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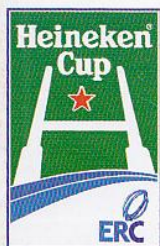
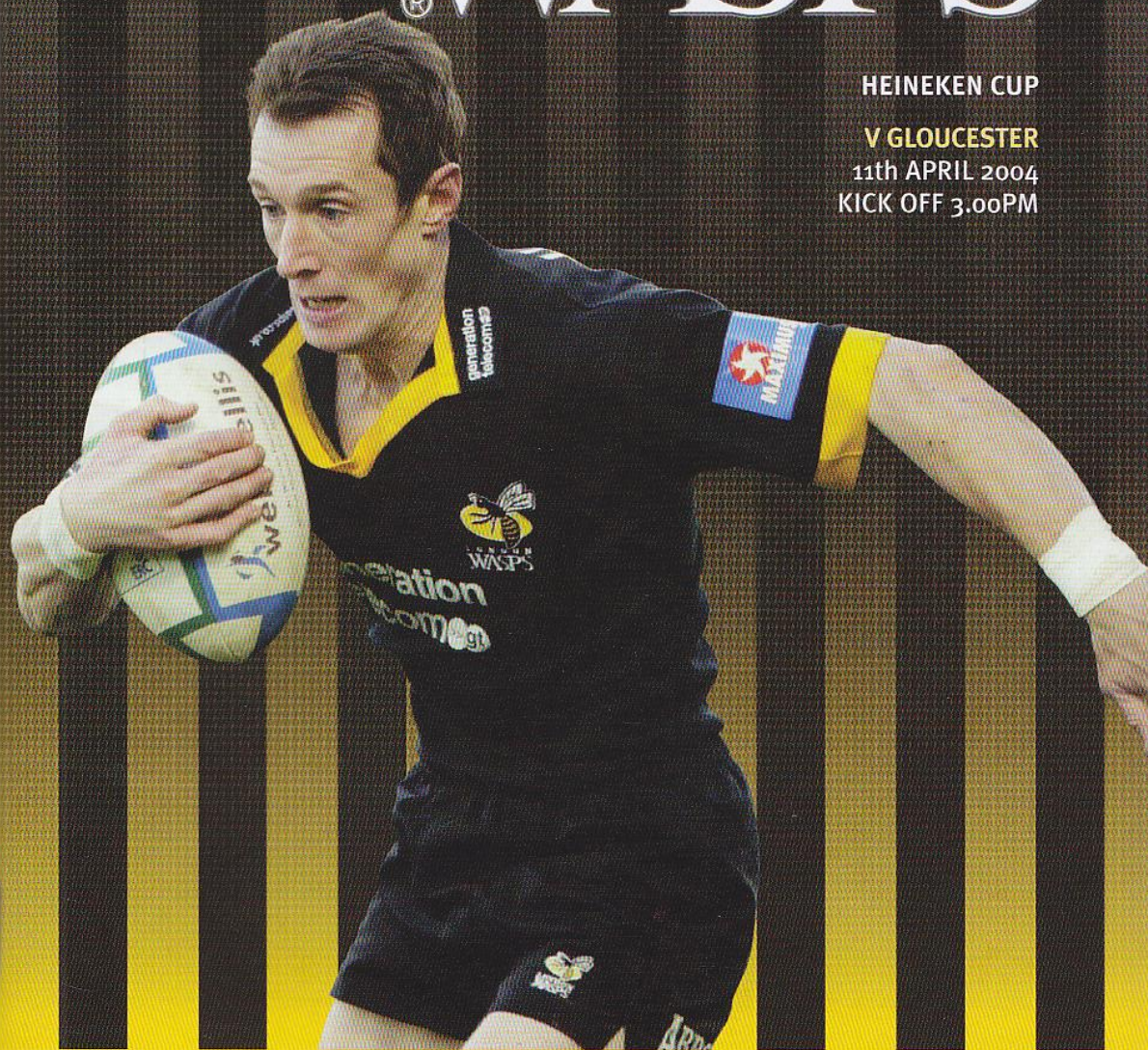
LONDON WASPS

HEINEKEN CUP

V GLOUCESTER

11th APRIL 2004

KICK OFF 3.00PM



Heineken® Cup

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Quarter-Final

MATCH PREVIEW

THE FINAL CHAPTER



The knockout stages of the Heineken Cup have been reached and by the time you've read this, three teams would have reached the semi-finals with London Wasps and Gloucester looking to secure the final spot.



Wasps were grouped in pool six with last season's finalists, Perpignan, as well as the Italian outfit of Calvisano and the Celtic Warriors, who are the Welsh combination of Pontypridd and Bridgend. Wins over Calvisano and Perpignan home and away, set Wasps en route to today's game. However, Warren Gatland's side were given a few sleepless nights after the Warriors arrived in High Wycombe and came away with a 14-9 win. Gatland, along with Lawrence Dallaglio, Rob Howley and the rest of the Black and Gold Army, were forced to go into the heart of Welsh rugby and bore out a 17-12 victory. While the win in Wales was what the doctor ordered, it was the amazing 34-6 triumph in France over Perpignan that made everyone stand up and realise that Wasps could possibly win this competition.

Gloucester on the other hand qualified for today's game through the back door as they finished second in their respective pool behind the mighty Munster. Lucky losers they may be, but the main thing for the fans, is that they are here and they are looking to put a somewhat stop start season behind them and gun for European glory. Home and away wins over Benetton Treviso and Bourgoin were followed by a 14-35 loss at Munster. However, the Cherry & Whites kept their nerve, racked up the points and qualified seventh out of the final eight. If one looks at the respective coaching departments from both sides, there

Once the pool stages of the Heineken Cup were complete, there was one game that everyone circled in their diaries and today's game is the pick of the weekend. The history between Wasps and Gloucester is a colourful one and

if someone had to write a book about it, there is no doubt that it would display some interesting reading. Getting to this stage of the competition was by no means easy for any of the sides and that's a good indication of how difficult winning the Heineken Cup is.

London Wasps v Gloucester

MATCH PREVIEW

is a remarkable similarity between them. While Nigel Melville and Gatland have the honour of being Directors of Rugby, it's the right-hand men of Dean Ryan and Shaun Edwards who give these two teams the fire in their bellies. Those in the know, would need to see Ryan and Edwards out in the field coaching to see how they drive these sides on. Both have enjoyed remarkable rugby careers and both demand only the best from their players. If you ever needed a motivational boost from someone, whether it is to kick-start your game or put something that is wrong, right, then these two men are a necessity in your corners. There is no doubt that team talks will come from these masters of the game in what should be a battle of the coaches.

We already know the Melville legacy with Wasps and that he knows the majority of these players inside out. We also know these two sides know each other extremely well and it's a pity that they had to meet at this stage of the competition, as the winner becomes the sole English representative in the Heineken Cup. That side will have to fly the flag for club and country and restore some much-dented English pride after the Six Nations.

Wasps have so far failed to come up to scratch on the European stage and Gatland is demanding they progress past the last eight for the first time. The side crashed out of the tournament at the quarter-final stage in 1998 and 2000 and the Kiwi is banking on it being third time lucky.

"The Heineken Cup is a competition in which Wasps are the first to admit they have not performed that well – we certainly have not achieved what we have been capable of doing," he said.

"We have let ourselves down in the

'It is going to be an extremely tough game but I guess on the positive side at least an English team will go through to the semi-finals.'

past but now we have qualified from the pool stages we are desperate to progress beyond the quarter finals. There is a lot of expectation on us after what we have done over the last 12 months and we don't want to let ourselves down again. Having home advantage is a big plus and it could make all the difference because there is a lot of history between us and we know each other so well. We would have preferred a team from a different country, so that the side, and their fans, would have had

further to travel and the players would not be so familiar with our ground. It is going to be an extremely tough game but I guess on the positive side at least an English team will go through to the semi-finals."

Jake Boer believes the Heineken Cup

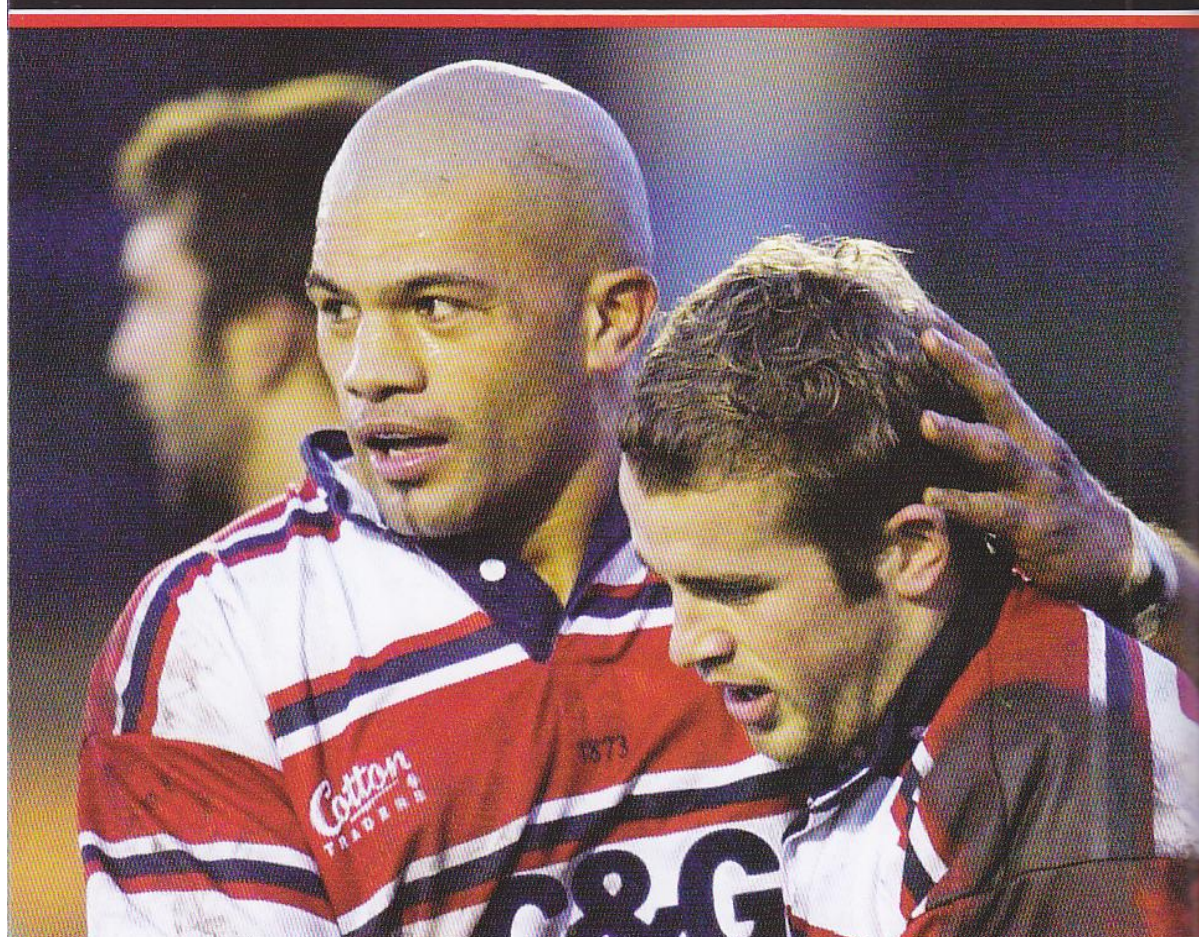
brings out the best in his Gloucester. "I believe that we played some of our best rugby this season in the Heineken Cup. We concentrated on the basics this week, getting the small things right. Wasps is always a big game, it's a tough intense battle – both physically and mentally".

In this section of the programme we normally single out key players who could play a vital part in the outcome of today's game. However, it would be unfair to single out players as today they are all heroes – each one holds the key to the door of the semi-finals. The loser will come from the side that can't find their keys to unlock the defensive doors.

The lines are painted, the grass is mown and all the pre-match preparation is done, which means the stage is set for this 'do or die' battle. It's time to write the final chapter.



TODAY'S OPPOSITION



Gloucester Rugby Club meet London Wasps today in yet another almighty game. But this time it's not for domestic honours, but for the chance to progress to the semi-final stages of the prestigious Heineken Cup.

Everyone, from players through to supporters, have been motivated and excited for this one, and talking in the build-up to the game Gloucester's captain and inspirational back-row forward Jake Boer was of similar mind.

"There'll always be a bit of history between the two, no matter when the game is played. It's certainly going to

be a great occasion both for the players and for the supporters who'll be at the Causeway Stadium, and watching on television."

The Cherry and Whites have been in superb form in this year's European campaign, with just one slip-up during the pool stages.

Boer was quick to look back at that defeat away in Ireland. "Looking back

at the Heineken Cup pool games we were extremely disappointed to have lost away at Munster. It was made worse because we know we didn't perform on the day."

But the 28 year-old, who signed a new three-year deal at the Kingsholm-club last week, added: "I believe that we have played some of our best rugby this season in the Heineken Cup, and it'll be good to



get back to the European competition on Sunday."

Coming into today's clash the Cherry and Whites have a win against Saracens in the Zurich Premiership behind them from last Saturday.

"The win against Saracens on Saturday was very important as it got us back to winning ways. We weren't overly excited about the performance, but we needed the four points," said Boer.

The four-point win at Vicarage Road saw the return to the first team action of Phil Vickery, Trevor Woodman, Andy Gomarsall, James Simpson-Daniel and Andy Hazell.

Boer was pleased to see the return of the key players, but was also realistic about what was achieved.

"Yes, there were a number of players back, and everyone was finding their feet again to some extent. But overall we weren't that impressed with our showing."

So what's set to be on offer this afternoon, the supporters have been talking non-stop, and the anticipation has been electric.

"Wasps is always a big game, it's a tough intense battle both physically and mentally. Despite the performance against Saracens, we've had a lift after the win."

Alongside Boer, every Cherry and Whites player will be focussed on the job in hand, with a place in the semi-final up for grabs.

Gloucester's Road to the Quarter-final

- Benetton Treviso 12 Gloucester 33 December 2003

Gloucester started their Heineken Cup campaign with an organised and disciplined performance away in Italy. A superb 80-metre solo effort from James Simpson-Daniel was the highlight of the 33-12 win in tough conditions.

- Gloucester 49 Bourgoin 13 December 2003

The Anglo-French clash at Kingsholm saw the return of former coach and player Philippe Saint-Andre to the West Country. But the Frenchman went home disappointed after a blistering second half performance from the Cherry and Whites sent the French side packing.

- Gloucester 22 Munster 11 January 2004

For the second year running Munster and Gloucester met head-to-head in the Heineken Cup. The Cherry and Whites took first blood with a superb team effort that maintained the team's 100 per cent record.

- Munster 35 Gloucester 14

January 2004

The return leg against the Irish ended in a disappointing result with Alan Gaffney's team not only winning but also getting the bonus points that was to see Gloucester miss out on the top spot in the pool.

- Bourgoin 18 Gloucester 37

January 2004

Visits to France are always tough, and this was no different, but the Cherry and Whites took the game to Bourgoin and a last minute try sealed the maximum five points. Bourgoin coach Saint-Andre was sacked after the final whistle.

- Gloucester 42 Treviso 11

January 2004

Going into this game Gloucester knew that they needed maximum points. Everyone also kept a watchful eye on the Munster Bourgoin game, as five points to the Cherry and Whites and four to Munster would have seen a top place finish. But a Tony Spreadbury penalty try saw Munster seal maximum points, and Gloucester come second in the pool.

JAKE BOER





