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TWICKENHAM - SATURDAY 8TH JUNE 2002

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Line-ups



36 Gloucester VS Saracens 13

<input type="checkbox"/>	Daren Oleary	15	Adryan Winnan	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diego Albanese	14	Tom Shanklin	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Todd	13	Kevin Sorrell	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Henry Paul	12	Tim Horan	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Terry Fanolua	11	Ben Johnston	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ludovic Mercier	10	Luke Smith	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Gomarsall	9	Kyran Bracken	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Patrice Collazo	1	Sean Phillips	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olivier Azam	2	Robbie Russell	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Deacon	3	Pierre Durant	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rob Fidler	4	Abdel Benazzi	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Cornwell	5	Scott Murray	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jake Boer	6	Kris Chesney	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	James Forrester	7	Tony Roques	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Junior Paramore	8	Richard Hill	<input type="checkbox"/>

[replacements]

<input type="checkbox"/>	Dimitri Yachvili	16	Luke Harbut	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chris Catling	17	Matt Cairns	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chris Fortey	18	Kieran Roche	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trevor Woodman	19	Ben Cole	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Federico Pucciariello	20	Nick Walshe	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Koli Sewabu	21	Gerald Arasa	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ed Pearce	22	Darragh O'Mahony	<input type="checkbox"/>

[teams correct at 26/03/02]

i [denotes international]

c [denotes captain]

[today's officials]

[referee] Roy Maybank RFU

[touch judges] Steve Leyshom RFU, Alan Hughes RFU

Welcome

[from Charlie Little, Marketing Manager]



Today, we are able to welcome Saracens and their supporters to Gloucester, for what is our penultimate Zurich Premiership fixture this season here at Kingsholm.

"I cannot give you any further information on the rearranged away fixture between ourselves and London rivals Wasps. We will be playing Bristol on the 21st April at 3:00 at the Memorial ground, but the Wasps game is still to be confirmed."

This game signifies the start of what promises to be an important part of the season for the whole club.

An interesting measure of our continued growth and success on and off the pitch this season has been the recent requirement for a reprint of match day tickets. Due to an average home crowd in the Zurich Premiership of over 9,200 and then a European Semi Final to look forward to, we have had to place a reprint order to see us through to the end of this season. Trying to second-guess when the season might come to an end here at Kingsholm left me submerged in mathematical probabilities.

Every transaction through the ticket office means a ticket is

printed off — whether it is a home game or a semi-final. Any transaction by payment card requires a signed receipt and that also prints off a ticket. If you also include the transaction for away match coaches into the equation then you should be nearing an answer. It is now just a matter of calculating the number of games left.

Well, we have two home games, including today's against Saracens, to consider. Then there are the away games — which I will come back to later, before the Championship matches. A place in the top four will guarantee us a home tie in the Zurich Championship quarterfinal on the 18/19 May. If we maintain our second place then we will also get a home semi final,

assuming we won the previous round. In between these games there could also be a European Final for which transactions would be made. While we are all enjoying our current form, and long may it continue, if anyone can give me answer then it would be appreciated.

At the time of writing, I cannot give you any further information on the rearranged away fixture between ourselves and London rivals Wasps. We will be playing Bristol on the 21st April at 3:00 at the Memorial ground, but the Wasps game is still to be confirmed. Various dates have been suggested and I don't want to heighten unnecessary speculation but we will let you know as soon as possible.

One thing that is for certain will be the presence of Gloucester supporters in Northampton on the 28th April for the European Shield semi final. If you still haven't got a ticket then call the ticket office on 0871 871 87 81 and reserve them. We are already taking 21 coaches to Franklin's Gardens and Ticket Master and our office have been inundated since they were released. They are on general sale NOW and we are all looking forward to it.



Gloucester face Bath in their last Zurich Premiership game at Kingsholm this season.

Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781

[welcome]

05

Coach's Corner

[Paul Turner]



Today, of course, is another big game for Gloucester Rugby Club. Our opponents this afternoon, Saracens, come in to the game on the back of a good win against Bath, where as we come in off the back of an unsuccessful attempt to end Leicester Tigers' unbeaten run.

We know what we have to do to achieve that sort of victory in the future. It is still a learning curve for much of the team. We were not ready at Welford Road, but we will get better organised by the end of the season and I believe that, that will be one of the games we will be able to crack next season.

Against Leicester, we were not smart rugby players. We didn't kick well out of hand and our ball retention was poor. Also our composure on the ball wasn't very good and we turned over the ball too much and did things we don't normally do at Kingsholm. Our defence was superb and Leicester have said it was probably the hardest game they have played in all season. But while they had two chances to score in the first half and took them, we also had two chances, but decisions didn't go our way. That left us seventeen-nil down at half time.

We have identified where it went wrong and we are doing the preparation work in training to put it right. I am confident we will. We have said all season, that, we wanted to remain unbeaten at

home, win the Parker Pen Shield and get in to the top four of the league. At the moment we are achieving our goals but today is another must win game.

In our last home game, against Sale, we threatened to blow them away and I was pretty disappointed that we didn't. I believe we had created enough chances against a depleted team to win by seventy points, but these are the reasons we are not challenging Leicester more closely. Of course the Sale game ended with one of our Hong Kong sevens heroes, James Simpson-Daniel, dropping the ball over the line. I'm sure he didn't do that last weekend.

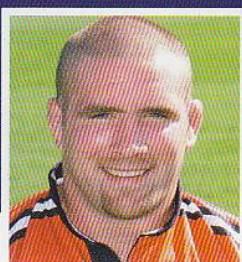
Our away record against teams like Bath, Newcastle and London Irish shows that as a team, we are not quite there yet. Today though, we need to be. Saracens have a lot of good players and are flattering to deceive at the moment but with their former Director of Rugby gone, players will always look to impress the new coach. Saracens have not got a great record at

Kingsholm and I'm sure they are aware of that. Having said that, they have a number of players who have never played for Saracens here before so that may not be a factor. I'm sure players new to this arena will enjoy the experience. It is still a great place to play.

We have set ourselves targets for this season and we must work hard now to achieve them. We want to finish the season without losing another game at home and perhaps try to win a couple of games away from home. We have a tough run in to the end of the season but if we maintain our current form then April, May and hopefully June could be a very successful period for the club.

"In our last home game, against Sale, we threatened to blow them away and I was pretty disappointed that we didn't"





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

The stakes for us today are very simple. Against Saracens this afternoon this is a must win game for us.

Saracens will come here, full of confidence after a good win at Bath in the last round of matches, and will be buoyed by the fact that they have already beaten us once, earlier in the season, at Vicarage Road.

Saracens will come here with nothing to lose; we on the other hand still have, especially after losing to Leicester last time round. Suddenly the seven-point gap we had established between ourselves and Sale is only three points again and the onus is once again on us to win our home games.

We have a very difficult run in to the end of the season and whilst Sale and London Irish, our two closest rivals, may

drop points as they have to still play each other, we mustn't allow ourselves to rely on other people. We are in control of our destiny and must remember that.

The fixture against Leicester was very disappointing for many reasons. There were a lot of things that we talked about in the build up to that game that just didn't get off the ground. Leicester showed, once again, what a good team they are but I firmly believe that they are beatable. Unfortunately, we made just too many mistakes. At home we may have got away with them but, away at Welford Road, you will be punished and we were.

Leicester are a quality all round

team and deserve to be in the position they are. Against Sale we showed in patches, what we are capable of but we must remember that they were very much a weakened team. We still have a lot of things to work on but I am confident that we have the right structure in place to do so.

Believe me, there were no more disappointed people than those that took the field after the Leicester game. We believed we had a chance but we let ourselves down a bit. We turned over too much ball and lacked a bit of composure at key times. I know though that everyone has been working hard on the training pitch this week to put things right and I hope we can bring some of that into today's game.

Finally I would like to congratulate the England Sevens squad and particularly James (Simpson-Daniel) and Henry (Paul), for their excellent win in the Hong Kong Sevens tournament. Both players have worked very hard this week and I know it will be a massive boost to their confidence and to team morale. I hope they can both bring some of that form back with them to Gloucester for the rest of the season.

"The fixture against Leicester was very disappointing for many reasons. There were a lot of things that we talked about in the build up to that game that just didn't get off the ground".



Ian Smith

After Nigel Melville ended weeks of speculation regarding the successor to Philippe Saint-Andre, the rumour mill started again, as everyone wanted to know who would fill the other vacant slot in the Kingsholm management structure of forward's coach.

After Laurent Seigne followed Melville's predecessor back to France, Gloucester took the approach of out with the new, in with the old. Seigne's successor could possibly not be more 'Gloucester' than Ian Smith.

Smith played in excess of 330 games for the Cherry and Whites in an esteemed career that also saw him win 25 Scottish caps. Smith left Gloucester in 1997 to take up a player-coach role with Midland's side Moseley. He then left to join Welsh side Newport before rejoining the Cherry and Whites, initially until the end of the season.

"It's marvellous. This place never leaves you. As a boy from the city you always did, and probably still do, want to play for Gloucester. It's also helped coming back to a place that I know so well. It's a place you are made to feel welcome very quickly and there are still a few players here that I played with", says the Gloucester stalwart.

Smith, like Melville, joins the club in strange circumstances. It is normal for

a club to change coaches in the course of a season, but rarely is it done when the team is second in the league and in the Semi Final of a European Cup competition.

Initially Ken Nottage and Pete Glanville made approaches to the Gloucester legend and proposed a return for him to his old stamping ground, (no pun intended). He has now been asked to team up with Nigel Melville and Paul Turner and breath fresh life into the Gloucester team to carry them through until the end of the season.

Usually a new coach comes in when a side are struggling and the team needs a fresh input. This team, however, is proving to be the best of the rest in the Premiership, behind Leicester Tigers, and is in the last four of a European Cup competition.

"It's a case of rationing what you do", explains Smith. "You need to work out what you can do, what input you can give and start to drip feed it in to the team. The key is to maintain momentum, maintain the good position we are in,

but also try to improve it and move it forward".

Because of the unusually prosperous circumstances that the new coaching team find themselves and the team in, Smith is acutely aware that he will have to do most of the adapting. Rather than try and impose his brand of play on the team at this late stage in the season, he will have to mould his strategies around the strengths of the team. In affect, the team will determine how he coaches rather than the other way around.

"You very much have to see what they are doing at set pieces, and what our favourite set pieces are. I need to learn the calls at the line outs and scrums and see what the organisation and defence is like and then try to add to it, try to improve it but not make wholesale changes that could upset the apple cart", says Smith.

For Ian Smith, Paul Turner and indeed Nigel Melville, the message is very much a case of "If it aint broke, don't fix it". Gloucester have established a game plan that has blown

away most teams and seen them rocket up the league and into the last four of the Parker Pen Shield. That said though, all the coaches are aware that although the team have functioned beyond many people's expectations, there are still a lot of areas for improvement.

The team has shown that against lesser teams, which couldn't match Gloucester's potency in the forwards, they could dominate upfront and strangle the life out of the opposition. Against stronger teams however, with a rock solid defence and a similar might up front, the Cherry and Whites have faltered.

"The players are a credit to the club but still need to work a fair bit on their strategy and organisation. If we can do that then I think the players will improve immensely", says Smith.

"Rugby hasn't changed much over the years", he adds. "Every side needs a good set piece to achieve anything. Your scrums and lineouts need to be good, the driving play needs to be good but

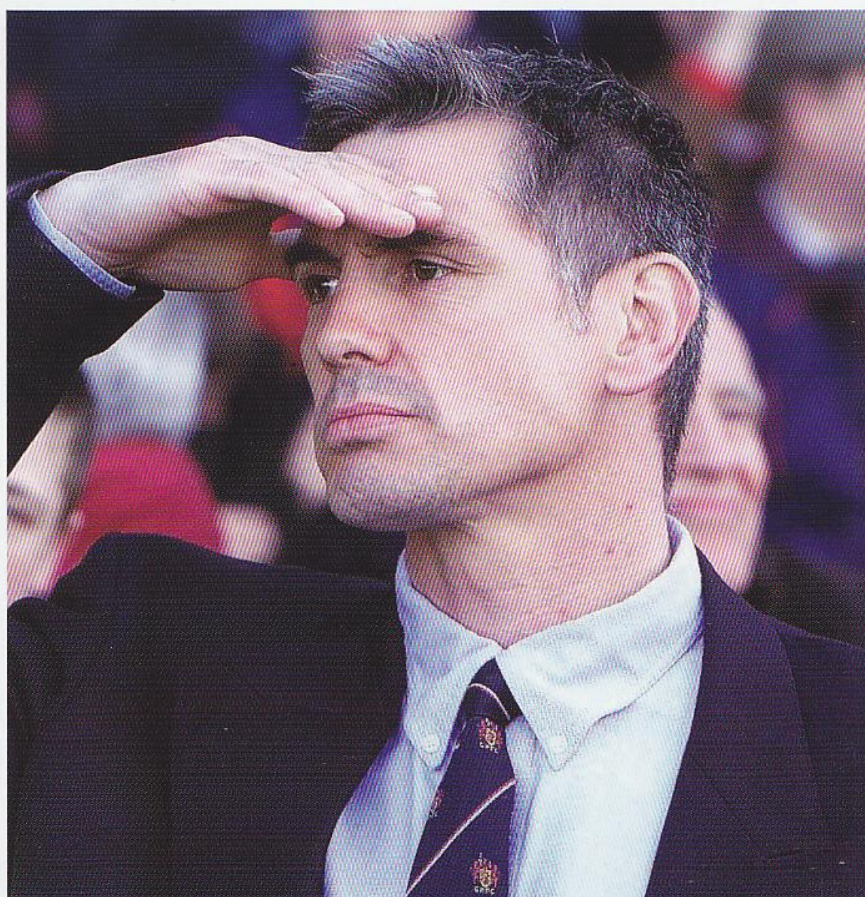
that is just the starting point. We now need to move them on to the next stage. They play a basic game, but they are very good at it, it is very hard to stop. But when you come up against a side like Leicester or Munster or Stade Francais in the European Cup, you need more structure, more organisation".

It is the team's structure and organisation that Smith, along with his new colleagues, will be striving to address in the coming weeks. It is patently obvious that Gloucester have the power and strength to out muscle ninety percent of the opposition in the League. To conquer the other ten percent and become, as Smith believes they can, one of the top sides in Europe, they need to add another dimension to their game plan.

"We need to take a step back to move forward. We need to work on our organisation at the breakdowns. We need to work on our phase play. We are getting through two phases and loosing our way. We should be able to string eight, nine phases together and control the ball".

If there is anyone capable of knowing what makes a Gloucester team tick it is Smith. It is unclear though, who has the most to live up to. Smith must integrate

himself into this team's way of thinking very quickly and maintain the high standards they have set this season. On the other hand, this team has still some way to go to match the commitment and achievements of Smith and the expectations of a passionate but impatient support base. Both will need to work very hard to reach the high standards they aspire to.



Watch This

Life is all mapped out for Ben Durham. After leaving Pates Grammar School with four A' Levels last summer he headed out with the England U18's group on tour to North America, and the South Pacific. On return he accepted a place at Oxford University reading economics.

At present he is trying, and it seems succeeding, to balance a promising rugby career with an education second to none.

"I always thought it was important to get an education first. The way I see it, when I finish my degree, I'll still only be twenty-one, so I'll have plenty of time to pursue a rugby career after that", says the Gloucester back row.

Of course, whilst at university, he will still play a very high standard of rugby, and his ambition while playing rugby at Oxford will be to win a blue in the varsity match.

"That is definitely something I want to aim for. Obviously we play a high standard of rugby, but the whole season is geared around one game. The team didn't have a great season this year but we won the one that mattered so everyone was happy" says Ben.

At nineteen, Durham is still relatively young and inexperienced in his position. He has though, already tasted

a varsity match and is hungry for more.

"I trained with the blue squad this season, and played in the under twenty-one fixture. I still got to play at Twickenham but my aim for next season is to make the full squad", he says.

Although still in his teens, Durham is no stranger to the big stage. During last year's England schools tour, in the biggest game of the season, the Australia v England test match, he was awarded the bronze boot award.

The coaches of the respective teams award the trophy to the player who has made the biggest contribution in the game.

Durham is in good company. Previous winners include New Zealand's all-time top try scorer, Jeff Wilson and, more recently, the Lion's nemesis George Smith.

"The highlight of the tour was the Australia Test because we won. It was great playing in Canterbury, as the curtain

raiser in front of loads of people, but the Australia game was more important.

We had lost to Wales and Ireland earlier in the season and we had lost to New Zealand on the tour. It was a good tour but if we hadn't won a game it would not be so good", says Durham.

Durham states that although the award has led to top international honours for former winners, he feels no pressure or expectation and indeed has used this season as a period of consolidation rather than a rapid springboard to higher things.

This year he has focused a lot of his energy into his studies and has only made himself available for selection in the Gloucester Academy side in holiday periods. It is the development of the Gloucester Rugby Club Academy structure that has helped Durham combine studies and rugby. Without this bridge between junior and senior rugby he could easily be lost to the

Gloucester Club and without the flexibility he enjoys within the Club he certainly wouldn't be able to concentrate so much on his studies.

"The Academy coaches have been great", admits Durham. "They have given me time away from the club when I have been busy with school work but have still helped me progress within the club structure".

At nineteen Durham is already playing 'at the next level'. It is a favourite term of the Academy coaches and means that players are already being coached and expected to play at the next level up from their normal standard or age group.

"Playing in the forwards, you see just how much stronger and bigger the senior players are. Without a good Academy you would never be able to make that step up from junior level. Whoever you have played with at junior level, the seniors are so much bigger" says the Gloucester back row.

Face

[ben durham]



Reading Economics and playing top level rugby does not leave Durham too much time for anything else and one suspects that if he intends to succeed he will have to give up a normal student life for one with more discipline.

The Cheltenham based player though accepts and indeed relishes the responsibility.

"I couldn't fill my life with just rugby, I need to keep my mind active. I think most of the players have something else to take their mind off rugby and I'm no different. Rugby though also acts a good release.

I couldn't spend all day in the library either and so its nice to train or play after a long week" says Durham

Durham's absence from the Academy set up for much of the year, means that he has become very self-motivated.

"During the week, the Oxford training sessions are good to keep up fitness and I live close to a gym so I can always go and do work on my own", says Ben.

It is Durham's size and strength, at such a young age, that have made him a great prospect for the future. Academy Manager, Jon Haines, is full of praise for the youngster, but insists he still has some way to go.

"Last year he was very strong and physically well developed, which, when added to his pace, made him an awesome ball carrier. As he steps up a level he still has much to work on, particularly in defence.

We understand his commitment to his studies but he will need to concentrate a lot in the next year. I am confident he can do it though", says Haines. Ben Durham watch this face.



Ben Durham and Clive Stuart-Smith in action for the England U18.

Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781

[watch this face]

17

Ian Randall
From the [commentary box]

B B C

Easter. Maundy Thursday at Lydney, memories of tours, and clubs like Broughton Park, Waterloo and Fylde at Kingsholm either on the Saturday or the Monday.

A friendly atmosphere and generally a feast of points. That was 30 years ago, and I mention that because the fabric of Kingsholm has changed very little since. 3 sides of the grounds remain basically the same, and before the end of this season we'll know if it's to be wholesale change here, or a move away from Castle Grim.

I'm sure you're well aware of the background. The club are doing extensive homework with various professional

bodies before presenting the findings to you, the supporters. After more than a century a move WOULD be a wrench, but Managing Director Ken Nottage feels the decision has to be a balanced one.

"The site here is only 7 acres, and if we were looking at the Kingsholm plot as an option without a stadium on it, we'd probably reject it because it was too small. There are environmental issues to consider too. At the moment the average crowds are quite close to our actual capacity, and we've had several sell-outs this season. I think we've got to be looking at a base capacity for 15,000, with the possibility of being able to increase it. The question is can we do that without moving. That's why we're simultaneously looking at both projects, so that we don't embark on what would be several phases of work taking in 3 sides of the ground. You only do this once."

It has to be said that only Newcastle have moved to a totally new stadium in recent years, but a project like the one Gloucester could be undertaking would be the largest of its kind in the

English game. A new, enlarged home for the club could double up as a representative venue or a possible option for Cup semi finals, but Ken Nottage admits that's not the driving force behind it all.

"Whatever happens, we're going to be spending some serious money, and it's the Chairman's money. People expect certain comforts when they come to a sporting event, and we're seriously lacking in those comforts at Kingsholm at the moment. It costs us a substantial six figure sum each season just to keep the ground safe and habitable, but we must do more than that. At the moment we have only 1248 seats. There's an immediate requirement for 2000 (all under cover), and we have to have 4000 by the summer of 2005. If we want to build what I would call "the business of rugby", both the RFU and the Premiership clubs are in agreement. We have to have the right facilities, and the RFU are withholding some money from central funds so that clubs don't spend it on players and the stadia get left behind."

For what it's worth, here's my view. The club must leave Kingsholm. I don't think,



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B B C

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unless there was to be a towering structure built on the site of the current main stand, any plans will get close to the minimum 15,000 capacity Ken Nottage is talking about, and I wouldn't be surprised if the cost of trying to adapt Kingsholm was actually MORE than starting with a blank sheet of paper. There's also the sale value of Kingsholm to put in the equation, and the injection in interest you get from a new stadium. You only have to look at attendances at football clubs such as Sunderland and Southampton since they have left Roker Park and The Dell, with gates not far off double their previous levels. It's time, I think, to recognise Kingsholm as what it is – an extremely atmospheric but now outdated venue.

Before a word about today's game, congratulations to James Simpson-Daniel and Henry Paul for their contribution to England's win in the Hong Kong Sevens. Without exception, the reports I read praised Paul's all-round awareness, and those of us who've seen Simpson-Daniel's progress over the last year will have been delighted but un-surprised by his hat-

trick of tries in the final against Fiji. Hopefully he can reproduce the same form when called upon in the closing weeks of the season.

This afternoon we welcome Saracens for the penultimate home Premiership fixture, though with the play-offs there may be two more later on! It would take a major shift in form to see them make the Heineken Cup places now, and they don't even have the Shield as insurance after they were knocked out by Pontypridd. Leicester may be over the horizon, but a win today is still necessary to prevent Sale and London Irish closing in on second place.

C'mon Glaws !

"This afternoon we welcome Saracens for the penultimate home Premiership fixture, though with the play-offs there may be two more later on!"



Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781

[from the commentary box]

19

Head2Head



Jake Boer

Strengths

To most Gloucester supporters, Jake Boer possesses all the qualities they look for in their Cherry and White heroes. Jake is as brave and committed as they come and in his own words, he is the 100% man. "I like to see myself as a team player, I just try and give 100% all round. I like to think that all aspects are up to a good standard and I just try to get all the guys around me to play".

Weaknesses

Jake's keenness can sometimes be his downfall. As the Gloucester defensive line becomes more regimented, those that break it by running out too quickly can cause more problems as the line becomes fractured and gaps appear. "At times we all suffer breakdowns in communication. Defensively we all have to concentrate on keeping the line"

High Points

To any outsider, it seems that Jake's entire rugby career has been a highlight. "I enjoyed rugby throughout my school career, and towards the end I played provincial school rugby. Also making the breakthrough into your first team is always a high point. I played provincial B rugby and I have played for three great sides in Europe". "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

"When I left school, I had to take a year away from rugby and that was very difficult. It got to the point when I couldn't even watch it. When I started playing again I felt I was starting to get a bit static, and I wasn't going anywhere. I was maybe a bit young and too ambitious, but it was time to move on", says Jake.

Hobbies.

"I play golf although I'm not that good at the moment. I am into computers and tend to spend a lot of time in front of them learning more about them. I also like all sorts of DIY", says Jake."

Boerstats

Nick Name **Muss**
Position **Flanker**
Born **01/11/75**
Height **1.87m**
Weight **103.4kg**
Int Hons -



Boer on Hill

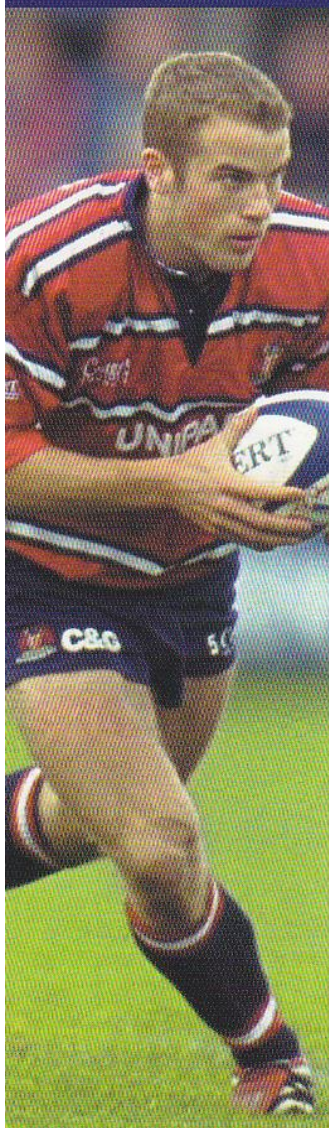
"I have a lot of respect for him, he is very underrated but he would be one of the first names on my team sheet every week. He is not often in the limelight with moves, but if you know about rugby and see the amount of work he does around the pitch you have to respect him. It will be good to play against him, I'm looking forward to it", says Jake.

Boer on Saracens

"Saracens would probably agree that they have under performed this year, but you certainly never go into a game against a side like Saracens and expect to walk away with the points, without having to put the work in so it is going to be a hard game" says Jake.

James Simpson-Daniel

[player focus]



From an early age James Simpson-Daniel was identified as a precocious talent. His displays for the England Schools U18 team attracted attention from a host of Premiership clubs.

And having looked at all his options, he plumped for a place in the Gloucester Rugby Club Academy.

At such a young age judges were keen to see what sort of impression he could make at senior level. After impressing in training, word soon spread that his exciting talents were indeed living up to expectations.

The former Yorkshire School boy immediately impressed John Haines, Gloucester's Academy Manager.

"He was the outstanding player at the U18 level and everyone was chasing him. He always had such great handling ability and we always felt he needed to play in a position where he would get a lot of ball to use these skills. He needs to work on his kicking game but with the ability and pace he has, he just needs to be in a position to use it. He is a natural for the sevens game and I am very

pleased that his development has been managed so well and that his talent has been recognised at the highest level", said Haines.

He made his Gloucester 1st XV debut in March 2001 coming on to the wing as a first half replacement against soon to be relegated Rotherham. In the end, Gloucester were too strong for their Yorkshire opponents and ran out comfortable winners. Simpson-Daniel, in customary fashion, announced his introduction to senior rugby with a fifty metre individual try, scored under the posts, in front of the hospitality boxes.

"That was one of my best rugby memories. I remember getting hold of the ball and just sprinting for the line. Once I had put the ball down to score I looked up at the Shed, which was going mental and it was a brilliant feeling", says the Gloucester starlet.

In the next home game, against the Champions Leicester, he showed his versatility by reverting to his old position of fly half. Although a little rough around the edges and wet behind the ears, the young Simpson Daniel was able to add another dimension to the Gloucester back line.

"I didn't expect to get the chance I got in the first team for at least two seasons. But there was a lot of injuries in the squad, so Philippe called me up. I was surprised but I had to raise my game because I didn't want to let anyone down", admits Simpson-Daniel.

In between these two league fixtures he went to Chile with the England U19 squad to take place in the FIRA World Junior Championships. He teamed up alongside Bath prodigy, Ollie Berkley and played a starring role at outside centre, where it was felt his pace and ball skills would be the most benefit to the team.

[James Simpson-Daniel] Utility Back

"...there was a lot of injuries in the squad, so Philippe called me up. I was surprised but I had to raise my game because I didn't want to let anyone down"



His development into one of the most exciting talents around continued throughout last season as he gained more and more exposure at first team level.

"With the number of injuries we had in the squad, I was thrown in at the deep end a bit. It was the hardest but also the best way to learn the game. You are amongst the first team squad playing first team rugby - that's the best way of learning"

"Philippe game me a first team contract at the end of the season and told me I was no longer an Academy player. I then had to stamp down and show everyone why I was in the first team squad and not the Academy squad".

Ironically, Simpson-Daniel's versatility may have hindered his development. He has played most of his senior rugby on the wing but his undoubted talents must surely push him infield, and closer to the action if he is to fulfil his potential. He has started eleven games this season and scored nine tries; a healthy return by anyone's standards, but then James Simpson-Daniel isn't just anyone.

"I don't think I have played my

best rugby for Gloucester yet", says a modest Simpson-Daniel. "As I get older and more confident I hope to get closer to the ball. At nineteen, any first team exposure I get is still a bonus, so I will play wherever I'm wanted. I don't think the permanent plan is for me to stay on the wing. My kicking game is not good enough for ten yet, but I like the sound of thirteen".

The prospect that Simpson-Daniel will only get better is a mouth watering one. His exploits at the start of the season earned him a place in the England sevens squad for Durban just before Christmas. With his pace and slight of hand, good judges feel he is perfectly equipped for the shorter version of the game.

At the time Joe Lydon, the England Sevens coach, described his squad as having "A strong blend of development players and specialist Sevens experience".

He added that Durban, along with the other legs of the IRB World Sevens Series, would present players with an opportunity to stake a claim for a larger sevens squad, which would be named in preparation for the Commonwealth games where rugby sevens would

be the finale to the tournament. Last weekend, England's experimental squad that contained both James Simpson-Daniel and Henry Paul won the Hong Kong leg of the series. It is a feat matched only once before by a Northern Hemisphere team, the Barbarians in 1981 - before Simpson-Daniel was born.

For his part, the young Gloucester star scored a match winning hat trick as England blew the final favourites Fiji away.

"That will be another one of my greatest rugby memories", admits Simpson-Daniel. "To go there and win it for the first time is something I will never forget. It didn't sink in straight away. On a personal note it was great to score a hat trick but I was just on the end of the scoring passes. Henry (Paul) had a brilliant tournament and just kept putting me in. The last one was just a walk over really".

Considering his starring role Simpson-Daniel is terribly modest about his chances for the Commonwealth games squad.

"To be honest I'm nowhere near that squad. The one they take will

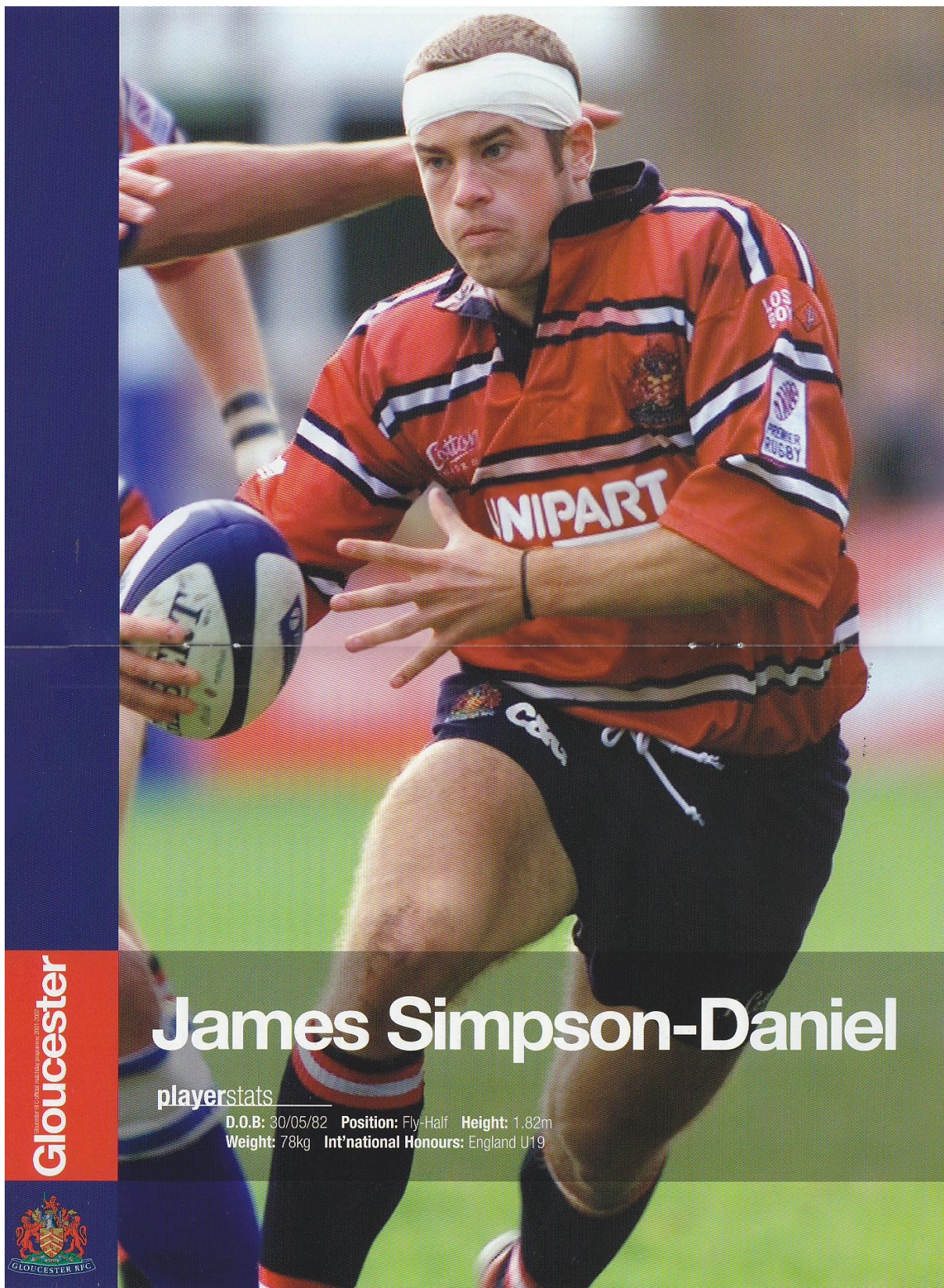
be much stronger. I just hope I can get selected for the remaining tournaments and then Joe (Lydon), will have the problem about selection for the games", concedes Simpson-Daniel.

Simpson-Daniel retains this pragmatic approach as his looks forward to the rest of the season.

"The sevens is nice to have on the side but like all the players who were there I just have to come back to Gloucester, get my head down and get back into training for the fifteen a side game".

Gloucester coach, Paul Turner, summed up the young Simpson-Daniel saying, "He is no longer an experimental player, he is a very good player with a fine future in the game and who knows, he could be wearing the England shirt before long".

"He is no longer an experimental player, he is a very good player with a fine future in the game and who knows, he could be wearing the England shirt before long"



Gloucester



James Simpson-Daniel

playerstats

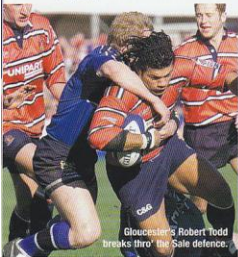
D.O.B: 30/05/82 **Position:** Fly-Half **Height:** 1.82m
Weight: 78kg **Int'national Honours:** England U19

Match Action vs

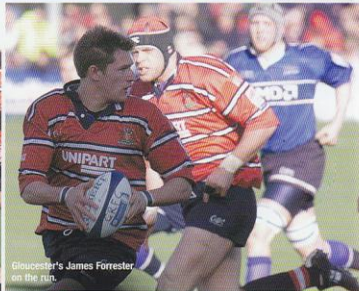
Sale Sharks

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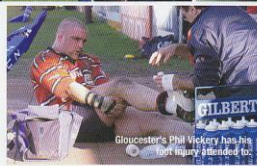
Zurich Premiership
9-03-02



Gloucester's Robert Todd breaks through the Sale defence.



Gloucester's James Forrester on the run.



Gloucester's Phil Vickery has his foot injury attended to.

Photography Supplied by Bruce Seabrook GPA

matchstats

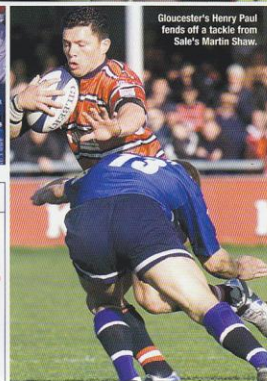
Attendance: 101



42 Gloucester: 42 points
Tries: Parsons/Dunne,
Simpson-Daniel,
Forrester, Puccinelli
Conversions: Mercer (4)
Pen Kicks: Mercer (3)



14 Sale Sharks: 14 points
Tries: Going
Pen Kicks: Going (3)



Gloucester's Henry Paul fends off a tackle from Sale's Martin Shaw.

Zurich Premiership

32 [match action]

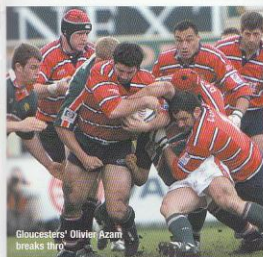
www.gloucester rugby club.com

Match Action vs

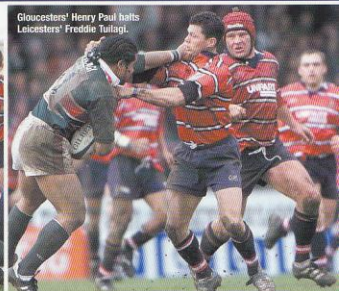
Leicester Tigers

[away]

Zurich Premiership
16-03-02



Gloucester's Oliver Azam breaks through.



Gloucester's Henry Paul hits Leicester's Freddie Tuilagi.



Gloucester's Andy Gonsdale on the run.

Photography Supplied by Bruce Seabrook GPA

matchstats

Attendance: 16,250



27 Leicester Tigers: 27 points
Tries: Back, Healey,
West
Conversions: Simpson (3)
Penalties: Simpson (2)



10 Gloucester: 10 points
Tries: Mercer
Conversions: Mercer
Penalties: Mercer



Leicester's Ben Kay tackles Gloucester's Steven O'Leary from behind.

Zurich Premiership

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[match action] 33

Peter Arnold

[contributor]

OUR TENTERS HAVE NEVER BEEN SO HOOKED

You have to admit, the Premiership situation is a bit twitchy at the moment.

Our loss at Leicester - no disgrace in that - while our closest rivals in the chasing pack were winning, has left us very much on tenterhooks. Sale are now just a point or two behind us, while London Irish are close on their heels. And Northampton's late run up on the rails looks a bit ominous.

A glance at the fixture lists would seem to indicate that we have the toughest run in of

the three leading contenders for second spot. However, I have a feeling that Irish and Sale still have to play each other, which should ease the situation a little, especially if the Exiles win that one. What it amounts to is that we have to win absolutely everything from here on in. That includes our late visit to the Saints, and we must not underestimate the problems posed by Wasps, now looking more of a threat since the talismanic 'Dally' is

back, raring to win a place on England's summer tour. Bristol against Gloucester is never easy, and Leeds are fighting for their very survival and will certainly be a handful on their own patch, with their own equivalent of the Shed baying for blood. Of course, where we eventually finish up in the table isn't so important as securing a European Cup place next season. Which brings us to another edgy situation.

There's a tremendous amount of speculation going on about just who is likely to exercise their option to travel back to France in the wake of the departed Philippe St. Andre. Guaranteed European rugby might just persuade some people that it would be better to stick with the elvers than return to the land of snails and frogs legs. Better start growing your finger nails. You'll need something to chew over the next couple of months.

CONGRATULATIONS, TONY

You may not have noticed that Henry Elwes, H.M. Lord Lieutenant for Gloucestershire has appointed six new Deputy Lords Lieutenant to mark Golden Jubilee Year.

Even if you did, the inclusion of Air Vice Marshal Tony Mason probably wouldn't have meant much to you. It does to a few of us, however. Tony Mason was a fine cricketer, in his time, and also a lifelong rugby man. He was very involved with the Combined Services side, and was the Big White Chief of the R.A.F. team. He was also a very experienced referee, and was a member of the Twickenham

committee which, in those days, appointed the International referees panel. Thereby hangs a tale. For a couple of seasons, our own John Orwin, a serving airman, was Captain of the R.A.F. team. Experience which, no doubt, served him in good stead when he went on to skipper England. On one occasion, I was sitting alongside Tony Mason watching Gloucester play

Moseley, who were quite a power in the land at the time. The referee was a well-known member of the International panel, but perhaps I won't mention his name here. Well into the game, he managed to send John Orwin off, a decision which seemed a bit harsh, an impression subsequently reinforced by repeated viewings of the match video. As you can imagine, Tony Mason was not

best pleased at losing his captain for the forthcoming Inter Services Tournament. The words 'spitting' and 'blood' came to mind.

The following season, that particular official's name was missing from the International Panel. Pure coincidence, of course, Congratulations, Tony. The honour couldn't have been conferred on a nicer fellow.

INJURIES STRIKE AGAIN

Phil Vickery must be absolutely gutted by his niggly ankle injury (if you'll pardon the anatomically mixed metaphor) which kept him out of the England v. Wales game.

Phil Vickery must be absolutely gutted by his niggly ankle injury (if you'll pardon the anatomically mixed metaphor) which kept him out of the England v. Wales game. However, while that misfortune has been grabbing all the headlines, we shouldn't forget the crop of other injuries which must be just as devastating for the unfortunate sufferers.

Adam Eustace and Andy Hazell have had their seasons terminated just when they were creating a lot of interest in high places. One also wonders what sort of an impact Tom Beim would have had if we had been able to call on his services this time round.

I'm told that Chris Catling made quite an impact when he

came on at Wellford Road the other week, but that's small consolation for the loss of one of the most penetrative full-backs in England for most of the season.

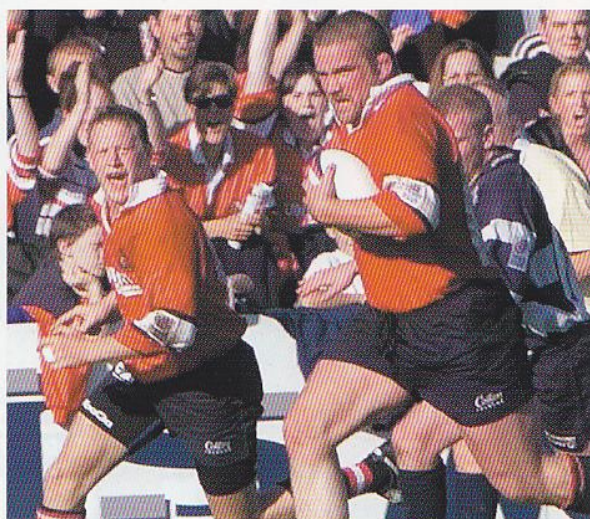
But the injury which aroused my sympathy more than any other was Clive Stuart-Smith's damaged elbow, which deprived him of the chance to captain England in the U19 World Championships.

That's a sad blow for any young man. In spite of all that, however, did you realise that if Phil Vickery had been able to take his place for England last week, Gloucester would have been represented at every international level from U19, through U21 and England 'A' right up to full International

status, in spite of the crop of injuries?

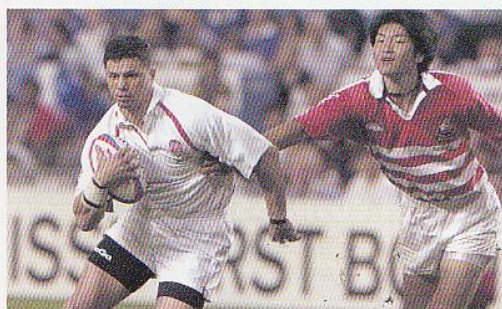
Just one more thing while on the subject. I notice that if young Clive had been able to

take up his U19 spot, he would have been asked to play in Venice. I know Kingsholm can get a bit damp, on occasion, but that is ridiculous.



GOBSMACKED !

I simply couldn't believe what I was reading on Teletext. For England to have won the Hong Kong Sevens seemed about as likely as Cinderford lifting the European Cup.



Then I read the report of the Final defeat of (of all people) Fiji, and I became completely gobsmacked. I had to read it twice to make sure I wasn't still asleep and dreaming, but there it was. Henry Paul, in what was described as a 'stunning individual performance' had made four of England's five tries, three of them scored by James

Simpson Daniel, and one by Harlequin, Ben Gollings, himself a Gloucester lad originally. Abso-blooming-lutely marvellous ! Perhaps the Hong Kong experience will serve to give Henry Paul the extra confidence he needs, and to kick-start him into the displays for Gloucester of which we know he's capable. We shall see. Possibly today.

A weight off th

In Gloucester's recent defeat at Leicester Tigers, there were very few moments to cheer. However, the introduction of Chris Catling provided a bite in an otherwise toothless back line. His return to fitness was one of the high points in an otherwise forgettable game.

In a match at Worcester RFC, arranged for next week April 3rd, another long-term absentee also hopes to make a long awaited return to first team action. Tom Beim went under the surgeon's knife to repair a shoulder injury on the day

that Gloucester met Leicester in the Heineken Cup Semi Final last season.

Although obviously disappointed to have missed such a massive game he turned his focus to one thing; getting better again.

Nine months on, and Tom is in positive mood, "I went to see the surgeon at the end of February and he gave me the all clear. That was a good day. He was adamant that the period I would be out would be twelve months so it looks like I will be back a month early" says the Gloucester speedster.

After almost a year away from the game, Beim has become very single minded and has impressed all the fitness coaches with his dedication to his training programme. He admits though that there have been some low moments and a lot of time spent soul searching.

"The hardest part is that after the operation, when the arm comes out of the sling, you think that it's going to be one hundred percent and it's not like that. You can have a good couple of weeks and then a bad week when it's sore. It's all up and down. You think you should be going on an upward increase but you don't. Each time you know you might have another bad week but when you do, it still gets you down", says Beim.

In comparison, Catling's rehabilitation time was relatively short but according to the England A full back, no less frustrating.

"There were three weeks after the injury when I was waiting for the shoulder to settle down. Then I had the operation, which was possibly a bit too early as there were complications so I had to wait around for another three weeks. That meant I had five weeks waiting around, not doing anything, which

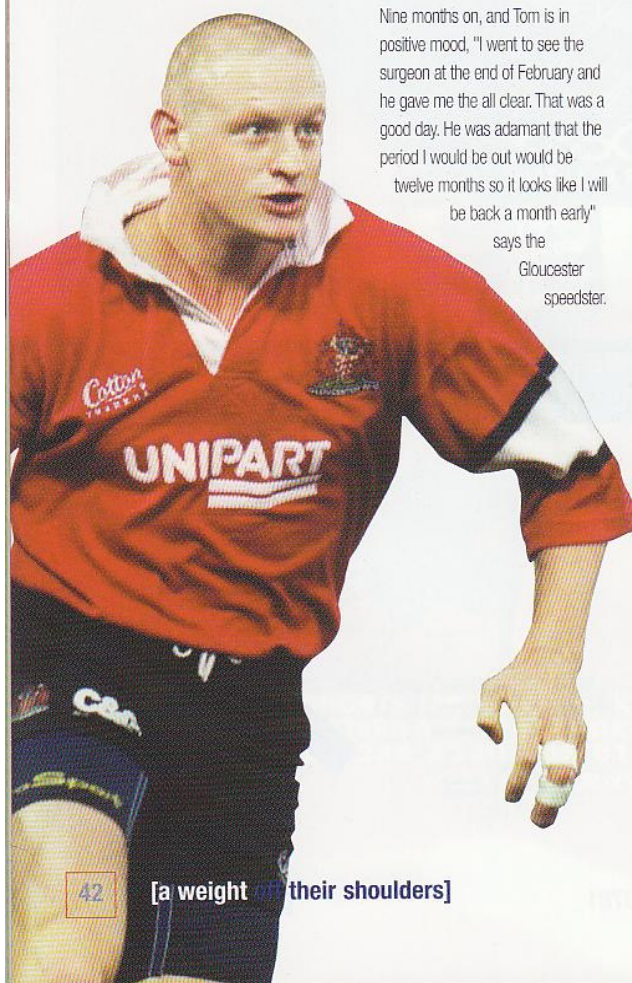
was very frustrating" says Catling.

Once both players had had their operations they began an arduous rehabilitation programme. For both players a training partner gave them the extra impetus they needed.

"I was six or seven months into my rehab and it was becoming a bit of a slog. Guys would come and train with me for two or three weeks and then leave as they went back to playing. With Cats having a similar injury we have done a lot of training, kicking and running together", says Beim.

Catling concurs that having a sparing partner helped him immensely. "Having Tom around made it much easier. For the last twelve weeks we have treated it like a pre-season. Both of us were very keen to come back at the end of the season, strong and fresh, which we both feel. We have trained pretty hard but having a partner to train with pushes you that little bit harder. With pre-season stuff, you need to push yourself through certain barriers, which can be hard to do on your own".

If there is a silver lining to the cloud that hangs over any player when they get a serious injury, it is that



[a weight off their shoulders]

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their shoulders

they are afforded time to prepare and rest their bodies for the time when they come back, hopefully, fitter and stronger as a result.

"I feel pretty good and fresh", says Catling. "It has been very frustrating, but it's nice to come back at a point in the season when other players are perhaps starting to feel the strain and hopefully I can breathe a bit of fresh air into the back line".

Beim is slightly less euphoric. After eleven months it is probably difficult to remember just how tired you were before the injury. Tom though, has put his faith in his demanding regime and the work of the surgeon.

"I don't think I could have done any more to make it better. The surgeon's done his bit; I've done mine, so it's all about playing now. I feel as quick as I have ever been, I feel strong. I feel in the best shape ever", adding, "but then I said that last time".

Of course, after such an injury confidence will play a major role in each player's rehabilitation. The physical work has been effective but mentally the players also need to be right.

"We have done a lot of tackling with Dave Ellis, Ed Archer and the tackle bags. Obviously I was wary about the first few sessions. It's the same with the bone on bone tackling. You think; do I really want to do this, but you have to give it one hundred percent", says Beim.

The next step in the rehabilitation for both players is now simply about getting game time under their belts. Both agree that there is nothing that can compensate for the feeling of being involved in a match day squad.

"If I had my way I would go away, get better and then get back", says Tom. "There is nothing worse than being around the club, when you are not involved you are just a spare part. I want to get back playing and repaying Gloucester, they have been good to me this year".

Catling has already achieved that goal with a cameo appearance at Welford Road.

"It made a total difference being involved in the game. Although I had been on the coach with the players, you don't feel a part of it", he says.

Catling's most important contribution came in the dying minutes, when faced with a one on one with Leicester's Steve Booth, his confidence in his rebuilt shoulder was put to the ultimate test.

"I actually had to give him the outside and try and defend with the touchline. It meant I had to line him up on the shoulder that had caused the problem. I did think 'this is on my left shoulder', but it wouldn't have made any difference, I still would have made a big a tackle as ever. Luckily he stepped inside and I took the tackle on my right shoulder. I

was actually annoyed that I couldn't stop them scoring", says the ever determined Catling.

Catling has never been one to rest on his laurels and is determined that his punishing rehabilitation schedule will not end just yet.

"I'm quite conscious of not relaxing my schedule. I still need to make sure that the shoulder muscles are strong enough. I am conscious that I have only played fifteen minutes of rugby and haven't tested my shoulder that much, so the hard work doesn't stop yet".



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[a weight off their shoulders]

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