



OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY 2008/2009 ISSUE 17 • £3.00



Gloucester Rugby
v Worcester Warriors

21.04.09 19.30



ADAM EUSTACE

DEAN RYAN
Head Coach rounds up the action

DERBY DAYS
Steve Cotton explores the
Gloucester/ Worcester rivalry

PLUS: Peter Arnold, community news and ticket update and Match Action

JAMES SIMPSON-DANIEL
First name on the team sheet?

WORCESTER WARRIORS
All you need to know



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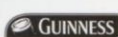
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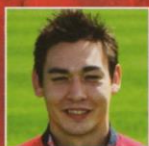
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CAPTAIN'S CORNER



After the recent highs experienced in the EDF Energy Cup, with the memorable semi final win over the Ospreys plus the special occasion that is a cup final at Twickenham, it's back to our bread and butter which is, of course, the Guinness Premiership.

I'm stating the obvious when I say that we're right at the sharp end of the Guinness Premiership season and we still have an awful lot to play for.

We've just slipped out of the play off places at the moment after the away defeats at Worcester and Northampton but we're looking forward to getting back to winning ways here tonight at Kingsholm and getting right back into the mix.



It's been well over a month since we last played here in front of our fantastic supporters and I don't need to stress just how your support means to us and spurs us on.



It's been well over a month since we last played here in front of our fantastic supporters and I don't need to stress just how your support means to us and spurs us on.

We still feel that we're in good shape heading into this final week of the regular season. As long as we can replicate the intensity, passion and determination that we showed in the game against the

Ospreys, for example, and also execute our game plan, then we believe that we're a match for anyone on our day.

Tonight, of course, sees us square off against Worcester for the second time in less than a month in what's bound to be an interesting encounter.

When we last met, at Sixways, Worcester were scrapping for their Premiership lives and, although we feel we that dominated territory and possession, we just couldn't

close out the game.

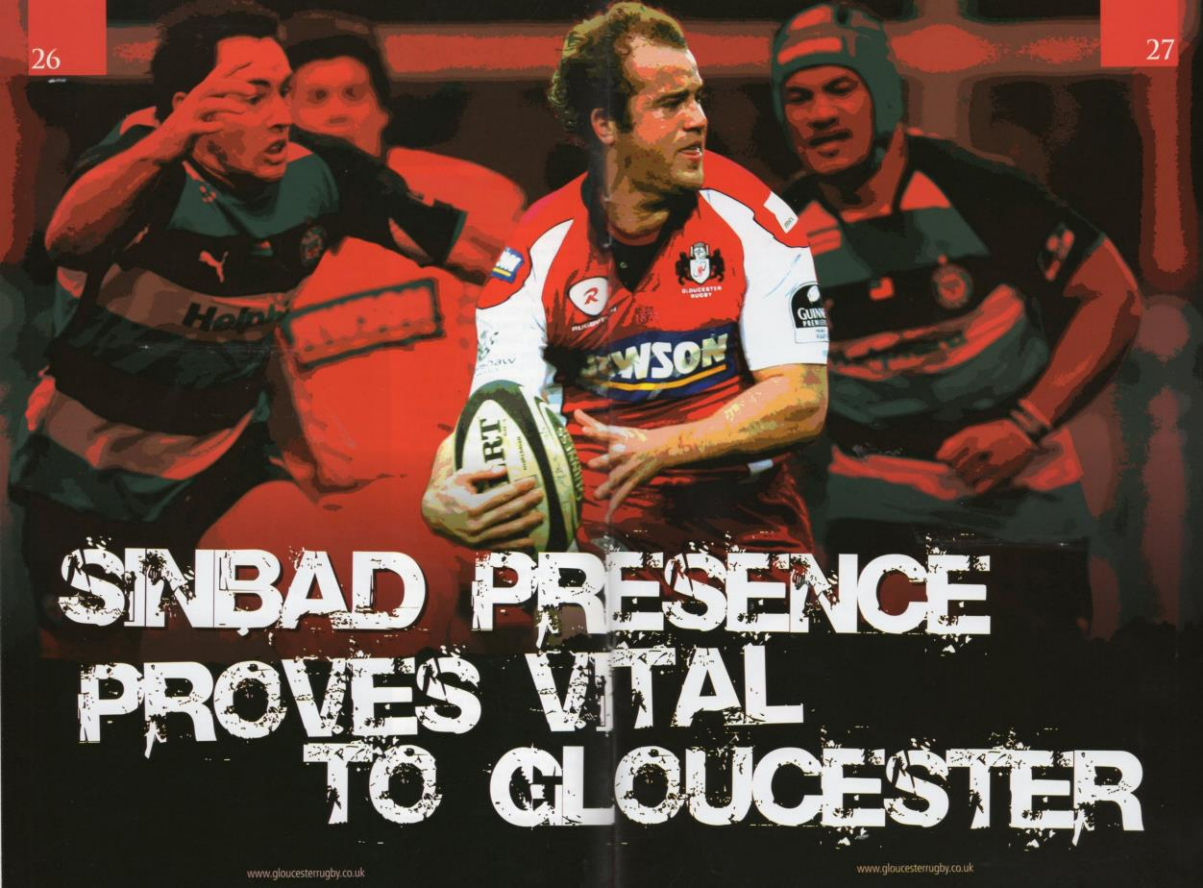
Their Premiership survival is secure now, of course, and they've progressed to the semi finals of the European Challenge Cup so it's difficult to predict what sort of team they'll field tonight.

But, we have to take care of our own performance first and foremost. It's our final regular season game here at Kingsholm and we'll be doing everything to make sure we sign off in style.



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SINBAD PRESENCE PROVES VITAL TO GLOUCESTER

SINBAD PRESENCE PROVES VITAL TO GLOUCESTER

JAMES SIMPSON DANIEL WAS TALKING TO GARETH BUTLER OF THE GLOUCESTER CITIZEN



HE has been out more often than in this season, but James Simpson-Daniel's name is one

Gloucester fans are always reassured by when it appears on the team-sheet.

That the Cherry and Whites have been wildly inconsistent at times during the campaign, and Simpson-Daniel has failed to put a solid run of games together, is no coincidence.

There are few men in the Guinness Premiership who can break a game like the winger, and his return to fitness for this crucial week is huge for the prospects of success.

Simpson-Daniel knows the pressure is on to find his best form quickly and score and set up the tries Gloucester need to propel them into the play-offs.

As any side would, head coach Dean Ryan is all too aware how much his side misses the magic of Sinbad. There was no clearer evidence of that than the home game against Bath, when he scored two and set up one try all in a matter of minutes, but then limped off – an all too familiar sight this season.

Ryan is happy to put that level of expectation on his star man's shoulders, because he knows Simpson-Daniel can cope with it.

"It's nice to have the backing of the coaches and their support," Simpson Daniel said.

"Equally as a player you can let it affect your game if you let it get to you.

"But hopefully I've been around long enough now to take it with a pinch of salt and do what I do on the pitch."

If Gloucester were to finally push on and bring home the Premiership trophy this

season, it might cause a few wry smiles once the celebrations are over among the players and coaches at Kingsholm.



"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 Simpson Daniel. "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."



This is widely accepted by all involved with the club as being a season when the

Cherry and Whites have faltered – but could they 'do a Wasps' by finding their best form when it really matters and win the next four games, starting with Worcester tonight?

A lot of that will depend on the speed and sharpness of Simpson-Daniel who, with the EDF Energy Cup final under his belt, is desperate for a quick return to match fitness.

"I'm not going to say I'm going out on the pitch 100 per cent raring to go," he said.

"But I don't think a lot of players will be. Everyone has little niggles and knocks. But as far as my quad's concerned I'm pretty solid.

"Match-sharpness will hopefully come as I only missed a couple of weeks. It's good to get out running around because it opens the lungs up again."

One thing is for certain, Gloucester are a far more dangerous prospect with Simpson-Daniel in their ranks. Let's hope he finds himself in a little bit of space tonight and mark the last home game of the season with something special.







RYAN'S REVIEW



We're now on the final stretch of the Guinness Premiership season and there's still a lot of work to be done in the final two games?

DR: Absolutely. A combination of results elsewhere and a couple of disappointing performances away from home mean that, as I write this, we've slipped to fifth place in the table and one point outside the play off places.

So, it's great to be back here at Kingsholm tonight and in front of our own supporters. It's been well over a month since we last played here and we need to make the most of home advantage this evening.

We came through the international period in reasonably good shape and maintained our position in the table so it's important tonight to get our challenge back on track. We've got two games left including tonight. Saturday sees us travel to Wasps



We've got two games left including tonight. Saturday sees us travel to Wasps so two games in five days is a big ask for the squad. So, our attitude, our preparation and execution has to be spot on for both games. We're still in the hunt for the play off places. It's all still in our hands.



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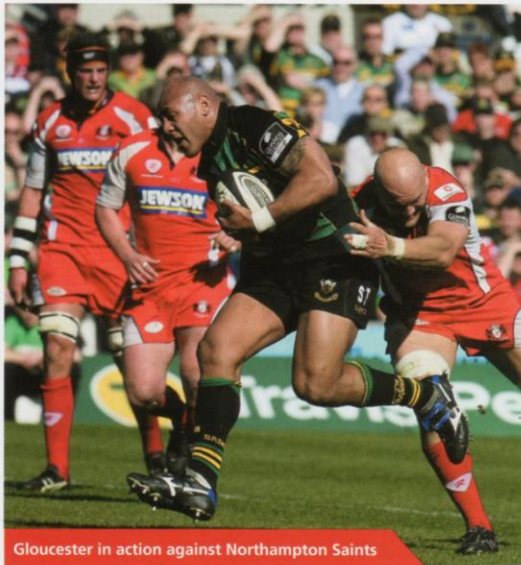


Aside from the Guinness Premiership, much of the focus in recent weeks has been on the EDF Energy Cup, the win over the Ospreys and the final against Cardiff?

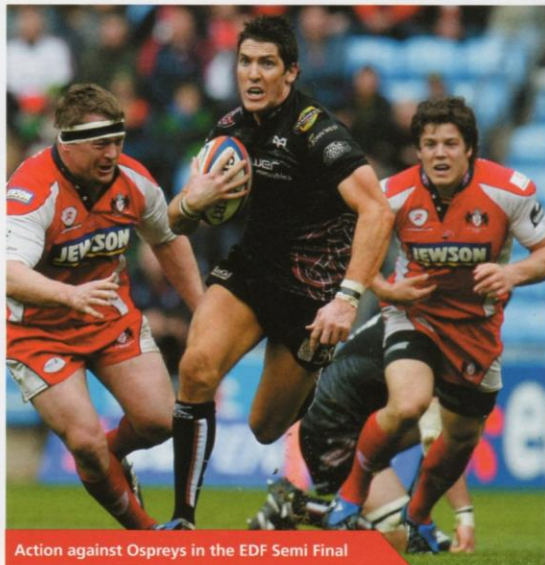
DR: Yes, it's great to be involved in the later stages of the respective cup competitions. It's where we want to be as a club and it's certainly created a buzz about the place.

The Ospreys performance showed a tremendous amount of grit and determination. We took an early lead but then had to put our bodies on the line in defence to keep them at bay and keep our line intact.

Losing Mike Tindall to injury was a blow but we regrouped well and took our chances when they presented themselves to eke out a 12-0 lead before Balsh's late



Gloucester in action against Northampton Saints



Action against Ospreys in the EDF Semi Final



Worcester Warriors

interception clinched things.

Cardiff qualifying for the final is interesting. It's almost as if someone has written the script in advance to pit us against each other again!

It's a classic Anglo Welsh encounter and this week has seen increased attention from the media and there's been a little extra edge on the training field as the players start to build up for it.

It's fantastic for our supporters as well. They pack out Kingsholm week in and week out and also travel in numbers so I'm really happy that we can reward them with a day out in Twickenham and hopefully some silverware.



What have you taken from the most recent performances in the Guinness Premiership?

DR: Consistency has been the issue. We've not been able to string four or five really good performances together on the bounce.

We had that superb win over Bath at the end of February and followed that up with a good win over Wasps.

However, we've not performed as well as we might on the road in the last couple of games.

Against Worcester, we were guilty of squandering chances which kept them in the game and they eventually nicked it whereas, against Northampton, we managed to score tries but were opened up too easily defensively.

Injuries have been a factor. At various times, we've been missing the likes of Tindall, Balshaw, Simpson-Daniel and Vainikolo but you can't hide behind that.



Worcester are the visitors tonight and their Premiership status is now assured. They've also made a European semi final. Do you think their minds will be elsewhere?

DR: Not at all. Mike Ruddock is a fine coach and he'll have made sure that his team will be focussed on tonight.

Worcester beat us at Sixways a few weeks back and would like to make it a double over Gloucester I'm sure.

They may not have too much to play for in the Guinness Premiership now but they'll be looking to maintain good form going into their European semi and their players will all be looking to stake a claim for selection.

They're a local rival and tonight will be a tough game.

TODAY'S TEAMS

Tuesday 21st April 2009 19.30
Gloucester Rugby v Worcester Warriors



REPLACEMENTS

- 16 AZAM
- 17 SOMERVILLE
- 18 BORTOLAMI
- 19 SATALA
- 20 LAWSON
- 21 LAMB
- 22 MORGAN

REPLACEMENTS

- 16 RUIVENS
- 17 FORTY
- 18 LYONS
- 19 COLLINS
- 20 ABE
- 21 CRICHTON
- 22 BENJAMIN

| Guinness Premiership Table | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----|----|---|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|
| Pos | Team | Pld | W | D | L | F | A | TF | TA | TB | Pts |
| 1 | Leicester Tigers | 21 | 14 | 1 | 6 | 509 | 398 | 51 | 40 | 4 | 66 |
| 2 | Harlequins | 21 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 488 | 375 | 55 | 34 | 4 | 61 |
| 3 | Bath Rugby | 21 | 12 | 2 | 7 | 506 | 423 | 55 | 46 | 4 | 61 |
| 4 | London Irish | 21 | 11 | 1 | 9 | 519 | 371 | 59 | 34 | 6 | 61 |
| 5 | Sale Sharks | 21 | 12 | 0 | 9 | 423 | 392 | 40 | 34 | 4 | 57 |
| 6 | Gloucester Rugby | 21 | 12 | 0 | 9 | 423 | 392 | 40 | 34 | 4 | 57 |
| 7 | Northampton Saints | 21 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 425 | 410 | 39 | 36 | 2 | 48 |
| 8 | London Wasps | 21 | 10 | 0 | 11 | 397 | 413 | 29 | 42 | 1 | 48 |
| 9 | Saracens | 21 | 9 | 0 | 12 | 419 | 414 | 36 | 35 | 3 | 47 |
| 10 | Newcastle Falcons | 21 | 9 | 1 | 11 | 350 | 425 | 36 | 38 | 2 | 44 |
| 11 | Worcester Warriors | 20 | 6 | 2 | 12 | 320 | 492 | 27 | 59 | 0 | 20 |
| 12 | Bristol Rugby | 21 | 2 | 1 | 18 | 296 | 564 | 33 | 66 | 1 | 17 |

Today's Officials

Referee: Rob Debnay

Touch Judges: Bob Mullis & Alan Biggs

4th: Mark Tovey

Replacement Ref: Chris White





PERSONAL FILES

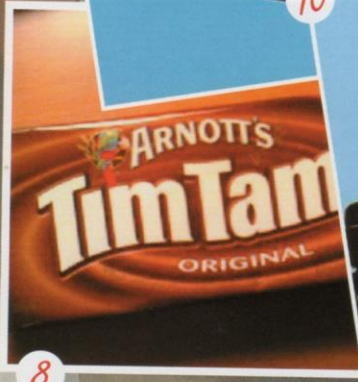
with Carlos Spencer

by Ian Randall



Carlos Spencer

| | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| DOB | 14th Oct 1975 |
| Birthplace | Levin, N Zealand |
| Height | 1.85 m (6' 1") |
| Weight | 98 kg (15 st 5 lb) |
| Position | Fly Half |
| Honours | New Zealand (35 caps) |



1. What is the first match you remember watching?

I've got a terrible memory! I think it would have been a club game in my home town of Levin in New Zealand, but I've no idea who it would have been against.

2. Who is your sport's best pundit?

Ian Smith, who used to play cricket for New Zealand as a wicket keeper. He now commentates on rugby, and is one of the better ones I've heard. It could be that because he wasn't a rugby player, he doesn't think he knows it all.

3. Can you explain cricket?

You have a bat and a ball and three stumps at either end of the pitch. The bowler bowls the ball and the batter has to try and score runs.

4. What's been your worst fashion crime?

I've never had one - I'm pretty good with my fashion, I reckon.

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

One of our fitness guys Mark Bitcon. I'm sure he's got a Porsche.

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

A helicopter.

7. Which charity do you support, and why?

I don't support one, but if I did it would be animal related - perhaps RSPCA..

8. What's your favourite biscuit?

You don't have them over here, but a Tim Tam, a chocolate biscuit from New Zealand.

9. Can you play a musical instrument?

When I was at school I played the guitar and the drums. I can still play a bit of both, but not as good as I used to.

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

Back in their heyday, it would have been Bob Marley and the Wailers.

11. How would you improve the play offs?

Don't have them. You finish first, you win the title.

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

I've always been 'Los, short for Carlos.

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

I've not had a quiz night with anyone

here, but they wouldn't want me to be on their team because I'm not intelligent.

14. Has your sport ever brought you to tears?

Yes. In 1996 I won the 3rd division final with my local province in New Zealand, which took us up to the 2nd division. They were tears of joy, though.

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

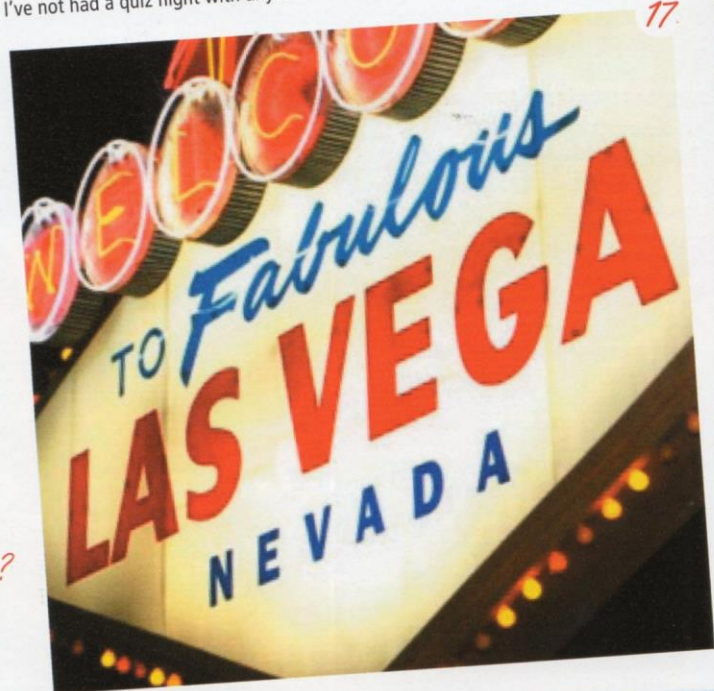
Make a penalty worth one point.

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

Dropping the ball.

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

Las Vegas.



BY STEVE COTTON, WESTERN DAILY PRESS



Geography alone cannot turn a fixture into a bona fide derby; there has to be feeling, emotion and at least one pulsating clash between the sides.

So, having been brought up on Gloucester-Bath, Bristol-Gloucester and Bath-Bristol spats, Worcester's arrival at the top table of English club rugby brought instant intrigue.

The Warriors' geographical proximity (closer to Gloucester than both Bath and Bristol) by no means guaranteed a rivalry – their performances had to warrant that. And, over the past five years, the seeds have been sewn for what is now a genuine derby clash.

There are two key reasons why this has happened: the high number of players who have left Gloucester for Worcester, and the increasingly competitive nature of the matches between the sides.

Gloucester won six of their first seven league matches against Worcester (the other was a 15-15 draw at Sixways in September 2005), but have lost their last two by either a three- or four-point margin.

And even though the sides are separated by 26 Premiership points, Worcester's 14-10 victory over their neighbours last month showed they can deliver when the pressure is on.

The presence over the past few years of Tony Windo, Chris Fortey, Marcel Garvey, Thinus Delpont and, most recently, Willie Walker in the Worcester side has upped the ante on both sides of the divide.

Walker has become an unlikely focal point of this fixture, his three penalties at Sixways last month denying his parent

club victory as Worcester produced a defensive effort of the highest order. And with such specific inside information being available to Mike Ruddock and his players, there is no reason to assume – as the bookmakers clearly have – that this evening's fixture will be the simplest of Gloucester's tests in this most challenging of weeks.

The week of truth kicked off at 2.30pm last Saturday, has already had its fair share of emotional and physical battles, and will not conclude until about 4.40pm this Saturday. Two-hundred-and-forty minutes of season-defining rugby played within eight days is enough to test the character of any club, but the enormity of this week for Gloucester cannot be understated.

Each of the three matches have their own particular challenges, but the way Worcester – even with their current crop of injuries – have matured into a side who can call themselves Gloucester's derby rivals, and then back it up on the

field, makes tonight's clash all the more dangerous.

Fatigue is sure to play a part this evening, too. The exertions of Saturday's Twickenham final will not be fully known until this weekend has been and gone, but you can rest assured there will be some tired limbs and minds on the Kingsholm pitch tonight.

Having written this before Saturday's game due to print deadlines, it is near impossible to highlight the individuals who will shape tonight's contest. But Gloucester have enough experience throughout their vast squad – from 60-cappers such as Mike Tindall and Greg Somerville to the old heads on young shoulders such as Gareth Delve and Olly Morgan – to turn this week into one of success and achievement.

Worcester have a major part to play, too. And that is why this is becoming an increasingly significant derby date on the English domestic calendar.



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PETER ARNOLD

THE END IS NIGH

So here we are then. Last home match of the regular Premiership season. I have to say that it has been one of the most frustrating campaigns I can remember. Not an unmitigated disaster, by any means, but as the old school reports used to say – could have done better.

We started the season with such high hopes. A settled squad with some highly promising additions seemed to indicate that we should be in for a very good season indeed, but somehow, things never quite seemed to work out. Admittedly, the loss of Qera and Delve to long-term injuries was a blow, but we seemed to have such strength in depth in the back row, that it hardly seemed to matter. Then we lost the incredible James Forrester permanently and things started to look a bit threadbare.

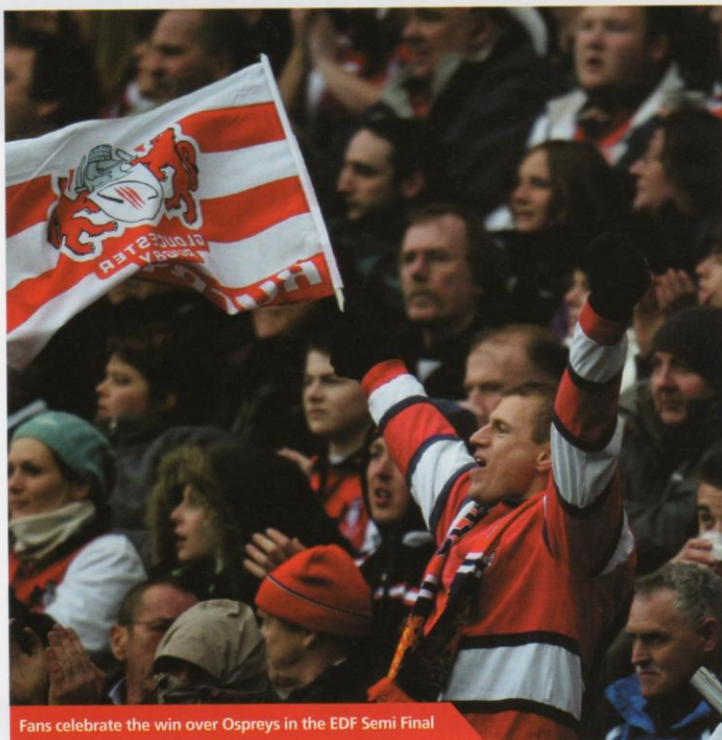
Hindsight is easy, but looking back, it seems as though all our troubles started right at the beginning of the season, and that we've been playing catch-up ever since. That may seem an odd thing to say, considering that we sat at the top of the table for most of the time, but one does have to remember that for a great deal of the time, other, very dangerous, rivals have had games in hand over us, and as we were never more than a few points clear, our position was something of a false one.

So what went wrong? I know no more than you do, but it did seem that other teams learned to cope with the ELV's more quickly than we did, and we also had trouble coming to terms with the inconsistency shown by match officials.

Don't get me wrong. It hasn't been a poor season by any means. Just not as good



One player I am particularly looking forward to joining us, is Wasps' Tom Voyce. In one sense, he's coming home. As you probably know, he's the great nephew of the great Tommy Voyce, the Gloucester player who is credited with inventing flank forward play.



Fans celebrate the win over Ospreys in the EDF Semi Final

as most of us hoped and expected. As I remember Peter Ford saying to me, it's not the number of games you win which decides your position in any league, but the number of games you lose. Not to put too fine a point on it, we've lost too many.

Why? We could argue about that all cricket season and still not come to any definitive conclusion. It's certainly not profitable to point fingers of blame, not at players, not at coaches or anyone else for that matter.

It could be worse. We could be Bristol supporters. Meanwhile, we have a score to settle with Worcester.

SOUR GRAPES

This game being played on a Tuesday, the Cup Final hasn't happened at the time of writing, so I can't say anything sensible on the subject. However I can vent a little spleen at the way we were treated by the media after the epic win over the Ospreys in the semi. Quite frankly, they were



Tom Joyce, the new addition to the Gloucester Squad

churlish, and one gets the impression that, as far as the Fourth Estate was concerned, the wrong team won. Perhaps the pundits, hardly anyone having given us any chance at all before the event, didn't like being proved wrong.

To an extent, I can understand the disappointment of the TV people. They have to portray a three-dimensional spectacle on a flat screen, and it is obviously much easier to make things look exciting when the ball is flashing around among the backs every ten seconds.

But that doesn't excuse the attitude of the print media. I was particularly incensed by the attitude of the Daily Telegraph correspondent (naming no

names, but he has the same initials as I have) who could find no better word to describe the Gloucester performance than "dull". Honestly, you'd think that a highly proficient former lock forward, with a clutch of well-deserved Caps of his own, would have more appreciation and more respect for the mysteries of the Front Eight Mafia than he exhibited.

The fact is that a back division, almost entirely composed of Welsh Internationals, couldn't score a single point against us. Surely the lads deserve some credit for that.

So we ended up with an Anglo-Welsh Cup Final, which is a consummation devoutly to be wished. Had we lost the Ospreys

game, then it would have been an all-Welsh affair, and I can't imagine that that would have pleased the Twickenham faithful.

Finally, did you see that Munster put 40 points on Ospreys the other week? Oh dear. What a pity. Never mind.

THERES ALWAYS ANOTHER SEASON

Whatever happens from here on in, we always have next season to look forward to. Some familiar faces will have departed, and we shall welcome some new ones

One player I am particularly looking forward to joining us, is Wasps' Tom Joyce. In one sense, he's coming home. As you probably know, he's the great nephew of the great Tommy Joyce, the Gloucester player who is credited with inventing flank forward play. Until his time, all eight forwards pushed, and weren't supposed to gallivant all over the field creating mayhem amongst the backs.

He was before my time, of course, so I never saw him play in the flesh, although I have watched a black-and-white clip of him playing in the RFU Centenary match at Rugby School. Fair haired, lean and rangy and as quick as lightning, he seems to have merited the great South African guru, Danie Craven's description of him as "The blond destroyer with a smile"

When young Tom scores his first try at Kingsholm, the ghost of Tommy, sitting in the front of the stand and watching the game through opera glasses, as he always did, will be there to chuckle appreciatively.

SUMMER WELL

So there we are. We have a summer to look forward to, what with the Lions and the Ashes Test Matches.

See you in September.

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
LONDON WASPS

24
22



Gloucester dig deep to clinch Wasps win

Saturday, March 14, Attendance: 15,249



A performance of the drama a fortnight earlier was perhaps asking too much and Gloucester had

to rely on a more workmanlike display to claim the points against a dogged Wasps side.

Wasps, not enjoying one of their finest seasons in recent times, were a proverbial thorn in the side of Gloucester with the back row pairing of Betsen and Rees in particular doing their bit at every breakdown to prevent Dean Ryan's side gaining any real momentum.

The Cherry and Whites did score three tries through Balshaw, Morgan and Qera but Wasps' refusal to throw in the towel and the experience gained by nicking so many close games in recent years kept the visitors in the game right up until the final whistle.

Ultimately, the result came down to a contest between Gloucester's attacking prowess against the kicking accuracy of Wasps fly half Dave Walder.

Despite Gloucester's superiority up front, Wasps took an 10-3 lead in the first half hour until Olly Morgan and Iain Balshaw finished off two well crafted moves to earn the lead.

However, ill discipline started to hurt

Gloucester and Walder kept his side in the hunt and Wasps led 16-13 early in the second half.

With half an hour to go, Gloucester seemed to have taken a decisive lead when Betsen was sinbinned and Akapusi Qera squeezed over the line for his side's third try but Walder kept chipping away.

Olly Barkley was having a mixed day with the boot but slotted his third penalty with just 15 minutes remaining to give Gloucester what would turn out to be a decisive 24-22 lead although there were some nervy moments as the final whistle approached with Rees, George Skivington, John Hart and Eoin Reddan all coming close to scoring.

Head Coach Dean Ryan acknowledged that his team had made hard work of matters.



Dean Ryan:



"I think it was tighter than it needed to be, we missed 20 or 21 points from the boot and I don't think we ever got more than a two or three point gap. You just cannot afford to do that against Wasps because they are pretty smart in finding wins from games they have not had that much dominance in."

WORCESTER WARRIORS 14
GLOUCESTER RUGBY 10



Sloppy Gloucester slip up at Sixways

Saturday, March 22, Attendance: 12,024



Gloucester went into this game with a real opportunity to consolidate their place but came unstuck by a combination of their own errors and the contributions of a pair of former Kingsholm favourites.

Worcester had every incentive to fight and scrap for everything they could on the afternoon. Sitting in eleventh place in the Guinness Premiership table, they were 10 points clear of basement club Bristol at kick off time but still in dire need of the points.

And, somewhat predictably given their respective league positions, Gloucester dominated in terms of both territory and possession but were made to pay for not making the most of their chances.

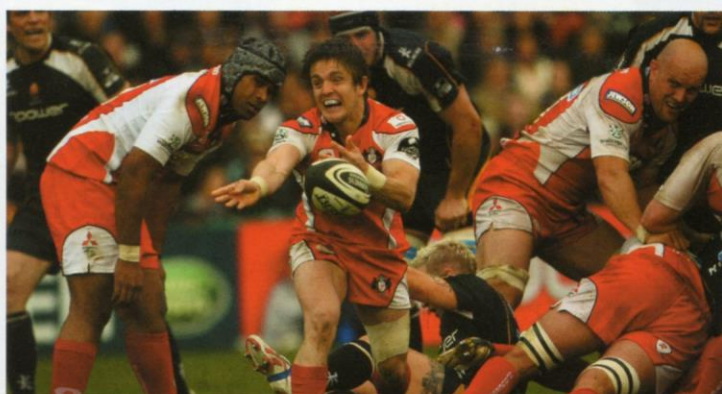
Worcester fly-half Willie Walker, on loan from Gloucester, kicked three penalties to stop his 'former' club from returning to the top of the table whilst former Gloucester winger Marcel Garvey scored his side's only try.

Garvey's score gave his side a first half lead but the Gloucester pack then took things into their own hands and forced a penalty try after Worcester collapsed several 5m scrums on their own line.

Worcester were far from disheartened, however, and Walker rose to the occasion as he kicked three penalties to open an 11-7 lead before Carlos Spencer kicked one of his own to narrow the gap.

Gloucester hammered away in the second half in search of the crucial next score but were unable to unlock the resolute Warriors defence. England back row Luke Narryway came closest but the ball squirmed from his grasp in contact when he looked set to score.

It was the nearest Gloucester were to come and Worcester hung on for a crucial home win much to the delight of a packed Sixways crowd.



Dean Ryan:



"We just butchered opportunity after opportunity and we allowed a courageous defensive side to stay in the match."
 "We had three or four opportunities where if we had simple passes it would have been a completely different game."
 "I don't think there is a huge amount wrong but we have to take our chances."

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
OSPREYS

17
0



Gloucester secure EDF final place

Saturday, March 28, Ricoh Stadium, Attendance: 26,744



January 1879 saw a group of men clad in red defy the odds and, despite being vastly outnumbered, keep the enemy at bay and emerge victorious.

The Ricoh Stadium in Coventry isn't quite Rorke's Drift but Dean Ryan's Gloucester team had to survive wave after wave of Ospreys attacks in the EDF Energy Cup semi final before clinching their place in the Twickenham final against the Cardiff Blues.

For long periods of the game, it was genuine backs to the wall stuff. Every single player in a Gloucester shirt had to put in tackle after tackle to keep the Welsh region at bay.

The effort was typified midway through the second period when Ospreys' skipper Ryan Jones sensed that the thin red line might be about to break and turned down a couple of opportunities to kick at goal. The Ospreys went for the try but Gloucester held out and didn't look backwards.

Gloucester actually got off to a reasonable start as fly half Ryan Lamb kicked them into an early lead with a 3rd minute penalty but that was to be the only score of the first period.

However, the game didn't lack incident, far from it! James Hook, Shane Williams and Sonny Parker all made breaks, but

the Gloucester defence held firm and the mistakes eventually came from the Welsh outfit.

Hook missed two regulation penalties which would have given his side the lead whilst the Cherry and Whites threatened sporadically, Iain Balshaw threatening with a run down the right only to be called back for a forward pass from Mike Tindall.

That was to be Tindall's final significant contribution as the England centre was forced to limp out of the fray to be replaced by Matthew Watkins.

The second half started in much the same vein as the first. Lamb's second penalty edged Gloucester a little further clear but just as significant was Olly Barkley's saving tackle on Marty Holah.

The Ospreys strove desperately for the try which they thought would break Gloucester hearts. James Hook had been off target with his goal kicking in the first half which perhaps influenced the decision making but, in hindsight, turning down the chance for points from penalties would prove to be a mistake.

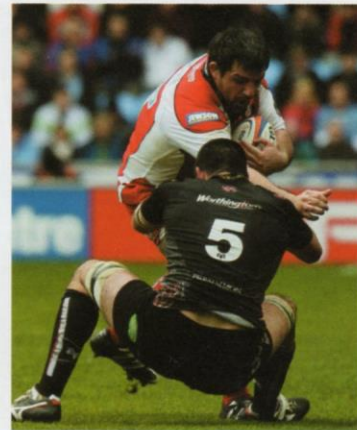
Gloucester weathered the storm and moved downfield with Lamb's tactical kicking game to the fore. One measured cross kick put Balshaw into space but another, intended

for Olly Morgan, was slightly overcooked.

However, all was forgiven as the fly half sat back in the pocket and dropped the goal which moved Gloucester more than a score clear on 67 minutes before adding his third penalty to open up a 12-0 lead.

Enter Iain Balshaw. With the Ospreys forcing the game in sheer desperation, the winger picked off an over ambitious pass from Mike Phillips and had more than enough gas to score from his own 22.

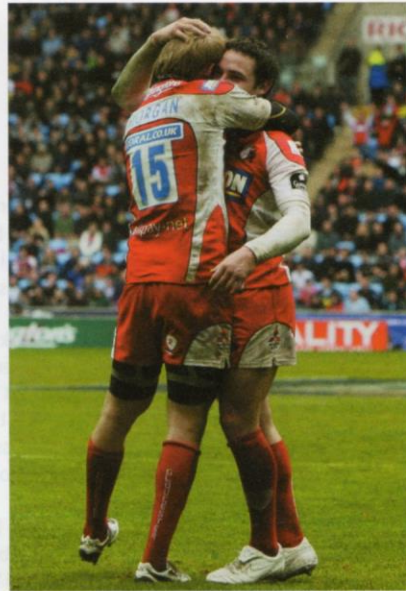
The Gloucester faithful erupted in a mixture of joy and relief, safe in the knowledge that the game was now in the bag and a Twickenham final secured.



Dean Ryan:



"We won a massive game. People say we can't come away from home and we can't win big games."
"I don't know how many Welsh internationals - 10, 11 or 12 - the Ospreys had who just came off the Six Nations and we've got a nil."



"This side's in good shape. It's got good spirit to defend and work as hard as they did in a game where we didn't have much possession or as much cutting edge."
 "But we made sure we won the game and that

stands you in good stead. It doesn't guarantee you anything. It doesn't mean you'll roll all the way and get silverware, but it means you're in good health."
 "And if you can keep working that hard, you may get something at the end of it."

NORTHAMPTON SAINTS 40
GLOUCESTER RUGBY 22



Disappointment for Gloucester at Franklin's Gardens

Saturday, April 4, Attendance: 13,426



After the high of the EDF Energy semi final victory over Ospreys, Gloucester travelled to Franklins

Gardens looking to maintain their challenge for the Guinness Premiership play off places.

For the Northampton media, it was all about the return of the prodigal son as Gloucester fly half Carlos Spencer made his first appearance against the Saints since his departure.

And the former All Black did take the field as a second half replacement but was unable to dig into his bag of magic tricks and help Gloucester to mount a successful comeback with two late tries from the home side denying the Cherry and Whites even a losing bonus point.

The result leaves Gloucester in fifth place in the Guinness Premiership table and needing to get something from their two remaining league games to force their way into the play offs.

After holding the Ospreys at bay and keeping them scoreless for the whole match a week earlier, Gloucester went behind to a Stephen Myler penalty after only 4 minutes. Ryan Lamb tried to respond in kind but struck the upright with his attempt.

Then followed a flurry of tries. Saints got the ball rolling with a score for winger Paul Diggin after Gloucester turned possession over.

Nick Wood charged down Lee Dickson's attempted clearance for Gloucester's first try, Lamb's conversion again hit the post and stayed out, before Dylan Hartley crossed the line punishing Gloucester for a poor clearance kick.

The high tempo continued as Gloucester hit back. Akapusi Qera made the key yards and Will James stretched his way over to narrow the gap to 17-12.

Myler added a penalty before Lamb and Olly Morgan combined to put Mark Foster in space and the winger showed good strength to beat Ben Foden and score, Lamb slotting the touchline conversion to bring Gloucester within a point.

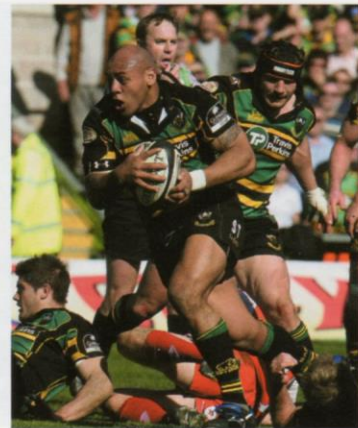
Myler added another penalty to bring a breathless first half to a close and the whole crowd wondered whether the momentum could be maintained.

The answer, initially, was no and Dean Ryan made a triple substitution in a bid to chase the game. It paid immediate dividends as one of the replacements, Olly Barkley, slotted a 50th minute penalty to

make it a 23-22 scoreline.

Gloucester were then dealt a real blow as flanker Andy Hazell was sinbinned after a clash on the Gloucester 22 with Myler rubbing salt into the wound by kicking the resultant penalty.

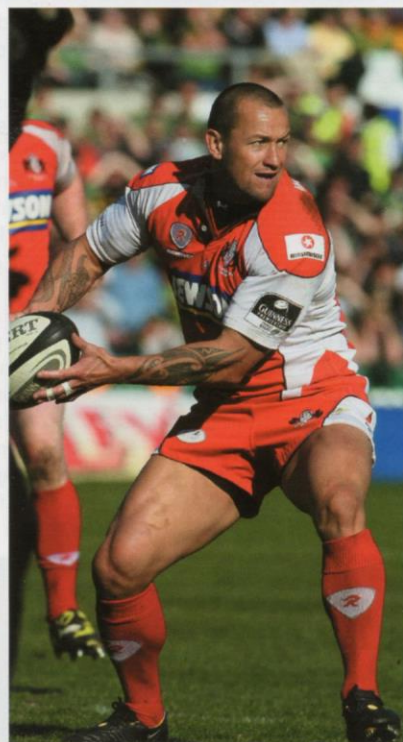
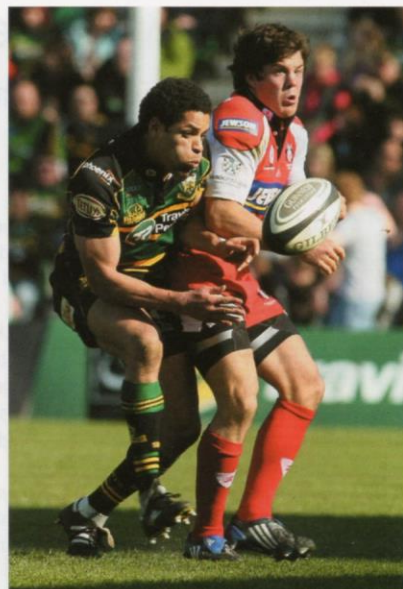
The 14 men dug deep and managed to prevent any further scores but, even after Hazell's return, Gloucester were unable to get into position to get the score that would have taken them into the lead before being dealt the body blow of Bruce Reihana and Paul Diggin scoring late tries to give the scoreline a rather lopsided 40-22 appearance.



Dean Ryan:



"We lacked any intensity and paid the penalty in the second half for our performance in the first."
"There were times when they opened us up quite easily and we just can't afford to do that away from home." "We can't come into a league game where the stakes were on for Gloucester and lack that level of intensity."



GLOUCESTER RUGBY 50
CARDIFF BLUES 12



Cherry and Whites leave Twickenham empty handed

Saturday, April 18, Twickenham, Attendance: 54,899



The Gloucester faithful arrived at Twickenham in their hordes for the EDF Energy Cup final hoping that recent play off disappointments would be forgotten.

However, under sky blue skies in south west London, wave after wave of attack from the fifteen in the sky blue shirts of Cardiff let those hopes in tatters.

Any hopes that last week's Heineken Cup victory over Toulouse would have left the Cardiff players heavy legged were quickly dispelled as the Blues tore into Gloucester from the very first whistle.

The loss of starting scrum half Jason Spice with a suspected broken arm was simply a minor inconvenience as the Cardiff pack started to assert themselves in the one on one physical confrontations.

In addition, their ability to offload out of the tackle to keep the ball alive and the speed of their recycling when the ball carrier did go to ground meant that the Gloucester defence was always on the back foot and struggling to regroup.

Rising star Leigh Halfpenny finished off two flowing Cardiff attacks in the first

quarter as the Blues swept into a 17-0 lead and Gloucester were breathing hard and digging deep.

Backed by still vocal supporters, Mark Foster's try gave Gloucester a glimmer of hope as he battled his way to the line to finish off a move in which Akapusi Qera made the incisive break.

It was important that Gloucester held out to half time but another muscular effort from the Cardiff pack put the Cherry and Whites on the back foot near their own line and Will James was just able to hold off the challenge of Ryan Lamb and touch down in the corner.

Blair's conversion was off target but a 22-5 half time lead left the Blues heading down the tunnel at half time with a more than useful lead and Gloucester scratching their heads as to what they could do to stem the tide and get back in the game in the second half.

The onus was on Gloucester to force the pace and the Blues were more than aware of that. Massive defenders were strung across the pitch to cut down on the space available for Gloucester's runners and the cultured left boot of Kingsholm bound Nicky Robinson kept his future team mates pinned back in

their own 22.

The killer score came on 66 minutes and was shrouded with controversy. Cardiff looked to be guilty of obstruction as Olly Morgan was blocked chasing a high kick. Referee Rolland saw nothing wrong and the Blues countered with Blair diving triumphantly under the posts. His conversion saw the Blues move well clear at 29-5.

Lady luck had well and truly deserted Gloucester and, when a clearance kick bounced badly for Matthew Watkins, Ceri Sweeney needed no second invitation to scoop up the loose ball and score under the posts.

Gloucester dug deep and the pack won a consolation prize as they forced a penalty try but late tries from Blair and Shanklin, capitalising on Gloucester errors as they chanced their arm from deep in search of further morale boosting scores, simply rubbed salt into the wounds.

After the heroics against the Ospreys at the Ricoh it was a desperately disappointing day for anyone connected with Gloucester but, on the day, the Blues were a superior outfit and well worthy of their win.

Dean Ryan:



"Today we were significantly second best and we can't hide from that. Previous encounters have been about learning, today was about reality. We deserve credit for reaching finals year-in, year-out but I don't want to keep losing them."

