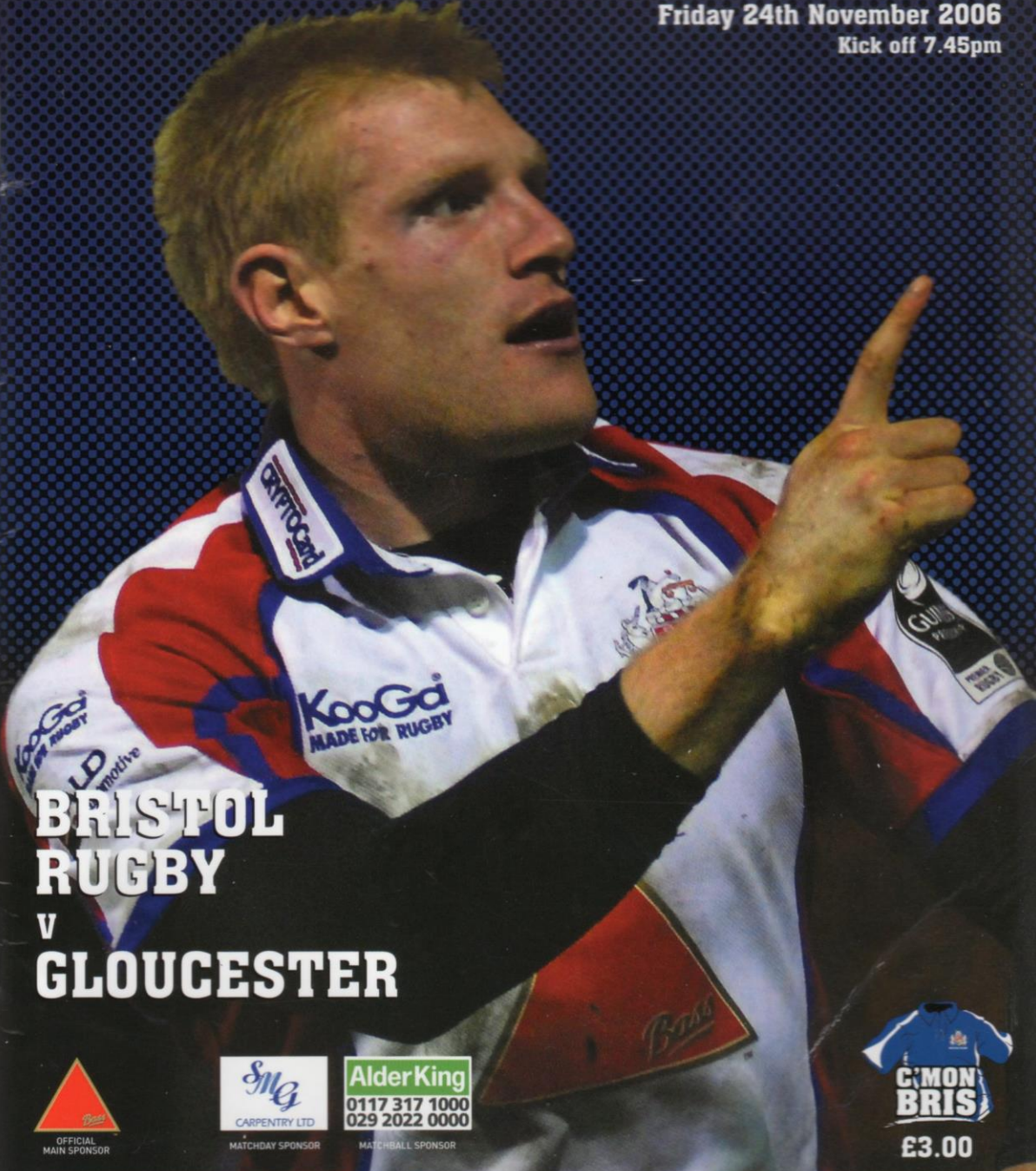


The Official Matchday Programme

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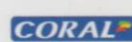
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# FOCUS ON GLOUCESTER



**THE GREATEST FACTOR ABOUT TONIGHT'S LITTLE WEST COUNTRY DUST-UP AS FAR AS SUPPORTERS OF BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTER ARE CONCERNED AT LEAST, IS THAT BATH ARE NOWHERE IN SIGHT.**

Gloucester arrive for a clash of the top two in the Guinness Premiership boasting an unbeaten record but expect one of their toughest challenges of the season to unfold at the Memorial Stadium.

The Kingsholmites have produced three vital results so far during the autumn internationals in a period of the season that dented their momentum last season and have a knack of turning it on at the Mem.

Considering they had the best part of a dozen players unavailable because of

injury and international call-ups, their desperately determined 21-12 victory over Saracens was a vital result three weeks ago.

They followed it up with an equally convincing display on the road at London Irish and then cracked a few heads against Wasps last week to earn a 27-21 victory.

Their run of three successive victories and seven in eight attempts followed on from two tortuous Heineken Cup defeats at the hands of Leinster's dazzling glitterati and the power and physicality of Agen as Dean Ryan's young and inexperienced side were dealt a number of chastening European lessons.

"I have always believed I'm working with the right group of players and it's

up to everyone here to support them," head coach Ryan said after the defeat to Agen. "This is such a young side, a side lacking in physicality, a side with a lot to learn. But in the last few weeks we have shown we are capable of learning those lessons and that has been very pleasing."

Before Europe intervened, Gloucester ended their first section of five Guinness Premiership matches with four victories and a draw.

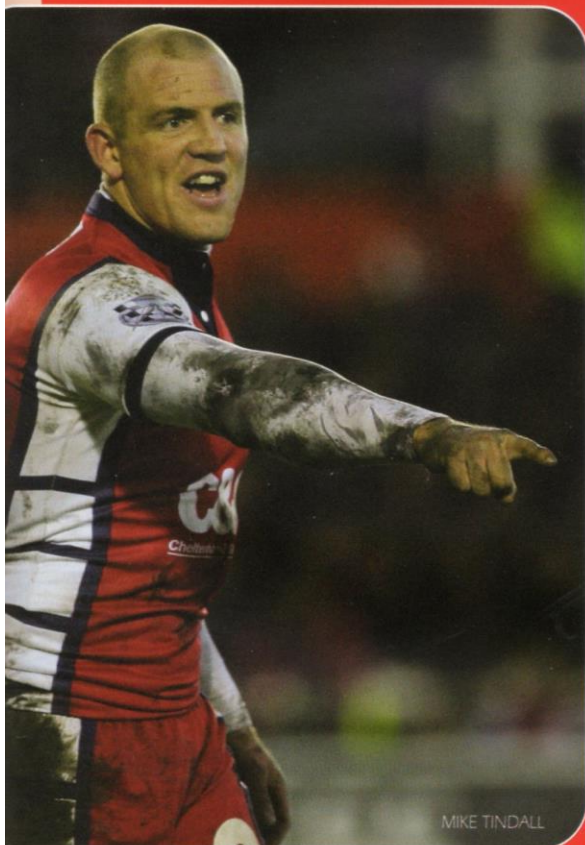
They opened their season with a west country derby victory over their nearest and dearest from Bath on the opening weekend – youngsters Jack Adams and Olly Morgan scoring the tries in their 24-19 success.

They then got the better of Harlequins at the Stoop in a far more disjointed performance that was revved up by a virtuoso performance from scrum-half Peter Richards.

It was a solid if unspectacular start for Ryan's side. The Kingsholm head coach has concocted one of the most exciting groups of players in the country, blending a mixture of youthful swagger and talent with high-quality experience in key positions.

From the beginning of the campaign they have been tagged as one of the favourites for the final stages of a number of competitions but Ryan is only too well aware that his group of players have only just begun their journey.

"Our ambition is to be at the top end of Europe but our journey has only just begun," he has said. "There will be some pain along the way but we have an exciting and developing group of players who all work tremendously hard to try and be successful."



MIKE TINDALL

## LEAGUE RECORD AGAINST GLOUCESTER:

	Home	Away	Total
Played	14	12	26
Won	6	3	9
Drawn	0	1	1
Lost	8	8	16
Points For	249	208	457
Points Agt	307	315	622

**Most Apps:** Paul Hull (11), Rob Fidler (12+1)  
**Most Pts:** Mark Tainton (63), Ludovic Mercier (94)  
**Most Tries:** Bristol - 5 players (2), James Forrester (5)  
**Most Cons:** Felipe Contepomi, Mark Tainton (6), Ludovic Mercier (16)  
**Most Pens:** Mark Tainton (15), Simon Mannix, Mark Mapletoft (15)  
**Most Drop goals:** Mark Tainton (2), Ludovic Mercier (2)

First match between the clubs played in Gloucester on 24.09.1892 with Glos winning 14-0. In total there have been 214 games between the clubs with 81 games Won, 18 Drawn and 115 Lost.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

"We are on a journey together and there is a long way to go. What has been pleasing is that we have endured a number of injuries but still progressed well. We are capable of making a number of changes and still be very competitive."

Gloucester's new-found freedom, partly orchestrated by design and partly by necessity, ended in triumph over London Irish last season in the European Shield final. But by then, the wheels were already in motion for this campaign.

Under the stewardship of Ryan and his assistants Bryan Redpath and

Denis Betts, Italian duo Marco Bortolami and Carlos Nieto joined from Narbonne and Viadana respectively in two of the highest profile signings of the close season.

Bortolami has already shown what an outstanding athlete he is and is a natural leader of growing reputation in Gloucester's pack and Nieto is regarded as one of the best tighthead props in the Six Nations.

Christian Califano, once voted in the all-time best French front row, switched from Agen and has been a revelation – offering immediate set-piece quality and a perfect learning base for youngster Jack Forster – just ask Tim Payne of Wasps.

There have been other additions too. With Ryan Lamb initially out of action with an ankle injury, Willie Walker has taken his opportunity in the number 10 shirt, while both scrum-half Rory Lawson and lock Will James have the potential to make serious impacts.

Iain Balshaw completed the summer recruitment drive from Leeds and can be deployed from either wing or full-back and scored the final of Gloucester's three tries in the 33-24 victory over Worcester. It has meant that Ryan's biggest job has been managing the vast expectation on his squad.

"There is an awful lot this squad can achieve but we must not get ahead of ourselves – we have a long way to go and a lot of development to go through," Ryan said.

# VIEW FROM THE POST



IT WAS WITH RELUCTANCE THAT ALEX BROWN HEADED OUT OF THE MEMORIAL STADIUM IN THE SUMMER OF 2003, A CASUALTY OF BRISTOL'S SECOND RELEGATION FROM THE PREMIERSHIP IN FIVE YEARS. THE LOCK, RATED AT THE TIME ONE OF THE BEST UNCAPPED PLAYERS IN THE COUNTRY, WAS NOT SHORT OF CLUBS WANTING TO ACQUIRE HIS SERVICES, AND EVENTUALLY HOOKED UP WITH DEAN RYAN AT GLOUCESTER.

And while Brown - now a fully-fledged England international - has not followed the lead of players such as Matt Salter and Darren Crompton in returning to Bristol under the solid foundation the club is now built on, he has

retained an interest in goings on at the Memorial Stadium. Whenever his Gloucester commitments have allowed, the 27-year-old has been a regular visitor to Bristol home matches, supporting his former team from the stands.

And as proud as he is to be heavily involved in the work in progress that is Gloucester's transformation from nearly men to serious contenders, Brown still has time to assess with pride what Bristol have achieved since his departure. "It's great to see Bristol winning games and playing in front of 10,000 or 11,000 people," said the Bristolian. "It makes a big change from when I was there and we were getting 4,000 or 5,000 people and losing games! But success breeds people wanting to come and watch. They get great support and they deserve it.

And even though he has been back to the Memorial Stadium many times as a spectator - and twice as a player - since leaving, Brown admits heading to the away dressing room this evening will still be a little bit strange for him. "I have been at Gloucester for a while now and some of the feeling has filtered out, but I still live in Bristol, I still keep in touch with a lot of the guys there," said Brown. "Of course it means a lot to me to go back - Bristol is my home city and playing there is always quite strange. I have played there a few times now, but it's always quite strange to go back there. It will have an effect on me, no doubt, but I am just looking forward to it now."

Gloucester's win over Wasps six days ago - along with Bristol's derby win at Bath - has set up a mouth-watering prospect this evening. And Brown says Gloucester will be full of respect for Bristol given their achievements so far this season. "It's great as an occasion - a top of the table derby live on Sky on a Friday night. You couldn't ask for any more," said Brown.

"I know Bristol are going to be mad for it - as we are. It's a big game for both of us. I don't think we are under any illusions about what Bristol are. They deserve to be where they are in the table."

By Steve Cotton

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# TEAMS

## BRISTOL RUGBY Vs GLOUCESTER



BRISTOL RUGBY

24.11.06  
Kick off 7.45pm



GLOUCESTER RUGBY

- 1** Dave Hilton
- 2** Mark Regan
- 3** Darren Crompton
- 4** Roy Winters
- 5** Gareth Llewellyn (C)
- 6** Nathan Budgett
- 7** Joe El Abd
- 8** Dan Ward-Smith
  
- 9** Brian O'Riordan
- 10** David Hill
  
- 11** David Lemi
- 12** Rob Higgitt
- 13** Neil Brew
- 14** Lee Robinson
- 15** Craig Morgan
  
- 16** David Blaney
- 17** Alex Clarke
- 18** Mariano Sambucetti
- 19** Alfie To'oala Vaeluaga
- 20** Greg Nicholls
- 21** Jason Strange
- 22** Josh Taumalolo

- PROP**
- HOOKER**
- PROP**
- LOCK**
- LOCK**
- BLINDSIDE**
- OPENSIDE**
- NO.8**
  
- SCRUM HALF**
- FLY HALF**
  
- LEFT WING**
- CENTRE**
- CENTRE**
- RIGHT WING**
- FULL BACK**
  
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**
- REPLACEMENT**

- Nick Wood 1**
- Olivier Azam 2**
- Christian Califano 3**
- Adam Eustace 4**
- Alex Brown 5**
- Peter Buxton (C) 6**
- Jake Boer 7**
- Luke Narraway 8**
  
- Haydn Thomas 9**
- Ryan Lamb 10**
  
- James Simpson-Daniel 11**
- Anthony Allen 12**
- Mike Tindall 13**
- James Bailey 14**
- Willie Walker 15**
  
- Rob Elloway 16**
- Patrice Collazo 17**
- Jonathan Pendlebury 18**
- Adam Balding 19**
- Ludovic Mercier 20**
- Jack Adams 21**
- Olly Morgan. 22**

### TODAY'S OFFICIALS

Referee - Rob Debney Reserve Referee - Roy Maybank  
Touch Judges - Paul Dix and Paul Emerson  
4th Official - Andy Weymouth Time Keeper - Matthew Peters TMO - Geoff Warren

### Final Score