millennium Stadium and Wales' home ground was Wembley and for some reason my dad had tickets to that and we ended up going to it.

2. Who is your sport's best pundit?

Spoken - Bill McLaren, obviously the guy's a legend, obviously we've got the family connection here, but the turn of phrase that he had just made everything so enjoyable.

3. Can you explain cricket?

Yes, you've got two batsmen in at any one time, 11 players on each side, six balls in an over - depends how many overs you're playing and what kind of game you're playing - but I used to play cricket. I had to stop because I couldn't scrummage and bowl at the same time, the back wanted to be compressed but not then, I couldn't handle it.

4. Who has the flashiest motor at the club?

Definitely Les, the Escalade, Cadillac Escalade with X-box in it and all the toys. that's a car to go in the back of, not to drive.

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

A nice house - rural - I come from the country so I think I'd want to go back there.

6. What charity do you support and why?

Anything to do with breast cancer really - there's no-one in particular. My mother died from breast cancer when I was 10, so anything to do with that is pretty close to my heart.

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

We'll go with the spirit of the Ryder Cup, the first one that comes to mind is Nick Faldo. shame he didn't do so well this year.

8. Can you play a musical instrument?

I used to play the bass guitar, but not anymore. It was when I was at school, I used to have lessons and I was in a band believe it or not.

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

The Rolling Stones, hands down - there's no competition there. The Rolling Stones. I've not actually seen them - I've missed out on that - but I've seen a very good tribute band called the Counterfeit Stones and I've got most of the Stones' music on CD or on the iPod.

10. How would you improve the play offs?

The play offs are here to stay. I think they were improved once it was taken to 4 teams rather than

3, I think that's a better system.

11. Which 2 of your team mates would you want with you on a quiz team??

Terry Sigley - I don't mind the old quiz machine with him - I get all the funny questions that no-one knows about and he gets all the sport questions for me. And you'd have Foz, because 1 of 10 might actually be right!

12. What was the last book you read?

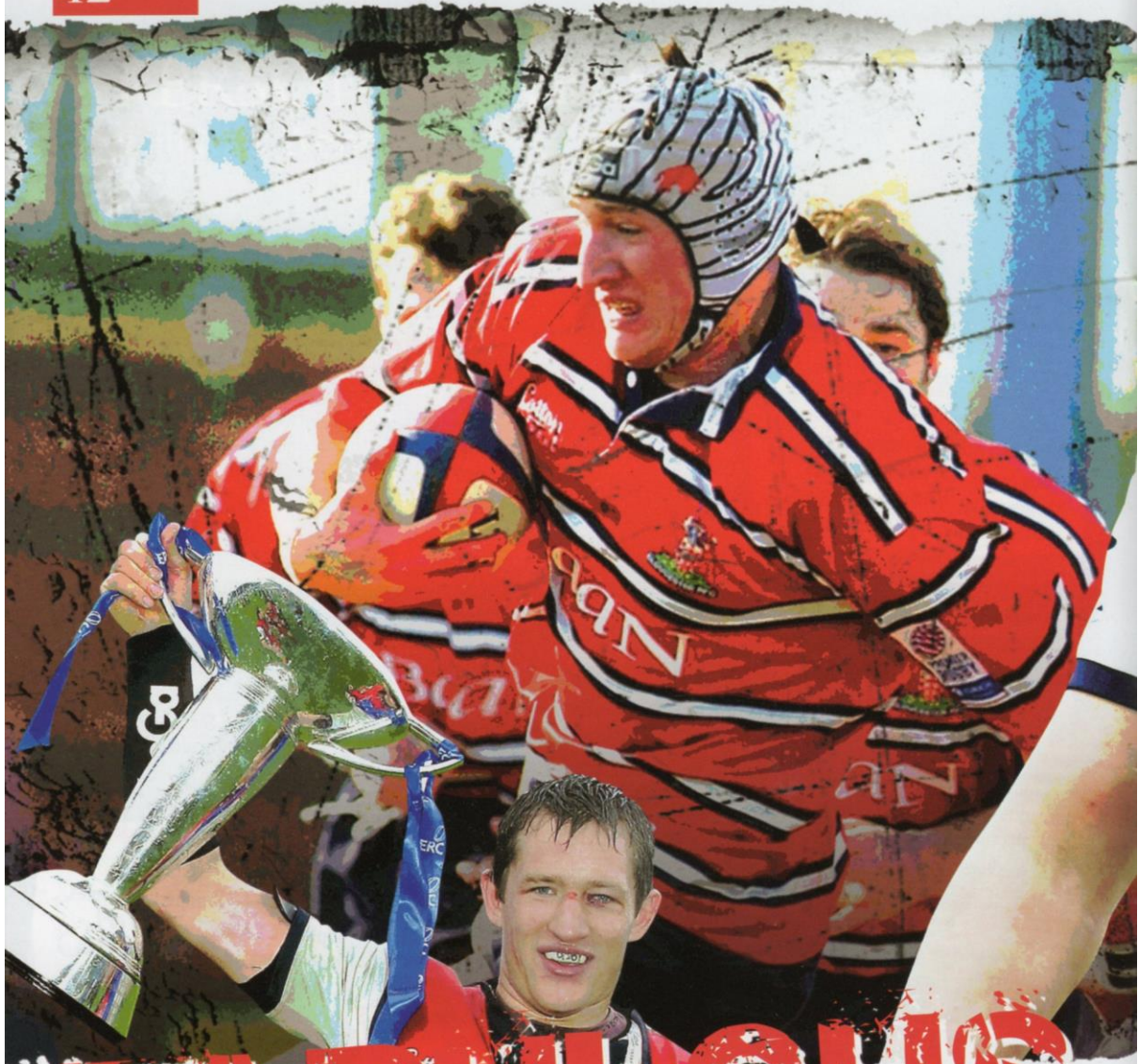
I go through phases of reading, I went to Mexico on holiday for 2 weeks with my girlfriend and I read 7 books in 2 weeks! Probably the best of those was The Kite Runner and the follow up A Thousand Splendid Suns, both of those books were incredible.

13. If there was one rule or law you could change, what would it be?


Every time they change these rules, people are saying "oh they're trying to get rid of the props", so as long as they don't do that I'm quite happy.

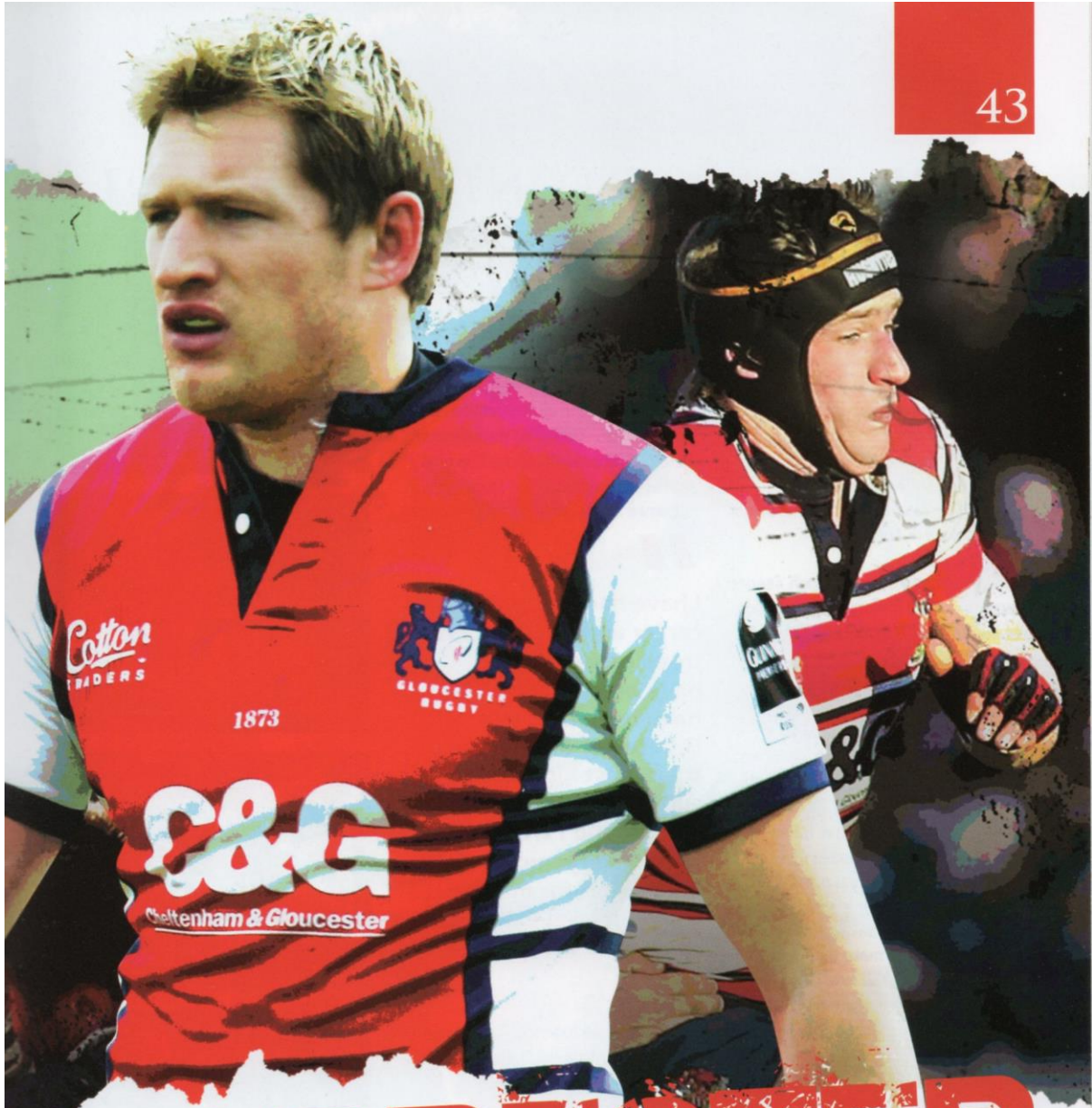
14. Where in the world is the best night out?

I had a fairly good night out in Dunedin when I was 18, that's a while ago, but it springs to mind. I was playing for the England under 18's, we played at Carisbrooke as the curtain raiser for the Bledisloe Cup, then we went to the Outback Bar or somewhere, half the Australian team were in there with u, so that was quite a good night.



FABULOUS

 He was one of the most explosive and gifted back row forwards of his generation but this week James Forrester announced his retirement, here, the matchday programme pays tribute to his career



FORRESTER



FORRESTER FORCED INTO RETIREMENT



GLOUCESTER Rugby are sad to announce that after a long battle for fitness, number eight James Forrester has confirmed his retirement from professional rugby.

Regarded as one of the most gifted game-breakers of his generation, renowned for his ability to score long-range tries, Forrester (27) suffered a horrific knee injury in Gloucester colours against Bristol at Ashton Gate in April 2007.

Although he battled back through a series of operations and intensive rehabilitation that included treatment from renowned specialist Bill Knowles in Vermont, who also worked with England's Richard Hill and Dan Ward-Smith, Forrester's comeback stalled when he suffered a breakdown during Gloucester's Guinness A League match against Sale last month.

"I have put everything I have into getting back to fitness and demanded more of myself in this recovery process than I thought possible but it is simply not going to be and after taking advice I have been forced to make the hardest decision any player will ever have to make – I have no other option," Forrester told www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk.

"Naturally, I am devastated my career has ended in this way but I have poured every ounce of effort into getting back to fitness for more than 16 months but I now know it's not going to be enough.

"I suffered a set-back after the game against Sale and have undergone another operation. That alone means I would be out for another eight months and it is simply not feasible to continue.

"I have had a wonderful career and have a treasure trove of memories. I have been fortunate to have been involved with Gloucester during one of their most high profile and successful periods in their history and I would like to thank everyone involved at the club for making it such a special place – it will always be with me."

Forrester, who won two England caps, graduated into the Academy set-up at Kingsholm from Bicester Rugby Club alongside his friend and former Gloucester full-back Jon Goodridge.

Following his debut in 2000-1, he made 134 appearances in all competitions and scored 51 tries – including the winner in the 2006 European Challenge Cup final against London Irish at The Stoop. He was renowned for his game-breaking qualities



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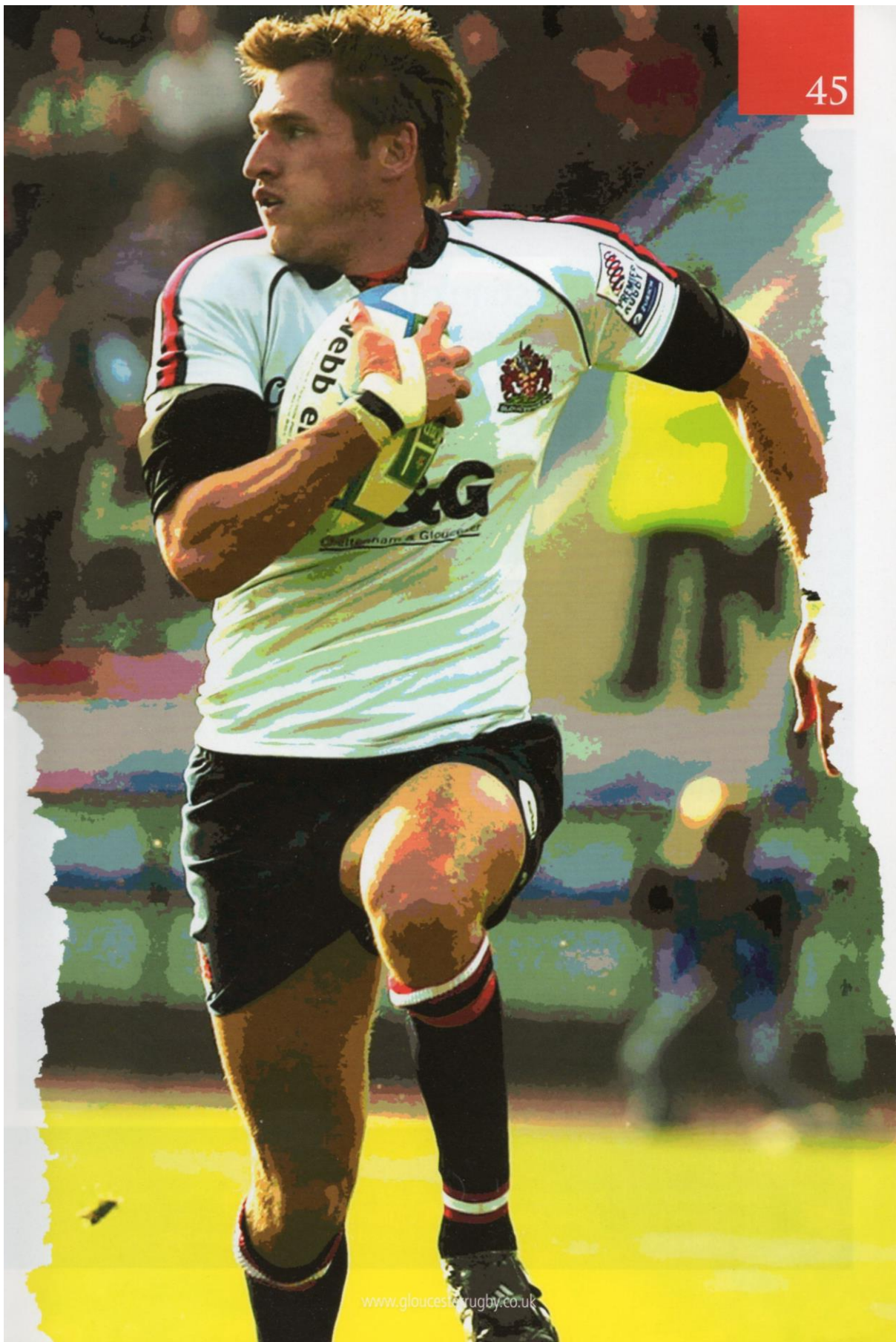


and scored three hat-tricks – two against Bristol at the Memorial Stadium and one against Caerphilly at Kingsholm.

Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan added: "When any player's career is cut short through injury it is a tragic waste but even more so in James's case because he was such a prodigious talent. "It is difficult to put into words just how hard he worked to return to full fitness – it was a testament to his desire to get back into the game after such a bad injury. He has played a massive part in Gloucester's recent history and his place within the club is assured.

"We saw what he might have been – he was a frightening talent and did things that were beyond explanation. It will be a huge loss to the game."





GLOUCESTER RUGBY
LONDON WASPS

24
19



Gloucester take the sting out

Saturday, October 4, Attendance: 7,864
Kingsholm, Referee: Martin Fox



GLOUCESTER won their second match in four days with a vital opening EDF Energy Cup success over Wasps.

Tries from Willie Walker and Lesley Vainikolo set Gloucester on their way to victory, while Walker also kicked a conversion and two penalties as Dean Ryan's side made the best possible start to the competition.

After Gloucester had slipped 5-0 behind thanks to Mark Robinson's try, the home side hit back with a Walker penalty and sweetly struck Ryan Lamb drop-goal. Lamb was at the forefront of Gloucester's attacking intent and after he sent Alasdair Dickinson thundering up the middle, the stand-off kicked cross field for Vainikolo to score.

To their credit, Wasps hit back with a second score from James Haskell and although their forwards battled hard, Gloucester held sway. Lamb was again involved in the move that eventually sealed the contest. His long pass found Vainikolo and when two defenders converged on the winger, he off-loaded brilliantly to Walker, who stormed in to score.

Other players to catch the eye for Gloucester were prop Dave Young, who produced a fiery performance against Tom French and lock Alex Brown, who dominated the line-out in the second half

– dismantling Wasps on their own throw.

The win maintained Gloucester's unbeaten home record in the EDF Energy Cup and sets them up for an attack on the competition with games against the Dragons and Newcastle to come.



Man of the Match



Willie Walker produced another excellent display that included a try, three penalties and a conversion.

Coach's Comment



"It is always good to beat Wasps – we lost to them in the last minute last year so it was a good win," head coach Dean Ryan.



Timeline

5 mins	
Robinson TRY	0-5
17 mins	
Walker PEN	3-5
20 mins	
Lamb DROP-GOAL	6-5
23 mins	
Vainikolo TRY	11-5
29 mins	
Staunton PEN	11-8
31 mins	
Walker PEN	14-8
38 mins	
Haskell TRY	14-13
47 mins	
Walker TRY and CON	21-13
51 mins	
Staunton PEN	21-16
70 mins	
Walker PEN	24-16
67 mins	
Walder PEN	24-19

Gloucester Line-up

15	Willie Walker	(1t, 3p, 1c)
14	Mark Foster	
13	Jack Adams	
12	Mike Tindall	(capt)
11	Lesley Vainikolo	(1t)
10	Ryan Lamb	(1 dg)
9	Rory Lawson	
1	Alasdair Dickinson	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	David Young	
4	Marco Bortolami	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Apo Satala	
7	Andy Hazell	
8	Alasdair Strokosch	
REPS		
16	Scott Lawson	(Azam)
17	Yann Thomas	
18	Adam Eustace	(Bortolami)
19	Peter Buxton	(Satala)
20	Dave Lewis	
21	Henry Trinder	
22	Olly Morgan	



PETER ARNOLD



Another week, another injury to Jonny Wilkinson.

Peter Arnold pays his own tribute and glories in the performances of Willie Walker and Lesley Vainikolo against Wasps.

KINGSHOLM JINX

WHAT is it with Jonny Wilkinson and visits to Gloucester? It was very sad to see him being helped off the field about half an

hour into the Newcastle mach with a knee injury which later turned out to be a dislocation. On the face of it, that would seem to indicate that he will be out of action for a while.

In that half hour, he had already proved that he was approaching his old form. His kicking boot seemed just as lethal as ever, as he proved by landing an indecently long penalty before some people had even had time to unscrew their hip flasks

But the point is that this isn't the first time

that something horrible has happened to Jonny at Kingsholm. A few years ago, Steve Ojomoh trod on his foot. Jonny fell over, but his foot, trapped by Steve's not inconsiderable weight, stayed where it was. The result was severe ligament damage which kept poor old Mr. Wilkinson off the field for quite a period.

There was nothing suspicious about either incident. It was just one, or in this case two, of the things which happen from time to time.

No one likes to see this sort of thing happen to any player, let alone someone with the talent and personality of Jonny. We know how it feels, bearing in mind the history of James Simpson Daniel.

Much as we like to see players of that sort of calibre performing on our sacred turf, perhaps the prudent thing would be for Jonny Wilkinson to stay away from us. They say that things happen in threes, and we would hate to see that proved true in this case.

I don't know whether the Jonny Syndrome is infectious, but young Mr. Cipriani wasn't going to take any chances, was he?

SWEET

IT'S ALWAYS sweet to beat Wasps, and that was true last Saturday, even if neither side was at anything like full strength.

You can't say that it was the best game we've ever watched, but it was thoroughly entertaining nevertheless. One interesting occupation was to watch how many balls were dropped during the game, and who dropped them. Not that I'm pointing any fingers, because that deadly, capricious wind and steadily increasing rain must have made it difficult to catch a black pudding, let alone a rugby ball.

The game did yield some interesting



Jonny Wilkinson

performances. I was pleased when Willie Walker was awarded the 'Man of the Match' title by Brian Moore. He thoroughly deserved it, not just because of his place kicking in conditions which foxed even such a reliable performer as Wasps' Jeremy Staunton. But also for his all round display.

To me, everything looks so much safer when Willie's on the field. He instils a sense of confidence, and does everything asked of him with professional aplomb, even if not always spectacularly. It was no surprise that it was Willie who popped up to take the scoring pass after Lesley Vainikolo's surging run in the second half.

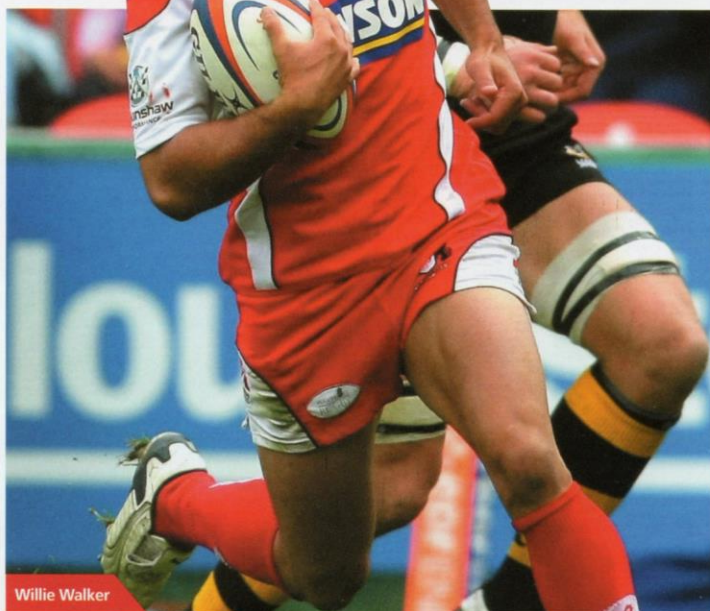
It seems incredible, with hindsight, that there appeared to be some doubt whether we'd be keeping him towards the end of last season. Then Chris Paterson's term of office came to an abrupt end, and the whole picture changed.

At this point, we seem to have got the better of the deal.

And talking of Big Les, I was reassured by his performance last Saturday, too. Not because of his try – let's face it, all he had to do was catch the ball and fall over after Ryan Lamb's succulently placed cross kick – but because he seemed to have regained some confidence.

Was it an optical illusion that his pace seemed to have ratcheted up a notch or two? I don't know, but I certainly wouldn't want him running at me with ball in hand. Not without a call on my insurance broker first. He also seemed to be looking for the ball more often. Certainly, there were times when he was quite happily mixing it with Wasps' big, bruising forwards.

A full-throttle Les Vainikolo would be an asset to any team, and I'm glad he's on our side.



Willie Walker

//

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The other chap who caught my eye was Jack Adams. He always does. He has a bustling, aggressive approach, ball in hand, and also appears to have a smart eye for a gap.

They say it's an ill wind which blows nobody good, and the injuries to Messrs. Watkins and Allan, together with the congested nature of this part of the season has given Jack something of a window of opportunity.

It was also good to note that Jack, together with three other Gloucester boys, has retained his place in England's Sevens squad for the World Cup. One thing's for sure – he won't let anyone down.

CUP QUERY

DID I read it aright? There seems to be a proposal to revamp the Anglo-Welsh Cup yet again. This time, the idea seems to be to hold it during the Autumn International and Six Nations periods. But won't the absence of top players drive the poor old Cup even further down the pecking order?



FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

➔ Probably the best club rugby tournament in the world? Bob Fenton thinks so and welcomes back the Heineken Cup to Kingsholm this afternoon.

THESE games are coming thick and fast, I'm beginning to think that I should have done a bit more training – my word supply is getting exhausted and my digits are starting to break down. That though may be more to do with my age and is possibly more information than you, dear reader, want while trying to digest your pre-match pint and pasty.

These are the games that make the season, the good old Heineken Cup. When you think of competition sponsors Rugby Union has the best – two breweries for

the major competitions, does that tell us something about ourselves though. Who cares, to be honest, I just wish they would hand out a few more freebies.

Actually talking of freebies, booze and rugby, who remembers that trip to Sale about six years ago when WKD were handing out free samples and some pretty inappropriate give-aways? Plastic 'bald' wigs – if that isn't some kind of oxymoron – as I recall. One side of their old ground was full of blokes wearing these daft things looking like a bunch of extras from that film – Cone Heads – had landed in Greater Manchester.

Gawd knows what the players thought when they ran out and saw that, though our lot probably thought it was some kind of weird homage to Ludo... Note to sponsors – we need more stuff like that!

Anyway, to get back to somewhere close to the point... The Heineken Cup is, to mix up the advertising slogans, probably the best club rugby tournament in the world. As far as I am concerned the Super 14s, NPC and all the others don't hold a candle to this competition, even the boys from down south (and I don't mean Harlequins here) concede that the standard of play in this competition is second only to a full international.

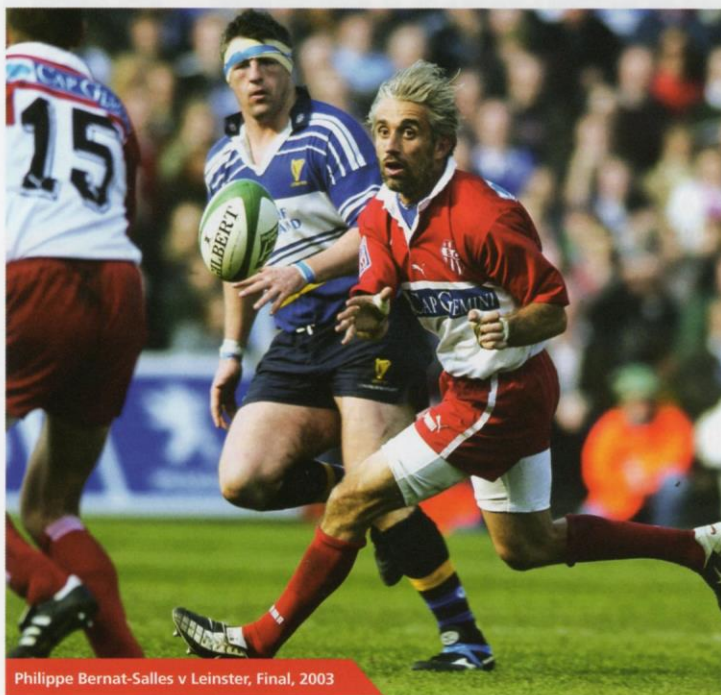
Biarritz will offer us a stern test today, they have an excellent European pedigree and while they may not be firing on all cylinders at the moment they are not a side to be taken lightly.

We have played them before in European competition, in whatever it was before it was called the Parker Pen – the European Conference For Teams Not Quite Good Enough For The Real Thing Cup or something like that. At the time they had one of my favourite players running out for them, that little maestro winger Phillippe Bernat-Salles.

He was class, I remember him playing at Kingsholm in that game stopping to conduct the shed in a rousing rendition of La Marseilles during Saint Philippe Andre's time here. He was so busy waving his arms about that he missed the ball flying over his head and had to stop what he was doing and sprint back into his 22 after it.

Shortly afterwards – and in response to an invitation offered in best Glawster / Franglaise – he turned to the crowd and, with a huge grin on his face, said, "I want to play for Gloucester!" He got the biggest cheer of the night for that.

Having written all that, I am now filled with self-doubt as to whether that was the right match, and have a nagging feeling that it might have been during



Phillippe Bernat-Salles v Leinster, Final, 2003



Dimitri Yachvili v Saints, Quarter Final, 2007

his time with Bordeaux-Bègles. Oh well, never mind, it's still a good story and they are both French clubs beginning with 'B'. And to quote a well worn shout from the man standing just over my left shoulder "That was close enough!"

Enough about former players and things that may, or may not, have happened – what about the lot they have got now. A scroll through their team sheet is like a who's who of great players, and one name that should be familiar to Gloucester supporters is that of Dimitri Yachvili.

'Yach' served his time well with us and is fondly remembered as a quality player and an all round good bloke. Even though he was only about 14 when he came here – well he looked that young – he had all the hallmarks of becoming a great player.

It's a shame that he left us when he

did, one suspects that there was a bit of pressure on him to go back and play in France if he wanted to pursue an international career. He seems to have



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fallen out of favour a bit of late, I hope he is here today though, he will be sure to get a great reception if he is.

Things off the field seem a bit shakey for Biarritz. They haven't had the best start to the season and like Gloucester, much is always expected of them. According to some reports they do not seem to have gelled under their new coaching team and former Ireland coach Eddie O'Sullivan has been spotted in and around the place.

Of course it's always hard to tell what is fact and what is reality when it comes to who has been spotted in town. Heaven knows we're experts at that down here in Gloucester!

Dean and the boys will know better than anyone that all the distractions of previous form mean nothing when it comes to games like this, so let's make this one of those special Kingsholm days and greet our boys with a mighty roar when they come out and, of course, when they leave the field as victors!