

# CHERRY & WHITES



  
**MITSUBISHI  
MOTORS**  
MAIN CLUB  
PARTNER



**GLOUCESTER  
RUGBY**

## V **BATH RUGBY**

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME**  
2017/18 SEASON / ISSUE 17  
AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY  
SATURDAY 28 APRIL 2018  
KO 15.00 / £3

**Loxley**   
TODAY'S MATCHDAY  
SPONSOR



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

# WILLI HEINZ

GOOD AFTERNOON, AND WELCOME TO KINGSHOLM FOR TODAY'S FINAL HOME AVIVA PREMIERSHIP GAME OF THE SEASON, AND IT'S WEST COUNTRY DERBY DAY, SO WELCOME TO ALL OF THE PLAYERS, STAFF AND SUPPORTERS FROM THE REC.

**W**e set out at the start of this three-game stint at Kingsholm, to give it absolutely everything in order to deliver the best possible results. And, after two wins from two, we know the job is still not complete.

The West Country Derby is the game that appears on the calendar, in the boldest font, it's the one that probably means the most to our supporters.

We had a wonderful victory at The Rec, way back at the end of October. That was a crucial one for us as we were able to put in a strong performance on the road, a game that showed our belief and drive to keep going to the last seconds.

We know this week that the challenge is going to be a big one, and a game that means a lot to all of the players that take to the field. We know the Kingsholm crowd will be bang up for it, and it's set to be a cracking day, with the game sold out weeks ago, and our last game of the season at Kingsholm.

Last weekend against Newcastle, I thought the boys were awesome, and recovered well from a slow start to play some of our best rugby. The lads up front showed so much energy in the set piece to really dominate the Falcons, and this allowed the backs to shine, and cross for some great scores.

The boys were commenting in the changing rooms about the noise from the crowd, and the Friday Night Lights really did deliver the noise. The forwards had to change their calls at line out time in front of The Shed, and this was a special one for all of the boys.

The challenge this week is to replicate this, and give the home fans



plenty to cheer about, we know that they take it up a notch when Bath are in town.

The last few times Bath have come to Kingsholm, they have been successful, and we have to back up our performances of the last few weeks. We welcome a quality team, coached by a quality coach in Todd Blackadder, so we have to be at our best.

Today will also mark the final game at Kingsholm for some of our squad. Without singling anyone out, for all of the lads that are moving on, we wish them all the best in the future, and all of them have made a real mark on the club, during their time in Cherry and White.

We have a final to look forward to in a few weeks time, but we'll cover that when the time is ready and we'll look forward to taking on Cardiff Blues.

Thank you for your support this season, it was a season with a lot of promise when Johan started, and it's been a season where we have learnt so much about ourselves and we hope to finish it in style.

Enjoy the game.

*Willi*



**G**ood afternoon and welcome to Kingsholm for the final time this season, and what a note on which to sign off – a full house against our local rivals Bath Rugby!

It's probably the one match in the calendar that we all look out for when the fixtures are announced in the summer, and it never seems to disappoint.

Aside from the historic rivalry and local bragging rights, there's a lot riding on the game as we are pushing hard to try and close the gap on Newcastle and Leicester in the chase for a top four finish and a play-off spot.

At the same time, we're very conscious of the fact that Sale Sharks are just a

couple of points behind us, and today's opponents could mathematically draw level with us if they can secure two bonus point wins to finish. Things will be a lot clearer after this weekend.

It's an incredibly congested Aviva Premiership table. I don't recall a campaign where so few points separate so many sides and it really is going down to the wire. It's fantastic for the organisers and very exciting for the teams involved and all their fans.

Johan and the team will be very much focused on today's match but I've only just calmed down after last weekend's semi-final win over Newcastle. What a terrific occasion that was, nearly 11,000 people made such a noise. I really can't imagine how 16,000 will sound today.

It's wonderful that we've qualified for the European Rugby Challenge Cup final for the third time in four years. Despite

the challenges of travelling to Bilbao, I hope as many of you as possible will be able to make it to support us in our bid to bring home the trophy.

Finally, a number of the squad will be taking part in their last matchday here at Kingsholm. The last game of the season is always an emotional occasion with awards being handed out and some players saying their farewells.

For those who are moving on, I would just like to place on record my sincere appreciation for everything they have done for Gloucester Rugby and wish them well in the future. Once a player has played for the Cherry and Whites he is always welcome back here in the future.

Enjoy the game.

*Martin*

GOOD AFTERNOON AND WELCOME TO KINGSHOLM FOR THE FINAL TIME THIS SEASON AND, IN PARTICULAR, A WARM WELCOME TO TODD BLACKADDER, THE PLAYERS, STAFF AND SUPPORTERS OF BATH RUGBY.

In my last set of programme notes, at the Harlequins game, I stated that it was good to be back at Kingsholm after three tough games on the road. Today marks the third of three tough games at home – the quirks of the fixture calendar!

Each of those three games has had a lot riding on it, for a variety of reasons. With only a few points separating so many teams in the Premiership, victory over Quins was important to keep our play off hopes alive and the manner of our victory showed real progress from last season. We knew how key the bonus point was, but didn't panic in the last 10 minutes and relied on our fitness and ambitious rugby to score the fourth try with the last play of the game.

The European Rugby Challenge Cup has been an important competition for us over the past few seasons, and last Friday's semi-final win against Newcastle has given us another big final to look forward to against Cardiff Blues. We started slowly against a very good Falcons team, but finished off with a wonderful team try scored by Ben Vellacott.

Today, of course, sees us looking for the points that would help to see us stay in the play-off race and also qualify for next season's Champions Cup as a result of our final league position. We're still chasing Newcastle and Leicester hard for 4th spot in the Premiership, but have Sale breathing down our necks, and Bath could mathematically still catch us.

And I haven't even mentioned the fact that today is one of the most passionate and hard-fought games on the fixture calendar – a West Country derby against Bath Rugby!

As I alluded to above, Bath still have something to play for. Their top six hopes may be slim, but they are still fighting and they'd like nothing more than to win at Kingsholm and avenge our victory at The Rec earlier this season.

With just a few weeks left in the season, it's good to still be competing on two fronts and playing competitive fixtures. The players and staff are

# DAVID HUMPHREYS



incredibly focused on us finishing the season as positively as possible and, although there will always be lots of things to work on, over the last few months we've found a style of play that suits our players and is great to watch. Plenty to build on...

I would like to finish by saying thank you. Firstly to the players who will be appearing at Kingsholm for the final time today. To a man, they've given it all for Gloucester Rugby and I'd like to wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

And also a big thank you to yourselves, the supporters. You've played a vital role in our success to date this season, helping to turn Kingsholm into the fortress that we want it to be.

Your backing is always appreciated and never taken for granted. Hopefully, you've got one more big game in you today.

*David*

GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
HERITAGE



GLOUCESTER  
RUGBY

**A SEASON OF  
HUGE PROMISE  
AND GREAT  
ENTERTAINMENT,  
ULTIMATELY  
TINGED WITH  
DISAPPOINTMENT**

**2002-03**

**Captain** Phil Vickery

**Played** 33

**Won** 25

**Lost** 6

**Drawn** 2

**For** 1003

**Against** 634



**F**ew seasons in the history of the Gloucester club evoke the same mixed emotions of pride and regret (and perhaps even today, fifteen years later, a simmering resentment) as the season of 2002-2003. In the first season in which the Premiership title was decided by play-offs, Gloucester, having won the Powergen Cup at Twickenham with a handsome 40-22 victory over Northampton Saints on 5 April and clinched the league (which they went on to win by 15 points) on 27 April, had to wait until 31 May to play the Premiership Final. In that first play-off year, second placed Wasps played third placed Saints for the right to play Gloucester in the final. After a 3 week lay-off, and nothing to play for in the previous 5 weeks, an off-the-boil Gloucester were badly beaten by second-placed Wasps in the first-ever Premiership Final at Twickenham.

Gloucester had started the Premiership season in tremendous form. Home wins

against Sale (44-8), Bristol (45-18) and Saracens (44-14) were complemented by away wins at Harlequins and Newcastle and a 21-all draw at Bath. Unbeaten going into the European Champions (Heineken) Cup first round, they looked to be among the favourites to win the competition.

This belief was strengthened by a magnificent 35-16 victory over Munster, runners-up the previous year, at Kingsholm in October. In a fiercely competitive "group of death", Gloucester then shared the points with Perpignan, home and away, in December and when the Cherry & Whites visited Limerick on January 18 for the final round, Munster were left with the "impossible" feat of scoring four tries and winning by a margin of 27 points to go through at Gloucester's expense. To the joy of the home fans and the chagrin of Gloucester, they did just that, winning 33-6. Perpignan also progressed and went on to lose narrowly to Toulouse in the final.

In domestic competition, Gloucester



continued to carry all before them, narrow defeats at Wasps and Leicester the only blemishes in the Premiership until a third narrow defeat, at Leeds, when 1st place was already assured. Saracens were despatched 51-20 in the Powergen Cup quarter-final.

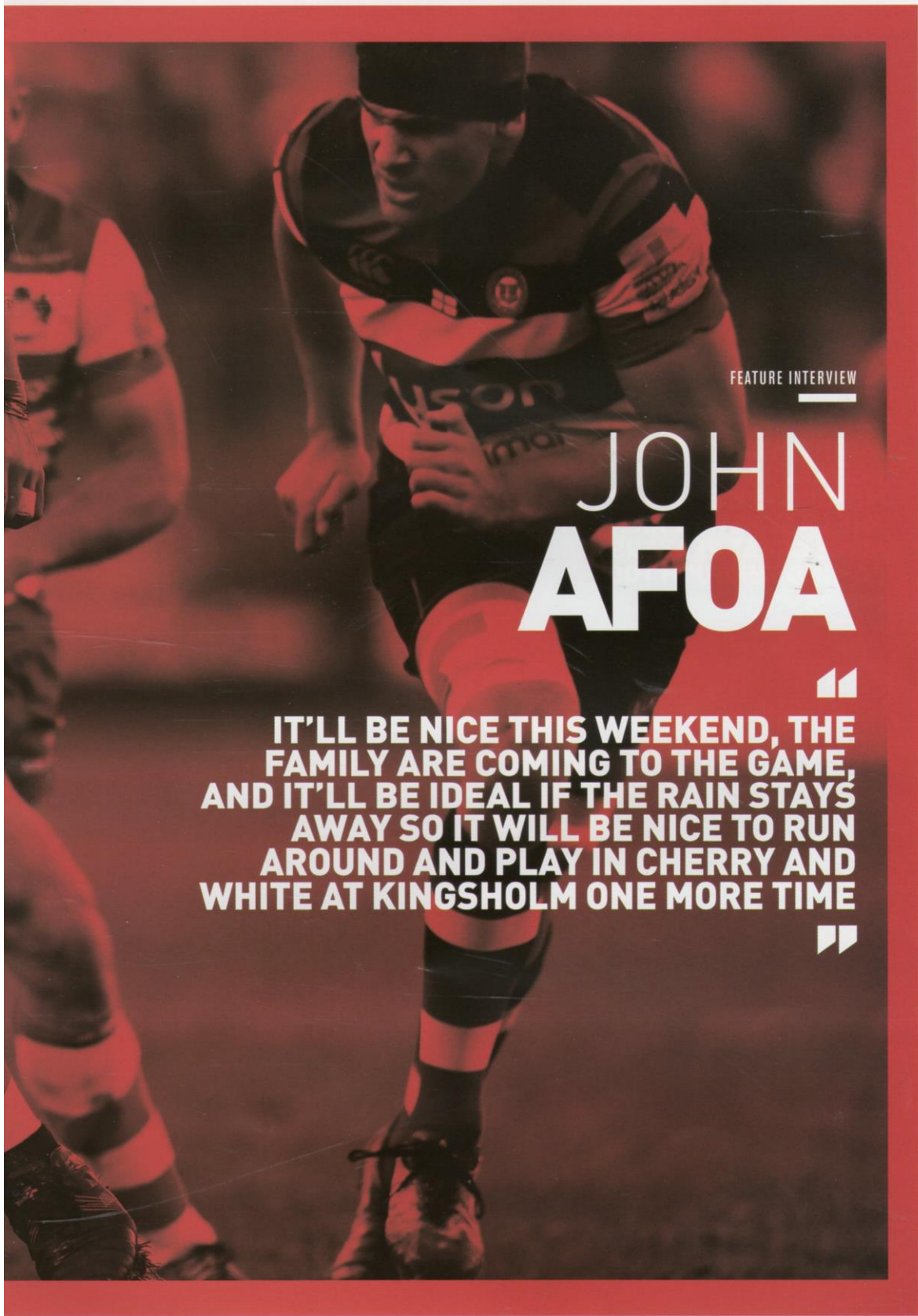
The highlight of this memorable roller-coaster of a season was the Powergen Cup Final at Twickenham. On a sunny April day, in front of a capacity crowd, Gloucester and Northampton produced a final to remember. It was a victory for youth over experience. Gloucester's four tries were scored by their trio of young star players James Simpson-Daniel (2), Jamie Forrester and Marcel Garvey. Ludovic Mercier kicked twenty points in the match. Simpson-Daniel scored the opening try in the first five minutes to take Gloucester into the lead 7-3 and Garvey the second as the lead changed hands six times in the first half. Although trailing 22-20 at the break Gloucester always had the edge and the promise of more to come – and so it

proved. In the second half with the wind and the sun at their backs, they scored early through Forrester and from then on Northampton were chasing the game. A second try from Simpson-Daniel proved to be the clincher. In the absence of injured club captain Phil Vickery, acting captain Jake Boer waved up the veteran Andy Deacon to collect the cup. Never had the future looked so bright for the Cherry and Whites.

Despite the disappointments, this was Gloucester Rugby's greatest season of the professional era. When even Stuart Barnes describes Gloucester as "far and away the best team in England" you know it must be right! The team had a combination of maturity and youthful promise. It was an outstanding squad with cover in every position from full back to loose-head prop. Above all there was the power and mobility of the mighty front row of Phil Vickery, Trevor Woodman and Ollie Azam, backed up by Andy Deacon, Rodrigo Roncero and Chris Fortey. Add

to this the line-out work of Rob Fidler and Mark Cornwell and the mobility of Adam Eustace in the second row and the pace and vision of Jamie Forrester and work rate and ball winning ability of Jake Boer, Andy Hazell, Peter Buxton and Junior Paramore at the back and you have a pack to challenge the best. The often underrated hero of the shed Jake Boer was voted Zurich Premiership Player of the Year nationwide. The speed and handling of the threequarters, where Sinbad and Marcel Garvey were in the form of their lives on the wings and Terry Fanolua, Robert Todd and Henry Paul formidable in the centre, was complemented by three talented fullbacks in Thinus Delpoit, Chris Catling and Jon Goodridge. World Cup winner Andy Gomersall partnered master kicker Ludovic Mercier at half back. Mercier's game, once considered limited, had developed that season to the extent that he was chosen as runner-up to Jake Boer as Zurich Premiership Player of the Year. A team of all the talents.





FEATURE INTERVIEW

# JOHN AFOA

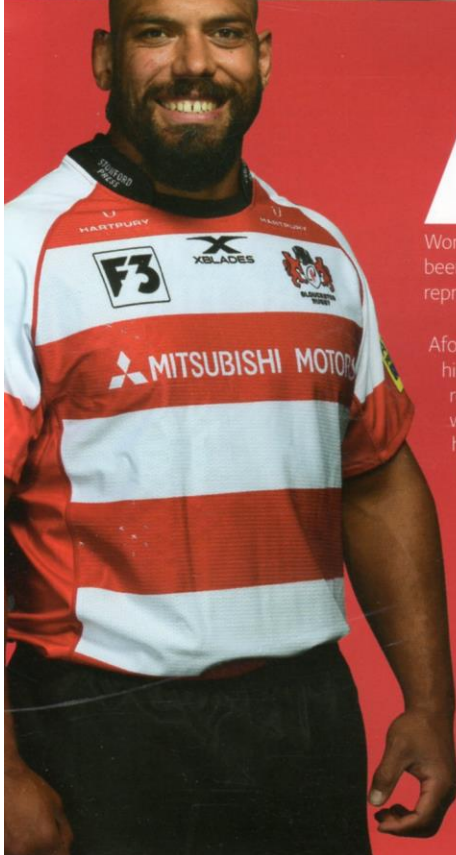
“  
IT’LL BE NICE THIS WEEKEND, THE  
FAMILY ARE COMING TO THE GAME,  
AND IT’LL BE IDEAL IF THE RAIN STAYS  
AWAY SO IT WILL BE NICE TO RUN  
AROUND AND PLAY IN CHERRY AND  
WHITE AT KINGSHOLM ONE MORE TIME

”





“RUGBY-WISE, WE’VE BEEN LUCKY TO HAVE THE MEMORIES WE’VE HAD OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WITH SOME GREAT PLAYERS COMING THROUGH TOO”



**A**fter four seasons at the club, John Afoa will trot out for his final home game in Cherry and White this afternoon, and the Rugby World Cup winning front row star has been speaking this week of his pride in representing the jersey.

Afoa has been a fans’ favourite during his time at Kingsholm, combining a rock solid set piece responsibility with constant touches of ball-handling magic that are far beyond the job description of the average front row forward!

With Afoa readying to say his farewells to a Cherry and White faithful that have firmly taken him to heart, he discusses how he has loved his time at the club, in his usual jovial manner.

“It’s going to be nice to wrap it up at home, but of course, the job is far from done with a few

big trips on the road to come before the end of the season. We have a lot of rugby still to play.

“It’ll be nice this weekend, the family are coming to the game, and it’ll be ideal if the rain stays away so it will be nice to run around and play in Cherry and White at Kingsholm one more time.”

For a player with an impressive CV to date, Afoa reveals how much his stewardship in the Cherry and White jersey, with the bold number three on its back has meant to him.

“I think it’s just been great to get back to a great club, I was lucky to be at another traditional club in Ireland with Ulster. But to then come over here for four years, where my children were a little older, and this allowed them to immerse themselves a little more in the community, and in school, doing after-school activities, and all that sort of stuff.

“It’s been great for that part of life, but rugby-wise, we’ve been lucky to have the memories we’ve had over the last

few years, with some great players coming through too. Laurie [Fisher] did some great work laying the foundations early on.

"We're also fortunate with Johan [Ackermann] in charge now, he has delivered a lot of belief to the squad, and that last little spark to kick on and win matches."

Afoa has not just been delivering lessons in offloading, carrying and scrummaging to his Gloucester team mates, the former All Black has been developing his coaching skills locally too with Longlevens RFC, immersing himself in the city's rugby community.

"Yeah that's been great, down at the Griffins, helping out down there on a Tuesday and Thursday night, and also trying to do my coaching levels at the same time.

"It's been great going down there, seeing the boys come straight from work, in their work gear, then getting straight out onto the field.

"It's a nice relief for me sometimes, and really allows me to appreciate playing at a professional level."

Afoa led the Cherry and Whites onto the field as they were victorious in Galway last month, and the prop spoke of his honour in notching up 100 appearances, and his delight in reaching that milestone.

"It's great, getting to 100 games. It obviously happens a lot quicker in the Premiership, with the quantity of games to play, but just to show that I was able to get there, put



myself on the pitch, and put myself forward to play for the club 100 times.

"It's a really great achievement for myself, and something I will be really proud of, and hopefully a few more still to come."

And as he looks back on his time at Kingsholm, just before he looks forward, can he pinpoint a favourite moment?

"It's a question I was asked recently too, but for me there's a few games that stand out, a couple of good wins against Saracens and Exeter Chiefs, couple of big European wins too.

"But for me, it's all about time with the boys. Time spent as a group with the coaches, be it during travel or on tour. On and off the field, those are the memories I'll definitely remember."

And Gloucester fans, he's not going far, and he definitely won't be a stranger to the club, even in Bear form!

"No no! I've already spoken to a lot of fans, they're sad to see me go, but I'll be here a couple of times over the next few years. That will be a weird one, but I'll cross that bridge when it comes!"

Good Luck John! It's been a pleasure!



# KINGSHOLM NEWS

WITH **BOB FENTON**

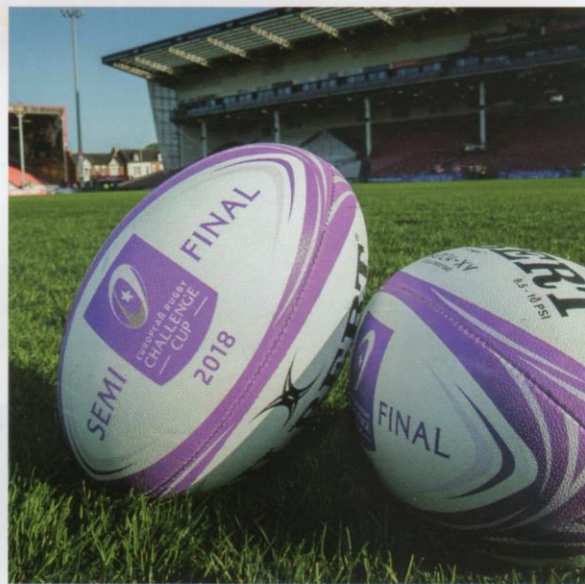
**Y**ay! Cup final secured with a great performance over Newcastle last Friday, other results going our way on Saturday meaning that as Cardiff have qualified for the big boy's cup already that we are in!

Although we made a bit of a stuttering start last week, the moment we hit our straps we played some great rugby. For me our last try, that took precisely 13 seconds from when Lewis Ludlow made the turnover to the point that Ben Vellacott put the ball down to score, absolutely epitomised the way we have tried to play this season.

Cup final then... in the most difficult place on earth to get to. Sorry Mr ERC, but whose bright idea was that? I get the 'spread the game' message but have a thought for us fans. It's not just the costs involved it's the sheer difficulty of trying to get there and find somewhere to stay.

The TV coverage is going to look great on Friday – a massive stadium with thousands of empty seats. At least next season it's in a place with transport links and hotels. Shame, but hopefully our club will have arranged somewhere for us fans to gather and watch the game.

Here we are then, last home game of the season and everything is still up in the air. We're a couple of points in front of Sale, ten ahead of our mates from Bath and a few behind Newcastle and Leicester. I've not known things to be so crowded, and with so much on the line in every game since... well I can't remember when.



There's no let up today. Bath fans will be thinking that two bonus point wins and a few results going their way could get them back into the mix. The Sale supporter will be travelling down to Exeter hoping for a big win there, and knowing that a Bath win here will put them firmly back in the mix. We know that a win today coupled with Sale failing against Exeter will see us home without having to worry about the Saracens game next week.

This is cut-throat stuff – proper winner takes all rugby – and working out the permutations makes my brain hurt. Every weekend we have been sat there, head spinning like that kid in the Exorcist film, trying to take it all in.

We don't know where the next threat or opportunity is coming from, so we frantically look backwards, forwards and even to the side as we try to get a grip on where we are and where the next impact will come from – I can only liken it to the last time I got mildly lost driving in Paris and had to negotiate the madness that is the road around the Arc De Triomphe!

But I was thinking, is it all that different or is it because we are actually part of it? And have our comrade supporters from other clubs been going through this mental anguish season after season and we have just not realised? Not realised, because over recent



years, we have been so far off the pace by this time of year that we have just had to look backwards to make sure that we were not being dragged into the labyrinth of a relegation fight.

Don't get me wrong, I like being a long way clear of all that nonsense with games to go, and I like being part of the mix for the big boys cup – it's just that at my time of life I'm not sure my heart can stand it! Can we just win the flippin' league by about March next year and make things a bit easier for me!

Seriously though, whatever happens over the next couple of days – and in the unlikely event that we don't hang on to at least the coveted sixth place – I think we must all acknowledge the massive step forward our team has taken this term. This time last year (and the year before ad infinitum) we would have gone through the heartbreak of so many failures, and while this year we have had a few heavy defeats they are nowhere near as common place as they were.

We are not seeing headless, sometimes hopeless, rugby, it's been replaced by a brand that while sometimes may appear madness (I'm a firm believer in that sometimes hoofing the ball away from your danger zone is the right thing to do) but you can't fault the ambition and excitement that it brings.

Our players seem happier with this 'licence to play' attitude that Johan has brought in – in fact the 'Ackermann effect' has been huge on and off the field and we are most definitely a different outfit since he boarded the ship. Add to that the great improvements that are taking place away from the pitch and all of a sudden it is a real joy to be a Gloucester fan.

Over the past few seasons there has almost been a sense of relief that the final whistle of the final game has been blown, letting us know that it's all over for a few months and that we won't have to go through the heartache of match day for a while. It's not like that



today. We look ahead with a very real sense of hope that a corner has been turned and that we are, finally, really on the up.

We've been there before, and we all know that – and to quote the famous line from 'Shawshank Redemption,' - '... Hope? Let me tell you something, my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane...'

It does feel different this year though, we've come so far in such a short space of time you can't help but feel positive about what happens next.

So finally, and as always, goodbye and good luck to those players leaving us over the summer and to you all thanks for reading my stuff this season.

Have a great summer everyone... What time is kick-off in August?

# RANDALL

## on RUGBY



WIND THE CLOCK BACK 16 YEARS, AND GLOUCESTER FOUND THEMSELVES IN A PARALLEL SITUATION TO THE ONE THEY FACE TODAY. BATH WERE THE VISITORS IN THE LAST HOME GAME OF THE 2001-02 CAMPAIGN, WITH THE CHERRY AND WHITES HEADING INTO THE HEINEKEN CUP THE FOLLOWING SEASON.

**T**o make you feel really old, James Simpson-Daniel was 19. Whilst you might grimace at the thought of where the years in between have gone, his hat-trick that day was the centrepiece of a 68-12 victory.

Given Bath's recent form, one or two optimists might be dreaming of a similar margin this afternoon - but Gloucester full back Jason Woodward isn't one of them.

It's been an eventful 18 months for Woodward - signing for Bristol, playing in the blue and white hoops for half a season and then, following their relegation, making the move up the M5. His partner Rachael is expecting a baby girl in July and they have just bought their first house. In short, life's not too shabby.

"I've been happy with my season," Woodward said. "We've got a classy back line and I've enjoyed linking up with the likes of Mark Atkinson and Henry Trinder.

"Add in Tom Marshall and Charlie Sharples and you can see why we've set ourselves up with a fighting chance of a top six place, possibly more, with two games to go.

"You can look back and say if we had beaten Wasps and Newcastle we'd be sitting in an even better position but we wouldn't be where Exeter or Saracens are."

Woodward first came to England at 17 on a school exchange. Hartpury College offered him a University scholarship, and he played in the same team as Trinder and Tom Savage before returning home to Wellington after the first year of his degree.

Having watched Gloucester when he could during that time, the wheel has come full circle and Woodward is on



the playing side of the fence, and he's also delighted to see Bristol restored to Premiership status.

"Part of the decision to come here was to play in the top flight," Jason went on.

"Unfortunately, when I got to Bristol the team was not in a great place having lost 11 games out of 11. We had three coaches in the season and won only three games.

"But with Pat Lam in there now and with the signings I know like Nic Stirzaker who I played with at the Melbourne Rebels, and John Afoa and Harry Randall from here I think they'll do quite well. They've had a big overhaul in a short space of time but it was what the club needed."

One of those Bristol wins was at Ashton Gate against Bath, who of course complete the West Country derby triangle.



## FOR THIS GAME TO BE A SELL-OUT TELLS YOU IT'S A SPECIAL ONE AND THE FANS HAVE A PASSION FOR IT

Woodward didn't play in the Bath-Gloucester fixture at the Rec earlier this season but he's well aware of what games between any of the three sides stand for.

"It's awesome to be part of a match where the history and tradition is massive," Woodward admitted.

"One of my first games for Bristol was at Bath and when we walked through the city from our hotel to get to the ground the atmosphere was buzzing. It was a special thing to do and not something I'd previously been used to.

"For this game to be a sell-out tells you it's a special one and the fans have a passion for it, but we mustn't let Bath's form get into our mindset. Given their coaching staff and the talent they have, you can never write them off."

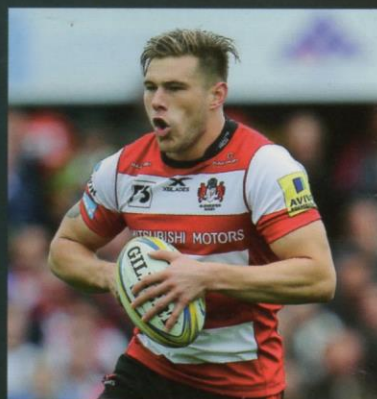
The nervous tension surrounding today's game has arguably been reduced by matters last weekend. Gloucester not only know they have a Challenge Cup final to look forward to, they also know that because it's against Cardiff, a Champions Cup place is already assured.

It should allow talents like Woodward to again play with a freedom that he believes make Gloucester a side that are going places.

"For any new coach the first season is difficult," he concluded. "Johan flew over early on and outlined the community and family feeling he wanted to create, as well as the style he wanted to play.

"The coaches ran things really well and it was a seamless fit when he arrived permanently. I think with the quality that is here we are a top tier European side and as a club we're heading in a good direction."

Thanks for reading this column over the season. I may bump into you over the summer if you spend any of it watching Gloucestershire's cricketers.





# GLOUCESTER RUGBY

# 37-9

# HARLEQUINS

**TRIES:**

Callum Braley, Jason Woodward,  
Jake Polledri, Ruan Ackermann

**CONVERSIONS:**

Billy Twelvetrees (4)

**PENALTIES:**

Billy Twelvetrees (3)

**DATE:** Sat 14th Apr 18

**KO:** 15:00

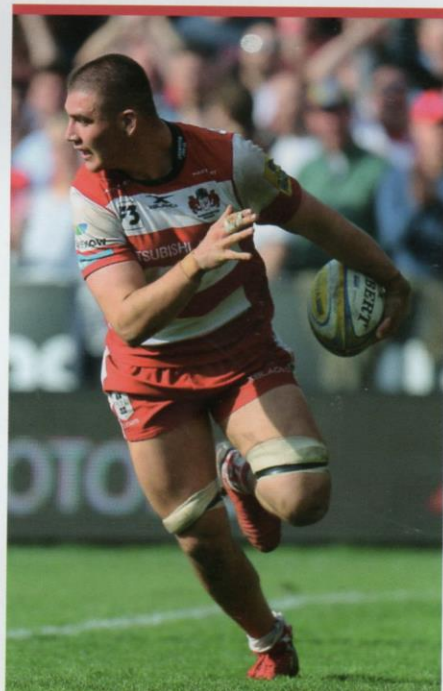
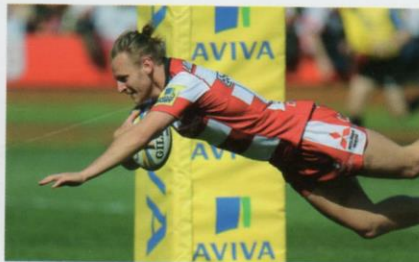
**PENALTIES:**

Marcus Smith (3)

PRELIM



ACTION



**W**hen Gloucester went into the final ten minutes of this Aviva Premiership fixture leading Harlequins by just 16 points to 9, you'd have got good odds on Gloucester scoring a try scoring bonus point.

However, a frenetic final nine minutes saw Gloucester pour forward, roared on furiously by an ecstatic home crowd, and secured said bonus point via Ruan Ackermann's try to send their supporters home happy.

The five points saw the Cherry and Whites leapfrog Sale Sharks and move back into the top six of the Premiership table and the automatic qualification spots for next season's Champions Cup.

It was a deserved win for Johan Ackermann's side, who had dominated possession and territory from the off without ever being able to reflect their superiority on the scoreboard.

In fact, it looked like being a tense finish as has so often been the case in Gloucester's games this season. But, thankfully, the Cherry and Whites spared the collective blood pressure of their supporters and put this one to bed before the final play of the game.

It had all started so well as Mark Atkinson's flat pass sent Billy Twelvetrees steaming through and the centre put Callum Braley over for the game's first try.

The game then became a tale of constant Gloucester attacks, but a combination of dogged Quins defence and inaccuracy in scoring positions by the home side meant that penalties from Twelvetrees and Marcus Smith left the half time score at 13-9.

Twelvetrees added his third penalty on 46 minutes, but the Kingsholm crowd started to experience a mixture of frustration and apprehension as the second half ticked by with Gloucester just one score clear.

But, on 71 minutes, a superb long pass from Atkinson found



**THE COMPETITION IS SO TIGHT AND EVERY POINT IS VITAL SO THAT CLOSING TRY WAS MASSIVE, ESPECIALLY AS MISSED KICKS IN OUR LAST FIXTURE AGAINST NEWCASTLE COST US. HOPEFULLY THIS WILL SOFTEN THE BLOW.**

**WE NEEDED TO SCORE ANOTHER TRY IN THE SECOND HALF TO GIVE US SOME BREATHING SPACE BUT EVERY FORWARD WHO CAME ON MADE A DIFFERENCE. OUR DECISION-MAKING IN THE BACK-LINE WAS MUCH BETTER BUT WE LOST A BIT OF PATIENCE AT TIMES.**



HEAD COACH JOHAN ACKERMANN

a flying Henry Trinder and the winger sucked in the defence beautifully before offloading to Jason Woodward to score.

Woodward was heavily involved in the build-up to the third try, which was well finished by Jake Polledri but it seemed as though the fourth try would elude Gloucester with little time left on the clock.

Ed Slater nicked lineout ball though to get Gloucester moving again, and some indiscipline from Quins allowed the Cherry and Whites to kick a penalty into the corner with only seconds left.

The catch and drive was well executed as 14,000 voices cheered on the Cherry and Whites and it was Ruan Ackermann who claimed the crucial score to complete the job on the day.







# GLOUCESTER RUGBY **33-12** NEWCASTLE FALCONS

**TRIES:**

Tom Marshall, Motu Matu'u, Billy Burns, Ben Vellacott

**CONVERSIONS:**

Billy Twelvetrees (2)

**PENALTIES:**

Billy Twelvetrees (3)

**DATE:** Fri 20th Apr 18

**KO:** 19:45

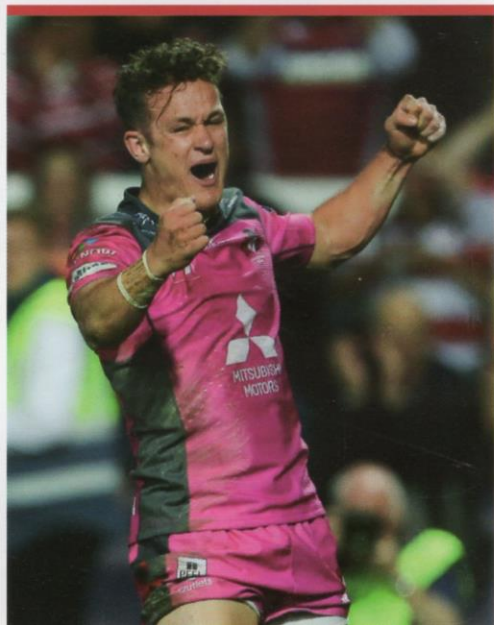
**TRIES:**

Scott Lawson (2)

**CONVERSIONS:**

Joel Hodgson

**ACTION REPLAY**



**U**p against an opponent who had already beaten them twice this season, including in the Premiership at Kingsholm, Gloucester didn't choke on the night and saw off Newcastle to book a place in this season's European Rugby Challenge Cup final.

It was only a few weeks previously that Newcastle took advantage of the efforts of the Gloucester ground staff to launch a smash and grab raid, and take four precious Aviva Premiership points back to the North-East.

And the visitors hinted briefly that they might be about to gate crash the Gloucester party in this European Rugby Challenge Cup semi-final before the Cherry and Whites took control and dominated the game.

The performance was based on a mighty effort up front from the Gloucester pack. Johan Ackermann had made five changes to his pack from the week before, and it worked like a charm as his forwards bossed proceedings.

Ironically, the only joy the Falcons got on the night was from two catch and drive tries. Those apart, they struggled to make a dent in a well organised Gloucester defence.

The Kingsholm crowd also more than played its part. There may only have been 10,587 in the stadium on an all-pay occasion, but they made it seem like a full house such was the noise they made.

It's not quite 'all roads lead to Bilbao' just yet, Gloucester have a couple of important Aviva Premiership games to come yet and Ackermann will have his team well motivated for those.

Scott Lawson, coming up against one of his former clubs, gave the Falcons an early lead and Gloucester took a little while to hit their straps. When they did, it was worth waiting for, Woodward making a great break and putting Marshall over.

The Cherry and Whites then took control. Twelvetrees slotted a penalty, before the home team dominated territory and scored a key second on the stroke of half-time, Matu'u scoring from a catch and drive.

Billy Burns took a Marshall offload to sprint home and open up some daylight, but Lawson scored a similar try to his first to make it interesting. However, Twelvetrees knocked over two penalties to settle things down.

Gloucester were now made to work hard in defence as Newcastle gambled, and a Ludlow turnover paved the way for a long-range counter attack to finish with Vellacott scampering home and sealing the victory.



**FIRST OF ALL WE GAVE THEM A START THAT PROBABLY COULD'VE GIVEN THEM A LOT OF CONFIDENCE, WITH THE MISTAKES WE MADE WE COULDN'T GET OUT OF OUR HALF.**

**BUT WE STARTED TO HOLD ONTO THE BALL, GOT A BIT OF MOMENTUM WITH THE FORWARDS AND OUR SCRUM STARTED TO DOMINATE. WE GET OUR PASSING ACCURATE SO WE CAN RELEASE OUR OUTSIDE BACKS, AND THAT WAS QUITE DANGEROUS.**

**HOPEFULLY OUR SUPPORTERS HAVE A NICE TRIP LINED UP BECAUSE THEY WERE EXTREMELY VOCAL AND I MUST SAY THAT HAD A MASSIVE INFLUENCE.**

**HEAD COACH JOHAN ACKERMANN**



# TEAM LINE-UPS



SATURDAY 28 APRIL // AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY // ROUND 21

T P C D				POSITION				T P C D				
				JASON WOODWARD	15	FULL BACK	15	JAMES WILSON				
				TOM MARSHALL	14	RIGHT WING	14	MATT BANAHAN				
				BILLY TWELVETREES	13	OUTSIDE CENTRE	13	MAX CLARK				
				MARK ATKINSON	12	INSIDE CENTRE	12	BEN TAPUAI				
				HENRY TRINDER	11	LEFT WING	11	ALED BREW				
				BILLY BURNS	10	FLY-HALF	10	RHYS PRIESTLAND				
				CALLUM BRALEY	9	SCRUM-HALF	9	KAHN FOTUALI'I				
				JOSH HOHNECK	1	LOOSEHEAD PROP	1	BENO OBANO				
				JAMES HANSON	2	HOOKER	2	TOM DUNN				
				JOHN AFOA	3	TIGHTHEAD PROP	3	SHAUN KNIGHT				
				ED SLATER (C)	4	LOCK	4	CHARLIE EWELS (C)				
				MARIANO GALARZA	5	LOCK	5	ELLIOTT STOOKE				
				JAKE POLLEDRI	6	BLINDSIDE FLANKER	6	TOM ELLIS				
				LEWIS LUDLOW	7	OPENSIDE FLANKER	7	FRANCOIS LOUW				
				BEN MORGAN	8	NUMBER 8	8	TAULUPE FALETAU				
REPLACEMENTS				REPLACEMENTS								
				MOTU MATU'U	16		16	JACK WALKER				
				PADDY MCALLISTER	17		17	LUCAS NOGUERA				
				FRASER BALMAIN	18		18	VICTOR DELMAS				
				TOM SAVAGE	19		19	JAMES PHILLIPS				
				RUAN ACKERMANN	20		20	PAUL GRANT				
				BEN VELLACOTT	21		21	MAX GREEN				
				ANDY SYMONS	22		22	FREDDIE BURNS				
				DAVID HALAIFONUA	23		23	TOM HOMER				

#### MATCH OFFICIALS

##### REFEREE

Wayne Barnes

##### ASSISTANT REFEREES

Peter Allan & Simon McConnell

##### TMO

Rowan Kitt

##### CITING COMMISSIONER

Paul Hull