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Gloucester RFC official matchday programme 2001-2002

Gloucester

vs Leicester Tigers

Saturday 15th September 2001 kick-off 3.00pm

[issue] 3

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www.gloucesterrugbyclub.com



Line-ups



(6P) 18 **Gloucester** VS **Leicester Tigers** 40 (4G 4P)

	Chris Catling	15	Tim Stimpson	i
	Daren O'Leary	14	Geordan Murphy	i
	Joe Ewens	13	Glenn Gelderbloom	
i	Terry Fanolua	12	Rod Kafer	i
i	Diego Albanese	11	Freddie Tuilagi	i
	Ludovic Mercier	10	Andy Goode	
	Dimitri Yachvili	9	Harry Ellis	
i	Trevor Woodman	1	Graham Rowntree	c i
	Chris Fortey	2	Dorian West	i
i	Patrice Collazo	3	Darren Garforth	i
i	Rob Fidler	4	Louis Deacon	
	Adam Eustace	5	Ben Kay	i
	Jake Boer	6	Paul Gustard	
	Andy Hazell	7	Lewis Moody	
	Junior Paramore	8	Peter Short	i

[replacements]

i	Andy Gomarsall	16	George Chuter	
i	Simon Mannix	17	Ricky Nebbett	
	James Simpson-Daniel	18	Martin Johnson	i
i	Federico Pucciariello	19	Austin Healey	i
i	Oliver Azam	20	Steve Booth	
	Mark Cornwell	21	Neil Back	i
	Ed Pearce	22	Derek Jelley	

[teams correct at 12/09/01]

i [denotes international]

c [denotes captain]

[today's officials]

[referee] Robin Goodlife

[touch judges] Brian Campsall, Paul Emerson

Welcome

From Charlie Little

[Marketing Manager]



As you will now know, there have been a number of new signings that have joined the club since last season – the ones that won't have made the back pages of the local papers but are just as important, we hope, to the future success of the rugby club. An investment has now been made into the Commercial Department of the club with the recruitment of three new members of staff. Sean Roberts, Andy Blaylock and I have joined the club in new roles as Sales Executive, Community Development Officer and Marketing Manager, respectively. The ambitions now of this commercial team match those of the players as we also set our sights on being the best.

Gloucester Rugby Club have also made a number of lower profile signings since the end of last season – the ones that won't have made the back pages of the local papers but are just as important, we hope, to the future success of the rugby club. An investment has now been made into the Commercial Department of the club with the recruitment of three new members of staff. Sean Roberts, Andy Blaylock and I have joined the club in new roles as Sales Executive, Community Development Officer and Marketing Manager, respectively. The ambitions now of this commercial team match those of the players as we also set our sights on being the best.

It is our aim to become the ultimate choice for all supporters by providing a fantastic level of service and offering an enjoyable experience every time you come into contact with the club. We want to open our doors to the community with the wish that, one day, they will become loyal supporters and Season Ticket Holders of this fantastic club.

If this is successful then they will be joining a group that is growing in number. Our other 'new signings' this season are greater in number and importance. While I thank all our Season Ticket Holders for supporting the club and

demonstrating your loyalty by purchasing such a ticket, I would also like to welcome the new Season Ticket Holders and wish you all an enjoyable season of rugby.

Finally, I would like to welcome our visitors today, Leicester Tigers, and their supporters. Leicester have also grown the number of their Season Ticket Holders to 10,510 based largely on their acclaimed successes over recent years. Hopefully we will one day achieve such levels of Associate Members but while they are ahead of us in this area, I hope that we get the right result on the pitch this afternoon.

"The ambitions now of this commercial team match those of the players as we also set our sights on being the best."

Philippe [director of rugby] Saint-André

"I prefer each week to have a big headache when I pick my team because I have so many good players and they are all playing well"



We had a good start to the season against Northampton, and I would like to thank all the people who turned up to support us on that day. We had a good win and played well for seventy minutes.

Against Saracens it was very disappointing, we had a better result than last year when we lost by fifty points but it was a shame because I thought we had the strength and ability to win this game.

In the first half we conceded a lot of points, too many. In the second half we came back very well and scored two good tries that show the different styles we can play. We had two more opportunities to score as well so it was a shame that we lost thirty points to thirty.

Today we play Leicester and it will be a very tough game. We are playing the Champions of England and the Champions of Europe. I have a lot of respect for Leicester and their coach Dean Richards and it is always a pleasure to receive them

here at Kingsholm.

As a team we will try to concentrate and focus for eighty minutes and play the best rugby we can. We will need to be on top form if we are to beat Leicester this afternoon.

We gave away a twenty-five to nine half time score, this was disappointing but we must learn from this. I will not criticise the referee, because I think we gave away too many penalties on our own.

We must learn from last week and improve our discipline we

cannot afford to give Leicester an advantage like we gave to Saracens. They are an accomplished team and will punish us if we make those errors again.

We must focus today and try and play the best rugby we can, if we can do this I think we can beat Leicester this afternoon.

Before the end of the week I think we will know more about Phil Vickery's progress, I think it will be a great boost for everyone when he returns to action.





D.o.B: **01/11/75**
 Position: **Flanker**
 Height: **1.87m**
 Weight: **103.4kg**
 Former Club:
London Irish
 Int'l national Honours:

Joined Gloucester after being named London Irish's player of the season 99/00. Bullocking South African who took a while to settle but then earned the respect of players and fans alike with his honesty and commitment to the Gloucester cause. Strong tackler who works tirelessly in the loose. Will want the international recognition he strives for soon

Jake [Match Captain]

To play at this level of rugby and to be able to captain a premiership side, particularly Gloucester is something that everyone aspires to do and when I was told initially, I was extremely grateful and when I started the premiership as captain it was even more special.

From a Captains point of view I was very disappointed with our last result, but the signs are certainly positive and I just hope we can bring everything together now and string a few wins together.

Every game we played pre-season was a step up and then Northampton was another step up again. We had a very good second half performance against Saracens but really we let ourselves down. It was a game that I was very upset to

lose. Sometimes though, you need a game like that to make you realise that you have to be consistent each week otherwise you travel forward three steps, and back two.

I think rugby is a very mental game and I thought possibly we didn't have the right mental attitude when we got onto the pitch and we got a bit of a fright in the first half. I think this is a very individual thing, but we got a wake up call and we took too long to realise it.

he did. We were our own worst enemies.

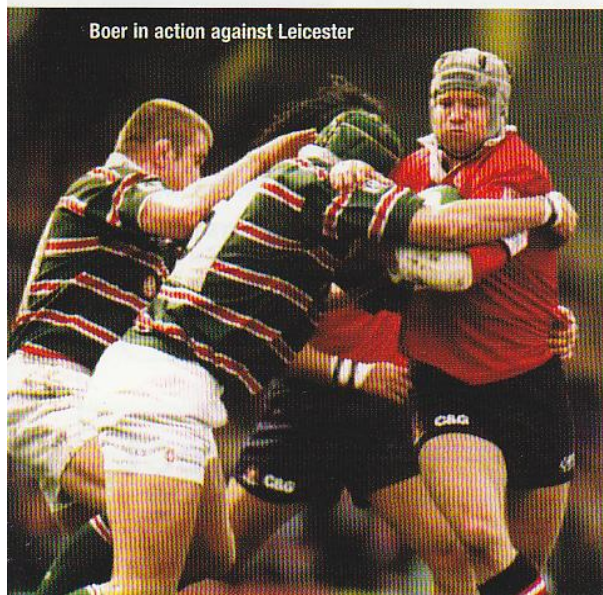
Against Leicester, even more so than any other team, you have to make sure you are 100% from the first whistle, and if you're not you will be made to pay for it. I certainly hope that all the guys have learnt their lesson from last Saturday and we go out firing on all cylinders this afternoon.

I think every team we play in the premiership this season will have around ten internationals in the squad and nowadays even those guys who haven't played international rugby come up with very special games occasionally. Playing Leicester they have quality players from one to fifteen and I'm sure even their bench will be very strong. They have the superstars that you have to watch but really you have to watch all of them.

When you look at that second half performance, you realise just how well you can play and it's just a case of playing like that every week. You don't have a chance to make mistakes in this league. If you play thirty minutes of poor rugby, against any team, you will pay for it. We have learnt this the hard way and we must make sure it doesn't happen again.

Another thing, I hope we have learned is that we can't give away penalties, particularly kickable ones. People have said that it was testament to Luke Smith but they were our errors, if we didn't make them he wouldn't have the chances. He is expected to kick the goals if they are kickable and

Being an old team of mine I know one or two of the guys and it always give the game a little bit of extra competition. But to be able to play against the champions is a thrill in itself and I just want us to go out there and put in a good performance.



Boer in action against Leicester

Gloucester Academy

result

Northampton Saints U21's
43
Gloucester U21's
24

matchstats

gordon league rfc

date of fixture: **Saturday 01 Sept 2001**



tries: J Forrester (3)
conversions: J. P. Goatley (3)
penalties: J. P. Goatley (1)

"The club has given its full support to the new Academy structure and is completely behind the staff"



man of the match
James Forrester

d.o.b: **09/02/81** pos: **No.8**

In the first match of the new U21 league, Gloucester surprisingly went down to a lively Northampton side at Franklin's Gardens.

Missing several contracted players through injury and selection on the England Schools tour to Australia, Gloucester were forced to field an under strength team that should still however, have been able to cope with their opposition. This seemed to be the case after the first two scrums of the game, which saw the Saints pack in disarray.

Without a recognised kicker the duties fell to John-Paul Goatley who put Gloucester ahead with a penalty in the tenth minute. Gloucester extended their lead through a well, worked, James Forrester try, which was

converted by Goatley.

Gloucester began to exert their dominance and scored another try from Forrester, this time a push over from a five-metre scrum.

After missing a few opportunities to increase their lead, Gloucester conceded a try from a well-executed, lineout peel. Gloucester responded well with some fine play just before half-time, but failed to capitalise on the possession they had.

Half Time Northampton Saints 5-17 Gloucester

Saints came out for the second half with a new approach and turned the game on its head. The loss of influential fly-half Jon Goodridge, prompted a flood of Saints scores as Gloucester lost their shape and composure. Five unanswered tries wrapped up the game for Northampton, with James Forrester having the last say by completing his hat-trick after some spirited forward play that had been conspicuous by its absence the rest of the half.

John Haines
Academy Manager

Gloucester Academy

result

Gloucester U21's
64
Saracens U21's
31

matchstats

gordon league rfc

date of fixture: **Saturday 08 Sept 2001**

tries: M.Garvey (3), J.Forrester, J.Shelley, C.Stuart Smith, J.Goodridge, B.Durham, J.P.Goatley, D.Murray.

conversions: J.P.Goatley (2), Joe Goatley (2)

penalties: Joe Goatley (2)

Gloucester welcomed back some key squad players from the recent England schools tour of Australia, and they proved instrumental in an emphatic win in the first home match of the season.



man of the match
Clive Stuart Smith

d.o.b: 17/05/73 pos: scrum-half

Gloucester dominated the early exchanges with second rows James Watkins and Alex Davidson prominent in the absence of the established Rimmer and Skelding. Brad Davies at outside half was a key playmaker in attack and his accurate passing allowed John Paul Goatley and flying wing Marcel Garvey early scores. Saracens did look dangerous on the counter attack however and responded well at the end of the half, only for scrum half Clive Stuart Smith to extend Gloucester half time advantage.

Following a timely reminder at half time by Head Coach Sean Holley of last weeks second half demise, the Academy side went out and delighted the crowd with some superb free flowing rugby. Forwards and backs combined to score several more tries with Garvey completing a hat-trick with a mesmeric second half brace. First team player Duncan Murray added to the tally and John Goodridge completed a fine day for the backs with his blistering injection of pace from full back.

Elusive No.8 James Forrester scored a fine individual try, replacement hooker John Shelley added another and England Schools Man of the Tour Ben Durham, rounded off the rout in a thrilling display of rugby.

With limited injuries from the game, and good exposure for the whole squad, the Academy can look forward to a tough encounter at Leicester next week.

DATE	VENUE	ACADEMY U21'S/U19'S	U21 RESULT	U19 RESULT	DATE	VENUE	ACADEMY U21'S/U19'S	U21 RESULT	U19 RESULT
1/9/01	Away	Northampton	L 43-24	-	5/1/02	HOME	LONDON IRISH U19		
8/9/01	HOME	SARACENS	W 64-31	-	12/1/02	HOME	NEWPORT U19		
15/9/01	Away	Leicester			19/1/02	Away	Bath U19		
26/9/01	HOME	SALE 7.00PM WEDS			26/1/02	HOME	BRISTOL		
29/9/01	Away	Leicester U19			2/2/02	Away	Wasps U19		
6/10/01	HOME	BATH U19			9/2/02	Away	London Irish		
13/10/01	Away	Harlequins 2.30 KO			16/2/02	HOME	SARACENS U19		
20/10/01	HOME	LONDON IRISH			23/2/02	HOME	HARLEQUINS 2.30 KO		
28/10/01	Away	Bristol (Sun) / Wasps U19's	Canceled		2/3/02	Away	Bristol U19		
4/11/01	Away	London Irish U19 (Sun)			6/3/02	Away	Sale 7.00pm Weds		
10/11/01	Away	Divisional training			9/3/02	HOME	SWANSEA U19		
17/11/01	HOME	LEICESTER U19			16/3/02	HOME	LEICESTER		
24/11/01	Away	Wasps			23/3/02	Away	Harlequins U19's 2.30 KO		
1/12/01	Away	Leeds			30/3/02	Away	Saracens		
8/12/01	HOME	BATH			6/4/02	HOME	NEWCASTLE		
15/12/01	TBA	Northampton U19			13/4/02	HOME	NORTHAMPTON		
22/12/01	HOME	WASPS			20/4/02	HOME	LEEDS		
29/12/01	-				27/4/02	Away	Bath		

[from the commentary box]

B B C

Ian **Randall**

Making Predicions

Sticking your neck out at this point in the season isn't a safe occupation. No real pattern has emerged yet, and the table, with Sale and Bath at opposite ends (and not the ones you'd expect) means little.

"The crux of it now is that Philippe has to justify the faith put in him by delivering results."

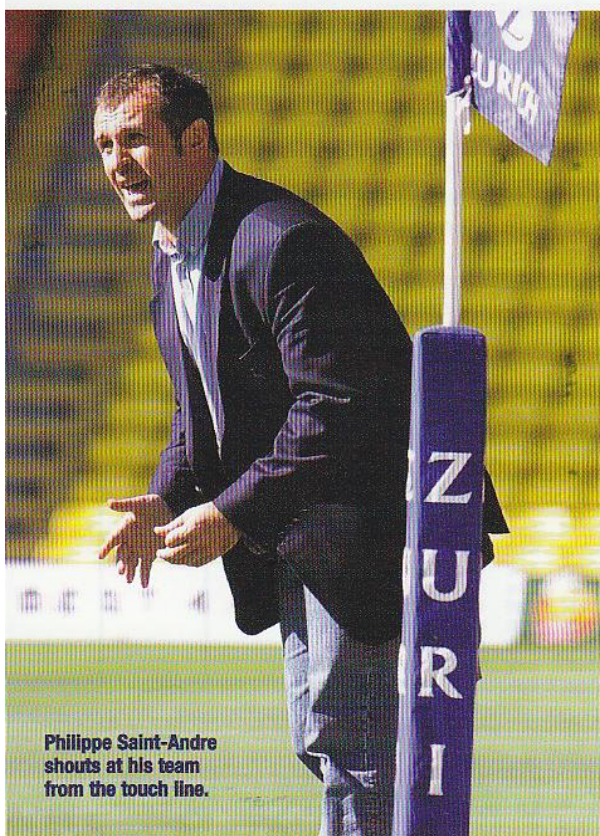
When La Rochelle come here in a fortnight for the first match in the group stages of the European Shield, we'll be far better placed to judge trends. Time though, waits for no-one. Andy Keast's departure

came after my print deadline for the Northampton programme, and now the rumour mill has another Englishman in line to take his place. Who knows, his identity may be unveiled by today, as Philippe indicated a desire to get another pair of hands in quickly to help.

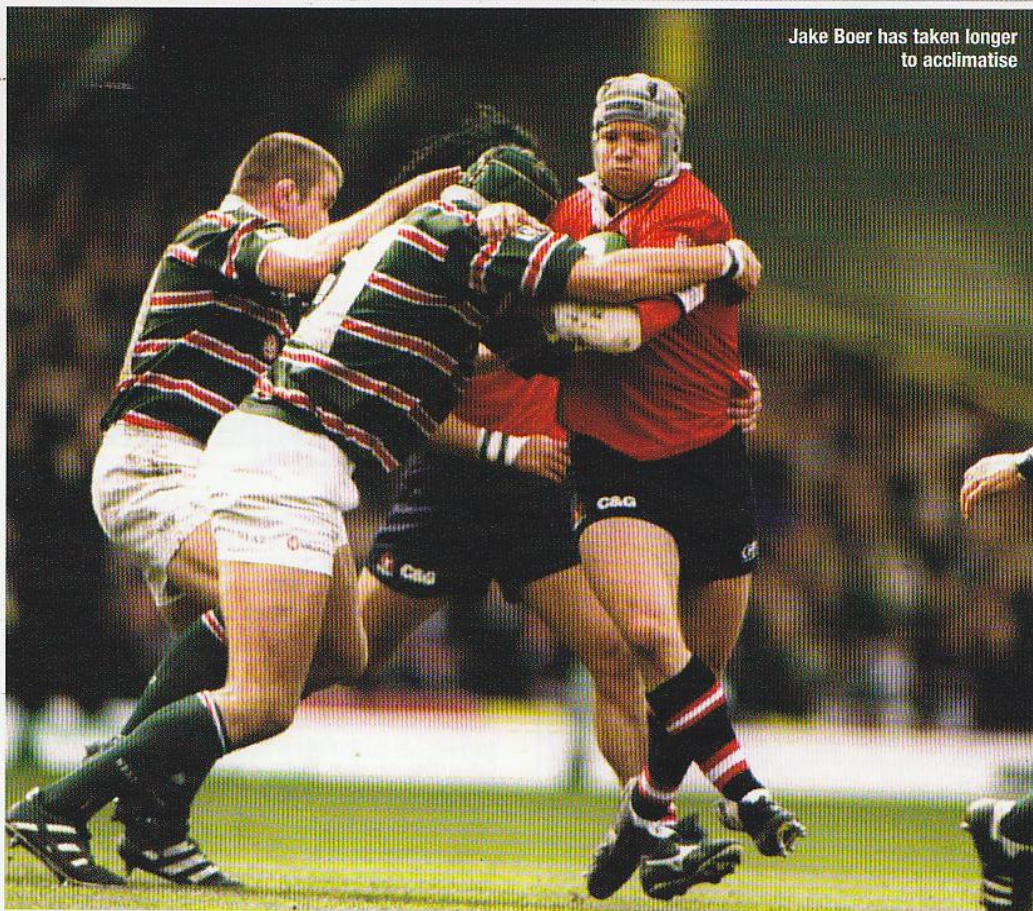
It's been interesting reading the broadsheet press over the past couple of weeks. The likes of Mick Cleary, David Hands and Stuart Barnes all see this as a make-or-break season for Philippe, with no great confidence that he will do what's required. Tom Walkinshaw's backing of him has been resolute since his appointment in the spring of 1999, and particularly on two occasions since, both of them this year. Saint-Andre offered to resign after the home defeat by Wasps in February - Walkinshaw quashed that - and then, if it was a question of Andy Keast OR Saint-Andre staying but not both despite their short tenure

together, again Tom ticked the box with Philippe's name against it. The crux of it now is that Philippe has to justify the faith put in him by delivering results. Managing Director Ken Nottage has publicly said the club cannot afford to be out of the Heineken Cup for more than one season, so I think we get a clear idea of the parameters on which judgement will be passed.

The gap between Gloucester and the rest of the local rugby hierarchy has, of course, grown over the closed season. Lydney's relegation has left three divisions between the Cherry & Whites and the rest, and the Severnsiders have got company in the form of Old Patesians and Cinderford, who are both in the National Leagues for the first time. Early results for all three have been mixed, and when you consider this is "traditional" rugby, with training only on Tuesday and Thursday nights, the travelling is considerable.



Philippe Saint-Andre shouts at his team from the touch line.



Jake Boer has taken longer to acclimatise

There are 3 trips to Cornwall, (Redruth, Launceston and Penzance), and one each to Kent, Essex and Norfolk. The need to be "professional" certainly extends to this level.

Leicester's try spree at home to Wasps last Saturday was in stark contrast to our match against Saracens, with the kicking of Luke Smith and Ludovic Mercier dominating affairs at Vicarage Road. The methodical Mercier takes considerable time over his kicking practice, and he's made a huge impression in his short time at

the club, yet it's one of those quirks of sport that some players who settle quickly ultimately achieve less than those who take longer to acclimatise - hands up those who would put Jake Boer into the latter category. I fancy Gloucester will better the predictions of those broadsheet scribes (5th at best) if Mercier has a good season.

Finally, a result for all those fans who called us last season asking if they could listen to our BBC Radio Gloucestershire commentary via the internet.

There's now a system where all the matches in the Premiership are available via the main BBC site, so providing your computer has a sound box, you can hear every minute of Gloucester's games for the cost of a phone call. The main site is bbc.co.uk, and you can pick up the commentary if you follow the links to "sport" and then "rugby union".

Of course, if you'd rather listen for free, then you know where to tune 104.7FM and 1413 AM.

C'mon Glaws !!

"I fancy Gloucester will better the predictions of those broadsheet scribes (5th at best) if Mercier has a good season.."

Head2Head

This week's head to head focuses on the two full backs. Both are match winners in their own right but as the press would have us believe, one as a goal kicker and one as a counter attacker.



In reality both have far more to offer and today's match may depend on one moment of brilliance from either player. Conversely, because of their last line of defence status, it

may hinge on one mistake. This 'hero to zero' position is one neither player likes to experience but as a full back it is something they have to come to terms with.

Chris Catling

Strengths

Catling, in his own words is a very strong counter-attacker. He spent a season on the wing and feels that this time spent seeing the game from another position, has improved his knowledge and reading of the game. It has also improved his timing when coming into the line. Defensively, he is also solid as a rock. He has great composure under the high ball, and has saved Gloucester many times with covering tackles.

Weaknesses

"I'm loathed to say it", says Catling "But my kicking is a cloud that has been put over my head. It has improved a lot, and it is annoying that every time I do an interview it is focused on". Supporters who watch Catling often, may agree. He showed some deft touches against Northampton and last year against London Irish in monsoon season.

Special interests

Catling is a model for any would be professional sportsman. He combines his talents on the field with a host of interests off it. He has a great love for music and plays both the guitar and the piano, admitting that he loves nothing better after a few drinks than hitting the ivories at a local club. Catling has also maintained his studies. He was awarded a first class honours degree at Exeter and intends to start an MBA in October.

High Point

Catling still lists the Tetley's Bitter Cup match away at Bath last season as one of his favourite moments. "The European run was also good". Catling says last season was a difficult one as, although it was full of great moments there were also some very mediocre games thrown in for good measure.

Low Point

Catling has ten England 'A' caps but sees this as a disappointment. His disappointment comes from being on the fringe but never getting the top flight, international recognition. "I think I get a low point every summer for the last five years. I think without exception I have half expected to tour with a big England squad, and the fact that I haven't is a disappointment".

"Catling on Stimpson"

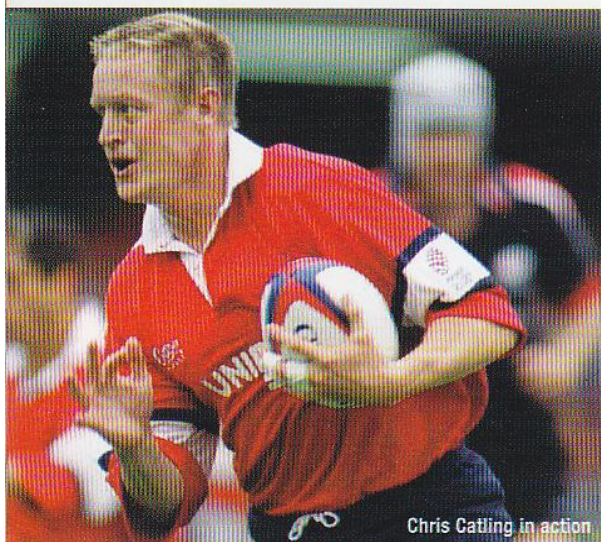
"I think his game is about much more than just kicking. His goal-kicking and kicking out of hand are things I am very envious of, but he is also a strong ball carrier, difficult to knock down, and the game Leicester play, he doesn't look out of place coming into the line".

"Catling on Leicester"

"Leicester are the club to model on. They have everything right, from the season tickets, marketing to the team. It's something that everyone should try and aspire to. Their backs are looking sharp, and they have proved over the last two seasons that they are much more than the A,B,C club who drive up the middle all the time".

Catlingstats

Nickname	'Cats'
Position	Full-back
Born	Carsharnton, Surrey
Age	25
Height	1.87m
Weight	90kg
Club History	Exeter Chiefs
Int Hons	England A



Chris Catling in action

Ludovic Mercier

[player focus]



In the first of this season's player spotlights, we focus on one player who, amongst his fellow new recruits has probably had the biggest impact on their new club.

This week we focused on Ludovic Mercier, the French fly half, who has a rocket powered, left boot. His form so far this season has left many a Gloucester fan drooling over the potential of having another quality number ten in the squad who can kick goals from inside his own half and unleash the backs at will.

'Ludo', has enjoyed a very promising start to his Cherry and White's career missing only four kicks in the last four games, his personal success however, is slightly tarnished by the teams performances. Yes, it has been good for me, but not for my team, because

we lost against Saracens. It was very important to win our first league game in Gloucester against Northampton. Loosing against Saracens was not good because we did not play very good for the first forty minutes".

A refreshing attitude to take. Ludovic also has a very pragmatic view about his role in the team and his duty to kick all goals, all the time.

"I work at it all the time, about one and a half hours each day between Monday and Friday, but never on a Saturday or Sunday.

[No.10] fly half

Ludovic Mercier, the French fly half, who has a rocket powered, left boot. His form so far this season has left many a Gloucester fan drooling...

Mercier in the thick of the action against Northampton



"My preparation is good, and my fitness is good and it was good to have a good start to the championship as we did"

I start with goal kicks and then dropouts and finish with line kicks. It's my job. I have missed some kicks for sure. The wind made it difficult on Saturday, but I don't really understand why I missed.

Goal kicking, as much as ever, is such an important part of modern rugby. Regardless of how the introduction of a new points system is designed to encourage teams to play flowing, running rugby, how often does a team take a quick tap penalty with one minute to go trailing by a point?

Preparation is key in any position and goal kicking is no exception. Ludovic has a specialist coach who, Ludovic says, "Arranges my move". Roughly translated the relationship they have is thus, "When things are good he comes for one or two weeks.

He reminds me of my kicking motion. At the moment he doesn't come because I don't have a problem, but in the next two months, I may have a problem so I can call him and he will come and arrange my move. For example, he will make sure my eyes and focus are on the ball, and my head stays down".

Whatever techniques Ludovic's kicking guru employs, they served him well last season as he became the top points scorer in the French league. Now he appears to be carrying on where he left off.

"Yes my feelings are good but I came here at the start of training. I preferred to do this. I didn't have a tour to go on, my championship had finished, and my contract started on the first of June. My preparation is good, and my fitness is good

and it was good to have a good start to the championship as we did".

The season kicked off in extreme contrast to last season. On August 19th 2000, Gloucester suffered a humiliating fifty-point drubbing at Saracens, this year over eight and a half thousand people witnessed the demolition of Northampton. Many goal kickers try to shut out the crowd completely, they immerse themselves in their kicking routine. Ludovic however, allowed himself the time to experience his first home crowd at a league game.

"The numbers are approximately the same, as in Aurillac, but the supporters here support the team for eighty, eighty-five minutes and this is very nice. We run for one lap around the pitch and

Mercier lets rip



playerstats

previous club: Aurillac
representative honours: -
height: 1.79m
weight: 85kg
position: fly-half



Ludovic Mercier

the fans start shouting 'Gloucester, Gloucester' and I like this. I enjoy the supporters very much"

And they enjoy him, changing the chant from 'Gloucester, Gloucester' to 'Ludo, Ludo'. Does he enjoy this as well? Absolutely.

"Yes it is very nice for me. I am a new player but the fans shout 'Ludo, Ludo' it is very nice for me it touches my heart"

So, his fans already love Ludovic. He also enjoys the unique privilege of playing in a new country, under a coaching team that speaks his language, and a half-back partner who is a very good friend. What could make it easier? However, rather than adopt a turtle pose and hide in his shell, for Ludovic it is a case of 'when in Rome'.

"Yes, Dimitri and I are good friends, but we speak always in English around the club so it is ok. If it is just the two of us then we can use French, but I am in England so I speak English. If we were in France you would speak French this is normal, we are professionals. The basic calls of 'miss one' or

'miss two' or flat are all easy to understand".

And Philippe's influence... The former French Captain is a long-term admirer of the young fly half with a dynamite leg, although Ludovic admits to being very surprised when he got Philippe's call.

"Him being here is very important for the team. I said to my agent I wanted to sign for Gloucester for a new adventure, a new challenge for me. I signed here I didn't want to sign for another team. I just liked the club".

Philippe's influence at the club means French newspapers are never short of a story about the Cherry and Whites and Ludovic has kept himself well informed. He had previously also tried the Kingsholm experience first hand, playing for Béziers in the European Shield in 1997. That day Philippe scored two tries as Gloucester scored a good victory.

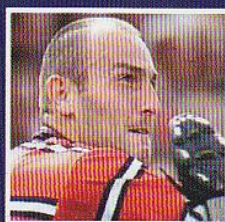
So what would Ludo like to achieve from his time with Gloucester, he has already won a World Championship for France. In 1995, as part of the French U19 side, he won the FIRA tournament in Romania

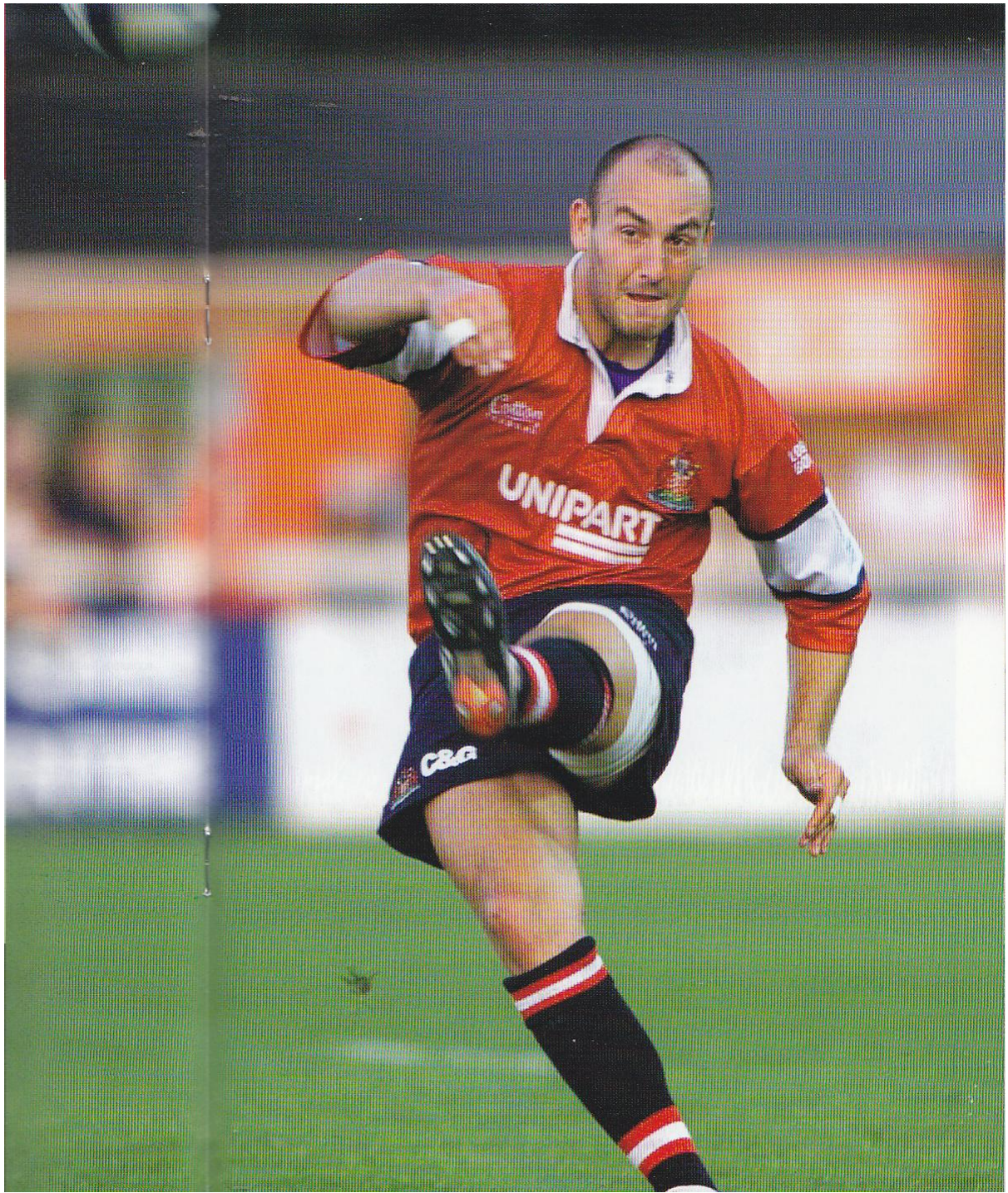
as they defeated Argentina in the final. His answer will again be like music to the ears of all Gloucester supporters. He, quite simply, wants to win championships. Although he concedes this will not be easy.

"This is a very good Championship because it is normal to have many internationals. Each week the games are like semi finals and finals, it is not like this in France because there are two or three weak teams".

Playing in such a league it is inconceivable that a player will not get better and put himself into the international shop window. As for international recognition Ludovic admits it "If I get selection it would be very nice for me.... but for the moment, I work for my team".

He must have taken a crash course in Gloucester speak and his sentiments will warm the spirits of the Gloucester faithful no doubt. He has even gone so far as to request that the size of the goalposts be altered. Not however, widened, (though most would afford him that luxury), but rather made taller to give him more height to aim at, now that's confidence.

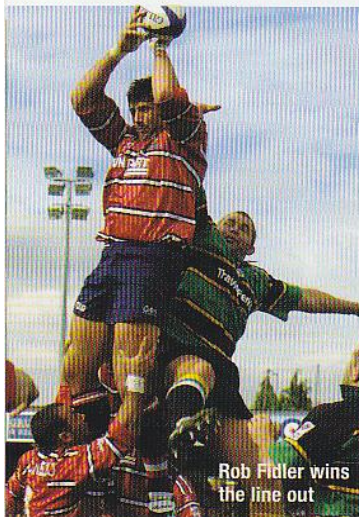




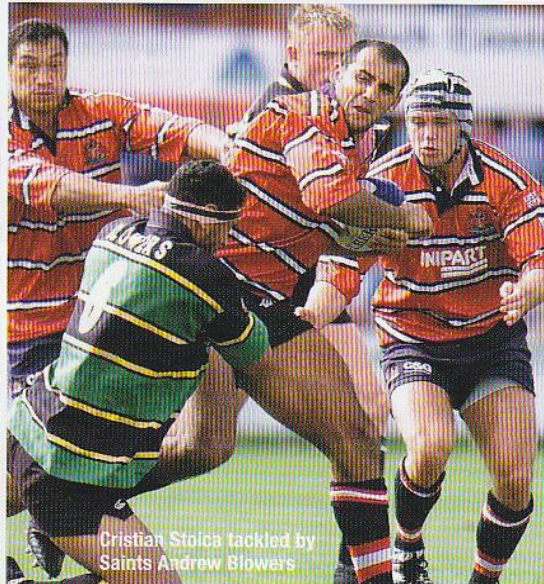
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Zurich Premiership

01-09-01



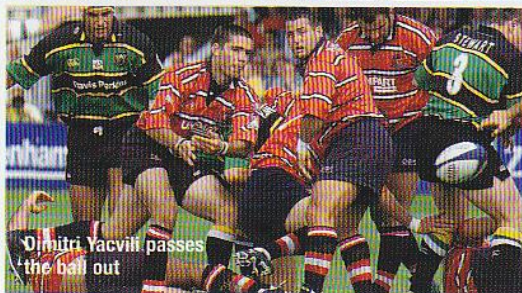
Rob Fidler wins the line out



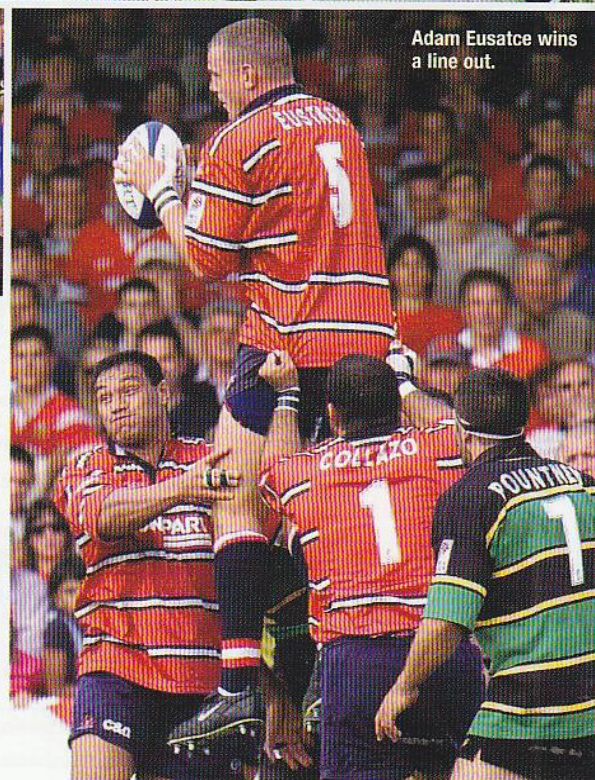
Cristian Stoica tackled by Saints Andrew Blowers



Adam Eusatce has his run stopped short



Dimitri Yacvill passes the ball out



Adam Eusatce wins a line out.

matchstats



22

Gloucester: **22 points**
Tries: Paramore (1)

Conversions: Mercier (1)
Penalties: Mercier (5)



9

Northampton: **9 points**
Tries: -

Conversions: -
Penalties: Grayson (3)

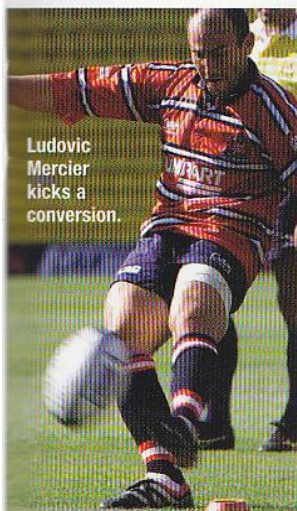
Zurich Premiership

[match action]

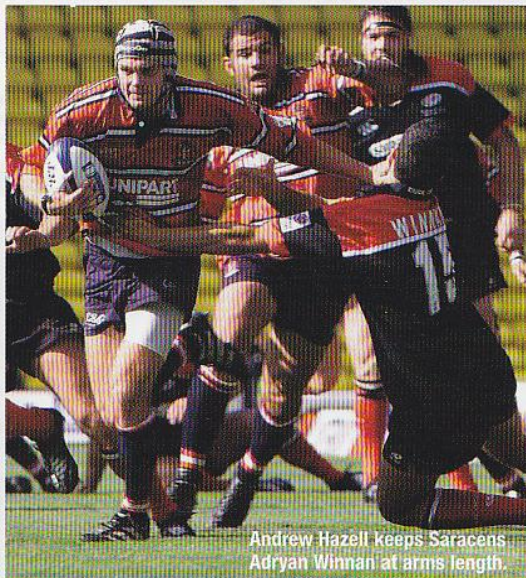
Saracens

Zurich Premiership

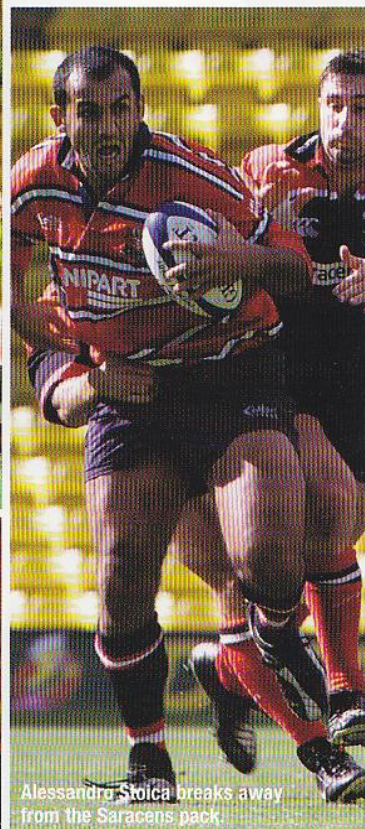
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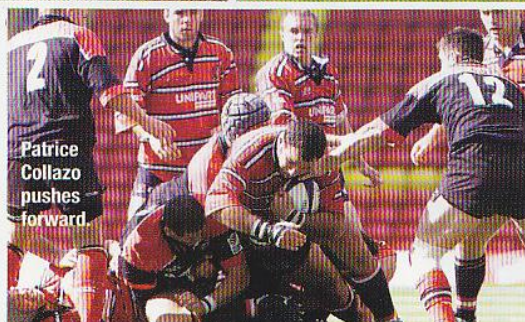
Ludovic Mercier kicks a conversion.



Andrew Hazell keeps Saracens Adryan Winnan at arms length.



Alessandro Stolica breaks away from the Saracens pack.



Patrice Collazo pushes forward.



Trevor Woodman breaks out of a tackle.



34

Saracens: **34 points**
Tries: Horan (1)

Conversions: Smith (1)
Penalties: Smith (9)

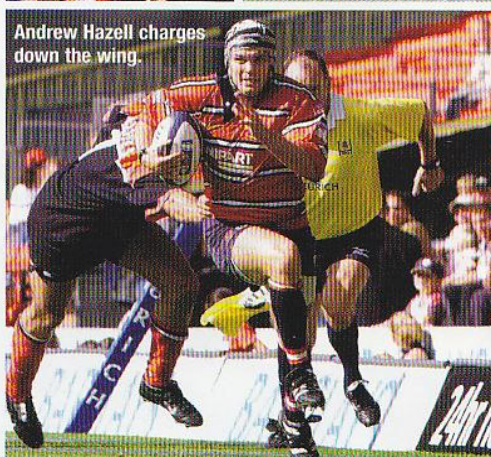


30

Gloucester: **30 points**
Tries: Azam(1), O'Leary(1)
Conversions: Mercier(1)
Penalties: Mercier(6)

Zurich Premiership

Photography Supplied by GPA



Andrew Hazell charges down the wing.

www.gloucesterclub.co.uk [match action]

33

Interesting 'Times'

...I always enjoy reading Stephen Jones of the 'Sunday Times'.

"Dimitri Yachvili was, after all, the French Under 21 scrum-half, and that's not the easiest squad to get into."

I don't always agree with the things he says, but they are always literate, stylish and, above all, informative with no discernible bias one way or another. Just what one wants in a professional rugby writer, of course.

This season we have been lucky in that he has covered both of Gloucester's matches. In his piece about the Northampton game he appeared slightly bemused by the fact that Gloucester had cobbled together a side of highly disparate elements, but that they had gone out on the field and played as a unit, seeing off one of the Premiership's fancied sides in the process.

He was particularly intrigued by the half-back combination stating that they were a pair who "nobody had heard of bar their mothers". He then went on for a paragraph or so saying, in effect, that if no one had heard of them before, they jolly well had now.

Actually, I think Mr. Jones was a bit hard, there. Ludovic Mercier created a sensation in France last season, when he was recognised as the best kicker in the country. And Dimitri Yachvili was, after all, the French Under 21 scrum-half, and that's not the easiest squad to get into.

Last week Stephen Jones was a little incensed by the

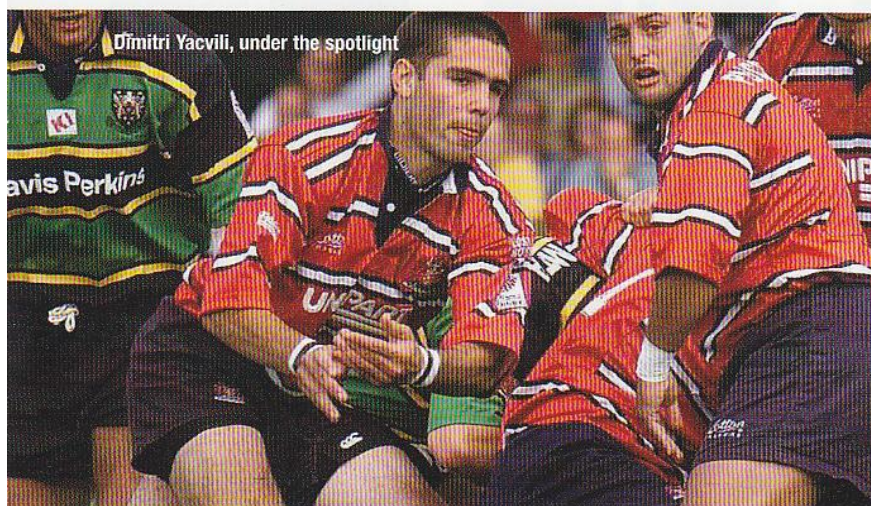
refereeing at Vicarage Road, which he described as "bewildering, finicky and unsympathetic in the extreme". He didn't imply that Gloucester were always on the end of poor decisions, but made it clear that he thought that we had received the dirty end of the stick throughout the first half at any rate.

Well, he's entitled to his opinion, and while I might agree as a consenting adult in private, I wouldn't want to comment here. The thought does occur, however, that, in a period where all Premiership clubs have a metronomic kicker, you don't want to go around giving away nine kickable penalties. And if you're a bit worried about the referee, then that's all the more reason to be careful.

So it's one win and one loss so far. Of course one always gets strange results at this time of the year, and on past experience, it's unlikely that the sides making the running at the moment will be the ones in the final shake-up as far ahead as next May.

What about poor old Bath, though?

Oh dear. What a pity. Never mind.



Con-Lab Pact

...I do have to apologise for my absence from the Northampton game a couple of weeks ago.

I was prevented from attending the first home Premiership game of the season by my involvement in the annual Mayor of Barton celebrations.

If you don't know about them, it would take too long to explain here. Suffice it to say that they entail a parade through the City by what Alan Myatt, new Mayor of Barton and Town Crier described as 'the usual nutters' and the press, more politely, as 'a cavalcade of eccentrics'. Silly hats and costumes are de rigueur.

After that, the whole strange

gang retires to Barton Street for suitable refreshment. This time, we made it back in time to listen to most of the game on BBC Radio Gloucestershire in the bar at the New Olympus Theatre, and great was the rejoicing when the final whistle went.

We did have one defector, however. Paul James, defeated Conservative candidate at the recent General Election, had taken the precaution of wearing his Gloucester shirt as part of his costume. He was therefore able to slope off, furtively, and take his usual place in the Shed

well in time for the kick-off. Lest I get accused of political bias, I hasten to add that the successful Parliamentary candidate, Parmjit Dhanda, a self-confessed round-ball buff, was also in the ground, a position he intends to hold as often as possible all season. About time, too. I don't think we've had regular attendance from our MP since Sally Oppenheim.

It's good to know that some politicians can put aside their ideological differences for the sake of the common good, and, in fact, get their priorities right.



Action from the Northampton game

Kicking the Cat



John Steele

Action Images

You know the feeling. You have a bad day at work, come home in a foul mood, snarl at the kids, shout at the wife and kick the cat.

We've all done it, so perhaps we shouldn't be too hard on Northampton's John Steele for his verbal attack on Junior Paramore after his sin-binning for a high tackle towards the end of a game which the Saints were so conspicuously losing.

Nevertheless, I've probably watched Junior Paramore at least as often as Mr. Steele, who is perfectly entitled to express his feelings if he thinks that one of his players has been unfairly attacked. We all know that his best friend couldn't

describe Junior as a modest shrinking violet. But to vilify him as some sort of a systematic, calculated thug is surely over the top.

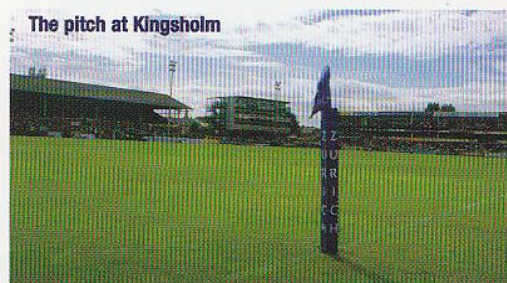
A whiff of sour grapes in the air, perhaps?

On the Green

I've heard a lot of comment about how good the pitch looks, thus far this season.

More than once, the phrase 'billiard table' has been quoted. Don't quite know about that, but I do have information that a certain well-known member of the club staff who likes the

occasional round of golf, could be seen practising his putting out on the pitch in the days before the first home game. I've heard of kicking tees, but this is ridiculous.



The pitch at Kingsholm

Bernard Faure [fitness coach]

The English rugby season is a marathon, not a sprint, a sentiment that will no doubt, have been echoed by all teams who have lost, or indeed won, their opening fixtures.



**New Fitness Coach
Bernard Faure**

With longevity in mind, what better way of ensuring the players fitness throughout this long slog of a season, than by employing a marathon runner, and a champion one at that?

Bernard Faure, the 1982 French National Champion marathon runner, (with a time of two hours and twelve minutes), has been recruited by Gloucester to condition the 1st team squad in such a way that they will maintain the level of fitness required throughout the season to turn the last minute losses of last year into narrow victories.

"At the moment, I think that the levels of fitness of all the teams is nearly the same. This is because they are all coming from a period when they could do the basic training. Some speed, some stamina, and some power also. I think the difference will start in two months and will start in three points: the rugby level, the amount of injuries and the fitness. On my side, on the fitness, in two months the levels will be completely different between all the teams".

Using the image of a mountain trek, Bernard describes this disparity between the teams in

a typically analogous way.

"In order to climb a mountain, you have different ways in which to climb it. I do not want to say that one way is better than one other but I know that with my way, in the middle of the season we will be up, never down"

Bernard earned his rugby stripes in 1995. He began conditioning a Brieve team, coached by Laurent Seigne, during a very successful time for the famous French club. He began in November 1995 and in the summer of 1996 they were in the final of the French championship and Cup winners. In '97 they beat Leicester in the final of the Heineken Cup and in 98 they were back in the final.

After his running career ended he went into the media, commentating for French television on the Olympics, the World Championships and other large meets. This change in vocation is obviously one he enjoys but Bernard does not see it as a way to extend his rugby commitments.

"I will not be able to talk about rugby. You need to do this at such a high level. I can speak about fitness, athletics, and

rugby fitness but I will never, and this is the key to my relationship with Philippe and Laurent, I will always speak about fitness in rugby, but not about rugby. It is not my job and I am not paid for this"

As a rugby supporter from France it was inevitable that Bernard would have heard of the 'Piglet' Philippe Saint Andre. His description of the legendary French winger is refreshing to say the least.

"I had admiration for the player, but this was another time. Now I enjoy working with him because he is very nice. At the same time, he is very hard and very soft. I like this. In French we say that he has an iron hand in soft gloves."

Teaming up with Philippe and Laurent has obviously enabled Bernard to express himself and introduce his own unique methods of coaching.

"What I ask of the players is not typical. I know it's odd and it is different from the way other teams do it. When you are different it can be a problem, when you win everyone is confident but when you lose it becomes a problem. So you must have a coach who believes and trusts you. I think it would be impossible

Marathon Man

for me to do the same job with any other coach".

To the untrained eye, the basic training concepts that exist in athletics and rugby may seem very similar. The transition from world-class athlete to rugby coach though, Bernard assures us has triggered a major change in many of his training methods.

"Rugby is very short action, two seconds to six seconds with some rest. It is a lot of 'interval' work so we have two ways of training. The first way is to have specific action, (training using the specific actions used in the sport). But if you do only specification, you could be down in some months, so we also do some compensation action training, which is very important".

"The problem also with rugby is that you must cope with the group. It is completely different from the situation where you have six athletes. Give me only six players to train with a typical programme and there is no problem, but this impossible with a team so you must have a different approach. You have to coach the group but give them information about their own levels".

Bernard is happy with the response from the team and indeed says it is a pleasure to coach an English team rather

than the red wine and cigarette culture that French rugby was accused of fostering.

Perhaps the best judge of the impact Bernard's 'odd' methods is Ed Archer. Ed is the second half of the partnership charged with getting unfit players fit and fit players fitter. He has been involved with sports conditioning and sports therapy since his school days in South Africa.

In typical style, Bernard describes the harmonious relationship within the department using a food-based analogy.

"When making a meal, you can give ten people the same ingredients but you may not get a good meal, it depends how you cook".

So the product is all in the blend. A blending that so far at least, seems to be having the right effect.

"They are certainly different to anything I have worked with before". Says Archer about Bernard's methods.

"Gloucester has come on a lot as a professional rugby team. In the four years that I have been here, there has been a lot of progression but really the team had got to a level where they needed a spark or something on the conditioning side to take them to another level and that is what Bernard

is able to bring. It's a different type of training that players were not used to and it did cause a shock to the system for them. But, the body adapts to cope with it and it makes it stronger. I have no doubt that the players are fitter than ever. Now we are doing warm ups that would have constituted a whole session in years gone by. There has been a massive progression, but the test will come in six months time. I am confident though that we will stand up to the test".

So the verdict on our new marathon man seems that whether he has reached the top of the mountain, or manages to cook on gas the results are already being seen where they count, on the pitch.



Faure puts the lads through their paces



PREVIEWING THE season for Gloucester is a waste of time - previewing the week ahead is hard enough.

So much has emerged from the volatile Kingsholm brew after only a fortnight of the campaign it is impossible to predict what might happen next.

Coaches coming and going, a victory, a defeat and now the visit of the Premiership champions. But one thing is for certain, though, this afternoon. Gloucester face their acid test in the huge, looming presence of the European champions - Leicester Tigers at Kingsholm. What are we to make of Gloucester's first two Premiership performances that have yielded a victory and a defeat before the Tigers enter the Gloucester den?

Confidently and with controlled aggression they disposed of a Northampton team that were a shadow of the side they are capable of, before spinning to a haphazard defeat at Saracens last weekend in a performance as contrasting as the autumn weather. But it is today when the true benchmark of Philippe Saint Andre's carefully hand-picked squad can be assessed - against the best - the dominating Welford Road side. You have to earn your stripes at Leicester, where

only the strongest, mentally and physically, survive.

Saint-Andre knows his team has enough quality and possesses the power and strength to win. They will need to take it to Leicester today and not relent in their efforts. But we know that, Gloucester always do against the best. But can they overcome the physiological indifference that was their undoing at Vicarage Road. It is Leicester's astonishing mental capacity to turn hard graft into victory that makes them the pre-eminent team in the country.

They tough it out and rely on their inner strength when things go against them to collectively strive for perfection. Gloucester have to learn that same suffocating resilience to match their undoubted potential. Leicester are calm and hold a persuasive, but ruthless streak that makes them the best. They emphasise Saint-Andre's 'collective' perfectly. Gloucester are within touching distance of obtaining it, but that has been said before. They must now take that extra step. A victory today would be the ideal start. Prepare yourself for a raucous afternoon in a rugby hot-bed

of deep-rooted tradition.

Prepare yourself for a clash between two domestic heavyweights in a collision as powerful as any in the game. The thousands of Cherry and White hordes will play their part today in an occasion that makes rugby what it is.

"Saint-Andre knows his team has enough quality and possesses the power and strength to win. They will need to take it to Leicester today and not relent in their efforts."



Saint-Andre and Saints' John Steele compare notes before last week's match.