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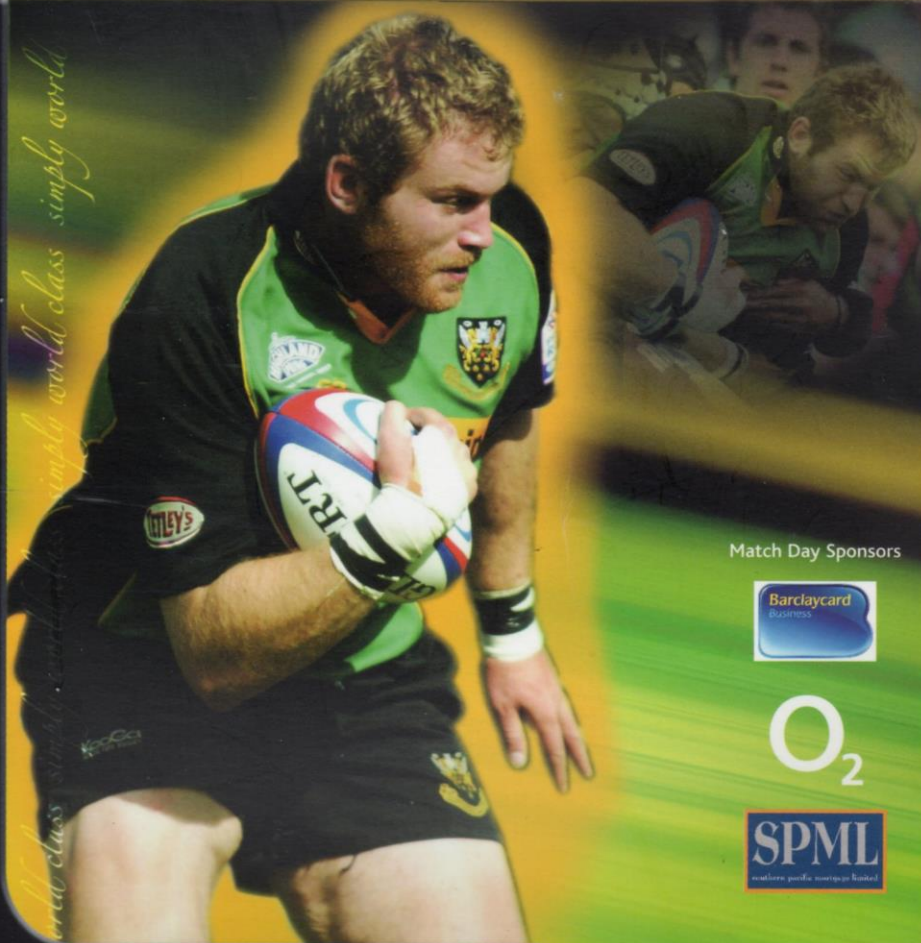
REVIEW

PREMIER RUGBY
PROGRAMME OF THE YEAR 2003/04

PRICE £2.60 NORTHAMPTON SAINTS OFFICIAL MATCH DAY PROGRAMME



Travis Perkins



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SAINTS v GLOUCESTER

SATURDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2004 KICK OFF 2.45PM
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THE TIMES



GLOUCESTER

Two wins from the opening two Zurich Premiership games see Gloucester sit just behind the Saints in the early-season table.

After a strong defensive performance against Leeds at Headingley two weeks ago, Gloucester opened their home account with a win against London Irish last Saturday in front of a record Premiership crowd of 11,265 for the Kingsholm club.



The 23-16 win over the Exiles, that continued the team's 100 per cent record, saw a slow start with the Irish taking an early 10-0 lead.

But a determined Gloucester team battled back through the forwards with tries from Olivier Azam and Jake Boer in the first half.



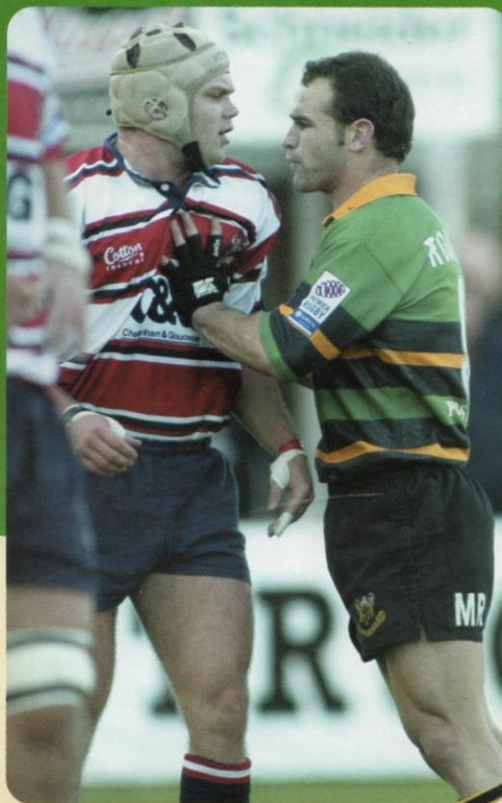
The second period saw Duncan McRae play a tactical game in the difficult weather conditions, and Gloucester took control in terms of possession and territory.

A superbly worked final try that started from a 20-metre Chris Fortey break, was finished off by open-side Andy Hazell to secure the four points.

As well as the well-deserved win, the London Irish clash also saw the opening of the impressive new 3,000 capacity Buildbase Stand at Kingsholm.

The new facility has increased the capacity at Kingsholm from 11,000 to 13,000, and offers a host of new facilities for supporters including bars, a new shop and toilets.

The two wins against Leeds and London Irish have offered Gloucester the chance to improve on last season's fourth place finish and Heineken Cup quarter-final place.



Prior to the new campaign's kick-off, the Kingsholm camp saw a good pre-season following the arrival of former All Blacks fitness expert Mike Anthony.

The Kiwi conditioning expert was working the Gloucester players hard from the beginning of July, and the pre-season fixture card saw some rich rewards with a 100 per cent record.

Gloucester defeated national division one side Coventry 48-0 in the opener, including a hat-trick of tries from James Forrester.

Welsh giants Llanelli Scarlets were next up, and a well-organised performance from Nigel Melville's men saw them run out 28-6 winners at Kingsholm.

The West Country club then welcomed Italian Heineken Cup side Calvisano to Kingsholm, and Gloucester ran out 37-7 winners.

Throughout the pre-season Gloucester's new signings settled in well, and during the warm-up games, as well as the sevens tournaments, saw some impressive performances from Adam Balding, James Bailey and Terry Sigley.

Joining these three are a number of new lads to the Cherry and White shirt. James Parkes signed from Saracens, Nathan Mauger from Super 12 side the Crusaders, Olivier Azam returned from Montferrand, and Gary Powell signed from Leeds Tykes.

Nigel Melville also signed South Africa's World Cup loose-head prop Christo Bezuidenhout. The 6ft 4ins, 19-stone front row man will team up with Gloucester in late September after completing his Currie Cup commitments.

Off-the-field, as well as the new Buildbase Stand, season ticket sales have also increased. The club has currently sold 7,100 season tickets for the new 2004/05 season – a 600 increase on last year's 6,500 total.

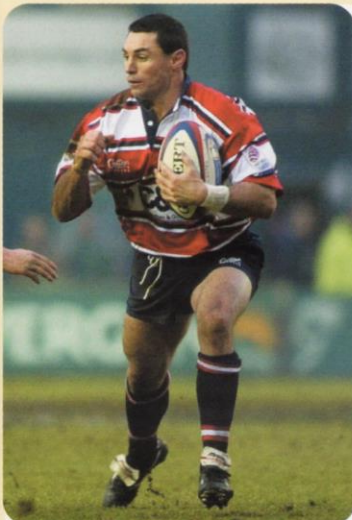
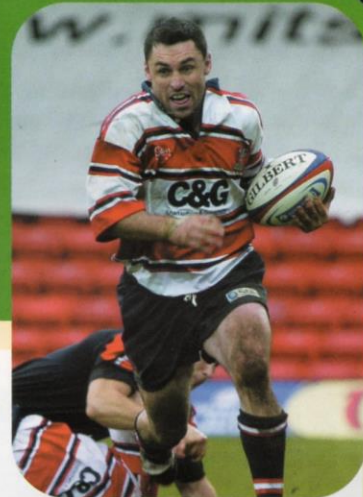
TODAY'S OPPONENTS



DANGER MAN

DUNCAN McRAE

Position: Fly-half
Date of Birth: 27/09/74
Height: 1.72m
Weight: 81kg
Previous Clubs: NSW Waratahs and Saracens
International honours: Australia A
Gloucester debut: Harlequins v Gloucester, 18 October, 2003.
Did you know? Duncan McRae is good friends with Northampton's new Aussie centre Marc Stcherbina



It's not just on the field that the former South Wales Waratah's man has found his feet though. His young family have settled in Cheltenham, and last week the 29-year-old admitted he cannot see himself turning out for another club as long as he plays the game.

"I think there's no better place to play than down at Kingsholm," he said. "My family is settled, and we have bought a place and really enjoy the lifestyle. If you are happy off the field, it does help your game."

With two wins from two for both Gloucester and Northampton, McRae is well aware of the importance of an early-season winning run

He admits that Gloucester, the Saints, and the other sides currently at the top of the table, should aim to follow the example set by Bath last autumn.

"Bath learned to win the close games last season. In every close game they would come out on top," said McRae.

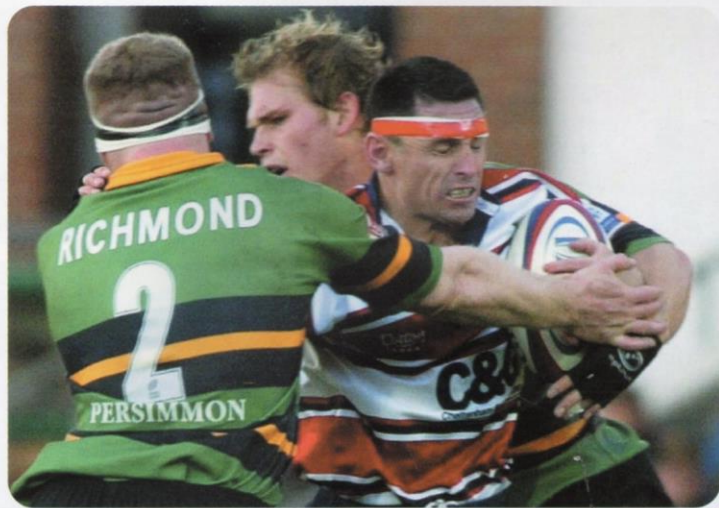
"Winning is a habit, as well as losing, and I think Bath found the winning habit early last season. Hopefully we can do that now."

Since McRae's arrival in the West Country, the Aussie fly-half has become a key player for Gloucester.

The 29-year-old made his debut for the West Country club in the 16-0 win over Harlequins at the Stoop in October last season.

Since his first appearance, the half-back axis with England number nine Andy Gomarsall has become one of the best in the Premiership.

Coupled with inside centre Henry Paul, the 9, 10, 12 combination has pulled the strings behind a strong forwards pack for the last 12 months.



SAINTS



GLOUCESTER

15 BRUCE REIHANA
14 John Rudd
13 Mark Tucker
12 Marc Stcherbina
11 BEN COHEN
10 PAUL GRAYSON
9 Johnny Howard
1 TOM SMITH
2 STEVE THOMPSON
3 ROBBIE KEMPSON
4 SELBORNE BOOME
5 Damien Browne
6 ANDREW BLOWERS
7 CORNE KRIGE (c)
8 Grant Seely

REPLACEMENTS

16 Dan Richmond
17 Chris Budgen
18 Matt Lord
19 Darren Fox
20 Ben Jones
21 Shane Drahm
22 Wylie Human

International players in CAPITALS

Jon Goodridge 15
Marcel Garvey 14
TERRY FANOLUA 13
HENRY PAUL 12
JAMES SIMPSON-DANIEL 11
Duncan McRae 10
ANDY GOMARSALL 9
Terry Sigley 1
OLIVIER AZAM 2
Gary Powell 3
Peter Buxton 4
Alex Brown 5
Adam Balding 6
(c) Jake Boer 7
James Forrester 8

REPLACEMENTS

Chris Fortey 16
Nick Wood 17
Simon Emms 18
Adam Eustace 19
Andy Hazell 20
Alex Page 21
James Bailey 22

International players in CAPITALS

REFEREE Steve Lander

TOUCH JUDGES Ashley Reay & David Broadwell