





## DAVID HUMPHREYS DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE'LL BE EXPERIMENTING WITH DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS, ADAPTING THE GAME PLAN AND **GENERALLY FINE TUNING...** 

GOOD AFTERNOON AND I'M DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO BRISTOL'S MEMORIAL STADIUM FOR OUR FIRST 'HOME' FIXTURE IN THE INAUGURAL WEST COUNTRY CHALLENGE CUP.

With the Rugby World Cup kicking off next weekend, it's going to be a very exciting few weeks for everyone involved in rugby and, although we'll be following all the RWC matches, our focus is on our preparations for the start of the Aviva Premiership and our first opponents Newcastle.

With a number of RWC games being played at Kingsholm, both of our home games in the West Country Challenge Cup will be played in Bristol. However, a lot of people worked really hard to secure Rugby World Cup fixtures for Gloucester and we're all incredibly proud of the fact that our Club, stadium and city will be very much in the spotlight over the next few weeks.

The impact of these games at Kingsholm will have very positive impact on the local community beyond the rugby pitch, and we're delighted that some of our current Gloucester players will be representing their country on their home ground.

Our venue today, the Memorial Stadium, also has a rich rugby history and we're grateful to them for their support in allowing us to play our games here. Although Bristol Rugby now play their matches across the city at Ashton Gate, the Memorial Stadium has witnessed many fine rugby matches over the years and we hope to add to that tradition with our matches against Bath and Exeter!

With the late start to the Aviva Premiership fixtures, it has been a long and physically demanding preseason for all the players and everyone

enjoyed being back into matches last weekend. The first couple of games are always tough and the challenge for the players is to transfer all their hard work from preseason training into a live match situation.

Last weekend, Exeter selected a very strong and experienced team and it took us a little bit of time to come to terms with their physical intensity. For the first game of the season it was very combetitive and we were delighted to end up scoring six tries and giving a number of our new recruits and Academy players their first opportunity to wear a Gloucester jersey for the first time.

Bath, with their depth of squad, will provide another tough test this afternoon for players making their first start of the season. Our plan has always been to give everyone an opportunity during the West Country Challenge Cup fixtures so that players who have worked hard throughout preseason get the chance to stake a claim for a starting spot against Newcastle.

Over the next few weeks we'll be experimenting with different combinations, adapting the game plan and generally fine tuning our preparations to ensure that we're in the best possible shape for October 16th.

I'm not sure Gloucester v Bath fixtures can ever be described as "friendly" but we're delighted to welcome all the Bath players, management and supporters to the Memorial Stadium!

Enjoy the game.



(ABOVE) Callum Braley will be looking to impress as he returns to his old stomping ground in Bristol (LEFT) Paddy McAllister putting in the hard work at the gym at Hartpury



THE CHERRY AND WHITES QUEST TO MAKE IT THREE PREMIERSHIP RUGBY 7S TITLES ON THE BOUNCE WAS ENDED PAINFULLY IN THE CUP SEMI FINAL AFTER DEFEAT TO EVENTUAL CHAMPIONS DRAGONS TO BRING ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE SEVENS CAMPAIGN TO A CLOSE.

In the group stage at Kingsholm, the Cherry and Whites dominated. An exciting mix of Sevens experience, first team knowhow and youthful exuberance combined to form a smart mix that opponents on the night found too hot to handle.

A packed Kingsholm Stadium witnessed the Cherry and Whites record three consecutive bonus point wins over Exeter Chiefs, London Irish and finally Bath Rugby in the twilight.

Steph Reynolds, captain for the night, sparkled with some stunning tries, but the try scoring was shared around the squad with a number of new faces getting their first outing in

(RIGHT)
Captain Steph Reynolds
scores at Kingsholm
(FAR RIGHT)
Mark Atkinson in action





Cherry and White.

In the opening match against Exeter Chiefs, the Cherry and Whites were three tries to the good at the break, with Lloyd Evans, Mark Atkinson and Steph Reynolds going over against a solitary Sam Simmonds effort for the Chiefs.

The second half was a one sided affair with the Cherry and Whites adding a further trio of scores including a blockbuster from Reynolds. Evans added his second, and Vellacott unselfishly laid a sixth try on a plate for Academy back rower Will Safe to dive over.

In the home side's second game of the evening, they met London Irish and Olly Morgan's team started where they left off wearing down the Exiles, running in another five tries combining pace with power.

Reynolds opened the scoring with a

### **CROUP B**







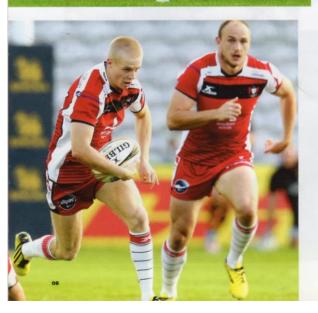






through a gap he had no right to get through, before Ross Neal levelled up for Irish.

Vellacott regained the lead as he dotted down after smart support play, before McColl, the impressive Dan Thomas and Jack Evans all got themselves on the scoreboard to





**NEWPORT** 

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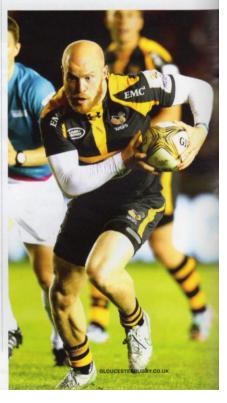
**GWENT DRAGONS** 











(LFFT) The finalists pose for a photo with the Premiership Rugby 7s Series Final trophy (BOTTOM LEFT) Gloucester in action against Harlequins on Finals night (BFLOW) Despite drafting rapid scrum-half loe Simpson in for the Finals, Wasps lost to Dragons in the final (RIGHT) Dragons celebrate their victory (BELOW RIGHT) Exeter celebrate after winning the Plate final



make it two maximum point wins out of two

Qualification was assured in the final game of the night, and in front of a raucous home crowd, Olly Morgan's team booked their space in the Singha 7s final with an entertaining win over Bath.

Dan Thomas stepped clear and raced away to open the scoring after some superb ball retention, but Zach Mercer leveled up for Bath.

Thomas again showed his pace to open up the Bath defence in the second half, this time Jack Evans was on hand to accept the offload and stroll over.

McColl added his second of the evening after a blistering Reynolds burst, before the livewire Vellacott raced into the corner to cap a great evening of Sevens for the young home

Heading to the Stoop to kick off the Bank Holiday Weekend, the Cherry and Whites made one change, with Lloyd Evans replaced by Mat Protheroe.

Protheroe was first on the scoreboard in the quarter final with hosts Harlequins the opponents, with the holders combining pace and power with composed ball retention to blow away the Quins in the opening seven minutes.

Vellacott trotted over after neat work from Protheroe, before captain Reynolds added a double before the break as Quins afforded him too much space in the wide channels.

Quins responded through Robbie Nairn at the start of the second half, before Dan Thomas showed a clean pair of heels to Fjian Nayolo to race over from 70 metres.

The home crowd were treated to some late Quins tries but the damage had been done, setting up a semi final against Dragons.

The Cherry and Whites found

themselves on the back foot early on in the semi final, two tries down before they had even touched the ball.

Dragons were suffocating the contest and the holders found it hard to break through, but a break from Protheroe pulled a score back to ease the pressure in a close contest.

Ben Vellacott's lung-busting score put the Cherry and Whites in the lead following a breathless period of play, but the last laugh went to the Dragons, and the eventual winners, as Ross Harries got on the end of an added time break to end Gloucester's involvement at the semi final stage.



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# **EXETER CHIEFS 41**GLOUCESTER RUGBY 38

# THE



#### **EXETER CHIEFS**



PHIL DOLLMAN
OLLY WOODBURN
PETE LAVERICK
SAM HILL
JAMES SHORT
GARETH STEENSON (C)
HAYDENTHOMAS
ALEC HEPBURN
SHAUN MALTON
MORAY LOW
MITCH LEES
DON ARMAND
DAVE EWERS
JULIAN SALVI
THOMAS WALDROM

#### REPLACEMENTS:

McGUIGAN, WHITTEN, BODILLY, HUGHES, JESS, HOOLEY, LEWIS, STURGESS, COWAN-DICKIE, WILLIAMS, ATKINS, WELCH, JOHNSON, WHITE, SKINNER



#### GLOUCESTER RUGBY

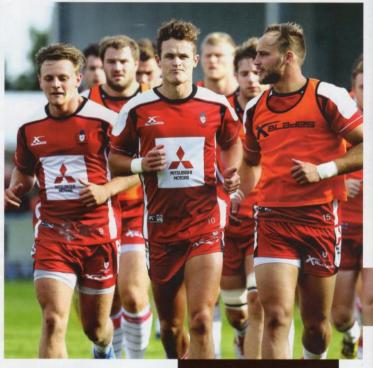


MAT PROTHEROE STEVE MCCOLL OLLYTHORLEY MARK ATKINSON STEPH REYNOLDS BILLY BURNS (C) CALLUM BRALEY DAN MURPHY TOM LINDSAY NICKYTHOMAS TOM HICKS ELLIOTT STOOKE LEWIS LUDLOW DAN THOMAS GARETH EVANS

#### REPLACEMENTS:

LUKE COLE, PADDY
McALLISTER, JOSH McNULTY,
JAMES HUDSON, JACOB
ROWAN, CALLUM BRALEY,
BILL MEAKES, HENRY PURDY,
ALEX CRAIG, WILL SAFE, ELLIOT
CREED, JACK EVANS

REFEREE: ITEMPEST ATTENDANCE: 7,433



GLOUCESTER RUGBY KICKED OFF THEIR WEST COUNTRY CHALLENGE CUP CAMPAIGN WITH A TESTING TRIP TO TAKE ON EXETER CHIEFS AT SANDY PARK LAST WEEKEND.

It was always going to be a tall order for a young Gloucester squad, missing 20 first team regulars, especially with the Chiefs opting to field two near fullstrength starting line-ups, one for each half of play.

And so it proved to be, particularly in the first half when the home team played with the wind at their backs, Exeter keeping things tight up front and scoring from two well executed catch and drives.

However, despite losing playmaker and skipper for the day, Billy Burns, due to injury, Gloucester stuck at it and eventually ended up outscoring

## THE SCORERS



TRIES: WALDROM (2) SHORT LEWIS BODILLY

CONVERSIONS: STEENSON (2 HOOLEY (2)

**PENALTIES:** HOOLEY (2)

### 1

McCOLL Atkinson Rowan (2) Creed Purdy

conversions: McCOLL (4)

the Chiefs by six tries to five. However, Exeter edged the final scoreline by 41 points to 38.

It will prove to be a valuable learning experience for a number of the Gloucester squad, many of whom making their first team bows, and they "IF YOU LOOK AT THE AVERAGE AGE OF OUR SQUAD, A LOT OF THEM WERE 22 OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND, WHEN YOU ARE PL ACAINST A TEAM AS COOD AS EXETER HAD IN THE FIRST HALF, WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY AT THAT LEVEL." DAVID HUMPHREYS





Mark Atkinson: It was good to be playing rugby again after an extra long preseason and that the experience would be particularly valuable for the younger Gloucester players.

(FAR LEFT) Captain Billy Burns leads the youthful Gloucester squad in a warm-up run (LEFT) Elliott Stooke carries the ball forward (BELOW LEFT) Bill Meakes in the thick of the action (BELOW) Mark Atkinson looks for a trademark offload (BOTTOM) New boy Tom Lindsay throws into the lineout



will probably benefit from that should they turn out against Bath today.

The first 40 minutes saw Exeter deliver a typically efficient performance. Powerful play in the

tight from the pack, allied with intelligent tactical kicking from Gareth Steenson saw them push Gloucester on to the back foot from the off.

That pressure resulted in a trademark catch and drive try

for Thomas Waldrom after only six minutes, the former Tiger having

made scoring from a metre out something of a specialty last





Playing into the elements, the Cherry and Whites struggled to get out of their own half and Exeter moved further ahead through a James Short try on 19 minutes.

Gloucester did hit back with a well-worked score from Steve McColl after excellent build up play from Protheroe, Atkinson, Braley and Meakes but Waldrom flopped over for

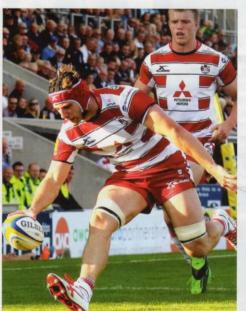
a third Exeter try on the half hour and it looked as though it would be a long afternoon ahead.

An Atkinson interception narrowed the

### Champagne Moment

Gloucester scored several decent tries but Henry Purdy's late score was the pick of the bunch. Receiving the ball in space on the left, Purdy outpaced the cover before chipping ahead over the final man and winning the chase to touch down.

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(TOP) Henry Purdy scores (ABOVE) Jacob Rowan dots the ball down (RIGHT) Replacement Elliot Creed crosses the line



gap six minutes into the second half as Gloucester strived to mount a comeback, but the next scores went the way of the Chiefs to ease the home team into a decent lead.

Will Hooley kicked a 48th minute penalty before converting a try from former Gloucester favourite, Dave Lewis, who darted over from close

range after more good work from his pack.

Gloucester
hit back with
a close range
score from Jacob
Rowan but, once
again, the home
side responded
emphatically to
slam the door
shut. Again
Hooley kicked a
penalty and then
converted a Max
Bodilly try after
loose handling

from the Cherry and Whites.

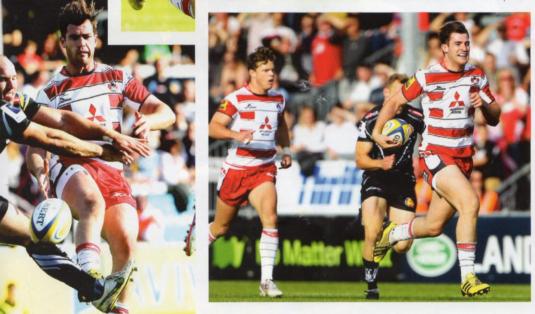
Trailing 41-19, Gloucester threw caution to the wind and possibly caught Exeter by surprise. Elliot



Creed scampered over for his first senior try before Rowan added his second.

However, the best was saved until last with literally no time left on the clock. Henry Purdy received the ball with some space to run down the five metre channel. He gassed the cover defence before chipping over the full-back and gathering to score.

It was a fitting reward for Gloucester who soaked up some real body blows in the first half, before fighting back in the second and showing several glimpses of the talent that exists in the squad.



(TOP) Try scorer Jacob Rowan emerges with the ball (CENTRE) Mat Protheroe looked dangerous with ball in hand

(LEFT) Mark Atkinson kicks through and (ABOVE) races through the Exeter defence to score