



CAPTAIN'S CORNER



THERE is no escaping the fact we are closing in on the definitive stage of the campaign and today is our

penultimate home game of the season.

Despite the defeat at Leicester last weekend I believe we are in really good shape and have created a position for ourselves we can really build on in the coming weeks as we head towards the play-offs.

Our task is to re-create the energy, sheer willingness and desperation we produced at Leicester. Sometimes, even though you don't get the result you want, you are able to take plenty of positives from a performance and that is how we felt at Welford Road.

We know we can use the ball better but our defensive organisation, physicality and togetherness were outstanding. We are a group who have been together for three years now and bond that shone through last weekend is not created instantly.

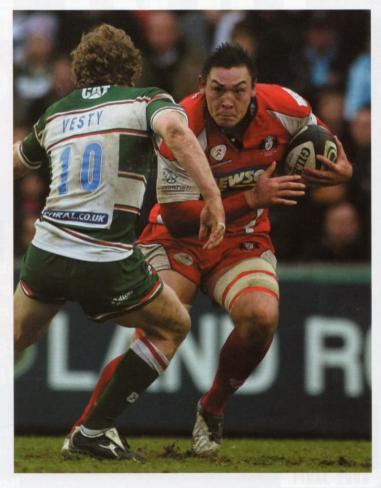
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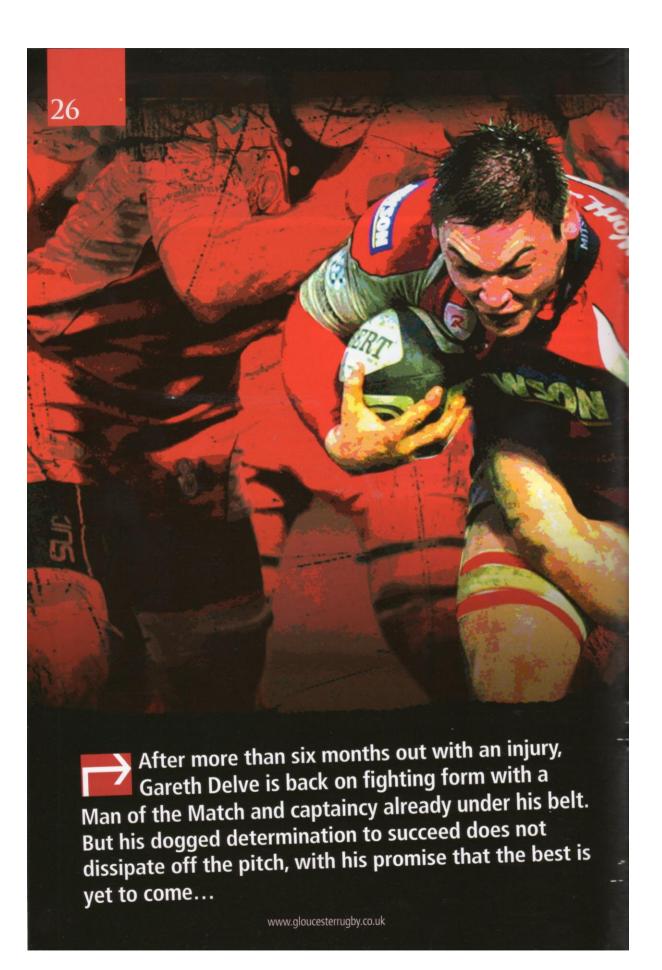
Today, we play another side who have

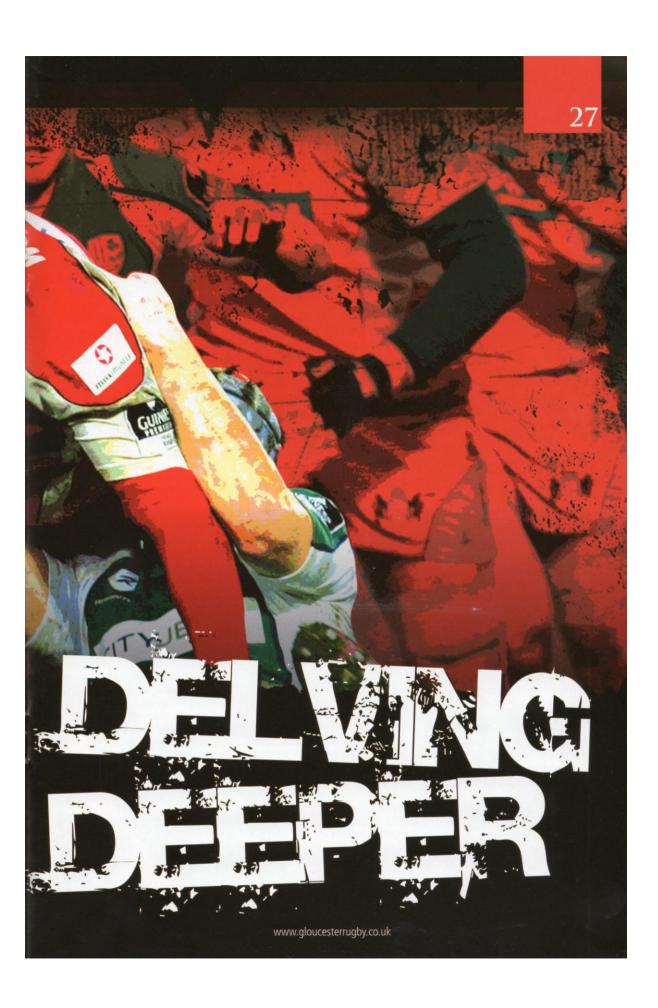
created a deep bond and who have been one of the most successful teams of the professional era. I don't think anyone at Gloucester needs telling just what a good side Wasps are, despite their current position in the Guinness Premiership, and they will still hold hopes of reaching the play-offs.

But this afternoon should be about us and what we have to do to maintain our position in the table. Our last home game was against Bath and I think that was a remarkable contest between two teams who dredged everything out of themselves

It is up to us to re-create that intensity, that fervour and that passion this afternoon. I am sure there will be another big crowd packed into Kingsholm this afternoon so please get behind the boys – never let up – because it is now we need that little bit extra like never before.







DELVING DEEPER



THE WORDS 'Gareth Delve' and 'injury' seem to attract each other like 'half-time' and 'pint'. But

not so any longer.

The powerful Wales international number eight has pulled himself through another gruelling bout of rehab after tearing the cruciate ligament in his left knee during Wales' tour of South Africa last June, to return for Gloucester that has invigorated his team's push for a play-off place in the Guinness Premiership.

While some players may be disheartened by such a run of bad luck, Delve has discovered a new-found maturity, his attitude has been remarkable and his form outstanding.

Since his return at the end of January, Delve has made sure he's earned the right to be back in the number eight shirt for Gloucester. Nominated Worthington's 1873 Man of the Match after his debut game against London Irish, he was then given the captaincy at the Harlequins game just weeks later.

He sees these opportunities and the club's faith in him as proof he made the right choice when he left Bath after six happy years. It was a decision he felt was reaffirmed in the recent clash against his old team-mates, when he led Gloucester out at Kingsholm and left the pitch victorious.

"It's the same when I've played against Welsh clubs," says Delve. "There's a sense of wanting to prove you made the right choice. I've come to Gloucester to achieve success and to win things, and I know it was the right call."

Leaving thoughts of Bath aside, Gloucester's continued success is at the forefront of Delve's mind and he has faith that as long as the team keeps churning out those wins, they'll find the form to contest the play-offs in the Guinness Premiership. And he doesn't think today's clash with Wasps will get in the way of that goal.

"In my eyes, Gloucester is everything. I've really enjoyed my first few matches back but you're only as good as your last game and I've got to keep improving," says Delve. "The one shining light is that after six and a half months out, there's a hell of a lot more improvement to come from me."



"Wasps are always a dangerous team," he says. "They proved themselves last year and they've got some fantastic coaches. But there's a good feeling in this club, there's a lot of confidence. At Kingsholm we've been strong all year."

He puts his desire to succeed down to his supportive family and his dogged determination not to let injury define his career — as he philosophically puts it, injury tests you and you either come out of the other side or you don't.

"I've missed two World Cups through injuries and it's gutting," says Delve.
"But it's one of those things; I tend not to dwell on it. It would be easy to categorise myself as having achieved a lot considering the injuries I've had, but I want to achieve a lot by anybody's standards."

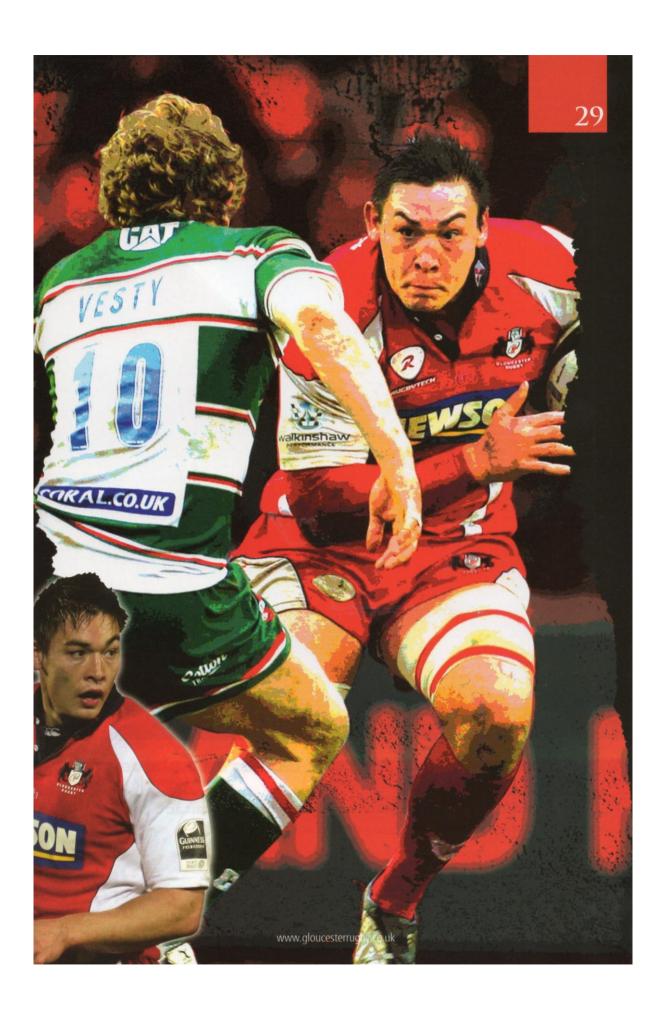
One person who has been a source of mental strength to Delve throughout his many sessions of rehab has been his father, Steve, who has had his own successful sporting career. Starting out in Cardiff Youth Rugby, Delve Senior then went on to win Mr Wales and competed in the Mr Universe competitions. It was his father-son training that Gareth attributes to his early career success and it's still his father he rings when he needs a few words of support.

Beyond his ambitions to see Gloucester lift the trophy at the end of this season, Delve is also back on the prowl for a few more caps for his home country.

"It took me three years from playing my first friendly with Wales to getting my first cap, because I'd been wracked with injuries," reveals Delve. "The sense of achievement to finally get there was incredible."

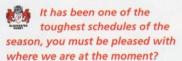
While he might have the next World Cup in his sights, it's a competition closer to home that he cares about right now and he's optimistic about the part he'll play in it.

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RYAN'S REVIEW



DR: I CANNOT remember a scenario where we have played the top five teams in consecutive weeks during my time at the club. We have got to be pretty happy with the shape we are in at the moment. Three wins from five against the quality of that opposition and at this stage of the season has got us going in the right direction and we can now build momentum off the back of those results.

Traditionally, we have not always played our best rugby during international periods and we have also been down on numbers due to injuries so to maintain our current position is good. What we must ensure now is that we turn up like that for our remaining games and build on the foundation we have set ourselves.

We have also used guys like Charlie Sharples and Henry Trinder in really high profile games and both have done extremely well. We know they are good players but it is another thing to ask them to go and perform to the levels they have done against the likes of Harlequins, Bath and Leicester in successive weeks.

What did you make of the performance against Leicester?

DR: I THOUGHT there was an awful lot we could take away from that game that

was positive for us. Sometimes, the result does not always reflect what we can take forward and Saturday was one of those games. Defensively, we have discovered a willingness and an attitude we must maintain from now on. It would be wrong to single anyone out because we had a system in place and a desperation to work together that was outstanding.

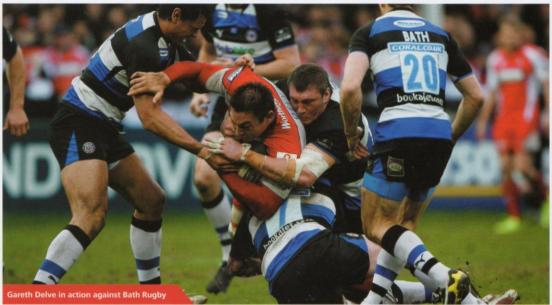
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We did lack a bit of strike power for obvious reasons but we have developing a group that is built on pride and a gut feeling to work for each other. That was what Saturday's performance showed to me.









Our last game at Kingsholm was against Bath. Have you ever seen a game like that between the two teams?

DR: SOMETIMES, you just have to sit back and appreciate your involved in a mini classic of its type. In fairness, Bath have probably played the more eye-catching rugby this season. Their movement game, set-piece and physicality levels are very good and they have made a habit of winning games late.

We always thought we could create them problems if we got key elements of our game right. There was a suggestion we ran more in that game - we didn't - we just ran in better areas, our kicking game was spot on and it created pressure in areas Bath didn't want it.

Our energy levels, our enthusiasm and

work rate were excellent. Bath played their part too - we had two scrums really going at each other - but there is no doubt it was a huge result for us and the feeling afterwards was exactly how we should be feeling after a game of that magnitude.

It was the first time Gloucester have completed the league double over Bath and it was a result that couldn't have come at a better time for us.



Wasps are the visitors today. Are they out of the play-offs?

DR: NO, at this stage they are probably not. There is probably no more resilient side in the Guinness Premiership given their recent history but they have left themselves a bit to do to make the top four this season.

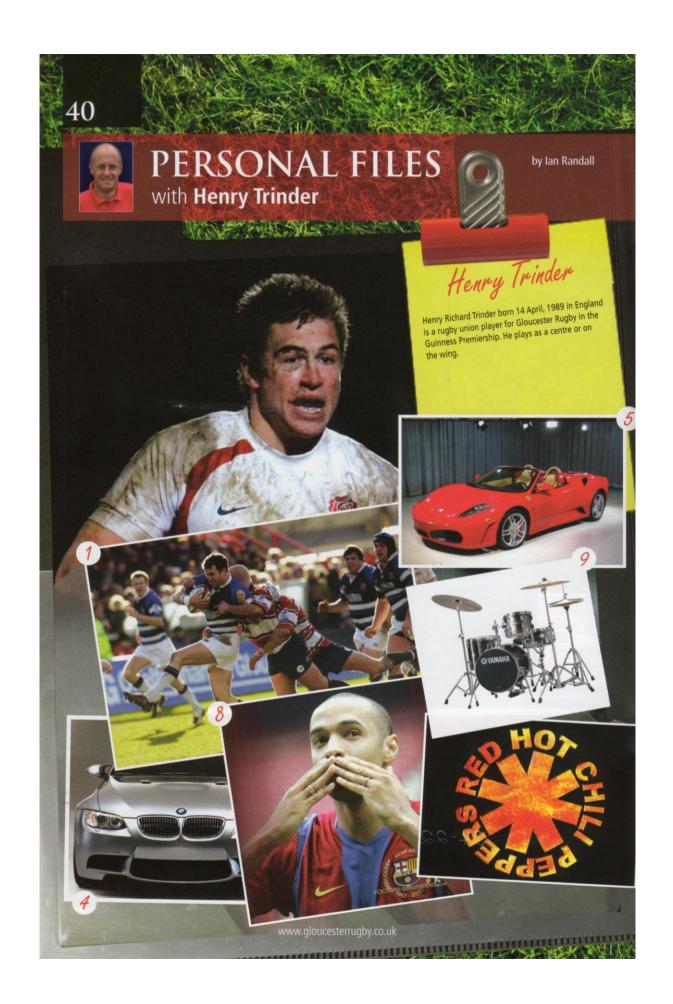
But as long as they keep churning out

victories like they did on Sunday against London Irish, they will retain hope. We appreciate Wasps are a good side and we have to play them twice before the end of the season but it is about maintaining our momentum and energy levels this week, taking the really good aspects of our performance last weekend and developing it even further today.

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www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk







I think is was 2005, when I first got a ticket to go and watch Gloucester at Kingsholm against Bath. I was behind the posts, but with the Shed making lots of noise it was awesome.

2. Can you explain cricket?

I played a bit of cricket at school. I know the scoring system so I'd say I've got cricket in the bag!

3, What's been your worst fashion crime:

A few months ago I bought a watch which was attached to a sweat-band. I wore it once and got a bit of abuse off the boys so it's stayed in the drawer ever since.

4. Who's got the flashiest motor at the club?

Olly Morgan's car is quite nice but Gareth Cooper's got a new BMW. I wouldn't mind one of those.

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

A Ferrari. A red one.

6. Which charity do you support, and why?

I give to two. Cancer Research, because my Nan died from cancer, and one that raises money to treat tuber sclerosis.

7. What's your favourite biscuit? Chocolate hob-nob. Every time.

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

The first person that comes into my head is Thierry Henry, although obviously that's a surname not a Christian name. I can't think of one (we have had a few kings with that name - ed)

9. Can you play a musical instrument?

I used to play the drums in school, if you call that musical! I used to have a drum kit, but got a bit bored with it and sold it.

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

I used to like a lot of Green Day's stuff, but at the moment it would be Red Hot Chilli Peppers.

11. How would you improve the play offs?

I wouldn't have them. At the end of the season there are injuries and you can't always play your best team. They're a bit pointless to me.

12. What is your nickname at the club and how did it come about? Just "Trins" really, that's the only one.

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

lain Balshaw - he's quite wise and he's been around a long time - and Olly Barkley. He's quite clever.

14. Has your sport ever brought you to tears?

Yes, when I played for England against Wales at Under 18's and we lost. That was a big blow, and also when we lost to Australia and I was on the bench. I was a bit upset about that too.

15. If there was one sport related rule or law that you could change, what would it be?

I'm not the biggest lad and I do tend to get "boshed" about a bit, so it would probably be the new rucking one.

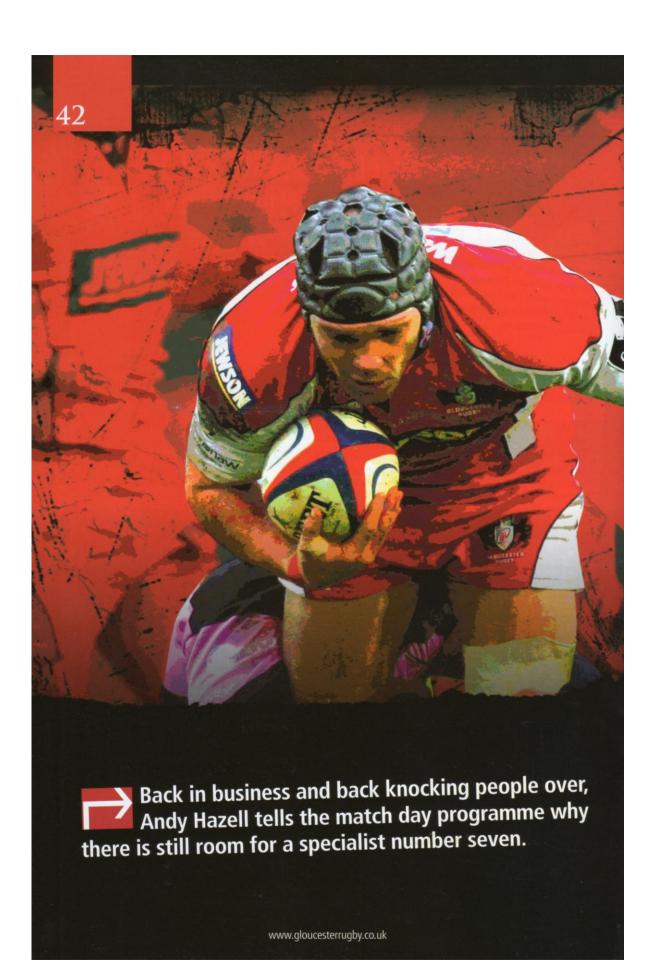
16. What's the most common mistake you see people making in your sport?

The one that keeps catching people out is that you cannot kick straight to touch from inside the 22 if the ball is passed back to you from outside it. I've done that a few times and as soon as the ball is in the air you remember you can't

17. Where in the world is the best night out!

I really enjoyed the Canada trip pre season.









SEVEN UP



"ABOVE ALL, you must have an all-consuming appetite for work," says Andy Hazell, Gloucester's

iconic and enduring number seven, when asked about what makes a good wing forward. "You have to be obsessed with being the first going forward, the first going back, the first to tackle and the first to the ball, wherever it is and whatever it takes."

Andy Hazell, in his tenth and Testimonial year at the club, is currently in the form of his life. He has been on fire since returning from yet another injury lay-off and he is showing the Guinness Premiership that the specialist openside still has a role to play under the new laws.

"Wing forwards, as first tacklers, were being penalised out of the game at the beginning of the season," says Hazell, "but referees now seem to focus more on the tackled player not releasing the ball, so we're back in business.

"When I got injured earlier in the season I watched hours of video tape and reevaluated how a number seven should play under the new rules - this might explain why things are going well at the moment. Plus the fact that I am part of a really well-balanced back row."

Hazell has strong views about the need for a specialist 'hunter-killer' wing forward, saying: "Most of the top teams still play with an out and out open-side wing forward - the All Blacks have Richie McCaw, the Aussies have George Smith and Wales have Martyn Williams. None of these are massive men and none could really play at eight or even six, but their impact on the game is enormous.

"On the other hand, some teams, such as South Africa, France and, perhaps,

England, use three really big men in the back row to put in the big hits. Unlike us No. 7's, these guys could play anywhere in the back five and they spend most of the game knocking lumps off each other close to the scrum, which means they can't cover the pitch like a wing forward.

These thoughts about speed and size led Hazell to comment on Joe Worsley's recent outstanding performance for England against the in-form Welsh.

"I'm sure that Joe Worsley is the only man in English rugby who could have done what he did on that day," says Hazell. "Joe is different from the other big guys. He's a monster, but he's also very fit, very fast and very skilful. He was angry and raring to go after another injury and being overlooked by England.

"I don't think anyone other than Joe could have beaten back that Welsh midfield attack. He didn't miss a single tackle or take a backward step. It was awesome.

"Martin Johnson worked out that the Welsh would use their big men down the middle of the pitch and he put Joe there to stop them. Wales should have changed their game plan and they were really lucky to win."

Andy first turned out for Gloucester 11 years ago and he is still playing like a man possessed. But, he is also a thinker. He's worked out how to play the new rules and he has seen the opportunities that they offer. That is why he is probably one of the best wing forward currently playing in the Guinness Premiership and, if his defensive performance against Leicester last weekend was anything to go by, he is getting better with every game.

Make no mistake, Andy Hazell is definitely one very tough guy, but he is also a thoughtful and generous person, as evidenced by his praise for Joe Worsley, who is currently wearing that magical England No. 7 shirt – the shirt Hazell has craved through his career.







PETER ARNOLD

WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER?

IF YOU had been offered the choice of tickets to watch England play Ireland or Gloucester play Bath, which would you have accepted? All right, so it's a silly question. Most Kingsholm regulars would probably have picked the local derby, but the chances are that unbiased neutrals would have gone for the international. After all, what is the Six Nations about? It should be about two teams, selected from the best players their respective countries have to offer, playing extremely high class rugby. Two weeks ago — it wasn't.

While the supporters of both sides were watching an absolute epic at Kingsholm, the people who had parted with a lot of dosh to go to Croke Park were subjected to a spectacle (if that's the word) which vacillated somewhere between boredom

and the rugby equivalent of torture. About the only thing the two games had in common was the number of yellow cards on view.

There were times in Dublin when both English and Irish players seemed to be holding a private competition to find out who could kick the ball to an opposing player most accurately.

As Professor Moriarty famously remarked to Sherlock Holmes, "It won't do. It really won't do!" Any South African spies who attended the match must have gone home gleefully reflecting what a nice, easy time their national side will soon be having when the Lions arrive.

There was one source of pleasure for Gloucester supporters on that

International weekend. Messrs Bortolami, Strokosch and Dickinson all put in fine displays for their countries in the Scotland v. Italy game.

Some crumbs of comfort, I suppose.

TALE OF TWO MATCHES

BIT OF a contrast these last couple of weeks. The euphoria of the splendid win over Bath, followed by a severe reality check on our visit to Leicester.

I was very pleased that Dean Ryan had plenty of positives to point out after the Tigers defeat. He was right to say that the defensive qualities of the side were praiseworthy to say the least. Mr. Tuilagi, so often our nemesis, must have needed some assistance in counting his bruises on

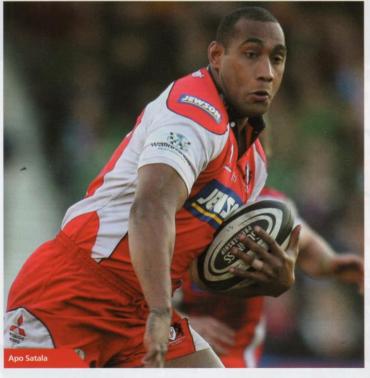


Apo Satala looked every inch a number 6 in the Bath match. I certainly wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of one of his tackles. In general, he provided convincing proof, if any were needed, that wild boar are indeed loose in Gloucestershire.

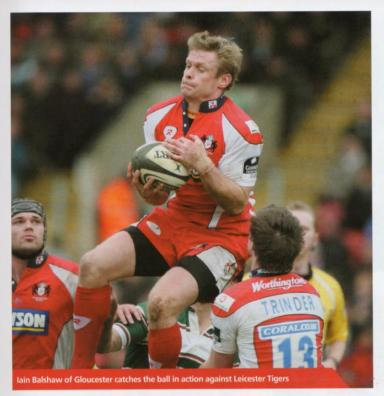


Sunday, so trenchant and frequent were the attentions paid him by the Gloucester tacklers, some of whom were about half his size.

It was quite a feat to deny the Tigers a







single try during that game. They have an extremely potent back line, and a threatening back row. To keep them out when we only had 14 men on the field for a quarter of the game (don't get me started on that) was a more than respectable achievement.

A few players have caught my eye over the last fortnight. It was good to see Adam Eustace, so often the forgotten man of our options at lock, more than holding his own. His flirtation with Welsh Wales doesn't seem to have done him any real harm.

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convincing proof, if any were needed, that wild boar are indeed loose in Gloucestershire.

And then there is Charlie Sharples. He's seized his chance at the big time, and looks a very real attacking threat, as he proved in taking his try against Bath.

Perhaps he's a little rough round the edges as yet, but as my old friend Reg Daldry would have said, "'Im's only a babby yet!"

JOHN MACE

I'VE ONLY just picked up the fact that a fellow who attended the Crypt School with me, John Mace, died during the close season. I apologise for that, and am grateful to his son, Steve, for sending me details.

He played around 20 games at prop for Gloucester, before being commissioned in the RAF in 1962. He could well have played more, but there was a lot of talent around the front row in those days.

Some would say that he played his best rugby for Old Cryptians. In 1960/61 he broke the club's points record, scoring 16 tries and kicking 80 conversions and 15 penalties. Quite an achievement for a chap who was then playing in the back row.

Unsurprisingly, he continued playing in the RAF, actually playing for both the Combined Services and the RAF sides. After hanging up his boots he served as a selector for both sides. He also wrote a published book on RAF rugby, and was, for a time Services Rugby correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. He retired with he rank of Wing Commander.

Steve Mace tells me that his final visit to Kingsholm was at the Bourgoin match in the Heineken Cup last season, before his health finally deteriorated.

Many people will have been saddened by the passing of John Mace. We've lost one of rugby's real characters.

POT CALLING THE KETTLE....

FROM one Old Cryptian to another, still happily very much alive and kicking, to coin a phrase

I see that Peter Butler, in his weekly Citizen column, suggests that we now call Ollie Barkley, "Barkley the Boot"

If you don't get the joke, it's too good to explain.

Match Action

GLOUCESTER RUGBY BATH RUGBY

36 27





Gloucester win west country epic

Saturday, February 28, Referee: Wayne Barnes Attendance: 16,500



IN A STUNNING west country derby, Gloucester produced a bonus point performance to complete

their first ever league double of their neighbours from the Rec.

Three tries in four hazy, crazy first-half minutes set Gloucester on course for a victory that firmly established their playoff credentials against one of the best teams in the country.

It was a remarkable contest, because the rugby was not always without blemish but because the physicality levels were staggering, the effort remarkable and something was always just waiting to explode.

Bath got a brilliant start when hooker Rob Hawkins was driven over from a line-out in the second minute. Thereafter, Gloucester started to dominate territory and possession but run aground against a welter of Bath penalties. Although they lost skipper Alex Crockett to the sinbin, Bath went 10-3 ahead with a Butch James penalty but Gloucester hit back with 11 minutes of the first-half remaining.

Rory Lawson, excellent throughout, fed Carlos Spencer and he rolled a lovely little kick in for James Simpson-Daniel to pounce and score. Three minutes later, Gloucester scored again. Spencer kept Gloucester's movement game ticking over and Simpson-Daniel cut a lovely angle before finding Charlie Sharples and he wriggled out of two tackles to score.

A minute later and the party was in full swing. Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu looked to open field with his long pass but Simpson-Daniel stole in and went beneath the sticks from half-way. Gloucester's deficit had now become a 20-10 lead but still the scoring hadn't stopped and when Duncan Bell, Fuimaono-Spaolu and Matt Banahan sustained an attack, Hawkins was on hand to score his second try.

There was still more to come. Gloucester grabbed a bonus point try when Spencer kicked in behind Banahan and although he and Iain Balshaw collided, Lawson dived in to score.

But Bath were nothing but forceful and set up a searing finale when Andrew Higgins scored from a quickly taken free-kick as Gloucester argued with the referee. There was still time for Alex Crockett to be red carded for a trip on Sharples but with the likes of Lawson, Greg Somerville, Gareth Delve and Apo Satala all in heat-seeking form, Gloucester held out for a remarkable victory.



Man of the Match



Rory Lawson was outstanding in defence and in with the ball



"Sometimes you just have to marvel at a game of that quality," head coach Dean Ryan.







Timeline

@ 7 mins	
Hawkins try, James on	0-7
14 mins	88 BU
Spencer pen	3-7
24 mins	1.36
James pen	3-10
10 29 mins	NEW Y
Simpson-Daniel try,	8-10
18 32 mins	STERM
Sharples try	13-10
33 mins	
Simpson-Daniel try, Spencer con	20-10
37 mins	100
Hawkins try, James con	20-17
100 40 mins	
Barkley pen	23-17
42 mins	16437
James pen	23-20
18 46 mins	W. State
Lawson try, Barkley con	30-20
50 mins	
Higgins try, James con	30-27
6 52 mins	
Barkley pen	33-27
65 mins	
Barkley pen	36-27

Gloucester Line-up

	The second second second	
15	Olly Morgan	
14	lain Balshaw	
13	James Simpson-Danie	(2t)
12	Anthony Allen (yc)	-
11	Charlie Sharples	(1t)
10	Carlos Spencer	(1p, 1c)
9	Rory Lawson	(1t)
1 2	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Greg Somerville	
4	Adam Eustace	
3 4 5 6	Alex Brown	
6	Apolosi Satala	(1t)
7	Andrew Hazell	
8	Gareth Delve	(capt)
REPS		
16	Andy Titterrell	
17	Jack Foster	(Hazell)
18	Danny Wright	
19	Dan Williams	
20	Ryan Lamb	
21	Olly Barkley (3p, 1c)	(S-Daniel)
22	Mark Foster	

Match Action

LEICESTER TIGERS GLOUCESTER RUGBY

24 10





Dupuy kicks life out of Gloucester

Saturday, March 7, Referee: Wayne Barnes



JULIEN DUPUY kicked seven penalties and Geordan Murphy belted an outrageous drop-

goal as Leicester produced an excellent performance to beat Gloucester last

The Tigers scrum-half made Gloucester pay for the ill discipline at Welford Road in another extremely confrontational Guinness Premiership match last Saturday.

Gloucester also lost scrum-half Rory Lawson and lock Alex Brown to the sinbin as they lost the penalty count 20-7. Despite the defeat, Gloucester's defensive qualities were outstanding and the fact Leicester failed to score a try underpinned their efforts.

Leicester dominated the second half but Gloucester's commitment to the cause never wavered and time and again they knocked the Tigers back around the contact area.

But what they didn't have was enough ball or territory to become a regular attacking threat and they were limited to sporadic break-outs in the second half.

However, they got the perfect start in the first quarter when lain Balshaw read perfectly Sam Vesty's long pass, picked it off and went to the line for the game's only score. Olly Barkley converted and added a penalty as Gloucester opened up a 10-3 lead.

Leicester, though, gradually worked their way back into the match through Dupuy's boot and some excellent carrying from Tom Croft. And when referee Barnes produced a yellow card for Lawson just before the break, the Leicester man kicked his side into 12-10 interval lead.

The Tigers started off the second half as they were to continue and although Dupuy missed three successive penalties but the dye was cast and the nearest Gloucester came to scoring was when Charlie Sharples chased onto a long kick from Barkley but was bundled into touch.

It was Dupuy who turned the screw, landing successive penalties before Brown was sent to the cooler for a late tackle on Murphy as Vesty looked for him with an inside pass. It was left to Murphy to seal the game with a massive drop-goal from a metre inside his own half and send Gloucester away empty handed.



Man of the Match

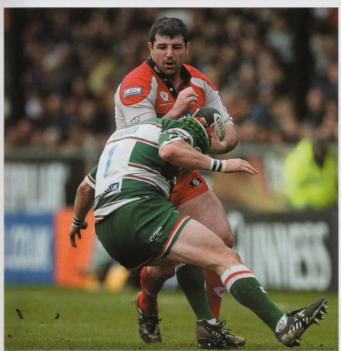


Greg Somerville – had arguably his most effective set-piece game for Gloucester.



"I think we can be very proud of aspects of our performance," head coach Dean Ryan.







Timeline

🔮 8 mins	
Barkley pen	0-3
3 17 mins	
Dupuy pen	3-3
👪 22 mins	
Balshaw try, Barkley con	3-10
🐠 30 mins	
Dupuy pen	6-10
₹ 36 mins	
Dupuy pen	9-10
₹ 40 mins	
Dupuy pen	12-10
™ 55 mins	
Dupuy pen	15-10
™ 65 mins	THE REAL PROPERTY.
Dupuy pen	18-10
78 mins	STIP T
Murphy drop-goal	21-10
80 mins	
Dupuy pen	24-10

Gloucester Line-up

15 Olly Morgan

14	Iain Balshaw	(1t)
13	Henry Trinder	
12	Olly Barkley	(1p, 1c)
11	Charlie Sharples	
10	Carlos Spencer	
9	Rory Lawson (yc)	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Greg Somerville	
4	Adam Eustace	
5	Alex Brown (yc)	
6	Luke Narraway	
7	Andrew Hazell	
8	Gareth Delve	(capt)
REPS	5	
16	Andrew Titterrell	
17	Carlos Nieto	(Wood)
18	Marco Bortolami	(Eustace)
19	Alasdair Strokosch	(Hazell)
20	Jordi Pasqualin	
21	Ryan Lamb	
22	Mark Foster	(Sharples)
	and the second second second	