

Gloucester RFC Official Matchday Programme

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Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

v NEC Harlequins

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE

SATURDAY 27TH DECEMBER 2003

KICK-OFF 3.00PM



Matchday Sponsor



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**ZURICH PREMIERSHIP
ROUND-UP**

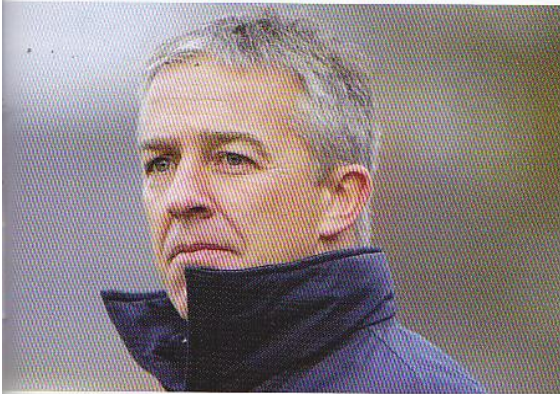
**INTERVIEW WITH
ALEX BROWN**

**ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND
VIEWS FROM KINGS HOLM**

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NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

"Every season brings its highs and lows, that's the beauty of sport..."

Welcome to Kingsholm for our final Zurich Premiership game of the year against NEC Harlequins, and what a fantastic year it has been for rugby union in both Gloucester and England.

Every season brings its highs and lows, that's the beauty of sport, but 2003 was also a special year that will live in all our memories for years to come.

Winning the Powergen Cup at Twickenham in front of a 75,000 capacity crowd was a milestone, but it was the noise and the colour that set this occasion apart from international games at Twickenham, the club game demonstrated just what it is capable of.

Topping the Zurich Premiership table by a clear 15 points after 22 rounds was our reward for a lot of hard work, there was no trophy, no fuss, but we all knew we had achieved something special.

The highs were high, but the lows were low!

Losing out on a final eight place in Europe with defeat in Europe was devastating – it still hurts today. Losing the Zurich Championship Final was a game too far at the end of a long season.

I still can't understand why our League competition is decided by a knock-out Cup. Anyone who tops the Premiership after 22 rounds gets my vote!

Then we had the little matter of World Cup 2003, we had all talked about it, but did we really believe it? Even when we beat New Zealand and Australia in July, we still had our doubts. The opening games were nothing special, we looked shaky against Wales, then it rained, the French withdrew, Australia tried their best, but in the end it was Jonny Wilkinson who sealed it.

I have experienced many emotions in sport, but the

World Cup Final was real theatre and what an advert for the game. My congratulations go to everyone involved with the England team, players, coaches, managers et al.....absolutely fantastic.

Now we all look forward to 2004, a year that I believe will be crucial in determining whether or not we retain the World Cup in 2007.

There are many issues that must be addressed if we are to build on our success. The first has to be the contractual position of our top English players. Their availability for their clubs is becoming less, yet their salaries remain high. It would be simpler for us all if the RFU paid them when they were with England and the clubs paid them when they were with the club.

This in itself doesn't solve the problem, if relegation remains in place, and the English internationals are away, there is no incentive for us to have England internationals at Gloucester – that has to be wrong!

If there was no relegation, we would not chase overseas players, we would develop our own and play the English internationals when they were available. The England team get what they want, we develop new young English players, and we all stay in business – it's as simple as that!!

Whatever happens, I am sure the Premiership is starting to hot up, Europe is poised to be yet another great competition and England will continue to build on their success. Another great year lies ahead.

Finally, a massive thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, we are so proud of you and what you do for this great rugby club.

It is our aim to make 2004 another special year – you deserve it - Happy New Year to you all.



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Jake Boer

Club Captain

"I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and have plenty planned for the new year."

Welcome to the final game at Kingsholm this year. I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and have plenty planned for the new year.

But before next week's celebrations we have a game to win and today we welcome NEC Harlequins to Kingsholm.

Quins have performed very well this season and I think that they've re-ignited what they had a few years back. Mark Evans has a number of quality players, but if I was to pick one out it would be Andre Vos.

He is a big player for Harlequins, he adds so much to their team. As well as a great leader, he has a major impact on those around him including the younger generation. It is a big factor for Quins to have someone like Andre around.

But enough of today's opposition and back to home and the Cherry and Whites.

When you look back at the last 12 months you know that every year has its 'ups' and its 'downs'. But it is good to be able to say that over the last year we've had plenty of 'ups' and thankfully fewer 'downs'.

Remember the Powergen Cup win with the crowds, the game and the party? Remember being top of the Zurich Premiership league table throughout the season?

We ended the regular Zurich Premiership season well, but didn't play at the final at Twickenham.

And of course, with the good comes the not so good and those moments really do hit home. Of course the biggest 'down' was away at Munster in the Heineken Cup.

But you have to take the good with the bad in professional sport.

I don't think that kind of result, such as in Munster, allows you to prepare any differently. It just sticks in the back of your mind.

We thought that we were prepared for that game, but on the day there was something missing, and we need to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

I'd like to think that we as a team have developed and I'm sure that we will be tested again at some point at that level and when that comes, we'll know if we're ready or not.

As well as a memory like Munster sticking around in your mind, so do the good times, and they make you all the more determined to get your hands on more of them.

Having won trophies, all it does it make you more aware of how difficult it is. And you only realise how important it is until you're there at Twickenham with the trophy in your hands.

Moving on to this season, we should have won more games this year, but we need to have shown more consistency. That is the key to success.

Big teams maintain their form and it is difficult to do this, but that is why there are so few sides that dominate sport for long periods of time.

After a mixed set of results during the first half of the season, we're desperate to get back into the top positions. You only have to look at how close the placings are with just a few points and one win separating a large batch of sides.

People say it is a cliché, but you have to take it each game at a time. We've had a couple of good results in recent weeks, but they won't stand for anything if we don't build on it. The only way to do this is to focus on each weekend as it is ahead of you. You get one win, you get another, you get a third – you can then build form, consistency and momentum.

Finally, on behalf of the entire playing set-up at Kingsholm I would like to thank you all for the generous and committed support over the last 12 months.

There have been some good times and a few bad ones, but your support has never dropped and it means a lot I hope you had a good Christmas this week and you have a good new year next week – and most of all enjoy today.

CAPTAIN OF ENGLAND ON HIS DEBUT-!

It's been a busy year at Kingsholm and one person in the thick of it has been director of rugby Nigel Melville. Regular matchday programme columnist Dave King put pen to paper to summarise the Gloucester supremo's life to date.



Some of our members have expressed an interest into the background and playing career of our director of rugby Nigel Melville.

Nigel was born on 6th January 1961 at Leeds. He was educated at Aireborough Grammar School and North East London Polytechnic.

During his playing career at club level he appeared for Otley, Wakefield and Wasps. He was captain of the Yorkshire County Championship team in 1985-86 and made 30 appearances for the White Rose county.

Nigel came from a rugby loving family, for his father Harry played for Otley as a winger. Honours never eluded Nigel and while he was at grammar school he played for England Under 19s versus France at Otley.

Prior to that Nigel had played for Yorkshire Under 16s, North East Counties Under 16s, the North of England, Yorkshire Under 19s, England Schools and England Colts.

Captaincy came early to Nigel. He was only twenty years of age when he led an England 'B' team that played in France in 1981. He also captained the Under 23 team that toured Romania in 1982. Nigel went on further tours to Argentina in 1981 and to the United States of America and Canada in 1982.

Nigel holds the unusual distinction of captaining England on his debut against Australia on the 3rd November 1984. He was the first England player to do so since Joe Mycock of Sale did in 1947. Included in the England line-up that day was Steve Mills from Gloucester. There were five new

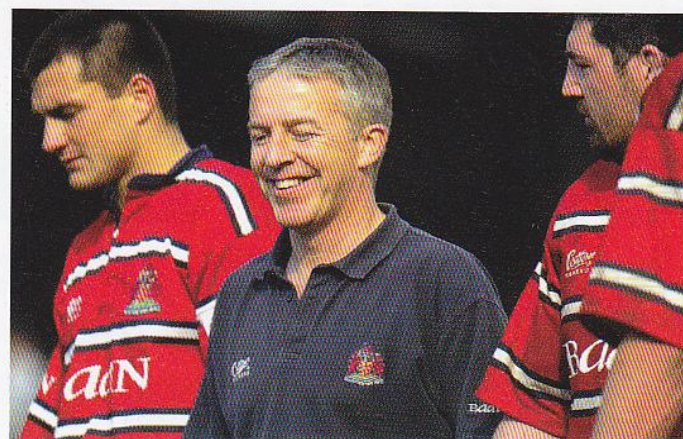
caps in the team.

The England team was: N.Stringer, J.Carleton, R.Loowski, B.Barley, R.Underwood, S.Barnes, N.Melville, G.Chilcott, S.Mills, G.Pearce, J.Rydall, N.Redman, J.Hall, C.Butcher and G.Rees. England lost 19-3

Nigel's next appearance for England was at Lansdowne Road, Dublin in March 1985 in a 13-10 defeat. Paul Dodge of Leicester had taken over the captaincy. He retained the leadership for a further seven internationals.

Ironically in the Lansdowne Road defeat Nigel was injured during the course of the match and replaced by Bath scrum half Richard Hill who in later years took the post of director of rugby at Kingsholm.

In the summer of 1985 England toured New Zealand. Stuart Barnes and Nigel formed the half back partnership in an 18-13 defeat in Christchurch and a 42-15 set back in Wellington. John Orwin appeared in both matches, as did Mike Teague, the



Gloucester back row forward scoring a try in the Christchurch test.

Nigel returned to the mantle of captaincy in the Five Nations Championship of 1985-

Championship versus Ireland leading England to a 35-3 victory. John Orwin also played in all four internationals.

This was Nigel's final appearance for

Following his appointment in 2001, he took the Cherry and Whites straight to Twickenham in the Zurich Championship final and a 28-23 success over Bristol Shoguns.

86. His half back partner throughout the four matches was Rob Andrew. England defeated Wales 21-18 at Twickenham, losing 33-6 to Scotland at Murrayfield, then defeating Ireland 25-20 at Twickenham before succumbing to France in Paris 29-10. Richard Hill again being called upon to replace Nigel in Paris as he had the previous match in Wellington through injury.

Mike Harrison was leading England when Nigel returned to the England line-up in the Five Nations Championship of the 1987-88 season.

The Wakefield winger saw England lose 10-9 to France in Paris, 11-3 to Wales at Twickenham, before Nigel replaced him as Captain in a 9-6 victory over Scotland at Murrayfield, Nigel playing in all three matches. Nigel resumed the captaincy for the final match of the Five Nations

England. For the musically minded this was the first match that an England crowd had rendered 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'!

There was always a consensus of opinion that injury curtailed what would have been a long international career. A spinal injury sustained on the British Lions tour to New Zealand in 1983 restricted the scrum half to one appearance. When he appeared for Major Stanley's XV versus Oxford University once again he suffered injury.

13 caps was a meagre return for such talent but no one can deny to captain England on your debut and on a further six occasions is a tribute few will encounter.

After his England appearances he moved into coaching and it was his canny influence that led Wasps to their first League title success when they won the Courage League Championship in the 1996-97 season.

In May 1999 he guided Wasps to victory in

the 1999 Tetley's Bitter Cup Final when they defeated Rob Andrew's Newcastle 29-19 a match in which Andy Gomarsall featured at scrum half. Darren Molloy who was on loan last season was one of the London club's props that May day. The following year he retained the Tetley Bitter Cup beating Northampton in the final Prior to that Wasps had lost four times at Twickenham!

Started coaching at Otley in 1988, won North 1, National 4 and National 3 taking them to the First Division. One the Yorkshire Cup with Otley.

Coached Yorkshire U21's to win the County Championship Final (beating Gloucestershire at Otley in the semi final, the Fortey brothers were playing in the front row!

Coached England U21 in SANZAR World Championship, England came fourth.

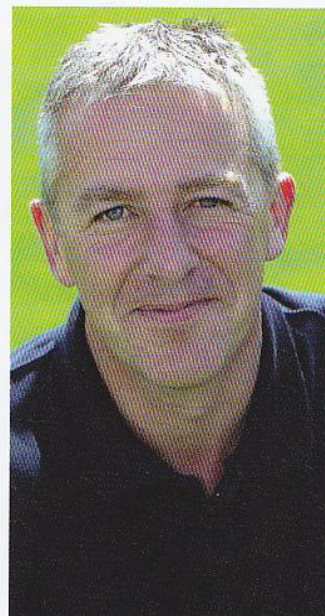
So, cups and titles have not eluded Nigel, and upon his appointment to the post of director of rugby at Kingsholm, he has led the Club to immediate success.

Following his appointment in 2001, he took the Cherry and Whites straight to Twickenham in the Zurich Championship final and a 28-23 success over Bristol Shoguns.

12 months later Gloucester lifted the Powergen Cup at Twickenham with a 44-20 victory versus Northampton. Last season Gloucester also finished top of the Zurich Premiership during the regular 22-game season.

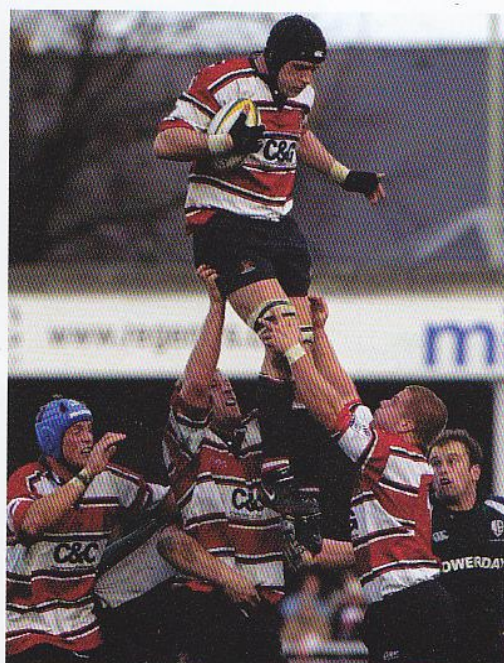
Nigel David Melville – A man with a 'Midas' touch?

By David King



CHERRY & WHITES RECORD WITH NIGEL MELVILLE INC ZURICH, POWERGEN & EUROPEAN MATCHES

(inc & up to the Benetton Treviso Heineken European Cup match)



OVERALL

P	W	D	L	F	A
54	38	2	14	1612	1069

HOME

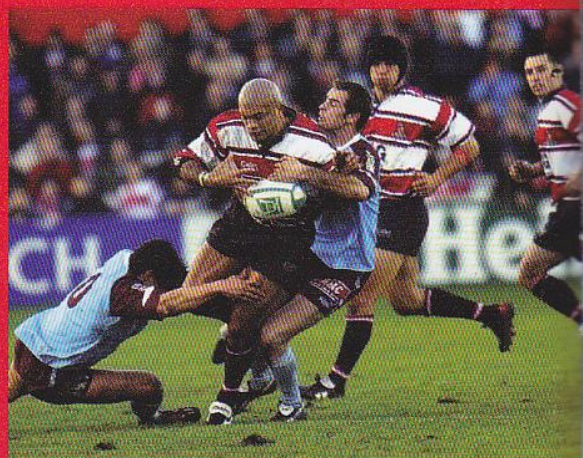
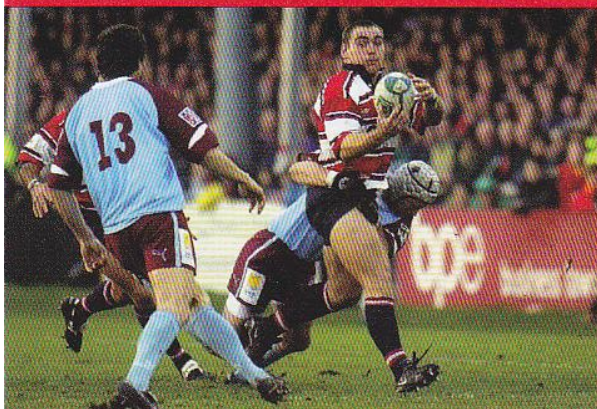
P	W	D	L	F	A
25	23	0	2	859	366

AWAY

P	W	D	L	F	A
26	14	2	10	695	613

NEUTRAL GROUNDS

P	W	D	L	F	A
3	1	0	2	58	90



KINGSHOLM SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER 2003



GLOUCESTER 49

TRIES: EUSTACE, SIMPSON-DANIEL (2), PAUL, GARVEY, FANOLUA

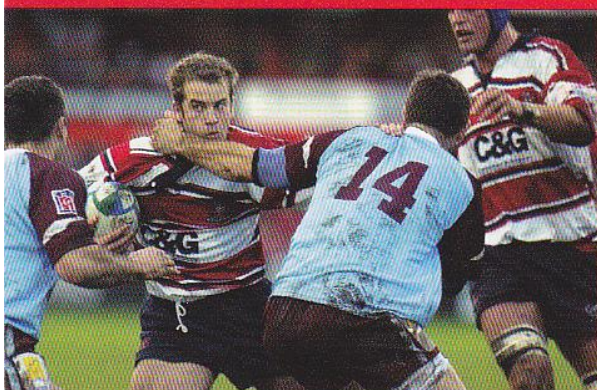
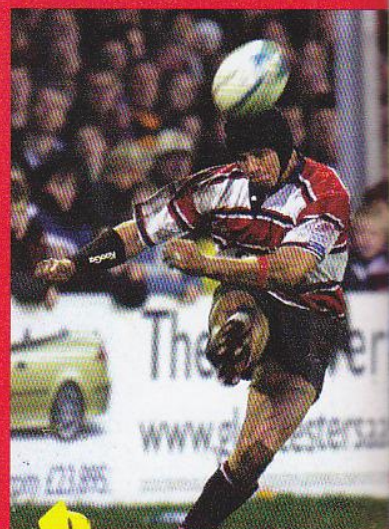
CONVERSIONS: PAUL (5) PENALTIES: PAUL (3)



BOURGOIN 13

TRIES: CHABAL

CONVERSIONS: PECLIER PENALTIES: PECLIER (2)



top left: Trevor Woodman prepares to pass as Bourgoin's Julien Bonnaire tackles. top right: Robert Todd is tackled by Bourgoin's Benjamin Boyet (left) and Anthony Peclier. middle: Henry Paul converts Terry Fanolua's try. bottom left: James Simpson-Daniel is tackled by Bourgoin's Mickael Forest (left) and Anthony Forest. bottom right: Terry Fanolua scores a second half try.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Sealbrook - GPA Images



Teams

Gloucester:

Delpont, Garvey, Todd, Paul, Simpson-Daniel, McRae, Gomarsall, Woodman, Fortey, Vickery, Eustace, Brown, Boer, Buxton, Paramore.

Replacements: Fanolua for Todd (71), Deacon for Vickery (48), Cornwell for Boer (67).

Not Used: Collins, Roncero, Hazell, Page.

Bourgoin:

Peclier, M. Forest, Davis, Fritz, Coux, Boyet, A. Forest, Pucciarello, Cabello, Peyron, Pierre, Bonnaire, Chabal, Raschi, Cape.

Replacements: Zhakata for Peclier (61), James for Boyet (77), Bonrepaux for Cabello (67), Bonet for Peyron (56), Stolz for Pierre (60), Cailliet for Cape (67).

Not Used: Campeggia.

Att: 11,000

Ref: Alan Lewis (Ireland).

top: Philippe Saint-Andre salutes Gloucester supporters in the shed just before kick off.

Gloucester's Henry Paul and James Simpson-Daniel played starring roles as the Cherry and Whites recorded their second successive Heineken Cup victory to top Pool Five.

Centre Paul amassed 24 points, while wing speedster Simpson-Daniel scored two second-half tries in three minutes that ended the game as a contest.

Gloucester's back-to-back European appointments with Munster in the new year will now prove key to the outcome of Pool Five.

Gloucester's display in the third quarter was breathtaking, as they rattled up 28 points, including tries for Simpson-Daniel (two), Paul and lock Adam Eustace.

Wing Marcel Garvey added a fifth try eight minutes from time as Gloucester also clinched a bonus point for posting four touchdowns or more, and Samoa World Cup centre Terry Fanolua completed the rout.

Bourgoin had no answer to such pace and invention, and it meant a disappointing Kingsholm return for the French club's coach and former Gloucester rugby director Philippe Saint-Andre. Saint-Andre received a rapturous reception from the Gloucester supporters, but his team were quickly on the back foot.

Paul landed a first-minute penalty, and Simpson-Daniel looked sharp, twice making threatening early runs. Gloucester were slow to build on their promising opening though, and after centre Robert Todd was penalised for a late tackle on Alexandre Peclier, Bourgoin moved up field and Peclier levelled the scores with a 15th-minute strike from 30 metres.

Peclier added another penalty eight minutes later. A superb Duncan McRae break - and equally stunning pick-up off the floor by Paul - briefly had Bourgoin reeling and when they infringed 20 metres

out, Paul slotted his second penalty. Peclier found his range eight minutes before half-time, levelling things at 6-6, before Paul kicked a penalty to see it stand at 9-6 at the interval.

Gloucester knew they had to step up a gear in the second period, and there was an immediate sense of urgency.

McRae made another menacing break, and scrum-half Andy Gomarsall then scurried away to within sight of the Bourgoin line.

The Bourgoin defence was stretched in all directions, and Gomarsall fired possession out from a ruck. Quick passing between captain Jake Boer and Simpson-Daniel allowed an unmarked Eustace to touch down in the corner.

Paul preserved his 100% goalkicking record by landing the touchline conversion, before Gloucester lost Vickery. He was replaced by veteran Andy Deacon.

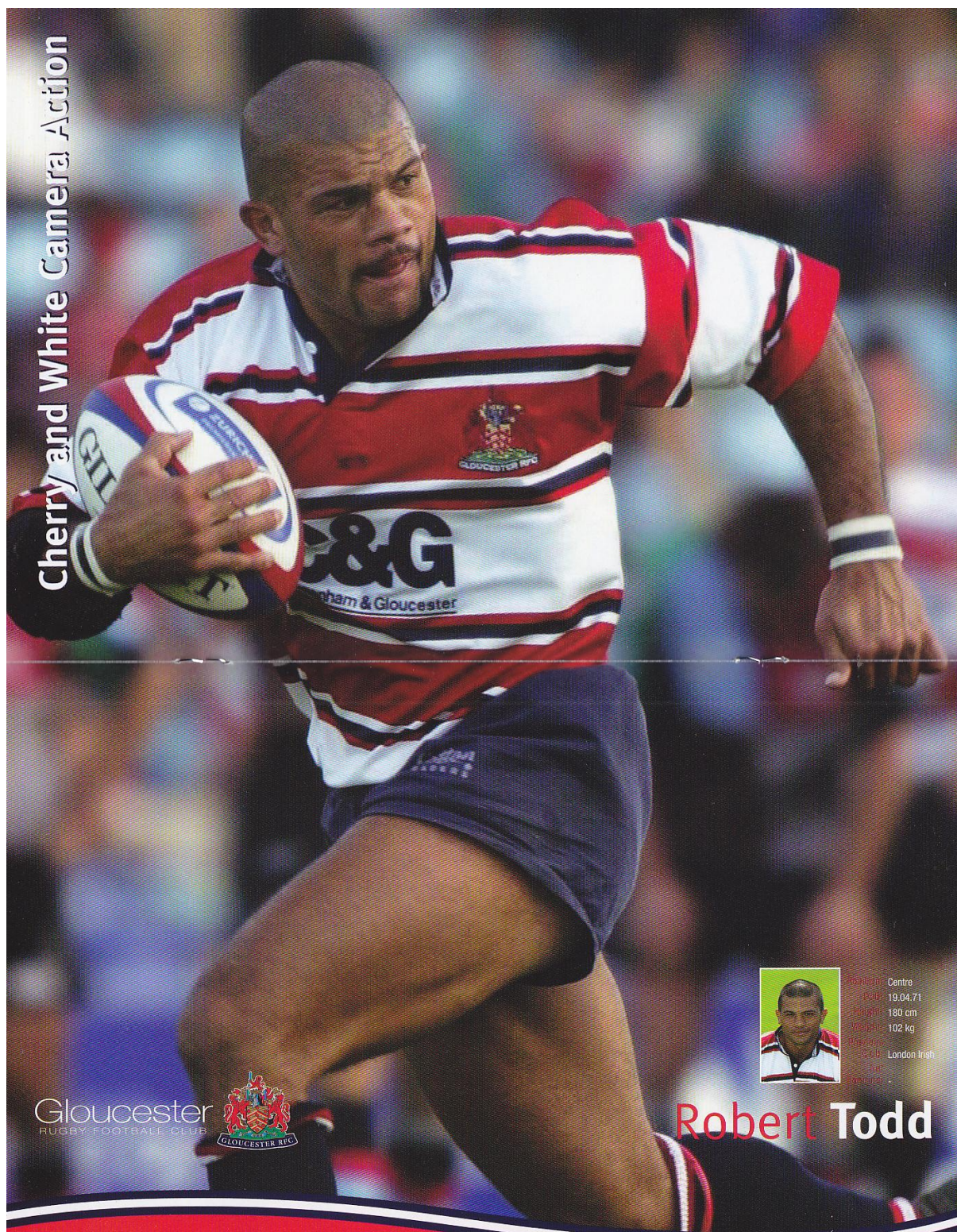
Bourgoin quickly reduced the arrears when Gomarsall failed to deal with a steeping kick, and France World Cup flanker Sebastien Chabal gathered a kind bounce to touch down. Peclier converted. But from 16-13, Gloucester put the game out of Bourgoin's reach with two Simpson-Daniel tries in three minutes.

His first was the result of a speculative kick through from Todd, and then he sprinted 60 metres for a second touchdown.

Paul converted both scores, and then claimed a try of his own that he also converted after McRae kicked cleverly into space. Gloucester had scored 28 points and four tries in 20 minutes to leave Bourgoin reeling.

Garvey's late score took them past 40 points, with the result serving emphatic notice that Gloucester mean business in Europe this season, and Fanolua's closing effort rubbed further salt into Bourgoin's wounds.

Cherry and White Camera Action



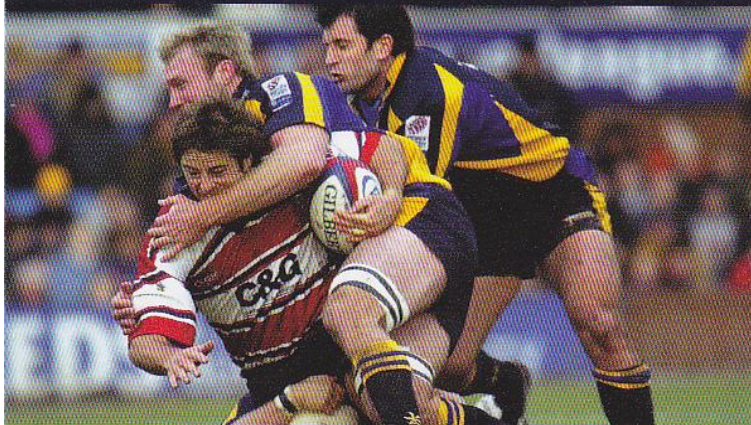
Position: Centre
DOB: 19.04.71
Height: 180 cm
Weight: 102 kg
Place of Birth: London, Irish
Club: Gloucester

Gloucester
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB


Robert Todd

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HEADINGLEY SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER 2003



LEEDS TYKES 22

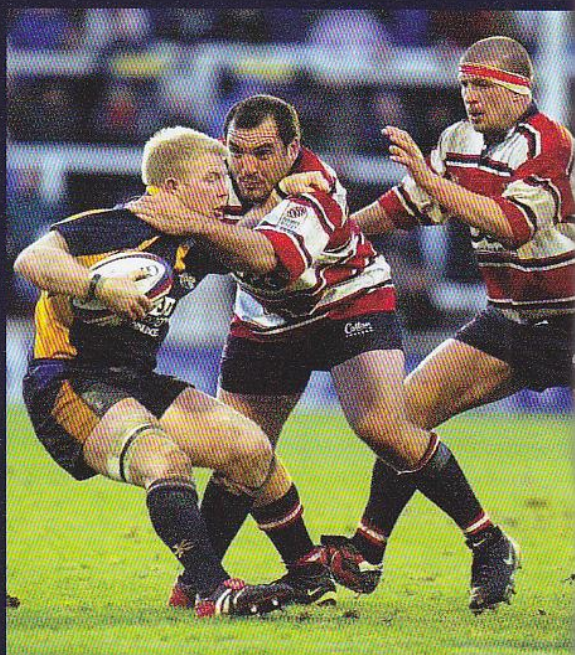
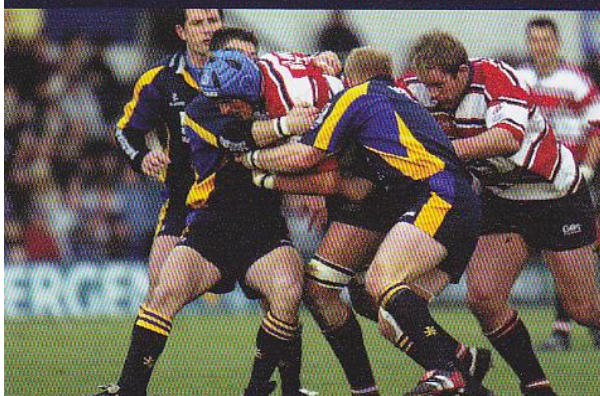
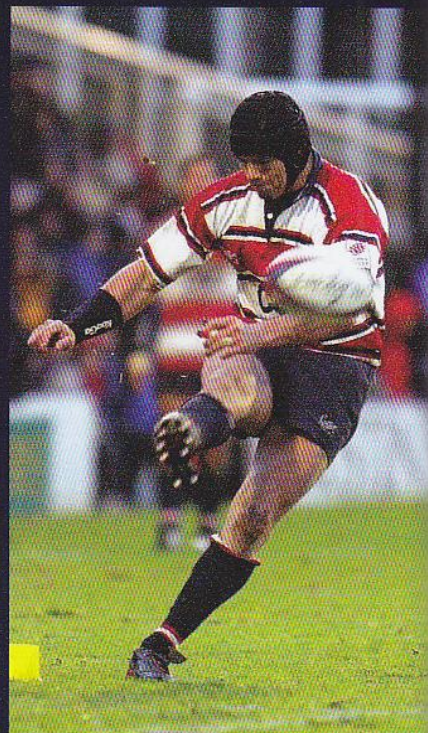
TRIES: **HOLT** CONVERSION: **ROSS**

PENALTIES: **ROSS** (5)



GLOUCESTER 18

PENALTIES: **PAUL** (6)



top left: Andy Gomarsall tackled by Leeds Matt Salter. top right: Henry Paul.

bottom left: Alex Brown is tackle by Leeds Clive Stuart-Smith (right). bottom right: Rodrigo Roncero tackles Leeds Clive Stuart-Smith.

Pictures courtesy of Bruce Seabrook - GPA Images

Peter Arnold

Peter Arnold looks at local rugby and a few moments from the last 12 months.

CAN WE HAVE OUR BALL BACK ?

I hope you're having a super Christmas, and while I thoroughly approve of the statutory over-indulgence that the Festive Season brings, I trust that it won't affect your vocal cords this afternoon.

I can't help feeling a bit sorry for the players at this time of year. In the old days the equivalent match to this one would be a thoroughly enjoyable run-out against the likes of Lydney or Old Merchant Tailors. The games were always well supported, and gave an opportunity to work off hangovers and Christmas bloat. It's not like that nowadays of

course. Santa has only just had time to disappear back up the chimney before the lads have to start thinking about a stern Premiership test with points at stake, and I'd have thought that a diet of Christmas pudding and mince pies is a decided no-no.

My own problem is rather different. Printers and allied trades are perfectly entitled to a seasonal break like everyone else, and in my experience, they tend to celebrate rather well, which is fair enough, but it does mean that programme production schedules go all to cock, if you'll pardon the expression. In fact, I'm penning these notes a full two weeks before the match.

This does give me a chance to return to

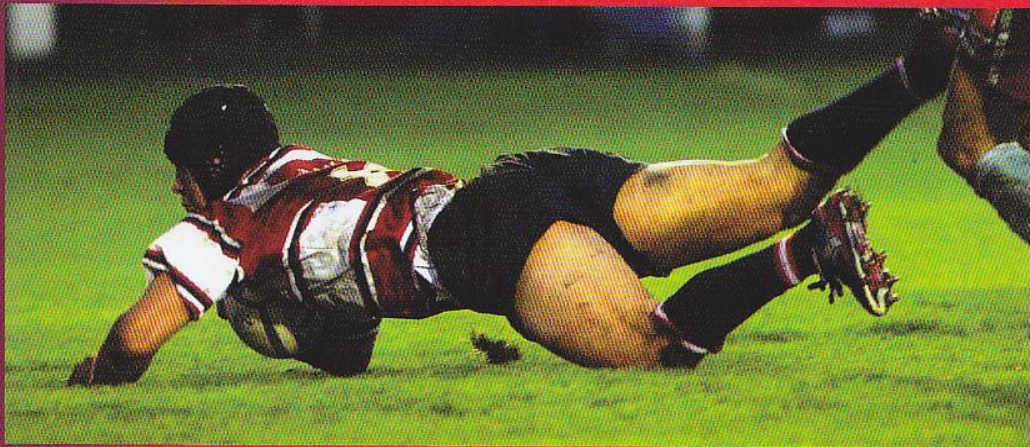
topics that I haven't found space for earlier. For example, I was somewhat amused to learn that the Australian Minister for Sport has appealed for the return of the ball with which Jonny Wilkinson dropped the decisive goal and which disappeared without trace in the general post-match euphoria. I would have thought there's about as much chance of that happening as I have of stopping James Simpson Daniel, and we shall probably never know if it was an Aussie or Pom who half-inched the thing.

The appeal made me think about all the balls which disappear over the Shed, week by week, and which arrive back safely. June Ayland, a past Mayoress of Gloucester, remembers how, as a small girl living in St. Mark's Street, she was stationed, by her father, in her back garden on match days with instructions to heave any wayward balls back over the fence.

One chap who didn't get all his balls back was the fellow who ran the coconut shy at the fair in Gloucester Park. Brian 'Bomber' Wells, legendary off-spinner for Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire, and a fair rugby player, himself, in his day tells how he and his mates used to station themselves behind the stall and decamp with any wooden balls which came over the top. They would then wrap them in layers of insulating tape until they approximated to the size of a cricket ball.

Must have been quite heavy. No wonder the Bomber could turn the ball square on





almost anything.

Last I heard of Brian, he wasn't all that well. We hope he's better now, and enjoying his Christmas.

TON UP GOING WELL

I had a little session with Norman Partridge recently, which is always a pleasure. He's fit and well and sends seasonal greetings to all his old friends, acquaintances and opponents who happen to be around Kingsholm today.

There are an awful lot of those. Norman has been a familiar figure around the local rugby scene for more years than most of us can remember, and is currently President of Gloucester Old Boys Rugby Football Club, with which he has been associated for a very long time. This year the club celebrates its Centenary, and Norman tells me that the various events held to celebrate that fact are going well, which is nice to hear.

For those who don't know, Gloucester Old Boys was originally formed to provide a club for former pupils of crypt, Sir Thomas Rich's and King's Schools and I'm told that there is no truth in the rumour that Norman Partridge is a founder member.

Over the years the club has produced many

fine players, up to and including International performers, as indeed have the three schools involved in its foundation.

It's ironic that, while Gloucester Old Boys RFC is celebrating its Centenary, two of the three schools concerned in its formation are threatened with closure by an education authority which couldn't care less about either history or rugby.

HOW'S THAT AGAIN ?

We get some pretty odd reporting in the rugby press from time to time, but surely, a headline I spotted recently must qualify as the weirdest of 2003. It read:

INDIANS TO FACE PIDDLE TEST

"Good Lord" I thought, "I've never come across a side from India, and what have they done to be subjected to mass drug testing?" But it wasn't that, neither was it a reference to an even more extreme form of the sort of water torture to which the South Africans were subjected in training for the World Cup.

In fact, nothing is to be done to them from a great height at all. The story is that an Indian national side is to play its first game on foreign soil. The opposition is to be provided by an Evesham President's XV, and the game is to be played in the Worcestershire village of Piddle.

Good for them. The subcontinent is about the only sizeable part of the world that, to all intents and purposes, doesn't seem to play much rugby, which is odd, because the Calcutta Cup originated in India, after all. I don't think England or Australia needs quake in their athletic supporters just yet, but it's good to see them having a go.

And I did like the headline.

QUOTE OF THE YEAR

"It says everything about England that they can win the World Cup while leaving James Simpson Daniel at home"

Philippe St. André

No further comment on that is required from me. But haven't we had an amazing year! Plumbing the depths, as in the Wasps play off, and scaling the heights as in the Powergen Cup win.

And remember:

Gloucester had an open-top bus parade before England did. What Gloucester does today, England does tomorrow.

If 2004 is as enthralling as 2003 has been, we'll consider ourselves fortunate.

Have a wonderful 2004, everyone. See you then.

alex brown

Alex Brown

Position: Lock

DoB: 17.05.79

Height: 200 cm

Weight: 110 kg

Previous Bristol

Club: Shoguns

Int'

Honours: England (A)



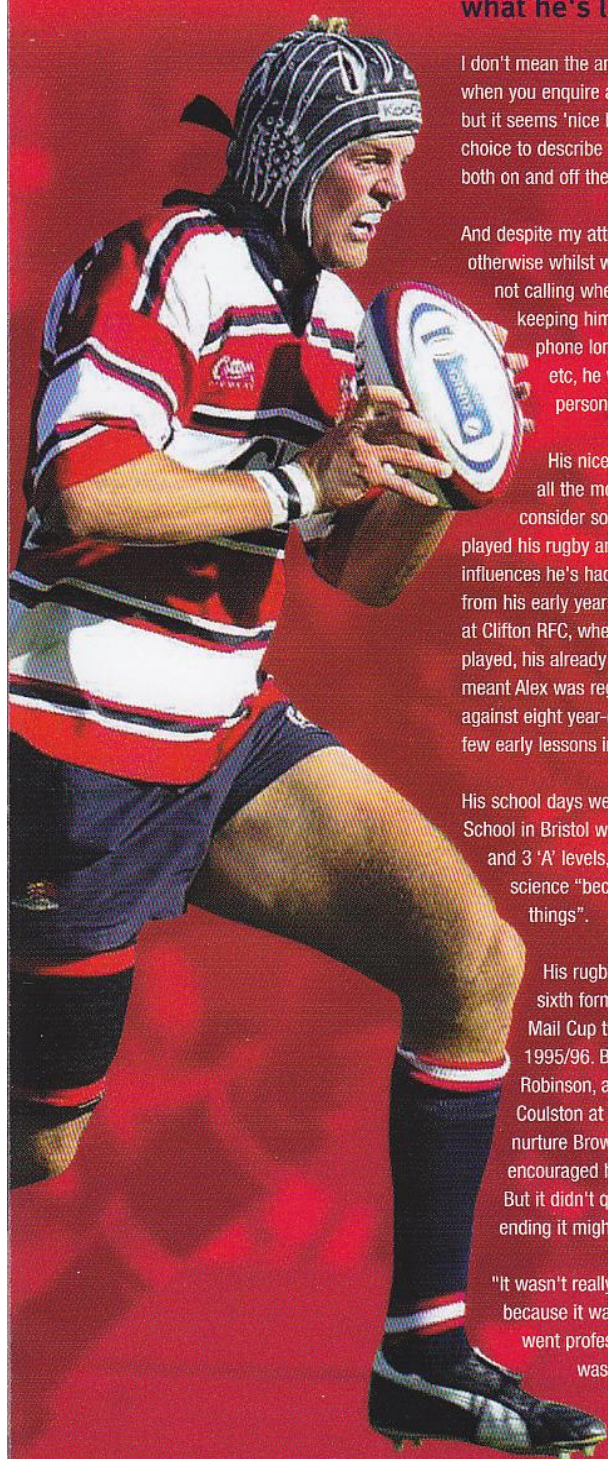
For the very first time in a Gloucester Rugby Club matchday programme article, Sky Sports' Tracey McKay wears her writing hat and had a chat with second row sensation Alex Brown.



by Tracey McKay

SKY SPORTS

For all the latest visit | www.gloucester rugbyclub.com



Ask pretty much anyone who knows Alex Brown what he's like and you'll get a two-word answer.

I don't mean the answer you might get when you enquire about some players, but it seems 'nice bloke' is the phrase of choice to describe the 24 year-old lock, both on and off the pitch.

And despite my attempts to prove otherwise whilst writing this feature - not calling when I said I would, keeping him nattering on the phone long after his bedtime etc, he was politeness personified.

His nice-bloke image seems all the more curious when you consider some of the places he's played his rugby and with some of the influences he's had along the way. Even from his early years of playing aged five at Clifton RFC, where his dad also played, his already increasing frame meant Alex was regularly lined up against eight year-olds, which meant a few early lessons in self-preservation.

His school days were spent at Coulston's School in Bristol where he got 10 GCSEs and 3 'A' levels, favourite subject science "because I like logical things".

His rugby progressed and his sixth form team won the Daily Mail Cup two years in a row in 1995/96. Bath scrum half Andy Robinson, and head of sport at Coulston at the time, was keen to nurture Brown's talent and encouraged him along to The Rec. But it didn't quite have the fairytale ending it might have.

"It wasn't really the best timing because it was just after the game went professional and there wasn't really an established academy set-up at Bath so I didn't get to play much

rugby," said Brown.

So, after six months, keen for the youngster not to get discouraged, Andy Robinson got in touch with Eddie Butler, one of the directors at Pontypool who invited Alex to play there - an 18-month experience he describes with a reminiscent chuckle as 'an eye-opener'.

"It was pretty evil stuff, quite nasty. As an eighteen year-old I learnt a few lessons, the coach David Bishop was intimidating but also one of the most inspirational people I've ever met."

Then came the offer to play for Bristol, a place he subsequently spent four years, and where he first came across two of the most notorious second rows in the country, Dean Ryan and Garath Archer.

"As a 19 year old I'd heard so much about them, there was a mixture of respect and intimidation, but I learnt a lot from them."

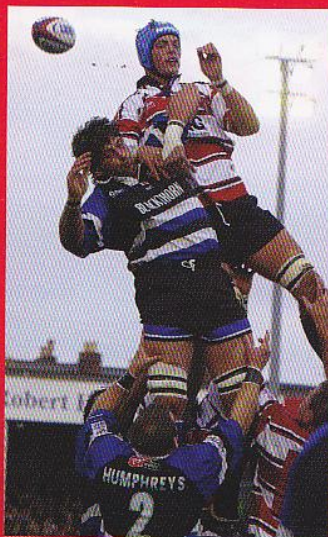
At this point I can't help asking how on earth he's managed to keep an almost perfect discipline record and his nice-bloke reputation in tact.

"Ah yes, I see what you mean, and sometimes I do get a bit of red-mist on the pitch but maybe where someone like Garath Archer is concerned we have a different mental approach to the game."

At the time Dean Ryan was player/coach at Bristol.

"Dean was at the top of his game, but he had a lot of pressure on him and he seemed to be doing everything by himself, he'd carry everything on his shoulders. When he left the club there was a big void."

What happened in the following 12 months at Bristol, culminating in their relegation at the end of last season, has



been well documented but for the players involved, like Brown, who were born and brought up in the town, the demise of the club was a traumatic experience.

"It was gutting for me as for all the players, especially those who had nowhere to go. It was also hard for my Dad, as he used to play for Bristol. His heart is still very much there so it was difficult for him to change allegiance, but he's excited for me to be playing at Gloucester".

Despite the move to Kingsholm, Alex is still based in Bristol where he owns a couple of properties and lives with ex-team mate and best friend Jim Brownrigg.

There is no doubting his ability to hold his own amongst the Gloucester forwards. A pack renowned throughout the rugby world as one of the most formidable and merciless - the same could be said for its' supporters.

"Coming to Kingsholm as an opponent was very scary, I dreaded the times we had to play here, but now I love it. I've never met a crowd like it in the Premiership or anywhere else".

It's no secret that Ryan is a tough and demanding coach who expects a lot from his players but Brown's previous experience of the man has been an

obvious benefit.

"He used to be a shouter but isn't so much anymore, and although we are quite different we do think in similar ways...it also helps that I know his playing weaknesses so if he gives me any grief I can always throw that back!"

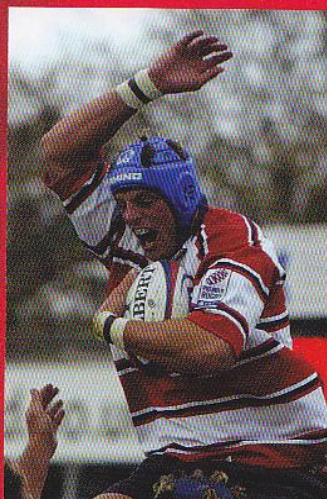
An obvious goal for Brown is the World Cup in 2007 and having the current England squad members back at the club after such a fantastic achievement has been a great boost for the team.

"Having them back has made a big difference, the feeling in the squad is good and training is definitely better, it's really nice to talk to them and learn from their experience".

For now though Alex's concentration is firmly on today's Premiership clash with Harlequins, the only club in the league with no ex-Bristol players in the line-up.

As far as the long distance future goes I ask him what he thinks he'll be doing in 10 years time.

"Oh I don't know, I'll definitely still be involved in rugby no doubt they'll still be wheeling me out on the pitch". And from what I can gather they'll probably also still be saying, he might be a bit battered but he's a really nice bloke.



The real Alex Brown

Favourite Film – Top Gun

Favourite Book - Touching the Void

Favourite Food – fish food (*assume anything to do with fish as opposed to flakes*)

Favourite Drink – Wine or Jack Daniels and coke

Person I'd most like to have dinner with – "it really should be someone important like Winston Churchill or someone shouldn't it.... Erm... I'll go for Keira Knightly."

Person most look forward to playing against – anyone who challenges him in his position like Ben Kay, Martin Johnson.

Person least look forward to playing against – Jerry Collins or Trevor Leota

Favourite TV – The Rugby Club, football (only big games though, no specific club)

Music – Red Hot Chilli Peppers; most chart stuff, R&B, hard core rap (depends on mood)

Hobbies— Going to the Cinema (last saw 'Love Actually' - Keira Knightly gets her second mention); doing anything active (further mentions of Knightly are banned at this point), mountain biking, water skiing, squash, tennis, golf.

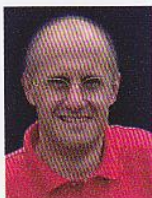
Party trick – hasn't got one (but open to suggestions)

What annoys him – people asking his height

[illegible]

BY IAN RANDALL

BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE



BBC Radio Gloucestershire's Ian Randall looks back in time and this year's Heineken Cup in his regular article for the matchday programme.

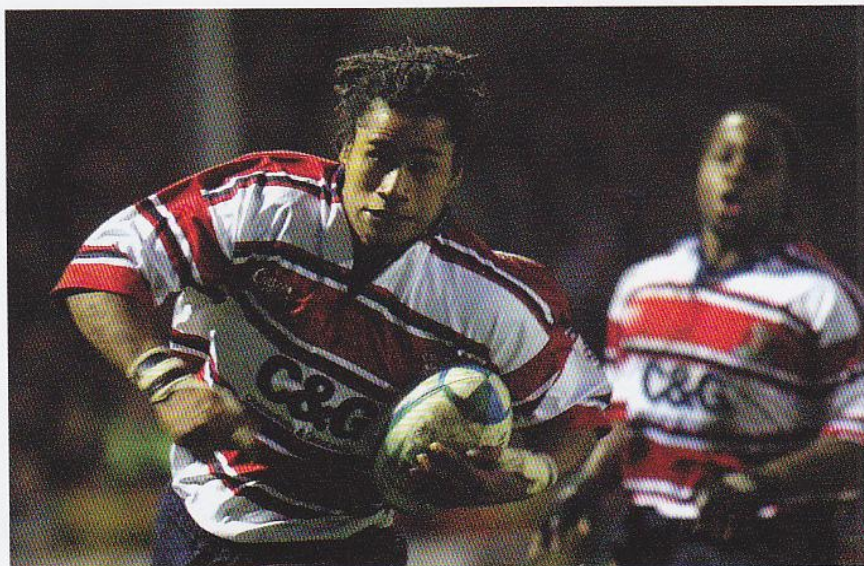
In 2004, Gloucester Rugby Club is 131 years old. They will have played on the same ground for 113 years, and although the shirt design may have changed in modern times, Gloucester's colours have been red and white since the Club borrowed a set of kit from Painswick Rugby Club in the 1800's.

"...the glamour and level of competition in Europe has turned the Heineken Cup into the ultimate prize..."

The village side truly were the original "cherry and whites", but while they compete this season in the Gloucestershire Premier Division, their near neighbours are now, in rugby terms, a world away. The numbers on the shirts may be the same, but that's about all.

Nigel Melville is Gloucester's chief plate spinner on the playing side. He has built up his stock after winning the Zurich play offs in 2002 and the Powergen Cup last season, and it could be argued that winning at Twickenham is the logical stepping stone to greater glory. The usual yardstick for players, management and supporters alike is the league, but increasingly the glamour and level of competition in Europe has turned the Heineken Cup into the ultimate prize, and former skipper Phil Vickery is expecting the excitement to match Gloucester's previous seasons in the competition.

'The Heineken Cup is the big thing to me because it's the highest level you can play at with your club. I've said before there are no weak sides and you want to be in it every year because that's the only way you learn how to play against these teams and compete with them. Days like the quarter final against Llanelli are special. Kingsholm was teeming and it was brilliant to be involved and to beat another traditional club with good players in a good team. The bonus points will



Fans Zone

with
Bob Fenton

Regular programme contributor Bob Fenton finds time over the festive period to pen a few words

With the Christmas period taking a few days out of the matchday programme schedule I am writing this stuff well in advance of today's game, so if anything looks horribly out of date, I apologise.

It's not as if the boys themselves get much time off, the days of

"...the first half of the year probably had more ups and downs and twists and turns than anything you are likely to find at Blackpool."

professionalism probably mean that the traditional turkey, Christmas pud and heaps of booze have long gone out of the window, to be replaced by some macrobiotic nonsense that would not look out of place on Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin's table.

Fortunately we are not all governed by such rigours, and can now manoeuvre our by now Westy-like girths into position for today's game against Harlequins.

Actually Harlequins was the last game I saw at Kingsholm before today – no not last season, but the 'A' team fixture a few weeks ago.

On a freezing cold night together with a few hundred other hardy souls I watched our up and coming players – people like Rodrigo Roncero, Paul Johnstone and another unknown, Terry Fanolua – send Harlequins crashing to a four-try defeat.

Actually name checking those three isn't fair on the other lads. If you haven't had a chance to do so, get along and watch these boys play, we have some real up and coming talent in our junior ranks.

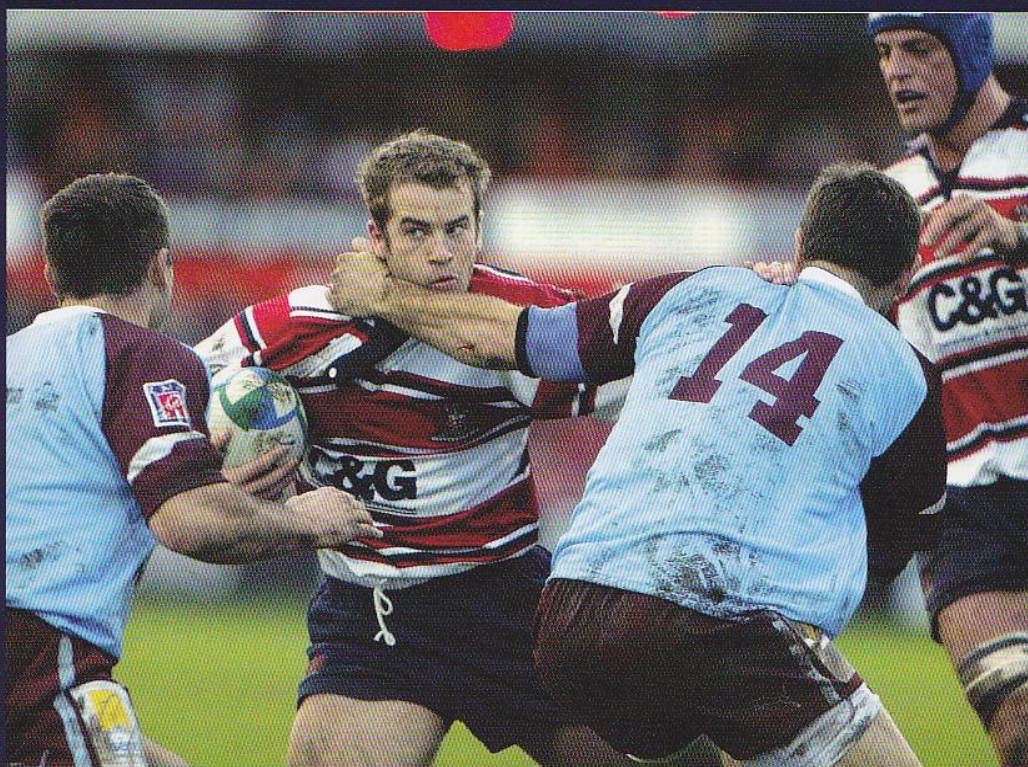
We've had a site of some: Rory Teague, Brad Davis, Alex Page and Jon Goodridge all had runs in the first team, but others – too many to mention – will not be far behind. And if you haven't checked out the exceptional player that is James Merriman then you don't know what you are missing.

Get down one night and see for yourself, if you have a season ticket then it won't cost you anything either. Give them your support, after all this is the only Gloucester side to win at the Wreck this millennium, having destroyed their counterparts 58 – 12 in the opening game.

My only gripe is the name, that is to say the 'A' league. Do they arrive in a big black van full of gadgets, guns and explosives? Is one of them half mad, while another is a dapper cool dude? Is one a huge muscle-bound lump of humanity? Should they run out to a series of explosions and an over-the-top theme tune... Actually there's a thought, we could all download the theme onto our mobiles and ring each other up when they run out...

Anyway, as this is the last of my columns for the year, perhaps it's a chance to look back on the roller coaster affair that was 2003. In fact the first half of the year probably had more ups and downs and twists and turns than anything you are likely to find at Blackpool.

Back to back games against Munster saw a great home victory –



unfortunately in both countries, and even more unfortunately theirs was slightly more great than ours. Looking back, those of us who made the trip – and there were many – were privileged to see one of the great games of club rugby. The result didn't go our way and we went out of the competition, but Munster deserved it. The atmosphere before, during and after the match was like nothing I'd ever experienced before. Just a shame I won't be able to go back to watch us exact our revenge on them in a few weeks time.

Then we had the great uncontested scrums debate after dumping Leicester out of the Powergen Cup at Frankenstein's Gardens. No complaints from them or the referee, but oddly a complaint from the RFU officer responsible for ordering rubber bands led to a few uncomfortable days before the result was confirmed. Strange how it transpired that he was once associated with Leicester wasn't it...

And who will forget the away match at Sale? Needing a win to clinch the league title (but not a trophy) the match was a blinder, ending in a well deserved draw. The travelling Shed was at it's strongest, and completely fired up, not least by the scantily clad girls wandering around dolling out free booze. And to top it all Ludo nearly nicked the result with two huge drop goal attempts.

The Powergen Cup final was an absolute joy. Vast swathes of Twickenham turned cherry and white, and the boys turned on a super-show to blow Northampton away. Who will forget Ludo's interception, and that complete mix-up between Steve Thompson and Motormouth Dawson... The celebrations went on and on. And on...

The league (but no trophy) was clinched at home to Harlequins, but the lack of recognition dampened the celebrations a bit. Jake and the boys did their best by showering the crowd with

Champagne though.

Of course all that went pear-shaped in the farce-final, as we failed to perform. Best comment on that match has to go to the journalist who mused that it may have been better if Ludo had missed his kick at goal. "... that way Gloucester's score would have mirrored the fixture – pointless..." he wrote. Still that's all water under the bridge, and we don't need to mention it again – well not until Wasps come to town towards the end of the season.

This season we've climbed back on the roller coaster, and so far the ride has not disappointed as we hit the highs of victory, and sink to the lows of defeat. Where will this season end? Who knows, that's the beauty of sport. Great fun being a Gloucester fan, isn't it.

Have a happy new year.

TRY
CONVERSION
PENALTY
DROP GOAL

GLOUCESTER

Thinus Delpont	15
Marcel Garvey	14
Robert Todd	13
Henry Paul	12
James Simpson-Daniel	11
Duncan McRae	10
Andy Gomarsall	09
Trevor Woodman	01
Chris Fortey	02
Andy Deacon	03
Adam Eustace	04
Alex Brown	05
Jake Boer (c)	06
Peter Buxton	07
Junior Paramore	08
Chris Collins	16
Rodrigo Roncero	17
Paul Johnstone	18
Mark Cornwell	19
James Merriman	20
Alex Page	21
Terry Fanolua	22



fullback

wing

centre

centre

wing

flyhalf

scrumhalf

prop

hooker

prop

lock

lock

flanker

flanker

no. 8

replacements

NEC HARLEQUINS

TRY
CONVERSION
PENALTY
DROP GOAL

Gavin Duffy	15
George Harder	14
Will Greenwood	13
Mel Deane	12
Simon Keogh	11
Andy Dunne	10
Scott Bemand	09
Ceri Jones	01
Tani Fuga	02
Jon Dawson	03
Bill Davison	04
Jim Evans	05
Roy Winters	06
Andre Vos (c)	07
Tony Diprose	08
James Hayter	16
Jason Leonard	17
Laurent Gomez	18
Karl Rudzki	19
Kai Horstmann	20
Adrian Jarvis	21
Chris Bell	22

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2003/04

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
Bath Rugby	12	11	0	1	293	154	2	1	47
London Wasps	12	8	0	4	333	231	3	2	37
London Irish	12	8	0	4	269	231	1	3	36
Northampton Saints	12	7	1	4	334	268	4	1	35
Sale Sharks	12	5	2	5	293	236	2	5	31
NEC Harlequins	12	6	1	5	282	246	2	2	30
Gloucester	12	6	0	6	237	207	1	3	28
Newcastle Falcons	12	5	0	7	273	249	2	5	27
Leeds Tykes	12	5	0	7	279	336	3	1	24
Leicester Tigers	12	4	1	7	216	273	0	2	19
Saracens	12	4	1	7	215	340	1	1	18
Rotherham Titans	12	0	0	12	151	404	0	1	1

1667

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Tony Spreadbury RFU

1st TJ: Paul Emerson RFU

2nd TJ: Huw Jones-Williams RFU

Replacement Referee: Dave Rose RFU

Today's Result

Gloucester 18

Harlequins 17

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