

CHERRY & WHITES



V ZEBRE RUGBY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME
2017/18 SEASON / ISSUE 08
EUROPEAN RUGBY CHALLENGE CUP
SATURDAY 16 DECEMBER 2017
KO 15.00 / £2.50



OFFICIAL PARTNERS



OFFICIAL SUPPORTER



OFFICIAL SUPPLIER



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

WILLI HEINZ

GOOD AFTERNOON, AND WELCOME TO KINGSHOLM AS WE WELCOME ZEBRE FOR THE SECOND GAME IN OUR EUROPEAN RUGBY CHALLENGE CUP DOUBLE-HEADER.

It's been another busy couple of weeks at the club, and I'm delighted to be writing these notes off the back of another couple of wins and with us sitting in second place in the Aviva Premiership table.

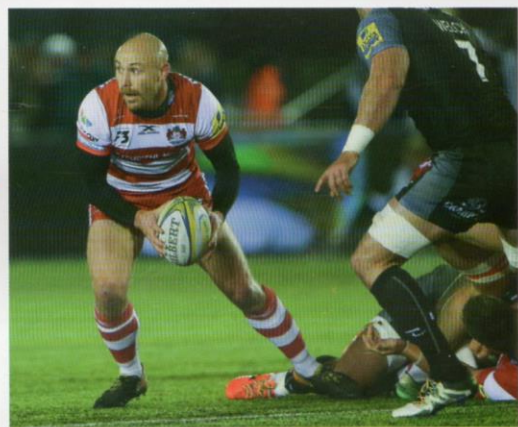
The important thing to note is that no-one at the club is getting too carried away with our recent run of results. As I've heard Johan say a couple of times when he's done post-match media, there are a lot of games to come and a lot of hard work to do.

And we'd also be the first to admit that we've won the last couple of games without really playing anywhere near our best. In a funny way, it's encouraging that we can win games without really hitting our straps, but we know that we need to be better to win big games.

For now though, it's good to be developing a winning habit. Some of the games we've won this season, we'd probably have lost last season and that's been a key change for us this time around.

Last week was also a massive week for us in terms of announcements. As players we were delighted to see the hard work of the coaches rewarded with new contracts. So much work goes on behind the scenes and it's good to see that recognised.

It was also significant that a number of players signed new



contracts. I think that's the clearest sign yet that we're heading in the right direction. When members of the group are encouraged by what is happening at the club and sign on for more, it speaks volumes.

We were also delighted to hear that the board are going to invest in an improved playing surface for next season. It was good to be involved in the decision-making process, as a group we expressed our preference and it's great that it was taken into account.

But, back to business. We need a win today to stay on the heels of Pau at the top of the pool and keep alive our hopes of qualifying for the knockout stages. We're also determined to defend our unbeaten home record this season.

Thanks as always for your support. To see so many fans in Cherry and White in Italy last weekend was a huge boost and we hope to repay you again this afternoon.

Merry Christmas!

Willi



Good afternoon and welcome to Kingsholm for our latest Aviva Premiership fixture. In particular, a very warm welcome to the players, staff and supporters of London Irish.

I'm delighted to be able to write these notes with the team having won their past four Aviva Premiership matches, and five out of the last six games in all competitions. At a time when we have been missing a few players on international duty, and still struggling with a lengthy injury list, it's been a terrific effort from all concerned.

I was particularly impressed with last Friday's win at Newcastle. Kingston Park is always a difficult fixture. The travel involved, if nothing else, makes it the toughest away trip of the season – and we're back there in the Anglo-Welsh Cup in February! When Johan requested that the team travel up to Newcastle 48 hours

before the game, to give the squad more time to get over the coach trip, we were happy to back him and it certainly paid off. It was a fine performance.

That win, and the fantastic result the week before with Saracens, sets us up nicely for the next few rounds of the Premiership. It's good to have climbed the table into the top six, but having worked so hard to achieve that, we know that we have to work equally hard to stay there.

That begins this afternoon against a London Irish side who are battling for every point. Anyone expecting an easy outing today would be mistaken and I know that Johan and the squad will be taking nothing for granted.

There has been plenty of debate this week regarding recruitment and retention with Ross Moriarty confirmed as joining the Dragons. It's always difficult to see a player who has developed through our system then depart for another Club. However, once the WRU made their

recent announcement regarding players with fewer than 60 caps having to play their club rugby in Wales in order to be eligible to represent their country, Ross was always likely to move across the Severn Bridge.

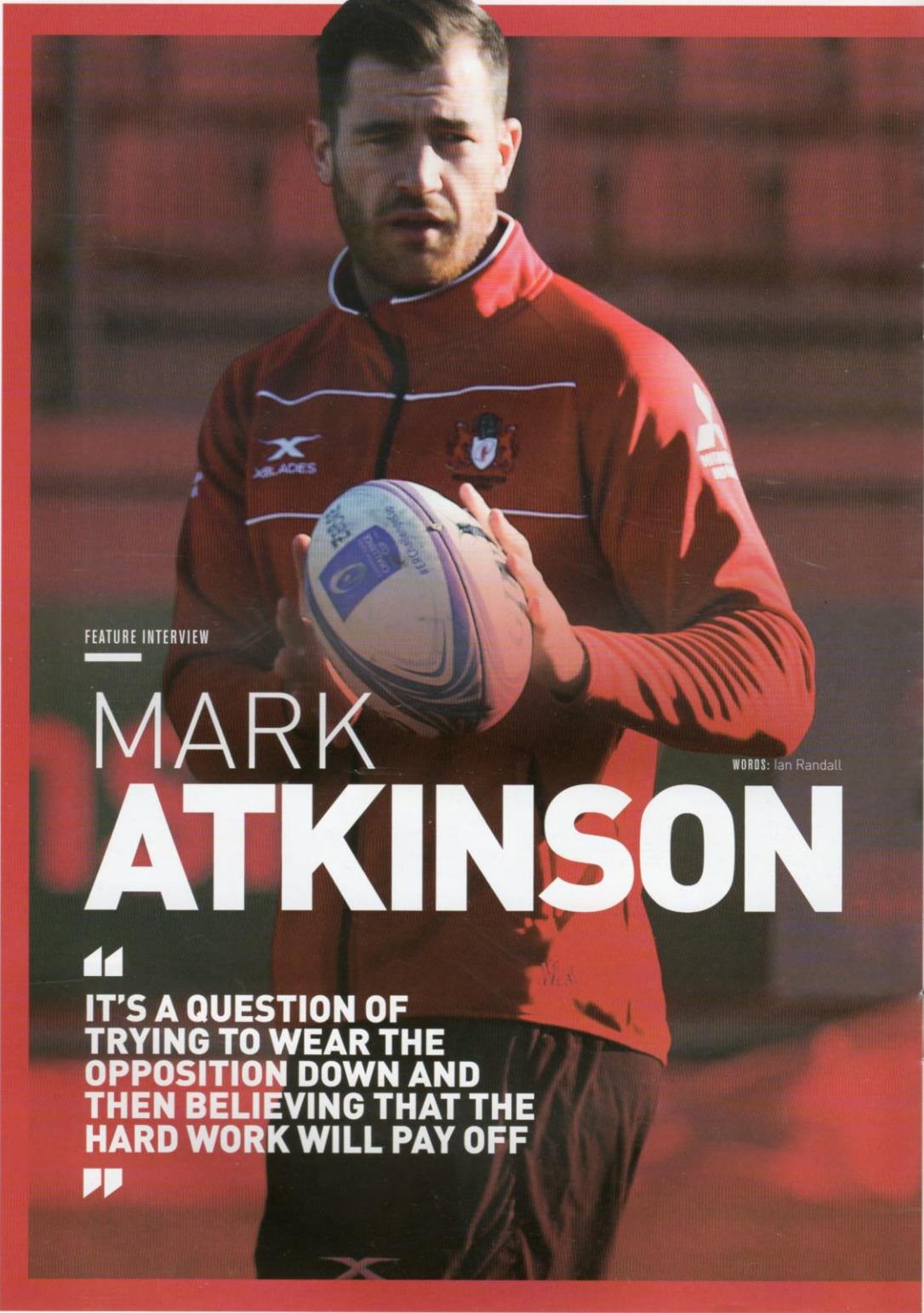
At the end of the season, we will look back on his contributions and wish him well. For now, we are keen to see him return to fitness and perform well in a Gloucester shirt, and I know Ross wants to give it his best.

In terms of contract news, I can confirm that David Humphreys is working incredibly hard on that front and we will be making a number of exciting announcements when the time is right for all concerned.

Please give the team your full support, as you always do.

Enjoy the game

Martin



FEATURE INTERVIEW

MARK ATKINSON

WORDS: Ian Randall

“

IT'S A QUESTION OF TRYING TO WEAR THE OPPOSITION DOWN AND THEN BELIEVING THAT THE HARD WORK WILL PAY OFF

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As the late Tom Walkinshaw once said over the public address system, "...take a last look at the main stand, because we're knocking it down..."

More than a decade later his successor Martin St Quinton could take to the tannoy after the last home game next spring, with an equally important reminder. "Take a last look at the pitch, because we're digging it up."

Gloucester's decision to invest in a hybrid surface has been one of several key announcements since we last met. It will leave only 25% of the Premiership clubs playing on truly grass pitches, and centre Mark Atkinson feels it sends the right message about the club.

"A hybrid will give us more chance to play the type of rugby we want to play for the whole season. At the moment, there are probably five or six matches here when we're not sure what we're going to get in terms of underfoot conditions. This will take that element out of it and allow us to play the attacking brand of rugby that we want to."

A series of contract renewals have also been well received and certainly Gloucester looks a club you would either want to join or certainly stay at right now.

Atkinson is in his fourth season at Kingsholm and says last Saturday's Challenge Cup win in Parma - the sixth in a row in all competitions - shows the consistency the squad has been looking for almost since he arrived.

"We've always been a team others have looked at and said CAN beat people but

we've tried to change the mind set so we don't beat a top side one week and then lose the next," he told me.

"Certainly everyone wants to be in the side more than ever before. In previous years the Challenge Cup has been seen as an opportunity to rest players and rotate extensively but now established internationals are being kept out of the side by younger names and that's something to be proud of.

"I don't know if this group is ahead of schedule or not compared to where people thought we might be, but there is trust between the players, and from the coaches to the players, and that's putting us in a good place."

Trust. It's a small word that says a lot about Gloucester's improvement, and the players have spoken repeatedly about Head Coach Johan Ackermann's people skills. Atkinson is no different.

"Johan is big on situations being led by the players, which puts a belief in us that I've not seen before," Mark went on.

"His start point is that we conduct ourselves as good people and it builds from there. In preseason he said he wanted us to show the reason we were here both

in training and matches, which was a fresh approach and gave us confidence. Coming from outside the Premiership he has seen some different things on and off the pitch and his thinking reflects that."

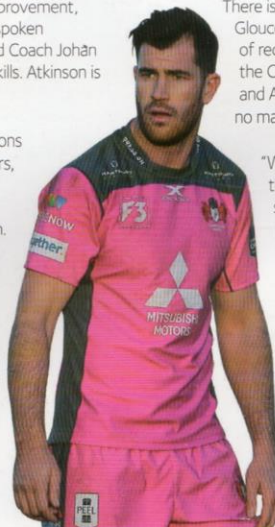
Atkinson started last year's Challenge Cup final against Stade Francais, and was again in the team in Parma last week as Gloucester eventually secured what was only their third away win of the season against today's opponents.

With Pau winning in Agen, the results only served to emphasize where Pool 3 looks to be heading - a shoot-out against Pau here in January with Gloucester needing a victory to seal a home quarter final. To that end, it's essential the margin stays at no more than three points over the intervening two rounds.

There is no doubt Zebre pushed Gloucester in Italy, but the momentum of recent Premiership wins finally saw the Cherry and Whites over the line and Atkinson is well aware that there is no margin for error today.

"We've had some good battles in this tournament, especially against sides like Zebre who we have played previously" he concluded.

"We're half way through the group and I can see this being another attritional game, especially in the first 40 minutes. It's a question of trying to wear the opposition down and then believing that the hard work will pay off and the dam will burst."





NEWCASTLE FALCONS

7-29

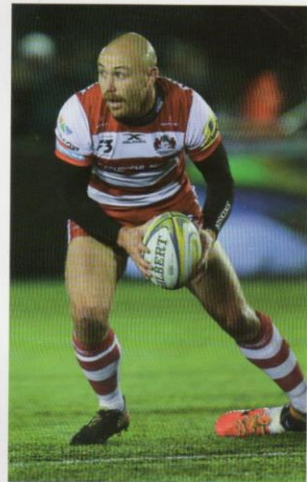
GLOUCESTER RUGBY

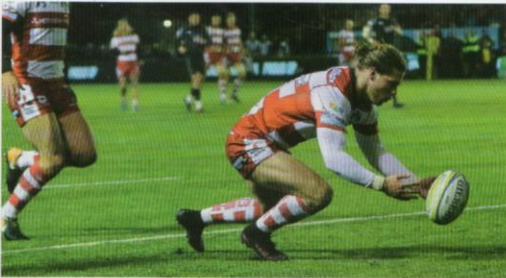
TRIES:
Mark Wilson
CONVERSIONS:
Joel Hodgson

DATE: Fri 24th Nov 17
KO: 19:45

TRIES:
Andy Symons, Jeremy Thrush, Henry Purdy, Gareth Denman
CONVERSIONS:
Billy Twelvetrees (3)
PENALTIES:
Billy Twelvetrees

ACTION REPLAY





Having put to bed their away day bogey with victory at the Rec over Bath, Gloucester promptly made it two in a row with a comprehensive 29-7 win at Kingston Park over Newcastle.

In some respects, this was an even more impressive one than the one at Bath. On that occasion, Gloucester had hung tough and snatched it at the death. Against the Falcons, they controlled the game from start to finish.

It's always been a tough trip and Newcastle started the season in fine form before suffering a slight dip in form. And Gloucester prepared for it by travelling up 24 hours earlier than normal to get the long coach journey out of their legs.

It certainly seemed to pay off as the team looked up for it from the off. They had to soak up some early pressure, but weren't really stretched and pounced for two tries to take a grip on proceedings.

Henry Purdy's break off clean lineout ball set up the first, Andy Symons plunging over after Purdy was halted just short of the line. And the second was down to the quick thinking of the pack, James Hanson's short lineout to Jeremy Thrush at the front catching the home side napping and the big second row romped home.

The home side and their crowd were visibly rocked, and even more so when Purdy added an excellent third as he chipped over the top, kicked ahead and won the race to touch down.

It had been an excellent first 40 minutes, and it was a real shame when the Falcons bundled their way over for a catch and drive try with no time left on the clock to make the half-time score 19-7.

That could have sent alarm bells ringing, a possible fightback from the Falcons on the cards. However, Billy Twelvetrees steadied the nerves with an early second-half penalty.

WE STILL HAVE TO PLAY SOME QUALITY TEAMS HOME AND AWAY AND WE DON'T WANT TO GET CARRIED AWAY - THERE IS STILL SOME HARD WORK TO BE DONE.

WE HAVE A FAIR NUMBER OF PLAYERS TO COME BACK AND TO HAVE SOME OF OUR YOUNG PLAYERS STANDING UP AND SHOWING THEY CAN PERFORM AT THIS LEVEL IS VERY ENCOURAGING.



HEAD COACH JOHAN ACKERMANN

The centre was subsequently yellow carded, but his team-mates dug deep to keep the line intact in his absence in a show of defiant defence. And, once back up to 15 men, Gloucester sealed the win and the bonus point as Gareth Denman forced his way over from close range.

A fine win on the road, and one that sent a powerful message to the rest of the Aviva Premiership.

However, the post-match talk played things down. There's a long way to go and much work to do.



GLOUCESTER RUGBY

39-15

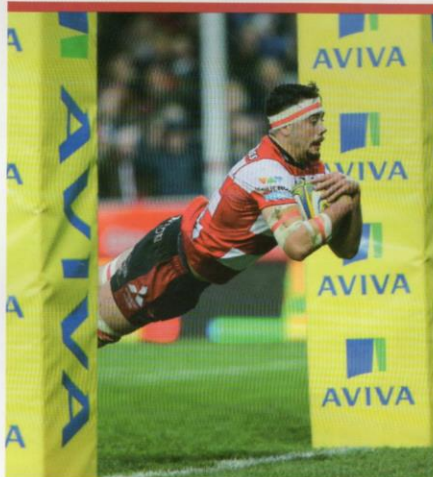
LONDON IRISH

TRIES:
Lewis Ludlow, Billy Burns (2), Jake Polledri, Henry Purdy
CONVERSIONS:
Billy Twelvetrees (4)
PENALTIES:
Billy Twelvetrees (2)

DATE: Sat 2nd Dec 17
KO: 15:00

TRIES:
Petrus Du Plessis, Filo Paulo
CONVERSIONS:
Tommy Bell
PENALTIES:
Tommy Bell

ACTION DEPICTED



After the excellent win at Newcastle the week before, the visit of bottom of the table London Irish to Kingsholm was a massive banana skin. It's exactly the sort of game that has tripped Gloucester up in recent years.

However, despite the Cherry and Whites not being at their fluent best, they had enough in the tank to secure a 39-15 victory and move up to second place in the Aviva Premiership table.

Gloucester had taken their time to get going before the game swung decisively their way just before half-time. The game was already getting a little bit fractious, two brawls breaking out in quick succession, before Irish skipper David Paice was shown a straight red for a late hit to Willi Heinz, contact being made with the scrum-half's head.

There was no doubt about the decision to send Paice off. The incident looked worse the more you watched it back. Heinz failed an HIA and didn't return and Paice left his team-mates facing an uphill battle.

Gloucester duly secured the win and the try scoring bonus point in the second half and didn't have to fire on all cylinders to do so. Irish remain rooted to the foot of the table.

The Cherry and Whites got off to a decent start on the day as Lewis Ludlow timed his run to perfection to take a flat pass from Billy Burns and burst clear to score.

After that Gloucester didn't quite find their stride. Billy Twelvetrees kicked two penalties, but Irish countered with a penalty from Tommy Bell and try from Petrus du Plessis.

However, as time started to tick away in the first half, Gloucester pressure in the Irish 22 finally told and Billy Burns was able to ghost around a defender and dive over for Gloucester's second.

With Twelvetrees converting for a 20-8 lead, Gloucester were well positioned before Paice's indiscretion well and truly gave the Cherry and Whites the advantage.

Burns shrugged off a weak tackle to sprint home at the start of the

second half and the focus now turned to the try scoring bonus point. It was secured in some style, Jake Polledri showing great pace and took a great angle to romp home for a fine individual score.

Irish responded with a close range try for Teofilo Paulo, but Burns then turned provider again as he measured a cross kick to perfection for Henry Purdy to catch and score.

39-15 and that was it for the scoring on the day despite Gloucester camping for what seemed like an age on the Irish line in the final few minutes. Further tries didn't come as the Exiles defended bravely but it was job done for the Cherry and Whites.

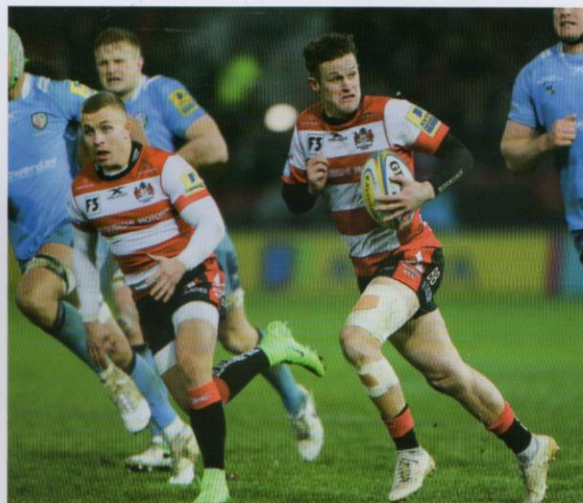


THE BIGGEST THING IS WE GROUND IT OUT TONIGHT. IT WAS NOT PRETTY BUT WE SHOWED WE CAN GO DOWN IN THAT ARM WRESTLE.

BUT I WILL NOT LIE TO SAY I AM PLEASED WITH THE WAY WE HAVE PLAYED. WE HAD A LACK OF INTENSITY AND ACCURACY BUT IT IS MIXED EMOTIONS BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO BE GRATEFUL THAT YOU HAVE GOT OVER THE WINNING LINE AND SCORED 39 POINTS.



HEAD COACH, JOHAN ACKERMANN





TEAM LINE-UPS



SATURDAY 16 DECEMBER // EUROPEAN RUGBY CHALLENGE CUP

T	P	C	D	POSITION		T	P	C	D
				TOM HUDSON	15	FULL BACK	15	MATTEO MINOZZI	
				CHARLIE SHARPLES	14	RIGHT WING	14	CIARAN GAFFNEY	
				MARK ATKINSON	13	OUTSIDE CENTRE	13	MATTIA BELLINI	
				BILLY TWELVETREES (C)	12	INSIDE CENTRE	12	TOMMASO BONI	
				DAVID HALAIFONUA	11	LEFT WING	11	GIOVANBATTISTA VENDITTI	
				BILLY BURNS	10	FLY-HALF	10	CARLO CANNA	
				BEN VELLACOTT	9	SCRUM-HALF	9	MARCELLO VIOLI	
				CAMERON ORR	1	LOOSEHEAD PROP	1	ANDREA LOVOTTI	
				MOTU MATU'U	2	HOOKER	2	OLIVIERO FABIANI	
				JOSH HOHNECK	3	TIGHTHEAD PROP	3	DARIO CHISTOLINI	
				ED SLATER	4	LOCK	4	DAVID SISI	
				MARIANO GALARZA	5	LOCK	5	GEORGE BIAGI (C)	
				JACOB ROWAN	6	BLINDSIDE FLANKER	6	MAXIME MBANDA	
				WILL SAFE	7	OPENSIDE FLANKER	7	JOHAN MEYER	
				FREDDIE CLARKE	8	NUMBER 8	8	RENATO GIAMMARIOLI	
				REPLACEMENTS				REPLACEMENTS	
				RICHARD HIBBARD	16			16	LUHANDRE LUUS
				PADDY McALLISTER	17			17	CRUZE AH-NAU
				GARETH DENMAN	18			18	EDUARDO BELLO
				JEREMY THRUSH	19			19	LEONARD KRUMOV
				CHARLIE BECKETT	20			20	JACOPO SARTO
				CALLUM BRALEY	21			21	GUGLIELMO PALAZZANI
				OWEN WILLIAMS	22			22	MATTEO PRATICHELLI
				ANDY SYMONS	23			23	SERAFIN BORDOLI
				MATCH OFFICIALS					
				REFEREE					
				Pierre Brousset (France)					
				ASSISTANT REFEREES					
				Adrien Descottes & Eric Soulan (France)					
				CITING COMMISSIONER					
				Ray Wilton (Wales)					



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