

Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



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**A 6 NATIONS
PREVIEW**

**CHRIS WHITE THE
MAN IN THE MIDDLE**

**ANDY HAZELL, BACK
IN A HAZE OF GLORY**

**LUCKY NUMBERS
WIN A SIGNED BALL**



vs Bath Rugby

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE

SATURDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2003

KICK-OFF 3.00PM

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WELCOME FROM...

Alastair Downey

Alastair Downey Remembers His First Time

My First Gloucester-Bath game was in 1986 at Kingsholm. If my memory serves me right, it was on a Tuesday night and Gloucester won 15-11.

I know it was close and I know it was dark. Apart from that, I can recall very little, except for the fact that my father held me up when the play smashed and clattered its way to our part of the ground so I could see - roughly near the 22-metre line towards the Tump end of the Shed.

What that shadowy evening did do though, was get me hooked on the game of rugby.

There was a special electric atmosphere that night that not only flooded the ground but also made it feel almost claustrophobic - Kingsholm was splitting at the seams with people. Those were the days when full meant full. We were drawn to the four huge pillars of light from miles away and at the end of the game, literally swept out of the ground on a human tidal wave of delight.

I remember the crowd being tremendously parochial but also side-splittingly good-natured. Looking over my shoulder and back into the bowels of the Shed, it seemed to be a dark mass of swaying bodies intrinsically linked to the team they supported. Not much has changed.

Since then, the two giants of the West Country have met every year and despite the occasional, gleeful afternoon for Gloucester, Bath have dominated this domestic dispute without care and

remorse for the heartbreak they have inflicted on the Cherry and Whites.

Today, Michael Foley will bring his side to Kingsholm in the unaccustomed position of second from bottom of the Premiership.

If that is enough to give every Gloucester supporter a warm glow before the start of this clash, they will not need reminding that the wounded blue, white and black hoops are the most dangerous opponents they could face today.

Nothing would delight Foley more than putting another one over their great rivals - particularly with them riding high eight points clear in the Premiership.

Last season in the corresponding fixture, Nigel Melville - new to the ropes at Kingsholm - saw his side run riot with a 68-12 victory. T-Shirts, mugs and videos were made in celebration.

His side will be in no mood to let that slip today. From the days when the Barnes, Hills, Guscotts, Halls and Dawes caused mayhem, Gloucester are developing their own vintage. Simpson-Daniel, Boer, Vickery, Eustace, Hazell, Forrester and Gomarsall are the names to pen the next chapter in this enthralling history. ■

“GLOUCESTER WILL NOT NEED REMINDING THAT THE BLUE, WHITE AND BLACK HOOPS ARE THE MOST DANGEROUS OPPONENTS THEY COULD FACE TODAY”.



MARTIN ROBERTS TACKLES
PHIL DE GLANVILLE OF BATH



NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

I would like to welcome the players, coaches and supporters of Bath Rugby Club to Kingsholm today, for what promises to be a thrilling West Country Derby.

As far as supporter's of the two Clubs are concerned, it doesn't get any better than this. Forget league positions, these games are local derbies; they carry the weight of history and tradition and are big occasions for everyone involved. As we know this game sold out a week early, I'm sure the atmosphere inside Kingsholm will be magnificent this afternoon, making it a pretty special day for us. It is always a big game so we are looking forward to it.

The last time these sides met, at the Rec in September, we felt that we should have won that game. Unfortunately, we didn't play well enough on the day, and I thought that Bath were very good. It was probably their best game at that point of the season.

Of course as everyone will remember, the last time we met Bath at Kingsholm, we beat them by a record sixty-points. But we will not try to relate that game to this one, every game is different, and today will be different from the games that have gone before for a number of reasons.

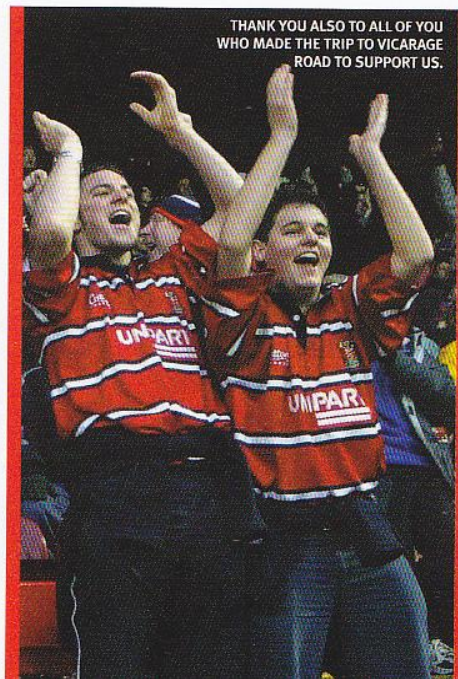
Last weekend we earned a massive victory at Saracens. It was nice to wake up on Monday morning without the 'We Have Never Won At Saracens' thing hanging over us. Playing away is always difficult, but I was very impressed with the way we stuck to our guns, a lesser team would have folded-especially going behind. But we fought back

and it turned into a good game. It was also the game in which Ludovic Mercier passes 500 Zurich Premiership points. We have not had to rely on his boot so much this season, but last weekend he showed once again how important he is to this squad. Thank you also to all of you who made the trip to Vicarage Road to support us.

Next weekend the Six Nations gets underway and I would like to wish all the Gloucester players, and coaches, who are involved with England and France the best of luck. Gloucester have a good representation in the international sides this year, we all know what they are capable of and given the chance against good opposition, I am confident they will all show their true potential.

Finally, it will not have gone unnoticed that today's referee is none other than Tony Spreadbury. Spredders as we all know is a self confessed Bath supporter but I would like to welcome him for today's game and add that I am looking forward to him refereeing. I think it is right that we have access to all the professional referees, and in the same way I would like to see Chris White refereeing us in the future, because I think that is a step forward for refereeing. I think Chris White, along with Tony Spreadbury are the best referees in the country, and we should have full use of them.

I have enough respect for Mr Speadbury to know that he will do a professional job this afternoon and that the fans will enjoy having him here. ■





CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Jake Boer
Match Captain

Sport is all about achieving things that you have never done; it was great to win at Saracens last weekend and break one of the Club's less impressive away records. We have broken some long-standing records this season and hopefully we can break some more before the end of the season, but there is still a long way to go.

We were all well aware, at the beginning of last week that the game at Vicarage Road would be totally different to the one here. Certainly Saracens were disappointed with the way things went for them up here, and of course we all knew that we had never beaten them down there. They are fighting for their Premiership lives, and we knew that we had to work very hard to maintain our place at the top of the Premiership, so both teams had something to play for. It was a huge game. As a squad we are all pleased with the way we responded to that early blow, even until the final whistle the game could have been a draw, so we were happy with the spirit and the way we fought on.

They started very well, and to be honest, they shocked us a little bit with the start they made. Simbad made a great early break, but unfortunately they turned the ball over and with the team spread across the field it is hard to defend. Before we knew it we were seven-nil down.

We had said before the game though that we wanted to be positive in everything we did. It can be difficult to re-motivate yourself but we knew what was at stake last weekend, with the teams behind us all pushing hard, we knew we had to win at Saracens. With Leicester, Leeds and Sale all

winning as well it has made our win at Vicarage Road even more important.

This weekend we are at home and we have another important record to preserve. We expect today's visitors Bath to play like a team fighting for survival; they won't come here and lie down. We know they are just one place above the drop zone so every Premiership point will be important to them and we know they will want to take points off us at Kingsholm today. They have got a good pack, they operate very well in the lineout, and once again we will have to be at our best to get a result here today.

When we went to the Rec earlier this season, we made it very tough for ourselves. We let Bath back into the game and at the end it was more of a dogfight than a game - we were hanging on for dear life. We came away with a draw, which was disappointing. But it could have been worse.

West Country derbies are very important to the supporters and players of this Club. At the back of all our minds still remains the loss against Munster. We were all disappointed after that game and we still have things to put right. Those sorts of thoughts get you up for games like this. We have to be careful though, although we may go into the game as favourites with bookies, rugby is a funny game and if you take your foot off the pedal for one minute, you can find yourself ten to fifteen points behind. We will be motivated for this challenge.

As a player you look forward to days like this. A sold out Kingsholm, full of passionate fans is one of the best experiences a player can get. The atmosphere lifts players and makes them want to play to their potential. As a side, we enjoy wonderful support, both home and away, and I am sure today will be a great occasion for rugby in Gloucester. ■



BY CHRIS HEWETT
OF THE INDEPENDENT

GLOUCESTER END BATH SUPREMACY

Those Bathonians who remember the golden age of Guscott and de Glanville, Hill and Barnes, Chilcott and Dawe, Hall and Robinson - people who really understood the psychological make-up of those peculiar folk known as the Shedheads and made it their business to annoy the hell out of them whenever they set foot on God's little Kingsholm acre - also remember another thing: the virtual inability of Gloucester to score more than a very occasional try on derby day. Bath used to score them by the cartload, of course, not least in the 1990 cup final. But Gloucester? They couldn't cross the whitewash in a month of Sundays.

And then last May happened. The score in the penultimate Premiership fixture of the season was 68-12 to Gloucester - yes, honestly - and the boys in Cherry and White ran in nine tries, the same number they had managed against the Somerset snobs in the period stretching from 1996 back to the dawning of Thatcherism. (An exaggeration, but only just). This was not the only remarkable aspect of the occasion. Three of the tries were credited to a certain James Simpson-Daniel, who, according to the Bath cognoscenti, had the distinction of being the first Gloucester three-quarter since the Battle of Hastings to be any good.

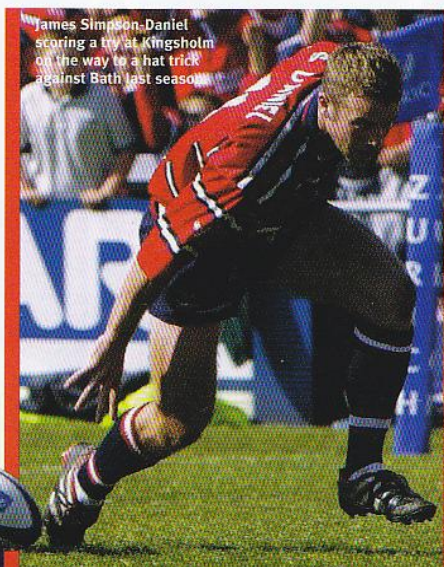
No one who witnessed the events on that spring afternoon at Kingsholm could have left the ground in any doubt that the West Country worm had finally turned. Gloucester had not ended a league campaign ahead of their neighbours for more than a decade - since finishing runners-up to Wasps in 1989-90, the closest they had got to Bath was in the 1999-00 season, when they were one place adrift in third. Suddenly, Nigel Melville and company were looking forward to reacquainting themselves with the Heineken Cup high life while Bath, 11th out of 12, were scratching around for salvation.

Someone suggested the Samaritans, but when the

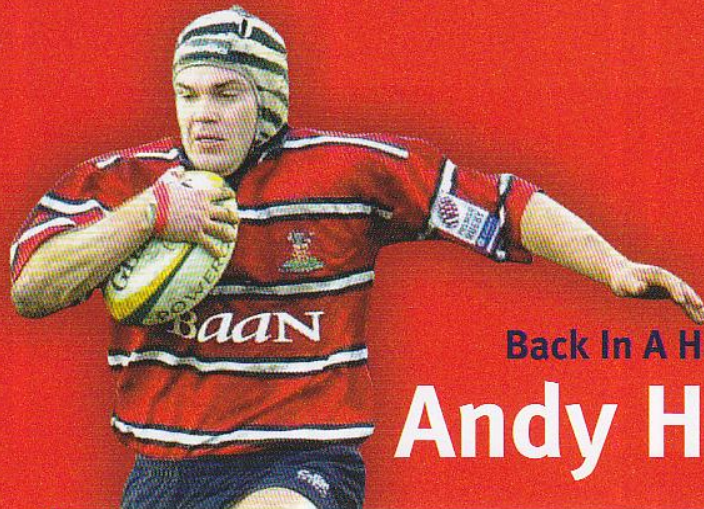
visitors phoned, they were told: "What do you take us for? Miracle workers?"

It is fair to suggest that without the aid of a miracle, Bath will finish second again this afternoon - not by 60-odd points perhaps, but second all the same. They turned in their best performance of the season against Northampton in last weekend's Powergen Cup quarter-final and still lost - and that was at "Fortress" Rec, where virtually everyone except Gloucester and Harlequins have now worked out ways of winning. By contrast, the locals put 50 on Saracens, (why doesn't Wayne Shelford ever pick his best team?) a mere week after enduring the Munster 'Mare at Thomond Park. It indicated a certain depth of character, that result. Bath are worried.

There again, it is no bad thing that long periods of ascendancy should eventually come to an end. Gloucester's Premiership form has been among the chief glories of the season - even the Bath lot acknowledge that much - and they should be hot for some years to come. As for Bath...well, they'll be back one day, if not today. As long as at least part of the West Country stays strong, all will be right with the world.



James Simpson-Daniel scoring a try at Kingsholm on the way to a hat trick against Bath last season



Back In A Haze Of Glory Andy Hazell

Or at least that is what everyone, not least Andy Hazell hopes.

You see, when writing any feature on Gloucester open-side Andy Hazell, one does so with crossed fingers. This is in no way to aid typing but rather an act performed to try and avoid inflicting Hazell with the dreaded commentator's curse.

It is the curse inflicted by any sports pundit the moment he or she highlights the excellent talent of a sportsman or woman that invariably leaves them with egg on their face after said sports person fails miserably moments later.

There have been many false starts to Andy Hazell's Gloucester career as arguably one of the most naturally gifted players Gloucester have produced in years has faced ruin on a number of occasions by a succession of injuries that are nothing short of staggering.

Despite what is described as 'fierce' competition in the back row, Hazell is worth his place in most people's first choice line ups because of the role he performs as the club's specialist number seven

"We know that we have had a quality player on the sidelines for a long time, so it was no surprise what Haze is capable of doing. He started the season as first choice and it has been very disappointing for him", said Dean Ryan after Hazell's man of the match performance in the Powersgen Cup against Saracens.

In effect, the Cherry and Whites have played the entire season without a true open-side and despite the

workaholic attitude of Jake Boer and some lively contributions from James Forrester, Hazell's absence has been hugely significant.

"There is no doubt I have some catching up to do," said Hazell.

"I have missed virtually a whole season now from last year and this one and it has always been at key times that I have been injured".

A serious knee injury in January started Hazell's recent run of pain. His rehabilitation to full health over the summer was followed by a freak toe injury in September whilst running out on to the pitch to play against the Sharks. (Sale)

He was not seen again until the Heineken Cup Pool 2 tie against Perpignan, when he made another cameo appearance. Unfortunately this was a false dawn for the young flanker as he suffered an Achilles injury where stress had formed in the tendon whilst it had been compensating for his toe for so long. Hazell did not feature again until the New Year against Viadana, a year after the original injury.

"I had to be patient and bide my time but the squad is so good and the coaching set-up is excellent. There are no weaknesses and that can make it more difficult".

If patience was a virtue then Hazell should be a saint. The only black mark against him though will be his devilish attitude in defence, as he combines lightning

pace with a savage attitude on the deck, where he wages a one man war to produce a host of turnovers.

Hazell is Gloucester's day light robber. He is able to (legally) steal the ball right from under the noses of opponents. Having such a talent in the squad is a rare commodity and Nigel Melville rates his terrier like assassin alongside Budge Poutney of Northampton and Leicester Tigers' pair of Neil Back and Josh Kronfeld.

"He will get better with regular games as he gets his confidence and rhythm back. He adds balance in the back row. He is a genuine seven and very few teams have one of those", explains Melville.

The key for Hazell now is to stay fit. For any professional sportsman this can be a tough ask but for someone with Hazell's fearless approach, the Gloucester medical staff will always have their work cut out.

"It seems it has gone 'bang' - I am always injured at crucial times but I think everybody gets injured and hopefully that is my time out of the way.

"I still have to get my match fitness and my lines of running are coming back but Wayne [Diesel] and Rudi [Meir] have kept an eye on me," he added.

Although considered small for his position, (though Ian Smith and Kingsley Jones were no giants) there are no half measures with Hazell.

He needs to play the game with almost reckless abandon and this attitude meant the medical staff were concerned about letting him back too soon. Once given the green light though, Gloucester's hot rod on the open side was tearing around the paddock with fearless abandon like he had never been away.

Hazell was Gloucester's best player in his comeback game against Saracens in the Powergen Cup and his worth at international level was recognized as he was called up for the first England A squad.

It completed a staggering comeback by the 24-year-old, who was joined in the squad by fellow Kingsholm team-mates Marcel Garvey and James Forrester, made even more impressive because of his lack of rugby.

"I was surprised by the news - but it is brilliant for me," he said. "It is very hard to say anything because it is such a shock. Some people said I had a chance of getting in the squad, but there were a lot of back rows playing well around the country all season, so this is brilliant.

"I have only ever started a couple of games and I cannot wait."

Ironically, it was in Hazell's last A team appearance against Scotland that he suffered the chronic knee injury last season, and he will be up against Forrester, Sale's Alex Sanderson and Leicester's Martin Corry for a place in the team.

Hazell, twenty-five in March, has been on a contract with Gloucester since the age of eighteen. He has trodden the path to 1st team rugby now run by Simpson-Daniel and Forrester, but without the comfort of an Academy system. He learned his trade at the school of hard knocks and already his body reveals the scars of seven years of top-flight rugby.

Hazell's injuries though have starved him and increased his craving for rugby and now he is ready to earn his bread once again.

"You have to just get your head round being professional and do whatever you have to do," he said.

"At the moment I would play at The Lannet (Tredworth's ground) on Monday, Tuesday, whatever, just to play for Gloucester.

"I have been on contract since I was 18 and now I just hope I have had my injuries but it has been very, very frustrating.

"I have learned to appreciate it more because I have been out for so long. Starting the game on Saturday was so special and I will savour every game.

"It is terrible being injured but it does make you appreciate what you have got."

It will not just be the Gloucester Medical team that has to watch out for Hazell for the rest of this season, opposition fly-halves and indeed anyone wearing an opposition shirt better have eyes in the back of their heads too! ■

An eventful passage of time between two away games, or as the words of the song almost say, 'What a difference two weeks make, 336 little hours...'

A public flogging in the media; a return of the fire and brimstone for a cup crushing of Saracens at Kingsholm; financial revelations flagged up and then back to league business with a first victory at Vicarage Road that must surely go some way towards eclipsing "the lapse in Limerick".

rebuild their reputation through the quality of their performances on match days. In Watford they certainly got their result and it seemed obvious that some mid term revision work had been done. The start of the season saw an expansion of "The Gloucester Way" with some inventive and skilful threequarter play adding to the forward power and defensive organisation. Even the impressive victory at Northampton could only claim to have used two of these aspects and recent events prove that you have to have more variety in your arsenal to



BY ANDY WYMAN

BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

In fairness the press did warn of the possibility of someone copping the backlash of the European debacle, but was it really fair that Saracens should have a double dose?

After Sunday's game the press room greeted Nigel Melville with the obvious enquiries and they earned the now familiar response, 'Yes, apparently that's another thing we haven't done before!' His body language carried the message that his work can't change the history of the club, only current performances. From a fans point of view let's hope those performances keep breaking new ground so that Nigel can get still more mileage from this seasons catchy, quick response. In truth that's what's needed if Gloucester are to end up with possession of the silverware rather than merely a successful season score card.

The press pack wouldn't let a good story fall into a complete slumber. Melville and Ryan once again explained that "the boys" are obviously still disappointed by the Munster result, but can only now look forward and express their desire to

change your game plan effectively. By the end of last week's encounter "the boys" had found the balance of power up front and appropriate width on the game. The closing stages were testament to a professional approach. This time the awarding of a penalty led to a full and meaningful discussion between decision makers on the field and the pitch-side management. Saracens were completely shut out. Even their legendary All Black leader was impressed with the Gloucester finale.

It's a funny thing sport, but after the airing of the financial bombshell in the build up to the game, can we safely come to the conclusion that pride in the shirt is a more powerful motivator than monetary reward? – OK, so it's not that simple, but I'm sure the topic has been passed back and forth over top of a few pints this week.

Ludovic Mercier certainly felt a lifting of the mood at this travelling fixture. The management expressed the opinion that Gloucester haven't had to rely solely on him for recent success, but Ludo reminded them of his value with a 24 point haul on his way to passing the 500 Premiership

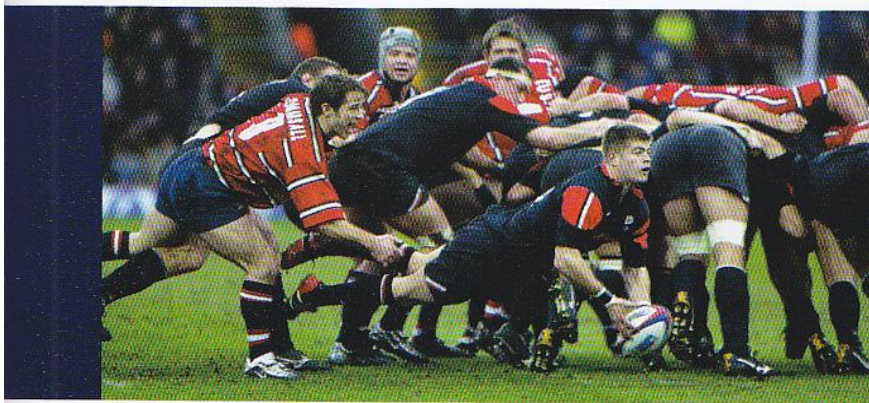
points' máfk. Even better than that, when he showed his hand he had a full house. For those who have gained enjoyment from playing the game of rugby, can you begin to imagine how good it must feel to walk off at the end of such a match in a stadium like that having scored a try, dropped a goal and kicked a collection of conversions and penalties. He looked almost as pleased with a job well done as did Andy Deacon.

So here we are relishing a visit from the old

It's probably too strong to say that in these special matches all form goes out of the window, but some cool heads can certainly feel the heat. Let's hope they only lean out for a breath of fresh air rather than fall out of the building altogether.

Another funny thing about sport. How can a collection of players from around the globe get caught up in the passion of a game played between two neighbouring clubs? Again no

B B C



Saracens copped a double dose of our European debacle backlash.

enemy Bath. Still a few scores to settle from the days when they were in their pomp. Considering recent form, surely the result is a foregone conclusion. Well obviously not, this is a West Country derby.

simple answer here, but the fans are obviously anticipating that sort of fervour – the game was a sell-out by Monday.

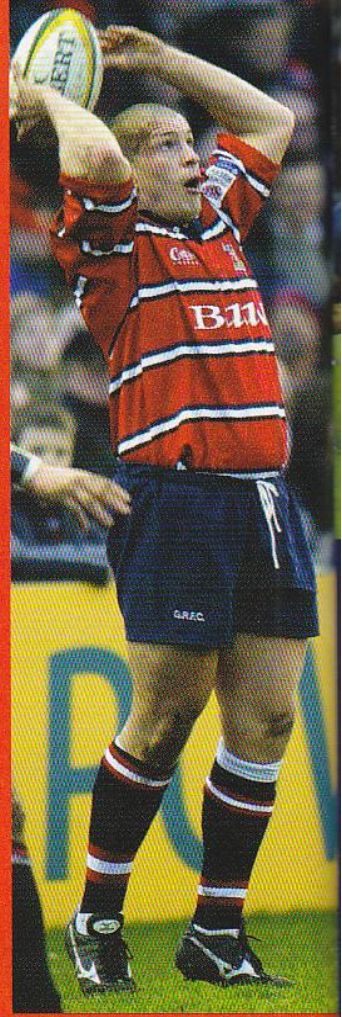
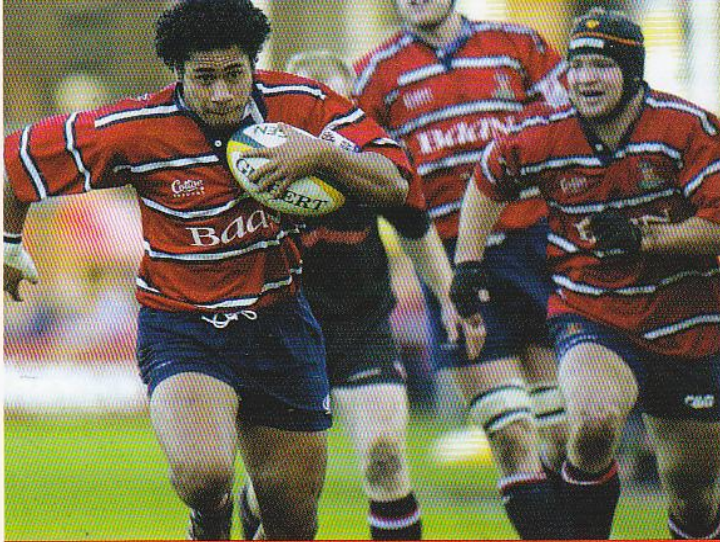
C'mon Glaws!

RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

104.7 FM & 1413 AM

B B C

EXCLUSIVE LIVE COMMENTARY BOTH HOME AND AWAY



KINGSHOLM SATURDAY 25 JANUARY 2003



GLOUCESTER 51

TRIES: EUSTACE, DELPORT (2), FANOLUA, RONCERO, FORRESTER (2), GOMARSALL

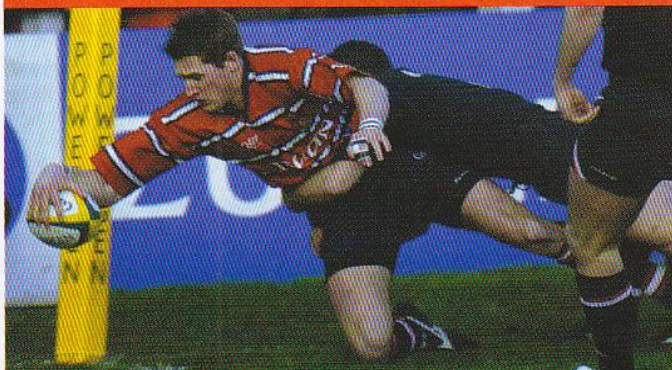
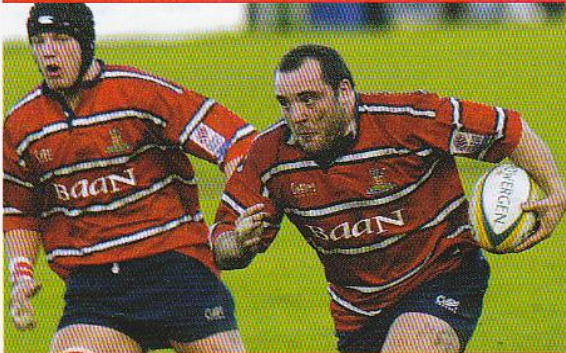
CONVERSIONS: PAUL, MERCIER (3) PENALTIES: MERCIER



SARACENS 20

TRIES: SHANKLIN, HAUGHTON, WINNAN

CONVERSIONS: LITTLE PENALTIES: LITTLE



(Top Left) Terry Fanolua on his way to his first half try.

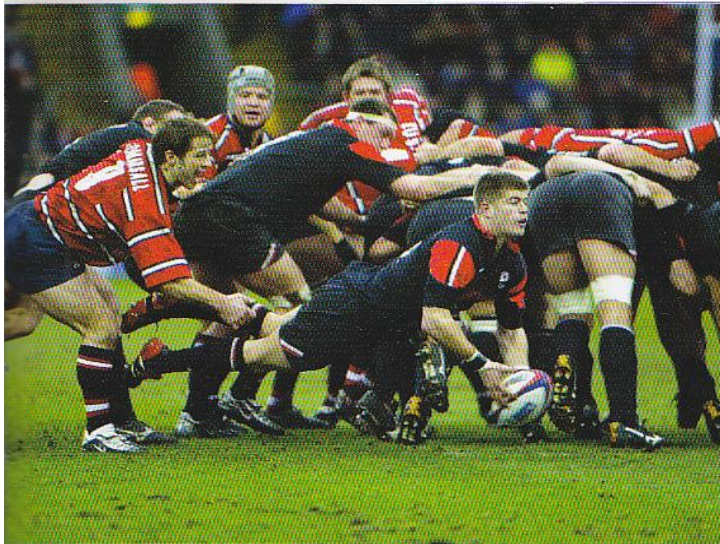
(Top Right) Chris Fortey back from injury plays his first match since October 2002.

(Middle Left) Rodrigo Roncero makes a break down the wing.

(Middle Right) Robbie Russel tackles Gloucester's Thinus Delport.

(Bottom Left) Saracens Kyran Bracken is unable to hold Gloucester's James Forrester as he goes over for the opening try.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA



VICARAGE ROAD SUNDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2003

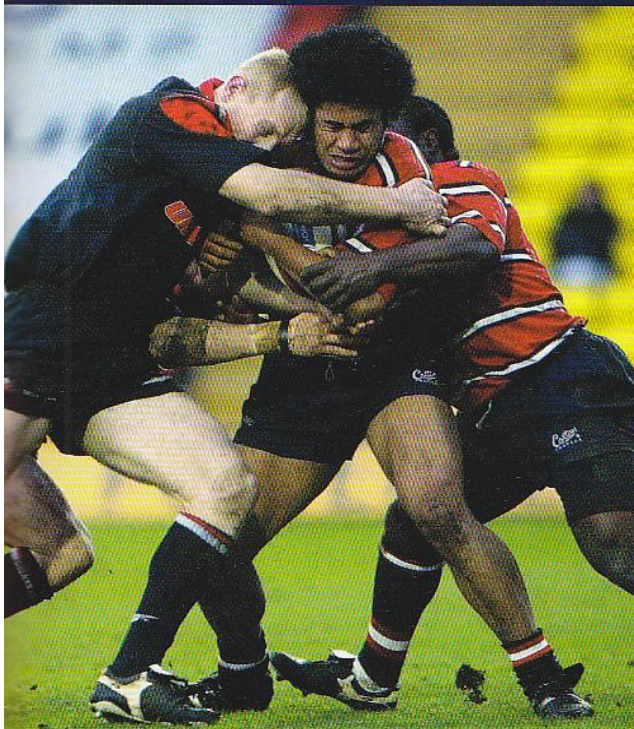
SARACENS 22

TRIES: HILL
 CONVERSIONS: LITTLE PENALTIES: LITTLE (5)



GLOUCESTER 29

TRIES: MERCIER, FANOLUA CONVERSIONS: MERCIER (2)
 PENALTIES: MERCIER (4) DROP GOALS: MERCIER



(Top Left) Andy Gomarsall moves in on Saracens Dan Kirton.
 (Top Right) James Forrester wins a lineout
 (Bottom Left) Terry Fanolua breaks through the Saracens defence.
 (Bottom Right) Ludovic Mercier scores his first half try.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA

Fans Eye View

With Bob Fenton

At the time of writing (Monday) this week's crisis that will threaten the future of Gloucester RFC / today's result has yet to break. Over the past two weeks we've wondered whether the Munster debacle would carry over into our next performance, and fretted as to whether - to misquote Mark Twain - reports of our impending financial demise had been exaggerated.

But as things stand at the moment, and the absence of black clouds looming over the horizon, we can sit back and bask in the reflected glory of back-to-back wins over Saracens. The trip to Vicarage Road was, as ever, an eventful one - and one that should make us forever grateful that we have not adopted some of the more modern practices of daft music and an even dafter PA operator. OK Graham may run him close from time to time, but even he hasn't resorted to the... Five minutes to go and Sarries are losing so try to whip us some crowd support nonsense - surely they shouldn't need prompting to get behind their side in those circumstances.

While Saracens do have a good number of supporters who understand the game, they have more than their fair share of Johnny-come-lately numbskulls, who seem to think that inappropriate music (the 'Rocky Theme' when a fight breaks out is just puerile) and pointless announcements during the game (about reductions on pizza prices!) is the norm. As someone commented on one of the many website forums afterwards '...I thought that the rugby was supposed to be the entertainment...' quite.

And next time anyone wearing a fez complains about the clang of a pin dropping when a kicker is taking a shot at goal remind me to laugh loudly. Ludo got the full treatment of blasting airhorns, banging seats and jeering. Didn't put him off though and we can all congratulate him on a 24-point haul last weekend, and over 500 points in a Gloucester jersey in just 36 games. An outstanding record of around 18 points every time he runs on the pitch.

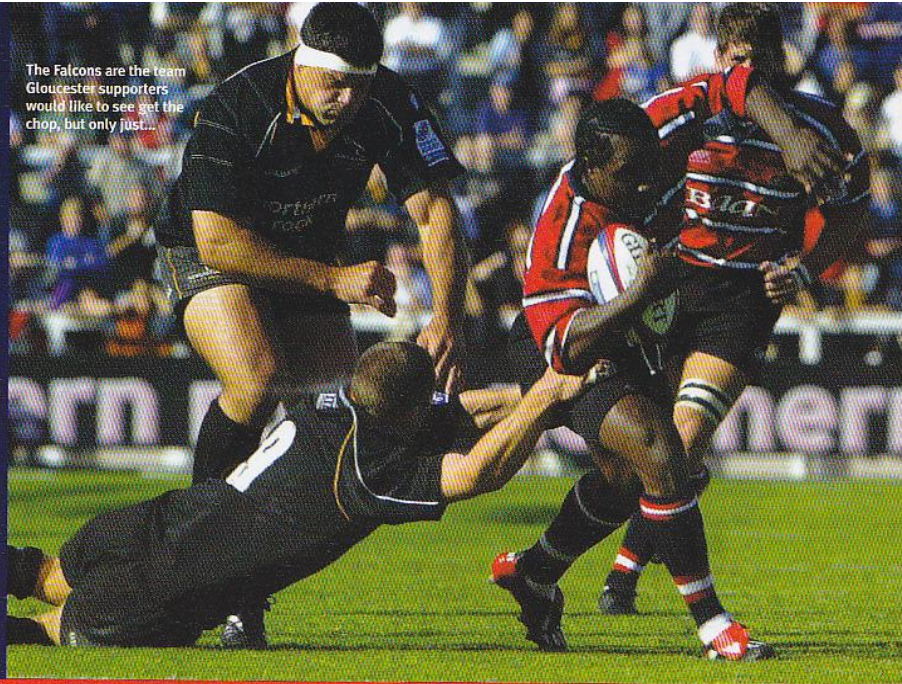
The last two weeks have provided us with the odd talking point though, not least the decision to hold the Powergen Cup semi final at Frankenstein's Gardens. With a capacity of around 12,000 you have to wonder whether there will be enough room in the place for the two clubs with the biggest supporter base in English rugby.

Leicester claim to have over 10,000 season ticket holders and Gloucester around 5,000 - the phrase 'getting a quart into a pint pot' would seem to be particularly appropriate here. There are bigger stadiums around - the Mad Jet Ski holds 22,000 - but it's off to Northampton we go. Let's hope that this time everyone who wants a ticket gets a ticket, and we are not left with the same situation as we had with the Munster game when hundreds of people were left disappointed because of the ticket allocation.

Still, Northampton is a neutral venue and one that is conveniently in the middle for both clubs, being 35 miles from Leicester and err... around 80 from Gloucester, so that's fair...

I was prompted to think of today's game a few days ago when I was clearing away some old junk and I rediscovered a box of albums - remember them, the things we used to listen to in the days before CDs - so decided to have a rummage through them.

One in particular caught my eye - remember a band called 'The Alarm' fronted by a guy called Mike Peters. No not the same one who toiled up and down the wing in a cherry and white shirt some years ago and once famously declared "I love the shed", this one was a little Welsh guy with wild overly-gelled hair. That wasn't the reason I noticed that record in the dusty pile, more it reminded me of one of their hits - '68 Guns' it was called! I can't think why that number should have meant anything to me or why I should have thought of that in the run up to this game.



The Falcons are the team Gloucester supporters would like to see get the chop, but only just...

Can you imagine what it's like to be a Bath supporter coming here today, not only will they be fearing a trouncing on the park they will probably expect a bit - just a bit, mind - of micky taking over a certain score line last season. And let's face it, it would be wrong of us to gloat wouldn't it, so when sitting down to write this column, did I think '...shall I???' and decide '...no, rise above it and don't be predictable...' or...

Which reminds me, what do these guys and these numbers have in common: James Simpson-Daniel (15), Junior Paramore (5), Robert Todd (5), Patrice Collazo (5), Terry Fanolua (10) Henry Paul (5) and Ludovic Mercier (23)? Worked it out yet? Well add up all those numbers and it's the answer is 68 and they were the guys who did the damage last time out.

But that was then and this is now, and a lot of water has swept under the bridge in the 42 weeks that separate that game back in May and today. For a start, unlike last year we are up the top of the table and Bath are scrabbling around at the bottom. Hang on, though, that's pretty much the same as last year isn't it.

After Newcastle's win over Harlequins the gap between the bottom clubs is down to just two points, so Bath will be scrapping for their lives today, so much as I would like to see another 68-point trouncing, I'm not going to hold my breath. I'll be happy with any sort of a win and the four points for that go with it.

Unless there is going to be a late, late fudge in the

promotion and relegation issue it looks likely that supporters of one of these two clubs will be checking their road maps for the best ways of getting to Exeter, Rugby and the like. Unless, of course, Malcolm Pearce's decision to step away from Bristol causes their financial demise and provides a very sad lifeline for the bottom club.

One thing has changed though, and that is the fact that Gloucester supporters are now evenly split over the issue of which team they would like to see slip out of the Premiership. Had you put that question to the Shed two years ago, the answer would have been a unanimous thumbs down for the pretenders from The Wreck, however off-field events last season have conspired to put another team into the least wanted on voyage spot. Step forward Squeaky Andrew's faltering Falcons.

In fact a poll recently run on Chubby's web site has posed the very question on which team Gloucester supporters would like to see get the chop. It was painfully close but the Falcons just edged it by 52 per cent to Bath's 48.

See we love you really Bath fans - just so long as we get the chance to humiliate you at Kingsholm each year. And we get the chance to end our seemingly thousand-year-old non-winning streak at your place.

Once we've achieved that (next season pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!) you can be relegated - okay?

Peter Arnold

“ROSES ARE RED, VIOLETS ARE BLUE, GARVEY & HAZELL, FORESTER TOO”

Sorry about that. Best I could do off the top of my head. Anyway, I imagine Marcel Garvey, Andy Hazell and Jango Forester will have better things to think about than hearts and flowers on St. Valentine's Day this year. The chance to try conclusions with a bunch of hyped-up Frenchmen in this season's 'A' International will, no doubt, be occupying their attention to the exclusion of everything else.

It's quite an achievement for three such young players to make the squad at such an early stage in their development, and it's all the more noteworthy because none of the three of them has, for one reason or another, played an inordinate amount of top-class rugby over the past few weeks.

I suppose the other good news about that fixture, as far as we are concerned, is the appointment of Kyran Bracken as Captain for the night. That, one would assume, effectively rules him out of contention for the full England side for the French match, which removes some competition for Andy Gomersall at scrum half. Of course, it remains to be seen how much actual rugby any of them will play when the matches roll around, but whatever transpires, we wish them all the very best of luck in their various endeavours. They all certainly deserve it.

HORACE EDWARDS

Generations of Old Cryptians will have been saddened by the news of the passing of Horace Edwards. If the name isn't familiar to you, the death notice in the Citizen says it all: 'HORACE EDWARDS - WELSHMAN, RUGBY PLAYER, TEACHER AT THE CRYPT SCHOOL'. That's about like saying that Jonny Wilkinson is a bit of a half-back, but its very brevity and accuracy would have earned the firm approval of its subject.

Horace never actually coached me, because he was just joining the school as I left it. 31 years later, as a School Governor, I was present at a small ceremony to mark his retirement. That was the moment when I realised that I was a whole teaching generation from being a schoolboy, a thought which made me feel extremely old.

One of the things we did on that afternoon was present Horace with an Old Cryptians tie. About six weeks later, I came across Horace strolling through King's Square, enjoying the sunshine. He was wearing the tie.

"Come on, Horace," I said. "You don't have to wear the tie all the time you know!" "It's all right for you." He replied. "You were entitled to wear this tie after about six years. I had to wait thirty before I could!"

Horace, of course, produced some very fine rugby players during his decades at



Simon Amor - "superb captain".

Podsmead Road. Just off the top of my head, Peter Butler, Charlie Hannaford, Dick Smith and Eric Stephens spring to mind, but many people here today will be able to catalogue a lot more. Not that you had to be a star to receive the full attention of Mr. Edwards. What he did ask was effort. It didn't matter how good you were, as long as you were doing the best you could, that was enough for him.

I could go on for several pages about Horace Edwards: about how agonisingly close he came to a couple of Welsh Caps himself, about the time he did play for Wales, in a Wartime International, right here at Kingsholm, about the whole host of excellent local cricketers he produced, but it has all been covered in articles in the local press. Anyway, a lengthy eulogy would only embarrass Horace.

It is worth remarking, however, that he had been retired for around twelve



years when he died, and the fact that he was so highly regarded and fondly remembered after all that time says a lot about the man.

We send our sincere condolences to his family. We are all proud to have known Horace Edwards.

Magnificent Sevens

You see, it is possible to win something in Australia, as the England Sevens squad proved in Brisbane last weekend. Congratulations are due to everyone concerned.

Did you notice, however, that the two vital tries in the Final against the tournament favourites, Fiji, were scored by Unya and Gollings, but made by Henry Paul and Simon Amor? Good for them.

I was also pleased to read that the

Manager, Joe Lydon, singled out Simon Amor for special praise, calling him a 'superb captain'.

Not bad for a little fellow.

WE WON IN MUNSTER

It was very gratifying to read a letter in the Citizen from no less a personage than the Mayor of Limerick. In it, he congratulated the massed ranks of Gloucester supporters who made the trip for their general behaviour, cheerfulness and sportsmanship. He also expressed the hope that there would be many more occasions when the two sets of fans could enjoy each other's company again.

Very pleasing indeed. Anyone who has been through the Chain Gang themselves can tell you how unusual it

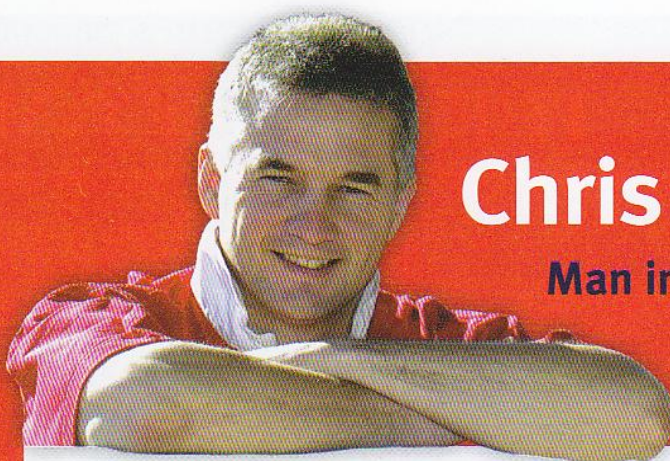
is for a reigning Mayor to write such a letter. Everyone who made the journey can, therefore, feel proud of themselves.

No matter how passionate we feel about our rugby, we do have to remember that it is just a sport, and each individual match just a game, after all. There may just be more important things in life.

Sounds like blasphemy, I know, but, in the larger scheme of things, such a letter, and the behaviour which prompted it, is more significant than the scoreline in the match, however disappointing.

It also occurs to me that these things cut both ways. We thoroughly enjoyed the company of the Munster supporters when they came here to watch their side lose back in October. They, also, were friendly and cheerful, and more than willing to boost the profitability of the various licenced premises around town.

What goes around, comes around.



Chris White

Man in The Middle

In response to a programme feedback e-mail submitted through the official web site, Chris White one of England's five professional referees agreed to take time out of his training schedule to identify and explain some of the more common rugby infringements.

Statistics show that the majority of infringements occur during contact, or areas where the ball is contested. With a number of bodies in these situations shielding the view of the average punter, and the pace at which the game is played, can we really tell what is going on?

The Tackle Area

Says White, "On average there might be around 24 penalties awarded in a game, of which around ten will involve the tackle area. The potential for infringement at the tackle area is obviously massive. For example, the tackler may not role away, the next players on the scene may make an illegal side entry to the tackle, and arriving players may go to ground".

"The referee will concentrate first on the actions of the tackler; if he/she is not moving away then the ball will not become available. Other players falling over will closely follow this, and possible foul play and more offences may occur".

"If the tackler moves correctly and releases the tackled player, the referee can then concentrate on the tackled player releasing the ball. The tackled player must release the ball to a player on his or her feet. This is because the law makers want rugby to be played by players on their feet".

"If the tackle area is being well maintained then you will see a lot of turnovers, as the players on their feet will win the ball. The bottom line is that the IRB expect a contest at the tackle where the skills of the attackers and defenders can be rewarded".

Scrum

The next main areas of contest and contact are the set pieces; White explains how a referee plots his way through this potential minefield.

"Whenever we are discussing the scrummage, throughout the game, from the top to bottom the main emphasis for the referee is on safety", says White.

"By law, the first area of interest for the referee is to have a square and stationary scrum. In order to get this he will go through an engagement process. He will make a mark for the two hookers to engage over, he will then call crouch and hold, for the two front rows to get into position from which they can engage on his invitation"

"The wheel is a contest for position rather than possession. Few teams take a ball against the head so rather focus on putting the scrum half and fly half under pressure. (To prevent an early wheel) We look for any shift in the loose-head's feet-he may step left to get around the tight head and this starts the wheel", explains White.

"Free kicks are often awarded before the ball is introduced into the scrum because a side has pushed too soon through the mark, or they have begun a wheel too soon. They are not allowed to push until the ball is put in to the scrum".

"Another area of concern is standing up", says White. This is not always as easy to spot because it occurs when the ball is at the back of the scrum. It is not always easy to tell if it is the defenders standing up under pressure, or if they are being forced up by an offensive action by the attackers", says White.

Line outs

The Lineout, like the scrum is increasingly being used as an option for putting your opponents under pressure.

CHRIS WHITE - MAN IN THE MIDDLE

As this set piece becomes a real contest for possession, the possibility for infringement increases.

"The line out has become more of a contest for several reasons; there tends to be more line outs than scrums in a game now, and secondly the defending side are allowed to tackle the ball winning side at the line out", explains White.

As well as contesting for the ball in the air, individual defenders can tackle opponents once they have reached the ground, if a maul doesn't form, then one player is allowed to pull down an opponent as in a tackle.

"A maul will only form if the defender goes in and binds around his opponent", says White.

"What is happening is that one player from the defending team, deliberately does not bind, and grasps his opponents- there could be two or three of them around the ball- a maul doesn't form and he pulls the player to ground immediately, as in a tackle. This is entirely legal".

"If he delays, then he is liable to be penalised, as the referee will deem that a maul has been formed".

The scrum half's position at the line out has also been clarified recently. If he enters the line out, he must be going in to contest for the ball, he can't go in as a decoy, and he can't go in to lift. A defending scrumhalf can only go in if his opponent goes in to challenge for the ball. Nowadays the teams are very keen to work out who the scrum half is because it will affect their attack and defence and the referee will spend time at the beginning of a line out to establish just what the numbers are and who is occupying the scrum half role".

Offside

For fans on the terraces and in the stands, one of the most frustrating facets of play is the habit of the defending team to encroach over the offside line. The offside line varies from situation to situation, it is different in a line out and in a scrum but in basic terms, in open play you are off side if you are in front of the ball.

"When adjudging offside from the scrum or ruck and maul, the positioning of the referee is vital", says White, who looks for the ball then faces the defenders when officiating.

Referees do get help from Tough Judges, but White says their role is firstly to prevent offside rather than penalise people for it.

"They will not call marginal decisions", he said. "They will look at the referee, look for the offside line and then look for the ball. Like in football, it is very difficult for the touch judge to see the moment the ball is out, if they are looking at the offside line as well".

If you are not involved, then the off side line from ruck and maul is behind the back foot of the last player on your team.

"Midfield offside is common here", says White "particularly against a side, who used the pick and go well, but as sides are extremely well drilled, they recognise where this line is and use the out side centre to call when the ball is out. As soon as the scrum half puts his hand on the ball it is deemed live. Players are geared to this and so will rush up the moment this happens. This can often look dreadful but on replay you will often see the player is onside".

Offside in open play is different. If you are in front of a kicker, and you are within ten metres of where the ball lands, you can do nothing but move out of the way. If you loiter you will be penalised. If you are more than ten metres away from the ball landing, you are only put on side if the opposition pass the ball, run with it more than five metres, or if one of your players behind you runs past you. The referee will shout wait and there is quite a lot of communication between the referee and players when the ball is in the air", says White.

Advantage

"The phrase I use is that continuity does not equal advantage. Just having the ball and moving left and right six times is not necessarily an advantage, the initial infringement can have a knock-on effect for the following attack, it can compound the original mistake", says White.

"If the ball is delayed in the tackle, you can expect to see about twelve defenders lined up against you. You may send more players into the ruck to secure the ball, which although you may win it, will leave you at a numerical disadvantage. As the phases progress this will be compounded and become a bigger disadvantage", explains White.

"There has been a worldwide discussion on the advantage rule and the tendency now is for advantage to be shorter".

"We try to communicate whether it is a knock on advantage or a penalty advantage". ■



Nothing quite like a local derby.

BY STEVE COTTON OF THE WESTERN DAILY PRESS

WHY EVEN SHED HEADS MUST PRAY FOR BATH'S SURVIVAL

A recent opinion poll on a Gloucester fans' website asked Shed-dwellers who they would prefer to be relegated at the end of the season - Bath or Newcastle?

We cannot yet be positive that a Zurich Premiership side will fall by the wayside come May, but assuming one does, surely there can only be one side Kingsholm regulars are wishing will slip out of the trapdoor - and it can't be today's opponents.

Sure, there are enough reasons for Kingsholm connoisseurs to savour beating Rob Andrew's lot year on year, but could any victory over the north-easterners really match the pleasure gained from last May's 68-12 obliteration of the men from down the road?

If the often-worn 'Larf at Barf' range of merchandise is anything to go by, then no, it couldn't. I am maybe being a bit selfish here, but Gloucester versus Bath is also a fixture us rugby journos lap up. Gloucester versus Newcastle, while appealing, does not have the same ring to it as a visit from those fellas in blue, black and white.

So Bath must stay up. It's that simple. Even the most ardent Shedhead must secretly agree that there would be little fun without a Bath side to take the proverbial out of at least once a season - and, remember, there is that small matter of never having won a league match at the Rec.

So, onto today's affairs. I sat, stunned, in the press box nine months ago as Gloucester handed out the thumping

of all thumpings to a seriously depleted Bath side. It was a woeful mismatch; like Gandhi being forced into 12 rounds with Lennox Lewis. How the referee that day must have wished he could have stopped the fight and ushered Bath back to the safety of their changing room.

Bath are still pretty much where they were nine months ago. Defeat last weekend, coupled with Newcastle's bonus-point win over Harlequins, has left them just two points above the danger-zone while Gloucester, if anything, are in a much stronger position - at least on the pitch where it matters. Today's result? Gloucester by 40 points I hear you cry on the Shed. But I'm not so sure. When they function, Bath can be an organised, dangerous side. Their forwards, much-maligned in recent times, have stepped up to the plate of late and more than held their own against Leicester last weekend. In Borthwick and Grewcock they have two potent line-out operators who should cause the odd dilemma for Gloucester today, both in attack and defence.

Their backs, if they click, can also be a handful. Catt, as everyone in this ground will know, can muster the unexpected, while Tindall, Maggs, Perry, Cooper, Danielli and Barkley could cause any defence in the land a problem or three if they hit the right notes at the right time.

But, and this is a rather large but, having seen both sides a fair bit this season, I tend to trust Gloucester's home form rather more than I trust Bath's record on the road. I have a feeling Gloucester will win, but it won't be for a lack of trying on Bath's part.

And if you Gloucester fans do walk out of Kingsholm today celebrating another try-fest against the old enemy, please hope it won't be the last time you experience the feeling, because it would be a crying shame to lose the atmosphere and uniqueness of these West Country derbies. That is why, even as Shedheads, you must wish for Bath's survival at this level of rugby.



29 GLOUCESTER

Thinus Delport	15
Marcel Garvey	14
Terry Fanolua	13
Robert Todd	12
James Simpson-Daniel	11
Ludovic Mercier	10
Andy Gomarsall	09

Rodrigo Roncero	01
Olivier Azam	02
Andy Deacon	03
Rob Fidler	04
Mark Cornwell	05
Jake Boer	06
Andy Hazell	07
James Forrester	08

Clive Stuart-Smith	16
Tom Beim	17
Daren O'Leary	18
Chris Fortey	19
Darren Molloy	20
Adam Eustace	21
Junior Paramore	22



BATH RUGBY 16

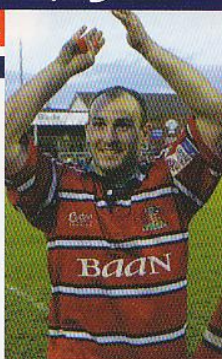
Matt Perry	
Simon Danielli	
Kevin Maggs	
Spencer Davey	
Olly Barkley	
Mike Catt	
Gareth Cooper	

Dave Barnes	
Jonathan Humphreys	
John Mallett	
Steve Borthwick	
Danny Grewcock (C)	
Andy Beattie	
Adam Vander	
Nathan Thomas	

Andy Williams	
Lee Mears	
Alessio Galasso	
Tom Voyce	
Alex Crockett	
Gavin Thomas	
Simon Emms	

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2002/03

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
Gloucester	15	12	1	2	412	252	4	2	56
Sharks	15	10	1	4	384	310	5	1	48
Leeds Tykes	15	9	2	4	344	281	0	3	43
Leicester Tigers	15	9	0	6	294	261	2	1	39
London Wasps	15	7	2	6	356	336	3	4	39
Northampton Saints	15	7	0	8	302	264	2	4	34
Saracens	15	6	0	9	349	406	3	3	30
NEC Harlequins	14	6	0	8	310	348	2	3	29
London Irish	15	5	1	9	311	338	1	3	26
Bristol Shoguns	14	5	1	8	330	359	2	2	26
Bath Rugby	15	4	2	9	250	332	0	3	23
Newcastle Falcons	15	4	0	11	252	407	2	3	21



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Your chance to win a signed GRFC ball!
Today's lucky number will be announced at half time.



GLOUCESTER'S NEXT THREE MATCHES



LEICESTER TIGERS

Powergen Cup
Saturday 1st Mar 2003
Franklin's Gardens KO 1.15pm
Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781



BRISTOL SHOGUNS

Zurich Premiership
Sunday 16th Mar 2003
Memorial Stadium KO 3.00pm
Tickets Hotline: 0117 311 1461



NEWCASTLE FALCONS

Zurich Premiership
Friday 4th Apr 2003
Kingsholm KO 7.30pm
Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781



THIS WEEKEND'S FIXTURES

Friday 7 February 2003
Leeds Tykes vs Newcastle Falcons

Saturday 8 February 2003
Leicester Tigers vs Bristol Shoguns
Gloucester vs Bath Rugby
NEC Harlequins vs Sharks
Northampton Saints vs Saracens

Sunday 9 February 2003
London Wasps vs London Irish

Ref! Link

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Tony Spreadbury RFU
1st TJ: David Rose RFU
2nd TJ: Ashley Reay RFU



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