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**[replacements]**

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<td>Koli Sewabu</td>
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<td>i</td>
<td>Ed Pearce</td>
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**[teams correct at 01/05/02]**

- [i] denotes international
- [c] denotes captain

**[today's officials]**

- [referee] David McHugh IRFU
- [touch judges] Brian Campsall RFU, Ashley Reay RFU
On behalf of everyone at Gloucester Rugby Club, we welcome Bath Rugby and their supporters to Kingsholm for our last home Zurich Premiership League game of the season.

“The Season Ticket for next season will offer everyone better value and bigger savings”.

Today promises to be another sell-out with 11,000 fans filling the ground and both West Country Clubs having more than a point to prove.

The crowds at Kingsholm this season have been exposed to some fantastic rugby and the numbers in which they come has grown throughout this season. It all started well when we took our season ticket base to 4,000 loyal members and I can announce today that next season we are able to offer even better value for money.

The Season Ticket for next season will offer everyone better value and bigger savings. Only the family membership will change slightly as we have kept the prices of all other Season Ticket categories exactly the same. We continue to listen to the supporters and in response to the Season Ticket questionnaire last year and in consultation with the Season Ticket Holders Association, we believe that our whole package delivers what you want at the right price.

So the value for money improves, the rugby gets better and you could also get entrance to the Middlesex 7’s for free, (in which Gloucester RFC will be participating) if you buy before the end of June. There should be three enticing Heineken Cup Games (fingers crossed?) here at Kingsholm included in the price and as you can see from the table, huge savings can be made. For the first time in four seasons we will be increasing the match day ground price by just £1. By keeping the Season Ticket prices the same we are remunerating even further those who commit to a Season Ticket.

I hope that everyone enjoys the game today and that you wish to continue to savour the unique atmosphere here at Gloucester Rugby Club by becoming a Season Ticket Holder next season.

<table>
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Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781
If you had watched the Leicester game against Llanelli last weekend, you will have seen a fifty-eighth metre kick bounce off the cross bar and between the posts to secure a Leicester victory.

But those who came to Northampton, saw Ludo, who could kick a goal from fifty-eighth metres and beyond, without the use of the bar or posts, miss a kick that he would normally get. It was tough on everyone and I especially felt for him.

He was not the reason we lost the game though. We started well and we finished well, but the bits in the middle weren't great. Sale were always going to have a spell of possession at some point and when they did get the ball they were going to throw it around because that is what they do best.

We have learned from that experience this week and I hope that we can take what we have learned into today's game. There are so many little things that we have improved on over recent weeks, but the challenge remains for us to keep getting better each week. We realise what we need to do, and there is no point dwelling on the past. We feel that we have let people down because of what might have been against Sale, but we can't beat ourselves up over it - we must move on.

Our minds are now focused on the important league points on offer today. We want to win and we want to go into Europe again. We also want to get the best seeded place we can. That is the criteria we have set for the next two weeks.

Today is our final league game of the season and we are entertaining Bath. It doesn't get better than this. Forget league positions, these games are local derbies and are big occasions for everyone involved. Wherever you are, there are always derbies. In London we played quite a fierce season, against Harlequins and Saracens but in terms of support and passion I think Gloucester-Bath carries a bit more weight.

The run in, in the final weeks is going to be tight at the top of the table. We have done well at home this season and Bath have not had a great season by their standards. We are under no illusions though that when Bath arrive here today they are not going to want to play. They are going to want to beat us, they are professionals and I'm sure that the West Country issue will add that extra spice to the game.

On behalf of the Management and playing team, I would, once again, like to thank everyone who travelled to Northampton for their tremendous support and to all those that have attended today. I hope that we can enjoy a strong finish to the season together.

"Forget league positions, these games are local derbies and are big occasions for everyone involved. Wherever you are, there are always derbies".
This week has been difficult. Everyone at the Club was disappointed not to have won the game against Sale.

As professionals though, we can’t afford to look back, we must look forward to today’s game. We want to cement our second place in the League and we can take a big step to achieving that today by winning against Bath.

It’s a local derby, and there is no bigger incentive as a Gloucester squad than to take on Bath at home. They are struggling at the moment, we have worked very hard to get into second place and we want to finish the season off on a high. I believe we deserve our position at the moment but we still have a job to do in our last two games. If we can do well today, then we can travel to Leeds next weekend with more confidence. It is all about putting results together.

After Sunday’s loss there are no longer any thoughts about a final place. Cup competitions are a nice distraction from the League but now it is over we need to move on and concentrate on our Bread and Butter, and that is all about getting Premiership points. It has helped to focus all our minds that today’s game has followed so quickly. Sometimes if there is a week’s gap it can be a negative thing.

Today is our last Premiership game at home this season. Only Leicester have beaten us at Kingsholm this season, and we are very proud of this record. It is something we are hoping to keep intact until the end of the season.

Regardless of what the League position says, today’s visitors Bath remain a very dangerous team. With the players they have in their squad, they are not far away from being a very good team. They will be fighting for their Premiership lives here today. Let us; they are a very proud club with proud players. They will come up today very focused. They will want to beat us because we are second in the League, and it will be a great challenge for both teams.

We will not underestimate the potential of any team that Bath put out against us today. If anyone runs out on to the pitch today and expects it to be an easy game then they will be very wrong. Bath will be well drilled, well organised and fired up. They know what they have to do.

With the players Bath have in their team they can score tries and kick the points. In Olly Barkley they have a quality goal kicker, who, if we are undisciplined will punish us. They will take their chances and be strong defensively. We though have the ability to keep the scoreboard ticking over and after eighty minutes if we take our chances and play to our potential we will win and finish the season off well.

For us as a team and as a squad, we must focus on what we need to do. We need to start well, get going forward, build a score and do our basics well. I believe we can grind any team down. I don’t want to teach anyone how to juggle eggs, but we didn’t do that against Sale, we let them back into the game and today we need to play for a full eighty minutes.

We have two Premiership games left and they are two games we want to win!
Todays Watch This Face feature focuses on two of Gloucester’s young props who are making their mark at U21 level for Club and Country. In an U21 side that is on the whole flattering to deceive, Nick Cox and Mark Irish continue to power on regardless.

Nick Cox joined the newly formed Rugby Academy at the beginning of last season. After a very successful England U18's season, on the recommendation of Peter Kingson, he was approached by John Harries the Academy Manager.

Cox liked what he saw at Kingsholm so decided to join. He enjoyed a reasonably successful first year with the Club, captaining a Colts team to victory in the National Knock Out Cup against Bath and breaking into the first team squad for a Heineken Cup appearance to boot.

At the end of last season he was one of eight youngsters to be rewarded with a 1st team contract and has therefore dedicated this year to his rugby. Whilst he has continued to develop along the international path, as an ever present for the England U21's, he has failed to make the impression he would have liked at Club level.

"I have made massive gains from a technical point of view this year, mainly due to training with the 1st team squad", said Cox. "My fitness and conditioning, and all my training is with the 1st team".

"This season, on the whole has been a bit disappointing though. The rotation system in place in the Academy meant that I was not playing all the games and for one reason or another I have missed out on first team exposure. I want to feel like I have played first team rugby", he added.

Cox missed his main chance for 1st team in January as a cruel sinus infection ruled him out of action for a month. He was due to take a place on the substitute bench for the GRANADA fixture in January, where he was more than likely to get a taste of the action at some stage.

Cock's loss however, was Irish's gain. The light-headed prop from Bridgwater followed Cox into the Academy after strong performances for the South West U20's and Bridgwater Albion in the South West Division 1. He was spotted by an Academy scout and invited along to train.

As an injury crisis hit the club, and particularly the front row, earlier this season, Irish's meteoric rise continued as he was called into the squad for the Powergen Cup and European Shield games against London Irish and Ebbw Vale respectively. He subsequently made his first team debut with a late appearance against the Steelmen.

"At London Irish it was just an experience to be sat on the bench. Against Ebbw Vale I got on and immediately we had a penalty and opted for a scrum. I noticed that I had to impress straight away. They kept giving away penalties and we kept going for a push over. Those few minutes were a bit of an experience", said the recently qualified Mechanical Engineer.

Irish's career is thrown back to the amateur days when players trained all day and in lunch hours. And although he admits that he lacks the all round fitness enjoyed by the Academy professionals it makes his rise to the 1st team squad more astonishing. He admits to exceeding all his expectations.

"My goal when I joined was to get a starting place, week in - week out, in the Academy team, which I have done. I wanted to progress with the South West but, then I played for the South West, England A, and then the England U21 squad and put the shirt on was magnificent", says the young tight head.

The congruence of their progress this season through the Academy ranks and into the England U21 squad has
helped Cox and Irish to become very good friends. They talk two or three times a week and even throughout a game, discussing training and game tactics and both admit that having a close club colleague has helped their development.

Both have a great respect for each other's game. Cox believes that there may only be one other tight-head prop in the U21 league that can match Irish's acumming ability, whilst Irish acknowledges that on the loose-head, Cox's agility and mobility in the loose helps to compliment his own tight game.

After completing a reasonably successful U21 Six Nation's Championship as the manning of the England front row, on the horizon for both players is an U21 tour to South Africa for the SANZAR Tournament. Both are keen to make a big impression with the international selectors and then use the tournament as a springboard for better things next year.

"I want to hit SANZAR with a bang, being in really good shape", admits Cox. "For the next six weeks before we leave I am stepping up my training regime so I am fitter than I have been. I'm focussing more on power and hopefully I'll have a good SANZAR then I can come back for a real go for 1st team rugby. I want them to consider me as the sixth prop, really fighting for a place".

"I decided not to go into higher education this year to concentrate on rugby. This is what I want to do but if it doesn't happen next year then I'll have to consider my options. There are props behind me in the international pecking order who are playing Premiership Rugby but fair play to them they had their chance and took it, I just want my chance", said Cox

The experience of a Southern Hemisphere tour will be a new one for Irish, but his goals for the summer and beyond mirror those of his fellow prop.

"I want to get fitter, and go over there, hopefully get a start and play to the best of my ability. Last year they finished fourth and to exceed that is going to be very hard. Then I'd like to come back and have a go at playing full time rugby. I want to see if by committing more time to training and weights, I'll be good enough", says Irish.

Both props have a big future in the game, Nick Cox and Mark Irish, watch these faces.
Why do people love sport? After last weekend, it makes you wonder. The agony of Ludovic Mercier’s missed penalty at Franklins Gardens was probably doubled for the Llanelli fans as for the second season running, they were knocked out of the Heineken Cup by a kick that had no right to clear the crossbar.

Contrast this with the Cheltenham Town supporters who saw their team score a potentially vital goal 2 minutes from time in their play-off at Hartlepool, and you have the extremes of emotion rolled up in barely 24 hours. Sport truly is, as I once heard it referred to, a magnificent irrelevance.

I am sure Nigel and Paul will analyse the game with Sallo elsewhere, put to concede 26 points without reply in part of a match and expect to win is being supremely optimistic. Two 40 point routings by Gloucester in the Premiership had clearly stunned the Sharks, and once they get going, it was their extra cutting edge in the backs that overcame Gloucester’s greater progress in the forwards, where Sale’s best was inadequate in the end. Chris Cattell’s six-year stint at the club has now contained four major semi-final defeats. He… and the rest of the squad won’t want another in the Zurich Championship next month.

Today may be the last home Premiership game, but I fully anticipate being back here in a fortnight for the start of the knockout competition for the top eight teams. The top four, as I am sure you know are drawn at home, and it would take a significant collapse now for Gloucester to have to travel. Finishing as runners-up to Leicester is important too, because that would assure us of a home semi-final on June 1st. Yes, competitive rugby in June.

Not an end of season tour, or a representative tour to the Southern Hemisphere, but domestic matches in a season that started on September the 1st. The structure of the season remains a nonsense to me and many others.

Looking round the other local clubs, Cinderford have dropped to South West One, leaving Old Pottersians and Lydney in National League rugby next season, while Barry Hill have been promoted back to South West One under the guidance of two former favourites here, Lee Osborne and Alistair Pownall. It’s good to see Dicky still involved in rugby after his car crash, and “Stoopy” was another of those backs whose versatility probably counted against him while he was here. They’ll enjoy a rush of local derbies again next season, just 12 months after being relegated.

It’s pleasing to see an increasingly long list of players signing new contracts. At the time of writing, Colico, Somersall and Forrester have all agreed to stay in the last week alone, no doubt influenced by Nigel Melville’s plans and the lead taken initially by Phil Vickery and Ludovic Mercier. Annual clear-outs don’t build any sort of foundation to challenge for honours, and Kingsholm was like Piccadilly Circus last summer. One such closed season is enough for a while. This afternoon, it’s welcome again to Bath. These are troubled times at The Rec, with...
twice as many defeats as wins this season, and still the threat of relegation hanging over the team. Last night’s clash between Quins and Leeds may have cleared the air a bit, but a Leeds win would leave Bath as one of four sides who could still go down. In a perverse sort of way, Gloucester fans might find it funny if Bath lost their Premiership status, but where would they direct their banner then? Cramped facilities, seats with no cover, shocking parking and steep prices; internet message boards need to have something to whinge about, and Bristol don’t have that arrogant streak that characterised Bath at their peak. The West Country Triangle needs to be maintained.

Finally, back to the emotion issue. People keep watching sport – win or lose (well, almost) if they get value for money. With football clubs facing huge problems with ITV Digital’s collapse, some are already looking at big rises in admission prices to cushion themselves. Some fans will choose not to go as a result, some will have no choice. They won’t be able to afford it. The word at Kingsholm is that season ticket prices for next season WILL stay the same for a third season in a row.

Tell me where else you’ll get more ups and downs for your money.

C’mon Gloucester!!

“It’s pleasing to see an increasingly long list of players signing new contracts. At the time of writing, Collazo, Gomarsall and Forrester have all agreed to stay in the last week alone,..."
Today's head to head focuses on two young players who are making a big impression on the Zurich Premiership, in Europe and at international level.

James Simpson-Daniel of Gloucester and Olly Barkley of Bath have trod a similar path into professional rugby coming through the representative ranks to England level, and starred together for the U18 and U21 age groups. Amazingly though, today will be the first time they have played against one another.

Simpson-Daniel on Bath

"I have never beaten Bath when I have been involved in the last two years. I think they are a very good team. They have some brilliant individuals, some great backs and attacking runners. Personally I am very worried about them, more so than other teams we have played!"

Simpson-Daniel on Barkley

"I have never played against Olly, which is strange. At England I played thirteen and he played ten. He has the general all-round game for fly-half. He is a good kicker, he is a clever player with good hands, he’s very confident and great to play with. I certainly enjoyed playing with him at thirteen. He played ten in the middle and I played a bit wider. Hopefully this weekend though I will get one over on him!"

James Simpson-Daniel

Strengths

Simpson-Daniel was identified as a precocious talent early on as his ball handling and awareness of space impressed many a good judge. Many wondered how this schoolboy star’s skills would translate into the rigours of senior rugby so young, but he has lost none of his sharpness in his step up to 1st team rugby.

"I’d like to think that my attacking play with ball in hand in a bit of space is my strength", says Simpson-Daniel. "I’m good at picking out mismatches in an opposition defensive line and I like to have a run at people that I think I can have a go at!"

Weaknesses

Simpson-Daniel admits that his kicking game is not strong enough at this level to play fly-half, his original school position. It was for this reason that he first made the move to centre with England U18’s as the South West fly-half, Olly Barkley, was preferred at stand-off. The two then worked in tandem to unlock defences.

Highs

Basically Simpson-Daniel just loves being a rugby player for Gloucester and his country but he has already enjoyed more special moments in his relatively short time than many players do in an entire career.

"Highs would have to be winning the Hong Kong Sevens Tournament and scoring my first try for Gloucester in front of The Shed against Rotherham last season", said Simpson-Daniel.

Lows

Losing against Leicester last season in the Heineken Cup and again last weekend to Sale are low points. I am only in my second season and I have already lost two Semi-Finals. It’s great to be there but very disappointing to lose", admitted the young back.

Nick Name: Simbad
Position: Fly-half
Born: 30/05/92
Height: 1.82m
Weight: 78kg
Int Hons: England U19

www.gloucesterrugbyclub.com
"GLOUCESTER GLORY BOYS... BATH GO CRASHING TO HILL'S SUPER FIGHTERS"

It was April 10, 1996 and Gloucester had just beaten Bath 16-10 at Kingsholm courtesy of Paul Holker's try and Tim Smith's trusty boot. Okay, the headline writer may have spent his Saturdays in the Shed and wore Cherry and White to work in the days before dress-down Wednesdays but what the hell, the result transcended such trivial details.

The scene prior to that floodlit night: One team were cocking in on the First Division title, the other were second-from-bottom and heading for the second division unless they stopped the rot.

Kingsholm was packed with 12,000 - yes, those were the days when full meant full -- and most of them spilled on to the pitch at the final whistle to acclaim captain Dave Sims and coach Richard Hill.

I had just started at the Western Daily Press and my pre-laptop computer bounced up and down to the strains of “Gloucester, Gloucester” coming from beneath the press box.

Bath were the title that year, oh, and the FA Cup, their last domestic honours -- but no-one cared in Gloucester. They had beaten the Barbour-wearers from Sevensett and eased fears of the drop, which were finally banished by beating Saracens on the final day of the league season. And below today's game? One team are going for the runners-up spot in the Zurich Premiership, the other battling to avoid relegation for the first time in their history.

Today, in my final game for the Western Daily Press, the odds are stacked behind Nigel Melville's men, second in the Zurich Premiership, European Shield semi-finalists -- poor Ludo -- and with the Heineken Cup beckoning. These have been strange times. Hill has long gone, Philippe Saint-Andre not so long ago, and now Nigel is making plans for Gloucester. Did you hear the one about the Bath man, the Frenchman and the Yorkshireman? And don't forget the Scotsman who has bankrolled Gloucester into professionalism, Tom Walkinshaw (right).

Legends you wouldn't have dreamed of have arrived -- Jason Little, Ian Jones, Saint Andre -- and departed, as have players you've never heard of such as Mercier, who is raising goal-kicking to new heights, literally. So too at the Recreation Ground: Phil de Glanville, Graham Dean, Nigel Redfearn and Andy Robinson, who all played that night, have moved on. John Makar and Mike Castle are still going, though the latter not so strong at the moment following shoulder surgery.

Jon Callard was absent that evening six years ago because of a family engagement and he will be missing again today after his own 14-year marriage to Bath turned sour.

Michael Foley is now in temporary charge of a club fighting for its top-flight survival. He's making a decent fist of it as the Aussies do and no-one here today, in their heart of one-eyed hearts, would surely like to see Bath go down. Now, where's the satisfaction in beating Rotherham, I ask you?
Trevor Woodman, Gloucester's other Cornish born prop. He is referred to in such a way because he remains in the shadow of his more illustrious team mate from the South West, Phil Vickery, who has become the cornerstone of the England and British Lions pack.

Woodman's importance to the Gloucester squad, however, was demonstrated as Tom Woodkinhow cut short a family holiday to ensure that Woodman signed a new three-year deal with the Cherry and Whites last season. Philippe Saint Andre professed that within eighteen months he would be the best loose-head prop in Europe. Almost a year on and we are still waiting for his talent to be fulfilled, and that is very frustrating, not least for Woodman himself.

"I know that this season I haven't achieved what I should have done and that is frustrating. I haven't put too many games together. One week I have played and the next I have been on the bench. When you are in and out of the team it's frustrating, but it's something I have got to deal with", says Woodman.

With Woodman, it is difficult to gauge exactly a cracking season would be. He missed the first half of last season with a neck injury, but through extensive rehabilitation work that had him up at 6.00am in the morning, running and undertaking a rigorous weights programme, he was able to return to first team action in November.

Such was his form through the winter and spring, that many people were calling for his recall to the international team for the Six Nations Championship. He missed out but he continued good work back to his backline. Best saw him selected to tour North America, and Canada with an England Development team lead by Kyron Bracken.

Woodman, again suffered an injury set back but returned in time for the tour warm-up game.

[Trevor Woodman] Loose Head

"One week I have played and the next I have been on the bench. When you are in and out of the team it's frustrating, but it's something I have got to deal with"

www.gloucesterrugbyclub.com
which was against a strong Barbarians team at Twickenham. Woodman was omitted from the start against Ali Black, Craig Dickson, but by his own admission didn’t perform.

"You set yourself targets that you want to be the best and you want to be number one and it was annoying that I got injured at the end of last season and I was out for a total of two months. I came back for the game against the Blue Bulls and looking back it was a game that I shouldn’t have played in because I wasn’t match fit and it showed. I had a poor game and next thing, someone who was performing well for their club comes in and he is still there now," admits a resilient Woodman.

Woodman has not flirted with the past though and is now focused on looking forward.

"I just want to stay fit and get back to playing how I know I can play. I need to get used to the work rate required to get to scrum after scrum and mentally I need to want to go out there and do it", he states.

"I’m not massively psychological but I know that you have got to be up for a game of rugby and you have got to be mentally prepared with the way the game is now. You have got to be up for a physical battle and you can’t let people down. I feel that I have let myself and players down this year because I haven’t performed."

Woodman’s claim for a first team place was somewhat hampered by his sending off in the Parker Pen Pool game away to La Rochelle. He was sent on as a second half substitute but was then sent off for an early bath after being dismissed for fighting. He received a six-week ban.

"It’s something I shouldn’t have done, but I was frustrated at being sent on at half time, which is something I wasn’t used to. I have learnt my lessons though, spending six weeks out never helps", admits Woodman.

Gloucester hope to extend their domestic season until June, and the Championship Final. During the summer though there is another chance for these on the cup of the England team to stake their claim for a place on another development tour to Argentina.

"If you went on my form recently you wouldn’t say that I’d be in the squad. But Gloucester have still got players left this season. I want to play in all of them, play well, and if I don’t get injured maybe I can prove a point at the end of the season," says Woodman.

Woodman’s case for a tour place with England may be helped by the call from the England manager Clive Woodward for Woodman to investigate the possibility of improving his hooking skills. Woodward believes that Woodman has the basic qualities of speed, mobility and good handling skills that if developed properly by Simon Hartling, the RFU hooking coach, will make him an ideal candidate to challenge Steve Thompson for the England number two shirt.

"That came out after Laurent Séguy thought about it and he felt that England may be short of a few hookers and that I might be able to do the job. It’s something that I have been learning and practising."

Woodman’s first introduction to the hooking position came in Gloucester’s recent away trip to Northampton. He was on the bench as a new hooking replacement and when Olivier Azam was sin binned Woodman took his place in the middle of the front row. He enjoyed a rather ignominious start to his new venture as Cédric Brouzet picked off his first two throws.

"I wasn’t expecting to be on the bench at Northampton as a replacement hooker. It was a long-term plan about something that may happen in the future. I’ll keep trying though and keep learning. England are obviously keen on it so I will keep doing it," admits Woodman.

Woodman’s chances of making an international starting XV are therefore greatly improved. By playing in two positions, he has two chances. He remains philosophical about his chances but deep down he can sense he would rather be number one than number two.

"I don’t want to be a utility person. My big passion has always been to be number one for England. I have been looking ahead my entire career. But if it happens at number two then I won’t be complaining," said Woodman.
Trevor Woodman

player stats

D.O.B: 04/08/76  Position: Loose Head  Height: 1.85m
Weight: 115kg  Int’l National Honours: England
Match Action

Norhampton 58 Gloucester 21
13-04-02 Zurich Premiership
Photography supplied by Dick Seddon.

Bristol 40 Gloucester 41
21-04-02 Zurich Premiership
Photography supplied by Roger Carter.

www.gloucesterrugbyclub.com
Gloucester 27 Sale Sharks 28
28-04-02 Parker Pen Shield Semi Final

Koli Scawaru is left nursing his wounds.

Robert Todd breaks through.

Lucio watches as his kick just fails to go over.

Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781

[match action] 33
OPEN LETTER TO LUDOVIC MERCIER

74, Victoria Street,
Gloucester.

29th April, 2002

Dear Ludo,

All right, so you missed one kick. It was a high-pressure effort, in squally conditions, with uncertain footings on your run-up, and with every eye in a packed ground on you and no one else. Anyone can miss them in such circumstances. I've seen them all do it - including Tim Stimpson whose 68-metre effort for Leicester against Llanelli just a few minutes later, must have rubbed considerable salt in your wounds.

I would ask you to remember that you are playing in front of the most knowledgeable supporters in the English game, and while they're undoubtedly disappointed, no one is going to pillory you for that one failure. Rather, we are all going to thank you for the marvellous performances you have been putting in for us all season. You have added a new dimension to Gloucester's game, and no one has contributed more to a successful campaign than you have. We are all looking forward to watching you perform in the same vein for a considerable time to come.

You wouldn't be human if you weren't shattered by your one lapse last Sunday, but I would ask you not to be too hard on yourself. Let your rugby do the talking. Make someone suffer in the remaining games of this season, and into the next.

I'm sure you'll do just that. And thanks again for all the pleasure you've given us since your arrival at Kingsholm.

Sincerely,

PETER ARNOLD
GRFC CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

Isn't it time that Gloucester season tickets were overprinted with a Government health warning? It certainly felt like that during the middle of last month.

First, there were two horrendous defeats by Wasp and Northampton. I can tolerate losing, and then I can even accept that, very occasionally, we might be defeated twice in a row, but the scorelines in those games sent me into a vertebrae-fri of the vapours. Luckily, I was down in Devon for a few days at that time, so didn't have to endure the slings and arrows of outrageous soccer fans, crowing over our misfortune. In any case, they have their own occasions for weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, at the moment, what with the TV Digital affair, the ongoing Saga of Beckham's Foot, and the Adventures of Ulrika and Sven to worry about, so I didn't get the going over I might have expected on my return.

That brought us to that tremendous game down at Bristol. I was condemned by circumstances to listen to that on BBC Radio Gloucestershire, whose coverage I can't praise highly enough. However, the last twenty minutes or so, spent all alone apart from the radio and a can of Fudges, did nothing for my coronary arteries at all.

To win by a solitary point in 81 is heart-stopping enough, but when the opposition is Bristol on their own ground - well, I don't have to tell you, do I?

Finally, there were the heartbreaking events at Northampton last Sunday. The secret is too fresh and too raw to do anything other than draw a veil over those.

Note to the Chancellor: Any chance of getting some of that extra cash you're going to pour into the NHS allocated to the alleviation of the suffering of traumatised rugby fans?

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

I recall another game against Bath, some years ago, when one of the attractions was our first sight of a highly regarded arrival from Rugby League, playing on the wing.

It was quite interesting. The player concerned looked quite quick and was nice to watch. However, his defence was distinctly dodgy, especially when the ball was chucked over his head, and his positional play was not the best we had ever seen.

All things considered, we weren't overly impressed.

Which just shows how wrong you can be. His player's name was Jason Robinson.

That thought is prompted by reports of remarks made by Henry Paul, ten days or so ago. Apparently, he had claimed that he had set himself various goals for the season, and that he had achieved most of them. All-in-all, he regarded his Gloucester career, so far, as a success.

Fair enough, Roma, like Gloucester Leisure Centre, wasn't built in a day. Furthermore, in spite of their common roots, the two codes are vastly different in many important respects, not least the presence of Union's two extra flank forwards, who can clog things up something awful if you're a recent refugee from League, seeking to make an impression in midfield.

It's easy to get carried away when someone of the undoubted talent and class of Henry Paul arrives on the scene. He can certainly be a match winner, but we do have to give the Wake Time. No one has found the transition easy, as least in Harris, among others, can tell you. Perhaps a spell on the bench, after a period when he was an ever-present in the starting side for weeks after weeks might allow him to settle down a bit. Time will tell.

My own feeling is that the best thing which could happen for Henry at the moment would be for Clive Woodward to take him on the Argentina tour. A spell under that sort of tutelage, for 24 hours a day over the period of a tough tour, might do him the world of good.

Keep in there plugging, Henry. We're all rooting for you.

Ticket and Information Hotline - Tel: 0871 871 8781
... a decade when everything the Recreation Grinders touched turned to silver and Stuart Barnes could position himself in front of the raging multitudes in the Kingsholm Shed, bow ironically after kicking one of his many match-winning goals, attach his extended bow tie to his collar and walk off into the night with a contemptuous chuckle.

Barney is laughing on the other side of his face these days. For a time the days of the good folk of Newport and Bristol might regard him as a mercenary - even a Judas - but on the other hand, he really does care about events on the banks of the Avon. Bath are in place, and have been for much of the season. Their Heineken Cup run, during which they emerged from a below-par pool with a 100 per cent record, was an Apuane-Christmas sized red letter, as Lawless and his men demonstrated in the semi-final of the Cup. The bat, bitter in the extreme, is that poor management, flawed recruitment, false economy and a debilitating injury list have left them tip-toeing through the minefield at the wrong end of the table.

Glasgow have enjoyed a long spell at the other, better end, yet they still have to win a third spot which will give them the city-slickers from Scotland, a taste of Cherry and Whites' mystique. Both have shown their depth by remaining in the Premiership match at The Rec in December; foreverremain a mystery - the look of stark, staring disbelief on Philippe Saint-Andre's visage at the end of that game said it all - and until they start halting results away from home, the big prizes will continue to elude them. Maybe Bath and successful practitioners of psychological one-upmanship for so long, will be the last team they learn to dominate.

Despite the obvious differences in fortune this season, there are still a number of fascinating parallels between the two clubs. Both have major ground issues to address - Bath more urgently than Gloucester, perhaps, but the problem is a shared one - and both have allowed their senior coaches in particular circumstances, until Gloucester's victory at Bath last weekend, the decision to praise Saint-Andre in the direction of the exit door was looking rather foolish. Equally, both have first-class youth coaches, leaving them with a degree of success. James Forrester and James Simpson-Daniel are both properties now, as are Olly Barkley and Jim Scropbrook.

Why it is, then, that the Gloucester way is looking forward to starting their shift on the Heineken Cup stage next term, while their opposite numbers are further away from elite European rugby than they could possibly have imagined at the start of the season? Simple. As any good West Countryman will tell you, this game depends on an overwhelming degree on what happens up front, where the coalface of the community go about their work. Gloucester have a pack - a wonderful pack, even without prime operators like Adam Eaton and Andy Hazell - while Bath have an apology for one. Gloucester recruited brilliantly under Saint-Andre (Azem, Collazo, Boer, Parramore) while Bath let the likes of Bateman, Haug and Clarke slip away too soon.

The Sheepdogs have waited an awfully long time for their place in the rich certainties of the good things in life - years during which the Bath faithful grew used to the exquisite flavour of success. All of a sudden, the tables are turned. Gloucester folk should enjoy their champagne moments, for they deserve them. And anyway, nothing lasts forever - as the once perennial kings of English rugby have recently discovered.
# Gloucester 2001-2002

## ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2001-2002

**LAST UPDATED 30/04/2002**

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10 = 2 bonus for scoring four tries in a match
15 = bonus for losing in a match by less than seven points

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**ZURICH PREMIERSHIP HOMES**

**ZURICH PREMIERSHIP AWAY**

**EUROPEAN SHIELD**

**FORBOLD GUP**

**FRIENDLY**

**NUMBER OF TIMES PLAYERS CAME ON AS SUBSTITUTE**

**PLAYED AT HOME**

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**SQUAD APPEARANCES & SCORES 2001-2002**

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