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vs Sale Sharks

Saturday 9th March 2002 kick-off 3.00pm

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ZURICH CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL
TWICKENHAM - SATURDAY 8TH JUNE 2002

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Line-ups



42 Gloucester VS Sale Sharks 14

<input type="checkbox"/>	Daren O'Leary	15	Jason Robinson	i
i	Terry Fanolua	14	Mark Cueto	<input type="checkbox"/>
i	Henry Paul	13	Joss Baxendale	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Todd	12	Mel deane	<input type="checkbox"/>
i	Diego Albanese	11	Steve Hanley	i
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ludovic Mercier	10	Charlie Hodgeson	i
i	Andy Gomarsall	9	Bryan Redpath	i c
<input type="checkbox"/>	Patrice Collazo	1	Kevin Yates	i
i	Olivier Azam	2	Andy titterrell	<input type="checkbox"/>
i c	Phil Vickery	3	Stuart Turner	<input type="checkbox"/>
i	Rob Fidler	4	Iain Fullerton	i
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Cornwell	5	Scott Lines	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jake Boer	6	Apollo Perelini	i
<input type="checkbox"/>	James Forrester	7	Stuart Pinkerton	<input type="checkbox"/>
i	Junior Paramore	8	Alex Sanderson	<input type="checkbox"/>

[replacements]

<input type="checkbox"/>	Dimitri Yachvili	16	Alan Dickens	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	James Simpson Daniel	17	Martin Shaw	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Ewens	18	Vaughan Going	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chris Fortey	19	Mark Giacheri	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trevor Woodman	20	Richard Wilks	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Koli Sewabu	21	Adam Black	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ed Pearce	22	Charl Marais	<input type="checkbox"/>

[teams correct at 06/03/02]

i [denotes international]

c [denotes captain]

[today's officials]

[referee] John Barnard RFU

[touch judges] Ashley Rowden RFU, Bob Mullis RFU

Welcome

[from Terry Short]



"On Tuesday 12th March at 7pm here at Kingsholm, the Season Ticket Holders Association will be hosting an evening with Henry Paul, who returns from last weekend's international against France..."

Welcome to today's Zurich Premiership game against Sale Sharks. At the beginning of the season the Rugby journalists had Gloucester and Sale in a predicted 8th and 9th places respectively.

However Kingsholm today plays host to a top of the table battle between two in-form teams, both chasing Heineken Cup places for next season.

Gloucester Rugby Club's ambition at the beginning of this season was to achieve a Heineken Cup place for next year and win some silverware, specifically the Parker Pen Shield, along the way. No doubt Sale Sharks have similar plans and the two teams on view today will have a direct impact on each other's successes for the rest of the season.

The Parker Pen Shield Semi-Final match at Franklin's Gardens on the 28th April will see Gloucester take on Sale in the third part of this season's trilogy. With a European Final date reserved for the winners of this game, today may provide an insight into the eventual outcome.

As Chairman of the GRFC Season Ticket Holders Association, I am pleased that the club have chosen to sell tickets for the Semi Final exclusively to the Season Ticket Holders for a three-week period. With a reasonably limited

allocation from the ERC, I applaud the Club for allowing all Season Ticket Holders the chance of guaranteeing themselves a place at Franklin's Gardens. Also, the club have been more than generous in helping to finance the coach travel to Northampton.

This is just another benefit of becoming a Season Ticket Holder of Gloucester Rugby Club. If the Club do not have your details on file then I would recommend that you contact the ticket office on 0871 871 87 81 and request more information on becoming a Gloucester Season Ticket Holder.

This brings me nicely to our next social event in the Season Ticket Holders calendar. On Tuesday 12th March at 7pm here at Kingsholm, the Season Ticket Holders Association will be hosting an evening with Henry Paul, who returns from last weekend's international against France, it promises to be a light hearted and enjoyable evening. We will also have Chris White, the professional referee, answering your questions on the night so we look forward to seeing you then.



Henry Paul at England training last week

Coach's Corner

[Paul Turner]

Given the three point difference between ourselves and our opponents today, a good win will take that out even further and set us up for our game, next week, against the Champions.

"I want to improve players but will always remember that we need to win and not just entertain. We can entertain after we have won. If the conditions dictate we must kick for eighty minutes then that is what we will do to win".



Long before I arrived at Kingsholm, the intention for every Gloucester team was to win their home games. With only two left after today, this game becomes even more important because the Kingsholm faithful expect.

Make no mistake, though this will be a very tricky game. Sale have enjoyed a lot of success here in recent years. I won here twice as a player, Sale had a good win here last year and before that Shane Howarth did a lot of damage. This means that coming here will not faze them and the pitch at the time of writing is very firm and will suit them.

Long gone are the days when Gloucester teams would pray for rain to increase their advantage over teams. Obviously a heavy pitch helps our forward game, but my intention is to develop a plan B, which has not been very evident during the season. We have been winning, but not putting sides away. In our last two league games at home against London Irish and Newcastle, we were almost praying for the final whistle.

Now we need to start developing a plan B. I have spoken to Philippe about it and he agreed,

and without putting Nigel (Melville) under too much pressure, I'm sure he will try to develop this as well. The game hasn't changed too much, as I always say you need people pushing the piano and some people playing the piano. Without our piano pushers we would not be second in the league.

We have a lot of players here who are desperate to express themselves on the pitch. As a coaching team, we have to win but we also have a duty to improve players and that has always been my philosophy. It's a formula that I believe all the great teams use. I want to improve players but will always remember that we need to win and not just entertain. We can entertain after we have won. If the conditions dictate we must kick for eighty minutes then that is what we will do to win.

Our problem this year is that we have been trying things on match days that we have not practiced during the week. That shouldn't happen. We need to keep going the way we have been but through our training methods and our preparation I hope we will carry on winning but improve in other facets of the game. I believe that what will be

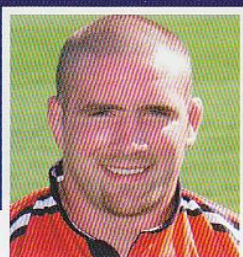
handed over to Nigel (Melville) is a mouth-watering prospect of things yet to come from us.

Today is a prequel to the Parker Pen Shield Semi Final and both sides will take a lot out of this game. Sale will get a massive boost if they come here and beat us, but if we can win then we will have done the double over them this season. Nothing is certain in rugby though and whatever happens today, the third game will be a one off affair.

It will be interesting today to see how they cope with our big forwards, which they didn't do at Heywood Road. Since then though they have improved up front and they have players in the back line that are world class.

Jason Robinson has shown on numerous occasions, against the Australians and last week against France, that people just can't contain him. We will have to make sure that our kicking game and our chasing game are spot on to cope with his threat. We don't want to concentrate on one person but we would be naïve not to think about him.

I still believe that we will be the team to watch today.



Club Captain [phil vickery]

D.O.B: 14/03/76
Position: **Tight Head**
Height: **1.91m**
Weight: **125kg**
Former Club: **Bude/Redruth**
Int'l national Honours:
England, British Lions

I find myself becoming slightly repetitive, but today is another big game for everyone concerned with Gloucester Rugby Club.

"Today is a chance for us to make a statement. Sale are our closest rivals and it would be nice if we thought people were resigned to Leicester winning the league and us finishing second".

If we can win today and win well, then we will give ourselves a bit of a gap and create some breathing space from the rest of the chasing pack.

Everyone here knows how hard our run in to the end of the Premiership season will be. We have only two more games at home after today and a good performance, with the right result will stand us in good stead for the trip to Leicester next weekend. Today is a chance for us to make a statement. Sale are our closest rivals and it would be nice if we thought people were resigned to Leicester winning the league and us finishing second.

Of course if we lose, then we will be dragged straight back into the dogfight but after the tremendous start we have made it is time to assert ourselves and finish the season off well in both the Cup and League competitions.

This week it was announced that Nigel Melville has been signed as our new Director of Rugby. I'm glad that it has now been sorted out. We have all been waiting for a decision and the uncertainty is now over. I personally am looking forward to working with him and hearing how he intends to push the club forward. I'm sure that he will not want to change everything but it was important that his contract was sorted out before the end of the season, as it will take time for him to get to know all the players and this way we can have a good preseason and be ready for next season's challenges.

Today though, our focus remains on this very important league game. Our victory at Heywood Road earlier in the season caught them somewhat on the hop and I am sure they will be keen to even up the score.

They play a very good expansive game. They can attack from anywhere, given the space and with Jason Robinson in the team, they have a very talented individual. It will be up to all fifteen players, who take the field today to beat what is in front of them and it will need a massive performance collectively.

Looking towards the near future, the Parker Pen Shield Semi Final against today's League opponents is a huge game for the club and its supporters. Today will give the players and coaches of both sides another chance to have a look at their opponents before that match. A good win for us this afternoon will help us put our marker down for that competition.

First and foremost however, we must treat the two games as completely separate. Today, the most important thing is for us to get the league points on offer. The Cup is the Cup and is a completely different competition. Today we will focus on the need to secure the vital League points that will help us finish the League competition off strongly.



Watch This Face

[brad davis]



He may not yet be the next big thing but the Gloucester Academy's Brad Davis has all the right credentials.

He describes himself as vocal and assertive on the pitch but away from the action he is a quiet and thoughtful young man with one goal on his mind; to play professional rugby for Gloucester.

He was lucky that at an early age his role model and hero, Phil Greening, pushed him to excel at Spartans RFC and at St Peter's school in Gloucester. Under the tutelage of another former Gloucester favourite, Dave Pointon, he progressed through the ranks at junior level and was spotted by Gloucester Academy Manager, John Haines who invited him to train with the Gloucester Colts.

Davis accepted the challenge and has progressed through the Gloucester ranks and now, at the age of nineteen, he is a regular in the Academy U21s.

The new Academy structure, which was introduced at the beginning of last season, and has already provided eight current first team player's, has certainly helped Davis, a fly half by trade, to tread the path from schoolboy to senior rugby. With the formation of a colt and U21 league, the regular fixtures have provided him with a competitive arena in which to

learn his trade. Also, by playing for the U21 two years young, he is already playing at the 'next level'.

"All the sides in the league are good so each week we are playing a high standard of rugby, which is good and more structured. Also the coaches at the Academy are excellent and they push you in the right direction", says the Gloucester youngster.

The fact that eight Academy 'graduates' were offered first team contracts at the end of the season was also not lost on the young fly half.

"With eight Academy players getting contracts at the end of the season, it put the whole squad on a high. We were all so pleased for them. It sent a message down throughout the club that if you were good enough, there would be opportunities to play first team rugby and it is a goal we all want to achieve", says Davis.

Throughout last season Davis also progressed through the age group representative teams. First with Gloucestershire, the South West for whom he had also played a year young the

previous season, and then finally with England. His reward, apart from selection, was a place in the squad for the Six Nation internationals against Wales and France and then on the England School Boys tour to North America, New Zealand and Australia.

"Just to play for your country is awesome", says Davis. "But to go on the tour, which only happens once every four years to Australia and New Zealand, was something else again".

The highlight for Davis, along with most of the England Tourists was, the game against the New Zealand's Schools XV at the world famous 'House of Pain' at Carisbrook, Dunedin. The young representative teams played against one another as a curtain raiser for the Bledisloe Cup confrontation between New Zealand and Australia.

"It was just fantastic to play in front of such a big crowd. It was a hostile environment but a good environment".

Unlike their senior counterparts, the U19 international teams play in a World Cup Tournament each season. Later this month the

England U19s will travel to Italy to take part once again in the FIRA tournament. Davis has been involved with the squad throughout and played against the Irish last month. As the U19's is the next step up on his development ladder he has set a goal of being on the plane when it leaves on 21st March.

On the field, Davies is content with his progress to date. He is currently in the first year of a three-year retainer contract that will ensure he is looked after during his Academy years. At present he is also enjoying a gap year before going to university where he hopes to combine a sport and exercise degree with his blossoming rugby career.

Time away from studies and work means that the young fly half can dedicate himself to the three to four hours a day he reserves for his chosen profession. But, like nearly all of his peers in the new professional era, he is sensible to realise the value in continuing his education along with his rugby development, as he knows a playing career can be short.

"I want to get my education

sorted out first. I hope to go to either Hartpury or the Gloucestershire University to study a sport related degree. I want to get a broad base of knowledge away from rugby because you can break your leg tomorrow", says Davis pragmatically.

This season he has also been given the chance to train with the first team squad whenever possible. This extra exposure has brought home just how big the step up is from junior to senior rugby.

"Training with them (the first team) gives you a chance to meet the players, get loads of experience and learn about the way the coaches want you to play. It also shows you the professional attitude you need to succeed as a player".

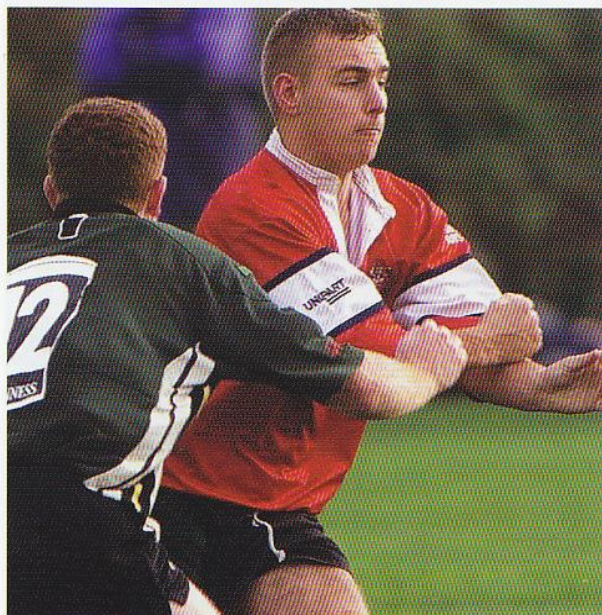
It is this attitude that the Academy Manager John Haines feels will help Davis to achieve his goal.

"He has a great attitude", says Haines. "He is very strong mentally and works very hard at his game. He is determined to get to professional rugby. He works hard to strengthen all aspects of his game. If he thinks something is weak he'll

do extra work to put it right, whether it be kicking or in the gym".

In order to achieve his goal Davis still has some way to go. The Club's fitness and conditioning staff have him working on a weights programme to ensure his young body is prepared for the rigours of a full rugby season. He continues to make progress with each game he plays and is certainly one for the future.

Brad Davis, watch this face.



Ian Randall
From the [commentary box]

B B C

So, in the words of XTC, a band from Swindon, in 1979 (surely one or two of you must remember them!) Gloucester are "making plans for Nigel."

It's been a badly kept secret for some time that the former England scrum half was Philippe's likely replacement, but his appointment came just in time to meet the print deadlines for this afternoon's programme.

Melville's pedigree for the job is strong. He's done the groundwork. He played 13 Tests for England - including captaining his country on his debut against Australia - and

toured with the Lions. He cut his coaching teeth in his native Yorkshire at Otley, and has spent nearly six years at Wasps, where, like Otley, he also served as a player. One League title and two Cups was his return at Loftus Road - but now it's time for a new challenge.

Managing Director Ken Nottage was delighted to conclude the negotiations, but didn't welcome Melville without a word to his predecessor. "To see between 200 and 300 supporters stood outside the tunnel at The Stoop after the match against Harlequins chanting Philippe's name wasn't something I'd anticipated, and I know he found it a difficult day to deal with. He was leaving one of the most attractive jobs in English rugby."

With Laurent Seigne also joining Philippe at Bourgoin, Nigel joins with no forwards coach on the staff, and with backs coach Paul Turner looking after the shop. Paul is from the same playing era as Melville, and it would be nice to think that the scrum half/fly half axis could work well together. By the time you read this, we'll know when that will

start, and Ken Nottage was quick to point out the place that this had in the scheme of things.

"The supporters will recognise it's more important to get the right person, and that's Tom Walkinshaw's view too. He wanted to make sure that having decided Nigel WAS the man to achieve the club's ambitions, we didn't lose him. Timing is the secondary issue, because although we do want someone looking after the development of the team as soon as possible, Paul Turner is already here. But let's be clear - everything about the club - shirt sales, beer sales, sponsorship, hospitality - is driven by what happens on the pitch."

Melville arrives in a tricky situation, but not one he can't handle. The margin of improvement for this season is small - he can only lose a promising position, and to guide the team into the Heineken Cup will be the minimum that will be expected. I'm tempted to say the Parker Pen Shield should also end up in the Kingsholm trophy cabinet, but anything can happen in knockout rugby, and Managing Director



Ken Nottage would settle for qualification via the Premiership.

"The absolute minimum position for us at the start of next season is to be in the European Cup. That's what our budgets are based on, and we want to keep the squad together, build it further, and challenge again for the top prize. Philippe took the performance of the team on a long way in his time here, but there is still a big job ahead. We're second in the League, but not substantially second. We need to secure that position, and I think one of the ways we can do that is by beating Leicester away. I know they haven't lost at home for 50 matches, but we've come very close to beating them in the past and I think with this squad we can go there and do it this time."

An alternative avenue of course, is to knock away the challenge of pursuers like today's opponents, Sale. Recent connections between the clubs have been plentiful, Chris Yates, Phil Greening and Simon Mannix have all played for both, as has Tom Beim, who it's pleasing to see is

close to full fitness again, and, of course, Paul Turner - though I think we've forgiven him for orchestrating more than a couple of defeats here in the blue and white as player/coach.

Turner will be keen to put one over his old club, as he will have done a lot of the preparation ahead of Nigel Melville's appointment. As for the players, whether their contracts are due for renewal or not, everyone starts now with a clean slate. They all have a chance to impress the new boss - which can only be good as the season reaches the business end.

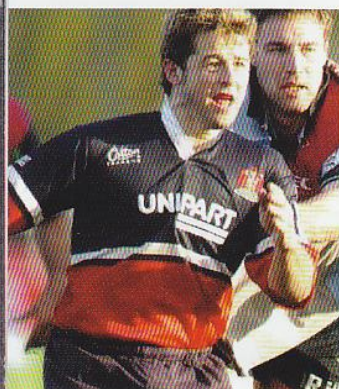
C'mon Glaws !!

"The absolute minimum position for us at the start of next season is to be in the European Cup. That's what our budgets are based on, and we want to keep the squad together, build it further, and challenge again for the top prize..."



Head2Head

Today's head to head focuses on the two scrumhalves on view in today's match. The scrumhalf acts as the link between forwards and backs and is one of the key decision-making positions on the field.



The decisions of Sale Shark's Brian Redpath will be scrutinised doubly as he is also the Shark's Club captain.

The quality of passing and kicking from both Andy Gomarsall and Brian Redpath can mean the difference between their team moving forward maintaining pressure on their opponents, or coughing up possession needlessly.

Andy Gomarsall

Strengths

"Organisation is a strong part of my game. I think my style of play puts a pattern on the game. I have a eye for a break, sometimes a bit too often. And also just my all round skills. I've been lucky enough to have good coaches from a young age so I feel my basic skills are pretty good. My box kicking and line kicking has been spot on, although my goal kicking leaves something to be desired" says Gomarsall.

"Also you need a big mouth, and I certainly have one of them", he adds.

Weaknesses

"There are no real weaknesses around my general skills but I do get criticised for not playing to the game plan. There may be a gap that closes quickly and I'll have gone for it. I have to be more educated in a game and understand and ply to the team pattern more", say Gomarsall.

High Points

"It's been a while ago, but my first cap was special. Things were not as professional in those days so it was more of a dream than anything else. One of my high points playing for England came in the Hong Kong sevens where we reached the Semi Final. Being a part of that was a great experience".

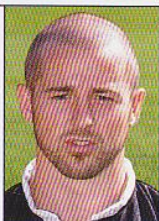
"On a Club level, winning the Courage League as it was and the Tetley Bitter Cup Final with Wasps was a high point".

Low Points

"I had a bad back injury in 1997 that put me out for four to five months. It was just after I had played for England so it set me back a bit. More recently, just before I signed for Gloucester in my last game for Bedford I ruptured my Patella Tendon and missed the England tour to South Africa. It would have been an ideal opportunity to get back into the squad".

Gomarsallstats

Nick Name **Gommars**
Position **Scrum Half**
Born **24/07/74**
Height **1.77m**
Weight **86.2kg**
Int Hons **England 7 Cap**



Gomarsall on Redpath

"Bryan and I have played against one another quite a lot and he is a very fierce competitor. I have always rated him as the top Scottish Scrum Half. He is a very clean player, his pass is exceptional and he fires up the whole Sale team. I think we are quite similar in the way we play".

Gomarsall on Sale

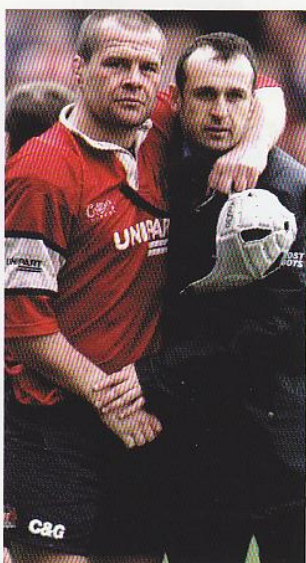
"Sale came here at the beginning of last season and won by a point. That kick-started their whole season and they have just got better and better. They play an expansive game and are not worried about throwing the ball wide where they have some very dangerous runners. They have made some good signings and will want to put right the result we got at Heywood Road"

Nigel Melville and Philippe Saint-Andre

An Appreciation

[by Alastair Downey]

The Philippe Saint-Andre legacy will live long in the memory at Kingsholm.



It will be a legacy that promises to provoke fierce debate in the weeks to come, but there is no question the enigmatic man from Romans felt dearly about the club and wanted the best for it until the end.

Gloucester have never been just an ordinary club. They are too fervent, too welded to the community and too passionate for that. Saint-Andre was able to convey the same Cherry and White-soaked passions as the cognoscenti that came to worship his team week after week - no matter the situation they found themselves in.

There is no place in the sport like the Shed - the townie terrace he converted to a seething mass of excitement behind the team he moulded. He stripped out the old Gloucester guard and brought in players from around the globe but got them to play with the same Gloucester spirit and dog. It was some achievement.

Saint-Andre was no ordinary man for no ordinary club. He was too well-acquainted with reality to let sentiment get in the way during the most uncertain period in club rugby. The blunt truth was that the heroes from local clubs could

no longer be relied upon to succeed at the top end of the professional game.

Initially, his rebuilding plan gathered momentum. A top three finish and a place in the Heineken Cup were just rewards for a club finding its feet. But what now? The pressure and the grind have gradually taken their toll. The beaming new director of rugby was replaced by a suspicious, volatile and unpredictable man who was unsure of himself and the feelings of his team.

He can, and always will, point to the fact he left Gloucester second in the Premiership and in the last four of a major European competition. There is nothing wrong in that, but how much input did he have in the club's development?

Gloucester have lost matches this term because their preparation, groundwork and structure have not been good enough. Those are the facts. Is a squad that includes Phil Vickery, Junior Paramore, Olivier Azam, Terry Fanolua, Jake Boer et al going to under perform because they do not like the man at the head of the chain. I will give you one guess. But once the players lost the

trust of Saint-Andre, which they obviously did, then they were a squad who were never going to deliver their potential. It is hard to question Saint-Andre's commitment to the club and he can be one of the most engaging men on the rugby circuit, but his time at Gloucester had run its course.

Nigel Melville is the man now to take Gloucester to tangible glory. His job, alongside Paul Turner, will be to pull all the ingredients together. It is a case of intensifying the preparation and awareness and turning Gloucester into a force every week. Melville has been at the forefront of the English game with Wasps for six years and in that time his record has been virtually exemplary. Regardless of how Wasps have performed this season, Melville has guided the club to two Tetley's Bitter Cup victories and a Courage League title. They are credentials to be proud of and a CV fit to lead a club craving success. Melville has also graduated from the grassroots of the sport and if there is a man capable of delivering to the people, then it is the former British Lions and England number nine. Good luck Nigel, it promises to be quite a journey.

Andy Gomarsall

[player focus]



At the beginning of last season Andy Gomarsall joined Gloucester from Bedford. He had enjoyed some personal success in a season Bedford can collectively describe as a disaster.

Financial problems crippled the Blues off the field, and on the pitch relegation to the first division was finally decided in a play-off with Rotherham, whom Bedford had narrowly beaten the previous year.

Gomarsall headed West, "To play for a traditional rugby Club". A purist at heart, the scrumhalf, who also adds Bath and initially Wasps to his rugby CV, was keen to ply his skills at a solid, proper club with strong traditions. The fact that Gloucester also fielded one of the strongest packs in Europe didn't hinder the decision.

Any scrumhalf who plays behind such a strong forward unit can be assured of regular, good quality ball. Gomarsall was quick to realise this and openly hoped that by enjoying a good run in the team he would be able to re-establish himself amongst the England selectors. Nearly two years on however, and the former Oxford Brookes Student has found himself slipping down the

international pecking order, and Gomarsall admits that his time with Gloucester has not all been as he had planned.

"In terms of my future it was the right decision to come to Gloucester. I wanted to come to a traditional club, and I wanted to play behind the famous Gloucester pack because I knew I would get ball. Another big factor though was that Gloucester weren't known for their back play and that was a challenge for me. When you have a pack of forwards like that, you want to use them but at the same time there was an immense talent in the back line that wasn't being used. I thought that if I could ignite a back line from scrum half then it would stand me in good stead for more representative honours".

Gomarsall's motives and rationale were relatively simple. Unfortunately his transition to Gloucester's pitch side general met with some resistance and he has taken time to fully

integrate himself in matters of a playing nature.

"The key was that I felt I was battling unfairly. At times it seemed like a brick wall was in front of me. I battled through it though and am hopefully a better person and a better player for it", said Gomarsall.

Ironically it was Gomarsall's desire to involve himself with the team's game plan that probably slowed his progress. Essentially a free spirited player he had to curb his have-a-go tendencies in order to conform to a rigid game plan. Gomarsall thrives on responsibility but being told how to play meant he was no longer in control. The difference of opinions caused a rift between himself and the management that in turn negated his impact on the pitch.

"If you are just passing the ball then for me there is no point playing. I thrive on making decisions and I want to get my

[Andy Gomarsall] Scrum Half

"In terms of my future it was the right decision to come to Gloucester. I wanted to come to a traditional club, and I wanted to play behind the famous Gloucester pack..."



hands on the ball as often as possible. As a scrumhalf you have a massive influence on the game and dictate the way the game is being played. We have a plan A but I want us to have an A plan, a B plan, and a C plan. We don't have that yet but I wasn't allowed to air my views at all".

"I am a different animal when I am not playing. I was very down and I didn't enjoy that part of my life. I need to play, that is where I get my buzz. All it was was a complete and utter communication breakdown so when we resolved it, there was that frustration in why have I wasted the last eight weeks? Especially as I was led to believe at the time that it was only a lack of game time that was keeping me out of the England side".

Gomarsall returned to the starting line up at the Zurich Premiership game, away at Newcastle. The team lost that day but Gomarsall announced his return with a commanding performance that was capped with an excellent solo try.

He has since gone from strength to strength as his newfound confidence, gained from time in

the starting line up, has allowed him to express himself more freely. He concedes though, that we have not yet seen the best of him and plays-down his man of the match performance against Ebbw Vale with refreshing modesty taking the praise with a pinch of salt.

"In rugby, unlike in football, when things go wrong for you, people don't put it down to a bad day, they say you are a terrible player. Some days it just doesn't go your way and that's life. On that day in shocking conditions we played well and all the decisions I made went for me. We scored two tries from decisions I made, I'll take the plaudits but I still have so much more to offer" he said.

Gomarsall's reasoning is that, at present, Gloucester have developed a rather rigid game plan. For Gomarsall to be at his best he feels he needs to be calling the shots and alternative strategies must be evolved to make Gloucester more than a one dimensional team.

"Some of the time we have looked disorganised this season, purely because when we get into open play we haven't played or

trained together enough in that area", says Gomarsall. One could also point to a lack of continuity behind the scrum where Gloucester have employed a variety of combinations at halfback as a cause for this need for rigidity.

"You do need continuity. There are a lot of competitions and everyone gets a chance to play. The management decide who they want to play but you do need continuity especially in the decision making areas like eight, nine and ten", explains Gomarsall.

After a shaky start to the season, Gomarsall says the mood in the camp has changed dramatically in recent weeks. The appointment of Nigel Melville, one of Gomarsall's former mentors at Wasps, as the new Director of Rugby is a cause for celebration for the Gloucester scrum half. He feels that although Melville will not be able to teach him more about the basic art of scrumhalf play his input on decision making and tactical nous will help him continue to develop as a player.

Alongside Melville, Paul Turner,

who Gomarsall absolves from blame for any lack of imagination at fourth or fifth phase, continues to work his magic. Turner's increased input into training in the last two weeks has seen a change in attitude for the players says Gomarsall.

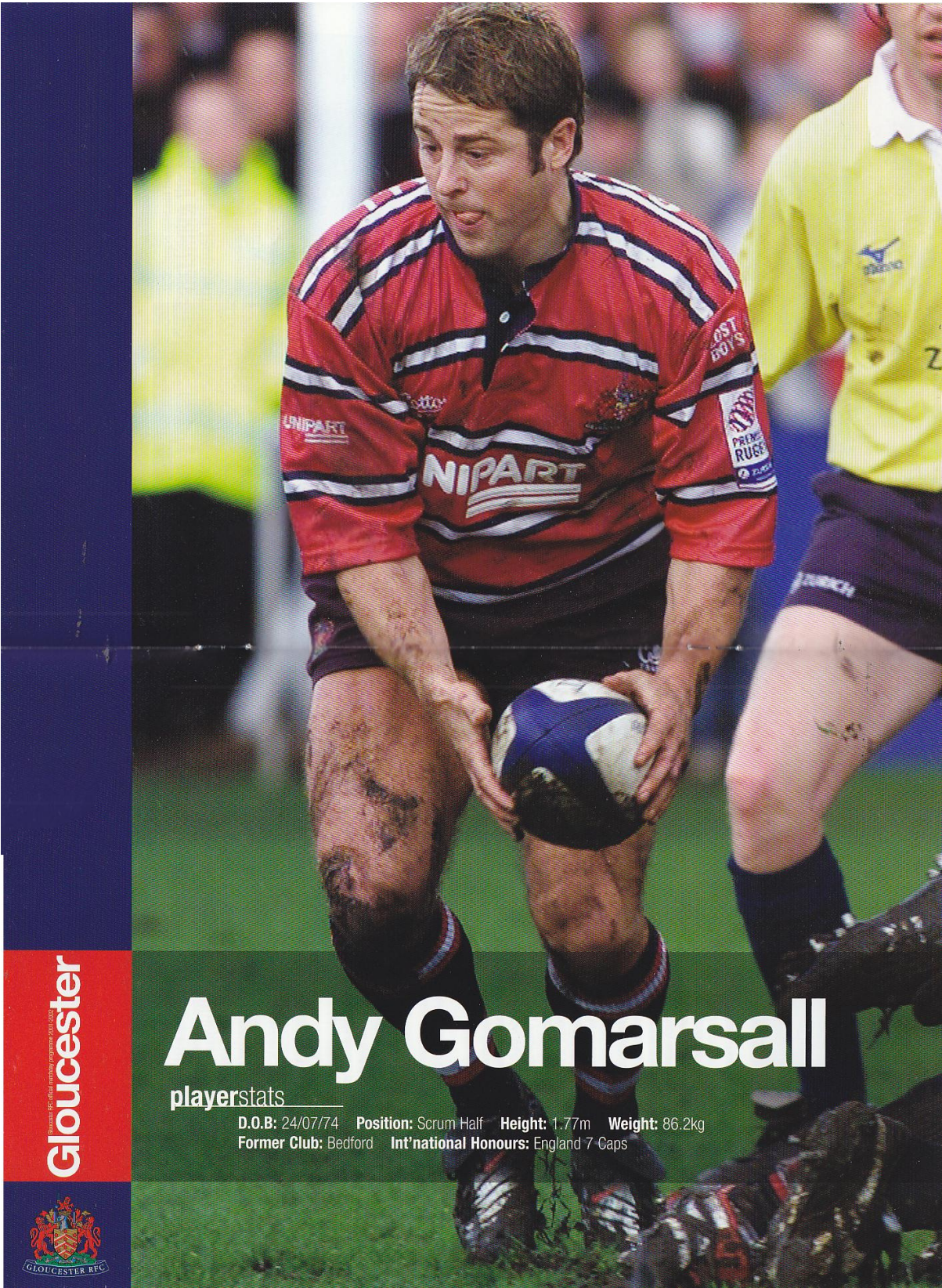
"We are starting to actually get things out of training. People are not so quick to rush off and everyone has a smile on their face".

So what next for Gomarsall? He is slowly getting the recognition he deserves at club level and after a Gloucester career that has endured a spate of set backs through injury and differences of opinion, he is now in pole position as the teams general on the pitch.

"I would like to think that a place on England's summer tour was still an option", says Gomarsall.

"For that to happen I need to be playing well and Gloucester need to be playing well", he added.

It is quite possible that the two variables are inextricably linked.



Gloucester



Andy Gomarsall

playerstats

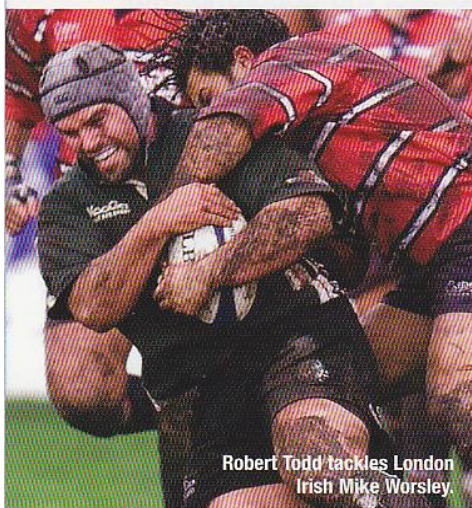
D.O.B: 24/07/74 Position: Scrum Half Height: 1.77m Weight: 86.2kg
Former Club: Bedford Int'national Honours: England 7 Caps

Match Action vs

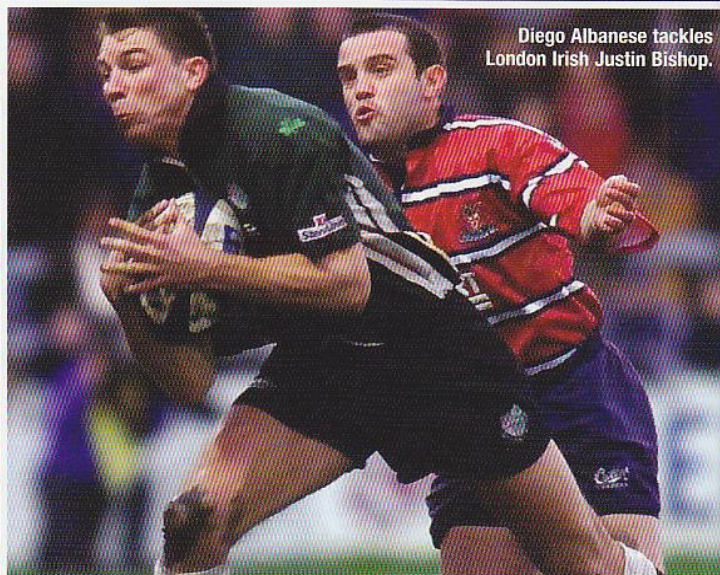
London Irish

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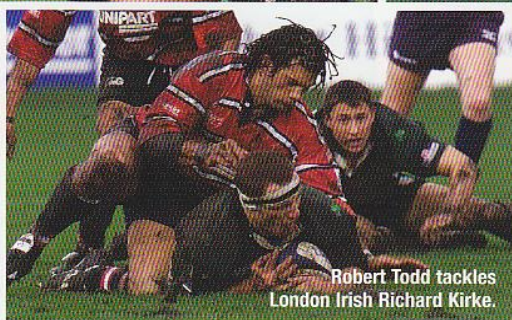
Zurich Premiership
9-02-02



Robert Todd tackles London Irish Mike Worsley.

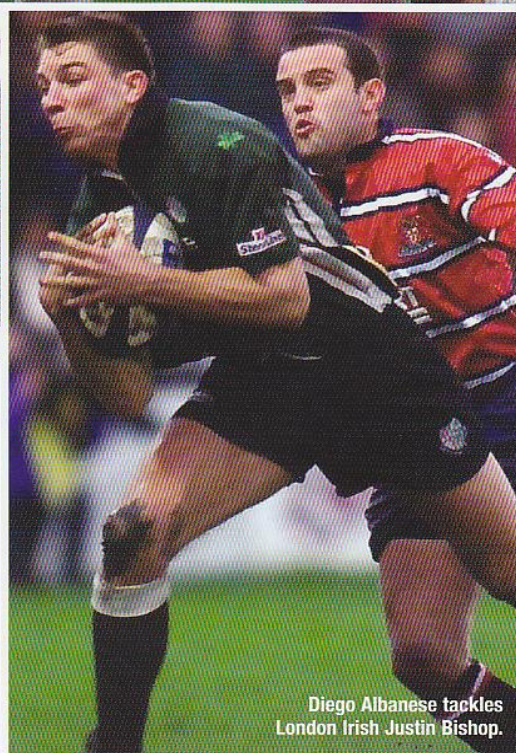


Diego Albanese tackles London Irish Justin Bishop.



Robert Todd tackles London Irish Richard Kirke.

Photography Supplied by Bruce Seabrook GPA



Diego Albanese tackles London Irish Justin Bishop.

matchstats

Attendance 10112



29

Gloucester: **29 points**
Tries: Fanolua, Azam
Conversions: Mercier (2)
Pen Kicks: Mercier (5)



22

London Irish: **22 points**
Tries: Sheasby, Worsley
Penalties: Everitt (2)
Drop Goals: Everitt (2)

Zurich Premiership

32

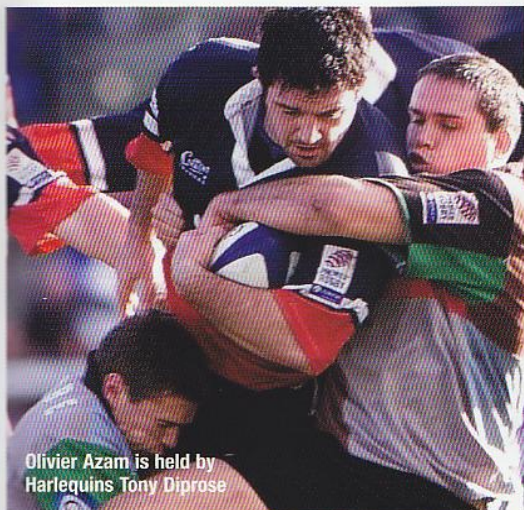
[match action]

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Match Action vs NEC Harlequins

[away]

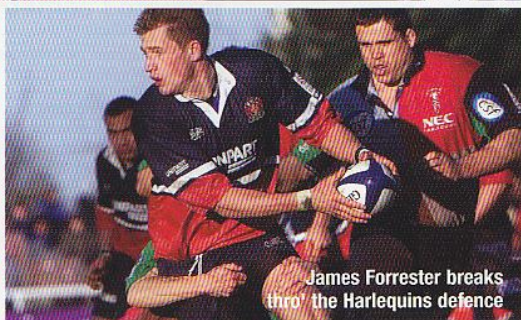
Zurich Premiership
23-02-02



Olivier Azam is held by Harlequins Tony Diprose

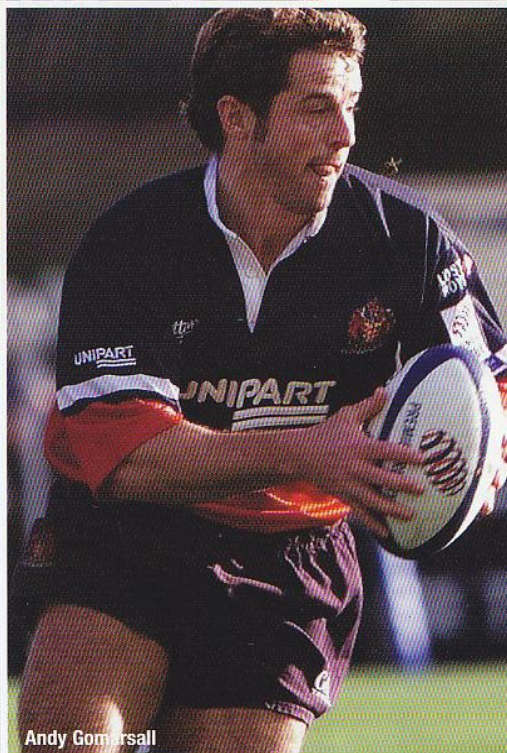


Philippe Saint-Andre bursts into tears as he waves farewell




James Forrester breaks thro' the Harlequins defence

Photography Supplied by Bruce Seabrook GPA



Andy Gomersall

matchstats	
Attendance 7000	
	NEC Harlequins: 06 points
	Tries: -
	Conversions: -
	Penalties: Burke (2)
	Gloucester: 18 points
	Tries: Albanese, Azam
	Conversions: Mercier
	Penalties: Mercier (2)

Zurich Premiership

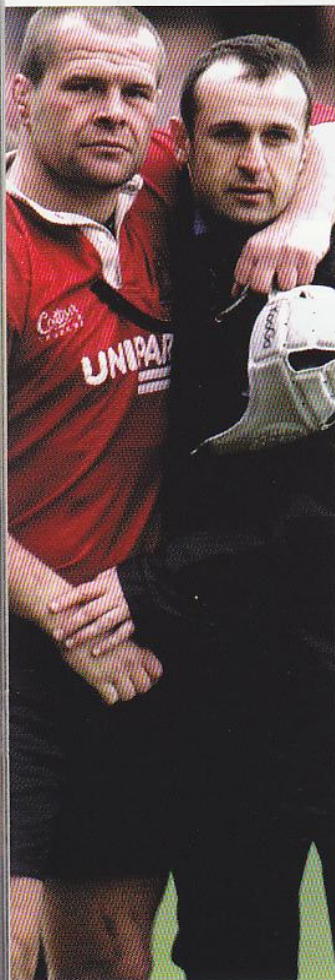
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[match action]

33

ADIEU ET BON CHANCE

Is it really five years since we first saw Philippe St. Andre show his paces at Kingsholm? And show them he did, scoring two scorching tries against Bristol in his home debut.



For the first one he sped right around everyone, leaving the defence looking as flat footed as so many ducks. Just by way of a change, for the second he mesmerised his way through the entire Bristol back division to go in under the posts.

Before he even arrived here, Philippe had stated his ambition to become a "hero of 'Le Shed'", and he achieved that right there, and it was a status he never lost up to and including the game against Harlequins, two weeks ago. Shame he couldn't have made his farewells right here on the ground he unashamedly loves. These things happen. I know from my own experience how the period between handing in one's notice and actually leaving the old job can be unsettling for everyone concerned, so the decision was probably the right one.

One thing you can say about the St. Andre years at Kingsholm is that they were

never dull. They contained moments of high drama, misery, elation, and even downright farce. Sometimes it was difficult to follow his thinking, but he was usually proved right in the end.

Much has been made of the cosmopolitan squad he assembled, here at Gloucester. I doubt if many people on this side of the Channel, had even heard of some of his most successful imports - Mercier, Yashvilli, Azam for example - before they arrived here, but their undoubted quality proves that there is no shrewder judge of a rugby player anywhere in the world.

Of course, Philippe isn't everyone's favourite person, by any means. One or two high-profile players found that they simply couldn't operate under his regime. However, I think that you need a bit of devil in your soul if you're going to run rugby successfully at Gloucester. You probably won't get very far by trying to be all things to all men.

To say that we shall miss 'Le Patron' is an understatement. We wish him well in his new endeavour, and any other he may pursue in the future.

It wouldn't be right to leave this subject without a word or two about Laurent Seigne. He hasn't been here all that long, but he's certainly made an impact, as the pain-racked bodies of opposing forwards up and down the country will testify. Of course, he had a hard act to follow by stepping into the role that John Brain had played with such distinction. Laurent was equal to the challenge, however, and I wonder if we might hope that 'Brainer' might make a return at some time in the future?

Finally, if I were the President of the French Union, I would whip the pair of them into my national set-up at the drop of a chapeau. If he wants references, he can have an unsolicited testimonial from us any time he likes to ask for one.

ALL IS NOT LOST

It seems a long time ago that Andy Gomersall had a couple of promising forays into the outside-half berth, but I suppose the idea could be pursued further, if necessary.

That thought is prompted by speculation about what could happen if we were to be unfortunate enough to suffer an exodus of players in the wake of the St. André departure. Taking the thought a little further, take a look at the following side.

John Goodridge, James Simpson-Daniel, Henry Paul, Joe Ewens, Marcel Garvey,

Andy Gomersall, Clive Stewart-Smith, Phil Vickery, Chris Fortey, Trevor Woodman, Rob Fidler, Mark Cornwall, James Forrester, Andy Hazell, Ed Pearce.

Not so bad, is it? Of course, you could also ask James Simpson-Daniel to revert to his original position at outside-half, bring in Josh

Frape on the wing, and have two highly competent scrum-halves to play with. I'm not saying that the side as nominated could beat Leicester at Welford Road; not for a year or two, at any rate, but they would certainly be no pushovers for anyone. And it doesn't include the likes of Terry Fanolua and Robert Todd, who don't seem likely to be affected by the St.

André situation. So why did I leave them out? Quite simple. Every member of that side qualifies to play for England. Clive Woodward, please note.

The thought also occurs that any opponents rubbing their hands with glee at the perceived destruction of the St. André squad would be wise not to start any chicken counting too early.

GET A MOVE ON !

I had hoped to be able to comment on the Martin Johnson and racial abuse enquiries, but as, at the time of writing, both seem to be rumbling on interminably. It wouldn't be wise to do so.

But I wish they'd get a move on. For justice to be done, it needs to be done as expeditiously as possible. Obviously, things have to be looked at with care and

attention to detail, but any avoidable delay isn't fair on either the players or the match officials concerned. After all, you can't expect any player, be he

an England Captain or a Gloucester hooker, to perform to the best of his abilities while he has an axe hanging over his head, can you?



OUCH !

Most of our current topics seem to be a bit negative, so to lighten the mood, here's one story which amused me, although it can't have been so funny for the chap concerned.

It seems that one 25-stone Welsh supporter decided to go to the International at Lansdowne Road. Unfortunately, so well built (shall we say) is he

that he's one of those unlucky people who has to book two seats on the aircraft to accommodate his generous frame. He can't have been very

cheerful after seeing his side get well and truly stuffed by the Irish, and matters weren't helped when he arrived at his aircraft to find that he had his two seats all

right, but that they were on opposite sides of the aisle.

Fairly makes your eyes water, doesn't it?

Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781

[contributor]

39

Nigel Melville and Philippe Saint-Andre

An Appreciation

[by David Llewellyn, The Independent]

The Director of Rugby has gone, Long Live the Director of Rugby! At least, many will argue, Nigel Melville speaks English, albeit with an odd accent.

And while the whiff of garlic and the non-committal Gallic shrugs of the Philippe Saint-Andre era will be missed by some, there is something altogether sparky about the appointment of former England captain and scrum-half Melville.

For a start his rugby philosophy and the long-standing tradition at Kingsholm mesh almost perfectly. Not for Melville the importation of a foreign legion; England rugby for the English, is his clarion call, and English clubs for their country.

Wasps was hardly a babel. Scarcely a place of many tongues. Sure there was the odd Southern Hemisphere twang, but it was not a place where home-grown players needed to be linguists to keep abreast of changing strategies and styles. Which is how Kingsholm seemed at times.

Melville will bring a less romantic vision to Kingsholm. He is more pragmatic, more down to earth, not that, from the media's point of view, Saint-Andre was difficult to approach. On the contrary he always played it straight with the press.

Not for him the pseudo profundity of fellow-countryman Eric Cantona's trawlers, seagulls and mackerel; nor indeed the French soccer star's profanity of "I piss

on the lot of you," which the former Manchester United player directed at French journalists more recently.

Saint-Andre was far more cultured and far too well bred to stoop that low. But perhaps his continental ideas were probably a bit more spicy than the traditional Kingsholm fare of meat and two veg style rugby. Perhaps it was steeped at times in a little too much sauce and garlic; maybe more room should have been given to local heroes.

Saint-Andre's rugby heart though was definitely in the right place, and so was he for the last five years. "When I came [to Gloucester] I wanted to find the true values again."

Perhaps due to the language barrier that he initially struggled to get past, the former French wing was never guilty of the three Ps, pomposity, pretentiousness and priggishness. But he is passionate about rugby. He was always upfront, ever honest and frequently prepared to laugh at himself.

His slowly acquired proficiency in English allowed him at the end to enjoy a joke in the aftermatch press conference at Harlequins, when he announced that

Gloucester's victory was their 69th in all games under Saint-Andre's guidance. "Also I won 69 caps for France," said Saint-Andre, "and soixante-neuf has been significant in other aspects of my life as well."

Strangely Harlequins holds a significant place in Saint-Andre's budding career. It was defeat to the Fancy Dans of the game which proved to be Richard Hill's final game in charge back in February 1999, at which point the Frenchman was handed the coaching reins.

And his first game in charge was a Tetley's Bitter Cup quarter final victory at home to Harlequins a couple of weeks later. Three years on and he wrapped it all up with that crucial win.

There was never unanimous approval for everything that Saint-Andre did. The proliferation of French players rather stuck in the craw of a rugby public used to producing its own stars, of the ilk of John Watkins, Digger Morris, Mike Burton, John Fidler inter alia. Indeed the Gallic influx looked to many like a desperate attempt to turn Gloucester into a sort of Grenoble-sur-Severn.

But all he was trying to do, in his own way, was to try to shift the

emphasis of Gloucester rugby from the traditional to the trendy.

He did not altogether fail, but perhaps the best that can be said is that he helped the club to leave the 20th Century behind. It falls to Melville though to bring the club into the 21st Century. And it is a job of which he is perfectly capable. It is not a matter of 'if', but 'when'.

