



THE PRIDE THE PASSION THE HONOUR THE HISTORY

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

ONLY £3

AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY
vs. HARLEQUINS
25 FEBRUARY 2012, KO 6PM

REGULARS

CLUB NEWS,
DAVE KING,
BOB FENTON,
PETER ARNOLD,
THE CITIZEN



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DreamTeam

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WORLD AND LOCAL RUGBY NEWS

GR MATCHDAY PROGRAMME
EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

ALEX BROWN

PART OF THE GLOUCESTER SKYLINE SINCE 2003



COMES TO **KINGSHOLM**

ON PAGE 38



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Captain's CORNER



The important thing now is for us to build on what we've achieved over the past two weeks. And we couldn't wish for a couple of tougher opponents!

IT'S great to be writing these programme notes on the back of two really impressive wins!

Too often this season we've produced a good performance only to slip up the following weekend.

But wins over the Northampton Saints and away at Bath are not to be sniffed at, especially in successive weekends.

It's a real tribute to the hard work being put in by everyone at the club, players and coaches alike, as we look to finish this season as high as we possibly can in the table.

We've been talking about this group of four Aviva Premiership fixtures as being pivotal to our overall season for quite some time now and to start off with two wins is a fantastic achievement.

They've not been easy, far from it! In fact, both games have been settled by a margin of only three points.

I guess that's indicative of just how tight the Premiership is this season. The table itself tells its own story. We were fourth briefly following the win

at Bath but finished the weekend in sixth place.

There's still only seven points separating Northampton in third place from London Irish in eighth position so, with seven rounds still to play, there's still going to be a fair amount of jostling for position to qualify for the play offs and next season's Heineken Cup.

The important thing now is for us to build on what we've achieved over the past two weeks. And we couldn't wish for a couple of tougher opponents!

Harlequins are familiar foes this season. We've played them twice in the Heineken Cup and also in the Aviva Premiership down at the Stoop. Believe me, we need no reminding that we've yet to win!

The two Heineken games were incredibly hard fought. We didn't take our chances in the game at Kingsholm whereas they did and we only lost out at the Stoop thanks to that wickedly bouncing ball near our own line.

So, it's a massive game and I'm hoping that I might be able to play

some part in it as I've had a frustrating few weeks on the sideline.

It's been a rough ride recently for the back row with myself, Bucko, Strokes, Hazey, Deacs and Gareth Evans all missing time due to injury.

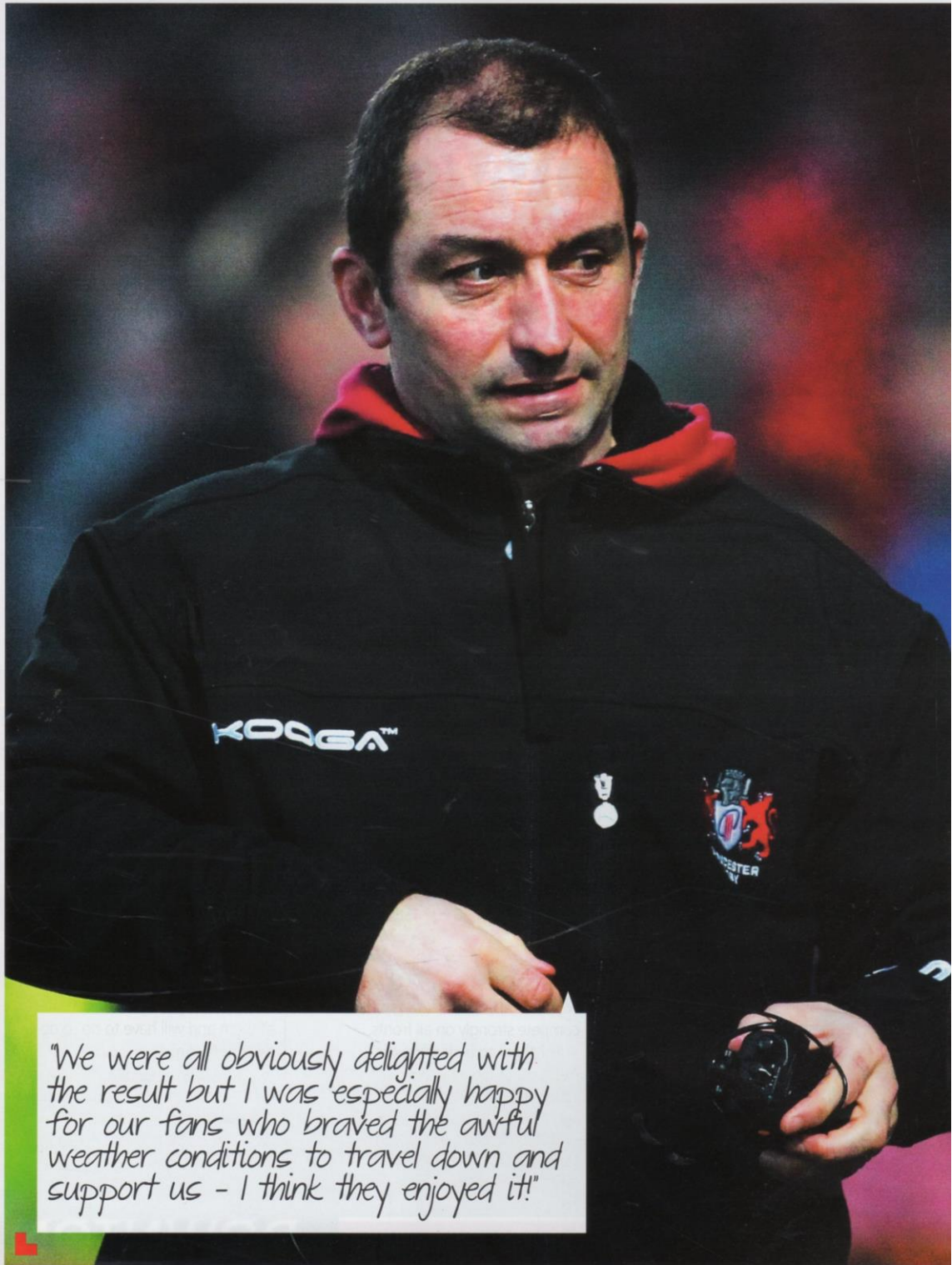
But fair play to the likes of Matt Cox and Tom Savage who have come in and been absolutely fantastic. And obviously Akapusi Qera has been immense on the openside.

That's one of the great aspects of our squad this season. There are no egos, no-one grumbling that they miss out on selection for a few weeks. Everyone keeps working hard and, when their chance comes along, they grab it with both hands.

That's the sort of approach we'll need this weekend. Everyone playing for each other and playing for the shirt.

If we get that right, combined with the amazing support we always get here at home, then we'll be on the right track.

Enjoy the game!



"We were all obviously delighted with the result but I was especially happy for our fans who braved the awful weather conditions to travel down and support us - I think they enjoyed it!"

Coach's NOTES

with Head Coach, **BRYAN REDPATH**

ON BEHALF OF EVERYONE AT GLOUCESTER RUGBY, I'D LIKE TO WISH THE PLAYERS, STAFF AND SUPPORTERS OF HARLEQUINS A VERY WARM WELCOME TO KINGSHOLM THIS EVENING.

WE'RE now really getting to the business end of the season and there's a lot riding on each and every game.

We've just come through two massive Aviva Premiership fixtures, against two very good opponents in Northampton and Bath, and I'm delighted that we've taken eight points from them.

Both games were settled by less than a score and, while I'd rather be winning matches by a slightly wider margin (!), I'm glad that we're now coming out on top in these close matches whereas we lost a few before Christmas.

We also clinched those wins with two vastly different performances, which I'm pleased about as it shows that we are starting to be able to adapt our game to the circumstances on the day.

Northampton here a fortnight ago was an open game at times. Both teams were looking to play a bit of rugby and that made for an entertaining game.

Our backs got their hands on the ball quite a bit as did Northampton's and there were some good tries scored on the day.

So, last weekend was a bit of a contrast to say the least! To be fair, we were monitoring the weather forecast a few days before the game so we were pretty sure of how things would play out on the day.

The irony is that the media were talking all week about the threat posed by our backs whereas, on the day, it turned out to be a good old fashioned arm wrestle up front in the mud at the Rec!

We could have made it easier on ourselves as we left quite a few points

out there in the first half. We had a six point lead but it should have been a few more really.

A fight back from Bath was expected and it duly came. With the game all square on the hour, it could have gone either way but I think our approach in the final quarter was spot on.

Credit to young Ryan Mills who kicked the penalty that edged us into the lead but, after that, we did the smart thing by making sure that we played the game in the right areas of the pitch.

We were all obviously delighted with the result but I was especially happy for our fans who braved the awful weather conditions to travel down and support us – I think they enjoyed it!

Which brings us to Harlequins today and another game with a huge amount riding on it.

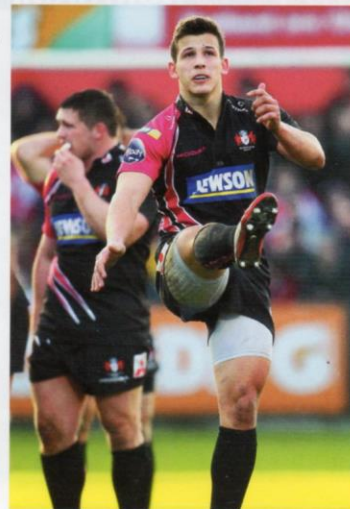
Fair play to Conor O'Shea's side, they continue to set the pace at the top of the table. After they made that blistering start to the season, a lot of pundits expected them to wobble a bit but they're still going strong.

Critics may point out that they bowed out of the Heineken Cup at the pool stage as we did ourselves. However, we know full well how difficult it is to compete strongly on all fronts.

For them to be leading the Premiership table by six points and to have only lost two games so far is a significant achievement.

They'll probably be missing a few players to international duty, including their skipper Chris Robshaw who has been excellent for them this season, but their strength in depth is impressive.

They've had the measure of us so far



this season but the previous games count for nothing this afternoon. It's all about what happens in the 80 minutes today.

So, we're under no illusions about the size of the task in hand this afternoon. We have just seven games left to play in the regular season and each and every one of them is a cup final for us.

In recent weeks the squad have handled everything that's been thrown at them and will have to do so again this afternoon.

But there's no greater incentive than pulling on the Cherry and White shirt and performing in front of our own supporters here on our own turf.

It should be a superb occasion and your support, as always, will be a key factor.

Enjoy the game

COMMUNITY
GLOUCESTER RUGBY IN THE COMMUNITY
ON PAGE 54

View from
The Citizen



WITH NICK PUREWAL

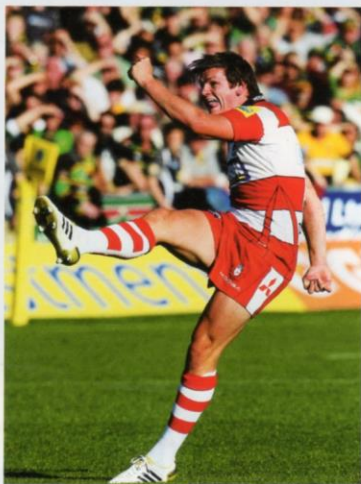
WEST COUNTRY BOY

“THE WIN WAS EVERYTHING THOUGH, IT WAS A SLIGHTLY SURREAL ATMOSPHERE AND OCCASION FOR ME...”

For the teenager serving chips at The Rec there could have been no greater insult.

An adolescent Freddie Burns would have offered a positively agricultural response if told that one day in the future he would help guide Gloucester to victory over the Blue, Black and Whites.

But now the 21-year-old has managed that feat two years in a row - and he conceded the feeling may always be surreal.



Burns grew up dreaming of Bath glory, but he is now a proud Cherry and Whites convert - he has even cajoled his parents into following Gloucester's fortunes.

As the Gloucester team coach drifted past many of Burns' childhood haunts - not least his family home - en route to Saturday's West Country derby, the speed of the England Saxons cap's ascent hit home once again.

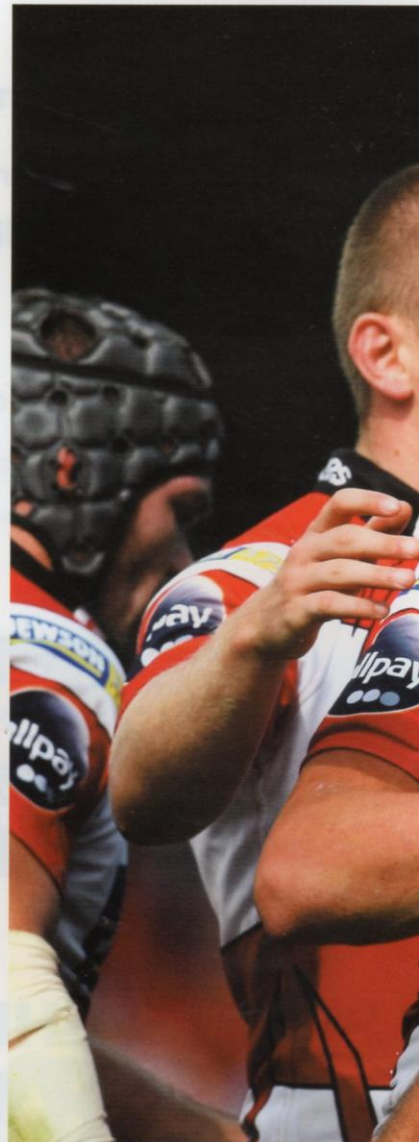
Burns produce another mature and controlled performance in Gloucester's 14-11 Premiership win over Bath at the weekend.

He could have been forgiven for a quiet pat on the back - instead he pledged to keep up the hard goal-kicking graft.

An inexplicable first-half penalty miss in front of the posts would have ravaged one less composed.

Instead Burns let the jeers bounce off him - and later nailed a tricky goal from near halfway on the stroke of half-time.

At a loss to account for missing that regulation strike, Burns said it was a good indication of the fact that training ground work always stops - but must never end.



Burns explained:

"It was slightly strange on the coach down, seeing all the familiar faces and pretty much driving past my house, and it definitely had an odd feeling.

"But to do the double again over the local rivals is great, and we're all pretty happy.

"If you'd told me about all this when I was working here serving the chips, the politest way to put it, I'd probably have told you 'get lost'!

"I've come a long way in a short space of time, and there have been a

few reasons in the last few weeks to realise that.

"They were the best chips around when I was down there, so I had to check they were keeping up the standards in my absence after the game!

"The win was everything though, it was a slightly surreal atmosphere and occasion for me, but the result was great.

"I shanked a couple of kicks but luckily enough they didn't come back to bite me.

"I don't really know what

“...TO DO THE DOUBLE AGAIN OVER THE LOCAL RIVALS IS GREAT, AND WE’RE ALL PRETTY HAPPY.”

happened with that one, I must have got a bad contact or my foot must have slipped.

"Nine times out of ten you're going to land that one, but it's the kind of kick that just underlines how you must always keep working hard at that side of the game.

"But I'll always step up and go for kicks even if I miss a couple, just like I did before half-time.

"That's the key thing for me, that I've got to strike a miss from my mind and just step up again.

"As soon as you miss one kick like that, in a derby game the crowd will get on your back, so you have to move on quickly.

"It was a bit of a saving grace that Barks missed one from in front as well, so it wasn't just me. But it's always something you keep trying to improve."

Refocusing on Saturday's Kingsholm clash with Harlequins, Burns said Gloucester must capitalise on their buoyant mood.

He added:

"It's two tight games we've come out of, and Bath were in some good form so that's two on the bounce now and we've got to take that forward.

"The forwards really gave us a chance to control the game at Bath, so they deserve a huge amount of credit.

"Hopefully against Quins we can produce something similar, and if the pack go well we can back them up as a backline."





DAVE KING'S WORLD OF RUGBY

THE MAGIC NUMBER

It would appear that to score a hat trick of tries in the game of Rugby Union is a more difficult achievement than scoring three goals in the game of Association Football.

In the professional era we have witnessed no fewer than twelve players who have scored three or more tries in the regular Premiership season for Gloucester Rugby.

Pride of place to be the first player

to appear for the 'Cherry & Whites' and achieve this distinction goes to former Bristol player Mike Lloyd, who scored three tries versus West Hartlepool here at Kingsholm on 18th January 1997 in a 37 points to 10 victory.

There was almost a period of two years before Chris Catling became the second player to achieve this feat when he did so against Newcastle on 17th October 1998 here at

Kingsholm, in a high scoring encounter where we triumphed by 41 points to 32.

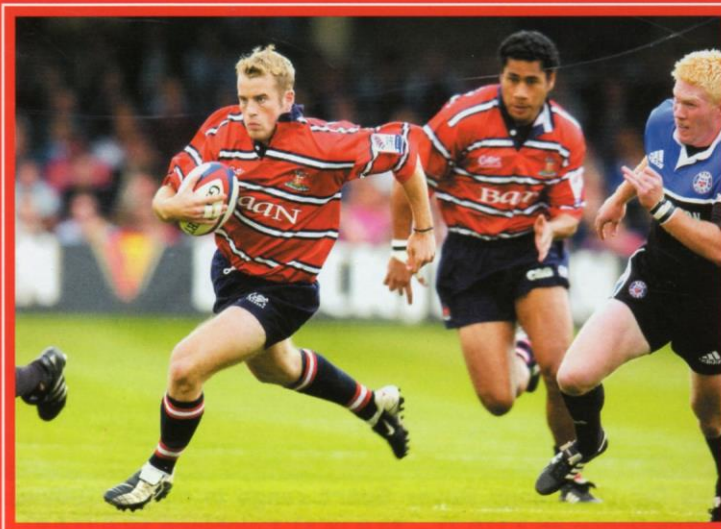
In the penultimate match of the 1999-2000 season, Elton Moncrieff surpassed the hat trick figure when he touched down on four occasions in a resounding 60 points to 17 victory here at Kingsholm.

On the receiving end were hapless Bedford on this occasion. The victory completed a double over the Goldington Road Club that season. Elton Moncrieff is the only scrum half to record a hat trick of tries for this club following the advent of professional rugby.

The following season, 2000-2001, witnessed the Frenchman Frank Schisano becoming the first 'Cherry & Whites' player to achieve a hat trick of tries in an away league match.

The French wing three quarter did so at Rotherham on 2nd September in a narrow victory by 29 points to 23. It was a welcome win after two defeats in our opening matches of that season.

The fifth player to register a hat trick was the mesmeric James Simpson-Daniel in a victory to savour, as visitors Bath were put



to the sword in a comprehensive 68 points to 12 victory at Kingsholm.

It was a nine try rout in the penultimate match of the season on 4th May. The 2001-2002 season could not have ended on a more satisfactory note!

The 2002-2003 season was notable for the fact there were two hat trick heroes for Gloucester.

In a 21st September meeting with south west rivals Bristol, it was wing three-quarter Marcel Garvey who set the Kingsholm crowd of 10,117 alight with three tries in an emphatic 45 points to 18 win. There were six tries scored on that autumn afternoon.

Once again Bristol were unfortunate to meet a rampaging 'Cherry & Whites' fifteen at the Memorial Ground.

The return fixture staged on 16th March saw James Forrester score the club's seventh hat trick in League matches. The 38 points to 21 victory once again included six tries, identical to the tally in the September meeting at Kingsholm!

A period of four seasons elapsed before we were to witness more scoring mayhem.

As the opening day fixture of the 2007-2008 season at Leeds dawned, no-one could have visualised a player scoring five tries on his debut and particularly in an away match.

Yes, that is precisely what occurred as Rugby League convert – Lesley Vainikolo astounded all with a nap hand on 16th September in a 49 points to 24 victory. There were eight tries recorded in that initial fixture.

Once again, like Bristol four years previous, a double was completed when Leeds were powerless to prevent the 'Cherry & Whites' recording a 39-16 victory on 19th April at Kingsholm. The ninth player to score a hat trick of tries was Akapusi Qera in that victory.

The 2008-2009 season witnessed Newcastle as the third visitors to Kingsholm that season.

A 39 points to 23 victory saw Iain Balshaw become the tenth player to register the coveted hat trick of tries on 30th September. The North East club conceded five tries on that autumn day.

The irrepressible James Simpson-Daniel became the first player to record a second hat trick for the club!

He did so in a rout of Harlequins here at Castle Grim in a comprehensive 46 points to 6 victory in a match where six tries were scored against the men from The Stoop. It was the eleventh hat trick of the professional era registered by a 'Cherry & White'.

Last season saw the burgeoning talent of Charlie Sharples become the twelfth player to accomplish a hat trick of tries.

A dispirited Sale XV slumped to a

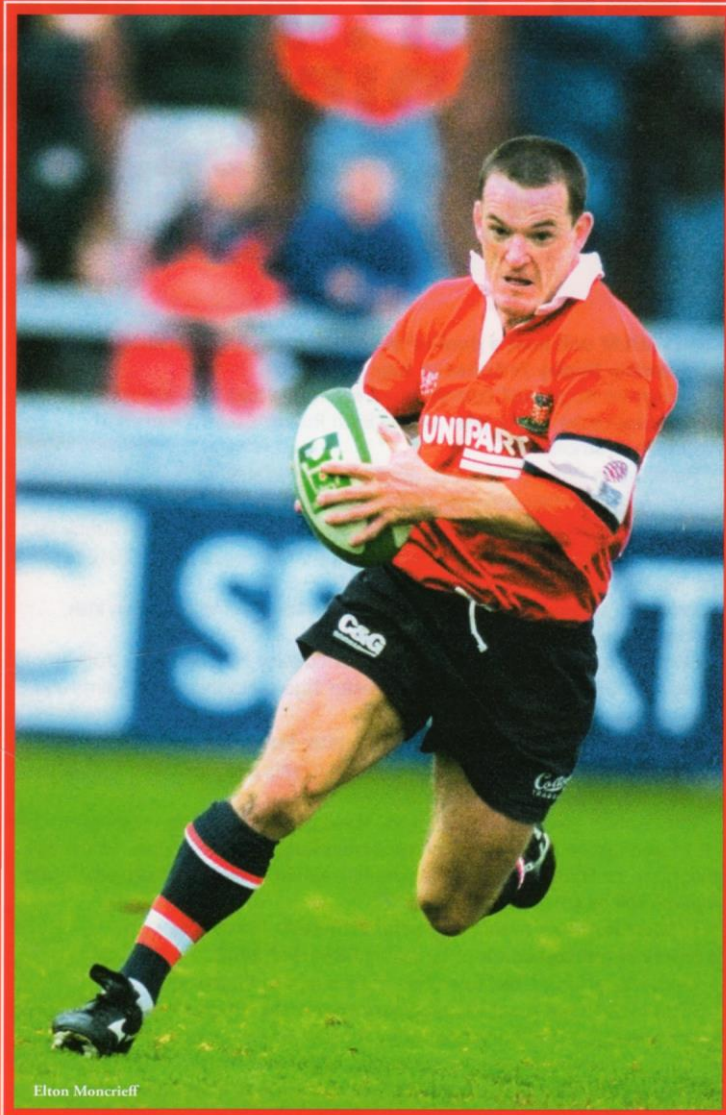
68 points to 17 defeat. The England International and former Wycliffe College student led the way in a ten try rout in the final match of the season here at Kingsholm on May 7th.

Obviously wing three quarters take centre stage where the majority of hat tricks are recorded.

Yet James Forrester and Akapusi Qera have shown the devastation a back row forward can cause.

Elton Moncrieff's achievement as a beacon of light for any aspiring scrum half to emulate his feat.

Who will be next to claim the thirteenth spot?



Elton Moncrieff

J.P.Morgan
Asset Management

**PREMIERSHIP
RUGBY
7s SERIES**

THE J.P. MORGAN 7S SERIES COMES TO KINGSHOLM!

KINGSHOLM will host a pool of the J.P. Morgan Asset Management Premiership Rugby 7s Series in July.

Gloucester Rugby will host the third event on Thursday 26th July, and joining Gloucester in this pool will be Bath Rugby, Exeter Chiefs and Worcester Warriors.

The exciting summer 7s series, growing in popularity each year, returns to provide fans with four evenings of fast flowing rugby entertainment.

Having hosted the J.P. Morgan Asset Management Premiership Rugby 7s Series Final last season, Harlequins will host the first event of the 2012 series at the Twickenham Stoop on Friday 13th July.

Joining hosts Harlequins in this pool will be London rivals London Irish, London Wasps and last year's finalists Saracens.

Sale Sharks will host the second event at Edgeley Park on Friday 20th July. Up against Sale in this pool will be Leicester Tigers, Northampton Saints and last year's winners Newcastle Falcons.

The third event will be hosted by Gloucester Rugby at Kingsholm on Thursday 26th July, with Bath Rugby, Exeter Chiefs and Worcester Warriors joining Gloucester in this pool.

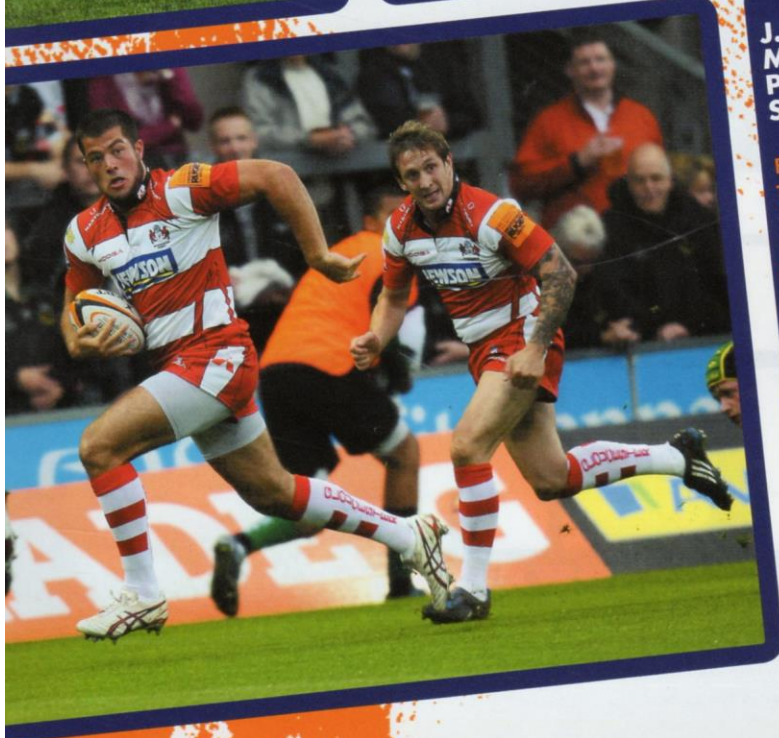
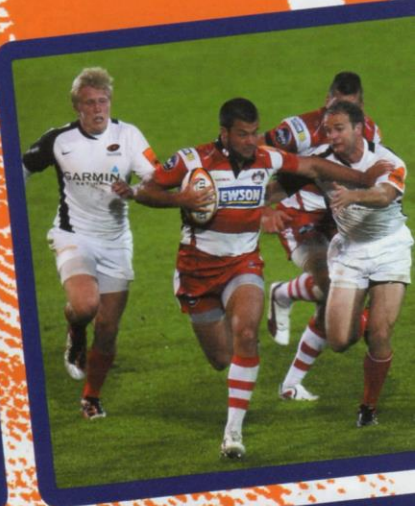
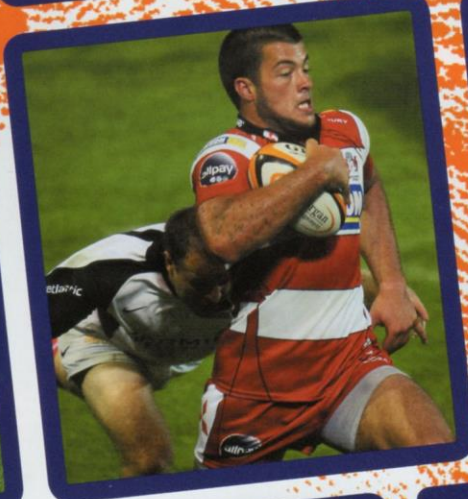
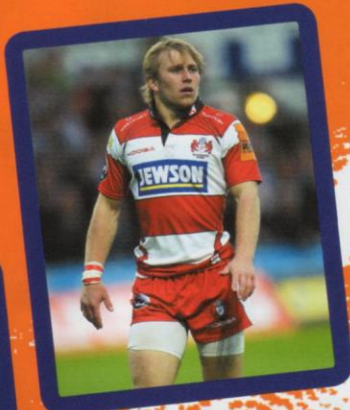
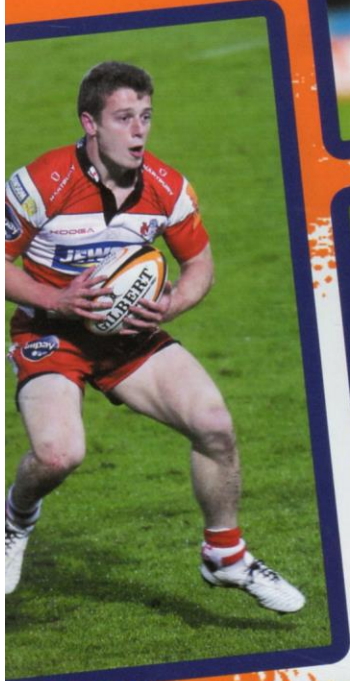
The top two seeds from each of the three pools will then go through to the J.P. Morgan Asset Management Premiership Rugby 7s Series Final, which will take place on Friday 3rd August at the Recreation Ground in Bath, where the winners will be crowned.

Tickets for all four events are available through Ticketmaster on www.ticketmaster.co.uk or by calling **0844 847 2492**.

Mark McCafferty, Chief Executive of Premiership Rugby, said:

"The J.P. Morgan Asset Management Premiership Rugby 7s Series, now into its third year, is a fantastic opportunity for fans to come down and see some world-class Premiership Rugby talent play high-octane fast-running rugby and experience the friendly party atmosphere of the 7s on a summer's evening."





**J.P. MORGAN ASSET
MANAGEMENT
PREMIERSHIP RUGBY 7S
SERIES EVENTS:**

**Friday 13th July,
The Twickenham Stoop**
Featuring... Harlequins, London Irish,
London Wasps, Saracens

**Friday 20th July,
Edgeley Park, Stockport**
Featuring... Sale Sharks,
Leicester Tigers, Newcastle Falcons,
Northampton Saints

**Thursday 26th July,
Kingsholm, Gloucester**
Featuring... Gloucester Rugby,
Bath Rugby, Exeter Chiefs,
Worcester Warriors

**Friday 3rd August,
The Recreation Ground, Bath, Final**
Featuring – the top two seeds from
each of the three Pools.

You Tube CLIP
The Bunker Master



Uploaded by:
andrewhazell7



Loving Top Gear
back on the box
#dreamjob

Tweeted by:
@alex_browny

KOOBA



HIGH FLYER

ALEX BROWN

MATTER OF FACT

Brown picked up the Gillette Power Award for the 2006-07 season for his defensive prowess

An old quote states that 'time stands still for no man' and that's particularly true for any professional sportsman.

EVEN those who are fortunate enough to avoid injury and retire from the game on their own terms will have a reasonably short career compared to other professions.

It's a thought that occurred to Gloucester Rugby second row Alex Brown as he looked back this week on an eventful year at the club.

When the popular Bristolian last featured in the matchday programme, he'd just signed a new contract with the club and was preparing to play in an LV= Cup pool match against London Irish. The reminder took him by surprise.

"Wow, that's amazing! Where did the time go? Looking back to last season, I guess we were just about to start on our run to the LV= Cup Final.

"That turned out to be a great day, one to remember. Winning anything is special but that final was very much a starting point for us.

"We wanted to push on to achieve greater things and we very nearly did as we were desperately unlucky to lose in the Aviva Premiership semi final."

This season has turned out to be very much one of two halves for Brown. Expecting to play a pivotal role in the club's campaign while several team mates were away on Rugby World Cup duty, he was unfortunate to go down injured in the season opener at Northampton.

"It was frustrating beyond words. I'd put in all the hard work during preseason and was really looking forward to playing a senior role during the World Cup.

"To go down with a serious injury so early was a nightmare. The guys who stepped up and filled the gaps while I was injured and Jim was away – Tom Savage, Peter Buxton, Will James – did a great job, but I was still incredibly disappointed."

He made his playing comeback in

an A League fixture in early January and, in hindsight, knows that having his shoulder operated on was absolutely the right course of action despite the lengthy absence.

"Without a doubt. It had to be done. I could have carried on but it would have still been there, nigging me, and I probably wouldn't have done myself or the team justice. Now, it's done and dealt with."

While he was out of playing action,



"...credit to the club, the city, the supporters. It's the sort of club you want to be part of and you want to stay at."

there was a fairly significant event in his personal life – the arrival of a second child – daughter Sienna.

"She's great, three months old and doing fantastically well. I love being a family man and it helps to keep the rugby in perspective because

sometimes you can get bogged down in it.

"You come back home and they're screaming for Daddy! They don't care if you've won or lost, played well or badly, you're always Man of the Match in their eyes."

Staying on matters away from the playing field, he's now starting to sit down and plan events with his testimonial committee as he nears 10 years with the club.

Does he appreciate that he's now on the verge of the media referring to him as a veteran?

(Laughs) "It sort of creeps up on you. The funny thing is that you just don't see it happening to you. You carry on convincing yourself that you're still as young as everyone else in the dressing room.

"But I listen to some of the stories that some of the younger lads tell in the dressing room and find myself shaking my head in disbelief sometimes. Then I remind myself that I was exactly the same not so long ago."

Talk of testimonials reminds the 32 year old that he's the latest Gloucester player to have that honour bestowed upon them and he insists that it's all down to the qualities of the club.

"The fact that so many of us have been here to qualify for testimonials speaks for itself. In recent years, it's been Hazey, Zed, Sinbad and Bucko. Mine is coming up and so is Olly Morgan's.

"That's credit to the club, the city, the supporters. It's the sort of club you want to be part of and you want to stay at.

"To qualify for a testimonial is a real honour and I'm planning to make sure that my year has a real cross section of events to cater for everyone who supports Gloucester Rugby, from the people in the corporate boxes to those who pack the Shed every week."

KINGSHOLM NEWS

WITH BOB FENTON

ANOTHER WIN AT THE WRECK... MUDDY MARVELLOUS! IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN PRETTY FOR A NEUTRAL (OR INDEED BATH SUPPORTER) TO WATCH BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER A MORE ENTHRALLING GAME FOR A LONG TIME.

Gloucester looked like the better side throughout the first half and, had it not been for a few missed opportunities, would have been out of sight at half time.

A bit of a turnaround in the second though, and it could have gone either way in the second half – not good for my fingernails or blood pressure, I can assure you.

Coming so close on the heels of the hard fought win over Northampton a couple of weeks ago, when once again my pulse rate headed upwards towards stratospheric levels – I'm hoping for something a bit more straight forward today.

However, given the opposition, I think that any win is going to be a close run thing.

When the fixture list for the season came out I looked at this run of four games – Saints, Bath, Quins and then Leicester as a bit of a season defining period and thought if we could come out of that with a couple of home wins and a losing bonus point or two that would be a fair result.

Well, two wins out of two is ahead of my prediction. A win today and we'll be well entrenched in the business half of the table with a trip to Leicester – on a day when they are likely to be without a few of their key players – should hold



no terrors.

When I think back to the 'are we relegation candidates' threads on the website from a bit earlier this season, it's fair to say that a wry smile may cross my face.

It is frustrating though; we pull great wins out at a place like Bath, and then blow it all by getting dumped on at the likes of Newcastle. I wish I had the answer to that little conundrum, but I guess if I did, I would be doing something else for a living.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves though; we have a pretty tough nut to crack in the shape of the multi-coloured men from the Stoop.

Long gone are the days when Quins at home was seen as a bit

of a foregone conclusion. They have become a formidable outfit and rightly sit at the head of the table at the moment.

We owe them one though, we've crossed swords with them three times this season, and three times we've taken a bit of a spanking.

In fact the aggregate scores on the doors makes for painful reading – those of a nervous disposition should skip to the next bit – Harlequins 90, Gloucester 29.

Roughly the same score as that fateful day at The Stoop about 10 years ago just after Richer Dill became coach!

I think much of Harlequins success must go down to their Director of Rugby, Conor O'Shea. He has to be one of the nicest

“MAYBE THE NEW ENGLAND MANAGEMENT TEAM WILL BE A BIT MORE OPEN MINDED WHEN IT COMES TO PICKING THEIR FRONT ROW? LET’S HOPE SO BECAUSE I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT THERE IS A MORE DESERVING CAUSE.”

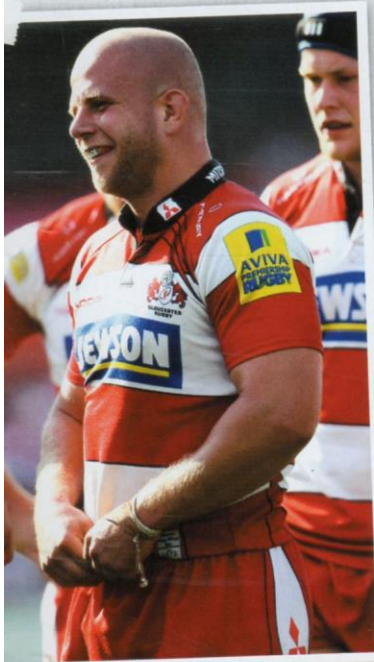
men in the sport, I don't think I have ever seen or read a bad word from him about anything.

He was great to watch as a player too, and many people here today will remember that horrible broken leg he suffered at Kingsholm in about 1999 (I think).

Weirdly the accident occurred pretty much right in front of where the Quins' replacements and team will be sitting today, I hope he doesn't spend too much time remembering.

Going back to the Bath game for a moment, it was great to see Nick Wood getting the plaudits from the TV commentators during and after the match. If ever there was a contender for the 'unsung hero' award it's Woody.

For as long as we have had



one, I have voted for him as Player of the Season and every time he has been beaten. Therefore I can only assume that I am his personal jinx and, this year will be voting for Tom Voyce (sorry Tom!), in the hope that the curse transfers and Wood rightly gets the prize.

He is Mr Dependable and the lists of opposition props that have bested him is very short – on the other hand the list of opposition props he has pummelled into the turf is pretty impressive.

How he has not got higher honours is a mystery to many people, and not just the one-eyed faithful of GL1. But, for all the 'mentioned in dispatches', he has yet to pick up the medal.

Maybe the new England management team will be a

bit more open minded when it comes to picking their front row? Let's hope so because I seriously doubt that there is a more deserving cause.

I mentioned crunch matches a bit earlier and they don't come much bigger than Shedweb RFC vs The Cherrypickers.

It's not long now until this annual festival of free-flowing rugby takes place, and this year it's going to happen right here at Kingsholm on April 21 straight after the match against Sale.

This year's chosen charity is Winston's Wish, so local lads slugging it out for a local charity. So put it in your diary and try to stay on for it, matches like these will become a thing of the past soon, so enjoy them while you can.

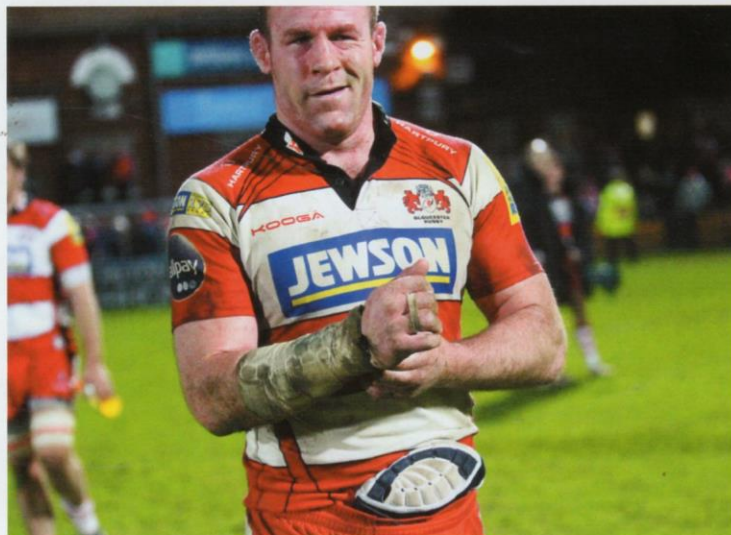


Gloucester

with Peter Arnold

talk

MONEY MATTERS



I AM frequently amazed by the different ways some people see the game. One follower's hero can be another's no-hoper.

Not so long ago, one supporter was heard to say that he couldn't, for the life of him, see why "...they keep picking Buxton. He never seems to do anything..."

Of course, he was missing the point. Much of the work of a class No.6 takes place where it can't be seen from the

stands.

It happens down there in the dark and dangerous bowels of the loose, retrieving and stealing the ball from the enemy, or stopping him doing the same to you.

Bucko is, of course, a master, but he's never going to get the same plaudits as a Charlie Sharples when he's paralysing the opposition with his sheer pace and guile.

Unfortunately, we're about to lose

another proficient practitioner of the art.

Alasdair Strokosch has, one suspects, been lured away to France, and the chap wouldn't be human if the prospect of copious supplies of Euros didn't partly influence his thinking.

One always has to remember that rugby is a dangerous game and a career in the game is relatively short. You have to make your money while you can, and that's especially true if you have a family to look after.

The big bone of contention is the fact that French clubs don't have a salary cap to contend with, while the rest of us do.

I note that various Welsh pundits, who will be faced by a cap next year, are particularly incensed by the situation.

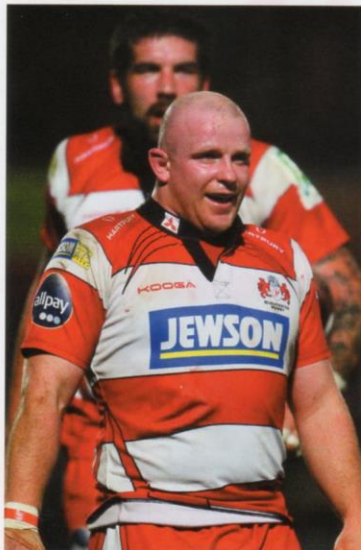
They have a right to be, because their pool of home-grown players is much smaller than, say, England's.

The current position is simply not fair, but I wonder if the French won't find it rebounding on them in the fullness of time.

If they're going to lash out oodles of cash attracting foreign players, then there won't be as much room to bring on native stars to grace their national team and that could be a disaster for them.

Oh dear. What a pity. Never mind.

COMINGS AND GOINGS



I WAS sorry to see that Scott Lawson is to leave us at the end of the season.

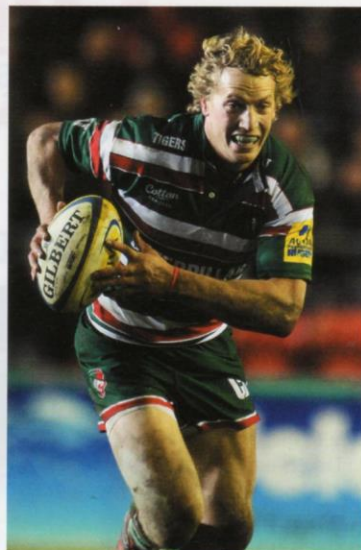
He doesn't get much publicity, but has been steadily climbing his way up the Scottish rankings, and never given less than his best when clad in cherry and white.

Good luck to him.

I'm sure we'll all be fascinated to see how the colourfully named Billy Twelvetrees gets on when he arrives at Kingsholm. Mike Burton would probably say that he needs to be 'Gloucesterised'.

I note that the Leicester hierarchy is spitting blood about us accepting one of their rising stars just when all their coaching was paying off.

That's rich coming from them. Remember a guy called Anthony Allen?



NICKING IT

WE didn't beat Bath by much, but let's not complain. Away wins in the Premiership are like gold, and a victory over Bath is absolutely priceless.

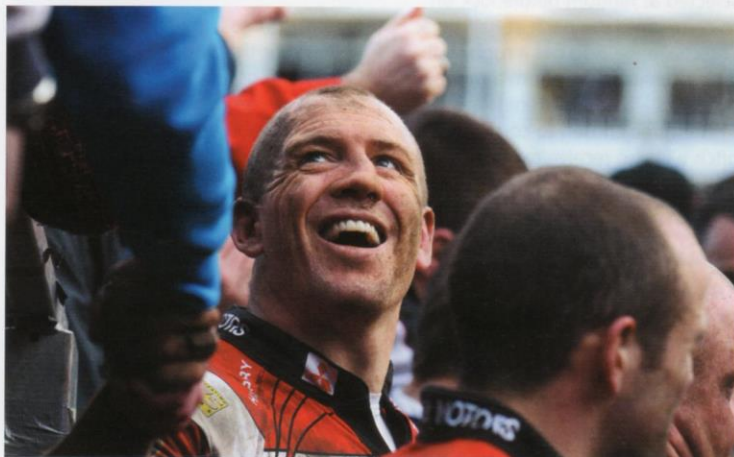
The Gentlemen of the Press didn't seem overly impressed and at least one of them used the epithet 'scrappy'. I don't really know what they expected in the conditions.

It's all very well criticising from a nice, dry press box, but not at all the same when you're out there playing against a committed enemy who would probably sell their wives into slavery in exchange for a win over Gloucester.

And that's on a dry day! When it's lashing down with rain on a heavy pitch on a ground which has never been a favourite for most of us, things get a whole lot worse.

Even when the rain stopped, conditions underfoot must have been akin to Conan Doyle's Great Grimpen Mire.

No wonder kickers on both sides didn't have an easy time of it. For a young, inexperienced player like Ryan Mills to hold his nerve and his technique together to land that vital final penalty is no inconsiderable



achievement.

But, of course, the star of the show was Nick Wood, who is rapidly attaining the status of the best loose head never to play for England. There is certainly no one better in the country at the moment.

Before the game, the TV pundits were going on about how good his Samoan opponent was, and how well he was playing for Bath. When the pair came to grips, Nick absolutely mullered him.

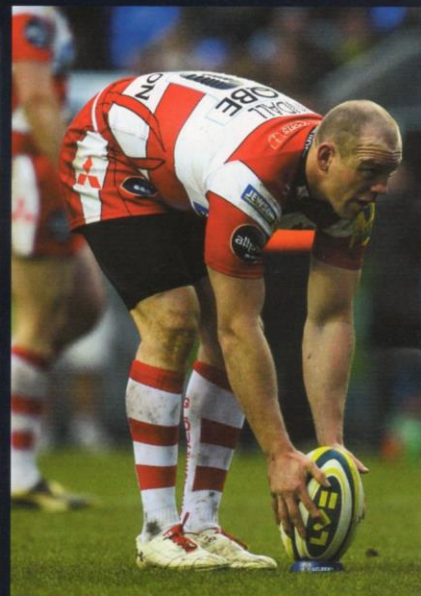
And, of course, he scored a try. The move had been nicely worked by the backs, but Nick still had work to do. It certainly wasn't one of those only-

have-to-fall-over jobbies that prop forwards often benefit from.

So, it was only justice when he was given the Man of the Match award. Perhaps his all round performance will give the lie to those who say that he's just a good scrummager and very little else.

It was a match that Nick Wood will be able to tell his grandchildren about.

Of course, by the time he gets that far, his description of the try will include a 40-yard run, two sidesteps and a marvellously subtle dummy. But what else would you expect from a prop forward?



LONDON IRISH 23
 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 15

LV= Cup, Madejski Stadium, 4 February 2012, 15:00 KO

LONDON IRISH

TRY Blaney (7)
PENS Homer (2, 14, 17, 51, 58, 74)

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

TRIES Clark (48, 63)
CON Tindall (49)
PEN Tindall (44)

AS the snow started to fall at the Madejski Stadium, the Gloucester Rugby squad boarded the team coach to head away from Reading reflecting on one that got away.

The defeat meant that Gloucester failed to qualify for the semi finals of the LV= Cup, the first time in four seasons that the Cherry and Whites have failed to make the final.

Despite having to massively reshuffle the side due to a dozen absentees on international duty plus the inevitable injury victims, the feeling afterwards was that the 23-15 defeat could easily have been a win.

The unfamiliar looking line up, after an uncertain opening, gave it everything they had and actually outscored their hosts by two tries to

one.

However, any indiscretion on the day was ruthlessly exploited by London Irish full back Tom Homer who finished with a six penalty haul.

The former England U20s contribution from the boot was enough to keep Gloucester at arm's length every time a comeback was threatened and was ultimately enough to secure the win.

Given the number of changes from the previous week's win over Cardiff, it was no surprise that Gloucester were slow out of the blocks.

And things got even worse just a few minutes into the game when influential flanker Andy Hazell limped out of the action with a knee injury.

Gloucester could barely get their



hands on the ball in the first quarter and were quickly on the wrong end of a 14-0 scoreline. Things looked grim but, slowly but purely, the Cherry and Whites fought their way back into the game.

Hopes of a fight back really arose when a turnover near the Gloucester line gave Peter Buxton the chance to free Ian Clark and the young winger simply had too much gas for the Irish cover defence.

However, Homer responded with two penalties before Clark finished off good work from Fuimaono-Sapolu and Simpson-Daniel to set up an interesting final quarter.

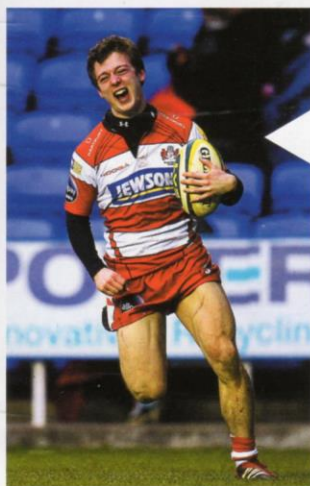
Gloucester really gave it a go in

the final few minutes, turning down potential kicks at goal in favour of running the ball in the quest for further tries.

Unfortunately, it wasn't to be, despite creating a couple of really good scoring opportunities, and Homer's 75th minute penalty pretty much nipped the comeback in the bud.

At the final whistle, news drifted through from Stockport that Sale Sharks had defeated the Scarlets who led Gloucester's group going into this final round of pool matches.

As things turned out, a win would have been enough to send Gloucester but it wasn't to be....



CHAMPAGNE MOMENT

Without a doubt, Ian Clark's first senior try for Gloucester, a length of the field effort that got his side into the game and hinted at an unlikely comeback.

KEY QUOTE

"It's really disappointing that we're not going on to defend our title. That's definitely one that got away, certainly in the second half.

"The first 15 minutes were poor and we gifted them 11 points, but we had opportunities to go and try to win that game in the second half."

Bryan Redpath

LONDON IRISH

- 15 FB Tom Homer
- 14 W Adam Thompstone
- 13 C Jonathan Spratt
- 12 C Shontayne Hape
- 11 W Sailosi Tagicakibau
- 10 FH Dan Bowden
- 9 SH Darren Allinson
- 1 P Clarke Dermody
- 2 H Brian Blaney
- 3 P Paulica Ion
- 4 L Nick Kennedy
- 5 L Bryn Evans
- 6 F Matt Garvey
- 7 F Dave Sisi
- 8 N8 Richard Thorpe

Replacements

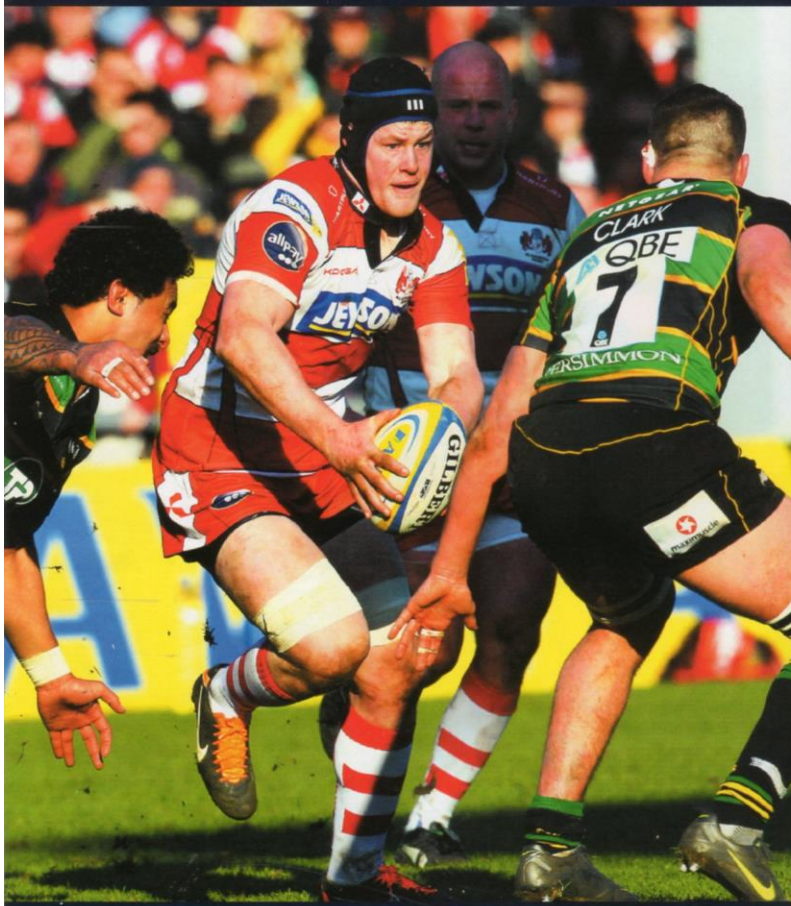
- 16 R David Paice
- 17 R Max Lahiff
- 18 Mark George
- 19 R Kieran Roche
- 20 R Alex Gray
- 21 R Guy Armitage
- 22 R Adrian Jarvis
- 23 R Ross Samson

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

- 15 FB Tom Voyce
- 14 W Ian Clark
- 13 C Tim Molenaar
- 12 C Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu
- 11 W James Simpson-Daniel
- 10 FH Mike Tindall
- 9 SH Dave Lewis
- 1 P Dan Murphy
- 2 H Darren Dawidiuk
- 3 P Shaun Knight
- 4 L Will James
- 5 L Alex Brown
- 6 F Peter Buxton
- 7 F Andrew Hazell
- 8 N8 Matt Cox

Replacements

- 16 R Matias Cortese
- 17 R Yann Thomas
- 18 R Dario Chistolini
- 19 R Tom Savage
- 20 R Gareth Evans
- 21 R Nick Runciman
- 22 R Billy Burns
- 23 R Akapusi Qera



GLOUCESTER RUGBY 27
 NORTHAMPTON SAINTS 24

Aviva Premiership Rugby, Kingsholm, 11 February 2012, 14:15 KO

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

- TRIES** Sharples (6), Dawidiuk (39)
- CON** Burns (7)
- PENS** Burns (16, 30, 54, 65, 74)

NORTHAMPTON SAINTS

- TRIES** Tonga'uiha (61), Pisi (66)
- CON** Myler (62)
- PENS** Lamb (12, 31, 37, 48)

GLOUCESTER Rugby played their first Aviva Premiership fixture at Kingsholm for more than a month and, with only a handful of points separating third from eighth in the table, secured a vital win.

It was a hard fought victory, games between these two teams have been settled by narrow margins in recent times.

Both sides were missing several players because of RBS Six Nations fixtures but it was the Cherry and Whites who just about had the strength in depth to clinch the points.

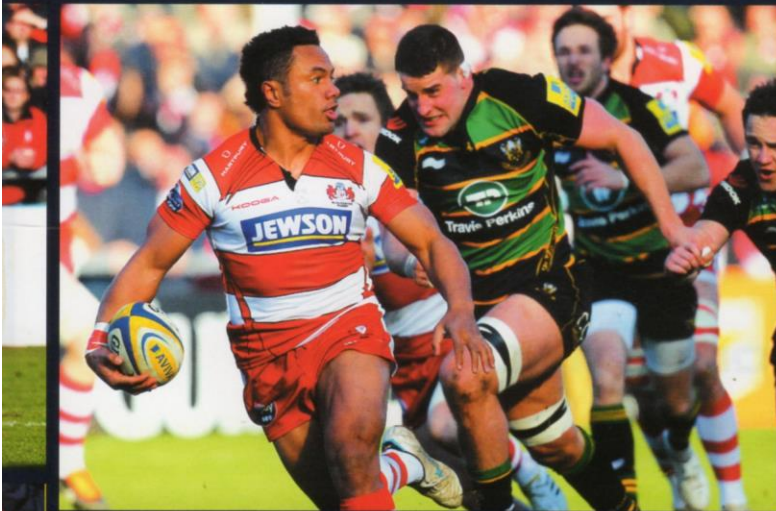
But this one went to the wire. Despite never being in the lead, the Saints doggedly refused to throw in the towel even when they trailed by 10 points.

In fact, they possessed enough character to launch a late second half comeback which sent a nervous tremor around Kingsholm as the Saints drew level at 24 points apiece before Freddie Burns' late penalty put the game to bed.

The Kingsholm ground staff had worked their usual magic to make sure that the fixture actually went ahead. The arctic conditions had been kept at bay by the heated covers and the playing surface was nigh on perfect.

And Gloucester started like the proverbial house on fire as they forced the Saints on to the back foot from the off.

The visitors' defence creaked and eventually broke as a combination of



May and Sharples created the chink of daylight that the latter required to score the game's first try.

The fleet footed pair combined to set up hooker Darren Dawidiuk for Gloucester's second try but the boot of former Kingsholm favourite Ryan Lamb kept the Saints in touch at half time with Gloucester leading 18-9.

The respective fly halves kept the scoreboard ticking over after the break but the cat was set amongst the pigeons on the hour when Soane Tonga'uuiha crashed over from close range for the Saints.

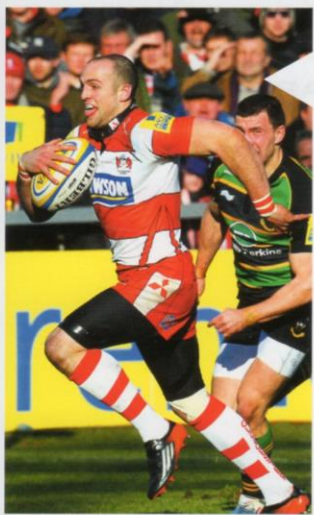
And, when George Pisi's sleight of hand and pace down the five metre channel, levelled the scores on 66 minutes, it was all to play for.

Gloucester may have been rattled but they didn't show it and the Kingsholm faithful found their collective voice to urge their team into producing one last effort.

Burns prolonged the agony as one penalty attempt struck the upright but he had no problems with an easier effort from bang in front of the posts.

The Saints produced a spirited response and almost broke through as time ticked away but a forward pass undid the previous good approach work.

The Gloucester pack produced a massive effort to win a vital penalty at the subsequent scrum and Burns cleared to start the celebrations.



CHAMPAGNE MOMENT

Charlie Sharples' try was the result of some elusive running from Jonny May who created the space for the winger to spin away from Ryan Lamb's attempted tackle and then sprint clear for the score.

KEY QUOTE

"We'll take the win today; we knew how tough it would be with the players who were out, especially with the back row.

"We were a bit sloppy, we created opportunities for them and gave them point after point and you can't do that, it's something that we need to move on from."

Bryan Redpath

GLOUCESTER RUGBY

- 15 FB Jonny May
- 14 W Charlie Sharples
- 13 C Mike Tindall (c)
- 12 C Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu
- 11 W James Simpson-Daniel
- 10 FH Freddie Burns
- 9 SH Rory Lawson
- 1 P Nick Wood
- 2 H Darren Dawidiuk
- 3 P Rupert Harden
- 4 L Will James
- 5 L Alex Brown
- 6 F Tom Savage
- 7 F Akapusi Qera
- 8 N8 Matt Cox

Replacements

- 16 H Matias Cortese
- 17 P Dan Murphy
- 18 P Shaun Knight
- 19 Korie Britton
- 20 Rob Langley
- 21 Dave Lewis
- 22 Ryan Mills
- 23 C Tim Molenaar

NORTHAMPTON SAINTS

- 15 FB Paul Diggin
- 14 W Jamie Elliott
- 13 C George Pisi
- 12 C James Downey
- 11 W Vasily Artemyev
- 10 FH Ryan Lamb
- 9 SH Martin Roberts
- 1 P Soane Tonga'uuiha
- 2 H Andy Long
- 3 P Brian Mujati
- 4 L Samu Manoa
- 5 L Christian Day
- 6 F Courtney Lawes
- 7 F Calum Clark (c)
- 8 N8 Roger Wilson

Replacements

- 16 H Mike Haywood
- 17 P Alex Waller
- 18 P Paul Doran Jones
- 19 N8 Mark Sorenson
- 20 Ben Nutley
- 21 Ryan Glynn
- 22 FH Stephen Myler
- 23 W Tom May

TODAY'S Line-UPS



**GLOUCESTER
RUGBY**



HARLEQUINS

15 JONNY MAY	15 MIKE BROWN
14 CHARLIE SHARPLES	14 TOM WILLIAMS
13 MIKE TINDALL	13 GEORGE LOWE
12 ELIOTA FUIMAONO-SAPOLU	12 JORDAN TURNER HALL
11 JAMES SIMPSON-DANIEL	11 UGO MONYE
10 FREDDIE BURNS	10 NICK EVANS
09 RORY LAWSON	09 DANNY CARE
01 NICK WOOD	01 JOE MARLER
02 DARREN DAWIDIUK	02 JOE GRAY
03 RUPERT HARDEN	03 JAMES JOHNSTON
04 PETER BUXTON (C)	04 OLLY KOHN
05 ALEX BROWN	05 GEORGE ROBSON (C)
06 TOM SAVAGE	06 TOM GUEST
07 AKAPUSI QERA	07 WILL SKINNER
08 MATT COX	08 NICK EASTER
16 MATIAS CORTESE	16 CHRIS BROOKER
17 DAN MURPHY	17 MARK LAMBERT
18 SHAUN KNIGHT	18 TIM FAIRBROTHER
19 ROB LANGLEY	19 TOMAS VALLEJOS
20 LUKE NARRAWAY	20 LUKE WALLACE
21 DAVE LEWIS	21 KARL DICKSON
22 RYAN MILLS	22 RORY CLEGG
23 TOM VOYCE	23 MATT HOPPER

Teams were correct at time of print

THE OFFICIALS

REFEREE: Dave Pearson
ASST REFS: Nigel Carrick and Andrew Watson

TOP SCORERS 2011/12



197 TOM HOMER

175 Nick Macleod

162 Ignacio Mieres

159 Nick Evans

155 Jimmy Gopperth

137 Owen Farrell



WHAT ARE THESE ALL ABOUT?

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