

Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

POWERGEN
CUP WINNERS 2002/3



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2003/04 SEASON
TICKET RELEASED

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP
ROUND UP

STEPHEN IONES
SUNDAY TIMES

EXCLUSIVE JAKE BOER
INTERVIEW

WELCOME FROM
THE CHAIRMAN

v **Lieicester Tigers**

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE

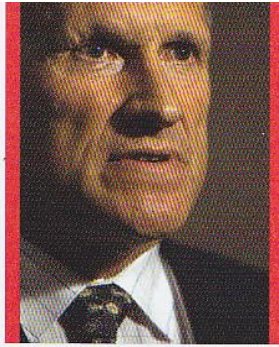
SATURDAY 10TH MAY 2003

KICK-OFF 3.00PM

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FINAL
SAT 31st MAY



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WELCOME FROM...

Tom Walkinshaw

The Chairman

I would like to welcome the management, players and supporters of Leicester Tigers to Kingsholm for this afternoon's match.

Today the Zurich Premier League will reach a thrilling conclusion but for both teams the season does not end here. At Gloucester, we are all looking forward to the Zurich Premiership Final at Twickenham on May 31st and the chance to be crowned Zurich Premiership Champions. After the scenes of passion and colour we witnessed at the Powergen Cup Final, I anticipate another wonderful advertisement for Gloucester Rugby Club and indeed the whole of English Club rugby.

“Today the Zurich Premier League will reach a thrilling conclusion but for both teams the season does not end here.”

At the start of the 2002/03 season I urged all of you to consider becoming a member of this great Club. For the 5000 of you that decided to do so, thank you. For those who were existing members I hope this has been a great season and for those of you who had become a member for the first time, I hope you will decide it was worth it and will complete the application forms that you will have already received.

The support that this team has received this season has been fantastic. Once again, you have shown that Gloucester Rugby Club has a fan base rivalled by none in England and possibly Europe. Thank you all for

showing your support and sticking by this Club through some very difficult times. In the face of rumours and scare mongering this Club has seen a record number of fans through the turnstiles, both at home and away.

I must congratulate, firstly Nigel Melville, Dean Ryan and all of his coaching staff for the work they have done this season and of course the players for their commitment, bravery and dedication to the job at

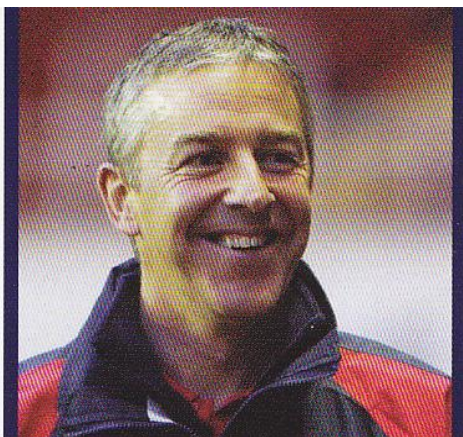
“I must congratulate, firstly Nigel Melville, Dean Ryan and all of his coaching staff...”

hand in what continues to be a long gruelling test of their bodies and minds.

None were prouder than I when Andy Deacon led the players up to collect the Powergen Trophy in front of a packed Twickenham crowd, bathed in a sea of Cherry and White. And none were happier than myself when Gloucester had earned sufficient points against Harlequins to ensure they finished on top of the table for the first time in this Club's history.

There has been much speculation about the break up of this squad and the loss of key players over the summer. As a business we must not ignore the current climate that the business of sport finds itself in. The governing body has advised us to ensure that we keep a sensible reign on our budgets but that does not mean that this Club will have to make wholesale changes. Nigel Melville will be given the full salary cap budget available to the Club to employ players again next season, of course, we will see a change in one or two places, that is only normal, but I am assured that Nigel Melville is already looking to add strength in depth in a number of positions to cover the World Cup period.

As a supporter of this Club I assure you that its best interest are always a top priority of mine and the board of directors, who are charged with steering the Club through this period of change and already I am excited about the start of next season and the visit of Bristol Shoguns on September 13th. ■



NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Leicester Tigers, Dean Richards, Peter Wheeler, their Management, players and supporters to Kingsholm for our final Zurich Premiership game of the season.

I can remember looking at the fixture list back in September and thinking what a special day today would be. Leicester have recently been the 'benchmark' for everyone in the Zurich Premiership, such has been their dominance of the competition for so many years.

Leicester and Gloucester fixtures are always very special, so much tradition, such loyalty and passion for the game. Two proud cities going head to head, this afternoon will be no exception.

The season has been long and hard for both Clubs, whilst this will not be remembered as the greatest for Leicester, they still remain in the top half of the table and challenging for those elusive European places. Injuries have obviously played their part with key players missing crucial games and we all know how good Munster can be on their day!

At Gloucester the season has been more memorable both in the Premiership and Powergen competitions. We managed to unearth some serious young talent Garvey, Forrester and Simpson-Daniel, coupled with the valuable experience of the senior members of the squad. In Europe we failed, but valuable lessons were learned in a tough group including two semi finalists Munster and Perpignan.

Following today's game our attention will be drawn

to the Zurich Premiership Final at the end of the month. I am tired of being asked about the rights and wrongs of a play-off system, the fact is that it is there, and we are in the Final, lets enjoy the challenge and another memorable day at Twickenham.

Off the field my main job now is to secure the playing squad for next season. Whilst players will leave, others will arrive. This is not a situation unique to Gloucester it is happening at every club in England. The challenge is to keep the team

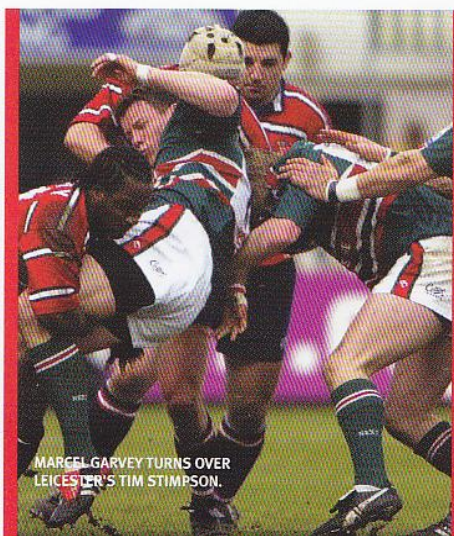
“Leicester and Gloucester fixtures are always very special, so much tradition, such loyalty and passion for the game.”

moving forward, maintain the momentum and enjoy the challenges ahead.

I would like to thank everyone for their continued support this season. The success' this season have been a massive team effort. Behind the scenes so much excellent work goes unseen but not unnoticed. From Fred (washing the shirts), Dave and Gareth (cutting the grass), Larry (fixing things), the commercial department, caterers and a whole host of others.

Finally, on behalf of the Players and coaching staff I would like to thank the Gloucester supporters. The journey we have travelled together this season has been absolutely fantastic, but the journey is not over, and it will not be over on the 31st May, the best is yet to come!

Have a great afternoon. ■



MARCEL GARVEY TURNS OVER LEICESTER'S TIM STIMPSON.



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Jake Boer

Match Captain

To finish top of the Zurich Premiership was a fantastic achievement, and to do it at home was even better, but that will not alter our focus ahead of today's game.

There was a lot of talk about us going to Leeds with a weakened side and not taking the game seriously- that is rubbish. As a squad we were disappointed not to win that match. No-one ever turns up to a game not wanting to win, it is not in our nature as sportsmen.

We truly believed that we could get a result at Headingley and the way we played in the latter stages showed just how good a squad we have and just what that team was capable of. If the game had continued for another five minutes, who knows what we might have achieved, we are just disappointed that it took us so long. It took a while for the side to settle, by which time Leeds had taken their opportunities.

Today is obviously our last game at Kingsholm this season and opponents don't come much bigger than the Tigers. They are still the benchmark by which teams measure themselves and they have still got a lot of quality players in their squad.

I think by their own admission they have had a disappointing season, but they still have a lot to play for today and as the last team to beat us here at Kingsholm I am sure that they will be putting pressure on themselves to do the same again. They would like nothing more than to beat the side that has taken their top spot.

For us, this represents a massive game; we have two games left this season and both are huge. We have a home record, which we are very proud of to protect, and we want to be in the best condition possible when we go to Twickenham at the end of the month.

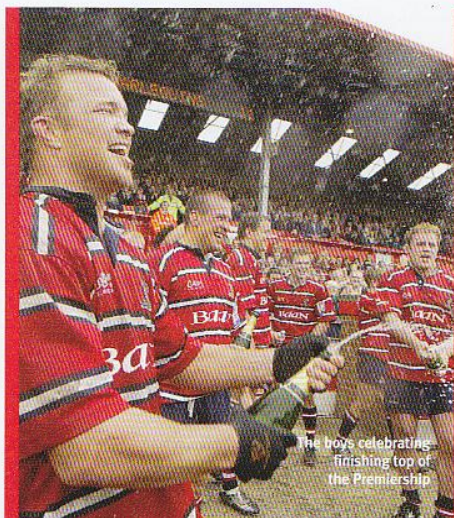
When we walk out for the Zurich Premiership Final, we want to be remembering that the last time we played, we all did our jobs, put in a massive performance and won the game. We don't want to lose any more games this season.

"Today is obviously our last game at Kingsholm this season and opponents don't come much bigger than the Tigers."

Of course today we will be looking to sign off for another season, which makes our performance so important. We have found that when we have let anything other than the performance become our focus, we have not got the right result. Today will all be about the performance.

As this is the last game of the season, I would like to once again thank all of you for your support this season. I have said it a million times already but the support we receive is absolutely amazing and you haven't let us down this season.

I hope you will all be able to come to Twickenham for the end of season final and then come September, you will all be back here to see us against the Shoguns. ■



The boys celebrating finishing top of the Premiership

The evidence that someone must be doing something right is there for all to see today. We have six games in the Zurich Premiership, all

deep down what a disaster that would represent. My only qualification about this day of destiny is that for a major name to disappear would bring up

BY STEPHEN JONES

THE SUNDAY TIMES

kicking off on a Saturday at 3pm. It is a personal preference of mine but I still believe firmly that rugby's paying public want to go along on a Saturday at 3 and are impatient with the fact that kick-off times are now spreading far and wide and causing confusion.

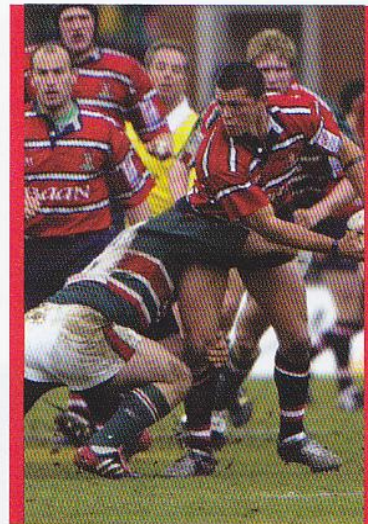
Even better, every single Premiership game today has something massive riding on it - Leicester need something from today to help their campaign for European rugby next year. Of all the 12 teams on view today, Gloucester probably have the least to gain since they are already guaranteed a place in the Zurich Premiership final a week on Saturday. On the other hand, Gloucester will also be desperate not to concede the double against the Tigers, a horrendous thought in a season in which they have been dominant.

I have made no secret of my views that Gloucester deserve to be called champions but other people are busy preparing for the Championship final to give the season a major send-off and the pilgrimage from Gloucester and district to Twickenham will be good news for all those trying to breathe life into the new concept.

But there is no doubt whatsoever that moment of most tension today will include the public address announcements from the other games, especially those between Bath and Newcastle and between London Irish and Bristol. No doubt there will be a major cheer if the news comes through that Bath are relegated but I hope that everyone realises

the dread prospect of amalgamations and if that happens then a chain of events could occur in which Bristol drop off the rugby map completely. Surely, even Gloucester diehards would hate that.

By this evening, we will know who is in the Premiership play-off, who is in the European play-offs and we will know who is relegated. At the end of the best Premiership season in living memory, with crowds and interest at an all-time high, there are going to be casualties to balance the sense of triumph at Kingsholm.



GLOUCESTER U21 32

V NEC HARLEQUINS 23

Two wins in their last two matches for the Gloucester U21 side has given them a chance of catching runaway U21 League leaders Leicester and indeed turning the Tigers over at Welford Road in the last game of the season.

The Gloucester U21's cut Leicester Tiger's lead at the top the U21 Zurich Premiership to nine points two weekends ago with a bonus-point win 23-32 away at Harlequins.

Whilst the Gloucester 1st XV were cementing their place at the top of the senior Zurich Premiership table their U21 counterparts were steamrolling over the Quins at the Stoop to keep touch with the leading Tigers.

In a game that the Gloucester forwards dominated the Cherry and White's set piece was too strong for their opponents. The pack was rewarded for their efforts with four tries in the game; a brace for lock Hughes and a try a-piece for prop Guess and flanker Knight.

Prior to kick off the U21 had to readjust after the late withdrawal of Cameron Mitchell and Sean Lynn, they coped well however, and were able to build on last week's win over the Sale Jets.

To add to the four forward-tries winger Andy Macrae also touched down whilst full back Neil Hunter kicked two conversions and Brad Davies a drop goal. "This was an improvement on the performance at Sale",

said Academy Director Carl Douglas.

"But we still have much to work on if we are to catch the Tigers".

Quins scored two late consolation tries to bring them within nine points of the Gloucester total but it was all too little, too late.

The U21's then set about avenging their U19 counterpart's defeat at the hands of Worcester by scoring a four-try bonus win against their opponents from six ways with a 27-24 win at home.

Prop Ben Gorst scored an early try for the home side but two converted tries and a penalty gave the visitors a 12-17 half time lead.

Gloucester struggled to come to terms with Worcester's in-your-face type of spoiling rugby and their physical approach rocked the Cherry and Whites.

Three second-half touchdowns, including a pair for lock Tom Skelding however, saw the home side to another four-try victory.

Worcester scored a late try to get close to Gloucester but the young Cherry and Whites held on.

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Diff	Try F	Try A	T Bon	L Bon	Pts
1 LEICESTER TIGERS	18	16	2	0	571	281	290	85	35	11	1	76
2 GLOUCESTER	19	16	2	1	534	296	238	71	39	8	2	76
3 NEWCASTLE FALCONS	19	13	5	1	471	324	147	70	44	10	2	66
4 BATH	22	11	11	0	495	466	29	66	64	8	4	56
5 LONDON WASPS	20	10	9	1	544	536	8	83	77	11	3	56
6 NEC HARLEQUINS	21	9	12	0	485	576	91	69	85	7	3	46

The final home game is an occasion to linger a little longer at full time than may be the case normally, say a cheerful farewell to match day acquaintances, and look forward to a sunny but rugby free summer, at least on Kingsholm. The return, for Premiership rugby at least, won't be until September the 12th, if the current draft fixture list proves correct.

Traditionally, this is the time of year when awards are handed out. The official website doesn't have a "Player of the Year" poll on it as I write (perhaps one may follow shortly!) but I'll put my cross against Jake Boer's name. I don't think I'll be alone. The flanker has stood in for Phil Vickery when needed as skipper and done a magnificent job, leading from the front by example. I only found



BY IAN RANDALL

BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Leicester's visit today comes in unlikely circumstances. The Tigers must win here this afternoon to qualify for next season's Heineken Cup through their League position, or for them it'll come down to the lottery of the Zurich wildcard play offs. The thought of Dean Richards' side not in the top European competition shows the cyclical nature of the game, and that not even the best sides can go on for ever. With Kafer and Freshwater departing, and Garforth retiring, there's some rebuilding to do at Welford Road.

This afternoon is BBC Radio Gloucestershire's 76th commentary match of the season (and the 31st involving Gloucester). There's bound to be at least one more, but we might even be at Twickenham on successive Saturdays if the County side can get to their final on May the 24th.

The first game is always the one where the rough edges are knocked off, and the second half against Surrey here at Kingsholm last weekend showed the team has to be fancied to retain their title. They're playing at Lydney against Devon this afternoon, where home advantage should again give them the edge.

out recently that he lives next door to Cheltenham footballer Russell Milton. One can only imagine the conversations over the garden fence after the seasons the two teams have had.

A nominal pennant for the individual performance of the season would surely go to Marcel Garvey for the way he exploded onto the Premiership scene against Bristol here back in September. It would have been unreasonable to expect such wizardry every week thereafter, and indeed it hasn't happened, but Marcel is still a young player learning his trade, and his ability to absorb coaching techniques both here at Gloucester and in the England training set-up will determine the pace at which he progresses.

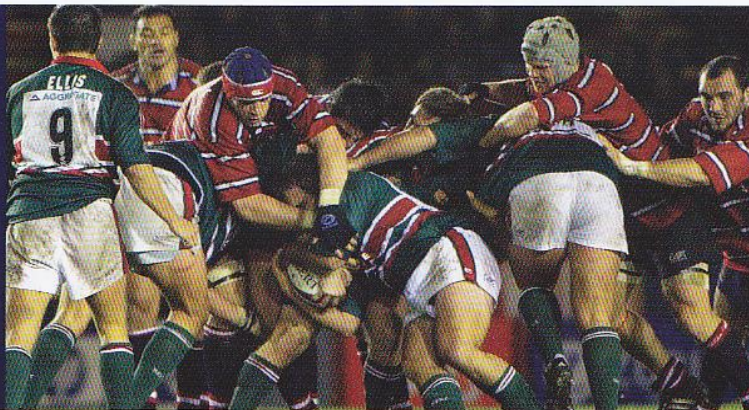
Choosing a team display that stands out depends on what you look for, but the League win at Northampton was the sort that sets champions apart from mere contenders. After snaffling an early lead, the last quarter was, as John Fidler would put it, "Gloucester dog" of the highest quality. The tackle count must have kept Dave Ellis grinning like a Cheshire cat for a week.

The Heineken Cup holds two of the most extreme memories. I was last to leave the scaffolding tower at Perpignan, in the dark and some three hours after the end of a match that left me virtually without a voice – not good for a radio commentator! Their bullying pack has taken the French side all the way to the final against Toulouse. It was a similar tale at Thomond Park,

Twickenham in the Powergen Cup.

B B C

A last hurrah this afternoon would be lovely as we go our separate ways. Don't forget if you can't get to Twickenham we'll have full match commentary on the Club's official web site (www.gloucester rugby club.com) on May the 31st....and don't forget your texts



The boys battle to stop Leicester's attack, the last time they meet.

and, for all its misery, that surely was the story of the rugby season. I can't recall one Gloucester supporter in our hotel who thought being knocked out there was possible, yet Munster pulled off a famous victory. We're all just thankful the team responded in the way they did in the matches that followed, culminating in the marvellous day at

(07786 201413) and post match phone calls (01452 307575) are always welcome. Go on.....the bar can wait for a minute.....

See you next season.

C'mon Glaws!

RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

104.7 FM & 1413 AM

B B C

EXCLUSIVE LIVE COMMENTARY BOTH HOME AND AWAY



“As a player, it’s great to know that the fans are behind you”

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

Before he leads the team out at Kingsholm for Gloucester’s final home game of the season, Jake Boer will be presented with the Season Ticket Holder’s player of the season.

It is just reward for all his hard work and in the eyes of the supporters the outstanding commitment he has shown this Club not just this season, but since he arrived.

Each Season Ticket Holder has been asked to submit their vote for the player who they believed has been the best and most consistent player in Cherry and White colours this season.

Boer has won the award by a country mile.

“As a player, it’s great to know that the fans are behind you”, said the ever-modest Boer.

“It has been testing at times and it has been a hell of a learning curve for me but I have been lucky to have had the guys around me that I have, who are playing so well. Our performances this season week in, week out have been very consistent”.

The transition of any new player into a Shed hero is described as being ‘Gloucesterised’, this certainly applies to Boer, if you ignored the dulcet South African accent, one could be mistaken for believing he was born and bred within the city walls such is the zest with which he fights the Gloucester cause.

The forward, who has played in all three of the back row positions and excelled certainly has the traditional Gloucester

dog in him, but in Boer’s case such is the impact that he has made since his move from London Irish three seasons ago that one feels obliged to rearrange the three letters and you get the word Gloucester god !!

No-one has typified the never-say-die attitude that runs true in every Gloucester performance this season more so than Boer, and the player who already has nine Premiership tries- his best return ever-freely admits to having the time of his life.

“You cant get many more high points in a season than we have had, and we still have a big day to come at Twickenham on May 31st admitted Boer.

“You always look back on a season and assess how successful it has been by seeing how close you have come to achieving your goals. So far we have achieved two out of our three main goals, but we are focused on finishing the job”, he added.

Boer, by his own admission however, has not got carried away with this season’s success. He remains critical of his own performances, almost to a fault as he strives for the perfection he wants to attain every game.

“I am very critical of my own game-it is a fault of mine. There is always something after a game that I am not happy about and that drives me on. I am very happy with the way things have gone this season but there are still loads that I can improve on. Hopefully I can get better over the next couple of years”, says Boer.

Jake Boer



Gloucester
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

PLAYER PROFILE

One area that Boer has pinpointed specifically is his international standing. For one of the most consistent performers at Premiership level his lack of international recognition is surprising.

He says that his heart remains with the Springboks, but after being nationalised through residency for England and holding a passport that allows him to play for Holland or Ireland he is open to all offers.

"As a player, international rugby is the highest level you can play and that is everyone's dream", said Boer.

"I play pretty much week to week though, and if something comes up then great. I have always wanted to play for South Africa, but that is not in my hands. I can only concentrate on playing for my Club, and if it happens it will do so in its own time. If something comes up then I'll sit down to discuss it".

Although Boer will receive personal recognition from the supporters today, he knows that the success Gloucester has built this season is down to a truly team effort, and is quick to acknowledge the part everyone has had to play this year.

"First and foremost we had the core of the squad here, secondly the coaching team came in and changed the way we play-it is a totally different style of rugby, and thirdly we work very hard, on the pitch and in the gym. We have picked up our standards in all aspects".

Interspersed with some massive highs this season, however, have been some major lows. Boer describes the Munster game at Thommond Park as his lowest moment this season, but says that, as a squad, Gloucester have learnt and won't make the same mistakes again.

"All the games we have lost are disappointment but Munster was the biggest disappointment because we just didn't do what we could on the day".

"No-one was to blame and we all wanted to win, but something was lacking. I cant put my finger on why we didn't perform but I do know that we are working hard to

make sure that whatever it was, it doesn't happen if we are in that situation again".

With one major trophy still to play for this season Boer will remain focused for another month before jetting off home to rest and prepare his mind and body for another assault on the Premiership.

Despite the gruelling nature of the domestic season, the good news for Gloucester fans is that Boer is already setting his sights for next season. Not one to rest on past glory's Boer is also looking ahead to a rosy, Cherry and White future.

"As a squad we still have a lot to work on next season. We have a number of good young players, and some players with a lot of experience- it is the perfect mix"

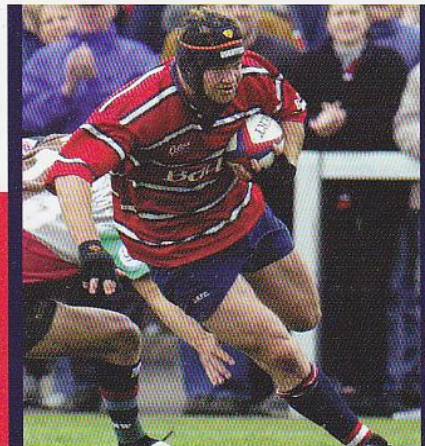
"Europe is huge for us next season, it is a massive priority, we can't make the same mistakes next year. When we get to the big matches we can't let ourselves down".

One thing Gloucester could never accuse Jake Boer of is letting anyone down. ■

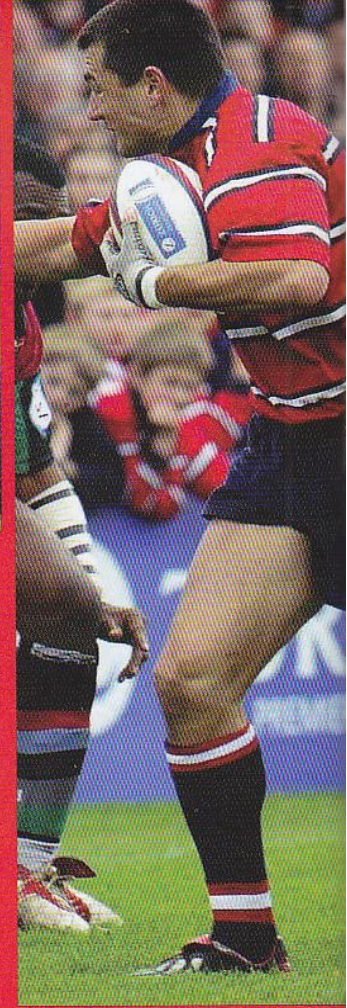
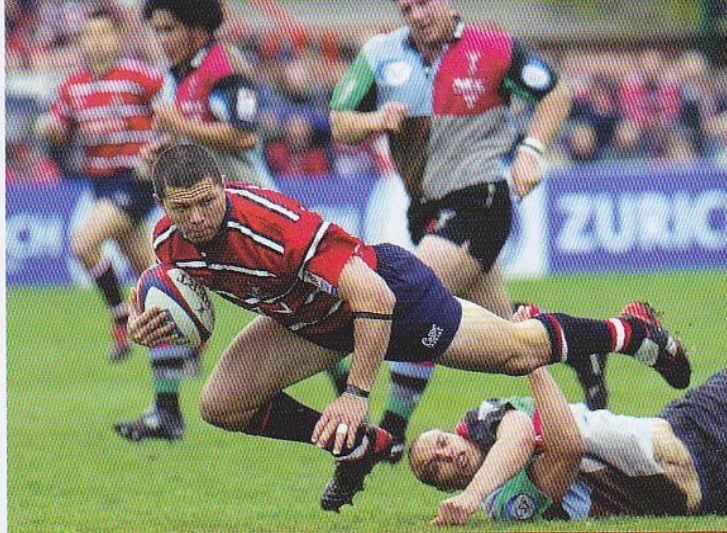
Jake Boer

Premiership STATS Gloucester

Matches	20
Tackles	258
Misses	28
Ball Carries	112
Metres	515
Passes	15
Defenders Beaten	5
Offloads	6
Turnovers Won	12
Tries Scored	9



"As a player, international rugby is the highest level you can play and that is everyone's dream."



KINGSHOLM SATURDAY 26 APRIL 2003



GLOUCESTER 29

TRIES: PAUL, MERCIER, SIMPSON-DANIEL, BOER

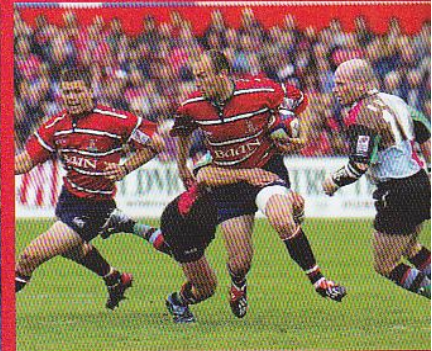
CONVERSIONS: MERCIER (3) PENALTIES: PAUL



NEC HARLEQUINS 11

TRIES: FUGA

PENALTIES: BURKE (2)



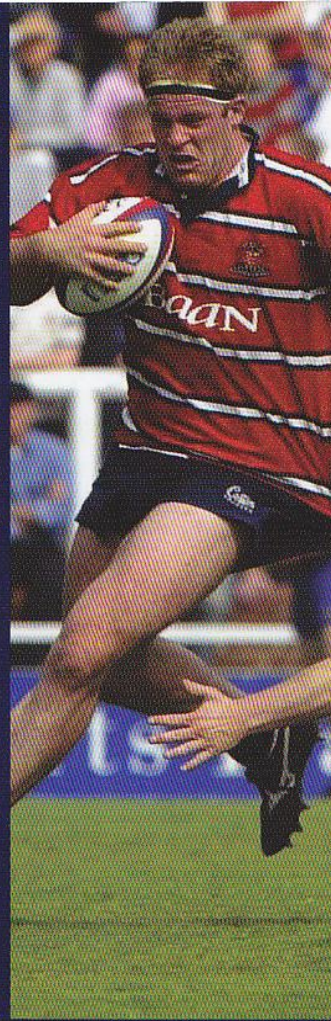
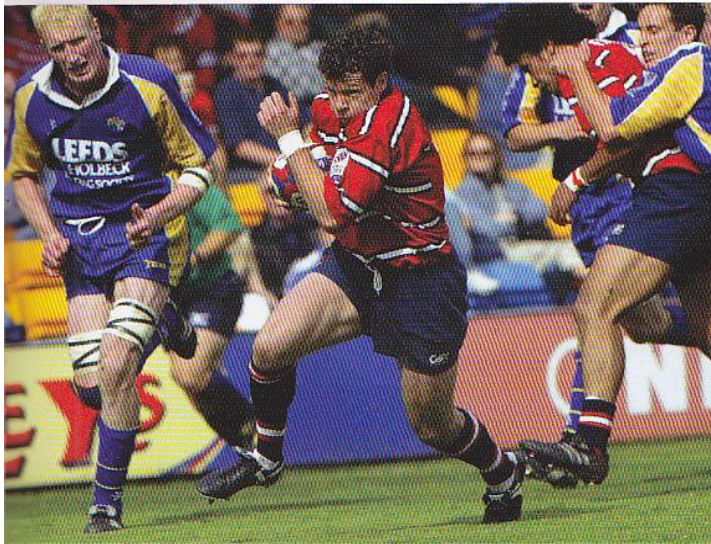
(Top Left) Henry Paul goes over the top of Harlequins Nathan Williams.

(Top Right) Thinus Delpont breaks through the Harlequins defence.

(Bottom Left) Andy Gomarsall is stopped short of the line by Harlequins Ace Tiata.

(Bottom Right) Ludovic Mercier breaks through the Harlequins defence.

FW Images courtesy of Ed Bates/Sherlock - GSWA



HEADINGLY SUNDAY 4 MAY 2003



LEEDS TYKES 30

TRIES: STANLEY (2), POPHAM, ROSS

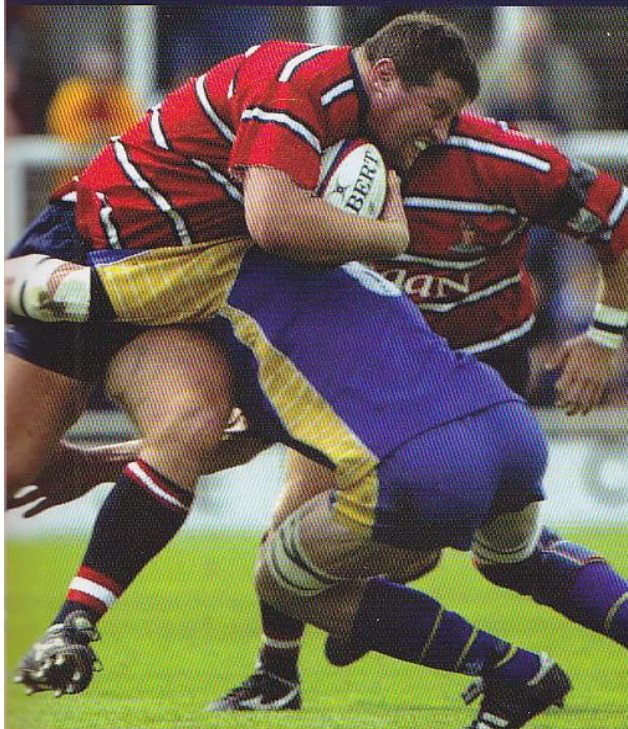
CONVERSIONS: VAN STRAATEN (2) PENALTIES: VAN STRAATEN (2)



GLOUCESTER 23

TRIES: BEIM, O'LEARY

CONVERSIONS: PAUL (2) PENALTIES: AMOR (3)



(Top Left) Tom Beim runs in his second half try.

(Top Right) Peter Buxton escapes out of a tackle from Leeds Mark Regan.

(Bottom Left) Darren Molloy is stopped by Leeds Cameron Mather.

(Bottom Right) Terry Fanolua is bundled into touch by Leeds Braam Van Straaten.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA



IT would have been reasonable to expect Gloucester vs. Leicester on the last day of the season to have involved a battle for some form of silverware.

However, Leicester arrive at Kingsholm without a

One area where Richards is desperate to recruit is at half back. With Austin Healey injured, Sam Vesty has manfully tried to fill the gap in the pivotal role in the number ten jersey, but Leicester are looking for a big name and Bristol's Felipe Contepomi is being tipped as a summer signing.

BY JON NEWCOMBE

RUGBY TIMES

chance of any trophies this season. The shock defeat at home to London Irish last weekend means they can no longer qualify for the end of season play-offs and their limp exit at the hands of Munster in the Heineken Cup and the defeat to Gloucester in the Powergen Cup means that Dean Richards' side are going to finish the season empty handed for the first time since the 1997/98 campaign.

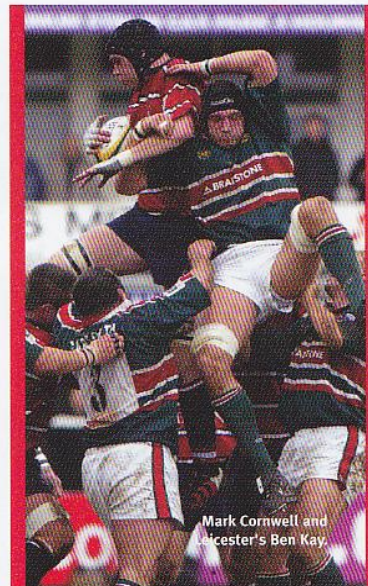
With players leaving and retiring, a lot of pundits are saying that the Tigers' domestic dominance is well and truly over but winger Steve Booth, currently sidelined with an ankle injury, believes his side are on the verge of a new era of dominance rather than falling by the wayside.

"We're going to be at the top for many years to come," Booth said trying to nip any doom-mongering firmly in the bud. "You only have to take a look at the youngsters we have here. I'm only 25 and then there's the likes of Ollie Smith, Leon Lloyd, Harry Ellis, Geordan Murphy and Sam Vesty to name but a few.

"We've been compared to Manchester United on many occasions and we are probably the biggest club side in the world. Dean Richards normally makes some shrewd signings and if we get the right people in again this summer, a new era could be about to take off, especially with the superb backing we get from the fans."

Contepomi's Argentinean compatriot, Agustin Pichot, is also being linked as Richards looks to find a top class scrum half - an area he has been looking to strengthen after missing out on Welsh legend Rob Howley.

With Franck Tournaire and Perry Freshwater leaving and Darren Garforth retiring, it's certainly going to be a summer of change at Welford Road.



Mark Cornwell and Leicester's Ben Kay.

Fans Eye View

With Bob Fenton

So here we are then at the end of yet another season, and hasn't it come around quickly - well they say time flies when you are having fun, and Nigel Melville and the boys have certainly given us more than our fair share of that this term.

Looking back to the beginning of the season it's interesting to check out the predictions that were made about who was going to do what to whom over the following months. I've long since lost all the scraps of paper that had the thoughts of the various experts in the media, though to be fair to a couple of them did predict great things for Gloucester.

What I have got, though, and I have a reasonably steady stream of emails that remind me about them - are the predictions I made at the start of the season. I have to say that I didn't do very well - take Leeds for example "... hard to see them finishing above 12th..." say's I. Or Sale "... can't see them repeating their success of last season..." If anyone has a spot of cream to go with the very large slices of humble pie I am being forced to eat I would be most grateful.

I didn't get it totally wrong though, "... this year is going to be quite a struggle for them..." were my wise words on Bath. That said, you didn't have to be Albert Einstein to spot that coming. Still with that sort of track record in getting predictions right it can only be a matter of time before I am approached to sit with the lauded gentry on the press benches. After all they were all saying Northampton, Leicester and the usual old favourites were going to romp home. As somebody once said: '... I can do that... Go on, Gizza job!'

Looking back over the season, I think one of the most pertinent things anyone has said about us has not come from the newspaper or TV pundits, rather from one of our own. "We are Gloucester, and we have to

fight for everything" was the quote. Who said it? Step forward Mr Junior Paramore.

He was talking about the end of season play off situation, and the fact that despite winning the league (and we are the real champions, whatever happens at Twickenham in a few weeks time) we were not guaranteed a trophy to put in our non-existent trophy cabinet.

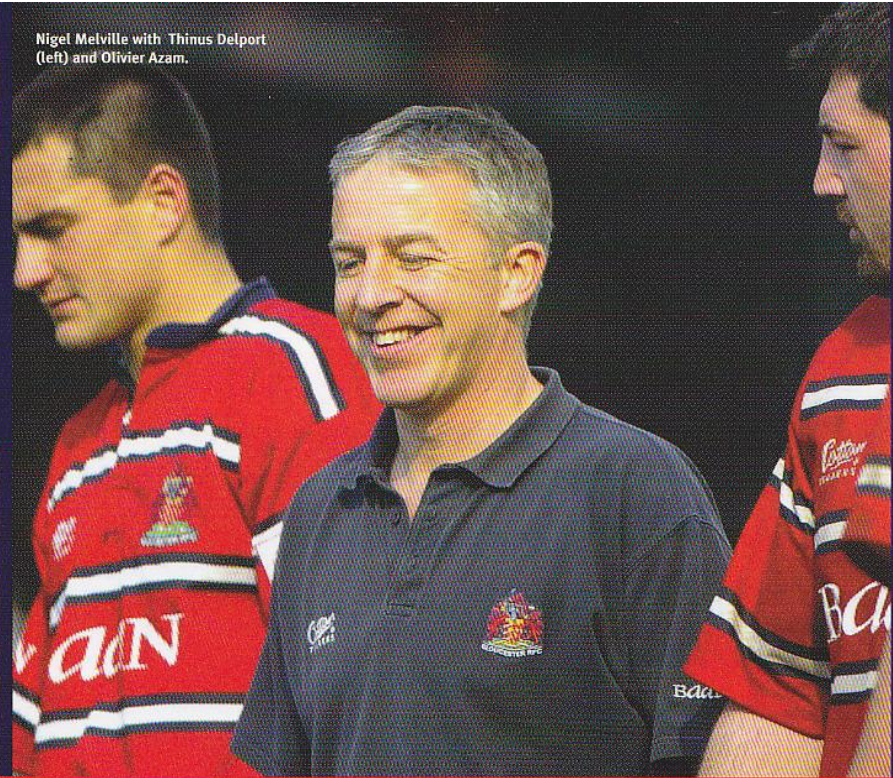
But what he said could have applied to quite a bit of our season. On the injury front we lost both Trevor Woodman and Phil Vickery for much of the season, as well as James Simpson-Daniel to Glandular Fever. It's testament to the strength of the squad that we sailed on regardless of missing more than a few names that would have been near the top of most people's team sheets.

We have seemingly been embroiled in all sorts of financial muddles throughout the season, with too many people speculating on the clubs finances, player's wages and contracts and even new owners for Gloucester. Note to everyone - can we have a bit less of that next season please!

We've all got excited about a new ground, then a redevelopment of Castle Grim then... well not much actually. No, let's be fair - we have got some additional burger vans and getting to the toilets behind the Worcester Street end is now no longer like wading across a ploughed field.

And we couldn't even win a semi-final without a steward's enquiry into the legitimacy of our victory. I have to say that for me that was the worst. The stink of sour grapes was terrible, made worse by the fact that the 'complaint' did not come from Leicester - Dean Richards saying that they [Leicester] had lost to the better team. Rather it came from an RFU official - presumably in charge of paper clips or something - who, and here's the

Nigel Melville with Thinus Delport (left) and Olivier Azam.



rub, used to play for - yes you've guessed it - Leicester.

And the final insult, a doctor was apparently sent to check over our casualty list to make sure we were not fielding a weakened team last week at Leeds. Wonder who asked for that - our paper shuffler at the RFU perchance???

And despite all those distractions we have simply kept on doing the business where it matters - on the pitch. Some fantastic performances, not least in the PowerGen cup final, and some dogged out wins, like Newcastle a few weeks back.

This season we have been treated to some fantastic sights - and I'm not talking about the garb the transvestite roman gets himself dressed up in each week - and memories that will stick for a long, long time. The drive up the M4 to Twickenham seeing every car decked out in cherry and white... Deacs lifting the cup... Terry walking around with the PowerGen cup full of Champagne giving everyone a drink in the clubhouse in the early hours of the Sunday after the cup final... looking at the league table after the Harlequins match and knowing that we had done it... Except that we hadn't - we still have it all to do.

The play off final is a cruel affair, I know the clubs all signed up to it at the start of the season, I know they do it in the Super 12s, and I know that in Rugby League it has been commonplace for some time. But it can't be right. Surely at the end of a season when every club has

played 22 games then the one at the top grabs the glory.

Would Manchester United be happy about taking on the winners of an Arsenal v Newcastle match in a winner takes all show down? Will we see Michael Shumacher agreeing to race off against another driver just to make sure he has won the Formula One title, or maybe the winner of the Grand National will be happy to do one more circuit of Aintree against another horse just to be sure that the right one had won in the first place.

From a spectator point of view it has to be about money - or more precisely taking it from our pockets. This trip to Twickenham will set me back around £200, and there is the real possibility that at the end of it I will feel totally gutted. For supporters of Wasps or Sale or even Northampton should they scrape third place it will not be the same if they lose. They don't deserve to be there in the first place competing for the title, so any victory will be a bonus for them and consequently any defeat less hard to take.

It's a nonsense. We won the Zurich play-off final last season, but Leicester were the champions. Keep it as two competitions, and if the pressure is on to reduce the number of games, scrap it altogether and just keep the league system. After all, it's worked well enough for years.

What next? Teams merging to avoid relegation???

Peter Arnold

WHAT DID YOU MAKE OF IT?

What's your opinion of the slightly bizarre proceedings up at Headingley last week? I suppose a loss was always on the cards. Given the starting line-up we put out, and I mean no disrespect to the 15 lads who ran out at 2.30 when I say that. It's nice to see some fresh faces being given a chance to shine, but the true state of affairs was revealed very clearly when Messrs. Vickery, Paul and Delport were introduced for the last ten minutes. There's no doubt that the result would have been very different had we really needed the points.

Nigel Melville and Dean Ryan must have learned quite a bit from the exercise, as did we all.

Simon Amor demonstrated what we have known in theory all along. He has the potential of being a real star - once he's absorbed the fact that there are fifteen defenders to beat rather than just six. As Mike Burton once said, "Once he's been Gloucesterised".

He reminds me a bit of Mark Mapletoft. He has similar stature, ball skills and elusiveness, and it was interesting to note that 'Tofty', playing at outside-half, was the trump card in the unexpected win of London Irish over Leicester last week.

There were other positives, too. It was good to see Phil Vickery getting into 'Raging Bull' mode, and very interesting

to see Henry Paul getting a brief run-out at outside-half. The game also gave Clive Stewart-Smith a chance to show what he can do over a full 80 minutes. He'll do all right, once he has become a little more streetwise.

With Olivier Azam likely to be in the French World Cup squad, if he's still with us at all, and Chris Fortey suspended until the end of September, something is going to have to be done at hooker, so it was vital to give Chris Collins and Adam Cave a run out. Luke Narrowway showed his inexperience, but you can't fault his energy and work rate. 'Big lump' Darren Molloy performed creditably on the wrong side of the scrum.

Plenty of plusses then. Enough to mount a challenge next season? Time, as they say, will tell.

NO ARGUMENT

An enormous head of steam has built up over this season's play-off system. As all the world knows, we are going to have to beat someone or other at Twickenham in three weeks time to claim the Premiership title. The vast majority of supporters, and others, seem to think that the whole thing is a carve-up and an all-around Bad Thing, designed to deprive us of our rightful rewards.

I can certainly understand that point of view. It does seem odd that the lads can strain every muscle and sinew for 22 matches, home and away, come out top



Phil Vickery back in charge during the second half last week.

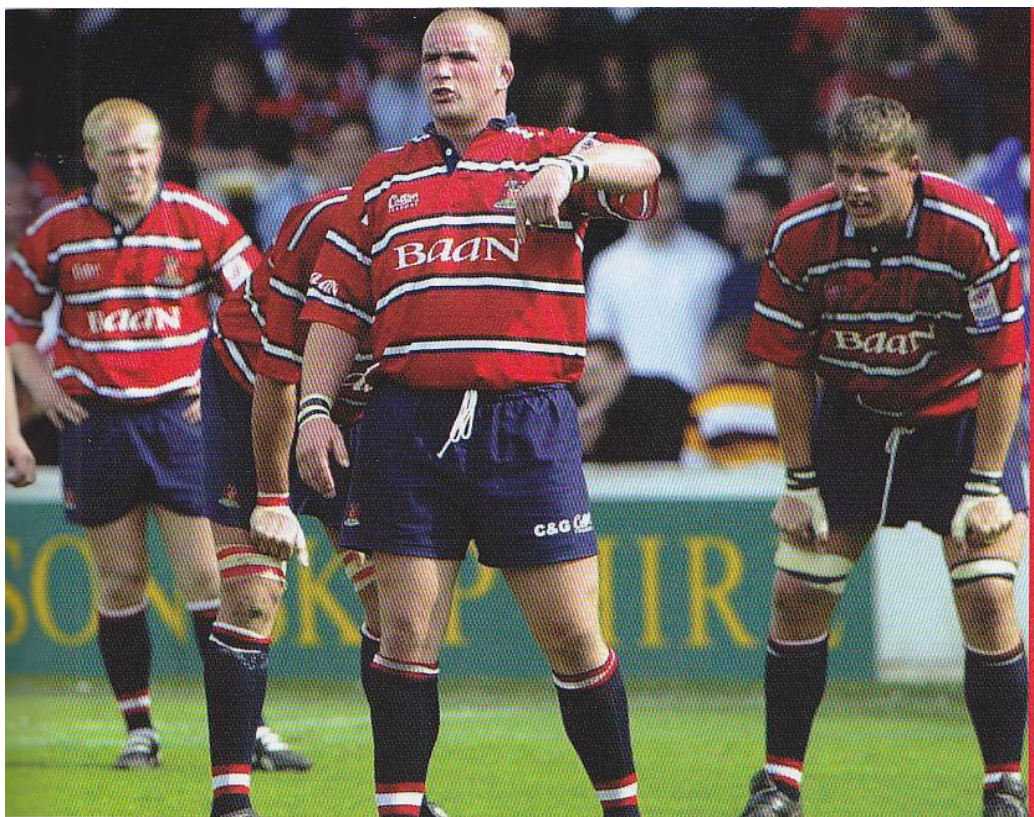
of the pile, and then not be able to call themselves Champions of England

There is, however, another way of looking at things, and if you want to know what it is, then I refer you to Henry Paul's interesting comments on the club web site. He, after all, should know, having been through it all before in his Rugby League days, and therefore being well acquainted with the Grand Final concept.

I'm not going to get into the argument, but there's one point of view with which I must take issue. I can't agree at all with the season ticket holders who wrote to the Citizen demanding that we all boycott the Twickenham occasion in protest against what they obviously see as a mickey-mouse state of affairs.

I ask you. What a way to thank the boys for their Herculean efforts this season!

They've, quite literally, shed their blood for us ever since last September, and the least we can do to acknowledge that fact is to turn up on the day and roar



them on at the climax to the whole campaign. There's just one more hurdle to surmount, and it would be a very strange, and very sad, thing if we weren't there to see them do it.

About one thing there is no argument whatsoever. We've won more matches than anyone else and lost fewer. We've scored more points than anyone else, and conceded fewer than everyone except Northampton. And we've done it all by playing some superbly attractive rugby.

We know that. All our opponents know that, and so does every rugby follower in England. If that doesn't make us the best side in the land then I'll never know what does. Whatever happens at Twickenham.

It doesn't really matter whether we end up with another piece of silverware gathering dust on the club's sideboard. Whatever the official view, everyone who knows anything knows that we are the champions of England, even if, God forbid, that fact is never

acknowledged in the official record books, and even if we have to spell it with a small 'c'. And I dare anyone who thinks otherwise to come to Kingsholm and say that in public.

OMINOUS

Stuart Barnes, ever one for a graphic phrase, described the slightly surreal prospect of a merger between Bath and Bristol as "Financial Vandalism".

That may well be so, and I wouldn't want to intrude on private grief, but my mind does go back a few years when London Irish and London Scottish announced that they were going to merge. Well, we all know about London Irish, but whatever happened to London Scottish? Perhaps Bristol supporters would do well to keep that train of events in mind.

So what's it all got to do with us? Quite simply, I think all of us would regret a Kingsholm season without a visit from

both Bath and Bristol, and for that reason, I don't want to see either Bath or Bristol relegated.

About the only cheerful thing to come out of this whole grubby saga so far is the remark made by one Bath supporter interviewed by Sky Sports. "Anyone but Gloucester!" he said, to which the presenter added that he thought Cherry-and-White supporters would agree.

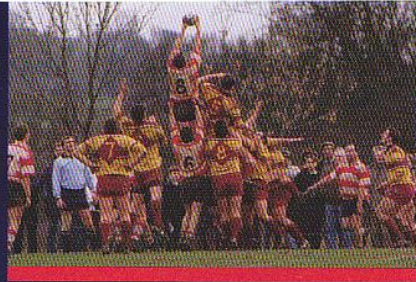
Damn right we would.

SUMMER WELL

This is my last literary epic of the season, and what a pleasure it has been! And I couldn't wish for a better end-of-term assembly than to spend it in the company of the Tigers. The King is dead. Long Live the King!

See you in September. Have a good cricket season. ■

Getting Shirty



Gloucester repay an old favour as Painswick RFC celebrates 130 years

Gloucester repay an old favour as Painswick RFC celebrates 130 years

Painswick RFC is officially the oldest village club in England, a fact commemorated in the Museum of Rugby at Twickenham.

Sir Francis Hyett introduced the game in 1872, and the first match was a 20-a-side affair against Brimscombe Iron Mill. Rugby was a community affair in those days and Painswick had an enthusiastic playing Curate who was instrumental in forming the Club.

Painswick have a proud cup pedigree and came close to Twickenham when knocked out in the Semi-Final of the Tetley Bitter Vase in 1997, having scalped numerous bigger teams along the way.

The club celebrated its 125th Anniversary in 1998 with a gala dinner for 450 players, friends and guests, which will long be remembered and proved what a great club it is.

The Painswick Club also enjoy another little-known first, being the first team to be known as the 'Cherry and Whites' even before their more illustrious neighbours at Kingsholm.

Early games between were played in white or work clothes making it difficult for the players to distinguish who was the opposition. To avoid this difficult situation the Painswick Vicar of the time went home and persuaded his wife to cut up some red curtains for sashes for the home team and the 'Cherry and Whites' were born. Painswick still wear the colours proudly today.

The story goes that Painswick lent Gloucester a set of shirts at their inception - hence their identical colours, but Cherry and Whites from Kingsholm never returned them. Gloucester RFC did help out their neighbours in January 2000, when a colour clash occurred in a Tetley Bitter

Vase tie and Painswick turned out in Gloucester's European Away kit.

To commemorate Painswick's 130th anniversary, and to return the favour done by the village side all those years ago, Gloucester Rugby Club will officially present Painswick RFC with the full set of Championship winning shirts as worn by the Cherry and Whites at Twickenham in June 2002. This will take place at Painswick RFC on Sunday May 25th, before a Painswick XV will take on a Cherry Pickers XV containing a host of Gloucester legends from the 70's 80's and 90's.

"We are absolutely delighted to see this longstanding favour returned by Gloucester, particularly at a time when the club is at the top of English rugby," commented Painswick Chairman Roger Turley. "We also welcome the support of the Gloucester Rugby Supporters Association who have been instrumental in this and other grass roots support projects for so long. We are looking forward to a great day on the 25th and hope to welcome as many Gloucester fans as possible."

A whole festival of rugby is planned at Painswick's Broadham Field ground on Sunday May 25th. Admission will be £2 by programme with proceeds going to the support of the Painswick Community Rugby Project. For more details please visit the Painswick RFC website at www.painswickrfc.co.uk

Painswick RFC 130th Anniversary Rugby Festival

Sunday 25th May 2003
At Painswick RFC, Broadham Fields, Painswick

Painswick XV
V
The Cherry Pickers
(Former Gloucester RFC players)

Commemorative return of Cherry and White shirts to Painswick by Gloucester RFC (as guest team)

Men's Rugby Tournament between Painswick, Hucclecote and Kingsholm Juniors

Barbecue & Fall Bar

Childrens Activities

Car Parking

Gates open at 10 am
Admission £2 by programme
All proceeds will go to The Painswick Community Rugby Project

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130th ANNIVERSARY RUGBY FESTIVAL
SUNDAY 25th MAY
PAINSWICK R.F.C.
THE CHERRY PICKERS

ASSOCIATION WITH RUGBY FOOTBALL FEDERATION

ASSOCIATION WITH RUGBY FOOTBALL FEDERATION

ASSOCIATION WITH RUGBY FOOTBALL FEDERATION



31(17)

GLOUCESTER

Thinus Delpont	15
Marcel Garvey	14
Terry Fanolua	13
Henry Paul	12
Tom Beim	11
Ludovic Mercier	10
Andy Gomarsall	09

Trevor Woodman	01
Olivier Azam	02
Andy Deacon	03
Adam Eustace	04
Mark Cornwell	05
Jake Boer (c)	06
Andy Hazell	07
Junior Paramore	08

Clive Stuart-Smith	16
Simon Amor	17
Robert Todd	18
Chris Collins/Adam Caves	19
Phil Vickery	20
Peter Buxton	21
Rob Fidler	22



13(10)

LIECESTER TIGERS

Tim Stimpson	
John Holtby	
Leon Lloyd	
Freddie Tuilagi	
Geordan Murphy	
Craig McMullen	
Harry Ellis	

Perry Freshwater	
George Chuter	
Darren Garforth	
Martin Johnson	
Louis Deacon	
Martin Corry	
Will Skinner	
Adam Balding	

Luke Abraham	
Ricky Nebbett	
Ben Kay	
Graham Rowntree	
Jamie Hamilton	
Glenn Gelderbloom	
Rod Kafer	



ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FINAL

TWICKENHAM
 Saturday 31st May 2003
 KO 3.30pm
 Ticket Hotlines: 0870 333 0153



THIS WEEKEND'S FIXTURES

Saturday 10 May 2003
 Bath Rugby vs Newcastle Falcons
 London Irish vs Bristol Shoguns
 London Wasps vs NEC Harlequins
 Northampton Saints vs Leeds Tykes
 Saracens vs Sharks

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2002/03

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
Gloucester	21	16	2	3	586	383	6	3	77
London Wasps	21	13	2	6	532	435	6	4	66
Sharks	21	12	2	7	537	436	8	2	62
Northampton Saints	21	12	0	9	484	370	5	5	58
Leeds Tykes	21	12	2	7	472	407	1	5	58
Leicester Tigers	21	12	0	9	435	365	4	3	55
NEC Harlequins	21	8	0	13	436	539	3	5	40
Newcastle Falcons	21	8	0	13	376	521	3	5	40
Saracens	21	7	0	14	465	568	4	5	37
Bristol Shoguns	21	7	1	13	483	592	3	3	36
London Irish	21	7	1	13	391	464	1	4	35
Bath Rugby	21	6	2	13	361	478	1	3	32



4126

LUCKY NUMBERS

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

Ref!Link

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Roy Maybank RFU
 1st T.J: Wayne Barnes RFU
 2nd T.J: Hue Jones-Williams RFU



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