

The Official Matchday Programme of Gloucester Rugby

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Gloucester Rugby



Gloucester Rugby
v Saracens
SARACENS 04.11.06 17.45



Marco Bortolami

Leader of the pack

Anthony Allen

Ready to face the All Blacks

Mickey Booth

Was he Gloucester's greatest scrum-half? He joins the Hall of Fame

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Denis Betts

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Captain's Corner

"I think **Saracens** are one of the most under-rated teams in the Guinness Premiership. They have many wonderful players and when they get it right can be **difficult to stop.**"



I AM NOT going to pretend otherwise – these notes were very difficult for me to write this week.

Our dressing room was a pretty quiet and reflective place last Saturday – there were some beaten up bodies and badly dented pride as we heard Agen's celebrations in the away dressing room.

It is not something any of us want to experience very often in our Gloucester careers. Losing at home is a bad feeling but it was made even worse because of the

magnitude of the occasion in the Heineken Cup.

Our team is young – I am a young captain – and we must learn the lessons of last weekend and become a better side for the experience.

Sometimes, it is easy to forget we are a developing team at the very early stages of our lives together and that as time progresses, we will only get better.

Today, I ask you to get right behind our team. We all need

to hear encouragement from the stands and the terraces, particularly when things are not going how we want them to on the field.

We will learn from our mistakes last weekend – I think we tried too hard to do well – and were beaten by a very competitive and physical team.

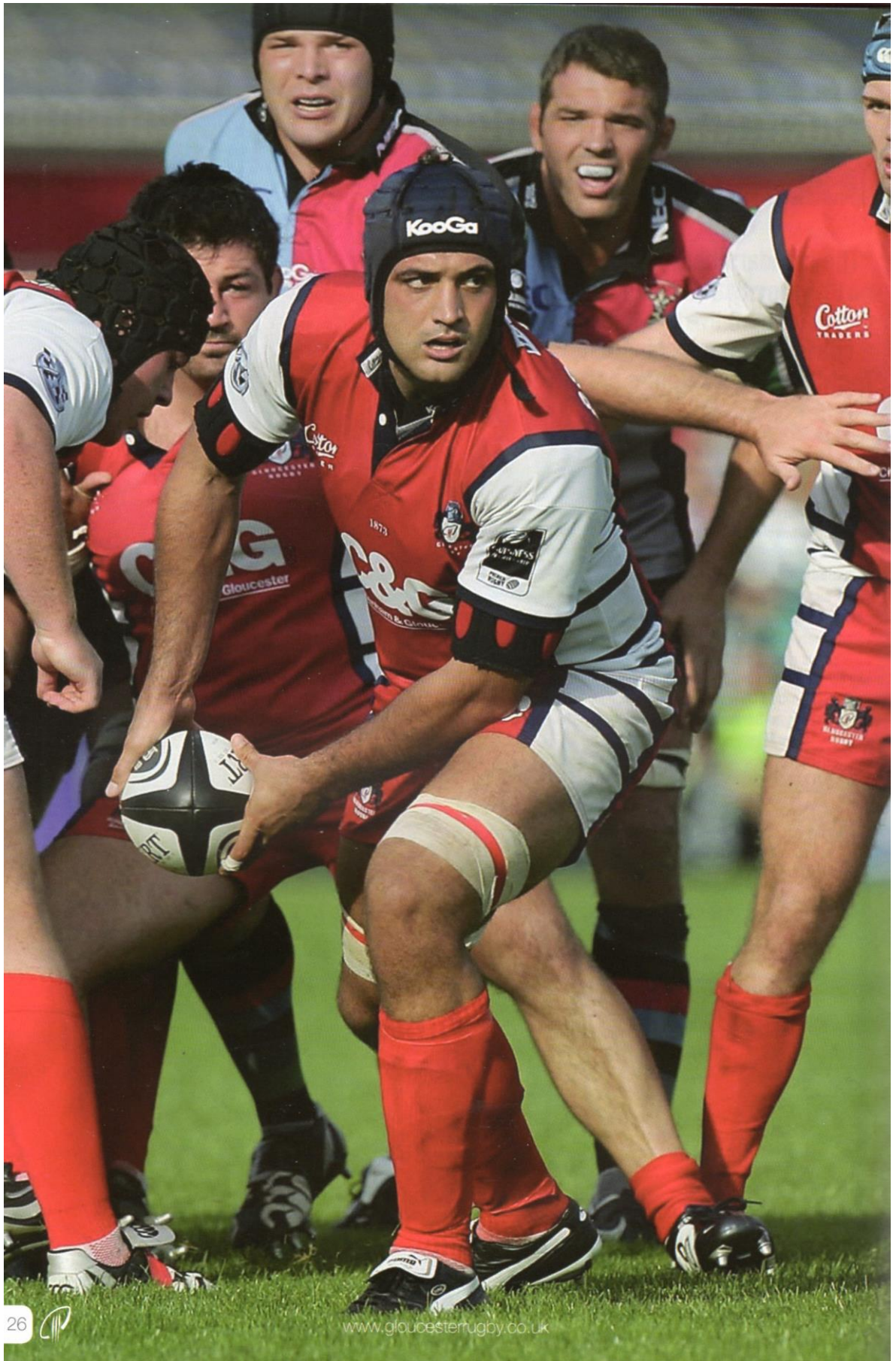
This afternoon it will be my first experience of Kingsholm under floodlights and I cannot wait for the occasion. I have heard the atmosphere can be intimidating and noisy and

we need that backing against a very good team.

I think Saracens are one of the most under-rated teams in the Guinness Premiership. They have many wonderful players and when they get it right can be difficult to stop.

But it is important to remember that we are unbeaten in the Premiership so far and we are desperate to keep that run of form going. We know it is vital to win at home in every competition and are desperate to do so today.





Leader of the pack



Player Interview

Marco Bortolami, the Italian national captain, has already enhanced his reputation since his move to England. Today he tells the matchday programme about his developing love affair with Gloucester and the honour he feels at captaining the club.

IT USED TO be taken for granted that Gloucester forwards were born within the sound of the city's cathedral bells before serving a brutal baptism of fire at the sharp end of a zillion inter-city rucks that decreed survival of the fittest was determined by who could take the biggest shoeing.

Marco Bortolami on the other hand was born within walking distance of the Cappella Scrovegni in Padova – with not a scrum, line-out or punch-up in sight.

But he has landed with a considerable bump at Castle Grim, the notoriously confrontation alter of rough-house forward play, to lead the latest Gloucester vintage through the choppy waters of the Guinness Premiership and Heineken Cup.

Those who knew nothing about this international forward were soon cheering him from the rafters. He led his new team to an opening day victory over Bath – trading blows with two of the fiercest second row opponents in the country – and has become a totem of excellence ever since thanks to his on-field maturity, leadership qualities and consistency.

So, has the English game been everything he has expected and what does he see for the future?

"The level of organisation and professionalism at the club is something I was not expecting," he said this week. "We have an environment here between the players and the coaches that is very special and that is something not easy to create.

"We are encouraged to find the solutions to everything, talk as a group and contribute towards our project together and in that way it is run like an international team.

"Everyone gives 100% in everything we do. I was used to a huge level of professionalism with the Italian team under John Kirwan and it was a big surprise to find it the same in Gloucester, but it is wonderful."

Managing expectation is nothing new to the 25-year-old. He skipped his country at the age of 21 – an almost improbably young age these days – and has consequently handled the burdens of leadership and the growing awareness of the sport in his own country superbly.

"I think my experiences with Italy helped me manage the expectation when I came to England," he said. "I came respecting the other players and the staff but the coaches had confidence in me and that was very important.

05



Marco's Stats

Position: Lock

Height: 6'6"

Weight: 17st 2lb

DOB: 12.06.80

"For me, I am working in the best environment. I am someone who needs to push themselves every single day. I don't just want to sit in the corner to do my job because then I do not try and become the best.

"We saw on Saturday that Agen are a very good team even though they are in the middle of the French league. But the difference is that day in, day out, the preparation is much better in England and that is what I find impressive.

"The best teams in France – Toulouse and Stade Francais are very, very good but the day to day work is not of the same quality and for me this is very important."

Bortolami is hot property. He is a developing athlete and is a natural with the captain's armband on. Pound for pound, line-out for line-out, scrum for scrum, he is one of the signings of the season.

He says he shares the captaincy responsibility on the field with four or five other decision makers but it is always Bortolami who roams to query decisions with referees, leads from the front and generally prowls around like a man comfortable in his surroundings.

"When you are under pressure you need the support of other players and that is why other people around me take responsibility but it is a big challenge and a great pleasure to be captain."

Head coach Dean Ryan identified him as an individual he wanted to be part of his new-look squad, targeted his signing before last Christmas and sealed the deal before many other potential suitors could table a bid. It was smart business.

"Marco was not just touted around by an agent, we went after him because we felt he fitted everything we were looking for," Ryan said. "He is a fantastic individual and to have the option to sign a player of his international quality was something very important to us."

"We have already seen him develop significantly, he provides us with outstanding leadership qualities and I am sure he will only get better."

Gloucester face Saracens tonight still unbeaten in the Guinness Premiership and in the top three but come into the game on the back of two Heineken Cup defeats to Leinster and Agen that leaves them struggling to progress from their pool.

But Bortolami is able to bring his experiences of French rugby – he signed for Gloucester from Narbonne – to England. It is that mix of experiences which is so crucial and is adamant his side will be better for their defeats later in the season.

"I think we have made a very good start to the season and we are pleased – but we are all frustrated about the last two results," he said.

"People need to remember we are a young side and to gain more experience we have to learn lessons on the pitch last weekend – it is all about our developing process.

"It is impossible to become a good side without feeling these disappointments. I think by the time we get back into the Heineken Cup in December we will have already learnt some of these lessons and be a better team.

"At the moment we don't have very good players like James Simpson-Daniel and Mike Tindall who also have a high level of experience in these games."

Bortolami is still learning too – but he is invigorated by the Premiership and its detail. "I love the English mentality," he said. "In England, everything is done properly – in life and rugby – and that to me is very important."



“When you are under pressure you need the support of other players and that is why other people around me take responsibility but it is a big challenge and a great pleasure to be captain.”



Ryan's Review

Gloucester face **Saracens** tonight after two defeats in the **Heineken Cup**. Here, head coach **Dean Ryan** reviews all the latest action.



It is impossible to avoid the fall-out from last weekend's game against Agen. Afterwards, you were very pointed in the way you described the progression of this squad, why was that?

DR: To me, the expectation on this group of players is ahead of where they are in reality at the present time. I can

understand how that has happened because we have some potentially outstanding individuals. I believe, as a club we have handled these guys very well – both on and off the field, we've done a pretty good job keeping people's feet on the ground.

Others have done a pretty good job in creating the myth that now surrounds them and there is a need to return to some common sense.

I have always believed I'm working with the right group of players and it's up to everyone here to support them. This is such a young side, a side lacking in physicality, a side with a lot to learn. I am not avoiding anything - that's the reality with this group of players, at this stage in their development.



Saturday's result will have been the first time a number of them have experienced such a defeat at Kingsholm, how do you build them up again?

DR: We are dealing with learning curves and career progressions of young men and it would be utterly foolish not to expect set-backs from time to time. It is my job, along with the other coaches, to put in place a framework these players can learn from.

They can then take their own individualism into that framework but they must have that to work from. These guys have the backing of everyone and it is inevitable that their confidence will take a knock after such a defeat in a major competition. It is our job to build it up again.

But it is about education as much as building confidence. We have some of the most talented individuals in the Premiership and I am not prepared to jump away from that because of one or two defeats. I said last week that we would not know about these individuals for 18 or 24 months and nothing has changed my mind on that.





“Our Premiership form is good – I think it is easy to forget we are unbeaten so far – and we want to continue that form.”



Agen have now won two games in the pool but edinburgh's defeat of leinster keeps the group alive doesn't it?

DR: There is no getting away from the fact you need to win your home matches in every competition to be competitive. We want to establish a proud Kingsholm record and have done well in that respect but Saturday was a dent in what we are trying to create.

Our group is exceptionally tight. At this stage, I don't think many people would have expected Agen at the top and Gloucester at the bottom. We have obviously given ourselves a huge task if we intend to qualify.

But the Heineken Cup is capable of producing some remarkable rugby and some equally enthralling results which means anything is possible. We appreciate we will need to win our remaining four matches, two of which are away, but by the time rounds three and four arrive we will have more experience to call upon and be a better side for the experiences.



We are entering a month of Premiership activity when you could be without a number of senior players because of international duty, is this when the depth of the squad is tested most?

DR: Last season I think we identified that during the autumn and Six Nations international periods; the momentum we built up beforehand was badly effected and we struggled to regain it.

I think we have taken steps to ensure it doesn't happen to the same degree this season. There is bound to be some obvious disruption because of the sheer number of players we operate without during the week, but we have a very competitive squad and some of these guys are desperate for an opportunity.

Our recruitment policy was designed to handle these periods. We will also have players coming back from injury during this stage of the season and I am confident the depth in the squad is strong enough.



Saracens won at Kingsholm in pre-season. they are unpredictable and talented, it's a big game this afternoon?

DR: I think it's a huge game and we obviously want to see some sort of reaction from last weekend. Our Premiership form is good – I think it is easy to forget we are unbeaten so far – and we want to continue that form.

Saracens are a very good side, really resourcefully coached by Alan Gaffney, who has built up a great deal of experience in Ireland, and they are capable of slaying a side when playing well.

They stuck 50-odd points on Bath in their last Premiership match so will be full of confidence. We are aware how important this



game is for us and are desperate to do well, particularly in front of our supporters.

**Gloucester
RUGBY**



Saracens

	Willie WALKER	15	Full Back	15	Dan SCARBROUGH	
	James BAILEY	14	Right Wing	14	Kameli RATUVOU	
	Jack ADAMS	13	Centre	13	Kevin SORRELL	
	Rudi KEIL	12	Centre	12	Ben JOHNSTON	
	James SIMPSON-DANIEL	11	Left Wing	11	Tevita VAIKONA	
	Ryan LAMB	10	Fly Half	10	Glen JACKSON	
	Rory LAWSON	9	Scrum Half	9	Neil DE KOCK	
	Nick WOOD	1	Prop	1	Kevin YATES	
	Mefin DAVIES	2	Hooker	2	Fabio ONGARO	
	Carlos NIETO	3	Prop	3	Cobus VISAGIE	
	Adam EUSTACE	4	Lock	4	Tom RYDER	
	© Marco BORTOLAMI	5	Lock	5	Simon RAIWALUI ©	
	Peter BUXTON	6	Flanker	6	Hugh VYVYAN	
	Jake BOER	7	Flanker	7	David SEYMOUR	
	Luke NARRAWAY	8	No 8	8	Ben SKIRVING	

Replacements

	Olivier AZAM	16	Substitute 1	16	Shane BYRNE	
	Patrice COLLAZO	17	Substitute 2	17	Aaron LIFFCHAK	
	Jonathan PENDLEBURY	18	Substitute 3	18	Iain FULLARTON	
	Adam BALDING	19	Substitute 4	19	Kris CHESNEY	
	Ludovic MERCIER	20	Substitute 5	20	Alan DICKENS	
	Haydn THOMAS	21	Substitute 6	21	Andy FARRELL	
	Rob THIRLBY	22	Substitute 7	22	Rodd PENNEY	



Shooting Star

At the age of 20, Gloucester's quicksilver young centre Anthony Allen is to be thrown in at the deep end as England confront the favourites to win next year's World Cup. Chris Hewett asked him about it

SOMEWHERE inside the 20-year-old mind of Anthony Allen, the Gloucester centre who will make his England debut against the All Blacks tomorrow in front of the biggest crowd ever to attend a Test match at Twickenham, there is a molecule of self-doubt. There must be. Human nature insists on it. The fact that no one knows where to find this tiny little temperamental flaw - not Dean Ryan, the director of rugby at Kingsholm; not Andy Robinson, the national coach; not Allen himself - suggests that on Sunday the best team in the world may also struggle to locate it.

The All Blacks are not renowned for their innate generosity of spirit, and if they detect so much as a smidgen of a weakness in the new boy's competitive make-up they will set about their victim like a pack of hyenas around a carcass. Daniel Carter will ghost his way past him, leaving him holding nothing more substantial than a handful of thin air; Aaron Mauger will string him along like a high-class conman operating a foolproof scam; Jerry Collins will cut him in half with one of his South Sea Specials, and then rub what is left of his nose in the south-west London mud.

Even if Allen holds himself together with his customary aplomb, he will get the treatment. In fact, the better he plays the more "attention" he will receive.

"It is," he conceded this week, "a daunting prospect. But at the same time, it's incredibly exciting. Will I be nervous? Yes, I expect so. I'm nervous

before every game I play." So is there really no difference between facing the representatives of the greatest rugby nation on earth on a red-letter day for the newly completed Twickenham and turning out against, say, Newcastle on a damp autumn day in the Cotswolds? "I don't know much about the New Zealanders, to be honest with you - I'm hoping to pick up some information from our video sessions over the next couple of days," he replied unshakeably. I suppose you could say that if I know little about them, they'll know even less about me. Which could work to my advantage, thinking about it." There is cool, there is ice-cold, and there is polar. Allen fits into the latter category.

This time last year, he was just another hopeful making his way in the Gloucester academy, along with his good friends Olly Morgan, Jack Adams and Ryan Lamb. Adams was recovering from serious injury at the time, but the others were working themselves to a frazzle trying to catch the eye of Ryan and his colleagues in the coaching hierarchy. After a scratchy run of performances, the three fit youngsters were given their head at Premiership level and promptly set the tournament ablaze with their adventurous running from all points of the compass. Largely through their efforts, the Cherry and Whites qualified for this season's Heineken Cup twice over by finishing fifth in the domestic league - a far better return than had looked likely at Christmas - and winning the European Challenge Cup.



Player Interview

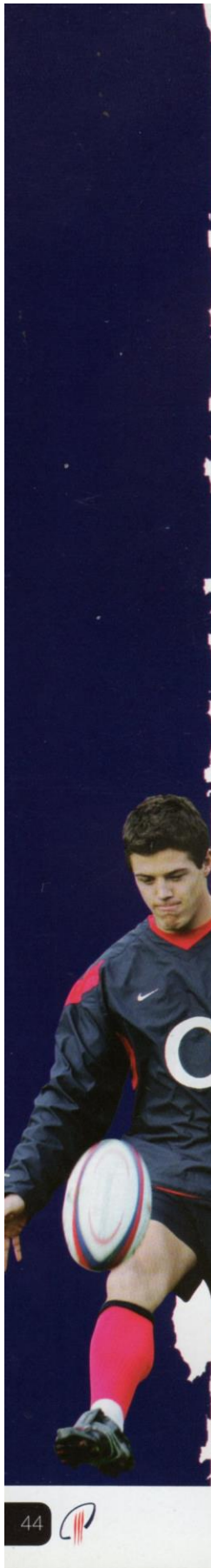
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Anthony's Stats

Position: Centre
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 14st 3lb
DOB: 01.09.86





Allen has become a fixture in the starting line-up, yet he has made only 23 senior appearances, four of them off the bench. What is more, his real education in grown-up rugby began only 11 days ago, when he found himself facing Gordon D'Arcy and Brian O'Driscoll, the state-of-the-art Irish midfielders, in a big Heineken Cup match in Dublin. D'Arcy ran through the Gloucester boys inside 90 seconds, and treated them to some home truths as he jogged back to the halfway line. Welcome to the big time, sonny.

"Yes, they had a bit to say for themselves," Allen said. "The nice thing was that we put a try past them almost immediately and gave them a few words back. That was very satisfying."

It must have been an eye-opener, even so; after all, O'Driscoll is a once-in-a-lifetime opponent. "It was very demanding, yes. When you find yourself up against people of that class, the things you lose are time and space. Your decisions have to be made very quickly, and they have to be right."

Having played his way into the England frame by impressing at last month's Loughborough University training camps - "I was surprised to be invited, just as

I was surprised to break into the Gloucester team," he admitted - and then giving the two celebrated Leinstern a dose of their own smart-arsery, he needed one last eye-catching performance to force his way into first-cap territory. This, he duly delivered, on a day when Lamb, Adams and, to a slightly lesser extent, Morgan, fell apart under the pressure inflicted by the powerful Agen backs. Allen put two tries past the Frenchmen from the back end of nowhere to keep his outclassed side at the races. Under the circumstances, it was an astonishing effort.

Afterwards, Ryan praised the youngster for his physical resilience, his technical mastery, the depth of his

concentration and the maturity of his decision-making. It seems the Big Bad Wolf of English rugby has developed a liking for the lad. Has Allen never fallen out with him, never been told his fortune in some dark corner of Castle Grim? "I make it my business not to fall out with Dean," he said. "I try to stay on his right side."

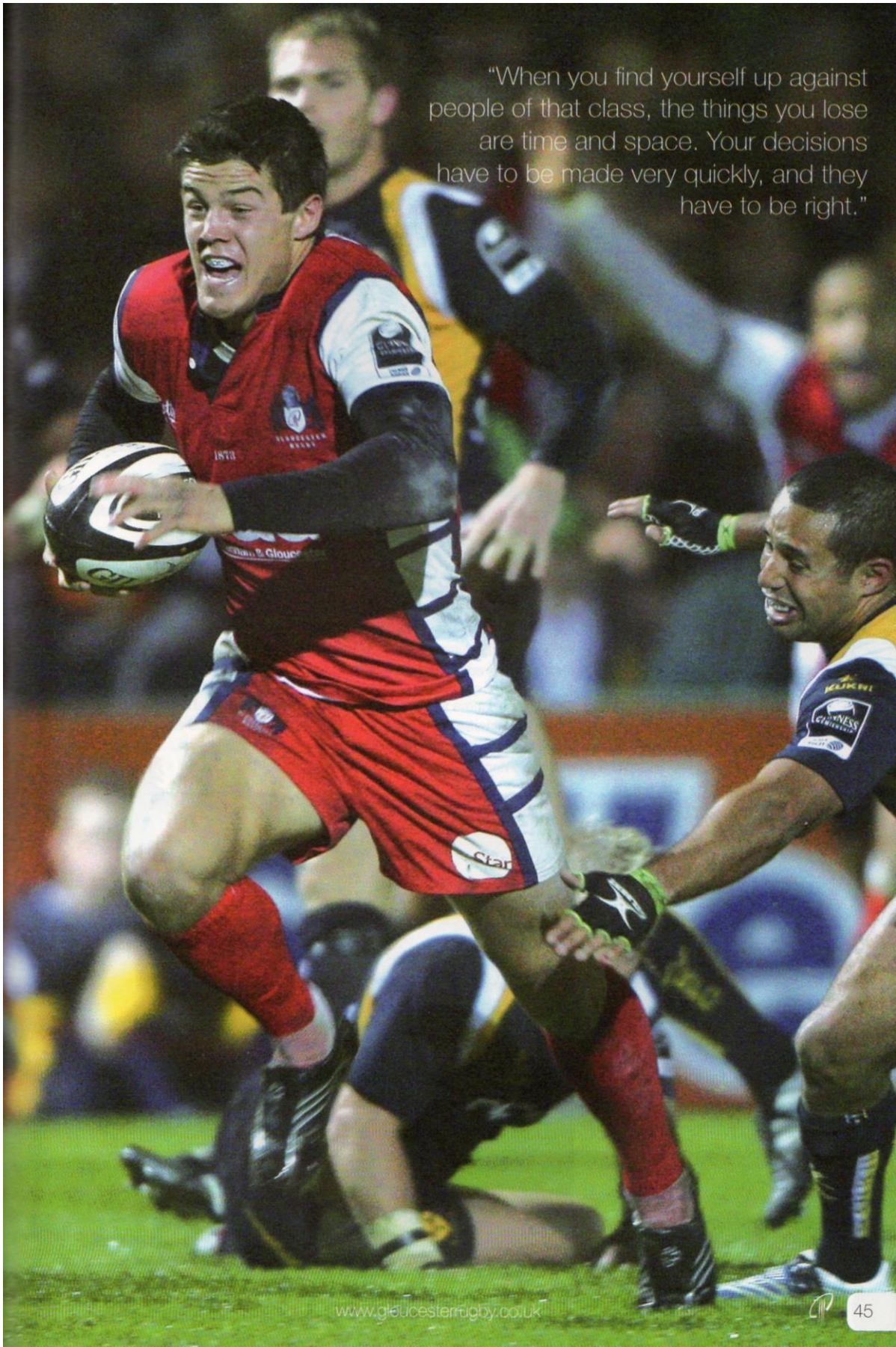
Gloucester were lucky to sign him. While studying at Millfield School, the world-renowned sporting institution in Somerset from where he won England age-group honours, Allen linked up with Harlequins, where his father managed the under-19 team. The Londoners thought they had an uncut diamond in sweaty palm, but when they slid towards relegation in the spring of 2005, they saw him disappear through their fingers. "My dad's not there either," he said. "He's involved in Hampshire rugby nowadays."

According to Robinson, the newcomer is not backwards in coming forwards on the communication front. "When he first came to us at Loughborough, we were struck by the way he got out there in the middle of it all and drove it forward, the way he commanded it," the coach said yesterday. "Every time we trained up there, he played his part in running things. It was just what we were looking for in terms of our midfield. Add to that the fact that he's the form centre in the country, and you can see why we've picked him. If he goes on the field with the confidence he's shown recently, particularly in difficult games over the last couple of weeks, he'll be fine."

Seriously? Will he really be fine when the All Blacks crouch low to the ground, eyes glaring and tongues shooting venomously from their lips, for the haka - maybe the traditional "ka mate" rendition, maybe the new one that ends with forefingers being drawn stiletto-like across their throats? "I've played them at age-group level a couple of times and I think I've faced both versions," Allen said, calmly. "To be honest, I reckon my mind will be on the game."



"When you find yourself up against people of that class, the things you lose are time and space. Your decisions have to be made very quickly, and they have to be right."



Match Action

Time line

1 mins	
Lamb PEN	3-0
8 mins	
Lamb PEN	6-0
10 mins	
Mignardi TRY,	6-5
17 mins	
Lamb pen	9-5
19 mins	
Van Niekerk TRY, Miguel CON	9-12
22 mins	
Miguel PEN	9-15
35 mins	
Allen TRY	14-15
45 mins	
Souzae TRY, Miguel CON	14-22
54 mins	
Stoltz TRY, Miguel CON	14-29
66 mins	
Allen TRY, Walker CON	21-29
71 mins	
Azam TRY	26-29
74 mins	
Gelez DROP-GOAL	26-32

Gloucester Line-up

15	Olly Morgan	
14	James Bailey	
13	Jack Adams	
12	Anthony Allen	(2t)
11	Iain Balshaw	
10	Ryan Lamb	(3p)
9	Peter Richards	
1	Christian Califano	
2	Mefin Davies	
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Jonathan Pendlebury	
5	Marco Bortolami	(capt)
6	Peter Buxton	
7	Jake Boer	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Olivier Azam	(1t) (M. Davies)
17	Patrice Collazo	(Califano)
18	Adam Eustace	(Pendlebury)
19	Adam Balding	(Boer)
20	Rory Lawson	(Richards)
21	Willie Walker	(1c) (Morgan)
22	Rudi Keil	(Adams)

Gloucester Rugby
SU Agen

26
32



French Fried

Saturday, October 28

Ref: M. Changleng (Sco) Att: 10,134

GLOUCESTER'S Heineken Cup hopes were dealt a major blow last weekend when Agen claimed a fully deserved bonus-point victory at Kingsholm.

Following their defeat against Leinster, Gloucester intended to bounce back against the French side but came up against a fierce physical bombardment that leaves them with only one point from two matches.

Gloucester did move into a 6-0 lead thanks to two Ryan Lamb penalties but once Arnaud Mignardi finished off a brilliant move involving Rupeini Caucaunibuca, Manu

Ahotaeiloa and Dave Vainqueur down the right, Agen always looked comfortable.

They scored again after 19 minutes when Caucaunibuca ran back to create room and from a series of short phases, prop Pieter van Niekerk scored from close range to open up a 15-9 lead.

However, Gloucester did battle back through the powerful carries of Jake Boer and some good work by Peter Buxton for





Anthony Allen to use all his qualities to reach the line under real pressure.

If that was to inspire a Gloucester rally, it never came. Agen, through the efforts of number eight Thomas Soucaze and the rest of his pack, took a firm grip on the contest and it was Soucaze who scored the third try when he romped home through midfield.

Agen were totally in control now and when they used off the top line-out ball after 54 minutes, Caucaunibuca launched himself through midfield with a lovely break and

replacement Conrad Stoltz finished a brilliant move with the bonus point score.

Gloucester were 29-14 behind now but raised themselves in a dramatic finish. First, Olivier Azam's turnover set in motion a move that allowed Allen to grab his second try of the match with a terrific finish and then Azam himself was bundled over from a line-out to leave them only three points adrift at 29-26.

But Francois Gelez sealed a famous Agen win with a 74th minute drop-goal that sunk Kingsholm hearts.

Man of the Match...

Anthony Allen



Centre Anthony Allen built on his performance against Leinster with an outstanding two-try performance against Agen.

Coaches Comment...

Dean Ryan



"If we were not staying in these games, I'd think I was working with the wrong group of players. I believe I'm working with the right group and it's up to everyone here to support them. This is such a young side, a side lacking in physicality, a side with a lot to learn. We're missing a lot of experience - That's the reality,"





Peter Arnold

It has been a **steep learning curve** amongst Europe's elite for **Gloucester** in the last fortnight but **Peter Arnold**, whose glass is always half-full, looks at the **positives at Kingsholm**.

FAMILY AFFAIR?

WE NEVER like to lose, of course, and it's a real bummer when we come second at Kingsholm. There were those ill-informed among us who thought we only had to turn up to beat Agen, and that the whole thing was a bit of a doddle.

Having done a bit of research beforehand, I never shared that view, and I know that the Gloucester players and management didn't either.

It's easy to forget that sides playing in the Heineken Cup are, theoretically at any rate, the best performing teams in their respective countries. It would also be true to say that the outfits who do well in the competition tend to be the ones who feature in it year in and year out. Toulouse, Munster, Stade – you can name them as well as I can.

Perhaps our performances in the Guinness Premiership have tended to give

us a rose-tinted view of the situation. By and large, if we face a side in our domestic competition we have a fair idea what we are in for. The players, most of the time, have come up against each other on previous occasions, and can make a pretty good guess at their strengths and weaknesses.

Just occasionally, a new talent arrives on the scene and takes everyone by surprise: our own Ryan Lamb is a case in point, but most players don't come as anything new to the opposition. The whole thing is becoming something of a family affair.

You could make much the same argument about the officials. Everyone gets to know the refs, and have a fair idea of their foibles and how they like to control things.

Then, we suddenly take the big step up into the Heineken Cup and everything changes. The opposition is obviously stronger, but it isn't so much that their players are necessarily better than ours man for man. They're just different; probably have a different philosophy about things, and different coaching

methods. The whole ball game changes. Stay in the competition for a few seasons, learn how things go, and the whole thing becomes, if not easier, at least something that can be coped with.

Having missed out last season, we're virtual infants in European rugby. But I'm sure that will change as time goes on.

SO NOW WE KNOW – OR DO WE?

FIVE players in the England squad for the Autumn Internationals! So now we know just who we're going to have to do without over that period. Or do we? Andy Robinson has announced that he might well add names to his list as the series progresses, and made a point that some players have only just returned from injury. That certainly leaves the door open for Mike Tindall, and quite possibly Ryan Lamb.

It also begs the question about Olly Morgan who hasn't actually had much game time this season, in fact, at the time of writing, I'm under the impression that he's had less than young Ryan.

He deserves his inclusion, as do all the others. Anthony Allen has certainly revealed his qualities in his 22 matches, and has impressed everyone, including Brian O'Driscoll, who knows a few things about centre play if anyone does.

The qualities that Pete Richards, Iain Balshaw and James Forrester bring to the party are well known and it isn't really any surprise that they have been included. Robinson has also said that he doesn't intend that anyone will play in every match, and that implies that everyone will get a cap somewhere along the line, if only from the bench.



Ryan Lamb





Celebrations v Agen

“It’s easy to forget that sides playing in the **Heineken Cup** are, theoretically at any rate, the **best performing** teams in their **respective countries**...”

That is to be welcomed, because there’s nothing more infuriating for we humble supporters to see some of our best performers snatched away from us, only to make up the numbers on match days.

I can’t help feeling, however, that the full-back situation is a bit unfortunate for us. Of our three leading contenders for the spot – Balshaw, Morgan and Goodridge – two have been snaffed by England, and one, again at the time of writing, is away on loan. Of course, Ludo Mercier has proved a respectable replacement in the past, and one mustn’t forget Willie Walker, who I’m told, has played at No. 15 in a previous incarnation.

Interesting times, my masters, but at least we do now seem to have the strength in depth to cope with the situations. Or perhaps it’s tempting providence to say that.

WAITING IN THE WINGS

OF COURSE, that might not be the end of the story. James Simpson-Daniel and Alex Brown are both recovering nicely, and might be waiting in the wings for further international honours. After missing almost all of last season through injury, Jack Adams has surely done enough this time round to warrant close attention by the national selectors. And I’m not even going to think about the Andy Hazell scandal.

Then there’s the front row situation. The old cliché says that you don’t know very much about the dark and mysterious world of the prop forward before you reach the age of 30, by which standards Jack Forster, who has enormous potential, is a mewling infant.

Even so, to be forced to include a 34-year-old in his first England squad would seem to argue that the selectors don’t see much up-and-coming talent in those most demanding of disciplines.

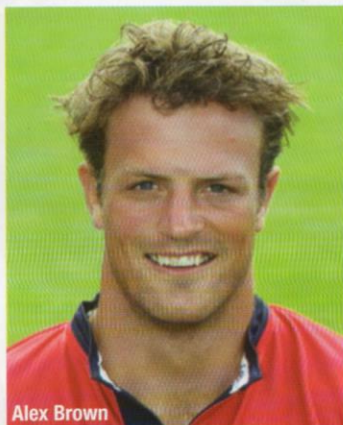
There’s hope for our old mate, Tony Windo, yet. And perhaps Andy Deacon hung up his boots a bit too soon.

PUTTING THE BOOT IN

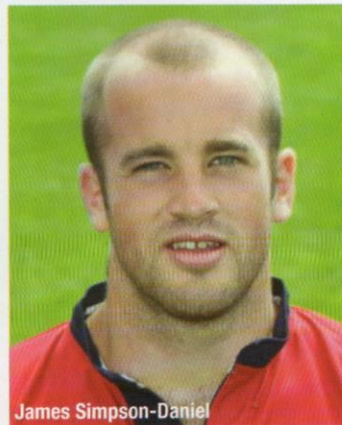
A YOUNG man of my acquaintance joined his secondary school last September. He’s now undergoing his first experience of rugby, and is thoroughly enjoying it.

His mother has her reservations however. Not because she’s afraid her offspring might get hurt, and she doesn’t really mind washing his kit.

She does complain, however, about cleaning his boots. Really, I don’t know what the youth of today is coming to. To ask my mum to clean the mud off my clodhoppers would have invited a swift clip round the ear’ole.



Alex Brown



James Simpson-Daniel

Hall of Fame...



“He had the proud privilege of captaining Gloucester in three seasons - 1962-1963, 1964-1965 and 1965-1966 and was a proud member of the club's 1971-1972 team that won the inaugural RFU National Knockout Competition.”

minute changes to the team or schedule. This was time when the Welsh clubs dominated the fixture list with Cardiff, Bridgend, Swansea, Aberavon and Newport, all eagerly anticipated visitors to Kingsholm.

That admired scribe, Nico Craven, once described Mickey Booth: 'as a one man exhibition of arts and crafts'. Few would disagree with Nico's description. Where is Booth today? Well, if you cast your eyes to the main grandstand you will see the effervescent former scrum-half taking his regular seat. He has never lost his love of the game of rugby union and supports the club home and away, visiting some of the exotic locations thrown up on the club's European ventures.

For those of you who actually witnessed Mickey in his playing days, many still regard him as the finest scrum-half the club has produced.

David King



Fan Zone

with Bob Fenton

Gloucester have been involved in some crucial games against **Saracens** down the years and **Bob Fenton** turns back the clock to remember two of them

I THOUGHT I would return to the theme of what I consider to be significant matches of recent vintage and look back on a bit of a special game against Saracens.

It's not hard to pick the most important game that has ever taken place between the two clubs – the relegation do-or-die tussle in 1995 (I think). Remember that one, in the early stages of professional rugby, this match was to decide who stayed up and who went down.

The loser would undoubtedly be consigned to oblivion while the winner went on to greater glory in the brave new professional world.

Saracens were one of a couple of clubs

that had just got their big money backer and were already talking about new recruits and a new home, Gloucester was just Gloucester. Richard Hill had taken over the reins but apart from that there was very little change to be seen.

Tom Walkinshaw and the import of foreign stars was a distant blip on the horizon and the team was largely made up of lads from local teams.

This was a horrible game to watch, there was far too much at stake and to be honest I don't remember too much about it apart from the nervous tension that was rife throughout the crowd and the massive surge of relief at the final whistle. As it was Gloucester came home the winners by the narrowest of margins - Saracens

finished bottom of the pile and waited for the relegation trap door to open.

Except it didn't. Professional rugby arrived and all sorts of jiggery pokery took place, suffice to say the then north London club remained in the top flight where they have stayed ever since.

Instead of looking back at that game, I want to spend a few minutes reminiscing about the Powergen Cup encounter that took place at Kingsholm on Saturday 25th January, 2003. Why this one, well to put it into context you have to go a bit further back in time – not much further, just seven days, in fact.

Saturday 18th January, 2003. Recognise the date? No... let me remind you. That

"Delpert, looking much happier at full-back than the wing, hit the line at pace, took the ball and almost made it to the line with less than a minute on the clock."



Thinus Delpert & James Simpson-Daniel v Saracens - Powergen Cup



James Forrester v Saracens

was the day when it all went pear-shaped at Thomond Park. That was the day we should have secured a berth in the knock out stages of the Heineken Cup.

That was the day when we saw our side comprehensively outfought, thoroughly beaten and left a shambling, demoralised team by a rampant Munster side.

So seven days later and we were at home to face Saracens with a huge question mark over what sort of performance the team would produce.

The side was re-jigged for the match – Thinus Delpont went from wing to full back, Henry Paul – not due to play after a torrid game the previous weekend – was a late replacement for the injured Robert Todd in the centre. Phil Vickery failed a fitness test and Rodrigo Roncero took his shirt.

For reasons best known to themselves, Saracens decided to rest a few of their new stars. The likes of Thomas Casteignède and Andy Goode were missing from the squad and England stalwart Richard Hill spent most of the game on the replacements bench.

It's fair to say that the team ran out to one of the most muted responses I have every witnessed at Kingsholm. Some people were still shell-shocked at the experience of the previous weekend, others tried to muster the familiar Kingsholm roar that greets a Gloucester side as it runs out.

It didn't take long before Gloucester showed they meant business. Delpont, looking much happier at full-back than the wing, hit the line at pace, took the ball and almost made it to the line with less than a minute on the clock.

There was a very brief respite and with just over two minutes on the clock the Sarries defence cracked and James Forrester crossed for the first of his brace of tries. Five minutes later it was Delpont heading over the line having chased a long clearance kick after the Gloucester defence ripped the ball away from a Saracens attacker. Unsurprisingly both tries came as a direct result of some industrious work from the effervescent Andy Hazell.

Henry Paul then broke clear with the visitors defence not up to his elusive running. Henry did then what Henry had a

habit of doing – he dropped the ball when it would have been easier to score.

Sarries staged a mini revival, Tim Horan chipped cleverly over Tom Beim and beat the Gloucester winger to the ball to score and Nicky Little then added a penalty to close the gap. A Ludovic Mercier penalty



Richard Haughton

Fan Zone...

pushed Gloucester further ahead, then Terry Fanolua rounded prop Mike Storey to score. Minutes later the fourth try and Delpoit's second came after Sinbad set off on a typical darting run before putting his full-back in the clear.

After half-time the game started to have a bit of a party feel about it. The Saracens pack was being shunted about at will and seemed to have no answer to the power of the Gloucester eight. At one point Olly Azam and Kris Chesney had a bit of a set to, the fracas ended with Azam ripping off Chesney's scrum cap and setting off down the pitch with it perched on the top of his head like some sort of bizarre hunting trophy.

Reality was restored when Tom Shanklin blasted his way through some pretty wayward tackling to score, this prompted a rapid response from the home side who launched a slick move with the James boys – Forrester and Simpson-Daniel – at its heart. Andy Gomarsall was the lucky recipient of the final scoring pass.

The much-vaunted 'pod system' then delivered a couple of tries, first Roncero was in the right place to score a poacher's try, then Adam Eustace benefited from Terry Fanolua's magic.

Saracens' sevens star Richard Haughton showed he was not only the proud owner of the dodgiest haircut seen at Kingsholm since Richard Tombs departed, but also the quickest pair of heels when he sprinted down the wing to score.

The last name on the try list though was the same as the first – Forrester. Again together with his young gun winger Simpson-Daniel he ripped a path through the battered visiting defence to score his second and Gloucester's eighth try of the afternoon.

So it finished 51–17 at the final whistle – an emphatic performance to lift the doldrums



Thinus Delpoit

For the record, the teams on the day were:

GLOUCESTER: Delpoit; Simpson-Daniel, Fanolua, Paul, Beim; Mercier (Amor, 74), Gomarsall (Stuart-Smith, 79); Roncero (Molloy, 76), Azam (Fortey, 65), Deacon, Eustace (Fidler, 67), Cornwell, Boer (capt), Hazell (Buxton, 77), Forrester.

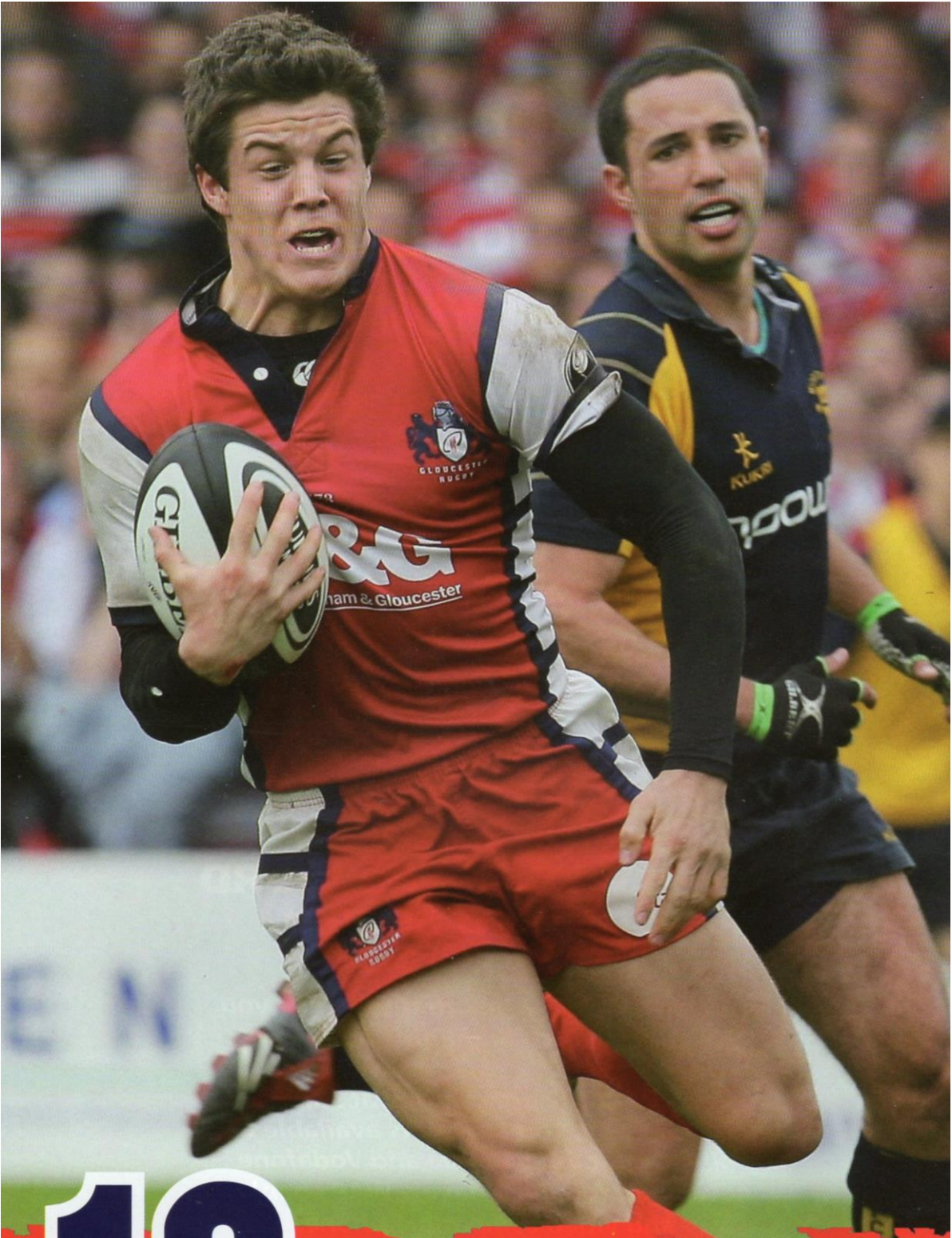
SARACENS: Winnan; Shanklin, Johnston (Haughton, 50), Horan, O'Mahony; Little, Bracken (capt; Kirton, h-t); Storey (Croal, 67), R Russell (Parkes, 73), Marsters, Hooper, Yandell (Skirving, 61), B Russell (Hill, 61), Roques, Chesney.

The same scoreline today would be nice...

from the previous week and to put us into the cup semi-final against Leicester at Franklin's Gardens.

Of course the memories of Thomond Park could not be lifted by one game, but it's worthwhile putting that particular game

into the context of the 2002/03 season. Sure it put us out of the Heineken Cup, but less than four months later we sat 15 points clear at the top of the table and had already paraded the Powergen Cup around Kingsholm. Seasons don't come much better than that.



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Anthony Allen

Stats

Position: Centre • Height: 5'10"
Weight: 14st 3lb • DOB: 01.09.86

