

The Official Matchday Programme of Gloucester Rugby

Issue 15 • Price £3.00

Gloucester Rugby



**Gloucester Rugby
v NEC Harlequins**
17.03.07 15.00

Adam Balding

Combining rugby and business

Who was Gloucester's best captain?

Hall of Fame

Ryan's Review

Gloucester's head coach looks back at the win over Leicester

Opposition Spotlight

All you need to know about Harlequins

Stuart Abbott

The man to watch

ALSO INSIDE

Fans Zone, Match action, Community news, Peter Arnold in another bumper matchday programme.



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GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP FINAL, TWICKENHAM, 12 MAY 2007

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Captain's Corner

in association with
dair*



“There was no let up in our **desire** and in the last fortnight we have managed to **close out** a game against one of our **biggest rivals.**”

WELL, I am sure everyone would agree we achieved a huge result on Sunday and one that really gives us a great opportunity at finishing in the top four.

Any victory over Leicester is always worth its weight in gold and this one was particularly significant, coming as it did after we had gone 12 points behind against their intense physicality at the breakdown and outstanding driving maul.

But we showed tremendous

character and resolve, tried to shift them around on the hard ground and really got stuck into them. There is a willingness within this squad not to let anyone down and I really think that shone through in the second half.

There was no let up in our desire and in the last fortnight we have managed to close out a game against one of our biggest rivals.

Afterwards, I was asked by Graham Simmons from Sky whether that confirmed our place in the top four. Although it was a

fantastic result I certainly don't think it means we are certain of a play-off place.

There are still plenty of games to go and we have another massive test this afternoon against a Harlequins side who are probably one of the form teams in the country right now.

They only lost by four points at Welford Road and any team coached by Dean Richards – a true legend of the game – are going to be resourceful, streetwise, physical and

determined. It is crucial we back up our victory over Leicester with another positive performance this afternoon.

I thought the atmosphere on Sunday was one of the best this season and we need that level of vocal support again this afternoon.

The atmosphere when Peter Richards broke away and created the try for Andy Hazell was brilliant and everyone in a Gloucester shirt wants that same noise level today.

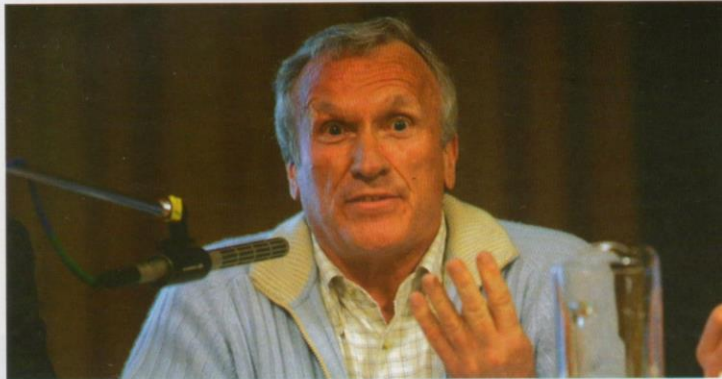


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From the Chairman



YOU may know that as a group of 12 Guinness Premiership clubs, we have been negotiating with the RFU on proposals to improve further the club and international game in England.

These negotiations have been running concurrently with the RFU's 'The Way Forward' consultation, which you also may have read about.

Ultimately, we hope to be able to reach a negotiated settlement which would take over when our current agreement expires at the end of season 2008/9.

At a Club meeting last week, we confirmed our position to the RFU; the clubs stand unanimously behind a proposal, which we believe provides the platform for a successful England team and also recognises and builds on the success of the professional Club game, particularly the Guinness Premiership.

We believe the proposal is an attractive one and is the right solution for the English game.

What is contained within our proposal?

ENGLAND SENIOR PLAYERS

A senior squad would be released to

England for 4 weeks around the autumn internationals and for 8 weeks around the Six Nations. They will therefore be 'in camp' with England for the duration of those periods. Players not required from the original squad will return each week to their clubs.

The number of international matches will be limited to eight during the season.

The structure of our Club season would be adjusted so the players were available to their Clubs for the same number of Guinness Premiership games as currently.

There would also be no England training days outside these periods, reducing the disruption for clubs.

The player's contracts would continue to be with their clubs.

THE EUROPEAN CUP

The shareholding and the votes would be primarily with the Clubs, as they play in and contribute to the value of the tournament. The Clubs can then actively develop the tournament through the next phase in its growth. The RFU would have a voting right of veto over anything which affected the International game.

The RFU does not currently accept this proposal, which is why the French clubs have withdrawn from the tournament next season and the level of participation of the other countries is yet to be confirmed.

FINANCIAL

The clubs would receive increased compensation from the RFU to allow us to increase squad sizes and develop more English-qualifying players.

The RFU and the Clubs, including the First Division, would be responsible for their own TV and sponsorship deals.

PROFESSIONAL BOARD

An essential part of our proposal and one that is now generally accepted in the game, is that a Professional Board is formed to manage rugby policy for the elite game. This would comprise the RFU, Premier Rugby, the Professional Rugby Players Association and First Division Rugby. This would ensure rugby playing decisions are driven by experienced coaches and/or former players. No one party would have an absolute majority.

CONCLUSION

It is the unanimous view of the clubs that our proposals represent a fair and balanced deal for English rugby.

The clubs continue to produce a stream of talented emerging players, like Toby Flood, Harry Ellis, Tom Rees and Shane Geraghty alongside our more experienced players, who can achieve results like last weekend's defeat of France.

We believe the system of club rugby is the unit of strength and we can again achieve success for both club and country.





Helping out to help you

If you have trouble remembering dates, don't have enough time to spend on yourself and need a little pampering, Adam Balding's new business the Complete Concierge Company will have all the answers.

HE MIGHT be better known for ploughing into tackles, anchoring the Gloucester scrum or carrying ball, but Adam Balding has joined the growing list of professional rugby players who are planning for their futures by starting a new business called the Complete Concierge Company Limited.

While fellow first-team regulars Peter Buxton and Adam Eustace undertake an electronics course at Gloscat, Balding has researched and started his own business and is delighted with the way it is going.

Although he has just undergone an Achilles operation that will rule him out for the rest of the season following a series of outstanding displays, it has allowed him to concentrate on his business.

"I want to make it quite clear that rugby is my passion and what Gloucester are trying to achieve is at the forefront of my mind and I won't let other commitments stand in my way."

"I was thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to press my claims for regular place in the starting line-up, thought I was playing pretty well at the time and then I got injured – I was really disappointed," Balding said.

"But on the plus side it gave me the chance to really focus all my time on the launch of the business and I am delighted with the way it has gone so far.

Since his debut in 2004, Balding has made 57 appearances for Gloucester and has scored four tries as a powerful, direct, fully committed number eight.

"I think Gloucester is a fantastic club and I am proud to be a part of it but I also had to think about my future away from the game and start planning for it. It is the sensible option and now it is up and running I am delighted.

"The original idea came from a chat with Leon Lloyd [of Leicester Tigers] who offers a similar type of service in the Leicester area. The company is called - The Complete Concierge Company Limited and was launched officially in February and the idea of the service is to provide that extra pair of hands to those people who never seem to have enough time in their day.

"We aim to reduce the stress in their lives, give them options for more 'me' time and to enable them to plan their lifestyle the way they would ideally like it to be. We offer a complete range of services from gift finding to organising a 'once-in-a-lifetime holiday' and everything in between."



Player Interview

08



Adam's Stats

Position: Number 8

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 17st 7lb

DOB: 7.12.79

The company is based in Cheltenham where Balding lives and will be able to cover a whole host of options throughout the county.

"If you need a plumber or are looking for a new extension to your house, we can provide a network of highly skilled professionals to undertake the work," Balding added.

"Alternatively, should you want to get away from it all, we can plan and organise your weekend break or even that round-the-world trip to celebrate a special occasion.

"On the other hand, how many of us have fallen foul of our partners by forgetting an important date or risked penalty through failure to renew certain licenses like an MOT or TV at the appropriate time?

"Well, worry no more, as CCS provide a timely reminder service to give you ample notice to get that present, send those flowers or book the car in for its annual service or MOT."

On the rugby field, Balding will be out of action for the rest of the season but will soon be able to start his recovery as Gloucester search for a play-off place in the Guinness Premiership.

"The victory over Leicester at the weekend was crucial to us and it was a great achievement – we just need to try and kick

on and earn a play-off place," he said. "The squad is playing well, the international players will be back and involved soon and we just need to build on every good result we have."

Of equal importance to Balding is his business and to help people plan and structure their lives to the best of their advantage.

"Our intention is to concentrate on a personal and elite service to people who have the capability and cash to spend, but not necessarily the time and/or inclination to plan their lives. Often the devil is in the detail and this is where we can truly take the strain.

"The principle of a concierge type service is not new and exists in number in many large cities like London and Manchester but following research it became apparent that the county of Gloucestershire, although a fertile area for this business, was devoid of any such presence, hence the introduction of CCS."

If you are one of those people who want more time for nurturing yourself and your family then don't delay, visit the website at www.thecompleteconciierge.co.uk or for more information phone us on **01242 232000**. They are waiting to hear from you and ready to help.



Ryan's Review

Gloucester's outstanding victory over **Leicester** pushed them into **second** in the **Premiership** and Head coach **Dean Ryan** looks back at a **Kingsholm classic**.



Sunday was quite an afternoon, it was a fantastic win against the Tigers?

DR: YEAH, it certainly was. I thought it was a fantastic advert for the Guinness Premiership despite the fact both teams were without their internationals. I raised the point last year and Pat Howard [Leicester coach] did on Sunday about the scheduling of

these very big matches and I do agree with it – but we were just thrilled to win a massive match in front of our own supporters.

I said in the post-match press conference that I thought it was probably as well as Leicester have played in a number of weeks and certainly for the first 40 minutes their immense physicality caused a good deal of problems.

We are aware that compared to other teams, we are not the most physical of sides but we held our own in that department and realised that we had the ability to shift them around and from the back of that manoeuvrability, the options would come for us.

Nobody can doubt we have been competitive regularly this season – even in Europe where we have fallen short occasionally – but it has been pleasing in the last two weeks we have won very close games and I think that just shows the development of this side.

It's difficult to know how crucial the victory over Leicester will be but it was one of those really big games and will do wonders for our confidence.

It keeps us going forward and the momentum bubbling away and that is vital at this stage of the season. The reaction of the players afterwards said it all – it was a massive game and a massive victory for us and we need to kick on and take advantage of that for the rest of the season.



Peter Richards was man of the match but who else impressed you?

DR: PETE'S contribution was fantastic. The conditions suited his top of the ground approach because we recognise he is a tremendous broken-field runner and his break and pass to Andy Hazell got us back in the match in the second half.

I also thought guys like Nick Wood and Jack Forster stood up





“It was a **massive game** and a **massive victory** for us and we need to kick on and take advantage of that for the rest of the season.”

tremendously well, Luke Narraway would have learnt a lot, while Andy Hazell and Peter Buxton keep producing a phenomenal level of performance.

But it was totally a team effort and that is what pleased me the most. Everybody in a Gloucester played their part on Sunday.



Off the field Dean, the club announced last friday the arrivals of two players for Edinburgh.

DR: IT IS very important we do these things in the right way and take into account and respect these players with their current employers.

I have lost count how many times I have said to people we do no conduct our business in public when players are under contract but the time was right to announce Alasdair Strokosch and Alasdair Dickinson and I think they will bring

a tremendous amount to our squad. They are young and two of the most highly thought of forwards in Scottish rugby so to be able to add them to our squad is really good news.

We obviously knew of them from our Heineken Cup matches this season and both impressed us and that European experience is another key factor in the recruitment drive.

Hopefully, there will be some more to come but we will deal with those when everybody is ready.

Gloucester announced on thursday the arrival of former Munster and Bourgoin scrum-half Mike Prendergast.



There is no rest as today we welcome Harlequins to Kingsholm. they have done exceptionally well in the last few months?

DR: THEY got stuck into us at The

Stoop back in September and had it not been for a try from Pete Richards, could have won that game.

I have been really impressed with them because they have successfully married together plenty of experience through the likes of Andre Vos, Paul Volley and Stuart Abbott with a creativity and flair that has produced some eye catching rugby.

Any team who goes to Leicester and is within a try of winning the match must be taken seriously and I think Dean Richards deserves a huge amount of credit for that.

He is a very successful coach and has done a great job. Their rise up the table has not surprised me because they are prepared to play some rugby and have a go.



Gloucester RUGBY



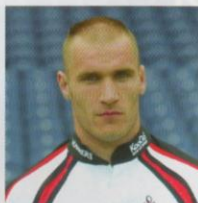
NEC Harlequins

	Willie WALKER	15	Full Back	15	Mike BROWN	
	James BAILEY	14	Right Wing	14	Simon KEOGH	
	James SIMPSON-DANIEL	13	Centre	13	Mel DEANE	
	Anthony ALLEN	12	Centre	12	Stuart ABBOTT	
	Iain BALSHAW	11	Left Wing	11	Tom WILLIAMS	
	Ryan LAMB	10	Fly Half	10	Adrian JARVIS	
	Peter RICHARDS	9	Scrum Half	9	Andy GOMARSALL	
	Nick WOOD	1	Prop	1	Ceri JONES	
	Olivier AZAM	2	Hooker	2	Tani FUGA	
	Jack FORSTER	3	Prop	3	Ricky NEBBETT	
	Will JAMES	4	Lock	4	Ollie KOHN	
	Alex BROWN	5	Lock	5	Jim EVANS	
	Peter BUXTON	6	Flanker	6	Andre VOS	
	Andy HAZELL	7	Flanker	7	Paul VOLLEY	
	James FORRESTER	8	No 8	8	Chris HALA'UFIA	

Replacements

	Mefin DAVIES	16	Substitute 1	16	James HAYTER	
	Patrice COLLAZO	17	Substitute 2	17	Mark LAMBERT	
	Adam EUSTACE	18	Substitute 3	18	Nicolas SPANGHERO	
	Jonathan PENDLEBURY	19	Substitute 4	19	Tom GUEST	
	Haydn THOMAS	20	Substitute 5	20	Steve SO'OIALO	
	Rudi KEIL	21	Substitute 6	21	Tosh MASSON	
	Jon GOODRIDGE	22	Substitute 7	22	Charlie AMESBURY	

Here they come



Last week, **Gloucester Rugby** announced their **first signings** ahead of the 2007-08 season – two forwards from **Edinburgh Rugby**. The matchday programme looks at what they will bring to **Kingsholm**.

GLOUCESTER RUGBY were delighted to announce last week the signing of two of Scottish rugby's brightest forward prospects.

Alasdair Dickinson and Alasdair Strokosch, who both featured for Edinburgh against Gloucester in the Heineken Cup earlier this season, have signed one-year deals and will join up with their new team-mates in the summer.

They follow in the footsteps of Scotland scrum-half Rory Lawson, who has made a tremendous impact at Kingsholm since making the switch at the start of the current season.

Strokosch, a 6ft 3in flanker, won his first senior international call-up for Scotland against Australia in the autumn internationals, and was this week added to the training squad for Saturday's Six Nations encounter with Ireland.

The 24-year-old is renowned as one of the hardest tacklers in the Magners League and has featured prominently on the blindside this season for Edinburgh.

"I'm really excited to be joining one of the strongest club sides in Europe," Strokosch told www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk.

"I had really good discussions with their coaching staff and was impressed by the facilities and the positive feeling at the place – I'm certain that moving to Gloucester will be good for my game."

Meanwhile Dickinson, 23, a dynamic prop who favours the loosehead side, has been capped by Scotland at every level up to A-international.

"I know from first-hand experience how strong a Gloucester forward pack can be, and it will be a real challenge to force

my way into contention next season," Dickinson said.

"Once I spoke to the coaches I was in no doubt that if I want to reach the highest levels then Gloucester offers the tough environment that can help me to achieve my goals."

Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan added: "We are careful who we want to attract but feel both of these players will add tremendously to the pool of talent we already have available.

"They played against us in the Heineken Cup this season and impressed us greatly. We are attempting to build a young, talented and competitive squad, and both of these players typify what we are looking for.

"The timing is now right for both the club and the players to release this information."

Alasdair Strokosch





Alasdair Dickinson

www.gloucester rugby.co.uk



Match Action

Time line

 11 min	Tuilagi TRY, Humphreys CON	0-7
 19 mins	Varndell TRY	0-12
 22 mins	Walker PEN	3-12
 29 mins	Richards TRY	8-12
 38 mins	Walker PEN	11-12
 40 mins	Tuilagi TRY, Humphreys CON	11-19
 42 mins	Foster TRY	16-19
 44 mins	Walker PEN	19-19
 47 mins	Walker PEN	22-19
 66 mins	Murphy TRY	22-24
 73 mins	Walker PEN	25-28
 77 mins	Walker PEN	28-24

Gloucester Line-up

15	Willie Walker	(6pens)
14	James Bailey	
13	James Simpson-Daniel	
12	Anthony Allen	
11	Iain Balshaw	
10	Ryan Lamb	
9	Peter Richards	(11)
1	Nick Wood	
2	Olivier Azam	
3	Jack Forster	
4	Will James	
5	Alex Brown	
6	Peter Buxton	(capt)
7	Andy Hazell	(11)
8	Luke Narryway	
REPS		
16	Mefin Davies	(Azam)
17	Patrice Collazo	(Forster)
18	Adam Eustace	
19	James Forrester	
20	Haydn Thomas	
21	Jon Goodridge	
22	Rudi Keil	

Gloucester Rugby
Leicester Tigers

28
24



Tigers tamed

Sunday, March 11

Referee: Sean Davey, Attendance: 12,000

A BRILLIANT performance from Peter Richards was instrumental in Gloucester's crucial Guinness Premiership victory over Leicester on Sunday.

The scrum-half scored one and created Gloucester's other try with a tremendous break to finally help shatter Leicester's resistance on a tremendous afternoon of Premiership rugby.

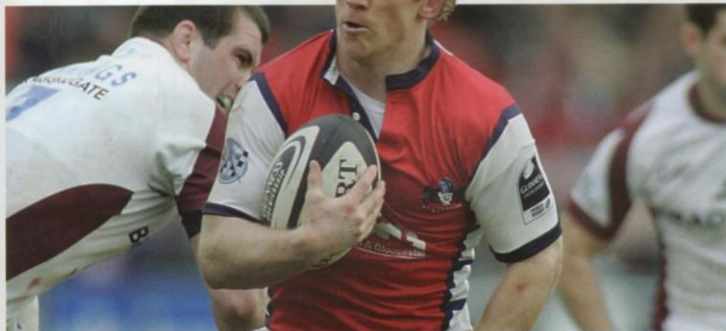
Although Leicester out-scored Gloucester four tries to two, an expert kicking display from Willie Walker got Gloucester home.

Leicester went two scores in front when Alesana Tuilagi gathered Ian Humphreys' lovely little kick to burst through Walker's tackle to score.

And then the big winger was crucially involved for Leicester's second try when he made another powerful break and off-load to Tom Varndell, who scored in the far right corner.

At 12-0 down, Gloucester could have faded but a Walker penalty got them going before Richards finished off a





Man of the Match... Peter Richards



The scrum-half produced a sensational performance to score one try and create another in Gloucester's victory.

powerful move that also included James Bailey, Luke Narraway and Jack Forster before Richards scored on the loop.

Walker then got Gloucester to within a point with a 38th minute penalty but Tuilagi scored again when Vesty chipped in behind Gloucester's flat defence to leave the Tigers 19-11 ahead at the break.

However, immediately after the re-start, Richards made a brilliant break from a line-out, handed off Shane Jennings and put

Hazell into score the game-changing try.

Walker added penalties after 44 and 47 minutes to take Gloucester 22-19 ahead but with Leicester in brutal driving form, they created a try for replacement Geordan Murphy, who scored in the corner after bursting into the line.

But Gloucester were not finished and Walker landed excellent penalties after 73 and 77 minutes to turn the game around and give Gloucester a four-point lead they held on to until the final whistle.

Coaches Comment...

Dean Ryan



"We knew we had to move them around on the hard ground and I thought we did that really well – it is a fantastic win for us," Gloucester's head coach Dean Ryan.





Peter Arnold

Peter Arnold is hardly had time to finish lunchtime pint last weekend before **Gloucester beat Leicester**, but is sad to see both **Haydn Thomas** and **Adam Eustace** go and also announces an earth-shattering confession.....

HAIL AND FAREWELL

I T'S THAT time of year, of course. The stage in the season when contracts are coming to an end, some players announce their departure and others are rumoured to be arriving. Some happy few have already agreed terms and are staying put and some strangers are confirmed as heading to Kingsholm.

Is it just me, or does the 'transfer' activity, to borrow a soccer term, appear to be more intense this year? Gloucester isn't the only club to be in the throes of such speculation by any means, and I suppose that as time goes on this is a trend that we can expect to continue.

There's one confirmed move away from us which I'm particularly sorry, but not surprised, to see confirmed. Young Haydn Thomas is packing his bags and trawling off down to Bristol. He's one aspiring player

who I really think could make it big time.

When injuries threw him into the Premiership squad before he'd really had time to get his feet under the table he took on the number nine shirt with relish, gusto and no little skill. Since then, the scrum-half position has become more stable, especially since the arrival of Rory Lawson, and his chances have been limited.

So you can't blame the lad for heading off into pastures new and I suppose that if there's one bloke who can guide and develop a young scrum-half almost as well as Bryan Redpath can it would be Bristol's Richard Hill.

We wish young Haydn well.

GOODBYE ADAM

A **NOTHER** all stalwart to be moving on to pastures new is Adam Eustace. It's

a pity that another good old Gloucester lad feels it necessary to seek his fortune elsewhere, but that's the way of the world these days, and we have to put up with it.

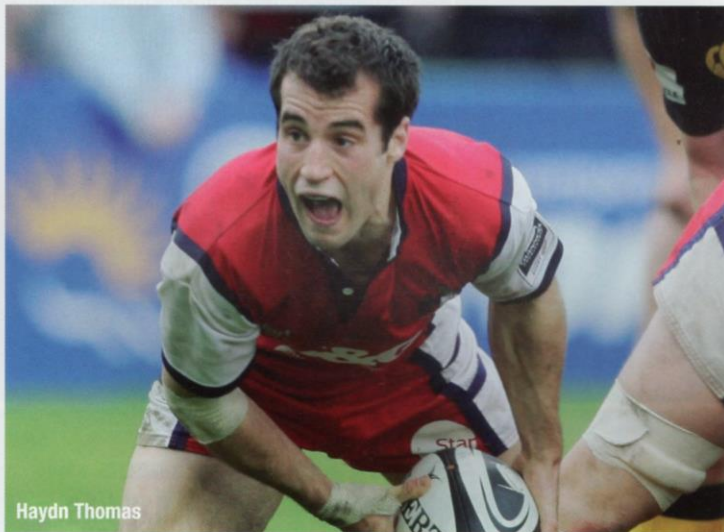
In some ways Adam's situation is similar to that of Haydn's. Again, His chances have been limited, of late, by other players leapfrogging over him in the pecking order. It's pretty obvious that Alex Brown and Marco Bortolami form our first-choice lock pairing, and the emergence of Messrs Pendlebury and James hasn't done Adam's chances any good either.

In these circumstances it's easy to forget what a stalwart servant Adam Eustace has been to the club. His rivals may, in some cases, have more charisma or athleticism, but no one doubts his commitment and determination to do his damndest for the cause.

But Adam was vindicated in the end. I thought at the time that his dismissal against Wasps had more to do with the ref trying to impose his authority early on in the game than it did with any indiscretion by the player, and the subsequent disciplinary committee apparently agreed, because they imposed no further penalty and, in effect, exonerated him.

I suppose Adam can take a great deal of heart from the Rob Fidler story. 'Fids' defected to Bath in somewhat similar circumstances, and although he has had Grewcock and Borthwick to contend with at the Rec, has been a valued part of the Bath squad ever since he arrived.

Hopefully, Adam Eustace will be dealing with the same scenario. After all, I haven't seen many Welsh locks any better than he is.



Haydn Thomas





Adam Eastace

SUPER SUNDAY

I CAN'T say that I am terribly fond of Sunday matches, particularly when they kick off just at the time when I'm usually thinking of leaving the pub and wandering home for my meat and two veg. Last Sunday, however, was a splendid exception: to see Gloucester beat Leicester and England hammer France in the space of around four hours made the 11th of March 2007 a memorable Sabbath indeed.

The Tigers game had everything we have come to expect from that fixture over the past couple of decades. It had tension (in buckets), physicality, no little skill from both sides, and the result was in doubt right until the final whistle.

Personally, I have sympathy with Leicester's coach, Pat Howard's view that the game should have been played at a time when the two sides were at full strength, unhampered by international commitments. In the event, we were probably as hard hit by absentees as they were, so things evened out, but that isn't really the

point. It would have been good to see the match contested by two full-strength sides and watch the ensuing match-ups. Richards v. Ellis, for example, would have been fascinating as would the battle between two packs which included Corry and Deacon on



Action v Leicester

one side and Bortolami and Nieto on the other.

Mr. Howard also pointed out that three of the last four matches have been played under similar circumstances, and that it's time the fixture list had a bit of a shake up. I find it difficult to argue with that.

As for the England game, my major interest was in the No.10 spot. Flood and Geraghty obviously covered themselves with glory, and good on them. But with Wilkinson still very much in the reckoning, where does that leave Ryan Lamb?

I read that the Scots are expressing an interest, and you couldn't blame the lad for taking it seriously, could you?

CONFESSION

IT'S TRUE confession time. I once supported Harlequins against Gloucester. Mind you, I was six years old at the time, it was my first visit to Kingsholm, and I shouted for the Quins because I liked their pretty shirts.

Hall of Fame

with Dave King



Mike Nicholls

Who is the finest captain in Gloucester's history? It is a tough question but Dave King's nomination – **Mike Nicholls** – enters the Hall of Fame today.

HERE IS a question that is likely to have occupied a few hours in the pub between Gloucester supporters – who is the finest captain the club has ever produced?

There are many that could vie for the honour but as ever the best judges are often the players and two of the greatest in Gloucester's history – Mike Burton and Phil Blakeway – name the same inspirational figure as the finest captain they have played under.

Of Mike Nicholls, Burton said: "Although I played under some brilliant captains during my career like John Pullin, Willie John McBride and others, Nicholls was the best. He was a hard man and an inspiring one. He epitomised Gloucester Rugby and was a real giant of the club. Quite simply, his captaincy was brilliant. The terse voice of Mike Nicholls was one you listened to."

Blakeway added: "Mike was an extremely competent hooker and a driving inspirational skipper."

Such compliments from two luminaries must bear not only a recommendation but also a lasting testament to one of Gloucester's finest players. A glance back at Nicholls's years as captain of this club shows how effective he was as a leader:

1970-71: Played 51, won 35, drew 4, lost 12. Points for: 772, Against 382.
1971-72: Played 49, won 37, Drew 3, lost 9. Points for: 819, Against 414.
1973-74: Played 54, won 39, drew 4, lost 11. Points for: 1,096, Against 576.

The one season interlude of 1972-73 saw John Bayliss elected as club captain. The accumulative total of those figures over a three season period showed the following:

Played 154, Won 111, Drew 11, Lost 32, Points for: 2,687, Points Against 1,372.

The figures revealed there were treble the victories over losses and almost more than double the points scored than conceded, a remarkable record under his captaincy.

It is well documented that Nicholls led the club to its first tangible success when he skippered his team to victory over Moseley in the RFU knockout Cup Final at Twickenham in the 1971-72 season. The names etched into the Club's history that spring day were: -

E.J. Stephens; R.J. Clewes, J.A. Bayliss, R. Morris, J. Dix; T. Palmer, M.H. Booth; R.J. Cowling, M.J. Nicholls (Captain), M.A. Burton, J.S. Jarrett, A. Brinn, J.A.



Phil Blakeway





“The infrequency of defeats in his reign as captain showed the players were both mentally hard and expected to win.”

Watkins, M.J. Potter, R. Smith.

Referee: R. Lewis (Wales).

Tries were scored by John Dix and Roy Morris. Drop-goals by Tom Palmer and Mickey Booth and a penalty by Eric Stephens. In reply to Gloucester's 17 points, a try by M.K. Swain and a conversion by Sam Doble accounted for Moseley's six points.

How times have changed the combined gate receipts from the final and the two semi-finals totalled £10,000. Nicholls received a plaque bearing a red rose on a white background as the winning captain. It was presented by Doctor Tommy Kemp, the President of the Rugby Football Union.

Adversity was to the fore in this triumph for

each round of the competition had been played away from home and Moseley even took the lead in the first minute of the final with converted Strain's converted try. One minute later Nigel Horton of Moseley was dismissed after a stamping incident. He was the first man to be sent-off at Twickenham in a major match for forty seven years.

Nicholls's was as loyal as anyone who has donned a Gloucester shirt. He characterised what is required to be a successful captain. He was respected by his team-mates, displayed a sympathetic style of player management and most important of all, knew how to get the best out of his players, even in the toughest of the circumstances.

He built up team spirit with the fact that he enjoyed captaincy. The infrequency of defeats in his reign as captain showed

the players were both mentally hard and expected to win.

Nicholls joined the Kingsholm ranks from Old Centralians and although he made regular appearances after his move in 1962 it was not until 1965 that he cemented his place in the Gloucester XV after displacing Ken Taylor.

So began a long and distinguished career for the hooker. He rarely missed a match and reached 300 first team appearances for the club in 1972.

Regular activity for Gloucestershire as well as for his club continued until 27th October 1975 when, after 484 first team appearances and at the age of 35, he announced his retirement from playing after being plagued by long standing injury to his left knee.

Hall of Fame...

He said at the time, "Obviously I feel sad. I am disappointed but I have accepted the situation and I shall continue to be as closely connected with the club as possible."

At the time a coaching revolution was taking place initiated by Carwyn James, the 1971 British Lions Coach who was taking the Llanelli backs with former Welsh hooker Norman Gale coaching the forwards.

That formula was adopted by Burton as captain, early in that 1975-76 season when he put Mickey Booth, the best scrum-half not to get an England cap, in charge of the backs division and he then appointed Mike Nicholls to coach the forwards.

"I am disappointed but I have accepted the situation and I shall continue to be as closely connected with the club as possible."

The club were fortunate to have Nicholls as coach as he was fresh from playing. He had not taken a break from the game so he was conversant with the methods adopted at that time. His name was now firmly stamped in the annals of the club.

In the records of the club and its family connections, Nicholls's son Mark appeared for the club in the back row and is now a major part of the

development of Cinderford RFC.

Unknown to many Nicholls had developed trouble with his left knee after a cartilage operation in 1966 and his knee gradually deteriorated. At the start of the 1975-76 season he developed a calf injury in the opening match to mark Weston-Super-Mare's centenary and then suffered a reoccurrence of his old trouble while playing for the United team against Cinderford and he was unable to regain fitness. His hopes of completing the season as a player were dashed and he informed the Chairman of Selectors, Peter Ford, of his decision.

At the time club Chairman, Gordon Hudson led the tributes: "He will be sadly missed, and not only was he a good captain but a good leader and coach. Mike has been playing in considerable difficulty which few people knew. It was his enthusiasm and leadership which carried us through the early rounds when we won the knock out cup. Mike was one of the country's outstanding hookers and he would have gained far more representative honours had his career not coincided with that of John Pullin."

Ford added: "Mike has set a wonderful example through his playing career. I look forward to his helping Gloucester in some other way."

And so ended the playing career of the tenacious hooker, a man who had made 14 appearances for the County.

A former contracts engineer, he can still be seen wending his way to his seat in the Grandstand at home matches still enthused about the development of the club.



Mike Burton



5

Alex Brown

Stats

Position: Lock • Height: 6'7"

Weight: 17st 8lb • DOB: 17.05.79





4

Will James

Stats

Position: Lock • Height: 6'6"
Weight: 19st 8lb • DOB: 22.12.76

