

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2004

## GLOUCESTER RUGBY

### HAZELL AIMING TO BE A NUISANCE

There will be enough combustible attitude and determination on show at the Causeway Stadium on Sunday in both muscular packs of forwards without Andy Hazell pouring more petrol on the flames, but that is exactly what the openside flanker intends to do.

There will be bigger names with bigger reputations flexing their pecks but the Gloucester loonie may just hold the key to a famous Heineken Cup victory.

It will be his job to be the biggest pain in the rear end at the breakdown as is humanely possible, to disrupt Wasps' momentum and stability with his ability to steal ball and cause panic with his disruptive and heavy-hitting tackling.

Hazell can also offer plenty in attack but his primary job will be to clog Wasps up at the contact area and it is an assignment he is relishing.

He will be the Gloucester burglar without the gloves – the caped crusader on the European mercy mission.

"We know Wasps have one of the best back rows in the Premiership," Hazell said.

"They are all big ball carriers and it will be a massive job for us to stop them.

"But I have got to get in there and try and slow their ball down, disrupt them as much as I can and be niggly.

"I am sure there will be a few fisticuffs – there usually is – and I have to try and upset them.

"It will be my job to push things to the limit, to test them and the referee, to chat it up and be switched on to what is happening.

"We need a clever performance if we are going to win, full of controlled aggression.

"We will try and attack them at the rucks and be as physical as possible, that is what we are all about.

"I really cannot wait, it is what we play the game for, and we want to get out there and get a result."

Hazell has the ability to be a complete menace and intends to end the season on a high.

For much of the campaign, the number seven has waged a constant battle for full fitness and it has seriously undermined his effectiveness.

He has lacked a regular run of performances to threaten his best form but finds himself one game away from a place in the Heineken Cup semi-final.

Hazell's injuries have ranged from the odd to the downright bizarre – his latest was a stomach lining injury that required a series of injections into his groin – but he is over the worst of it now.

And he offers the type of unpredictable threat possessed by James Forrester, the number eight who will be out injured.

Hazell is equally as likely to shoot up the wing in support or lend a hand in midfield just when Gloucester need it as he is clearing out rucks and tackling his heart out.

"I get used to the injuries to be honest," Hazell said.

"I just want to put a run together of 10 or 12 games to show what I can do.

"We have worked on a few different things this week and to be honest, I am glad Wasps go in as favourites.

"I would certainly admit they got the better of us last time in the final at Twickenham and that really still hurts – but I certainly don't think they are unbeatable.

"It is quite nice really because the pressure is off us – nobody expects us to go down there and win – apart from everyone at the club."

The back row match-ups promise to be thrilling with the glorious talents of Jake Boer and the workrate of Junior Paramore up against England specialists Lawrence Dallaglio, Joe Worsley, and Paul Volley.

It could be one of the defining areas of the game but Hazell will certainly have his part to play as anarchist in chief.

With Dean Ryan, a man who has Wasps running through his veins, offering as much advice as possible, Gloucester will not be short of knowledge.

The attitude needs to be red-hot, the commitment stratospheric but Hazell and his cronies sense a famous win.

JC