



**GLOUCESTER
RUGBY**

The Official Programme
of Gloucester Rugby

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**Gloucester Rugby
v Bath Rugby**

10.05.08 3.00pm



INSIDE

Iain Balshaw

Life in the fast lane with the Gloucester star

The Wild West

An in-depth preview of today's showdown

Dean Ryan

Looks back at the victory over Wasps

Prop Idol

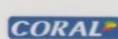
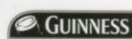
Feature on Bath star Matt Stevens

PLUS: Match action, fans zone, Dave King and Peter Arnold.

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CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Gloucester's skipper was thrilled at the victory over Wasps and looks ahead to the visit of Bath today.

IF YOU had said back in September that with one game of the regular season remaining we would be fighting for the chance to finish top of the Guinness Premiership then I am sure we would have taken that scenario.

Let us not under-estimate what an achievement that would be for this squad. It would be back-to-back seasons we have proved to be the most consistent team in the country and that is very important in our development.

There has been plenty said and talked about us in recent weeks – about our perceived lack of intensity and mental durability – but I think our result at Wasps, and more importantly our performance signified we are able to match sides who have traditionally excelled at knockout rugby.

I thought our performance was full of character, a tremendous defensive effort and a physicality level that took them by surprise. We always felt we had the ability

to unlock their blitz defence because we have done it before and we again made the most of our chances.

But that victory will mean nothing today unless we can back it up against Bath. It is interesting that the teams currently towards the top of the table – ourselves, Bath, Wasps and Sale – all try and play some rugby and I think that says a lot about the Premiership this season.

Like ourselves, Bath have been one of the front runners all season. Their forward pack is abrasive and capable of playing a very good off-load game and they have some great backs who have shaped their season and provided a cutting edge.

I think it is fitting that two clubs like Gloucester and

Bath are fighting it out for a place at the top of the table. We are two huge clubs, Kingsholm was a sell-out weeks ago for this fixture and we want to end on a high.

Please get behind the boys today, become the 16th man and help us to the victory we want.

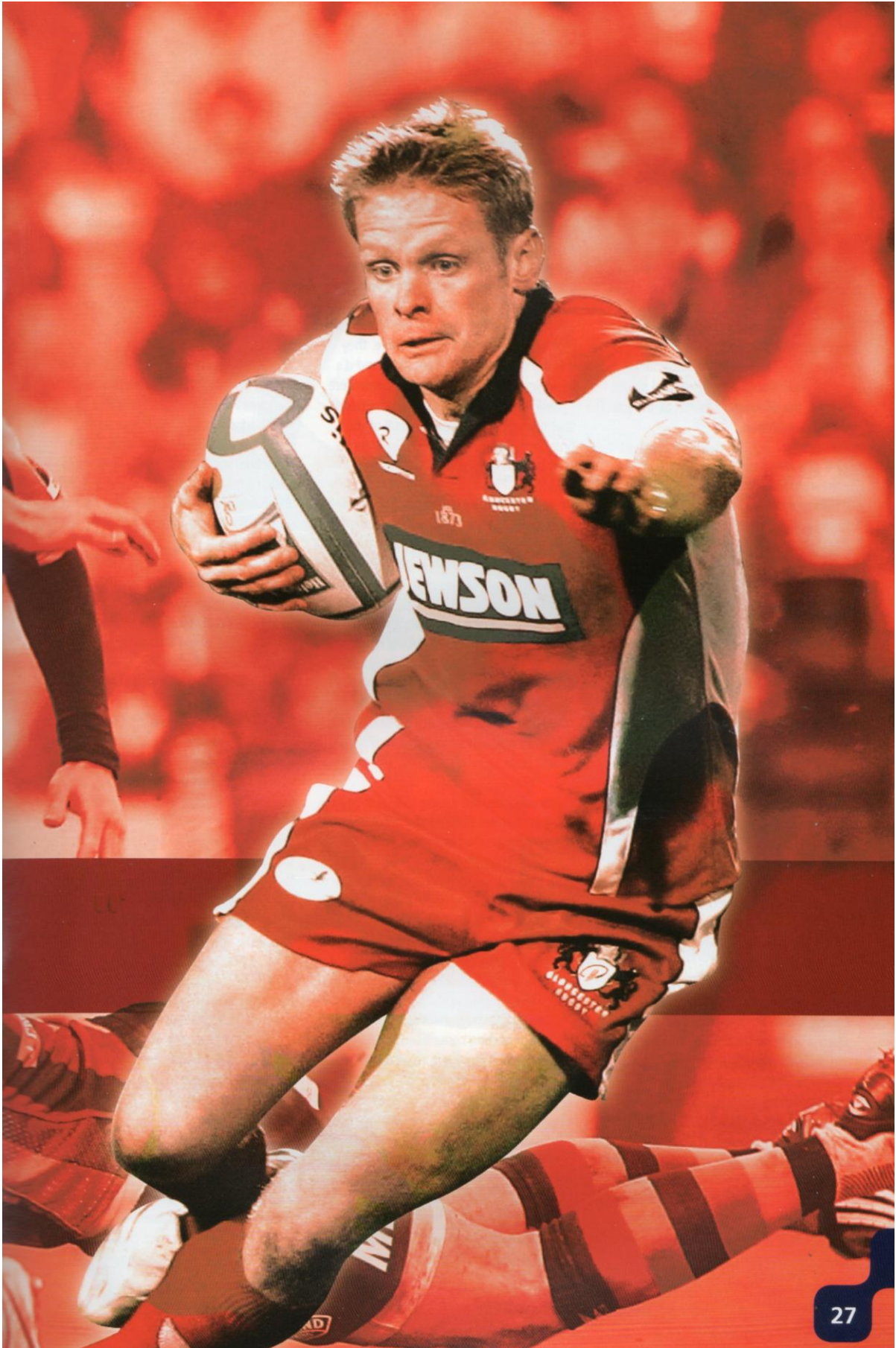


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BALSHAW BACK TO HIS BEST

Consistency and a new two-year contract have been key to establishing Iain Balshaw as a main element in Gloucester's surge to the top of the table. Here, he tells Kat Cook why Sunday's win at Wasps was so important.



BALSHAW BACK TO HIS BEST

▶ IF EVER there was a victory to suggest Gloucester are undoubtedly heading in the right direction, then it came at High Wycombe last Sunday.

When Ryan Lamb knocked over his second penalty at the fag-end of the contest to leave Wasps eight points behind, he turned and offered a clenched salute towards the Gloucester bench as the job neared completion.

For a side that has taken its fair level of criticism in recent weeks it was the sort of performance and result that indicates they may have what it takes to reach Twickenham again this season. Gloucester's performance was full of good things: power, penetration, subtlety, control and team work, and as they head towards today's Guinness Premiership showdown with Bath, full-back Iain Balshaw believes last weekend's victory is hugely significant.

"The Wasps match was probably the first all year where we have stuck to our structure for 80 minutes of the game and it paid dividends," he said.

"We said last week that Wasps are a team that are very good in certain areas and we cannot come-off script. It was tough, but it was a very good result for us, and no matter what happened we stuck to the game-plan. It's definitely a confidence boost, and we've proved that we're here and we're very serious about being contenders for the premiership."

Balshaw has recently set the seal on a new two-year contract at Gloucester after signing two years ago from Leeds. His ability as one of the finest game-breakers and readers in the business has been instrumental in Gloucester's rise to the top of the table this season. His versatility at either full-back or wing has been key and his expert kicking game, counter-attacking ability and safety under the high ball were all in evidence against Wasps.

"When I signed two years ago I knew the potential that the club had, they were very ambitious then," he said. "I don't

think we've hit our full-stride yet and I feel that there is a bit more to come from the boys and the players that we are bringing in, I think it's a very exciting time for Gloucester, that's why I want to stay. I thoroughly enjoy it, it's a great atmosphere, all of the lads get along, the coaching staff are very innovative, they see the game in a different light and it's been very refreshing for me to come here. "There is so much talent within the team that it keeps you on your toes all of the time, and playing at your best in order to keep your place in the squad."

He will face former employers today when Bath come to town, with both teams still able to finish top of the table and ahead of the play-offs, Balshaw knows these occasions are pure one-offs.

"We want to finish top really, that's our main goal. We had a convincing start to the season where we were ahead by quite a way and we let it slip just in the middle of the Six Nations. There was quite a few boys away and we took our foot off the pedal a little bit and lost games that really we should have won."

"That put pressure on the lads, the good thing is that we showed last weekend against Wasps that in a must-win game, we have the quality, we have the structure, the game-plan to beat teams like that who are the top form team in the country at the moment."

"It's a huge game today but the boys have got confidence in the structure that we're playing, confidence in the game that we're playing and the momentum that we're building towards the play-offs, we're not getting complacent at all, we know this is a huge fixture as Bath are playing very well. Playing in the Heineken Cup against huge European sides such as Munster and massive games like that are all great experiences that help when we're getting towards the end of the season and the play-offs."

"Having been at Bath and knowing the quality players they have there, it was just a matter of time before they got everything

sorted and were going to be back on top. I think they've got a fabulous pack in terms of the way they are playing in the Premiership at the moment. They've got a great squad but I don't really look at what other teams are doing I just concentrate on where we're heading.

"The rivalry is obviously massive, for both clubs it is bragging rights. It's probably the same rivalry as that of England and Scotland. It's a huge game for the supporters and in particular that of the old-school supporters. That's what makes it such a huge occasion, the fans will be absolutely immense, as they have been all season. The noise volumes will make it a fantastic day."

Balshaw has come into his own this season and there have been times when his running skills touched the pinnacles of 2000-2001 when he burst onto the international scene and he has benefitted from consistency and a clean bill of health.

"This year at the beginning of the season my goal was to be consistent and do the basics really well," he said. "I'm pretty happy, I speak to the coaches regularly on what they want me to do, as long as I keep doing that my performances will be steady. It's when you start trying to force things to make it happen is when I've found that I've put myself and the team under a bit of pressure. But this year I've gone about quietly at my own job doing the basics well."

"There are so many young lads coming through that you have to constantly put yourself under pressure to be in the squad. I have got pretty high standards, but I'm very happy and happy with the way that everything is going, I know if I make a mistake I can do better and I know I can do the right thing."

"We're top of the Guinness Premiership table with one game to go before the play-offs. Although we're pretty happy at the moment we know that there is definitely one big game today, potentially three massive games before we can actually say that this has been a great season."



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RYAN'S REVIEW

Gloucester will look to finish top of the Guinness Premiership today and Head Coach Dean Ryan reviews an eventful few weeks.



It would be impossible to start the last Ryan's Review of the season without looking back at the victory over Wasps, you must have been delighted?

DR: IT WAS a special moment for the squad and a significant step forward for us because it says we can compete at that level regularly.

I never had any doubts we could create a threat provided we could get enough ball because we showed in the EDF Energy Cup match we could penetrate their blitz defence. What we could do was in the game physically in the closing stages.

We took a concerted decision to go with five forwards on the bench because of the sheer physicality levels we were expected to face. That meant certain individuals could go all out for 40 minutes and then be replaced and it worked. I thought we stayed in our structure and gameplan exceptionally well – we were able to win

those two or three turnovers at scrum-time and they proved crucial.

I wouldn't say that was the first time this season we have managed to do that but it was probably the most complete performance from that point of view. There's no guarantee we've matured now and we've solved everything, we are heading in the right direction.

There were still cracks but we know we are a good side playing with the ball. But we've had to come to terms with how physical the game is at the top end

and the victory against Wasps was an illustration that we are getting better at it."



We seem to be rolling into form at the right time following the wins over Saracens and Leeds?

DR: I DIDN'T think we were particularly out of form when we lost to Munster, we just didn't get the dividend we needed when we dominated possession and territory. There is no doubt that the victory over Saracens was good for confidence at



We took a concerted decision to go with five forwards on the bench because of the sheer physicality levels we were expected to face. That meant certain individuals could go all out for 40 minutes and then be replaced and it worked.



Victorious v Wasps




Rory Lawson v Wasps

just the right time and then we did some pretty good things against Leeds.

The thing that pleases me is that before we beat Wasps at Kingsholm they had won five successive matches and before Sunday it was eight in a row. Gloucester are the only team in the Premiership to double up over them. As a group we always felt we were close to a result like that – it was just a case of going out and earning it.

Wasps have made an art form of being successful in knockout rugby – they have been playing it for a long time this season already – which is why we can take so much out of Sunday and hopefully into the rest of the season.

 ***It's neck and neck at the top of table. Today's game is a fitting end to the season at Kingsholm?***

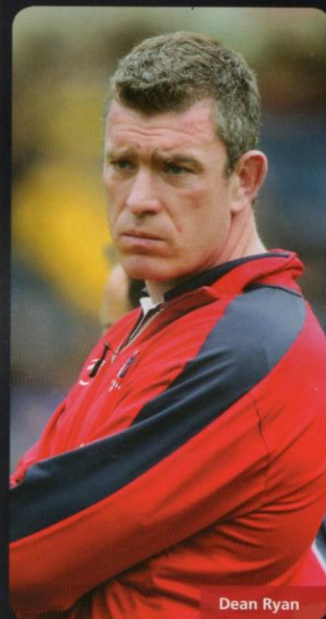
DR: YOU only have to look at the sides at the top of the Premiership to see that the

teams who use the ball, are adventurous and have more than one level to their games have been successful. I think it says a lot that the likes of ourselves, Bath, Wasps, Sale and Harlequins are all in the shake-up for a play-off place and is great news for the Premiership as a whole in the long-term.

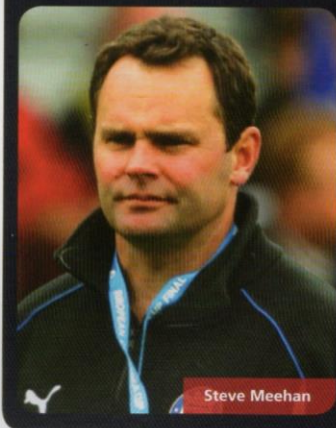
What Bath have achieved in a pretty short space of time is pretty impressive. We have known for some time that their forward pack stacked up against anything in Europe but they have combined that with game-shapers at half-back and in the midfield that have added an extra dimension to their game, and as a result they have played a quick off-load game to fantastic effect in recent weeks.

To have two teams like Gloucester and Bath fighting it out on the last day of the season for top spot is what it is all about, and I hope everybody gets behind the team today so we can finish what we started in September before moving into the play-offs.

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Dean Ryan



Steve Meehan

TODAY'S TEAMS

Saturday 10th May 3.00pm

Gloucester Rugby
v Bath Rugby



**Gloucester
RUGBY**



**Bath
RUGBY**

	Iain BALSCHAW	15	Full Back	15	Joe MADDOCK	
	James SIMPSON-DANIEL	14	Right Wing	14	Andrew HIGGINS	
	Mike TINDALL	13	Centre	13	Alex CROCKETT	
	Anthony ALLEN	12	Centre	12	Olly BARKLEY	
	Lesley VAINIKOLO	11	Left Wing	11	Matt BANAHAN	
	Ryan LAMB	10	Fly Half	10	Butch JAMES	
	Rory LAWSON	9	Scrum Half	9	Michael CLAASSENS	
	Nick WOOD	1	Prop	1	David FLATMAN	
	Andy TITTERRELL	2	Hooker	2	Lee MEARS	
	Carlos NIETO	3	Prop	3	Matt STEVENS	
	Marco BORTOLAMI ©	4	Lock	4	Steve BORTHWICK ©	
	Alex BROWN	5	Lock	5	Danny GREWCOCK	
	Alasdair STROKOSCH	6	Flanker	6	Jonny FA'AMATUAINU	
	Akapusi QERA	7	Flanker	7	Michael LIPMAN	
	Gareth DELVE	8	No 8	8	Daniel BROWNE	

Replacements

	Olivier AZAM	16		16	Pieter DIXON	
	Alasdair DICKINSON	17		17	Duncan BELL	
	Will JAMES	18		18	Peter SHORT	
	Luke NARRAWAY	19		19	Chris GOODMAN	
	Gareth COOPER	20		20	Mike BAXTER	
	Willie WALKER	21		21	Shaun BERNE	
	Mark FOSTER	22		22	Tom CHEESEMAN	



HEAD COACH
Dean RYAN



HEAD COACH
Steve MEEHAN

A black and white photograph of a person holding a large, ornate silver trophy. The trophy has two handles, each with a black banner that says 'GUINNESS' in white capital letters. The person is wearing a white shirt and is looking down at the trophy. The background is dark and out of focus.

GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP FINALISTS? YOU NEVER KNOW

Andrew Baldock, the Press Association's rugby union correspondent, has seen enough of both Gloucester and Bath this season to predict a mini classic today and believes one of them is good enough to lift the booty at Twickenham later this month.



GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP FINALISTS? YOU NEVER KNOW

▶ IT WILL BE another three weeks before the 2008 Guinness Premiership champions are crowned - but nothing wrong with a sneak preview this afternoon, is there?

All you Wasps fans can buzz off. This is a private matter between two of the West Country's finest, and anyway, you've had your turn - isn't three Premiership titles in five seasons enough?

Gloucester and Bath, two heavyweights of the English and European game, can't even boast one between them.

Bath never had any problem getting their head around the old Courage League, as six championship-winning campaigns testify, but change its name to the Premiership - Allied Dunbar, Zurich or Guinness - and they've often struggled to remember their own name, let alone the sponsor's.

Gloucester, of course, famously "won" the Premiership by 15 points in 2003 - Bath then "won" it with a six-point margin the following season - yet play-off masters Wasps provided a sting in the tail each time.

If play-offs didn't exist, then today's encounter would have assumed seismic proportions as a title decider, but whether you agree with the knockout concept or not, it doesn't really matter.

Play-offs are here to stay, so I guess we should all get over it and accept what happens during 80 minutes on one afternoon at Twickenham ultimately counts, not the eight-month marathon that precedes it.

Gloucester and Bath have lost three play-off finals (2003, 2004 and 2007). Each season, one of them finished top of the table, but then left Twickenham empty-handed.

This time though, you sense it could - and

probably should - be the year when Marco Bortolami or Steve Borthwick holds aloft the Premiership trophy.

Gloucester have perhaps not received the credit they've deserved for topping the table throughout this season apart from a couple of fleeting interventions by, yes you've guessed it, Bath.

Dean Ryan's men currently have more Premiership points than any other team, they've scored more points than any other team, averaging almost 26 a game, and collected more bonus points than any other team.

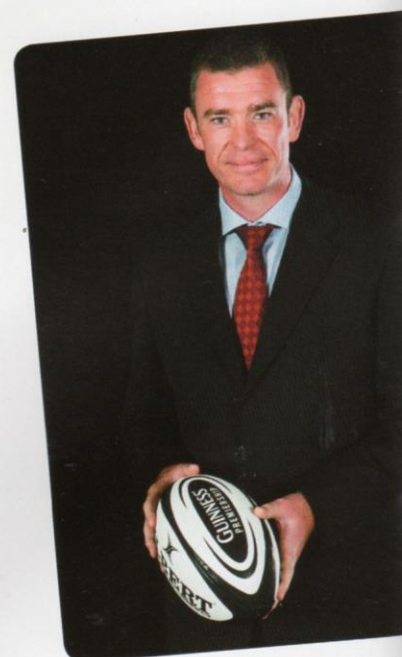
When they click, Gloucester are a joy to behold in all areas, whether it be the relentless work-rate of an Alasdair Strokosch, the remarkable attacking weapon that is Akapusi Qera, the prodigiously-talented Ryan Lamb or that bulldozer of a wing Lesley Vainikolo.

Ryan's work in progress continues at a healthy pace, and while it is a similar story at Bath with their underrated Australian boss Steve Meehan impressively going about his business, both sets of supporters wouldn't half like some silverware in the trophy cabinet.

Probably only Meehan's nearest and dearest would have given him a hope of guiding Bath back into the Premiership's top half when he pitched up at the Recreation Ground from Stade Francais in July 2006, let alone establishing them as a major force again.

What he has done though, is quite remarkable. Just a few seasons ago, Bath played rugby of such mind-numbing boredom that you needed to buy a flask of coffee with your match programme in order to stay awake.

It was mainly prehistoric rugby pre-Meehan, but anyone who has witnessed Bath's often exhilarating performances



www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk



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”

MATCH ACTION

Gloucester Rugby
Leeds Carnegie

39
16



Time line

13 mins	
Qera TRY, Lamb CON	7-0
15 mins	
Di Bernardo PEN	7-3
20 mins	
Di Bernardo PEN	7-6
23 mins	
Lamb PEN	10-6
26 mins	
Di Bernardo DROP GOAL	10-9
28 mins	
Azam TRY, Lamb CON	17-9
50 mins	
Lamb PEN	20-9
51 mins	
Lamb TRY	25-9
61 mins	
Qera TRY, Lamb CON	32-9
69 mins	
Qera TRY, Lamb CON	39-9
79 mins	
Edwards TRY, Brooks CON	39-16

Gloucester Line-up

15	Willie Walker	
14	Iain Balshaw	
13	James Simpson-Daniel	
12	Mike Tindall	
11	Lesley Vainikolo	
10	Ryan Lamb	(1t,4c,2p)
9	Gareth Cooper	
1	Alasdair Dickinson	
2	Olivier Azam	(1t)
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Will James	
5	Marco Bortolami	
6	Alasdair Strokosch	
7	Akapusi Qera	(3t)
8	Gareth Delve	
REPS REPS		
16	Andy Titterrell	(Azam)
17	Jack Forster	(Nieto)
18	Alex Brown	
19	Peter Buxton	(Delve, Strokosch)
20	Rory Lawson	
21	Chris Paterson	(Vainikolo)
22	Olly Morgan	(Walker)

Qera sinks Leeds

Saturday, April 19th, Attendance: 11,753
Kingsholm, Referee: Martin Fox

GLOUCESTER secured a predictably comfortable win over visitors Leeds in their race to win the Guinness Premiership title.

Akapusi Qera earned himself the man of the match award with a hat-trick of tries to put the home side on their way to grabbing a bonus point. He produced a performance that head coach Dean Ryan described as world class and his influence has grown rapidly in the last few months.

His first try came after 13 minutes, when

the two Gareths - Delve and Cooper - broke behind Leeds' defence and Qera arrived in support to score and Ryan Lamb added the extras.

Leeds' work ethic was excellent throughout and they replied with two penalties and a drop-goal from Alberto Di Bernardo that cut Gloucester's advantage to just 10-9. Gloucester did some good things in the first half and when Qera thundered through a midfield gap from Mike Tindall's pass, Olivier Azam arrived in support to score



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and stretch the home side's lead.

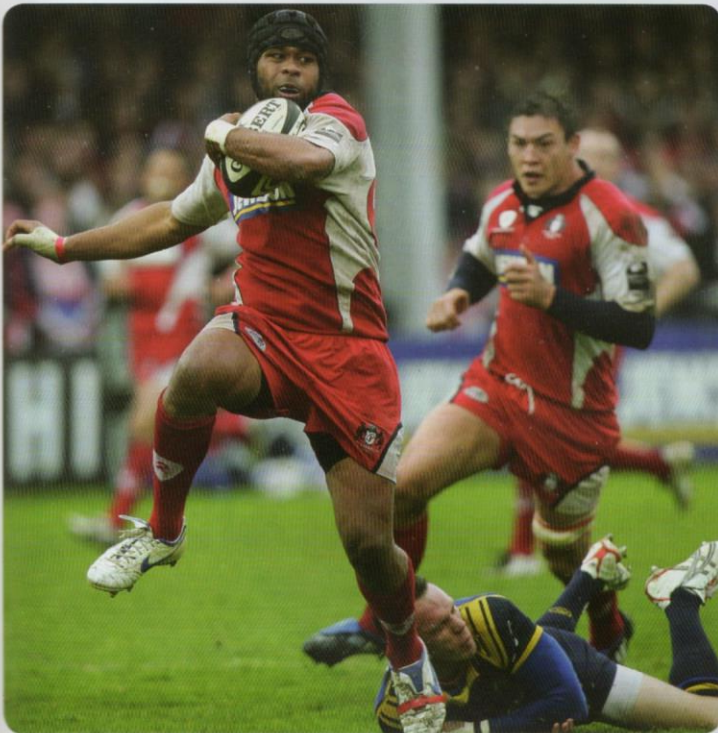
Although Gloucester lost Lesley Vainikolo in the second half with a hamstring injury, Lamb added another penalty before snatching his second try in as many games. He picked off Di Bernado's hesitant midfield pass and charged to the line unopposed for try number three.

By now, Leeds were beginning to feel the heat and Qera went on to complete his hat-trick to seal the contest. His first was from a flowing move that he completed

and he grabbed his third by stepping through a ruck close to the line.

Gloucester were comfortably ahead of the visitors and allowed Darren Edwards to creep over the line and score a try for Leeds in the 79th minute, which was swiftly converted by James Brooks.

Leeds were always in the game and put up a decent fight but their defeat confirmed their relegation from the Premiership.



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Man of the Match



immense.

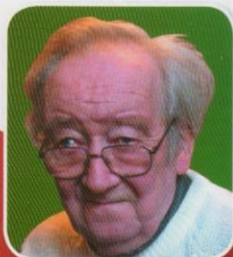
Akapusi Qera – Not only did the Fijian score a hat-trick but his work rate was

Coach's Comment



"I thought Qera's performance was World class. His hat-trick was the end product of his performance," head coach Dean Ryan.





PETER ARNOLD

It has been a remarkable season and as Peter Arnold reels off another collection of programme notes today, he hopes he may just have a few more words to write...

DOWN TO THE WIRE

I DON'T have to tell you how much is riding on this game. A home semi-final in the Premiership play-off system is obviously vital, but I can't help thinking that we shouldn't have got ourselves in this position. I can think of at least two games that we should have won and didn't: in fact both of them seemed to be in the bag until we let things slide in the last few minutes. If we'd taken those points; then we'd be free and clear at the top by now.

No use crying over spilt milk, however, and I can also think of victories which no one gave us a light in achieving. In fact, if ever a season was the proverbial roller coaster, this one is it. We started as though we were going to steam

roller everyone with no trouble at all, scoring 177 points in our first five matches. Then the World Cup blues set in, together with a few injuries, and we hadn't really recovered from that when the Six Nations arrived and disrupted things again. Only in the last few weeks have we showed glimpses of our true form.

I can't help thinking that there must be a better way to structure the season. By the very nature of the beast, the sides who do best in the Premiership are going to be the ones worst hit by international call-ups.

'Twas ever thus, however. You can never be complacent if you support Gloucester. Never could.

SUSSING THE PLACE OUT?

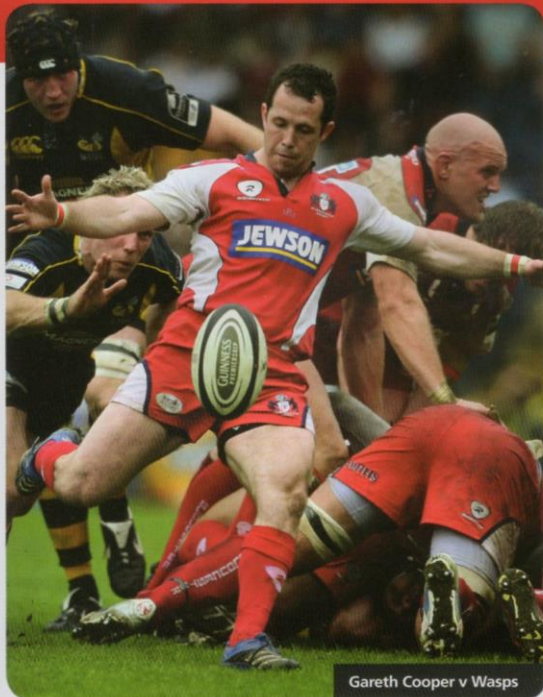
IT'S A bit like selling your house, isn't it? Your prospective buyer comes along, noses into the nooks and crannies, takes a stroll in the garden, and decides whether he wants to make an offer or not. For your part, you decide whether he's the sort you want to do business with.

I don't know how serious the suggestion that Bath play their home games at Kingsholm while the Rec is being redeveloped is, but the idea has certainly got the Gloucester faithful buzzing.

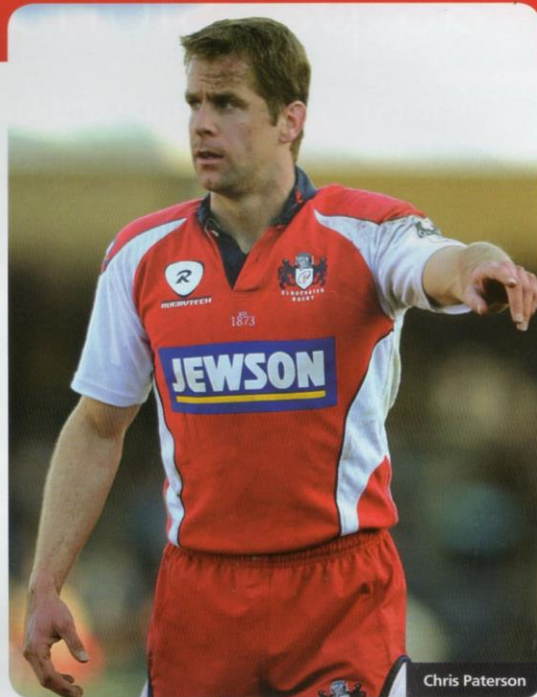
As you'd expect, there are pros and cons. Some people like the idea of being able to watch extra Premiership rugby during the season, while others are worried about



The Rec, Bath



Gareth Cooper v Wasps



Chris Paterson

the extra wear on the sacred turf. Some don't like the thought of extending hospitality to the ancient enemy at all, let alone allowing them to ascend from the nethermost pits of the Recreation Ground to the Elysian Fields of Castle Grim.

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that if Bath do come to Kingsholm, then at least we might have a chance of winning the away fixture.

Bristol's affairs seem to be done and dusted. They appear to be moving to Newport's Rodney Parade while the Memorial Ground gets its much-needed face lift, while Bristol Rovers, who share the Mem, are to migrate to Whaddon Road, Cheltenham.

For me, what stands out like a sore wotsit is that we seem to manage these things much better at Gloucester. Our major developments have been undertaken with much less disruption to the supporters. Of course, there's still the Shed to go.

If Bath do come here, I'm sure they'll be

made welcome. As long as they buy the beer.

THE STING

I'VE seldom been more gratified at a result as I was last Sunday. If I were honest, I'd have been satisfied if we'd come away from Adams Park with a losing bonus point, but to have constructed a win in such a professional fashion was something to relish.

Even with the game three-quarters over, I had the nagging feeling that Wasps were going to snatch it at the death, as they've done so many times before, and injury time seemed to last for an eternity. That spell when the lads stuffed the ball up their collective jumper and denied Wasps any possession at all for a full ten minutes (according to the radio commentators) was probably crucial, and when Ryan Lamb sank his monster penalty, sighs of relief probably resounded all over Gloucester.

All the pundits were billing Wasps as the form team with all the momentum going for them (although today's visitors might cock a quizzical eyebrow at

that contention, especially after their indecent demolition of Sarries last Saturday), but no side wins eight games in a row in the Premiership without a helluva lot going for them, so there was some truth in the belief. To beat them on their own turf is a considerable achievement.

So often have Wasps put it across us when they really didn't deserve it, that the win is particularly satisfying, and will be savoured for a long time to come.

HAIL AND FAREWELL

I'M sorry to see Chris Paterson returning to Edinburgh at the end of the season. Things never seemed to go quite right for him at Kingsholm, and no one will ever be able to explain why a man classed in many people's minds as the best kicker in the world seemed unable to land his goals for Gloucester.

We wish him well.

SUMMER WELL

I HOPE this isn't the last piece I contribute this season, but if it is – have a good summer.

MATCH OF THE DAYS

They were once considered a major force in English rugby but by the time Gloucester completed a Courage League double over Orrell, their demise was virtually confirmed, as Dave King recalls.

▶ WHILE Gloucester will face-off with Bath today for the right to finish top of the Guinness Premiership, a decade ago it was a very different story.

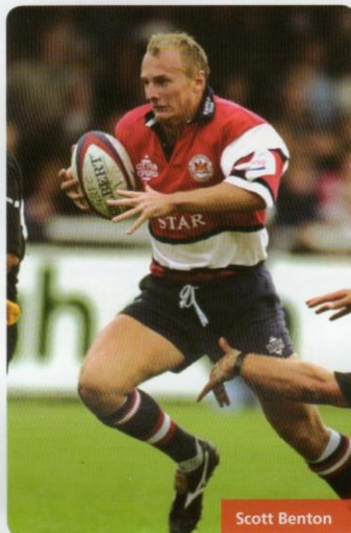
The early stages of professionalism were still taking hold and the grand old club Orrell were the visitors to Kingsholm.

The Edgehall Road club, famous for producing the likes of Dewi Morris, arrived at Kingsholm on February 8 1997 bottom of Courage League Division One.

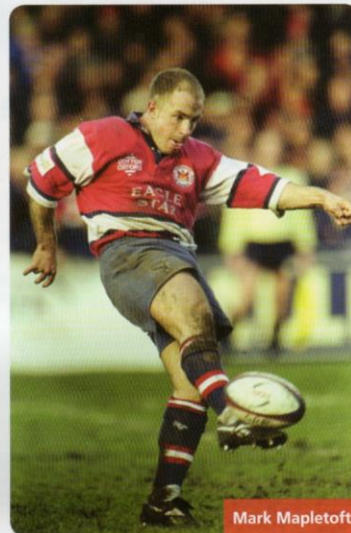
The Lancashire club were insistent on adhering to their thrifty principles and the outlook was bleak. Paying only what they could afford was a praiseworthy principle but it did not allow them to compete with the spending philosophy of the majority of clubs who were embracing the professional age and recruiting big name players.

The match itself was more of a mental task than a physical confrontation. Gloucester had already defeated Orrell 49-3 in November, and it was widely expected that the two points on offer were forthcoming.

It was a memorable day for Gloucester scrum-half Scott Benton as he had made his Courage League One debut in the corresponding fixture the previous season. For Benton and his colleagues



Scott Benton



Mark Mapletoft

they seemed to be affected by a general melancholy. There was the odd exception with Mark Mapletoft able to register 20 out of a Gloucester's 30 points.

The game began promisingly, winger Mike Peters rounded off an impressive attacking move featuring half the team for an eighth minute lead, and five minutes later Mapletoft landed a 25 metre penalty.

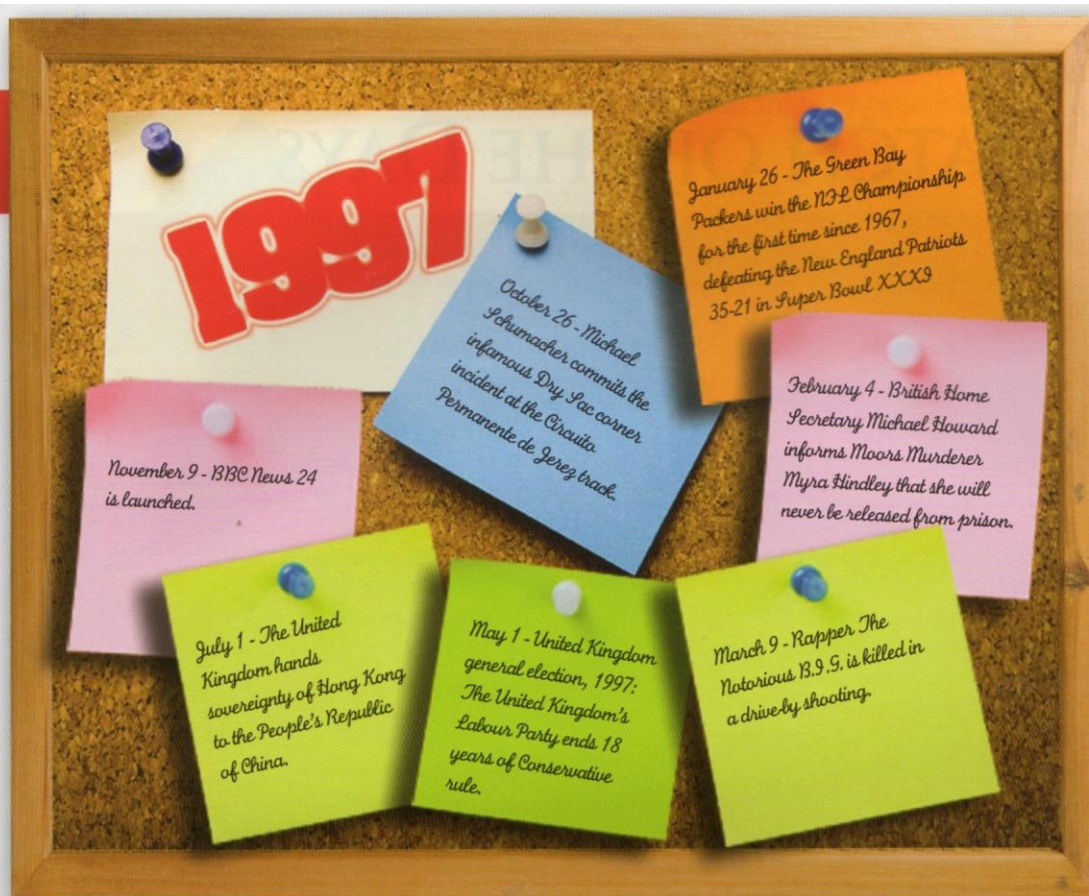
It was against the run of play that the home team increased their lead, a line-out was won close to the visitors 22 which led to a try for Mapletoft. It then turned into the Mapletoft show as he

landed a penalty soon after the restart and scored his second try after receiving a well-placed pass from full back Chris Catling, 'Tofty' added the conversion. Winger Mike Lloyd rounded off the scoring with a 73rd minute try which the irrepressible Mapletoft converted.

It was not a win that was convincing for the Gloucester faithful, and there were more glum expressions than happy ones. Even Gloucester's head coach Richard Hill wore a worried look as he recalled: "It was a game with far too many handling errors. The scoreline looked good but we should have done better." Strangely, Orrell were not downhearted.

The bottom half of the Courage League One table read as follows: -

Club	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
Northampton	12	6	0	6	272	256	12
Gloucester	11	6	0	5	272	298	12
West Hartlepool	12	3	0	9	236	387	6
Bristol	12	3	0	9	232	395	6
London Irish	11	2	0	9	265	392	4
Orrell	11	1	0	10	139	462	2



It was a memorable day for Gloucester scrum-half Scott Benton as he had made his Courage League One debut in the corresponding fixture the previous season. For Benton and his colleagues they seemed to be affected by a general melancholy.



John Arrowsmith, then the Orrell secretary said: "It was a match between two of the last remaining true rugby clubs in League One."

At that time Gloucester Rugby was not quite the vision that John Arrowsmith had portrayed. They had followed the path of many clubs by forming a limited company. They were struggling to meet a £1 million playing budget and were still reliant on a mostly home grown squad coached by the self confessed video analyst Richard Hill. This was a game he did not intend to watch again, 'It went in the bin' he stated.

For the Kingsholm faithful they were left to reflect that the club had racked up a record seventh consecutive Division

One victory. After losing the first five matches of the season we looked like certain relegation candidates, but after this match we were one win away from a place in Europe.

Meanwhile, at Edgehall Road our United XV recovered from a 16-3 half-time deficit to record a 23-21 victory. Included in the United team that winters afternoon was the promising Trevor Woodman.

So the demise of Orrell continued, they never won a League title. Their highest finish was second in the 1991-2 season. Up to then they had enjoyed the distinction of having been in the Courage League One every year since the leagues were formed. The downfall



Andy Deacon

is sadder when you consider that Frank Anderson, Peter Williams, Fran Clough, Dave Cusani, Nigel Heslop all represented England. John Carleton and Dewi Morris also played for the British Lions and Simon Mason represented Ireland. The advent of professional rugby hit the club hard.

MATCH OF THE DAYS

THE TEAMS

GLOUCESTER:

C.CATLING
M.PETERS
D.CASKIE
M.ROBERTS
M.LLOYD
M.MAPLETOFT
S.BENTON
T.WINDO
P.GREENING
A.DEACON
R.FIDLER
D.SIMS (CAPTAIN)
E.PEARCE
N.CARTER
S.DEVERAUX

REPLACEMENTS:

C.FORTEY
L.BECK
M.KIMBER
W.BULLOCK

ORRELL:

S.TABERNER
J.NAYLOR
D.LYON (CAPTAIN)
L.TUIGAMALA
R.HITCHMOUGH
M.MCCARTHY
S.COOK
J.CUNDICK
M.SCOTT
S.TURNER
C.BRIERLEY
C.CUSANI
P.ANGLESEA
R.HIGGS
J.HUXLEY.

REPLACEMENTS:

P.REES
P.LEDSON
P.HAMER
P.NEWTON

REFEREE: ED MORRISON (BRISTOL SOCIETY)
TOUCH JUDGES: S.SAVAGE (RFU) & M.FIRBY (RFU)



Dave Lyon



Chas Cusani

FAN ZONE WITH BOB FENTON

After a week of walking in aid of charity, Bob Fenton found the miracle cure for all his aches and pains on Sunday – victory over Wasps at Adams Park. He hasn't stopped smiling since.

▶ I'VE DISCOVERED a miracle cure. Don't laugh, I really have. I know it can take away muscle pain, can make you forget various blisters that have mutated into volcano-sized growths and immediately removes any tiredness caused by exercise or too much drink.

Want me to let you into the secret? It's called beating Wasps at Adams Park. At 2:30 on Sunday I was staggering round like some old codger (stop it), by 4:50 I was bouncing around like a spring chicken.

When James Haskell dived over the ball to give us an 85th minute penalty I knew Lamby would nail the three points, I knew we would win. In the moment the ball went through the uprights every muscle ache vanished, every blister gained over the previous five days was forgotten to be replaced by complete euphoria.

On the walk the Wasps boys gave us no

chance, on Thursday morning the radio Gloucestershire sports presenter said we would be lucky to come away with a losing bonus point, and fellow walker and Bath fan Aiden from Tewkesbury (who is hiding in the grandstand somewhere today) constantly chided me about who would be top of the pile on Sunday.

Oh ye of little faith. I have constantly said we have the squad to win things, we just had to believe. And on Sunday we believed and we fronted up big time. I saw a clip of film from inside the Wasps dressing room a couple of weeks ago, they had a couple of banners on the wall. One read "Dominate physically" the other "Defence wins championships", a mantra for their success over the years.

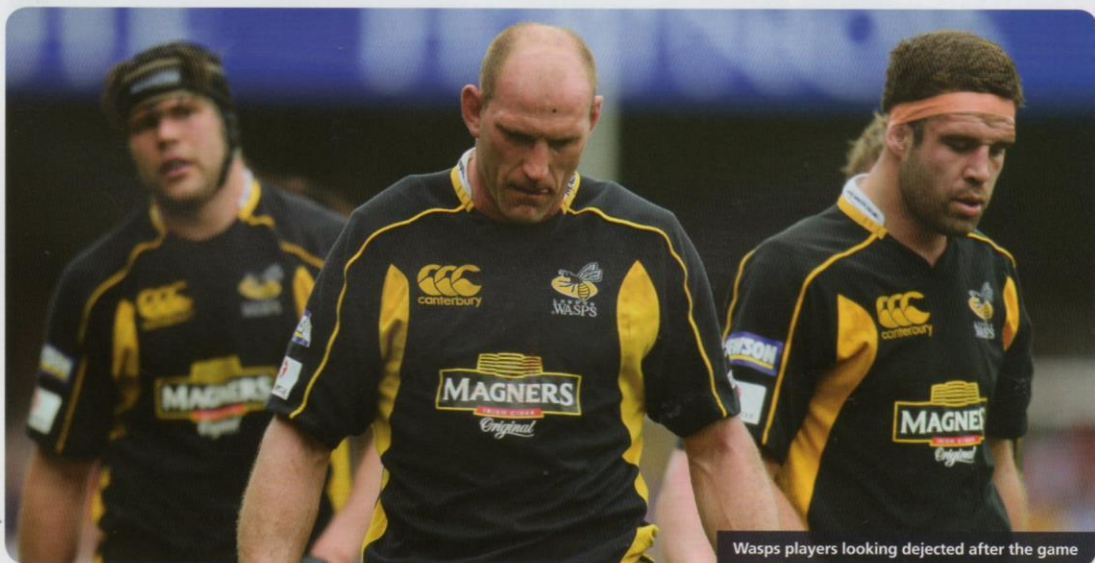
Well on Sunday we dominated them and our defence was superb. Maybe they hung the banners in the wrong dressing room...

By now you will have read all the reports so there is little for me to say other than to point to one incident that epitomised the determination of the Gloucester side last Sunday.

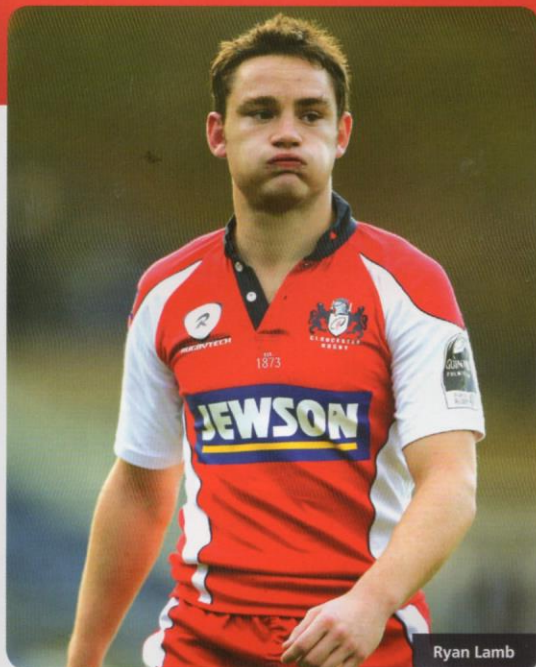
Big Joe Worsley – England international back row – tries to run through Anthony Allen. Not only does he get unceremoniously dumped into the turf the ball is expertly stripped by Ant, who scampers off up the pitch to set up another Gloucester attack. Excellent.

And of course what it has done is set up an excellent top of the table clash today – winner takes all. Well top place in the league at least. In a way it's a shame we have got play-offs, because the run in to the end of the season has been immense this year. At the time of writing (i.e. before Newcastle host Wasps) any one of three teams could finish top – who needs extra games when you have that pressure.

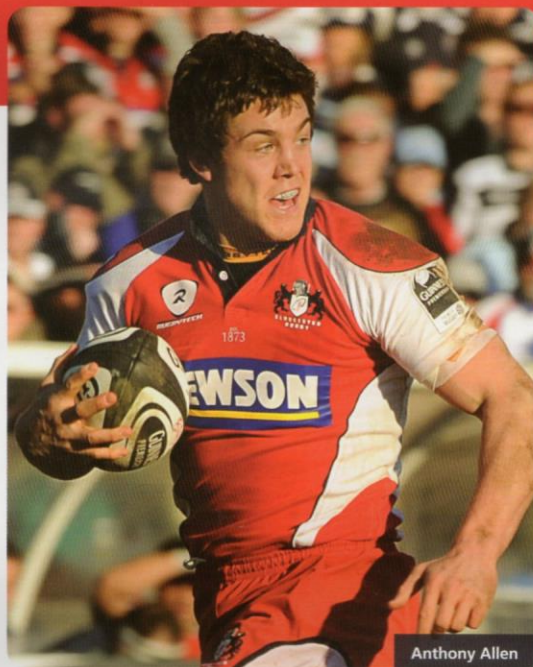
But, like them or loath them, play offs



Wasps players looking dejected after the game



Ryan Lamb



Anthony Allen



When James Haskell dived over the ball to give us an 85th minute penalty I knew Lambie would nail the three points, I knew we would win. In the moment the ball went through the uprights every muscle ache vanished, every blister gained over the previous five days was forgotten to be replaced by complete euphoria.

Bob Fenton on the Wasps game



are here to stay for now. This means that there is still plenty to play for today. Bath will be on a high after their demolition of Saracens last weekend, and what better way for them to sign off and hit the top spot than by putting one over on us.

And you can bet your cotton socks that one Olly Barkley will be doing his level best to show that he will not be doing any favours for his new employers. Any notions of a player going through the motions so he doesn't upset the new employer can be forgotten. Remember when Robert Todd left us for Sale? His last game for us was against them at Kingsholm – he played a blinder that day and ran in a try.

Of course a draw with both sides scoring four tries would be a bit of a result today – three points each would be enough

for us to finish in the top two spots and grab a home draw in the play of semi-final. I wonder what the odds of that happening are?

I can't finish this week's blurb without a mention of the walk, a good hike through the Cotswolds and Chilterns was a pretty good test for most of us, and torrential rain hitting us on the first day sapped the spirits a little. But that was the only really wet day, apart from a few showers here and there the weather was kind to us.

The reception we received at Stow, Chipping Norton, Bicester and Chinnor rugby clubs was superb. Fundraising events at each stop boosted the coffers, and I must say a big thank you to all the Gloucester fans who were handing me cash outside Adams Park on Sunday – it

did go into the bank account, honest.

On day two, from Charlton Kings to Stow, we had the pleasure of Premiership referee Ashley Rowden walking with us. What a good bloke he is, but boy can he talk – most of what he said is far too rude to be included here.

I have to say though, I was slightly concerned during the evening when he seemed to have a lot of difficulty reading his notes – a referee with dodgy eyesight??? Surely not...

As for the amount raised for the two charities – Breast Cancer Care and the Salvation Army – we're well on the way to £6,000. There's just under £4k on the two 'Just Giving' sites and with more money coming in all the time we will hopefully get up towards £7,500 – so thank you to everyone who has contributed.

Finally, in the very unlikely case that this is our last home game of the season, can I wish everyone a great summer and say thank you for reading my stuff.

See you back here in September, if not before...

MATCH ACTION

London Wasps
Gloucester Rugby

17
25



Time line

7 mins	
Qera TRY	0-5
10 mins	
Tindall TRY, Lamb CON	0-12
20 mins	
Cipriani PEN	3-12
24 mins	
Lamb PEN	3-15
27 mins	
Ibanez TRY, Cipriani CON	10-15
48 mins	
Morgan TRY, Lamb CON	10-22
62 mins	
Ibanez TRY, Staunton con	17-22
78 mins	
Lamb PEN	17-25

Gloucester Line-up

15	Olly Morgan	(1t)
14	Iain Balshaw	
13	Mike Tindall	(1t)
12	Anthony Allen	
11	James Simpson-Daniel	(1t)
10	Ryan Lamb	(2c, 2p)
9	Rory Lawson	
1	Nick Wood	
2	Andy Titterrell	
3	Carlos Nieto	
4	Marco Bortolami	(capt)
5	Alex Brown	
6	Alasdair Strokosch	
7	Akapusi Qera	
8	Luke Narraway	
REPS		
16	Olivier Azam	(Titterrell)
17	Alasdair Dickinson	(Wood)
18	Will James	(Brown)
19	Gareth Delve	(Narraway)
20	Peter Buxton	(Qera)
21	Gareth Cooper	(Lawson)
22	Willie Walker	(Morgan)

Glorious Gloucester sink Wasps

Sunday, May 4, Attendance: 10,000

Referee: Wayne Barnes

▶ GLOUCESTER produced one of their most complete performances of the season to collect a priceless victory away to Wasps last Sunday.

By combining their obvious cut and thrust potency with a shuddering intensity level, they gave Wasps a serious dose of how's your father to return to the summit of the Guinness Premiership.

It was almost impossible to pick a stand-out performer because this was a team performance from top to bottom. Gloucester executed a fantastic kicking game that caused all sorts of problems for Josh Lewsey, roared into the contact area

and were magnificent at the set-piece.

They also took their chances and can be rightly proud of their first ever away victory over Wasps in the league. Gloucester got the perfect start when Akapusi Qera carried possession to the right and Ryan Lamb aimed an expert kick towards Lewsey. Olly Morgan put in the perfect chase and when the Wasps full-back fumbled under pressure, James Simpson-Daniel scooped up the ball to score.

And when Gloucester attacked the short side three minutes later through Qera, Iain Balshaw and Alex Brown, the visitors moved the ball well enough to create enough space



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for Mike Tindall to charge his way through Paul Sackey for try number two.

Gloucester's advantage was significant but Wasps rallied and scored when Carlos Nieto was sent to the sinbin. They controlled a line-out close to the line and hooker Raphael Ibanez ploughed over. Wasps could have scored again before the break following a quick line-out routine but Rory Lawson made a brilliant try-saving tackle on Fraser Waters.

Gloucester's tackling was iron-hard all afternoon. Tackles flooded in from the likes of Anthony Allen and Lamb – and when replacement Willie Walker was called up he made a tremendous hit on

Shaw that saved a certain score in the second half.

Before that, Gloucester scored again. Lamb tackled Danny Cipriani and when Alasdair Strokosch turned the ball over, Lamb's kick slipped off the side of his boot. But Simpson-Daniel took it brilliantly, weaved out of Sackey's tackle and sent Morgan in for the score.

Although Ibanez grabbed his second of the game with 18 minutes to go to leave Wasps trailing 17-22, Gloucester shut the game out and when Lamb knocked over a long-range penalty at the death his clenched-fisted salute said it all.



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Man of the Match

Impossible to split – a real team effort

Coach's Comment



"We have double-banked Wasps in the league. They came into the game at Kingsholm on the back of five wins and we beat them. They came into this game on the back of eight wins and we beat them," head coach Dean Ryan.

