

# Saints Review

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## SAINTS v GLOUCESTER

Saturday 11th March 2006 Kick off 3pm GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP



[www.guinnesspremierhip.com](http://www.guinnesspremierhip.com)



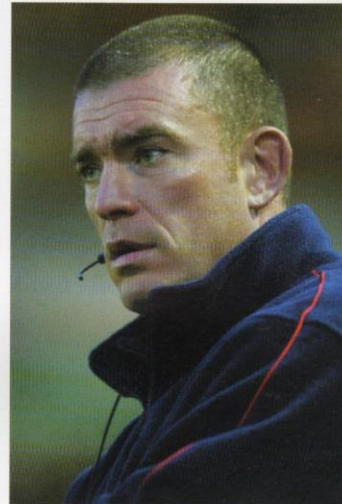
# today's opponents

It's never dull at Kingsholm. Home defeats against London Irish and Bath in recent weeks have sandwiched victories over Leicester and Newcastle, so knowing exactly what Gloucester vintage will turn up at Franklin's Gardens this afternoon is anyone's guess.

But there is something about the beautifully manicured turf in this part of the Midlands that has a habit of bringing out the best in Dean Ryan's squad. Always competitive, always direct and never beaten, Gloucester are currently third in the Guinness Premiership, despite a topsy-turvy last few weeks.

"I think there have been instances when we have not performed like a top three team," Ryan said. "I don't mean that in any disrespectful way whatsoever, but we are developing and learning what we want to be as a side and that does always mean we produce the level of performance that marks us down as a top three side.

"But there have been a number of factors I have been extremely pleased about this season but sometimes we need to problem solve better when we find ourselves in a situation that is difficult. The London Irish game exposed that but we are learning all the time and that is great to see,



particularly with the high number of young players we have in the squad.

"When we don't carry out our plans well enough, like the Irish game, we struggle. It's never nice to lose at home and we have to undo that damage by getting another victory on the road again."

Gloucester have been steady if unspectacular in parts this season. Injuries to key individuals such as Phil Vickery, Jake Boer, Olivier Azam and Olly Morgan, plus a raft of international call-ups, have slightly dulled their momentum but they are within touching distance of returning to the Heineken Cup next season.

Ryan has already begun re-shaping his squad ahead of next term.

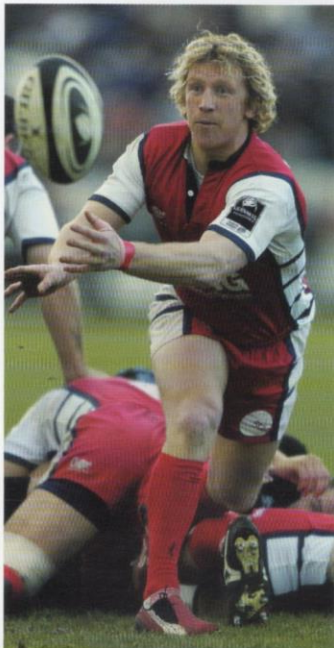


By Alastair Downey  
**Gloucester**

Italian national captain and second row Marco Bortolami is a major piece of the jigsaw and recently joined the club alongside his national colleague, prop Carlos Nieto.

They clearly emphasise where Gloucester want to be next season, while Rory Lawson, a Scotland U21s international, will provide competition at scrum-half for Peter Richards and Haydn Thomas. More signings will follow as Gloucester build a squad capable of challenging at the top end of the European game, but this afternoon it is domestic points at stake.

As well as aiming for a place in the Guinness Premiership play-offs,



Gloucester, like Northampton, have made it through to the knockout stages of the European Challenge Cup. After progressing with an unblemished record in the pool stages, a piece of silverware is now on the horizon and that will be incentive enough when the French come to town in April.

Next month they host Brive at Kingsholm in the quarter-finals and suddenly a piece of silverware looms on the horizon.

But this afternoon, the likes of Andy Hazell, Alex Brown, Peter Richards, Terry Fanolua and James Simpson-Daniel have the task of stopping the Saints and Carlos Spencer doing yet more damage at home in what should be an entertaining, full-on and typically robust dose of Premiership action.

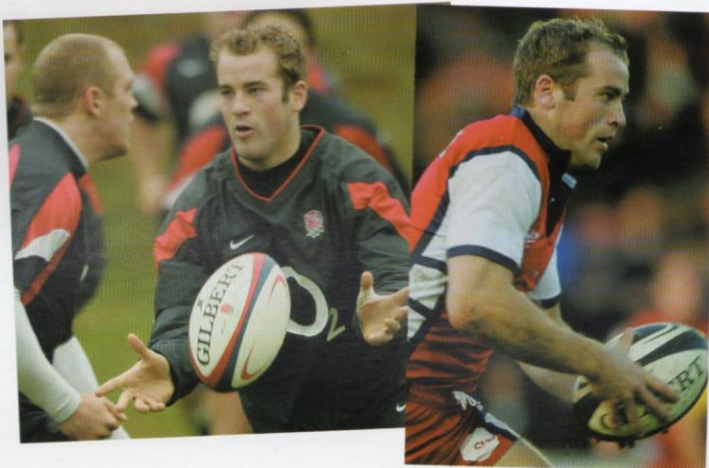




# ones to watch

**T**he ones to watch this weekend are teetering on the edge of England glory and many would argue should be in the starting XV against France tomorrow. With the midfield question continuing to dog Andy Robinson's team since the autumn internationals, many rugby supporters believe the answer lies with the electric talent of James Simpson-Daniel. And others reckon Alex Brown should be allowed to break up that Bath partnership of Borthwick and Grewcock. Maybe unluckily for Saints, they are in cherry and white today.

Brown signed for Gloucester in the summer of 2003 from West Country



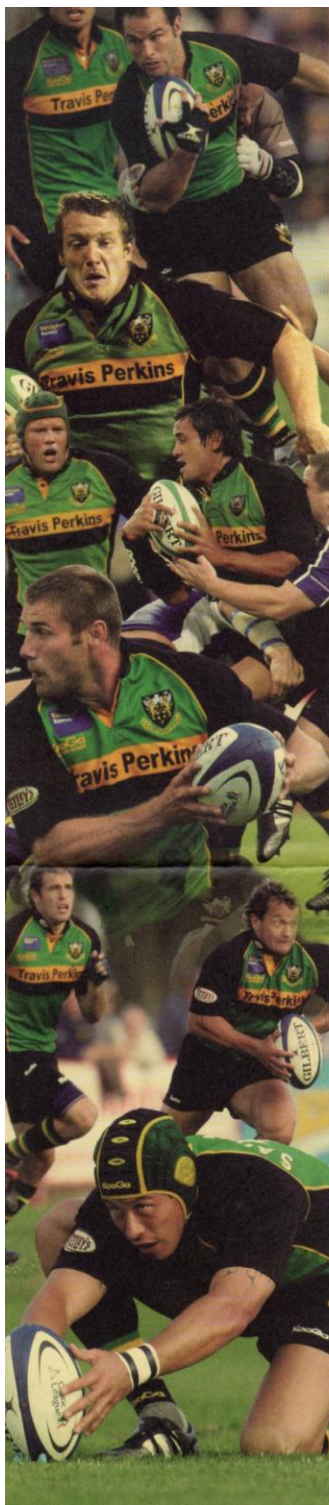
rivals Bristol Shoguns. The England 'A' international topped the lineout statistics charts during the 2003/04 season, and was voted the Players' Player of the Year. Brown was selected for the Churchill Cup team to tour North America during the summer of 2004 but was surprisingly omitted from England's Elite Player Squad this season despite being one of the best lineout practitioners in the country. His favourite position is in the middle of the lineout, where he controls Gloucester's operation. Brown has also remodeled himself into one of the most effective defenders in the business and was included in the England squad for the 2005 autumn internationals. He has made 16 appearances this season and scored one try.

Director of rugby Budge Pountney said: "Alex is great in the lineout and every year gets better around the field. He is really putting pressure on the second rows in the senior England set-up."

Simpson-Daniel has also made 16 appearances for Gloucester this

season but scored 12 tries! Sinbad, as he is known, joined Gloucester from Sedbergh School and has established himself as one of the game's biggest talents. His Gloucester debut was against Rotherham in 2001 when he scored a superb individual try. The wingman has gone on to make an impression at England level after a great performance against Jonah Lomu when he faced the Barbarians in May 2002. His first England try came against Italy in the Six Nations in 2003 and he played in the opening game against New Zealand on the tour of 2004.

A member of the summer England squad that won the Churchill Cup, Simpson-Daniel is one of the most electric finishers in the Premiership. He burst onto the scene with a hat-trick against Bath. He has suffered with injury and illness but on his day the most dangerous open field runner in the squad. Head coach Paul Grayson said: "James Simpson-Daniel has game-breaking ability and can't be far from an England spot."



# NORTHAMPTON SAINTS TEAM SHEET



## Saints v Gloucester Saturday, March 11, 2006 GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP

### Saints

15 James Pritchard  
14 John Rudd  
13 Jon Clarke  
12 David Quinlan  
11 Bruce Reihana (capt)  
10 Carlos Spencer  
9 Mark Robinson  
1 Tom Smith  
2 Dan Richmond  
3 Pat Barnard  
4 Damien Browne  
5 David Gerard  
6 Paul Tupai  
7 Sam Harding  
8 Mark Easter

### Replacements

16 Chris Budgen  
17 Simon Emms  
18 Matt Lord  
19 Darren Fox  
20 Ben Jones  
21 Paul Diggin  
22 Robbie Kydd

### Gloucester

15 Jon Goodridge  
14 James Bailey  
13 Terry Fanolua  
12 Brad Davies  
11 Mark Foster  
10 Ludovic Mercier  
9 Peter Richards  
1 Nick Wood  
2 Rob Elloway  
3 Terry Sigley  
4 Jonathon Pendlebury  
5 Alex Brown  
6 Peter Buxton (capt)  
7 Andy Hazel  
8 Luke Narraway

16 James Parkes  
17 Jack Forster  
18 Adam Eustace  
19 James Forrester  
20 Haydn Thomas  
21 Marcel Garvey  
22 Rob Thirlby

Ref: Dave Pearson

TJs: Peter Huckle & Paul Emerson