

Season 2009/10 - Volume 17

Saints v Gloucester

Saturday, April 17th, 2010

£3.00



SAINTS

Official Matchday Programme

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Main Sponsor





CLUB INFORMATION

Gloucester Rugby
Kingsholm
Kingsholm Road
Gloucester
www.gloucester rugby.co.uk

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Gloucester's first balance sheet showed a membership of 35 and total receipts of £11. In 2009/10 there are 6,200 season ticket holders at Kingsholm – how times have changed!
- The club has never had an official nickname; the 'Cherry and Whites' moniker came from the media!
- Gloucester finished top of the Guinness Premiership table in 2006/07 and 2007/08, although thanks to the play-off system they did not lift the trophy

CLUB PROFILE

Gloucester come to Franklin's Gardens this afternoon with the focus strictly on the 2009-10 Guinness Premiership run in.

Last weekend's Amlin Challenge Cup quarter final defeat at London Wasps ended Gloucester's interest in Europe, while the LV= Cup final defeat at the hands of the Saints means that Gloucester now face just their three remaining Guinness Premiership games before the end of the season.

It's the latest game in a schedule that has been gruelling of late to say the least. A fortnight ago saw Gloucester take on Saracens at Kingsholm in a televised fixture, the third game the side had played in a week including a midweek trip to Newcastle.

It's faintly reminiscent of the tail end of last season when Gloucester had to play the EDF Energy Cup Final on a Saturday, Worcester on the following Tuesday and London Wasps on the Saturday. It was a brutal way to sign off a campaign.

Ironically, Gloucester are perhaps a victim of their own success. Had the side not made the semi-final and, subsequently, final of the LV= Cup and progressed to the quarter finals in the ACC, midweek fixtures would not have been necessary.

It is also testimony, of course, to the progress made by Bryan Redpath's side after a difficult autumn threatened to make 2009/10 a very difficult first season on charge for the former Scotland scrum-half.

The optimism generated by the opening day win over local rivals Bath quickly dissipated as a number of suspensions and injuries forced Gloucester into a constant reshuffling of resources. Confidence dipped as a number of close results went against Gloucester.

However, the turn of the year heralded a change in fortunes as Redpath was finally able to start selecting from a full squad and the results started to come.

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The Heineken Cup was actually the catalyst for a series of positive results. The Kingsholm ground staff worked miracles to render the pitch playable with Britain gripped by snow and ice and a memorable victory over Biarritz was the result.

The side then went to Newport and scored their first try scoring bonus point of the season against the Dragons to clinch a spot in the ACC quarter final.

LV= Cup wins followed against Worcester and Harlequins, and, now on a roll, Gloucester then scored a total of 93 points in their next two home matches in the Guinness Premiership as Harlequins and Sale Sharks were duly despatched, although wins on the road proved to be more difficult to come by.

More recently, a bogey was laid to rest as a run of four successive defeats in various competitions against the Cardiff Blues was reversed as Gloucester celebrated their first ever visit to the Cardiff City Stadium with a 29-18 LV= Cup semi final win.

The final itself saw a great spectacle for the neutral as Gloucester and Northampton served up a feast of end to end, running rugby with the lead swapping hands several times and the result remaining in the balance until the very last whistle.

Gloucester will count themselves unlucky as several key decisions went against them. However, Northampton deserved the trophy and no-one will begrudge them that.

Gloucester still have a number of key matches left this season, today included, and an awful lot to play for. The fight for Heineken Cup qualification continues and every minute of every single game will be crucial.

With both teams gunning for the victory this afternoon and looking to bounce back from European defeats last weekend, it could be an entertaining one!



CLUB STATISTICS

Games played in Premiership

291

Wins

162

Draws

9

Losses

120

Most appearances

Adam Eustace (159)

Top points scorer

Ludovic Mercier (855)

Top try scorer

James Simpson-Daniel (52)

Total points for

6,858

Total points against

6,076

Total tries for

701

Total tries against

588

Most consecutive wins

8



UNSUNG HERO



CHALKY MEEK

When Gloucester take the field for this afternoon's game, resplendent in their Cherry and White hoops, give some thought to the man who has ensured that they turn out that way. Team Logistics Manager Chalky Meek has to look after the team kit in addition to his other duties and sometimes that can be quite a challenge.

Take the recent home game against Sale Sharks. A pre match downpour of biblical proportions left the game in real danger of being called off and only the sterling efforts of the Kingsholm ground staff resulted in the game going ahead.

Predictably, even in the pre-game warm ups, the players started to look as though they were playing in that game on the 1974 Lions tour during which Fran Cotton was so famously photographed. Yet, seven days later, the team ran out at Adams Park to take on London Wasps looking absolutely pristine. New shirts? No chance!

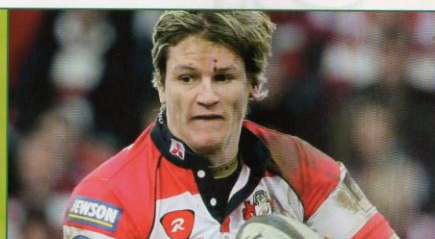
It's not all about the kit of course. Chalky travels ahead of the team to all away games, ensuring that everything is hunky dory at the team hotel before setting up the team's dressing room.

This season has seen some epic trips in the club's kit van. Travelling with the players' bags down to Biarritz in this year's Heineken Cup saved a fortune in luggage costs and, only a couple of weeks ago, Chalky made the trip up and down to Newcastle while the team flew in comfort!

But, you won't catch him complaining. He loves working in professional rugby and it's all part of the job to him!

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YOUNG GUN



FREDDIE BURNS

19-year-old fly half Freddie Burns has enjoyed a season to remember for Gloucester. He joined the Gloucester Academy from local rivals Bath and has burst onto the scene this season.

A fly half by preference, he is also more than capable of playing at full back as he has been proving in recent weeks.

His first opportunity to shine for the first XV came in the Guinness Premiership away fixture at Leeds Carnegie when he took the field as a replacement and immediately caught the eye with his ability to turn defence into attack.

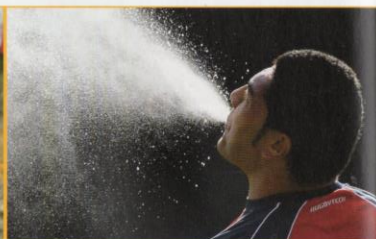
The LV= Cup has provided some of his high points this season as he scored four tries from five starts and featured in the final against today's opponents, Northampton Saints.

Freddie did miss some playing time midway through the season when he underwent surgery on his calves to cure a cramping problem which was curtailing his outings but has since bounced back in style.

He featured in England U20s Six Nations campaign in the spring and is a good bet to feature in this summer's IRB Junior World Cup before returning to Gloucester colours to play his part in Gloucester's run in.

Freddie made the headlines the weekend before last when his 19-point haul with the boot in the live televised fixture against Saracens earned him Man of the Match honours and his side a 29-28 win.

OPPOSITION INTERVIEW



Gareth Butler of the Gloucester Citizen interviews Lesley Vainikolo, the Gloucester wing who has come right back into form over the past few weeks.

"Oh man, I was tired!" That was the reaction of Lesley Vainikolo when asked how he felt after the Saracens game at Kingsholm a fortnight ago.

Despite Head Coach Bryan Redpath saying no-one would have to play all three games last week, injuries in the backs meant Vainikolo did just that.

The England international gave everything to the cause, starting with the 19-0 home win against Leeds and ending with the thrilling 29-28 nail biter with Saracens. Sandwiched between was a disappointing defeat to Newcastle at Kingston park, but resurgent form has seen the club move a world away from their early season woes.

Redpath admitted it wasn't a planned move to play the five-cap winger but with his hand forced, the move worked out better than he may have expected.

"I didn't intend it to happen but it was because of midfield injuries etc. He was good, I was chuffed for him. He's been playing very well.

"Since Christmas time he's had a great turnaround, in fact, since before then in coming back from his ruptured Achilles.

"He's been very consistent and people forget that, for a big man to rupture his Achilles and come back and function as well as he has, is quite a big deal."

But the Tongan born winger was not complaining – he was just delighted he had the fitness for 80 minutes in all three matches, a real plus for any team considering the packed nature of the European rugby calendar nowadays.

"I felt tired but at the same time I felt good that we got the result at home," he said. "The one thing I've been working hard at is my fitness.

"Sometimes it takes a while to come back from injury but since Christmas it has been good. I'm pretty happy with it."

The injury Vainikolo is talking about is the ruptured Achilles tendon which kept him out for nine months of the last calendar year.

He admits that only now does he feel at one with his game, with a stability both on and off the field that allows him to go out and enjoy himself.

There are several factors within that. He had a tumultuous 2008/09 season off the field with deaths in his family and charges against him. Add in the injury and it is not hard to see why he struggled with his game.

When asked about it he makes it clear that for the first time he feels confident playing rugby union since he switched codes from Bradford Bulls

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LESLEY VAINIKOLO

in 2007, even though he touched down 11 times in his debut season with the club.

"I'm happy with where I am. It's where I wanted to be when I came back from injury," he said. "I've picked up fitness and picked up my form and I feel pretty good."

"I feel more involved and just more comfortable out there with the boys."

Asked if he felt like he had finally settled into the union format after switching from league, he said: "You could say that, definitely."

And on the almost constant flow of law changes since he swapped codes?

"That makes me confused," he said. "But I'm enjoying my time here."

Vainikolo was one of a host of players to turn down moves elsewhere to sign a new two-year

contract at Kingsholm. It will take him into a fifth season with the club and he has already made over 60 appearances for the Cherry and Whites.

However, he said the move was down to family more than anything else.

"My family didn't want to move. I've settled in with my wife and my son really well."

"It's always your family," he added. "Kava's doing really well."

"He's in nursery two days a week. After a hard day's training you go home and your son is there calling your name and giving you a big kiss and the tiredness is gone."

Following a March packed with Guinness Premiership action, Vainikolo will likely continue his run in the Gloucester starting XV as he and his team face a rematch with Northampton Saints, a team they faced in the agonising LV=

Cup final defeat less than a month ago.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Vainikolo made a stunning start to his time at Gloucester and in rugby union by scoring five tries on debut.

Despite becoming a full England international, Vainikolo is Tongan born and represented New Zealand internationally during his rugby league days.

He once ran the 100m in 10.6 seconds in qualifying for the 1998 Junior World Athletic Championships.



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NORTHAMPTON SAINTS

	1 Prop SOANE TONGA'UIHA		2 Hooker DYLAN HARTLEY (C)		3 Prop EUAN MURRAY
	4 Lock IGNACIO FERNANDEZ LOBBE		5 Lock JUANDRE KRUGER		6 Flanker COURTNEY LAWES
	7 Flanker PHIL DOWSON		8 No. 8 ROGER WILSON	REPLACEMENTS 16 Brett SHARMAN 17 Regardt DREYER 18 Brian MUJATI 19 Mark EASTER 20 Neil BEST 21 Alan DICKENS 22 Shane GERAGHTY 23 Joe ANSBRO	
	9 Scrumhalf LEE DICKSON		10 Flyhalf STEPHEN MYLER		
	11 Wing BRUCE REIHANA		12 Centre JAMES DOWNEY		
	13 Centre JON CLARKE		14 Wing CHRIS ASHTON		15 Fullback BEN FODEN

GLOUCESTER

	1 Prop ALASDAIR DICKINSON		2 Hooker OLIVIER AZAM		3 Prop PAUL DORAN- JONES
	4 Lock WILL JAMES		5 Lock MARCO BORTOLAMI		6 Flanker JAKE BOER
	7 Flanker APO SATALA		8 No. 8 ADAM EUSTACE	REPLACEMENTS 16 Scott LAWSON 17 Nick WOOD 18 Pierre CAPDEVIELLE 19 Alex BROWN 20 Akapusi QERA 21 Jordi PASQUALIN 22 Nicky ROBINSON 23 James SIMPSON-DANIEL	
	9 Scrumhalf RORY LAWSON		10 Flyhalf TIM TAYLOR		
	11 Wing LESLEY VAINIKOLO		12 Centre ELIOTA FUIMAONO- SAPOLU		
	13 Centre TIM MOLENAAR		14 Wing CHARLIE SHARPLES		15 Fullback FREDDIE BURNS