

Gloucester RFC Official Matchday Programme

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Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

v London Irish

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE

SUNDAY 18TH APRIL 2004

KICK-OFF 4.00PM



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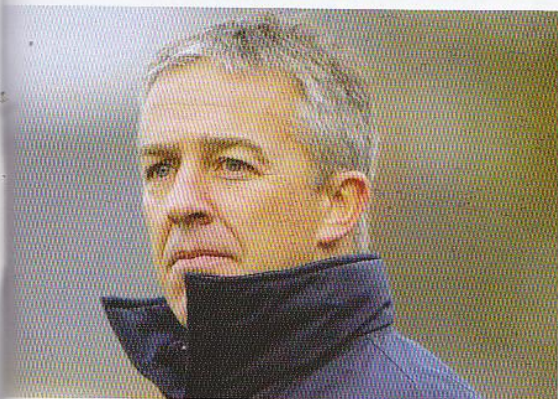
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ROUND-UP AND PREVIEW**

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NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

"It's been something like nine weeks since our last game here and we've missed it."

What more can I start with than to offer a big welcome back to everyone at Kingsholm today and the return of Zurich Premiership rugby. It's been something like nine weeks since our last game here and we've missed it.

There is no better way than to put last weekend's poor performance behind us than to have a home game in front of a sell-out Kingsholm crowd.

We under-performed last Sunday and each and everyone of you deserved better. The support at the Causeway Stadium was superb. When you get used to the level of support that we have here, it sometimes takes a game like last Sunday to remind everyone how lucky we are with the fans.

We didn't gain our fair share of possession against Wasps, and we were disappointed with the referee. We know we didn't perform and Wasps were better on the day, but since last Sunday we've had various discussions with English referee representatives, including Ed Morrison, who had similar thoughts to us.

You only have to look at a quite unbelievable statistic that in 24 European games that Mr Jutge has refereed there have been 24 home wins. From our experience of the last three away games he's refereed with us, it doesn't surprise me.

Putting that to one side, we're now 100 per cent focussed on qualifying for next season's Heineken Cup tournament.

This is where it gets complicated! There are a huge amount of permutations and it's a lot easier if we just win all of our games and finish third. But one of the options is that if Quins do not reach the final of the Parker Pen Cup then fourth place in the Zurich Premiership will

definitely qualify for next season's Heineken.

Both Northampton and ourselves, as well as the clubs below us, will be keeping a close eye on their visit to Ireland in the second leg next weekend.

From a player point of view in recent weeks we've sealed the signatures of some key players for the next few years, including Jake Boer, Duncan McRae, Henry Paul and Marcel Garvey.

There are plenty of discussions going on behind the scenes to improve the squad for next year, and as these develop we'll inform everyone.

Onto another topic now and John Mitchell. The former All Blacks coach is a good friend of mine and he's been on a 'working holiday' over the last two weeks, and heads back to the Southern Hemisphere this week.

He's enjoyed his stay and we've enjoyed having him. We've also both enjoyed the rumours and everyone's thoughts on why he was here in the first place.

And next 'special guest' up is French coach Bernard Laporte, who will be arriving to stay with us in the next couple of weeks.

Finally, we'd all like to add our support to Marcel Garvey this week. He's had a tough week and I think that whilst a lot of people jump on the bandwagon with high profile players, it is so important to get all of the facts correct from the very beginning, as the player, the club and the game have reputations to maintain.

Anyway, like I've already said, it is great to be back here today. Let's all get behind the team today. It's a big, big game and enjoy.

GRFC Chaplain

Gloucester Rugby Club's chaplain Steve Austin-Sparks puts pen to paper during a busy period to offer his thoughts.



A belated Happy Easter to players, management and supporters from the club Chaplain.

Today's match is our penultimate home Zurich Premiership fixture of the season, and it is good to welcome everyone to Kingsholm for what we hope will be an exciting afternoon. Home matches are particularly special, for the support here in Gloucester is second to none, and the atmosphere around this capacity crowd is electric.

For many of us involved in Gloucester last Sunday, the 11th April 2004, will be remembered with disappointment for the crushing defeat that Wasps inflicted on us in the Heineken Cup quarter-final at the Causeway stadium. The game was hard fought, but an exceptional performance from Wasps proved too difficult to overcome.

As supporters of the Cherry and Whites, like the supporters of other teams, we ride an emotional roller-coaster, going from the joy of success one week to the disappointment of defeat the next. We celebrated when we qualified for the quarter-finals of the Heineken Cup only a short time ago, and last week we faced the frustration of defeat, but today we return to Zurich Premiership action.

Not only was Sunday 11th April 2004 the Heineken quarter-final, it was also Easter Sunday. This is a time during which Christians also ride the roller-coaster of emotions going from remembering the sadness and intimacy of the Passover meal on 'Maundy Thursday', through the crushing defeat and utter despair of the crucifixion on 'Good Friday', to the exuberant celebration of the resurrection on 'Easter Sunday'.

Just before Easter I had the opportunity to

go and see the latest block-buster film from Mel Gibson, "The Passion of The Christ". There has been much written in the press about this film, but as the old adage says, 'don't believe everything you read in the press'! Some have found the film spiritually moving, others are appalled at the grotesque violence, but few are ambivalent. For me, I was struck by the passion that it took for Jesus to go through all that he did and not give up, seeing it through to the end and the victory of the resurrection.

It is often said that what defines true character is to persevere through the struggles of life, and despite setbacks and defeat to rise again to achieve victory. This seems to ring true to me, but it is no simple task for it requires passion and commitment, it requires belief and confidence.

In my short time working at Gloucester Rugby Club, I have experienced a unique family atmosphere of which we should be proud. However, there is also an immense passion and commitment, a willingness to give 100 per cent and more, which will carry us through last week's disappointment and cause us to grow stronger.

I am confident that, as we fight for a place in the top three of the Zurich Premiership, we will demonstrate true character and rise to the challenges that face us in these final few games of the season, and I know that, as the team take to the field, they will receive the support for which Gloucester is rightly renowned.

I hope you had a Happy Easter, and that you enjoy the match today.

Steve Austin-Sparks
(Chaplain)

SteveAustin-Sparks@gloucester rugbyclub.com

Cherry and Whites Player Update



As it's been a while since the last matchday programme, it seems appropriate to round up all of the recent news from the team side of the business.

The last few weeks has seen club captain Jake Boer, Henry Paul, Duncan McRae and Marcel Garvey all sign up on new contracts.

These four join the two new-comers who have joined on short-term contracts from South Africa.

Since the last home game in February both Delarey Du Preez and Riaan van der Bergh have joined the Club, and the programme also rounds up their backgrounds.



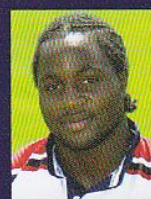
Boer - Home from Home

Gloucester Rugby Club's captain Jake Boer has pledged his future to the Cherry and Whites after signing a new contract that will keep the back-row forward at the Kingsholm club for the next three seasons.

Boer, who is currently in his fourth year with Gloucester, was delighted to sign up, and he said: "Gloucester Rugby Club is a home from home for me and from day one I felt welcome. Everyone around this club is so passionate about rugby, and you can't ask any more as a player."

Commenting on Jake's signature director of rugby Nigel Melville added: "We're obviously delighted that Jake has signed up for the next three years. Securing his future at Gloucester Rugby Club is a statement that fits in with our long term planning. Jake's a quality individual that represents what is so good about this club."

Since his debut four seasons ago, Boer has made 111 competitive appearances for the Cherry and Whites in all competitions, and scored 19 tries.



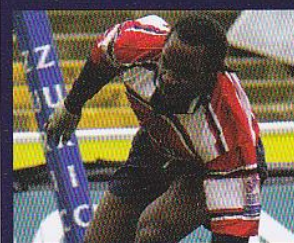
Garvey It means so much

Marcel Garvey spoke of his delight after signing a new three-year contract with the Cherry and Whites.

The 20 year-old winger said: "It means so much to me to sign-up for the long term future at Gloucester. It's my home town club and I've grown up around these players."

Garvey has scored four tries in 15 Zurich Premiership appearances this season, which takes his overall league tally to 11 touchdowns in 37 outings for the Cherry and Whites.

Director of rugby Nigel Melville said: "Marcel is proof that a local player with ability can put in the hard work and make the step up to professional rugby. He fits in with the long-term plans of this club."





McRae Gloucester is so attractive

After an impressive debut season in the Cherry and White shirt Duncan McRae signed a new two-year contract last week.

McRae said: "Being involved in a good side with quality players and an intelligent coaching team was key. Add this to the support that the club has, and as a player it's so attractive."

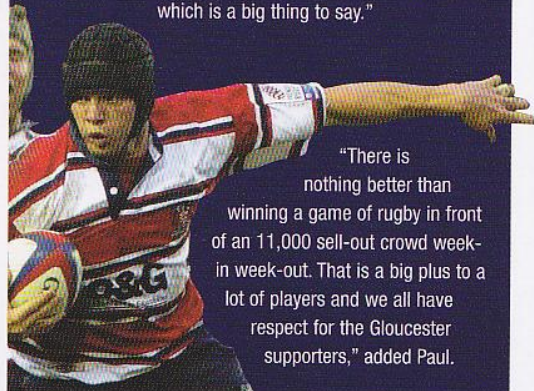
McRae has made 14 appearances for the Cherry and Whites in the Zurich Premiership this season and scored two tries.



Paul Career at Kingsholm

Inside centre Henry Paul has also signed a new deal that will keep the 30 year-old at Kingsholm for the next three years.

Paul said: "I like the Club, the game of rugby union, the players and the whole environment. This new contract will mean I'm seeing out my career at Gloucester Rugby Club, which is a big thing to say."



"There is nothing better than winning a game of rugby in front of an 11,000 sell-out crowd week-in week-out. That is a big plus to a lot of players and we all have respect for the Gloucester supporters," added Paul.

South African Signings

Hooker Delarey Du Preez and full-back Riaan van der Bergh have also joined the Club since the last home game against Sale Sharks on Saturday 14 February.

28 year-old Du Preez joins from Super 12 outfit the Cats and brings with him a wealth of experience from top level rugby. The former Springbok number two made his debut for the Cherry and Whites away at Sale Sharks, and has been on the replacements bench for the last three fixtures.

25 year-old Riaan van der Bergh joins the Kingsholm-club from Super 12 side the Bulls and Currie Cup team North West Leopards.

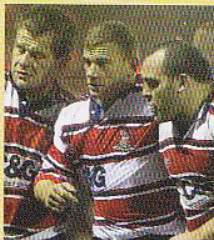
The 6ft 1" utility back was involved in half of the Bulls' Super 12 fixtures last season and covers full-back, wing and centre positions.

Van der Bergh saw 20 minutes of action away at Rotherham in the snow before making his starting debut away at Saracens two weeks ago.



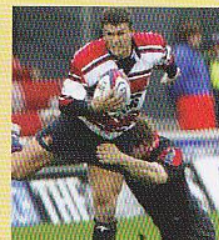
**Delarey
Du Preez**

Hooker

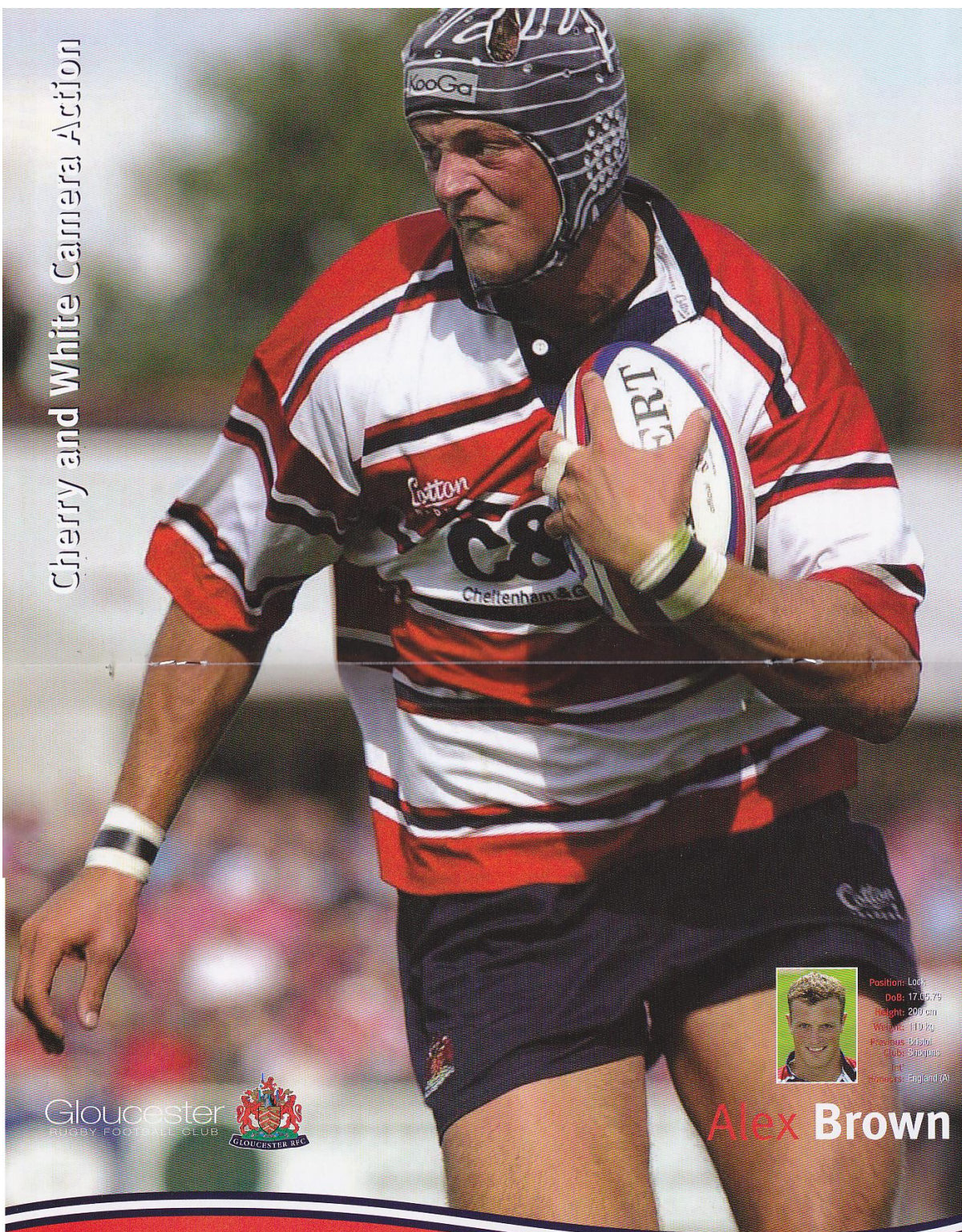


**Riaan van
der Bergh**

Full-back



Cherry and White Camera Action



Position: Lock
DoB: 17.09.79
Height: 209 cm
Weight: 119 kg
Previous Club(s): Gloucester
Club: Gloucester
Int: Gloucester
Country: England (A)

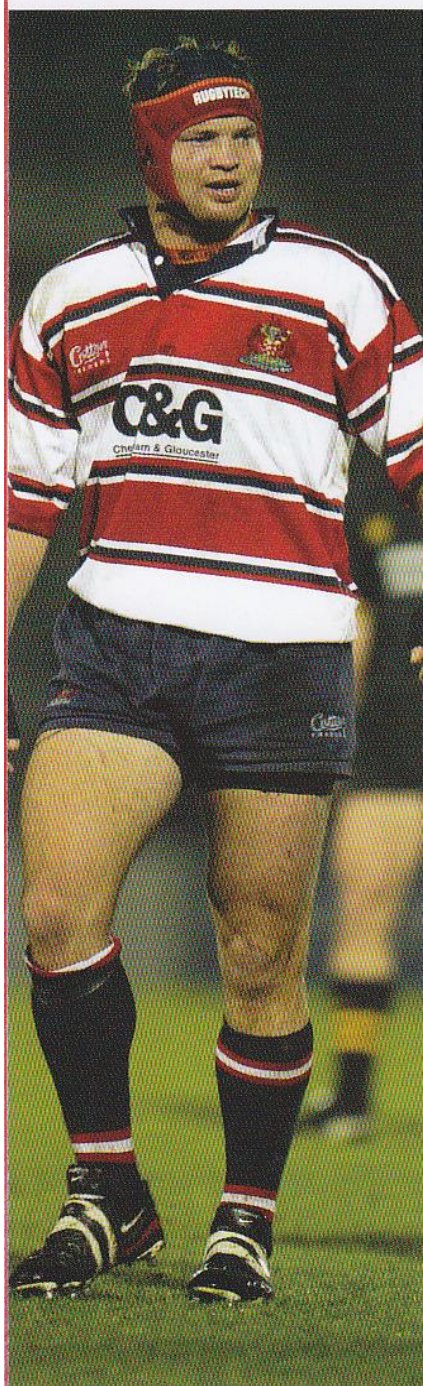
Alex Brown

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CAPTAIN'S LOG

JAKE No 64



When Nigel Melville appointed Jake Boer to lead the club into this season's campaign he became the 64th appointment since the club was formed in 1873. The official matchday programme, through the eyes of Dave King, takes a look at past captains.

Obviously most of our members will be more familiar with those who have had this honour bestowed upon them since the end of the 1939-45 conflict. There have been two seasons where joint captains have led the Cherry and Whites. In 1904-05 George Romans and Bill Johns shared the honour, Tom Price and Roy Morris did likewise in the first season after the Second World War.

Most of Jake's predecessors have been revered names in and around Kingsholm and further afield. Our Club President Peter Ford has led the club onto the field of play for five seasons during his career. No player has since surpassed this achievement. Peter led the club in 1955-56, 1956-57, 1957-58. There was a one year break when Cyril Thomas took over the captaincy before Peter resumed for the following two seasons of 1959-60 and 1960-61.

So, since those dark days of conflict some fine players have entered the archives of Gloucester Rugby history, names that will be familiar to all ages within our membership.

Captains of Gloucester who have appeared for England include Tom Price, George Hastings, Peter Ford, Don Rutherford, Mike Burton, John Watkins, Steve Mills, Gordon Sargent, John Orwin, Malcolm Preedy, Dave Sims and most recently Phil Vickery.

Other players who have donned their

country's shirts with pride and also led the Cherry and Whites are Ian Smith with Scotland, Kingsley Jones with Wales and of course Ian Jones of New Zealand.

Keeping it in the family was the Smiths. For Dick Smith skippered the club during the 1968-69 and 1969-70 seasons. As time evolved so did his son Ian who led the club for three consecutive seasons in the early nineties, 91-92, 92-93 and 1993-94 before giving way to current Gloucester prop, Andy Deacon.

There has always been an old saying within sport that if you really want to know the worth of a player, then ask those who stand on the terraces. Our members will have stood out in sun, hail showers and even snow to witness and savour the wealth of talent paraded through the seasons at Kingsholm.

They will have been mystified and bewildered why some of the former captains of this club have not been sent for to represent the red rose. Mickey Booth was unlucky not to represent his country. Peter Glanville a prominent flanker in his prime had his admirers in high places.

Delving into the mists of time, Arthur Hudson, Tom Voyce and Les Saxby were Gloucester captains before the Second World War and represented their country.

Most of our members will have witnessed several of these players through the decades. Many have taken pride in their selection and wondered why others have not been honoured but will have shared the same emotion of pride when this club has appointed them to lead Gloucester RFC.

Jake Boer comes into the category of why not? He really has in recent seasons deserved a call up by his country – South Africa. Compensation may have come when Nigel Melville added Jake to the Captain's Roll of Honour at Kingsholm.

Prior to Jake moving to Kingsholm he was at London Irish and on a personal recollection I can recall asking one of their fans what he thought of Jake as a player. This was when Jake's name was on the rumour mill as being poised to move to Kingsholm. His reply, 'The best player this club has had for quite a while, never plays a poor game, if he moves to Gloucester you are very lucky.' Prophetic words and very accurate. So the name of Jake Boer was added to the illustrious list of Gloucester captains.

There have been numerous players who have captained the club for just one season. Tom Day, Jack Watkins, Bob Hodge, John Taylor, George Hastings, Cyril Thomas, Alan Townsend, Alan Holder, Gary White, Don Rutherford, John Bayliss, Keith Richardson, Mike Burton, Bob Cleaves, Gordon Sergeant, Malcolm Preedy, Andy Deacon, Peter Glanville, Kingsley Jones and Ian Jones

These are names that are familiar to the members of the Club within the last 50 years. There were also 11 players prior to 1939 who also had the solitary season leading the Cherry and Whites.

Notable years and captains have been Frank Hartley who was the club's first captain way back in 1873. George Romans led the club in 1900 at the commencement of a new century. George Holford in the last season before the outbreak of the First World War. George was still in place when fixtures resumed in



1919. Various captains were used in the last season before the Second World War. Harold Boughton was appointed at the resumption of fixtures. Andy Deacon led the club in the season prior to professionalism and Dave Sims was the first Gloucester captain as rugby union entered a new era in the 1995-96 season when the game became professional.

Peter Glanville, Kingsley Jones, Ian Jones and Phil Vickery have since followed, all highly popular with the members of this club, none more so than Jake Boer.

The fact that Jake has recently signed a new three-year contract with the club which will see him wear the Cherry and White shirt until 2007, enhances his relationships with our members.

Difficult to imagine how any player would wish to play anywhere but at Kingsholm. Jake set the standard in recent seasons on and off the field. A perfect model for all to follow in his footsteps.

DAVID KING

BY IAN RANDALL

BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE



BBC Radio Gloucestershire's Ian Randall looks back at the last week and also at the what's possible over the forthcoming games.

Last Sunday was a day when you were always going to get a variety of different views on the match. Gloucester's chairman Tom Walkinshaw's to BBC Radio Gloucestershire were typically pithy.

"We just weren't good enough. We didn't do anything the way we should do, they dominated and we got exactly what we deserved. We had a lot of supporters there and they were great. Home advantage at this level might make 5 or 10 points difference at the end but it didn't make that scoreboard. Without the ball you're not going to play. Wasps are probably the best team in England at the moment. The penalty try seemed harsh but the referee didn't cost us the match. We've got to

dig down and find out why we're not getting enough possession. You can have great plans but none of it works when you haven't got the ball. We've just got to keep trying to be in the top three. That's the only thing in our control, but London Irish today won't be easy, and neither will Wasps. The last game is at Bath."

Sunday's result – with five tries conceded – means Gloucester can only have a maximum of five matches for the rest of the season, but amongst the disappointment, the performance of Gloucester's number five was a beacon.

Alex Brown strove manfully in the line out and his



mobility asked questions of the Wasps defence. His constant place on the team sheet this season has been a major bonus and at this time for Player of the Year votes, he must be a front-runner.

The inner sanctum of the Kingsholm dressing room will have been a place of much analysis this week. The scoreboard suggested a gulf between two sides just two places apart in the Premiership, but to me it was the performances of Leota and Shaw in particular that made the difference. Both were outstanding in a very experienced Wasps team. You just hope a week is long enough to get the result out of the Gloucester player's heads, and to set themselves for the remaining matches.

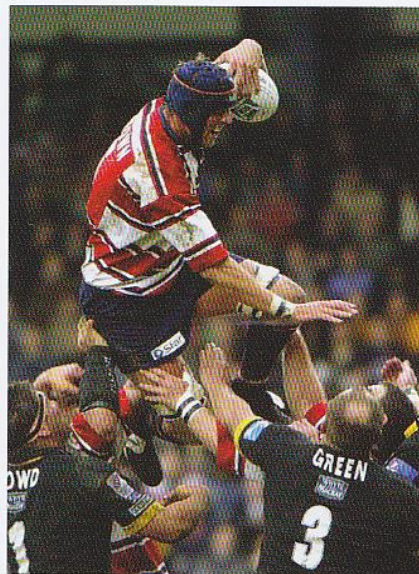
I saw one website posting over the weekend championing Bath's case in the Parker Pen Challenge Cup. You may question this shift in allegiance but you could see the fans' point of view. Should Northampton win their last three games there is nothing Gloucester can do about finishing in the top three, and with yesterday's Powergen Cup Final sending Sale or Newcastle into the Heineken Cup, Gloucester's only way in COULD be through the wild card play offs unless someone was to qualify on two counts. Bath had a semi final first leg lead to take to Montferrand, while in the other match Harlequins held a narrow advantage over Connacht. If Quins are there, one more door could shut on Gloucester on May 22.

The scramble for the play off places genuinely involves five teams chasing three places alongside (realistically) Gloucester or Northampton. Amazingly, none of the five play each other on the last day, so it could be a real slide rule calculation for the final table. Newcastle and Sale both have a run in free from games against the top four, while Quins, like Gloucester, still have to play Bath and Northampton.

Leicester, who finish the season at Wasps, look the outsiders. As for Irish, they've won here already this season, and shouldn't be underestimated. The wild card route is their only way into the Heineken Cup, so expect a committed performance. When you get to this stage of the season, it's not where you are, but how you are playing that matters the most, and Gloucester will need your help to re-establish the necessary levels.

C'mon Glaws !

"Alex Brown strove manfully in the line out and his mobility asked questions of the Wasps defence"



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Peter Arnold

Resident matchday magazine writer Peter Arnold rounds up his thoughts from the last few months and, like everyone else, welcomes back Zurich Premiership rugby to Kingsholm.

LONG TIME NO SEE

If my arithmetic is correct, this is the first Gloucester programme to be produced for nine whole weeks. It's been that long - two months - since our last home game on Saint Valentine's Day.

Of course, we haven't been short of entertainment, but while the Six Nations is important, exciting and entertaining, it isn't like the real thing, is it? All right, so we had the England U21s here twice, and we were all delighted to see that Kingsholm broke the attendance record

for such games, not once, but twice.

I can quite see that balancing the needs of a season which includes the Premiership, Powergen, Heineken, Six Nations and Under 21s is a logistical nightmare which would have taxed the ingenuity of the planners of the D-Day landings, but I'm sure that the present situation isn't satisfactory.

It starves us of home rugby just at the worst point in the season, when the Premiership table is beginning to shape itself up for the final run in, when every game is vital, and when the weather is improving to the point where we might expect to see some exciting, running rugby.

When hostilities came to a halt, we had some considerable momentum going. That has now been stopped in its tracks as effectively as that French forward was when he came across Phil Vickery during the final Six Nations game.

Furthermore, it's the second time in two years when this has happened to us. Last season we had to go into that infamous Premiership play-off against Wasps after three weeks without a game. This season the boys were sitting around gathering rust for four weeks before having to go into an always difficult proposition against Sale on their own patch. I'm sure the lads worked extremely hard on the training pitch in the interim, but there's no substitute for a match against serious opposition in the Premiership.

I'm sure that anyone who went to Sale, or watched the game on the box, will agree with that. Gloucester simply didn't look the part that evening, not quite having the mental edge to compete in a game like that. Sale, like Wasps the previous season, had had some tough rugby while Gloucester were lying fallow. And the lads hadn't really shaken off the malaise the other week at Vicarage Road.

Something surely has to happen. I don't pretend to have an answer, short of a 365-day season.

Don't laugh. Stranger things have happened.



HOW DID THEY DO?

How do you think our contingent fared during England's Six Nations campaign? Curate's egg, I'd have said. Good in parts.

No problem with the props. You can see Trevor Woodman growing into his role game by game, and I just wish he could be given licence to roam around the field a little more. That will come, I suspect.

Phil Vickery was enormous as always, a considerable force in all phases of play. However, I did get a little annoyed when he was replaced, with ten minutes to go, during the Welsh game. Not at the replacement itself, which was a legitimate ploy, but at the way the commentators kept banging on about how much difference Julian White made when he came on in his place.

Well, of course he did. The Raging Bull had spent seven-eighths of the game reducing his opposite number to a quivering jelly. By the time he left the scene, my Great Aunt Mary could have taken him. And if you doubt that, you didn't know my Great Aunt Mary from Archibald Street.

I think Andy Gomarsall was unlucky. He had a stormer in his first match, and while he admittedly went off the boil a little during his second outing, it wasn't a big enough lapse to earn him his drop. Nothing against the formidable Matt Dawson, but one does wonder what the result would have been had the precocious Olly Barkley been on the end of Gomarsall's longer, faster pass in Paris.

Sinbad did what he could with the chances he got. However, I counted three occasions where he passed the ball when I'm almost certain he would have run at Kingsholm - as he did in that famous Barbarians game a couple of years ago. How much of that is playing to orders, and how much is down to the lad's confidence, I don't know, but it's not worth playing a chap with James



Simpson-Daniel's unpredictable talents unless he is given free rein to do so. I hope that one gets sorted out over the summer and autumn.

As for Henry Paul, for once, words almost fail me. The bloke got no chance at all during the derisory few minutes he was allowed to play. Then he was dropped from the squad as soon as Tindall was available, even though the Bath centre's fitness was, and is, suspect. You may also recall that Henry earned the Man of the Match award after the 'A' side's defeat in France, and it's most unusual for such an accolade to go to a player from the losing side.

After all that, he really didn't need the

Sevens fiasco. It's a measure of the man that his concentration has still enabled him to kick his goals, from all over the field, when you wouldn't have thought that most players' mental focus would be all that it might be. I find that quite admirable, and it makes me all the more pleased that Henry is one of the players who has already agreed terms for next season.

GO ON - GLOAT

All right, so there's no denying that we got stuffed last Sunday. But to any Wasps supporters out there, I would say, "Go on. Have your little gloat. But just remember - you have to come to Kingsholm in a couple of weeks."

Cherry and White Camera Action

Riaan van der Bergh



Position: Fullback
DOB: 07.10.78
Height: 187 cm
Weight: 95 kg
Previous Club: Bulls
Test: 1
Previous: -

The South African full-back joined the Cherry and Whites in February and made his debut as a replacement away at Rotherham in the snow! The former Bulls player started his first game for the club away at Saracens. The number 15 has a physical presence and a big kick that can clear the lines.

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Fans Zone

with
Bob Fenton

After too many weeks, Gloucester are back at Kingsholm and former Shed Head editor Bob Fenton is happy as Larry.

Good afternoon, welcome back, do you remember why we are here? It's been a long two-and-a-bit months since we last saw some Premiership action at Castle Grim, but no one can say the intervening nine weeks have been anything but dull.

For a start there has been some good

"have to say that the England – Wales game was one of the best matches I have seen at Kingsholm for many years."

rugby played on the Kingsholm turf – a couple of United – sorry 'A' team – games and a couple of excellent England Under 21 matches for a start.

I missed the first of the latter, but have to say that the England – Wales game was one of the best matches I have seen at Kingsholm for many years. With two near-capacity crowds for those games, we must have gone a long way towards securing these fixtures as a permanent addition to our calendars.

We've had the Six Nations to watch, and as I work for a French company you can't begin to imagine the gloating that I have had to endure since then – cuttings from French newspapers, posters of the team with the cup and the like suddenly appearing on my office wall overnight and that kind of thing.

Revenge came when we were offered the chance to have a 'visit' from the Web

Ellis trophy. When asked why by my French boss I told him "...it's because they thought this would be the closest a French man would ever get to holding it..." Okay so my promotion chances took a bit of a hammering as a result, but it was worth it...

And we should say congratulations to Worcester on their promotion, they've been trying hard enough for the past few years and have finally made it, absolutely blitzing their way through the first division. Of course their Gloucester connection is more than a few players, it's John Brain at the helm and Andy Keast at his right hand that has steered them towards success, it'll be good to see 'Brainer' back at Kingsholm next season.

It'll be interesting to see what they do during the summer, you can bet your boots that they will be recruiting heavily to bolster their squad. There is no doubt that the step up in class between the divisions is getting bigger, but they must stand a good chance of hanging on next term – especially as they seem to be being linked with just about all of the Kingsholm staff.

These rumours seem to be based on little more than someone 'spotting' a player at Worcester. On that basis I and quite a few other supporters from here will be going too as I have been there a couple of times of late!

Worcester's promotion throws up what promises to be an interesting meeting between Andy Keast and Philippe Saint Andre after the latter's return to English rugby, and it will be interesting to see whether Cecil Duckworth softens his rhetoric about the Premiership being a closed shop if a few early results see his lot struggling at the wrong end of the table.



Philippe Saint Andre's return to English rugby at Sale was a bit of a surprise, and has seen plenty of speculation linking him with members of the Gloucester squad who are out of contract this summer – and a few who left a while back. It seems that both Olly Azam and Ed Pearce are being linked with a move to Sale, or Stockport, or wherever they will be next season.

So far though, only Robert Todd has confirmed that he will be moving up the M5 / 6 to link up with his old boss and of course we wish him all the best at his new club. I like Toddy, not only a really good, 110 per cent, player but a very decent man too.

Actually I suspect that the real reason that he is moving is nothing to do with contracts, it's to escape his 10-year-old stalker. Toddy currently lives about 100 yards away from me and it seems that every time he ventures out to the corner shop the boy Matthew is there as well, quizzing him on last weekend's/next weekend's game, rugby or life in general.

We've also been linked with a few dozen players, and depending on who you listen to, we're going to be picking up people from the southern hemisphere, France and even Northampton – again, wait and see is the only way forward.

What we do know though is Jake, Marcel, Henry and Duncan have all put pens to paper on new long-term contracts, and that is good news. All we need is for a few others to do the same and we will start to see the kind of stability in the side that seems to have escaped us over the last few years.

Looking ahead, the next few weeks will prove key, and it could even come down to, possibly for the first time in living memory, hoping that Bath win a game to give us a chance. If they beat Northampton this weekend, and we get the win today we could jump ahead of the Saints into third spot.

All we need to do then is beat Wasps at home and Bath away (which would be for

the first time in the league for ten zillion years) while Northampton lose at least one of their remaining two games – away at Leeds and home to Quins if you are interested. All things considered it is, as one of our super-intelligent soccer pundits may say, a big ask.

Unless the mythical extra place in the Heineken Cup is awarded to an English side, our best route to automatic qualification is for Bath to win the Parker Pen competition. So, gulp, (whispers) come on, Barfff... It's either that or the Zurich Wild Card competition, and I don't think anyone would want that.

In case you are wondering why there is no mention of Wasps and the Heineken Cup in this waffle, it's because of the deadlines – I could have written it during the evening after last Sunday's game, but I know that I will either be too depressed or too alcoholically fuelled to see, let alone use, a keyboard. Anyway, they are here in a couple of weeks so it can wait until then.



TRY
CONVERSION
PENALTY
DROP GOAL

GLOUCESTER

Riaan van der Bergh	15	fullback
Marcel Garvey	14	wing
Terry Fanolua	13	centre
Henry Paul	12	centre
James Simpson-Daniel	11	wing
Duncan McRae	10	flyhalf
Andy Gomarsall	09	scrumhalf
Trevor Woodman	01	prop
Chris Fortey	02	hooker
Phil Vickery	03	prop
Mark Cornwell	04	lock
Alex Brown	05	lock
Jake Boer (c)	06	flanker
Andy Hazell	07	flanker
Junior Paramore	08	no. 8
Delarey Du Preez	16	replacements
Rodrigo Roncero	17	
Andy Deacon	18	
Adam Eustace	19	
Peter Buxton	20	
Simon Amor	21	
Robert Todd	22	

LONDON IRISH

Michael Horak	15	
Paul Sackey	14	
Geoff Appleford	13	
Nils Mordt	12	
Justin Bishop	11	
Barry Everitt	10	
Darren Edwards	09	
Doug Wheatley	01	
Adrian Flavin	02	
Rob Hardwick	03	
Ryan Strudwick (c)	04	
Bob Casey	05	
Declan Danaher	06	
Kieron Dawson	07	
Phil Murphy	08	
Neal Hatley	16	
Naka Drotske	17	
Nick Kennedy	18	
Chris Sheasby	19	
Paul Gustard/Rob Hoadley	20	
Kevin Barrett	21	
Mark Mapletoft	22	

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2003/04

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
Bath Rugby	19	17	0	2	439	263	3	2	73
London Wasps	19	15	0	4	522	323	6	2	68
Northampton Saints	19	12	1	6	509	378	5	2	57
Gloucester	19	12	0	7	428	333	4	3	55
London Irish	19	9	1	9	384	391	1	5	44
NEC Harlequins	19	8	2	9	417	389	3	5	44
Sale Sharks	19	7	3	9	415	397	4	6	44
Leicester Tigers	19	8	3	8	376	390	1	2	40
Newcastle Falcons	19	6	2	11	440	448	4	8	40
Leeds Tykes	19	7	1	11	407	515	4	2	36
Saracens	19	6	1	12	328	468	2	3	30
Rotherham Titans	19	0	0	19	256	626	0	2	2

2059

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Roy Maybank
1st TJ: Stuart Terhegge
2nd TJ: Lloyd Jackson

Today's Result

Gloucester **28**
London Irish **13**

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