

Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



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PLAYER FOCUS
PETER BUXTON

ADAM EUSTACE
SIMON SHAW
HEAD 2 HEAD

FANS EYE VIEW
MATCH ACTION

vs London Wasps

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE
SATURDAY 4TH JANUARY 2003
KICK-OFF 3.00PM

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NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

Happy New Year and welcome to Kingsholm for our first home Zurich Premiership game of 2003. Today it gives me great pleasure to welcome my old friends London Wasps to Kingsholm. Last week they convincingly beat Leicester at Adams Park and, as they are in a rich vein of form, they will no doubt want to replicate that this afternoon.

Last weekend we visited Franklins Gardens to play the Northampton Saints, another form Premiership side. It wasn't pretty but it was a marvellous occasion, a physical 'in your face' game played in the right spirit before a full house. There could be no better advertisement for Premiership rugby as we approached the New Year.

One issue that was raised by the press was the blood bin incident with Phil Vickery. Phil's clash of heads with Tom Smith resulted in a cut ear and a sore head. Dr Rob Mackay and Steve Lander agreed that the cut needed clearing up and Phil should attend the blood bin. During this time Rob assessed the damage and passed Phil fit to continue, any suggestion that we somehow broke the rules, or that Phil returned to play on his own accord is rubbish. We have a responsibility to look after the players, a responsibility we don't take lightly.

As a result of this injury Phil has been tested on our Cogsport system and passed fully fit to train and play. All our players are tested on Cogsport, a software package that gives post game assessment of head injuries, and since its installation at Kingsholm last summer it has proved to be a valuable asset.

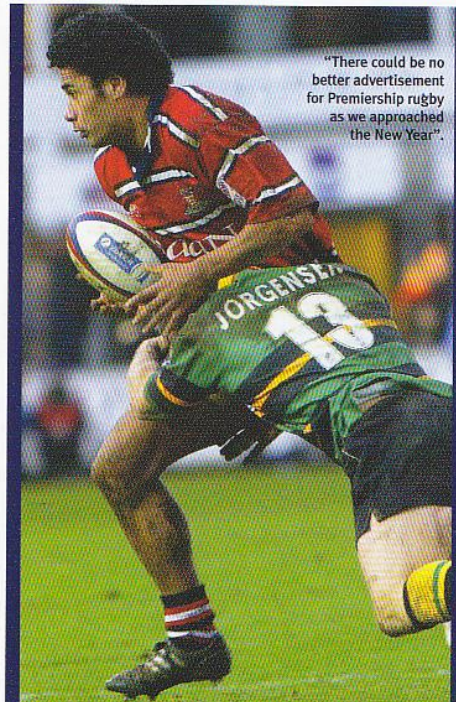
Today's game will be another physical encounter. The recent history of games between Gloucester and Wasps have been surrounded by controversy for all the wrong reasons. I hope both teams manage to keep their discipline this afternoon and that all 30 players remain on the field for the full 80 minutes.

This afternoon's teams are packed with quality international players, I have no doubt that this afternoon's contest will be of the highest standard.

On another positive note we have been able to welcome back various players from injury at training this week. James Simpson-Daniel, with a clear blood count, reported for training as usual this week. After his operation, Trevor Woodman is making steady progress and is now back on a weights and fitness training programme. Chris Fortey is working hard and is not far from fitness while Andy Hazel should be back within a week or so.

"I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE TRAVELLING SUPPORT HAS PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN OUR SUCCESS AWAY FROM KINGSHOLM THIS SEASON".

Finally, I would like to thank the Gloucester supporters who followed us to Northampton last week. I have no doubt that the travelling support has played a major part in our success away from Kingsholm this season. Ticket sales for trips away from home in the New Year (particularly Munster) suggest that our travelling support has grown significantly. Everyone in the Playing Department values your commitment to the team and would like to wish you a prosperous and peaceful New Year. ■



"There could be no better advertisement for Premiership rugby as we approached the New Year".



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Phil Vickery

Club Captain

First of all I would like to wish everyone in the ground a happy and prosperous New Year.

Gloucester Rugby Club has enjoyed a very positive twelve months. Since Nigel Melville joined the Club in March we have seen a lot of change and, of course, 2002 will be remembered as the year when the Cherry and Whites finally won a Twickenham final. The Zurich Championship was a wonderful occasion and a fantastic finale to the season.

On a personal note, leading my country to Argentina and winning against the Pumas was a massive honour and one I will never forget.

The Club has built on the successes of last season; we are on top of the Zurich Premiership and have played some good rugby. Although we have not always performed to our best, we are not at the top of the tree by accident; we have won the games and earned the points.

I said in my Perpignan programme notes that you can only play poorly and win for so long, but last weekend we showed that you can have the best line out, or the best back-row moves or backs moves, but without that grit and guts about you in your side, all those things are out to waste.

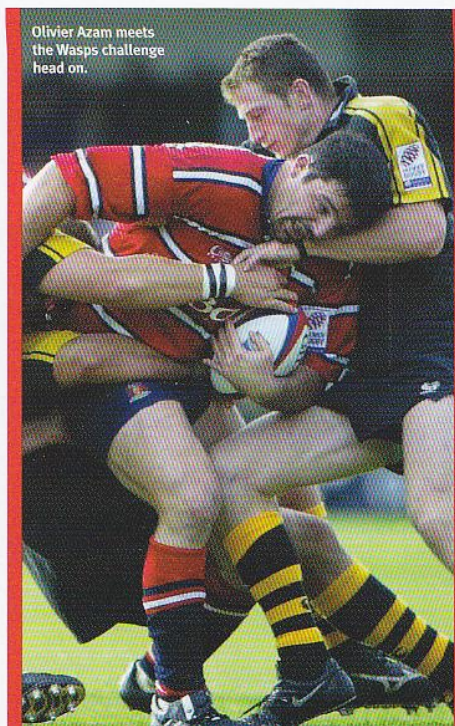
We knew last weekend that if we didn't give it everything we had, Northampton- as they showed against us last year- are more than capable of putting forty or fifty points on a team. I felt that we went out and showed a lot of character as a side and I was very proud of the effort the boys put in to that game.

Today, Wasps find themselves in a very similar position to us last weekend. They come here, as we went to Northampton, and Northampton went to Leicester, with nothing to lose. On each previous occasion the travelling team got the result. I hope we can change that this weekend.

Wasps are a very good side and have a good record at Kingsholm. We have never beaten them away and I have been in at least two losing sides here at Kingsholm. There are a lot of big game players in their squad and we are going to have to up the intensity of our game again. There will be more pressure on us today because we are at home but I am sure we can use that positively, I am sure the fans will turn out in their droves today to cheer us on.

We have a great opportunity to make a real statement today. The Premiership will not be won or lost today but there is chance for us to send out a real message. We have given ourselves a slight advantage and that needs to be rubber stamped this weekend. If it is not then last weekend was a waste of time.

We won't let that bog us down though, we know we have things to work on but the boys have all worked very hard this week with the help of Wayne Diesel, Rudi Meir and Ed Archer and all the back room staff. Hopefully we can put all this together and get the right result today. ■



Olivier Azam meets the Wasps challenge head on.

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND

This afternoon we would like to offer a special welcome to groups that have travelled along way to be here. Handsworth RFC mini section and Tor RFC are here to take part in pre match coaching and kicking.

If you haven't collected your child's t-shirt yet then please bring along a Junior Cherry and Whites Season Ticket Book to the Ticket Office. Please note that these t-shirts are part of the Junior Cherry and Whites package rather than for all Junior Members.

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Kevin Howie

COMMUNITY NEWS

Back to the Old School



In the week leading up to Christmas as schools were breaking up, Gloucester Rugby Club's Community Department took some 1st XV players back to their roots.

Former St Peter's junior school pupil Adam Eustace met with nine-year-old Ben Conway, who still attends the school. Ben interviewed Adam for a school project.

Interview questions for Adam Eustace for the School Magazine 2002

Adam Eustace gave this interview to Ben Conway aged 9 in the weights room of Gloucester Rugby Club on 12 December 2002. Adam and Ben both attended St Peter's Infant and Junior School in Gloucester.

Date of birth: 9\01\79
Position: 2nd Row/backrow
Shoe size: 12

Highest Level played:
ENGU23/ Gloucester
height: 6ft 4inch
Gloucester debut: 1999

• **What other clubs have you played for.**

Old Richians junior section and Widden Old Boys.

• **How long have you played for Gloucester.**

I've played here for about 7yrs and really enjoy it!

• **What memories do you have of your junior school.**

I went to St Peter's Junior School and have only good memories. Mr O'connor was the head and I remember Mrs Street taught me.

• **What are your hobbies outside of rugby.**

I play golf and snooker with other members of the rugby club. I also

WELCOME BACK.

WESTERN
Daily Press

WWW.GLOUCESTERRUGBYCLUB.COM

enjoy films and my favourite one is Ghosts.

• **What are your nick name and any of your teammates.**

The players call me "Ust" and "Sherman" after the big eater in The Nutty Professor film.

• **What advise would you give to a young enthusiastic rugby player.**

Try to get into the school team and as you get older in the County U15 U16.

• **What has been your most embarrassing moment while playing rugby.**

When my shorts were pulled up high when I was in a scrum and it was on video.

• **If you had not become a rugby player what other job would you have done.**

I was in Insurance before I joined Gloucester but I would say a police/fireman

• **What was the most important game you have played in.**

Llanelli away in the Heineken Cup as it was my first game European competition. We won at Stradey Park, which is not done very often.

• **What is your most prized possession.**

X box computer . I really enjoy playing it.

• **Any superstitions.**

I always wear two pairs of socks

• **Who would you most like to meet and why.**

Madonna because she is a real super star.

• **What do you expect Father Christmas to bring you.**

Some more X box games and CD 's.

• **What would you do if you won £5,000.**

Put towards a car.

• **If you had three wishes what would they be.**

1)win the lottery
2)live in a mansion
3)Gloucester to win Heineken Cup and Premiership League title

• **What is your motto in life.**

You only get out what you put in!!



Gloucester
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



ACADEMY HALF TERM REPORT

The Gloucester Rugby Academy is enjoying a well-earned Christmas break at the time of writing.

The U21s finished the first half of their season off in style with a 43-10 win over Northampton Saints and went into the festive break in a healthy second position in the U21 Zurich Premiership behind runaway leaders Leicester Tigers.

On and off the pitch the Academy has undergone radical change as we have developed from a part time to a full time training programme. This process has taken a lot of planning and structures will continue to be implemented throughout the second half of this season to support this development.

Of course all of the work done at Academy level must fit with the senior XV and form the bridge between junior and senior rugby. With this in mind, one of the biggest achievements in the first half of the season has been the ability to use the knowledge and expertise of the 1st XV coaches.

Provision of appropriate educational development is also a huge part of this Gloucester Academy process, particularly at undergraduate level. We try to ensure that the boys can continue their studies but also have sufficient time to concentrate on their rugby development.

One of our major aims at the Academy is to work towards a twenty hour training week on top of the players studies. This is the next stage of our development process, particularly with 16-18 year old players, as we strive to secure unaffected access to the players in the Academy.

The RFU believe that twenty hours a week is the optimum amount of time, over up to a ten-year period, required for a young player to reach their full potential. Therefore flexible educational provision is an essential part of the next stage in the development of this Academy.

Over the second half of the season we also want to further our work with local junior clubs and send out the message again that we want to work with them and clarify their understanding of how the elite player programme impacts on them. We need to work with them and we need their support in order to make the whole thing a success.

On the pitch, after a promising pre season programme, our U21 side are currently second in the league. Our focus will switch to the second part of the U21 Premiership season in the New Year and obviously we still have a lot of planning and preparation that needs to be done to improve our level of performance.

The ultimate goal is, of course, that individual players are effective enough to warrant a move up to the United and senior XVs. As ever the focus in the Academy is on our player development process, if we get the process right I believe that both the individuals and the team as a collective will meet with success.

I would once again like to thank Sean Holly, Andy Stanley, Paddy Anson, Mike Hall, Pete Kingston and Pat Kiely for all their efforts so far because none of this would be possible without their efforts.

All that is left for me to know is to wish you all a Happy New Year and hope that Gloucester Rugby Club can look forward to success at all playing levels.

SIMON AMOR

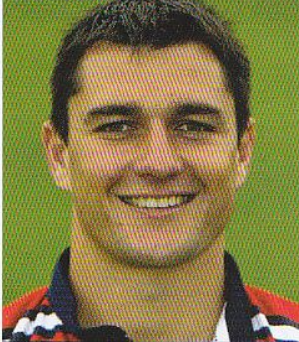


AN EVENING WITH THE NEW BOYS

On Thursday 19th December, the Gloucester Rugby Club Season Ticket Holders Association offered a belated 'Welcome to Gloucester' to the Cherry and Whites summer signings.

Simon Amor was asked to explain his role in the England Sevens squad. Amor who is captain of the squad felt that Sevens was being used by the RFU as a way of fast tracking promising young players into the full international squad.

THINUS DELPORT



In the most recent instalment of the Season Ticket Holders 'An Evening With...', Simon Amor, fresh from his recent trip to South Africa with the England Sevens squad, Thinus Delpport, Peter Buxton and Rodrigo Roncero, still licking their wounds after a defeat in Perpignan, all joined supporters for an evening of Question and Answers at Kingsholm.

Predictably all players were asked to comment on their decision to join Gloucester. All, again predictably, highlighted the role the famous support and the infamous 'Shed' played in their decision. All wanted to further their careers in England, and all felt that their decision to join Gloucester were swayed by the passionate support they would get from all the Kingsholm fans.

PETER BUXTON



Immediately the topic turned to the standard of Heineken Cup and Zurich Premiership Rugby in England compared to the Super 12 competition and the Welsh League.

Gloucester fans have a unique relationship with match officials and the latest Kingsholm recruits were asked to comment on the ability of referees in this country.

Thinus Delpport, as he did all night reacted first. He felt that the Zurich Premiership compared similarly to the Currie Cup, the domestic competition in South Africa. He felt though that the Super 12 competition, because of it's 12 week intensive focus was a different type of competition to the 10 month Zurich Premiership.

All agreed that it was a very hard job, as Roncero described it "It is one man against thirty", but all felt that improvements could be made. Southern Hemisphere referee's allow the games to flow commented Delpport and they play advantage more, in England it seems so stop start.

RODRIGO RONCERO



Peter Buxton, after spending two seasons in Wales with Newport, felt that the level of competition in England, and particularly the attitude in training was far more professional than it was with their Welsh counterparts.

Buxton added that there continued to be a disparity in the decisions Gloucester get at home compared to when they are away, using Welford Road as an example of when decisions all go to the home side.

Rodrigo Roncero, in broken English, explained that professional rugby wasn't an option in Argentina. Although the game still flourishes, players have to manage their time between their work or studies and training.

The questions continued to flow and once again, 'An Evening With...' proved to be very popular with the players and supporters. Nearly 200 people packed into the members bar for the event and more will follow in the New Year.

HEAD 2 HEAD

Adam Eustace

Strengths

Playing a lot of his early career in the back row has certain advantages for Adam Eustace in his new position of lock. As well as good athleticism in the line out and power in the set piece Eustace also has the dynamism to get around the paddock. This dynamism was evident when Eustace outstretched the London Irish cover to score at the Madejski Stadium and his all round ball skills add an extra dimension to his game.

"It certainly does help, I work on the scrum and the lineout but am also more versatile around the pitch. Aspects of handling and support play that you use in the back row also help as a second row".

Weaknesses

Because of Eustace's role as a jack-of-all-trades he has to focus on many aspects of the game. He is only in his fourth year as a professional so admits to still learning the nuances of both roles.

"I still have things to learn, when you look at players like Ian Jones he was so clever, he ran good lines and was always cunning in defence. Also I like to work on my speed off the ground and power at the scrum because the basics are still so important".

High and Low Points

Before a broken ankle robbed him of the second half of last season Eustace was in the form of his Gloucester career. Included by Philippe Saint Andre as standard in both second and back row positions. He lost six months of his fledgling career and with it the chance to play in Gloucester's biggest game in twenty years.

"It was a big low point getting injured last year, especially as I thought I was playing well and Philippe and Laurent were showing confidence in me. It was a low point not being included in the squad for the Championship final, and not being involved in such a

good win, but I still feel that I was able to contribute to the success of the team because of my form in the early part of the season"

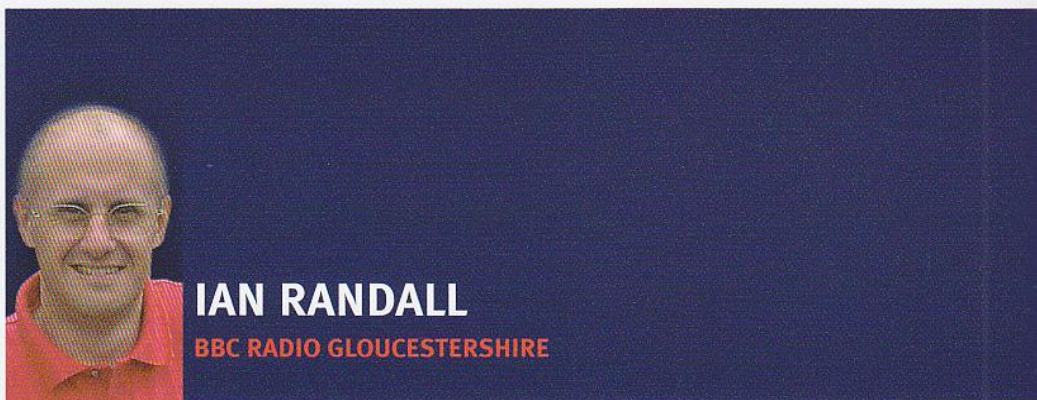
"I have come back from that, I missed six or seven months, but I feel that I am playing well again and it feels good to be taking part. What being out for so long does do is feed your hunger and desire to play again".

Eustace on Wasps

"Wasps will come into this game on the back of a win against the Tigers so will have an edge. When we played them at Adams Park with fourteen against fifteen we ran them very close and picked up the bonus point. Obviously if I am selected to play I will have a point to prove. I owe it, not just to myself, but to the team to make up for what happened there. If we can get a win it will leave us in a good position as the Heineken Cup returns next week".

Happy New Year. Hope you've enjoyed the festivities, and that you're ready for the roller-coaster in three competitions for the second half of the season. The Powergen Cup draw has been kind with a home game here against Saracens, but if the last four should contain Northampton,

Vickery's interview style is understated, a bit like his approach to his rugby. Some make up for their frame with an arrogant, bossy personality, but Phil is a gentle giant off the field, perhaps because he's someone who fully appreciates what he's achieved from his farming roots in Cornwall.



IAN RANDALL
BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Leicester and holders London Irish as well as Gloucester, then the green light will be well and truly on.

The keenly anticipated Munster trip is now just a fortnight away, and everyone will be keeping their fingers crossed that a quarter final in April will await Gloucester after the game in Limerick. The mood would certainly be more upbeat than on the return from Perpignan. When we landed at Birmingham, Phil Vickery was stood by the baggage carousel with a black right eye and stitches above his eyebrow. It just emphasised how physically demanding the art of propping is, an art explained by Vickery in a recent BBC interview - and there's more science to it than you might imagine.

"If your body position is not in the right place, it doesn't matter how much power you've got behind you that power cannot be transmitted through" he said. "If you've got a lot of power coming onto you from the other front row, if you're body position isn't right, it doesn't matter how strong you are, you can't stop it. I don't pretend to get it right all the time - in fact, my advice to any young players out there would be if possible choose another position, it's not easy work at all."

"7 or 8 years ago I was milking 70 or 80 cows twice a day, now I'm a professional rugby player who's represented his country. It's a fairytale but there's still a huge amount I haven't done. I haven't won the League or a domestic Cup with Gloucester, I haven't won a Grand Slam with England, and England haven't won the World Cup either. I'm tremendously proud to be involved with Gloucester. You look round the club house and you see names like Burton, Blakeway and others going back to the 1940's.

In Cornwall, Richard Keast, Graham Dawe and John May were icons for me. I met Keast when I was at Redruth and it was the biggest occasion of my life at the time."

Phil's very focussed when it comes to his rugby, but there IS a softer side to him. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy as the saying goes, and he would like to try and strike a balance in the years ahead.

"As a professional player, especially an international one, there are a lot of sacrifices to make and relationships are a difficult area. Ultimately I would like to have a family, but I'd want to be a proper Dad, to grow up with my

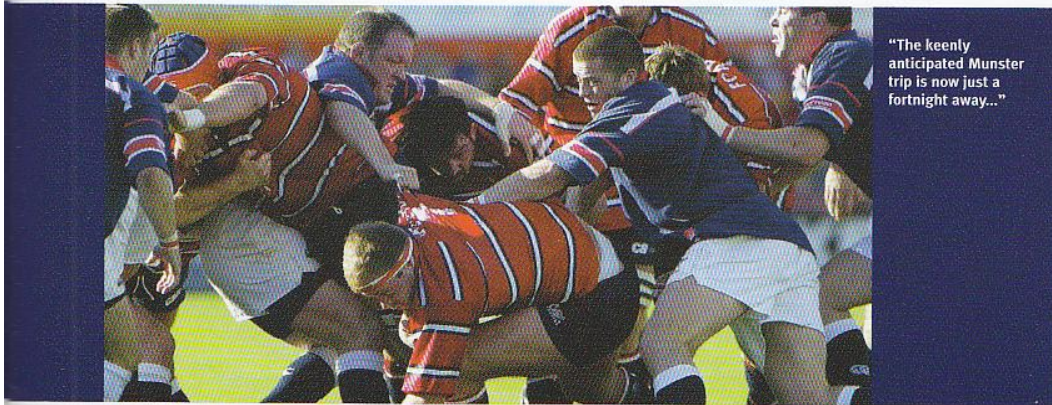
kids and be there for them." The tone suggests that is still some way off, but it's a clear goal for the Raging Bull.

Today's target, meanwhile, is to start the year by avenging the loss at Wasps where Adam Eustace

we qualify for the quarter finals of the Heineken Cup, and after Viadana and Munster we've got Sarries in the Powergen. January is a huge month for us."

Typical Phil, quietly authoritative and straight

B B C



"The keenly anticipated Munster trip is now just a fortnight away..."

was sent off. Vickery accepts the season is entering a high-octane phase. " There are 8 Premiership games left after today, and we want to be in a position where the rest of the teams are left to scrap it out amongst themselves. We've also got to make sure

to the point. As it was said to me - he's a man who you'd run through a brick wall for, only to find when you got there he'd beaten you to it.

C'mon Glaws !

RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

104.7 FM & 1413 AM

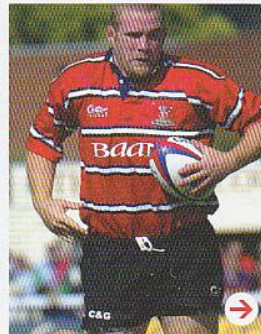
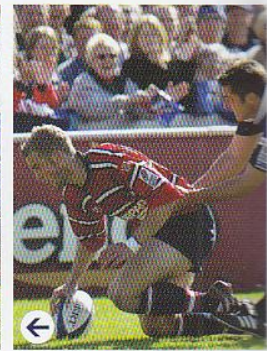
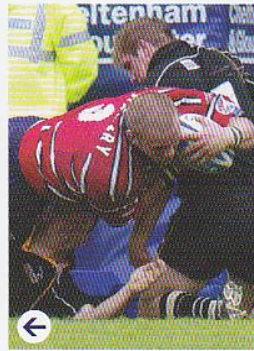
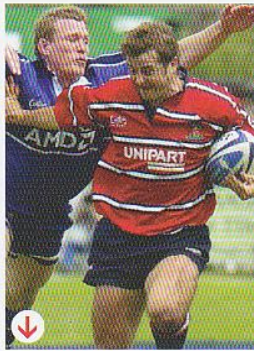
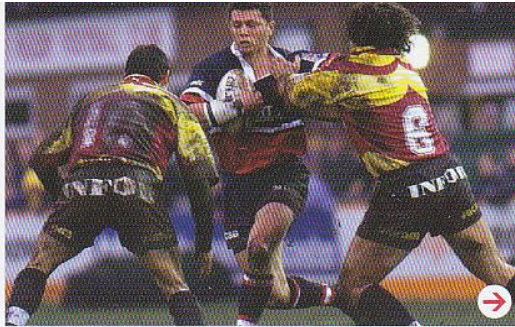
B B C

FIRST FOR COVERAGE OF THE CHERRY & WHITES

What a year!

We take a look back at 2002, a year of change for Gloucester Rugby Club, and one that is sure to be remembered by all Gloucester fans....





As the **New Year** began, Gloucester's Challenge for the Parker Pen Shield intensified with two wins in the Pool stages, one a record 99-0 score against Italian minnows GRAN Parma. The second a hard fought 34-12 victory in La Rochelle.

In the quarter finals, Welsh side Ebbw Vale were duly beaten 46-11, the downside to this victory though was the loss of both Adam Eustace (ankle) and Andy Hazel (knee), for the rest of the season.

Gloucester's involvement in last season's Powergen Cup was ended by a loss to London Irish at the Madejski Stadium.

In **February** Gloucester saw the end of an era. Philippe Saint Andre ended his involvement with the Club in tearful style at Harlequins.

Fittingly Gloucester won in fine style 29-22.

March saw the dawn of a new era. On Wednesday 6th, Nigel Melville was officially introduced as Gloucester's new Director of Rugby. Although a gentleman's agreement prevented Melville from taking full control of the side he saw the Cherry and Whites earn two creditable home victories, against Sale and Saracens but a visit to the Tiger's

den in Leicester brought a familiar story as Gloucester were beaten 27-10.

April was a rollercoaster month for Gloucester, two heavy losses in a week away to Melville's former Club Wasps and again at Franklins gardens were a harsh way to start Melville's reign but a win at the Memorial Ground in Bristol set the Cherry and Whites up nicely for a Parker Pen Semi Final against the Sale Sharks. A last minute Ludovic Mercier penalty miss however, prevented Gloucester from progressing.

In early **May**, the Cherry and Whites bounced back in style



with a record victory against arch West Country rivals Bath 68-12 at Kingsholm. A James Simpson-Daniel hat trick was just one of the highlights in a one sided contest. Victories away at Leeds in the final round of Zurich Premiership matches and home win against Newcastle in the Championship Quarter-Finals meant Gloucester were again to face Sale with the prospect of a Twickenham final at stake.

June was a great month for everything Cherry and White. A Victory at Heywood Road against Sale meant Gloucester travelled to Twickenham to play, and duly

beat, Bristol in the Zurich Championship final.

On the international front James Simpson-Daniel and James Forrester were in the head lines for their displays against the Barbarians and Phil Vickery Captained an inexperienced side to Argentina and beat the Pumas in Buenos Airies.

Andy Gomarsall rekindled his England ambitions and Trevor Woodman was also included on the trip.

Summer signings Peter Buxton, Thinus Delpont Simon Amor and Rodrigo Roncero joined the

playing squad, while Rudi Meir, Wayne Diesel and Bristol's Dean Ryan the management side.

Gloucester kicked the new season of in style in **August**. A Marcel Garvey try helped the Cherry and Whites beat Harlequins at the Stoop.

The winning habit continued in September as the Sharks and Shoguns, after a dazzling Marcel Garvey hat-trick, were beaten at Kingsholm, while a last minute Henry Paul penalty secured a crucial away win at Newcastle. Despite enjoying the majority of possession and territory however, the Rec hoodoo continued as Bath escaped with a draw.

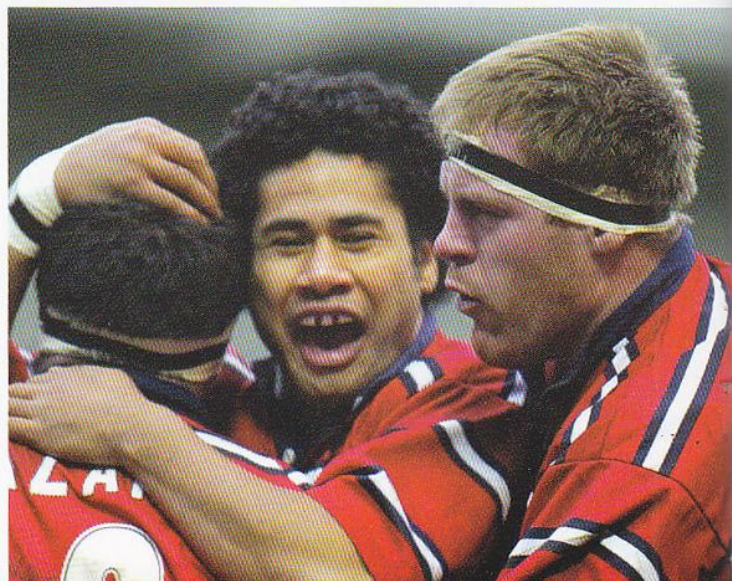
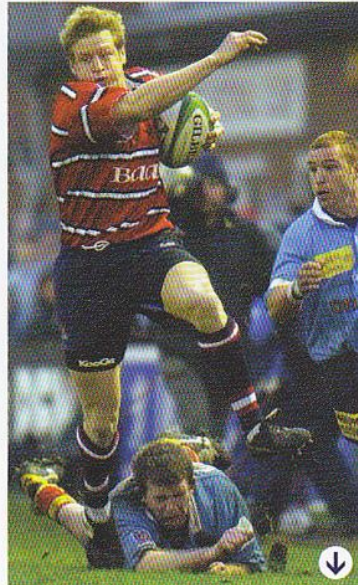
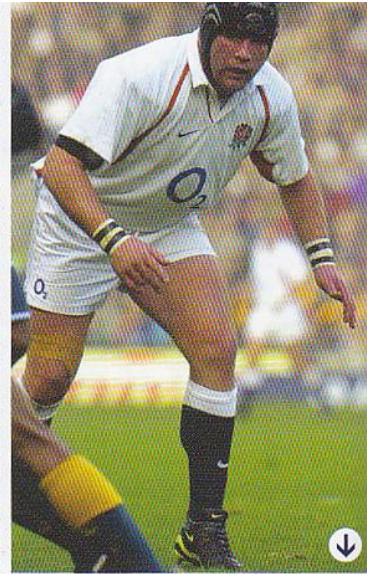
October brought Heineken Cup rugby back to Kingsholm and a mammoth performance, including another marvellous Marcel Garvey try, saw off Munster and a twelve try demolition of Viadana in Italy saw Gloucester off to the best possible start. October, and Wasps at Adams Park inflicted Gloucester's first defeat of the season.

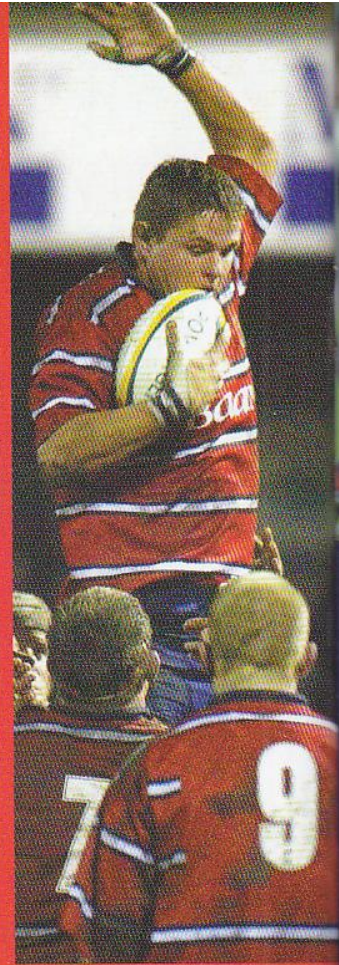
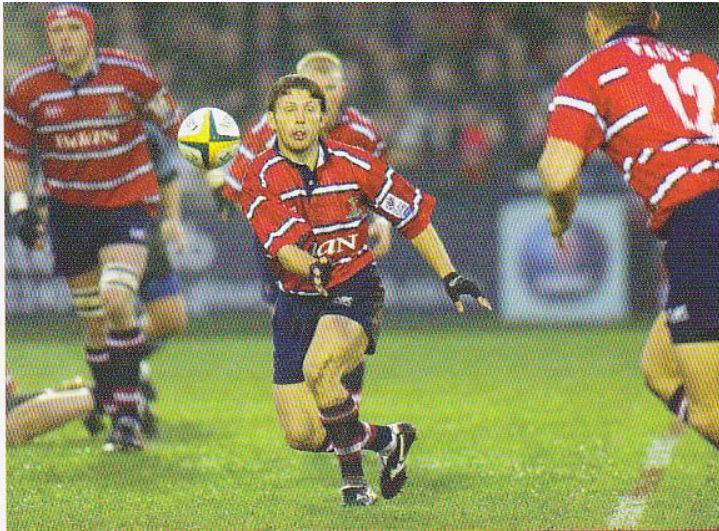
November was another massive month for Gloucester. Without their international stars, huge clashes against Northampton Saints, Leeds Tykes as well as a brace against London Irish all went Gloucester's way but the Welford Road challenge was a test too far and the Tigers came out on top.

Marcel Garvey, Andy Gomarsall, James Simpson-Daniel, Trevor Woodman, James Forrester and Phil Vickery were all included in the Investec Autumn international squad to play against the Southern Hemisphere super powers. Woodman and Simpson-Daniel both started a full international for the first time, while Phil Vickery and Andy Gomarsall asserted their international credentials.

December and as the year drew to a close Gloucester faced a daunting Heineken Cup double header against French side Perpignan. The Cherry and Whites enjoyed the spoils at Kingsholm but fell down badly in France a week later.

Gloucester's first Powergen Cup tie saw the Exeter Chiefs, Dave Sims, Ian Sanders et al, as the visitors to Kingsholm. The Cherry and Whites Premiership class making the difference in the end. The last fixture of the year was at Franklin's Gardens against the Northampton Saints. A Ludovic Mercier drop goal the difference as Gloucester won the spoils and finished the season nine points clear at the top of the Zurich Premiership table. ■





KINGSHOLM SATURDAY 21 DECEMBER 2002



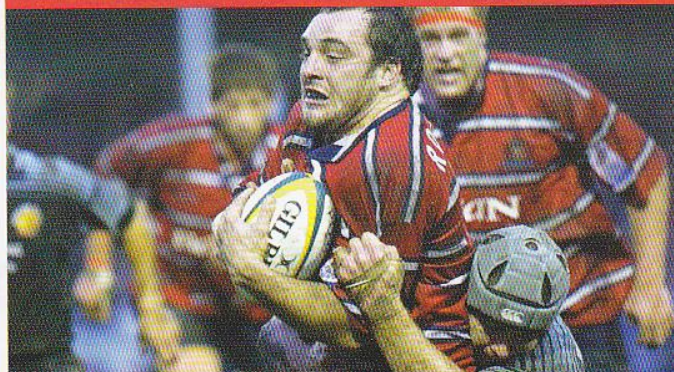
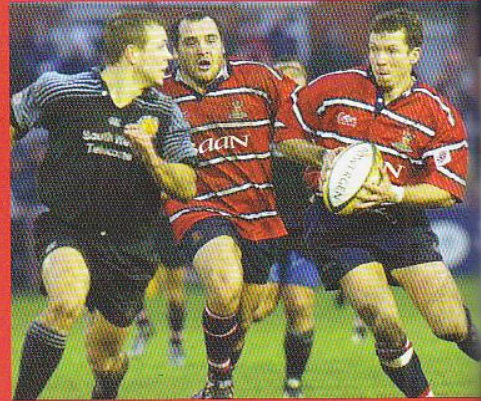
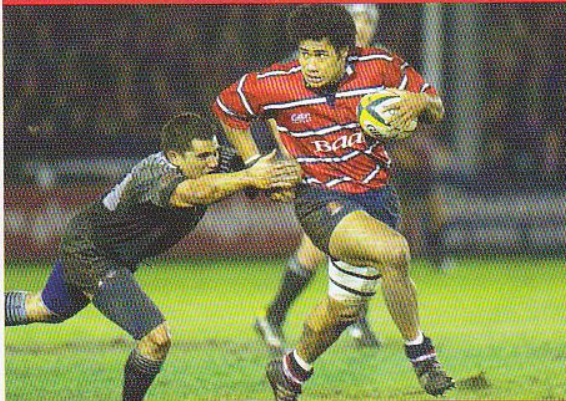
GLOUCESTER 35

TRIES: BOER, BUXTON, CATLING (2), O'LEARY
CONVERSIONS: PAUL (5)



EXETER CHIEFS 6

PENALTIES: YAPP (2)



(Top Left) Simon Amor passes to Henry Paul.

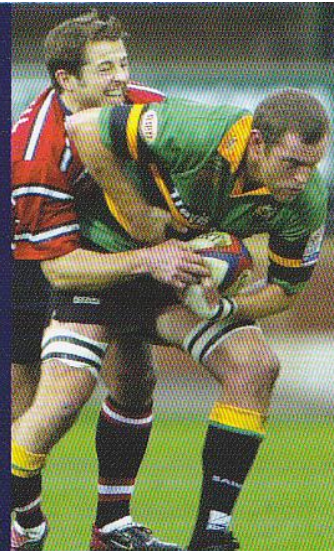
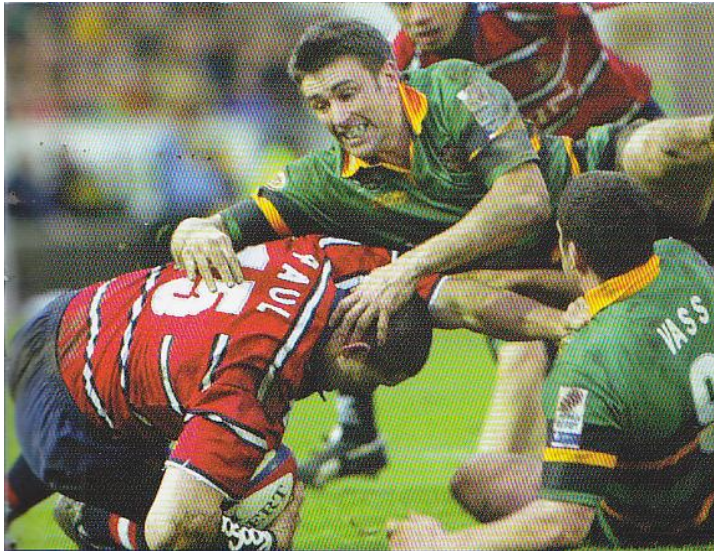
(Top Right) Ed Pearce wins a line out.

(Middle Left) Terry Fanolua escapes from Exeter's Piran Tretherway.

(Middle Right) Tom Belm.

(Bottom Left) Rodrigo Roncero is tackled from behind by Exeter's Richard Baxter.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA



FRANKLINS GARDEN SATURDAY 28 DECEMBER 2002



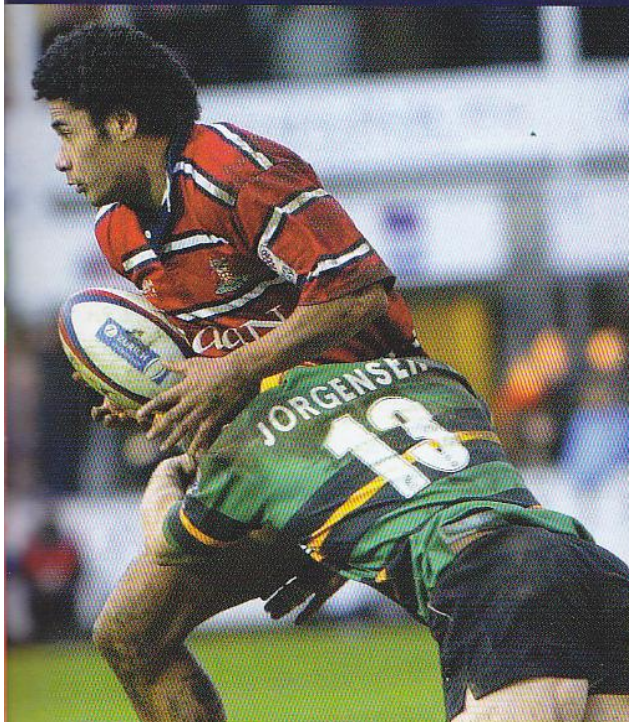
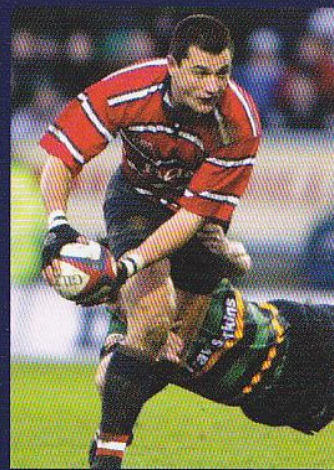
N'HAMPTON SAINTS 13

TRIES: JOHN LESLIE
 CONVERSIONS: P. GRAYSON PENALTIES: P. GRAYSON (2)



GLOUCESTER 16

TRIES: OLIVIER AZAM CONVERSIONS: MERCIER
 PENALTIES: MERCIER (2) DROP GOALS: MERCIER



(Top Left) Henry Paul is held by Saints John Leslie and Ian Vass.

(Top Right) Andy Gomarsall tackles Saints Rob Hunter.

(Middle Right) Thinus Delport.

(Bottom Left) Terry Fanolua.

(Bottom Right) Saints Steve Williams tackles Junior Paramore.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA

Fans Eye View

With Bob Fenton

Sometimes Gloucester RFC can really get you into trouble - even when it's not your fault. Just before Christmas, she who must be obeyed was planning a trip up to see her parents and had worked out that 21 December would be a good weekend to go.

When she suggested the date it wasn't me who objected. No it was left to nine-year-old Matthew (he of the high-pitched shouting on the halfway line) to pipe up and say, "Well I'm not going - we're home to Exeter in the cup!"

If that wasn't bad enough, he then compounded the crime on the day of the match when his Grandfather - who had just driven up from Brixham to see him - turned up roughly two hours before kick-off. "Hello Granddad, I'm just going to Kingsholm with my Dad," was the greeting, before he grabbed his coat and headed for the car. Queue frosty looks from his Mum. Still appeared to be my fault for some reason...

Anyway, as we head into the New Year, looking forward to all that it brings, it's probably as good a time as any to take stock of where we are now.

At the time of writing (ie before the Northampton game) we are sitting pretty at the top of the pile, five points clear of The Sharks - or the artists formerly known as Sale - with a points difference in our favour of some 150. We also sit top of the form in our particular pile of the Heineken Cup.

In 12 Premiership games we have failed to take the spoils in just three - two narrow defeats away at Wasps and Leicester, and a very disappointing draw down the road at the home of the unmentionables.

It seems that for the first time in living memory we have a settled squad of players, and a management team that all seem to be pulling in the same direction. Gone is the

factionalism and splits of previous years - the ship is steady and the course is set: great things loom on the horizon.

And just to add to our overall sense of well being, it's heart-warming to see Leicester having to dog it out with mere mortals for a change, with five defeats so far this season maybe the wheels are, at last, starting to come off their wagon. Adding a couple of particularly sweet dollops of icing on the cake, Bath continue to struggle and new Gloucester bet noire's Newcastle are currently propping up the table!

In the cold, dark, dampness of winter summer seems a long time back, but I suspect that had you offered a rosy picture - as outlined above - to the average Gloucester supporter as a vision of the future back then, he would have snapped your hand off for it. Well except for the draw down at Bath, of course.

Many commentators have talked up our prospects for this season, though at the start of term they were not so forthcoming about our prospects. For me, though, the best comment on the resurgence at Kingsholm comes not from one of the national hacks, not even from the Citizen's ever-erudite Mr Alastair 'adjective-overload' Downey.

No, the best comment for me came from a London Irish supporter on the eve of our visit to the Mad Jet Ski. In the pre-match piece he wrote: "I may not be a judge of fashion, and I may not know that this year brown is the new black. But I do know that this year's Leicester are wearing cherry and white!" Brilliant. Wish I had thought of that.

One thing that has been interesting this season is the endless conversation over what is the best formation we can send out as our first team. The versatility of players such as Henry Paul and James Simpson-Daniel make picking the dream team a nightmare. And while it provokes a lot of debate among supporters over a few



ZURICH

pints, you do start to feel a bit sorry for Nigel, Dean and co who have to make these decisions week in, week out.

While we can argue amongst ourselves over who should play where, the statistics for the season so far seem to indicate that they have a fairly good idea about what they are doing, so maybe we should just let them get on with it while we enjoy the ride.

It's great though, it's not that long ago that we looked enviously at the squads of other sides, now it's their turn to throw green-eyed glances in our direction. In fact things have changed so much that Fatty Barnes is saying nice things about us on Sky TV. Then again I suppose he has to as various internet voting scams have conspired to ensure that Gloucester boys have won just about every try of the month competition so far this season.

And if that weren't proof enough of the new-found fashionability of Gloucester, Clive Woodward has, at long last, discovered that there is a road that links London and Gloucester and has become almost a regular at Kingsholm. Maybe Charlie Little should try and flog him a season ticket...

With the PowerGen cup throwing up another home tie for us in the quarter-final stages, and our nearest rivals in the Premiership beating one and other on a regular basis, maybe it is time to start dreaming about a glorious end to the season...

There's a long way to go in the season yet (insert your own favourite 'marathon not a sprint-type' analogy here), and there will probably be another couple of reverses along the way, but you can't help feeling that things are going our way a bit. Time to start thinking of European / Premiership / PowerGen cup treble? No harm in dreaming is there...

But that's all a long way off. First of all we have a chance to avenge the defeat at Adams Park earlier this season. No doubt Nigel Melville will be looking for some revenge against his old side, and it promises to be a bit of an odd day for Darren Malloy as - selection allowing - he turns out against the side he played for man and boy. Five points today will be the perfect start to the New Year for every Gloucester supporter.

Finally, as this is the first programme of the New Year, I have tried hard to think of some acerbic and witty new year's resolutions but must admit to failing miserably. I also suspect that today I will also fail miserably on a personal resolution not to drink so much Irish lager that I burble incoherently for hours on end when I get home after a match and have to rely on Matthew to tell me what happened...

Whatever you have resolved to do, good luck with it - and good luck to all and sundry for 2003. Well that is with the exception of every other team we are going to play this year - you can be a bit too magnanimous with New Year good wishes at times, can't you?

Peter Arnold

BEST WISHES FROM THE SHERIFF

It's amazing what some Shedheads get up to in their spare time, by which I mean any time not spent watching, reading, talking or thinking about GRFC.

Take Paul James, for example. He is currently serving a term as Sheriff of Gloucester, which, done properly, is a pretty time-consuming job in its own right. Anyone who reads the local press will be aware that this year's Civic scene is exceptionally busy: indeed, with Pam Tracey, who lives just a Ludo drop-kick from the ground herself, in charge as Mayor of our fair City, it could hardly have been otherwise.

Paul James is certainly doing his fair share of the civic duties, and then some. Yet he doesn't miss many Kingsholm occasions, and nor does he intend to do so.

That being so, it was nice of Paul to spare some time to pen a New Year greeting for us all, which I am happy to reproduce.

"2002 was a great year for Gloucester Rugby Club. I had the pleasure of watching, in my official capacity, our Zurich Championship win over Bristol at Twickenham, and the victory over Munster at Kingsholm, confirming our place at the top table of European Rugby.

I've also enjoyed watching every other

game at Kingsholm, from my usual spot, including the occasion when I had to rush straight from presenting the traditional Lamprey Pie to the Lord Lieutenant (still wearing my big gold chain), to watch the end of the game against Sale.

2003 can be an even better year. We must not be complacent, or add to the burden of expectation which already lies on the shoulders of our squad. Under Phil Vickery's captaincy you can be sure that the lads will keep their feet on the ground and concentrate on the job in hand.

I wish all GRFC supporters, indeed, everyone at Kingsholm, a happy prosperous and winning year ahead."

Yours sincerely,

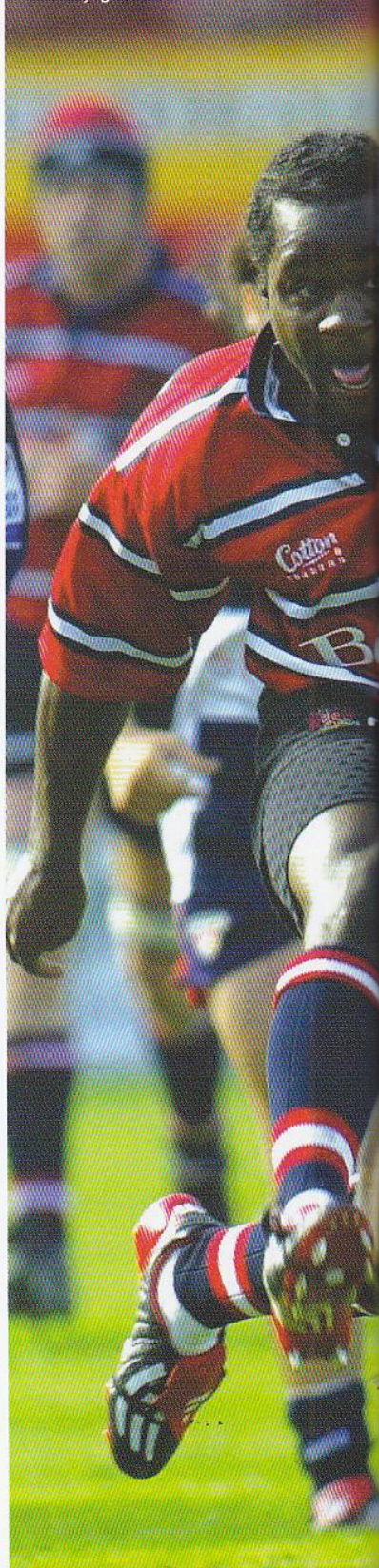
PAUL JAMES
Sheriff of Gloucester 2002/3

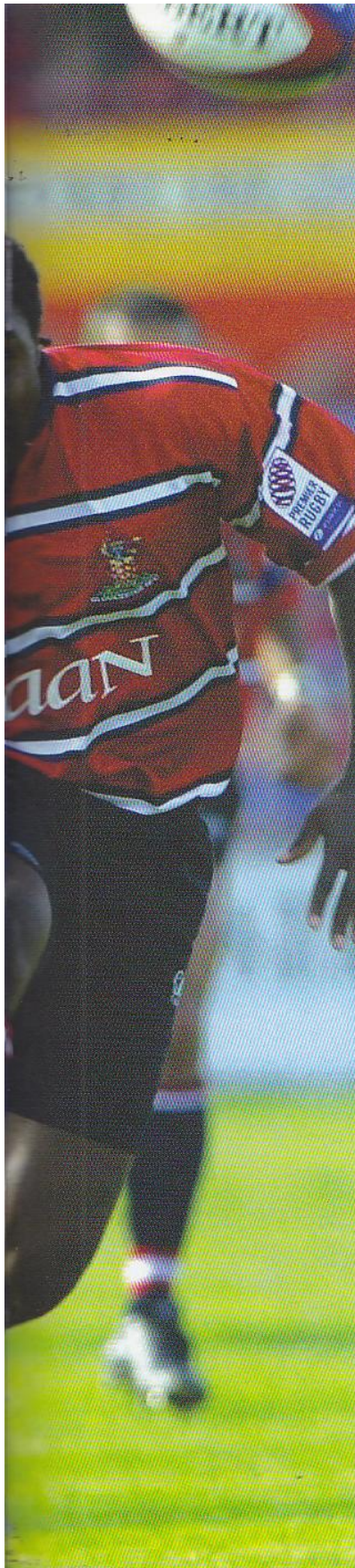
Thanks for that, Paul. We know you're a busy man, but also note that there are some consolations to the job. Like getting free tickets to Twickenham. All right for some.

NAKED ROGER

If you think Paul James has an odd way of spending his spare time, somebody really ought to tell you about Roger Payne, who has been a devout Shedhead for even longer than our distinguished City Sheriff.

Marcel Garvey bamboozling no fewer than ten defenders before getting away to score his first electric try against Bristol.





Roger really is something of a Renaissance Man. A rugby man to his back molars, a passion he has passed on to his children, he turned out for Gloucester Old Boys in his young days. Professionally, he has a high reputation as an imaginative architect. He is also very well known as a Justice of the Peace, particularly for his work on the Licencing Committee, which gives you a clue as to one of his other lifelong interests.

However, he is probably best known as a local thespian, and as Chief Ovaltiney of the New Olympus Theatre. As a lucrative and satisfying spin-off from these activities, he has been undertaking extra work for film and television companies for many years. You've almost certainly seen him on your screen at some time or other, as one of those noble souls who appear briefly, possibly speak a line or two, and disappear. Such appearances for Roger span Penelope Keith's 'To the Manor Born' and a fairly recent episode of 'Casualty', where he was slightly miffed to be cast as 'Old Man with Earache'.

Now, however, he seems to have made a breakthrough. He actually has a featured part in an ITV sitcom shooting at the moment. It is called 'Servants' and isn't, I gather, so much an 'Upstairs, Downstairs' as a 'Downstairs and Further Downstairs'. Roger Payne has apparently been cast as an ancient retainer, and is having a ball.

He does have one worry. Next month he has to shoot an episode requiring him to run naked across a lawn, and jump, naked, into a lake. In freezing cold February? It can get nippy in the Shed, but that is ridiculous.

One thought does occur. If any lady Shedhead has ever concealed a yen to see Roger Payne naked - now's your chance.

Well, there's no accounting for taste.

ANY MORE FOR ANY MORE ?

That's two examples of the eccentricities with which Shedheads fill in the empty hours between rugby matches. It would be nice to hear about anyone else's similar little foibles. Drop me a line at 74 Victoria Street, Gloucester GL1 4EW, or Email me at petearnold@aol.com.

MAGIC MOMENTS

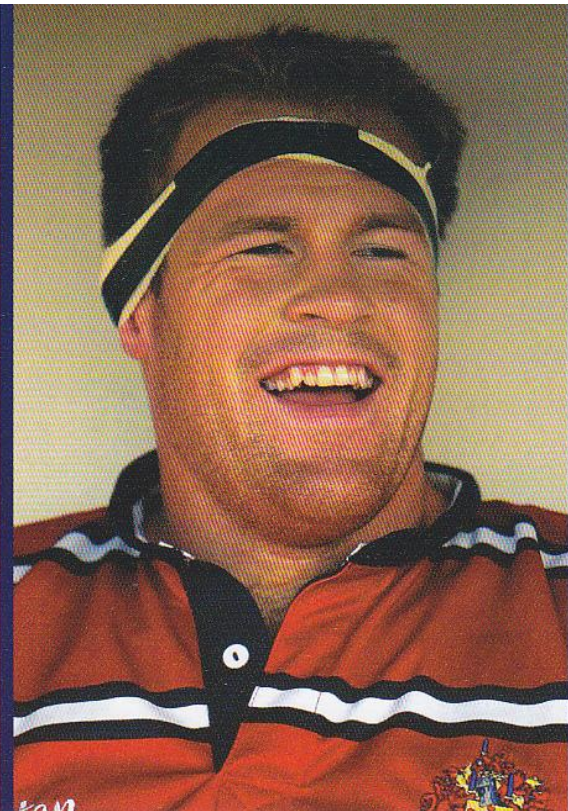
There were so many moments of sheer magic by Gloucester players during 2002, and we'll all have our favourites. Perhaps yours is the sight of Marcel Garvey bamboozling no fewer than ten defenders before getting away to score his first electric try against Bristol. Or you might prefer the same player's whip through half a gap to score against Perpignan at Kingsholm.

Then there were several examples of James Forrester appearing out of the blue to run vast distances and, as often as not, either score or create a try from nothing. One such effort against London Irish springs to mind.

But the one snapshot, which I can see in my mind's eye as I type, is the outrageous dummy, involving releasing the ball completely, which James Simpson Daniel produced for England against the Barbarians. He then set off on a try-scoring run which left Jonah Lomu gasping in his wake like a tired Shire horse. Absolute sorcery!

That incident resulted in, what must be, the quote of the year. Phil Vickery, when asked to comment, marvelled "Nothing Sinbad does surprises me !".

Here's looking forward to many more such moments in 2003. Have a great New Year, everyone. See you along the way.



Peter Buxton

"Really I just want to cement a place in the Gloucester twenty-two... I just want to push for regular selection".

It is fair to say that playing for Gloucester is a dream shared by many young boys standing in the Shed today.

While many of the Gloucester squad assembled on show here today have come from far and wide, Buxton has made the short journey from Cheltenham. Gloucester was always where he wanted to end up but he had to make a small diversion first North to Moseley and then West, down the M4 to Newport.

Buxton rose steadily through the ranks at the Cheltenham Club and was keen to make the short move in distance, but massive jump in intensity a few years back. At the time though the Club had just secured the services of two other young local back row players named Hazel and Eustace and so could not accommodate the hulking Buxton.

Undeterred, Buxton joined the Black and Ambers and plied his trade in the Welsh League. He was ever present in the Welsh side's Heineken Cup team and has steadily moved up the international pecking order with England A caps last season.

Buxton, who finally made the move he craved last summer to further his career, says he has no regrets about taking this rather diluted journey to Kingsholm

"I wanted to come to England to push my England claims. The offer from Gloucester was very tempting because it was a place I always wanted to come back to after my move to Wales".

"I tried to come here before and made my interest known but the Club had just signed Adam and Andy, who are both good players and they were happy with that".

It is a mute point whether or not this move worked out best for Buxton, his two years at Newport gave him essential first team experience, perhaps more that he would have got at Kingsholm with Jake Boer and Junior Paramore in such fine form and the Welsh Club's Heineken Cup adventure certainly broadened his rugby outlook.

"Obviously I was disappointed at the time but I had two great years at Newport and don't regret a thing. I got good experience and played in places that I wouldn't have had chance to".

The move to Kingsholm this summer though meant another step up the rugby ladder for Buxton. The Zurich Premiership is widely regarded as the top league in Britain and Buxton has had to adjust to what he describes as a more professional set up.

Has A Natural Spring In His Step

"It is a lot tougher. The games are a lot more competitive all season. In Wales you get five or six hard games but you always knew the games where you could rest players and perhaps not be on such good form".

"The defensive organisation and the attacking organisation of all the teams in England is better. Each team knows what they are doing and it is very hard to break teams down".

For the first time in his career Buxton is working with a number of coaches that work on every aspect of his game. Dave Ellis has improved Buxton's defence, Dean Ryan and Nigel Melville monitor his development and in Rudi Meir and Ed Archer he has coaches who develop his basic skills and conditioning.

In a relatively short space of time Buxton has recognised an improvement in his game.

"I think there was only one defensive coach in Wales that I know of working at Swansea, the set up here includes a defensive coach a forwards coach, a backs coach and two fitness coaches. That is pretty awesome, it is as close to an international set up as you can get. It is ideal if you want to improve your personal skills it is the sort of set up you need".

"Defensively I have improved a lot. I have managed to fit into this system, and it works well for me. I can get a lot more physical in the tackle as I know what people are going to do within the system when they come at us. Skills-wise I have worked very hard and with Rudi (Meir) and the drills we do, the environment is there to improve".

Buxton explains that ball handling was an area of his game that he wanted to improve; after working with these coaches for only six months, he feels that he is now able not only to burst through tackles with the ball under control, but also pick out when there is a two-on-one situation or even if a miss-pass is a more appropriate option.

He feels though that for a back row this is now part and parcel of the game and as it evolves players simply have to have a range of skills.

Another sign of progression for Buxton was competing in the Heineken Cup this season with a team that has real aspirations of winning the tournament. With no disrespect to his former Club Buxton was overjoyed to actually beat Munster this year after loosing to the men from Limerick three times in succession.

"We started well with three good wins and that was a new experience for me. The talk is that this squad has the depth to win this competition whilst at Newport we wanted to get to the quarter-finals and see what happened after that. It was good to be beat Munster, it was the first time I had beaten an Irish Province".

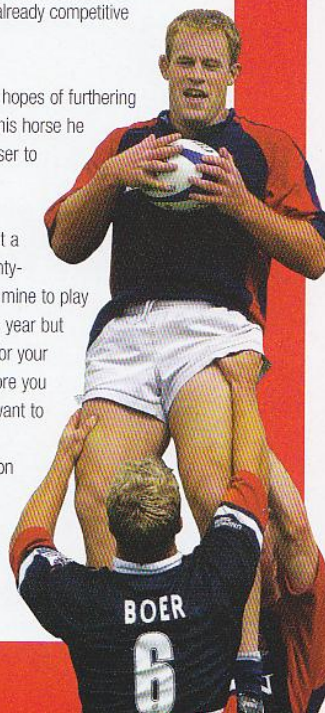
"These are new challenges that you face as a player and can only make you better if you can cope with them".

Despite his elevation into one of the top teams in Europe however, Buxton remains modest about his goals for this season. He realises that his personal qualities come to the fore in tight, forward-dominated situations. He is a giant figure in the back row, who really fills his jersey each time he puts it on.

Buxton though joined the Club under no illusions as to his place in the squad. His skills were added to the squad to bring depth to an already competitive back row.

Buxton joined the Club with hopes of furthering his England claims but for this horse he must attend to pastures closer to home first.

"Really I just want to cement a place in the Gloucester twenty-two. It is still an ambition of mine to play in the England A games this year but you have got to be playing for your Club week in, week out before you can think about that. I just want to push for regular selection. I already knew that competition was good here and I would either make it or I wouldn't. Really I want to prove myself here first". ■



Peter Buxton



Gloucester
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

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By Alastair Downey

Watershed result seen as turning point of Gloucester's season

If there are defining turning points in a season, then Gloucester crossed theirs at Franklin's Gardens last weekend.

On an afternoon that was riveting from beginning to end, Gloucester laid down a marker for the remaining Premiership run-in that may be decisive in their chase for the title.

There were more important factors to the triumph than merely three points. It proved, finally to the sceptics, Gloucester can, without question, win at the toughest venues in the country.

Northampton are undoubtedly a better all-round side than Perpignan so Gloucester should also gain confidence for their remaining European Cup adventure – wherever it may take them.

While there were mistakes on such a ferocious afternoon, the commitment, will to win and togetherness were simply outstanding and as a group of players, summed up their spirit and resolve to each other.

Gloucester have always been the team at the forefront of the season but they are now the team to beat as well – whether anyone will emerge to challenge them for first place is a serious uncertainty.

I am sure that in the minds of Nigel Melville and Dean Ryan and their entire squad, that if Gloucester finish top of the Premiership at the end of the domestic season, there will be no doubt who the real 'champions' will be – regardless of the outcome of the play-offs.

Melville described the victory over the Saints as 'hugely satisfying' and he was not wrong. To complete the job they will need to beat Wasps today to ensure all their good work is not wasted.



"Melville described the victory over the Saints as 'hugely satisfying' and he was not wrong".

If they can maintain their unbeaten Kingsholm record until the end of the season and pick up another couple of away victories, nobody will be able to catch them.

However, Wasps will represent a tough prospect today. In his column in the Citizen on Tuesday, Phil Vickery talked about an 'edge' at Northampton.

They will need to recreate that edge today to get the better of a side who worked Leicester to a standstill last Friday.

Wasps have a fairly good record at Kingsholm and under Melville won two league clashes at Castle Grim. But ever since the meeting at Adams Park earlier in the season Gloucester have relished this return game.

They felt a serious sense of injustice that afternoon and will be out for revenge today. This game is arguably more important than last weekend because if Gloucester lost, it would undo all their hard work.

Melville, Ryan, Vickery et al know there can be no let-up in the approach or determination at Kingsholm this afternoon.

It should be a cracking game between two very good sides. Sit back or stand up and enjoy the occasion.

On behalf of everyone at the Citizen, may I wish every Gloucester supporter, player and management a very Happy New Year – starting today.



24 **GLOUCESTER**

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Henry Paul | 15 |
| Marcel Garvey | 14 |
| Terry Fanolua | 13 |
| Robert Todd | 12 |
| Thinus Delpont | 11 |
| Ludovic Mercier | 10 |
| Andy Gomarsall | 09 |

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Rodrigo Roncero | 01 |
| Olivier Azam | 02 |
| Phil Vickery | 03 |
| Rob Fidler | 04 |
| Mark Cornwell | 05 |
| Jake Boer | 06 |
| Peter Buxton | 07 |
| Junior Paramore | 08 |

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Clive Stuart-Smith | 16 |
| Simon Amor | 17 |
| Tom Beim | 18 |
| Adam Caves | 19 |
| Darren Molloy | 20 |
| James Forrester | 21 |
| Adam Eustace | 22 |



LONDON WASPS 17

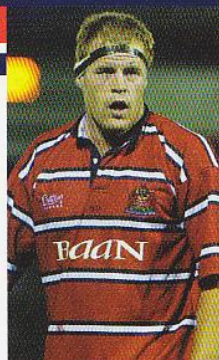
| |
|--------------------|
| Mark Van Gisbergen |
| John Rudd |
| Fraser Waters |
| Stuart Abbott |
| Josh Lewsey |
| Alex King |
| Rob Howley |

| |
|------------------------|
| Craig Dowd |
| Trevor Leota |
| Will Green |
| Simon Shaw |
| Richard Birkett |
| Joe Worsley |
| Paul Volley |
| Lawrence Dallaglio (c) |

| |
|-----------------|
| Martyn Wood |
| Kenny Logan |
| Mark Denney |
| Ben Gotting |
| Peter Scrivener |
| Andy Kershaw |
| Martin Purdy |

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2002/03

| TEAM | P | W | D | L | F | A | TB | LB | PTS |
|--------------------|----|----|---|----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|
| Gloucester | 13 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 359 | 213 | 4 | 2 | 48 |
| Sharks | 13 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 323 | 296 | 4 | 1 | 39 |
| Leeds Tykes | 13 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 307 | 262 | 0 | 3 | 35 |
| London Wasps | 13 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 323 | 303 | 3 | 3 | 34 |
| Northampton Saints | 13 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 283 | 226 | 2 | 3 | 33 |
| Leicester Tigers | 13 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 256 | 235 | 2 | 1 | 31 |
| Saracens | 13 | 6 | 0 | 7 | 309 | 354 | 3 | 1 | 28 |
| Bristol Shoguns | 12 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 301 | 316 | 2 | 1 | 25 |
| NEC Harlequins | 12 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 267 | 299 | 2 | 3 | 25 |
| London Irish | 13 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 278 | 305 | 1 | 3 | 22 |
| Bath Rugby | 13 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 235 | 297 | 0 | 2 | 22 |
| Newcastle Falcons | 13 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 217 | 352 | 1 | 3 | 16 |



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Gloucester
 HUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



GLOUCESTER'S NEXT THREE MATCHES



VIADANA

Heineken Cup
 Saturday 11th Jan 2003
 Kingsholm KO 3.00pm
 Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781



MUNSTER

Heineken Cup
 Saturday 18th Jan 2003
 Thomond Park KO 2.45pm
 Tickets Now Sold Out



SARACENS

Powergen Cup - Quarter Final
 Saturday 25th Jan 2003
 Kingsholm KO 3.00pm
 Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781



THIS WEEKEND'S FIXTURES

Friday 3 January 2003
 Leeds Tykes vs Bath Rugby
 Sharks vs Newcastle Falcons

Saturday 4 January 2003
 Gloucester vs London Wasps
 Leicester Tigers vs Saracens
 NEC Harlequins vs Bristol Shoguns
 Northampton Saints vs London Irish

Ref!Link

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Tony Spreadbury RFU
 1st TJ: Geraint Ashton Jones RFU
 2nd TJ: Hue Jones-Williams RFU