

Heineken® Cup



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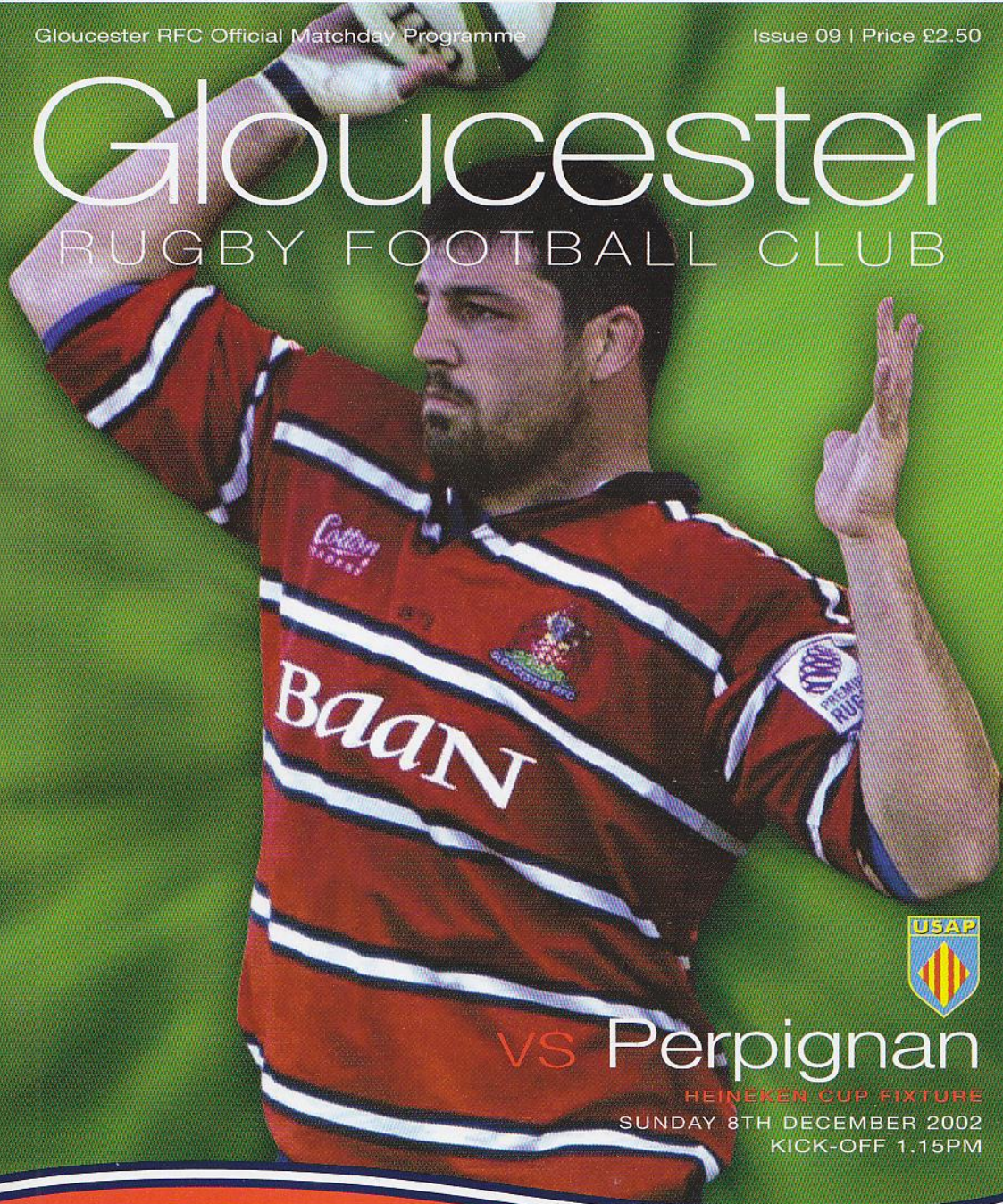
round
three

Gloucester RFC Official Matchday Programme

Issue 09 | Price £2.50

Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

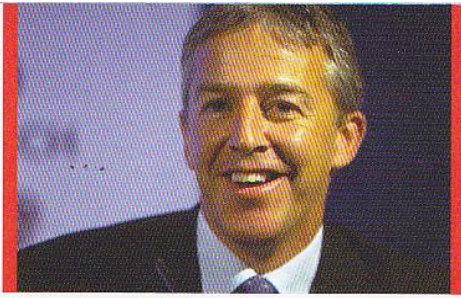


vs Perpignan

HEINEKEN CUP FIXTURE
SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2002
KICK-OFF 1.15PM

Baan

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NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Perpignan players, management and supporters to Kingsholm for this afternoon's Heineken Cup action.

We take a break from the grind of the Zurich Premiership for the next two weeks and it is fantastic that this year the supporters and players of Gloucester Rugby Club can experience the Heineken Cup, Europe's top Club competition.

Before the resumption of European competition we had the small matter of a massive London Irish fixture last weekend. We finished the most recent phase of Premiership fixtures in a healthy position but the manner in which we played last week's fixture was disappointing. However, after studying the match video it was very apparent as to why our performance was not as good as it could have been.

We could see that London Irish didn't come here to play, but rather to make sure that we didn't, and they did a very good job of that. They frustrated us, but we have to learn to cope with that in the second half of the season, particularly when teams come to Kingsholm.

Today's visitors to Kingsholm, Perpignan, come with a burgeoning reputation. This French-Catalan side have a pack that is a match for anyone in Europe and the battle up front over the next two weeks will be key to deciding the outcome of this Pool.

As a squad though I feel that Gloucester has progressed a long way, even since our last phase of Heineken Cup rugby, we know how we want to play this game today, we know the strength and weaknesses of Perpignan, just as we did of Munster. If we play to our potential, which we are more than capable of doing at home, then we have a good chance of winning the game.

You may have seen in the papers or on television that the Gloucester squad have begun a course of indoor climbing at The Warehouse in Gloucester. The players have begun a six-week block of training that is focused on what I call ball manipulation. As part of the delivery of this programme we felt that they needed to strengthen their forearms and their fingers. Climbing is the sort of activity that can be ideal for this sort of strength training so under the guidance of Rudi Meir up the wall they went. It has proven very popular, incredibly competitive and extremely hard work.

Much has been made this week of Gloucester's position over two of our players, who were injured or taken ill whilst on international duty. Trevor Woodman and James Simpson-Daniel both made massive impacts on the international stage last month but unfortunately their efforts have curtailed their involvement domestically.

Trevor will have an operation this weekend that should keep him out of action for around twelve weeks; the prognosis on James Simpson-Daniel's glandular fever however is a little harder to measure. He will be given as much time as is necessary and not rushed back into action any sooner than is felt medically possible.

Of course we wish both players a speedy recovery and I am sure we all want to see both players back in a Cherry and White jersey as soon as possible.

"AS A SQUAD THOUGH I FEEL THAT GLOUCESTER HAS PROGRESSED A LONG WAY, EVEN SINCE OUR LAST PHASE OF HEINEKEN CUP RUGBY, WE KNOW HOW WE WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME TODAY..."

The issue we have as a Club however, is that both players were on international duty when their respective ailments were diagnosed; whilst the RFU has adhered to their normal practice of compensating Gloucester over Trevor's injury, there is a sticking point on James. James' illness is stress related and occurred on international duty, I have simply asked the RFU whether they would be inclined to compensate us appropriately for his ailment. A decision is pending.

The scene is set, its Sunday afternoon, Kingsholm, the Heineken Cup, Gloucester v Perpignan – we have all the ingredients – enjoy a great days rugby, this is what it's all about! ■



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Phil Vickery

Club Captain

The Club has just come through a difficult period of the season during the international release period and we have had some disappointing performances, but we have come away with the points in the bag so all in all it has been a good period for us.

We need to look at the big picture. I'm sure a lot of teams would want to swap places with us so we are still positive and still trying to improve. At this halfway point in the season, I feel that we are doing what we set out to do. It has been hard work so far but we have a hard end to the season with some hard teams away from home still to come. But it is all there for us, we are in control of our own destiny at home and abroad it is up to us. We have done a lot of the hard work but we need to build on that.

We are top of the Zurich Premiership, and sometimes people wonder why we don't hammer teams at Kingsholm. I think that is simply because coming here is a massive game for any visiting side, and the pressure is very much on us to perform. We need to keep grinding out results, if we click we will score heavily, but when we don't we need to grind out a result and take the four points.

"...SETTLING FOR PERFORMING POORLY BUT STILL WINNING CAN ONLY GO ON SO LONG... IF YOU ARE NOT PLAYING WELL, A SIDE WILL COME ALONG AND BEAT YOU."

Unfortunately, settling for performing poorly but still winning can only go on so long. Sooner or later, if you are not playing well, a side will come along and beat you. We don't want that to happen in one of these massive games; we need to do well over the next two weeks.

We are entering the second phase of Heineken Cup Pool matches so we want to leave the stigma of the Premiership behind, and approach this next phase of

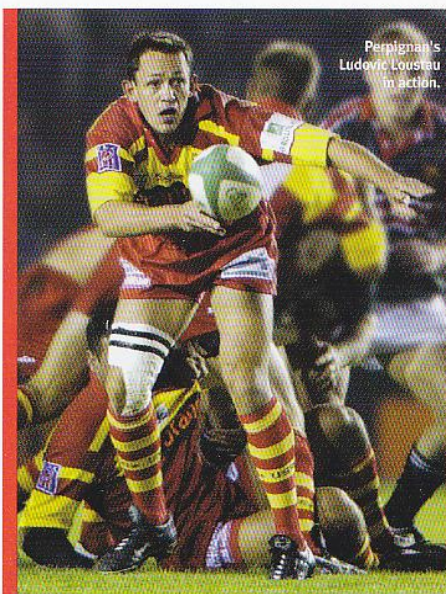
matches as a fresh new challenge. Hopefully we can take some confidence out of the next two weekends and come back to the Premiership afterwards and continue where we left off.

We have to face Perpignan on consecutive weekends and these two matches will go a long way to deciding our fate in this competition. We have to take each game as it comes. I will focus on winning this game this weekend and worry about next weekend, next weekend. Perpignan is a massive side, who will have no fear of coming to Kingsholm. We know that this weekend is a massive game for us, if we lose at home then that will be the end of the Heineken Cup dream. We have to win our home games.

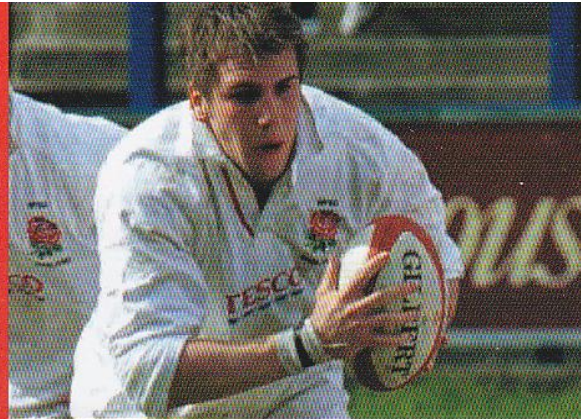
In every game we play it is important to assert dominance in the forwards. Without this platform your game plan doesn't work. Our forward success though will be critical today. I don't know the Toulouse team that well, but I know Patrice Collazo and I know some of his colleagues in the front row and they were driven all over the park by this Perpignan side. We need to compete up front with Perpignan, otherwise we will be in trouble.

They are what we consider to be a very traditional French side. They have a big pack of forwards, big strong runners with a very simple, very direct, in your face game plan. When they are allowed to play like that they are devastating, our job will be to stop this forward surge. We need to be clever, we need to be tight and cohesive in all we do. We need to take our chances, because they will take theirs.

I hope you all enjoy the game. ■



Perpignan's Ludovic Loustau in action.



Ben Durham

VARSITY BLUES

On 10th December 2002 Oxford and Cambridge will compete in the 121st Varsity Match.

Since 1873 on the second Tuesday of December the two great Universities have met for this world-famous student Rugby fixture. Of the 120 matches, which have already been played Cambridge hold a slight advantage with 56 wins to Oxfords 51, 13 have ended in a draw.

Originally played at Oxford or Cambridge, at the Oval and Blackheath, the venue shifted in 1921 to the home of English rugby, Twickenham stadium. A 52,000 strong crowd watched the match last year.

With such players as Stuart Barnes, Rob Andrew, Phil de Glanville and our own director of rugby Nigel Melville all playing in this fixture before representing their country this fixture can be the highlight of a career or simply the start of it.

One player who will hope to be running out in the Dark Blue of Oxford next Tuesday will be Gloucester Academy star Ben Durham. The former Pates Grammar School pupil turned down the opportunity of joining the Academy on a more full time basis and instead opted to take up a place at Oxford University to read economics

"It's been good. I am doing my work for a degree but I am still playing a good standard of rugby, most of our games are against Premiership Club's second teams". This decision, for the moment at least seems to be paying off. Despite not appearing on the Oxford University RFC website as a current player Durham in his second year now, has been an ever present in this year's Dark Blue Squad.

"The standard is probably good as the Gloucester U21s and United plus I get to play in fixtures like the one against the Major Stanley's XV. I played against Zinzan Brooke, you could tell he was a great player with the touches he had" said the back row forward.

Durham was part of the Blues squad in his first year at Oxford but only got a look in after Christmas when the preparations for the following year's Varsity match begin.

"It's all about this game, that is what makes it so special. You can lose every game but if you win this one, your season is a success. The whole season is about building up to this game, which makes it so intense and unique for the players. It's all about one game".

For this one game Durham has had to make certain sacrifices as he maintains a strong work ethic and trains full time for the Blue's squad. This though is something he has accepted as part of the job.

"If you are working this hard and playing this much rugby of course there are sacrifices but it is the same in professional rugby. To be honest though I like having something else other than rugby in my life it stops me going stale", he says.

Durham is currently playing open side for Oxford but is also packing down at eight for certain moves, he says former ACT Brumbie centre John Allen is one to look for on the dark blue side.

The Oxford side will be announced internally at the Vincent Club, the traditional Club for Oxford sportsmen in blazers and smart slacks the lucky players will toast to their success over a glass of port.

Simon Amor

Gloucester's utility back and the recently named Captain of the England sevens squad Simon Amor is a veteran of two Varsity matches. Cambridge scholar Amor made the bench for the Varsity squad in 2000 and played at fly half in the 2001 rubber. Despite kicking a conversion and three penalty goals however, Amor was on the losing side twice as the dark blues of Oxford continued their hold on the Bowring Bowl trophy.

"Tradition is the word, it is everything in the rugby season. You can lose every game of the season as long as you win this one", says the former Cambridge Blue

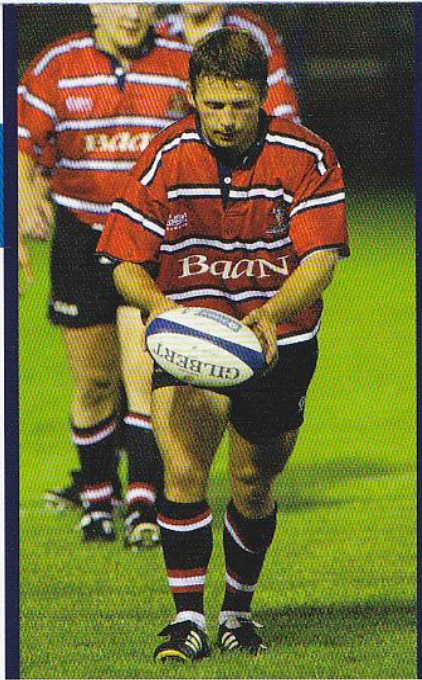
"People on the outside only see the game, for two weeks before hand you attend functions and are part of the build up to the biggest game of the year. Unique is the only word I can use. There are functions and old sayings and traditions that date back decades plus for players who will never play Premiership rugby the chance to run out at Twickenham in front of 60,000 people is simply awesome".

"Along with the boat race, the rugby is one of the two biggest sporting events of the year, with 20,000 students at Cambridge, the whole City comes alive".

The Oxbridge Institutions used to be a schooling ground for potential internationals and a cursory glance at the honours board tells a story of just how many graduates went on to represent their country.

In the past this game was considered almost an England trial but Amor feels that whilst both squads will have a sprinkling of current or former international talent, the standard of rugby at the Universities may suffer as a direct result of the formation of rugby Academies at each of the Zurich Premiership Clubs. As young players find a Club first and a degree second, the lack of affiliation to any club from either Oxford or Cambridge means players will look elsewhere to further their education.

Despite being a young player of massive potential and high intellect, Amor admits that the thought of joining Cambridge to read a degree and play Varsity rugby never crossed his mind. As an undergraduate reading at St Mary's University, Amor was picked to represent



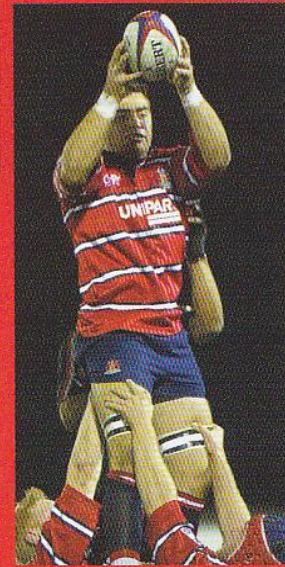
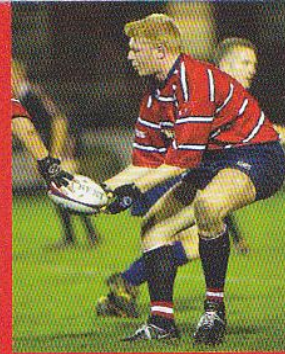
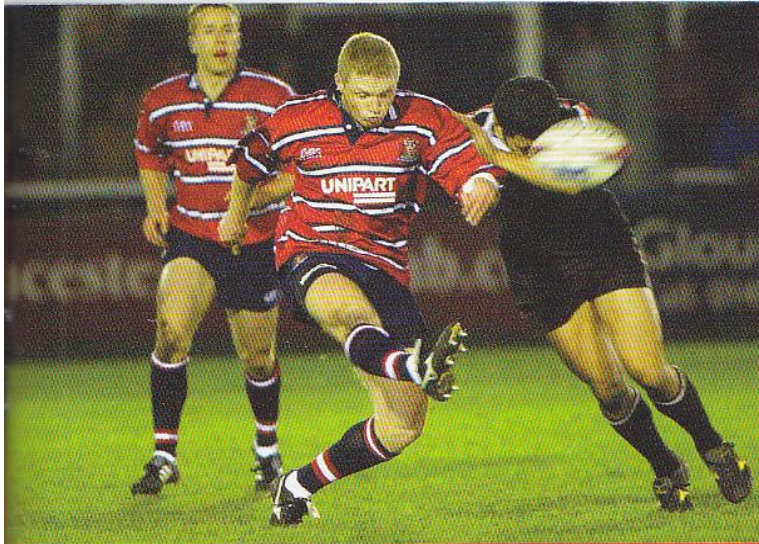
England Students. One of the players on the team was a Cambridge scholar at the time and recommended Amor to the coaching staff. Amor was approached and subsequently enrolled on a Social and Political Science and Management honours degree.

"It literally never crossed my mind to play in the Blues squad, I never thought I was good enough. I was sent a letter asking me to apply so I did and that was that. I didn't expect it at all".

To some this may seem like a back door into one of the worlds leading educational establishments but despite the hero status afforded to the Cambridge sports stars, Amor is adamant that as far as reading for a degree, no dispensation was asked for nor offered.

"That is the way it should be. For Cambridge to retain its status as the best University in the world it can't afford to make special allowances as that will bring down the status of the degree. Time management is key and it serves to focus the player's minds on what they are doing at University.

Amor subsequently graduated from Cambridge but after playing in an honourable 24-all draw for a Steele-Bodger's XV against his old Cambridge team mates last Wednesday night, from a position of full-back Amor was perfectly placed to assess the chances of the light blues. "They have a good pair of strong centres, the left wing is very sharp in space and they have a big number eight", says Amor.



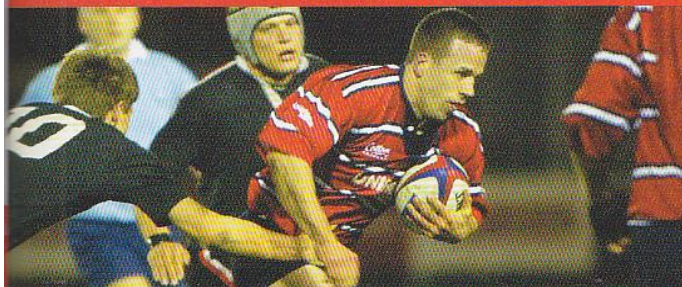
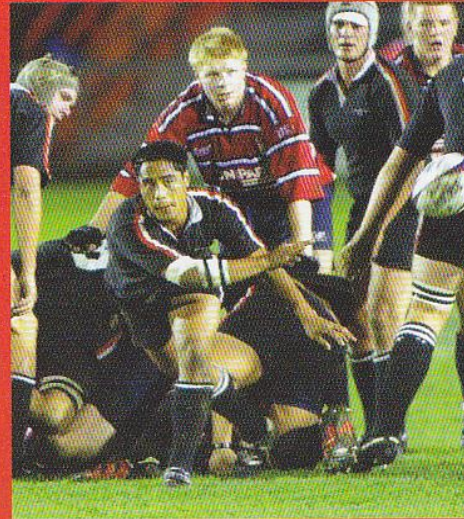
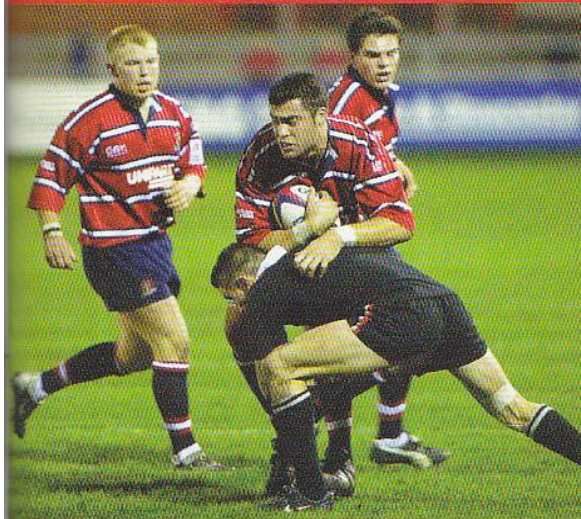
KINGSHOLM TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2002



GRFC U21 XV 20



NZ YOUTH DEV. XV 39



(Top Left) Josh Frape is tackled by New Zealand's B Heather.

(Top Right) Nick Southern receives the ball.

(Upper Middle Right) Mark Rimmer wins a line out.

(Middle Left) Mark Rimmer has his break stopped short.

(Middle Right) New Zealand's scrum half, J Heta, passes the ball out.

(Bottom Left) Stu Roberts breaks through New Zealand's defence.

HEAD 2 HEAD

James Forrester

Strengths

After only one full season with the Cherry and Whites, James Forrester has already established himself as one of the Zurich Premiership's most devastating runners. He scored a match winning hat trick against Bristol last season by showing all his footballing skills. This year he has already notched up five touchdowns but he feels his duties start with more fundamental responsibilities.

"I start with the basics - scrummaging, lineout and winning our ball and working hard on defence, then I work on attacking play and getting involved. I try to support the ball carrier and stay involved as much as I can", says James.

Weaknesses

Forrester's main weakness per se is his age. He is still relatively young for a back row forward and he is yet to learn all the nuances of a senior pro like Junior

Paramore. What he lacks in experience however, the young, former Bicester player more than makes up for with tenacity and sheer hunger for the game.

"Every part of my game needs improving, but some more than others. I am putting on weight to bulk up and working as hard on defence as I do in attack. I am just trying to tighten up my whole game. As I play more though I learn more".

High Points

"Just playing for Gloucester has been a massive thrill and winning the Championship last season was a brilliant day for players and fans. Obviously playing for England at any level is always an honour".

Low Points

Forrester has been relatively injury free since turning professional but at Christmas 2000 he was diagnosed with a hernia. This kept him out of the England schools set up.

"PLAYING FOR GLOUCESTER HAS BEEN A MASSIVE THRILL AND WINNING THE CHAMPIONSHIP LAST SEASON WAS A BRILLIANT DAY..."

Forrester on the Heineken Cup

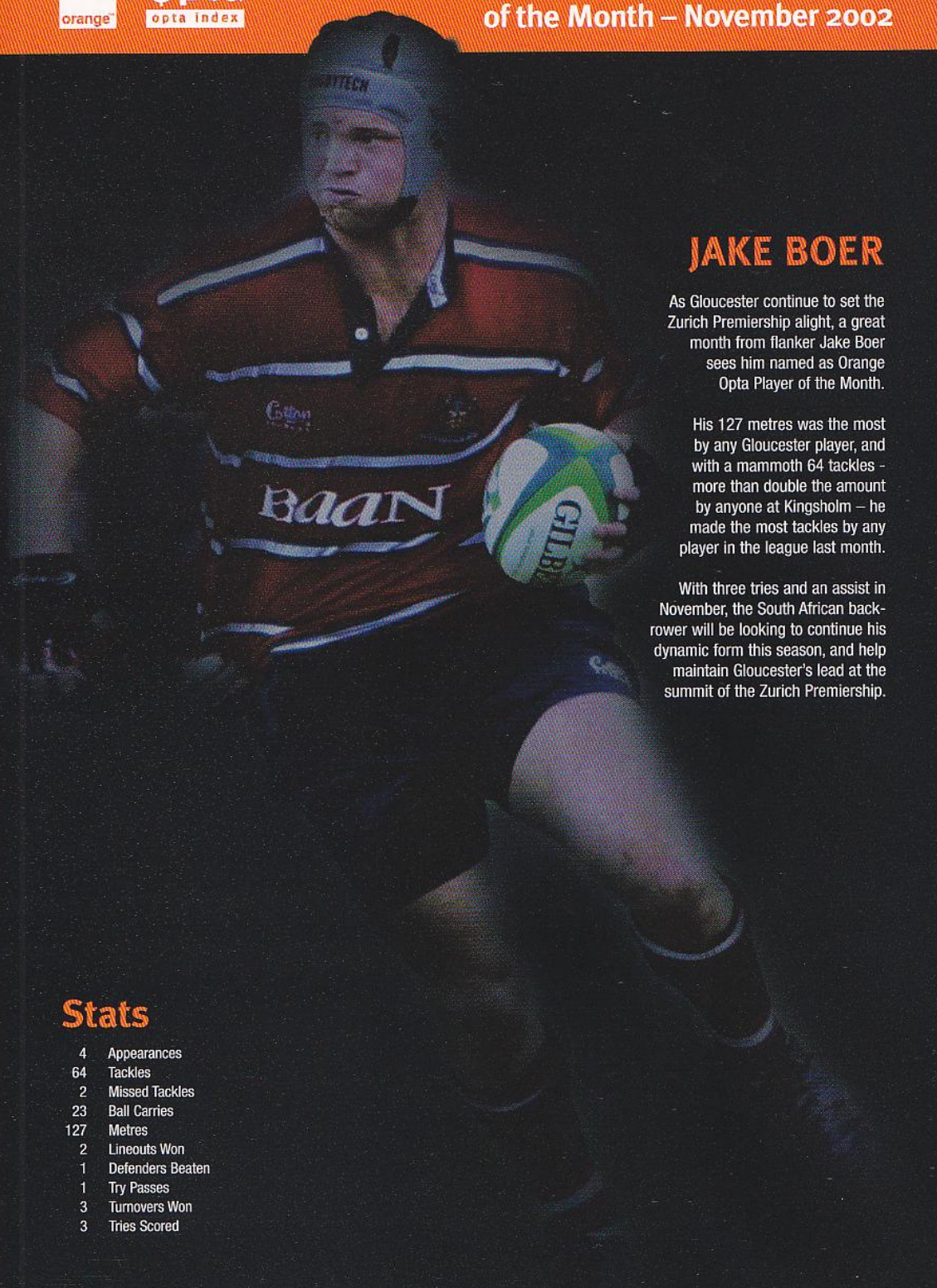
"The Premiership has been incredibly competitive this year, with every one beating everyone. The Heineken Cup though is definitely a step up. It's a great experience to play against these players that we don't see week in, week out. Also you get to see new places when you visit the likes of Munster and Perpignan, it's a great opportunity. I think it certainly helps to bridge the gap between Club and international rugby".

Forrester on Perpignan

"These are going to be a big challenge for us. They have a big pack of forwards with a good back row. We are taking each game separately but with next week in mind we want to play well and put a marker down. Most-importantly though we want the 'W'".



Orange Opta Gloucester Player of the Month – November 2002



JAKE BOER

As Gloucester continue to set the Zurich Premiership alight, a great month from flanker Jake Boer sees him named as Orange Opta Player of the Month.

His 127 metres was the most by any Gloucester player, and with a mammoth 64 tackles - more than double the amount by anyone at Kingsholm - he made the most tackles by any player in the league last month.

With three tries and an assist in November, the South African back-rower will be looking to continue his dynamic form this season, and help maintain Gloucester's lead at the summit of the Zurich Premiership.

Stats

4	Appearances
64	Tackles
2	Missed Tackles
23	Ball Carries
127	Metres
2	Lineouts Won
1	Defenders Beaten
1	Try Passes
3	Turnovers Won
3	Tries Scored

In the aftermath of last Saturday's win over London Irish, defensive coach Dave Ellis gave a rare interview on Gloucester's performance. He felt it was unconvincing in several departments, but the result was achieved. Job done, time to move on. On, in fact, to the second phase of

before the trip to the Stade Aime Giral should help Gloucester to iron out any problems under the Kingsholm comfort blanket. The team has had to work very hard in the last 3 home games, and a return to some of the fluency we saw earlier on the season would auger well for next week.



IAN RANDALL
BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

matches in the Heineken Cup, a phase which could cloud or clarify who the likely qualifiers are for the knockout stages next April.

The tables of the six pools before this weekend's games show one team in each with a 100% record, and one team in each with nothing to show from their opening two matches. The written press at the London Irish match were bemoaning the quality of some the Celtic League stuff they've been watching this season, and with Swansea, Cardiff and Newport all propping up their groups, that gap in class would seem to be borne out. Interestingly too, 4 of the pools are lead by French sides - Biarritz, Toulouse, Beziers and Philippe's team, Bourgoin. Beware Perpignan, and that's Dave Ellis' view too.

Ellis has an extensive rugby CV, and has worked all over the world, including France. His knowledge of what awaits Gloucester will be handy, not only in playing terms, but also in how the French may react to the recent sacking of the clubs' assistant coach. Internal turmoil there may be, but this is not the domestic Championship, and so represents an opportunity to throw the kitchen sink at Gloucester in an attempt to blow Pool 2 wide open. Fireworks can be expected, but in the overall scheme of things, playing today's game

Passionate as they are about their rugby, no doubt the Perpignan supporters will enjoy the Castle Grim experience, but for one French lady today will be something totally new. Her name is Odyle Perot, and she works for a unit called International Relations at the BBC's White City site. She spoke at a seminar I attended recently, and confessed that although through her linguistic and logistical skills she helps people like us go to all parts of the globe covering sporting events, she had never been to a big game - her background, as a professional musician, is as far from sport as you could imagine. An invitation was therefore extended to attend today's match, and sample the raw energy of Kingsholm as a "thank you" for helping to sort out the commentary you can hear with BBC Radio Gloucestershire from Perpignan next Saturday. Welcome Odyle.

Looking at Gloucestershire teams involved outside the Premiership, it's good to see Old Patesians and Lydney riding high near the top of National Division 3 South. Going into this weekend, Lydney had lost only once, while Pats were level on points with leaders Rosslyn Park, albeit from three games more. Their winning penalty goal in the recent match with Tabard was kicked by Robert Nock, surely the most unlikely player to feature in the National Leagues

this season. Nock played for Pats as a youngster before turning to Badminton, where represented England at many major internationals. Now, after hanging up his professional racquet, he's back in the Pats first team for the first time in 5 years. No doubt the atmosphere will be feisty when the two teams

ineligible player, are through to the last 32 of the Intermediate Cup, while Cheltenham Saracens are our last survivors at the same stage in the Vase. Both will hope to uphold a strong local tradition in knockout rugby.



meet for the first time this season at Regentsholm on the Saturday before Christmas, when we take on Exeter here in the Powergen Cup.

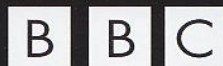
Talking of Cups, in the Intermediate Cup and Junior Vase, last weekend's 4th round results leave just 1 team from the County in each competition. Cheltenham, who earned a reprieve after Coney Hill were disqualified for fielding an

Meanwhile, back to today. In our last Heineken Cup campaign, Gloucester could only draw here with French side Colomiers and then lost the return match. I'd like to think things have moved on a bit since then, so that there is no such upset today.

C'mon Glaws !

RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

104.7 FM & 1413 AM



FIRST FOR COVERAGE OF THE CHERRY & WHITES

"...Perpignan will be one of the biggest European tests the Cherry and Whites will face."

Gloucester Set For French Test

Alastair Downey of

The Citizen



There is always something slightly unnerving but very special about the prospect of facing a French side in Europe's premier club competition.

Kingsholm should be alive with anticipation today for the third game in the opening stages of Gloucester's Heineken Cup adventure but prepare for a tough ride because it will be tough. Gloucester's previous experiences against the unpredictable French will tell them to be cautious.

This afternoon, Perpignan come to Kingsholm for the first stage of back-to-back clashes in what will decide the outcome of Pool Two in this year's competition. Two victories for Gloucester will almost certainly see them into the next stage of the competition but they will be wary of the Catalan side who took Munster to the wire in Limerick in the last section of matches.

Director of rugby Nigel Melville has likened today's match with the opening encounter with the Munstermen in terms of its intensity and that is likely to be returned tenfold when Gloucester make the trip to the Stade Aime Giral next weekend. Memories of their forays into France in recent seasons will not provide much comfort. Defeated comfortably by Biarritz in the European Shield and then against Colomiers in their first European Cup campaign indicates just how difficult next weekend's match will be away from the comforts of Kingsholm. And

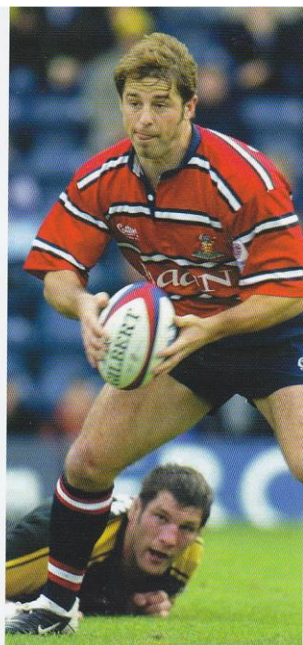
even when they were victorious last season at La Rochelle, it took a magnificent forward performance in the first half to lay the foundations for the triumph. In the second half, Gloucester weathered a bitter storm and had Trevor Woodman sent off before earning their triumph.

They may not be good travellers, but on home soil, Perpignan will be one of the biggest European tests the Cherry and Whites will face. Gloucester will need to perform better than they have in their last two Premiership matches to secure the victories they crave and will require a better understanding of how to run the game when the going gets tough today.

That is the key. It will be tough, rough and exciting - and that's just the crowd. Perpignan's coach Olivier Saisset has insisted this is the toughest challenge his side have faced all season.

"They don't come any bigger than Gloucester at the moment," he said. "We will certainly be the underdogs. We are going to have to fight hard over there but we are not afraid of that. "We were not shown up in Munster, we fought it out well over there too."

"Despite our disappointing results in the Championship, I think it's a good thing we have to face up to the number one club in England at this point - it is the challenge we need to put us on the right road and perform."



Henry Paul	15
Marcel Garvey	14
Terry Fanolua	13
Robert Todd	12
Thinus Delport	11
Ludovic Mercier	10
Andy Gomarsall	09
Rodrigo Roncero	01
Olivier Azam	02
(c) Phil Vickery	03
Ed Pearce	04
Adam Eustace	05
Peter Buxton	06
James Forrester	07
Junior Paramore	08
Clive Stuart-Smith	16
Tom Beim	17
Chris Catling	18
Rob Elloway	19
Mark Irish	20
Andy Hazell	21
Rob Fidler	22



Frédéric Cermeno	
Pascal Bomati	
Christophe Manas	
Nicolas Couttet	
Farid Sid	
Benoit Bellot	
Ludovic Loustau	
Renaud Peillard	
Marc Dal Maso	
Stéphane Debesombes	
Jérôme Thion	
Christophe Porcu	
Lionel Mallier	
Bernard Goutta (C)	
Rimas Alvarez Kairelis	
Alexandro Moreno	
Nicolas Mas	
John Daniell	
Phil Murphy	
Grégory Le Corvec	
Ed Carter	
Manuel Edmonds	



TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS Referee: N.H Williams W.R.U
 1st T.J: C. Thomas W.R.U
 2nd T.J: A Jenkins WRU



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Heineken Cup
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KINGSHOLM SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2002



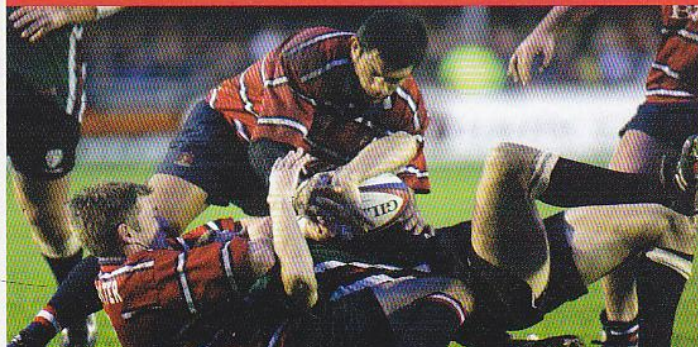
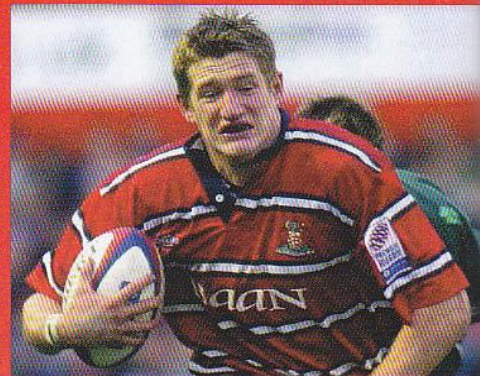
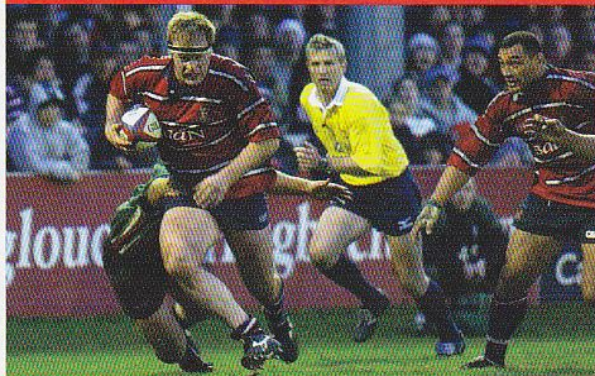
GLOUCESTER 25

TRIES: BOER, PARAMORE, PENALTY TRY
CONVERSIONS: MERCIER (2) PENALTIES: MERCIER (2)



LONDON IRISH 20

TRIES: SACKEY (2)
CONVERSIONS: EVERITT (2) PENALTIES: EVERITT (2)



(Top Left) Henry Paul is held by London Irish Justin Bishop and Nick Burrows.

(Top Right) James Forrester wins a line out.

(Middle Left) Peter Buxton breaks away.

(Middle Right) James Forrester breaks away from the London Irish defence.

(Bottom Left) James Forrester and Robert Todd halt an assault from London Irish.

Fans Eye View

With Bob Fenton

I have a confession to make - a sort of coming out of the closet for a public flagellation session before throwing myself on mercy of my torturers. Apparently I am a London Wasps supporter.

This news came as somewhat of a shock to me, because prior to that I thought I was a supporter of NEC Harlequeens. And if things carry on this way I think there is every chance that I am about to be exposed a Northampton fan, with a few others to follow no doubt.

The news was broken to me in a letter from some hopeless power company attempting to sign me up to a contract and was using an address that had been sold on to them by Wasps.

This kind of thing is not on. Leaving aside the fact that several coaches and horses have probably ram-raided their way through the Data Protection Act (I was not asked - and have not given permission - for my details to be sold on), the libellous nature of the correspondence must give me reasonable grounds for some sort of prosecution.

No doubt Gloucester RFC have a few razor-sharp legal brains at their disposal, perhaps they can take some sort of action on behalf of me and the tons of other Gloucester supporters who have also received similar junk mail.

I couldn't help wondering if some poor supporter from London Irish or Leeds was currently opening a letter starting "... as a Gloucester supporter..." after buying a ticket from Castle Grim recently, so I rang and asked.

While Gloucester does support the scheme, they do not go about it in the same way as other clubs - and went as far as to apologise for the actions of Wasps and Harlequins. It seems that Premier Rugby have requested that all clubs should provide their season ticket holder database so that the mailshot is accurately directed. While Gloucester were able to comply with this requirement due to the new systems and technology that we have, other clubs have not. So there you are, it seems we can all bask in the reflected glory of following a club that sticks by the rules

and while we have to wait for our own letter (due in the new year), I have been told that it does benefit Gloucester Rugby Club and supporters alike.

Anyway, to other matters of some concern. Last weekend's match against London Irish presented us with a few talking points, not least the late replacement of the referee - it was supposed to be Whistling Roy Maybank, we got Robin "What Offside?" Goodliffe instead. That wasn't the only late change though, as Adam Eustace came in for Mark Cornwell.

I missed out on why Pasty fell off the team sheet altogether, but Alastair Downey later enlightened me with the news that he had suffered a neck injury, the second of its kind in a matter of weeks - Henry suffered similarly causing him to miss a match.

I don't know the cause of Pasty's neck injury, but remember Henry copped his apparently watching Breakfast TV - did Mark go the same way, I think we should be told, and we should also be told what they were watching. I mean GMTV, or Sky Sports News is hardly that riveting so what are they doing. And if this kind of thing is about to become endemic isn't it time Nigel took their televisions away?

Does make you wonder what other dangers there are lurking around the house - I seem to recall some footballer having to get stitches in his foot after dropping a jar of coffee on it. And Rio Ferdinand (all £30 million pounds' worth of him) missed a game after damaging his leg watching TV - no doubt kicking it or something. I can safely say that in many years of TV watching I have not occasioned myself any injuries, apart from raised blood pressure watching Glaws on the times that I have not got to an away game.

Also last weekend the venerable stalwarts of Tom and one-man-crowd Westy invaded our usual little enclave around the middle of the shed. Both, it has to be said, were probably a little worse for drink why else would Tom have subjected himself to the humiliation of having his hair



'painted' by our resident transvestite Roman with what looked like a George Cross. I say looked like because it actually seemed that he had run into a madman armed with an axe - I'm just surprised that he was not whisked off to Gloucester Royal to have his head stitched up!

Actually Tom provided us with another magic moment just after his arrival. I should say here that readers of a nervous disposition or anyone stuffing their face with a hamburger are advised to look away now.

Tom is apparently new to dentures and halfway through his umpteenth pint parted company with his set, only for them to materialise in the bottom of his glass! However, totally unflustered he finished his pint and retrieved his nashers - the howls of laughter must have been heard for miles. I bet that was one risk not explained by his dentist!

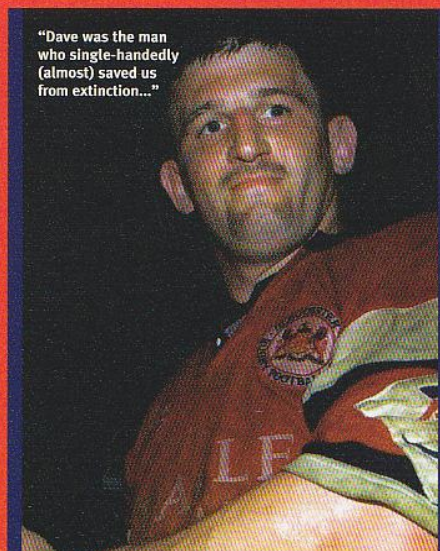
For the next few weeks we leave behind the Premiership and the pressure of hoping that Newcastle pick up a couple of bonus points and send Bath into bottom place, to concentrate on first the Heineken Cup and the domestic cup competition. So far Perpignan have a one and one record in the group, wining at home to Viadana before going down to Munster.

They will come into this game knowing that they really must get a result to have any chance of progressing into the next round, we will want a couple of wins to cement our position at the top of the group. We all know the stories about French teams not travelling well, and their overall record in the competition seems to bear that out. But then it's not that long ago that a report of Elvis being spotted shopping in Asda was more likely than a

Gloucester away win - so let's not take anything for granted yet.

And then next week we're home again, this time to Exeter Exterminators or Extremists or whatever name it is that their marketing geniuses have dreamed up for them in the Power (Bombard you with junkmail) Gen cup. More importantly - team selection and fitness allowing - it will see the return of Gloucester rugby legend, teller of funny stories, local cult hero and all-round good bloke: Dave Sims. For those newcomers to Gloucester (ie since we started winning regularly) Dave was the man who single-handedly (almost) saved us from extinction. Be prepared to shout his name loudly.

It's easy, just like the 'Ludo' chant but Simo, Simo, Simo...



"Dave was the man who single-handedly (almost) saved us from extinction..."

STAFF PROFILE

THE MEIR OF GLOUCESTER

RUDI DRIVES THE PLAYERS UP THE WALL - AND OUT OF THEIR BOX.



Enthusiastic, knowledgeable and innovative, three words to describe Gloucester's Australian-born fitness and skills coach Rudi Meir. A Nigel Melville summer recruit Meir joined the Cherry and Whites to 'improve the core skills and fitness' of the players.

Nigel Melville, who had first hand experience of Meir's methods whilst the pair worked with the England U21 side describes the Australian as 'Someone who can think out of the square', a rare quality in today's game where technology, analysis and structure is dominant.

As soon as Melville had agreed to take the top job at Kingsholm he quickly enlisted the services of the fitness and skills coach.

"A lot of advances have been made on the conditioning side and we are seeing the benefit to players, but looking forward it is the development of the basic skills that will move the players on. We needed someone who could deliver core skills and basic skills, Rudi is a guy who has experience of this all over the world" said Melville.

Meir's 'thinking out of the square', as Melville puts it came to the fore this week with very unusual results.

"We are trying to get them out of the box and experience alternative training methods", was how Meir justified the decision to enroll the Gloucester 1st team squad into a block of alternative training activities using the indoor climbing facilities at 'The Warehouse' in Gloucester.

Thinking 'out of the box' is a saying used daily by marketers as a way of designing advertising campaigns for new or existing products. Meir though says that he never used any marketing ad jargon to sell this activity to the players at all.

"We never sold it to the players by saying it would make them better on the field, however, that is not to say that this will have some cross-over benefit somewhere down the line. There is always a logical link between these things as remote as it may seem to the players. Ultimately it is all about making them better at what they do and a cornerstone of that is challenging them in different ways", says Meir.

Finding synergy between the skills used in a rugby match and someone scaling a rock face may not be immediately apparent, but after spending a little time with the inventive Meir one realizes that synergy can be drawn from almost any sporting activity.

Meir explains that the specific gripping and pulling techniques used in this climbing can have positive effect in lots of rugby specific actions.

"Climbing requires a lot of upper body strength and gripping techniques that are beneficial in tackle situations", explains Meir. ►►



"The upper body strength is vital in grappling or pulling a player down. This takes strength, specifically in your fingers, your hand and your forearm and the great thing about indoor climbing is that it develops just this type of strength".

A perfect example of this came in the recent Investec autumn international series. Many of us will remember Phil Vickery's try-saving tackle on All Black Kees Meeuws, when the prop was just inches from the line. As Meeuws seemed certain to score, Vickery hauled him down with one hand.

As well as the strength benefits Meir also sees climbing as providing many other positive results for the players.

He feels that by taking them out of their normal 'gym' environment it will have a strong motivational effect on the players approach to training. When climbing, the players also operate a buddy system where one player

"The upper body strength is vital in grappling or pulling a player down. This takes strength, specifically in your fingers, your hand and your forearm and the great thing about indoor climbing is that it develops just this type of strength".

is up the wall and another is holding the rope, it is a system that requires a huge trust element.

Meir even sees benefit in Gloucester's rucking and mauling techniques.

"There is this notion of spatial awareness involved. When you are up a wall, twenty or thirty feet off the floor, you become very conscious of the space immediately around you and I will try to relate that back to being at the bottom of the ruck or in the middle of a maul. You have to be very aware of where the try line is compared to your body. You have to pop your head up at a moments notice and know where you are and where you are going to go, where support players are, where the defensive line is. It is the same in a disorientating tackle situation is a perfect example of when spatial awareness can be key".

As well as this alternative, innovative approach to training Meir brings with him a wealth of knowledge, honed from years working in various rugby league and union sides, across the globe.

Meir earned his stripes with eight years at the Gold Coast Seagulls in the Australian National Rugby League before the team folded in 1995. In 1996 Joe

Lydon, current England 7's coach, who at the time was team manager at Wigan rugby league team put in a call to Rudi and enticed him to visit England.

It was the advent of Super League and Lydon was worried that after Wigan's decade of supremacy, the rest of the league had caught up in this first Super League season.

Meir was invited to spend a month in with the Wigan side to look at everything they did in respect to their training, their strength and conditioning work, their skill work, and the communication between the coach and players.

Nigel Melville though by his own admission enlisted the help of Meir to develop the basic skill levels of his players. Was this an admission that the Gloucester players simply were not good enough at them?

Meir is typically candid in his response.

"I think if you spoke to all our players, if they were being totally honest, they would all say that there were areas in their game that they can improve on. We sit down with the videos of games each week and see clear examples of skill execution that we are not necessarily doing well. I am sure the fans see it, they are very knowledgeable; they see when bad passes are being made, or when the player is not looking where a pass is going, or players not in position to receive a pass. The emphasis of what I do is all based around those things, if you don't have the basic fundamental skills you can't possibly do the complex team manoeuvres", he explains.

It may seem strange that Nigel Melville turned to someone who is fundamentally a rugby league coach to teach his rugby union players the skills they need to succeed. Meir though is able to add value in both rugby codes because he focuses on the basics. He professes to having little tactical knowledge of Union but by doing his job on the basics he can leave the strategy to the other coaches.

"Nigel knew what he was looking for when he asked me to join. All the coaches compliment each other by what they bring to the party, we all add something different", says Meir.

Meir is able to work with equal success in both codes because of the parallels that exist between the basic disciplines in the two sports. After all, whilst there are many complexities that maintain the inherent differences in the two sports, in their simplest forms running, catching, passing and tackling are the main components of both League and Union. Rudi's commitment to his players wherever he is, is to help them improve their mastery of these basic disciplines.

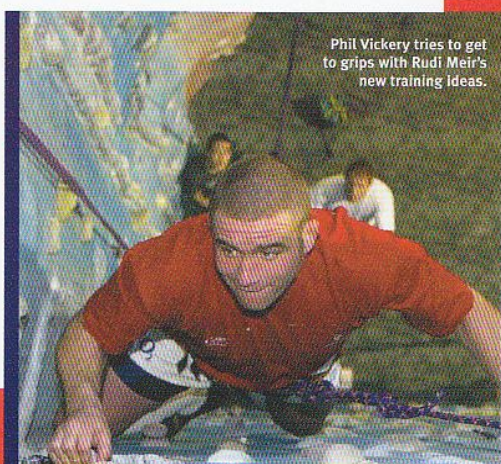
"I won't be as gullible or naïve as to suggest that we are doing anything different to anyone else. I am sure the previous coaches will have done something similar, we just try to do it a little differently", says Meir

After enhancing the players spatial awareness, their team dynamics, upper body strength and their basic and core rugby skills, with his characteristic enthusiasm Meir's next challenge to tackle concerns the player's visual fitness.

By enhancing their ability to assimilate visual cues and information Meir hopes to improve the players 'scanning' ability. Scanning is the process by which players in rugby league and rugby union instantly assimilate all the visual information around them during a game and are able to adapt accordingly when a play has been called.

Meir hopes to achieve this improvement in visual fitness by using another innovative and alternative training method. He will mark symbols and letters on to a match ball and ask the players to assimilate this information.

It could drive you up the wall! ■



Phil Vickery tries to get to grips with Rudi Meir's new training ideas.

Peter Arnold

SEEN IT ALL BEFORE

There was a decided touch of déjà vu about our two most recent Premiership games. They both put me in mind of times gone by. I suppose we should have expected it.

Both Leeds and London Irish had better-than-usual reasons to want to beat Gloucester this time round, the former because they wanted to take our top spot, and the latter because they were anxious to climb further away from the danger zone. To which, one must add, the delusions of grandeur inflicted by a win over Leicester the previous week.

The result was a couple of dour old struggles notable for aggressive defence and ferocity among the forwards. In both cases our magnificent pack saw us through safely, which should have surprised no one. In his match commentary on the radio, Peter Butler remarked that it all reminded him of the way Gloucester used to perform in his playing days.

He was about right. The old elver eater virtues of a strong and streetwise pack, backed by a lively scrum-half and a top-quality kicker triumphed again.

It seems to seep out of the very bricks from which Kingsholm is built. Some of the names may sound a bit alien to Gloucester ears, but the time-honoured ethos of forward play, which is as far removed from mere strong-arm stuff as lacemaking is from darning a pair of socks, is alive and well and living right here.

THE RETURN OF BIG DAVE

You'll have heard, by now, that our next little Kingsholm get-together will be for our Powergen Cup engagement with Exeter on the Saturday before Christmas. That would be sufficient reason to eschew last-minute shopping in any event, but the fact that it involves the return of Dave Sims to his spiritual home makes attendance positively mandatory.

The Chiefs did well to get here. On November 22nd they travelled to London Welsh in a League fixture and lost 15-13. The following Saturday, they returned to Old Deer Park and restored the balance by putting 36 points on the Welsh Exiles. The Cup is always a great motivator.

It's also a great leveller. While that game provides an obvious chance to rest a few people, and keep them within their 30-game limit, it would not be wise to regard the Exeter challenge as a stroll under the Christmas lights. The presence of Dave Sims, second-row maestro, hugely influential captain, and a player who should have had more England Caps than he did ensures that. There would be no better Christmas present for 'Simsy' than putting one over on the club where he learned the game, and which he served so well.

He won't be the only familiar face at Kingsholm that day. Ian Sanders, who had an effective spell at Gloucester after leaving Bath, will also feature. It will be good to see him again.



The return
of Big Dave



I learn that Ian receives valuable sponsorship from Sanders Fish and Chips in Exeter, which seems entirely appropriate. I shall not say anything about 'getting a good battering'. That would just be too easy.

BEST OF LUCK, SIMON !

Spare a thought for Simon Amor, who is skippering the England Sevens squad out in Dubai this weekend. We all hope he does well.

I see that he describes his squad as "ridiculously quick". He should know. He's no three-toed tree sloth himself.

HOW ABOUT DEAKS ?

I see that Mark Regan was named as the Premiership Player of the Month for November. Good for him. He has certainly been rejuvenated since he moved to Leeds, as we saw when he came on in the second half down here a couple of weeks ago.

However, I might be wrong, but I don't recall him doing anything notable during November, apart from sitting on the England bench throughout the Autumn International series.

Nothing against Mark at all, but wouldn't Andy Deacon have been a better choice ?

THE ORIGINAL 'IRON MAN'

Space, recently, hasn't allowed me to comment on a sad little item I picked up two or three weeks ago. C.R.Jacobs, of Northampton and England has died at the age of 74.

Geriatrics, like me, will remember Ron Jacobs very well indeed. Known as 'The Iron Man' when Mike Teague, if he

was around at all, was probably still in nappies, he was a thorn in Gloucester's flesh for many a year. In those days, Leicester were a fair-to-middling side, Bath a Saturday afternoon run about, and no one had ever heard of Leeds, but Northampton, as now, were one of the best teams in the country. Anchoring the corner of the scrum was Ron Jacobs. Think Jason Leonard with a touch of the Phil Blakeway about him and you'll get the picture.

After making his England debut in 1956, he was a member of Eric Evans' side which won the Grand Slam in 1957. His prop partner through that whole campaign was our own George Hastings.

Ron Jacobs went on to win 29 Caps, a very considerable number in a period when there weren't half as many International matches as there are now. He played on for the Saints for years, and after his retirement became a distinguished administrator.

Throughout his playing career 'C.R.Jacobs' was one of the first names we looked for on the team sheet when the mighty Northampton visited Kingsholm. He was always one of our most respected opponents, which is saying a lot when you recall that Gloucester has always known a thing or two about prop forwards.

Apart from anything else, he was a very nice bloke, and one can only regret his passing. But the news certainly stirred some old memories.

MISPRINT

I'm not sure I believe a little story relayed to me by one of my Email contacts the other day. According to him, an Australian local paper, describing a Ladies Rugby match, opined that 'the game was dominated by the knickers'

There's no answer to that.