

Gloucester RFC Official Matchday Programme

Issue 15 | Price £2.50



Gloucester

RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

v London Wasps

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE

SATURDAY 1ST MAY 2004

KICK-OFF 2.45PM



ANDY DEACON
RETIREMENT

SEASON REVIEW
24 PAGES

WIN TICKETS AND KIT!
BARBARIANS PRIZES

SOUVENIR

100 PAGE ISSUE

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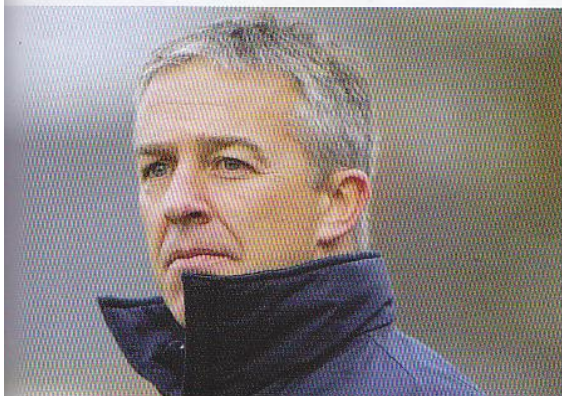
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NIGEL'S NOTES...

Nigel Melville

Director of Rugby

"There have been so many kind words about the man (*Deacs*) and there will continue to be so for a very long time yet."

Welcome to possibly the last home game of the season here at Kingsholm, or possibly not!

It's certainly a merit for the English game that with two games to go there is so much to play for throughout the league.

But I'm not a great fan of a play-off system that means that depending on who wins the European finals (later in May), dictates whether a winner of a Wild-Card semi-final actually plays in the final – but c'est la vie!

Looking back at the season it has been very stop start, which has caused a lot of issues. We've had periods when we play non-stop for four months, and there have been times when we've played one game and then gone five weeks without another.

As a team and a business, you just can't gain any momentum, which is so important if you are to succeed. If you've had a win, it's good to continue the good form, and if you've lost, you want to get straight back into it and but things right. We just haven't been able to that this year.

The team had a superb run from December through to February, then suddenly five weeks with no game!

As well the team aspect, it's disappointing for the fans, it's hard to enjoy the flow or non-flow of a season when sometimes you go three or more weeks without a home game. This season we didn't have a game at Kingsholm between 14 February and 18 April!

But anyway, back to today, and welcome to Wasps. Last Sunday's Heineken Cup semi-final was a great game and Wasps did very well. I hope they go on to beat Toulouse in the final, and I'm sure they will.

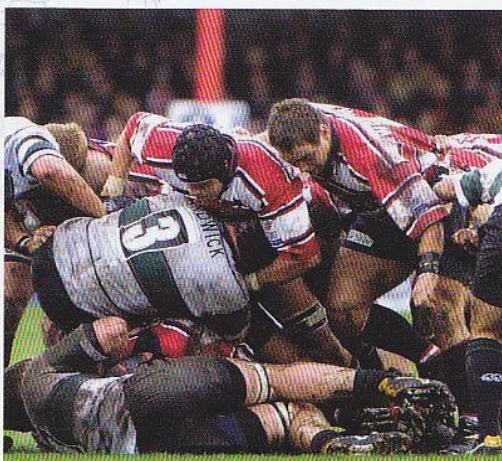
At Kingsholm this week has been good. I've certainly

enjoyed catching up on the transfer speculation in the newspapers! We're a business and business involves contracts. I'm a firm believer in only announcing something if the deal has been done and ink is on the paper.

Earlier in the week Andy Deacon announced his retirement. It's been a brilliant week for him, and there was even a rumour he said that 'he wished he could retire every week!' There have been so many kind words about the man and there will continue to be so for a very long time yet. It says so much about someone that in years to come people will be saying that "I was at Deacs' last Premiership home game for Gloucester".

As well as Deacs, we've also got to say farewell to Robert Todd at the end of the season. It is always tough when players leave. But with the professional game, people move on to another club. We wish people well, and there is always a heartfelt thank you to any player who has played such an important role at this club.

Once again, thank you for your support and enjoy the afternoon.



Picture by Jordan King



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Jake Boer

Club Captain

"When it was announced that Deacs was retiring it was a shock to a lot of people."

Welcome to today's game. It's Gloucester versus Wasps again! I hope that everyone from Wasps is made to feel welcome today, and supporters from both sides enjoy the match.

They don't come much bigger than this, and that shows the level of the game we're all playing at, as we seem to be saying this each and every week.

Everyone knows that there'll be a huge tussle up front, and that the backs will be fighting it out for supremacy.

We let ourselves down against Wasps in the quarter-final, but you only have to look back at previous encounters against them in the league to see how close the games are. The recent big game results haven't really reflected the closeness of the battle with their score lines.

Enough of today's game, you've got all of that to look forward to, now for a few words on a certain Mr Andy Deacon.

When it was announced that Deacs was retiring it was a shock to a lot of people, made more so because he has just gone on and on with his playing career and still performs at the highest level.

Realistically though it happens to all of us, I'm certainly not expecting to be playing when I'm 38! He's been an ambassador for this club and the city and has always been there to help people.

I've built up a great friendship with him over the last few years and he is the ultimate professional and friend.

Someone asked me this week to sum up Deacs in a few words, not easy I can tell you. But here goes.....He has an aura around him and if you can earn his respect and get behind that, there is a great person there. There's no beating around the bush with Deacs, what you see is what you get, but he is one of the most genuine guys I've ever come across. Once

you've got a friendship with Deacs, it's one for life.

As well as Deacs, we're also saying farewell to Toddy soon. Robert Todd and me go back a long way. I was with him at London Irish for two years, and obviously here at Gloucester for the last three.

When I first came to Kingsholm, we stayed with him and his family for a while, so it'll be sad to see him go. He's been one of the front-runners in recent years in taking this club to where it is today. Again, he'll be missed.

Enough of the softer side of the playing department and back to the rugby. Today could be the last home game of the season, if it is, it means we'll have finished in the top three in the table, which was one of our targets at the start of the season.

If it isn't our last game here this year, it means we've finished fourth and there'll be a Zurich Wildcard game here on the weekend of 15 May.

With all of this in mind, there are two massive, massive games coming up. We've always said you play a role in our achievements, so all we ask is for your continued support over the next fortnight! Enjoy.

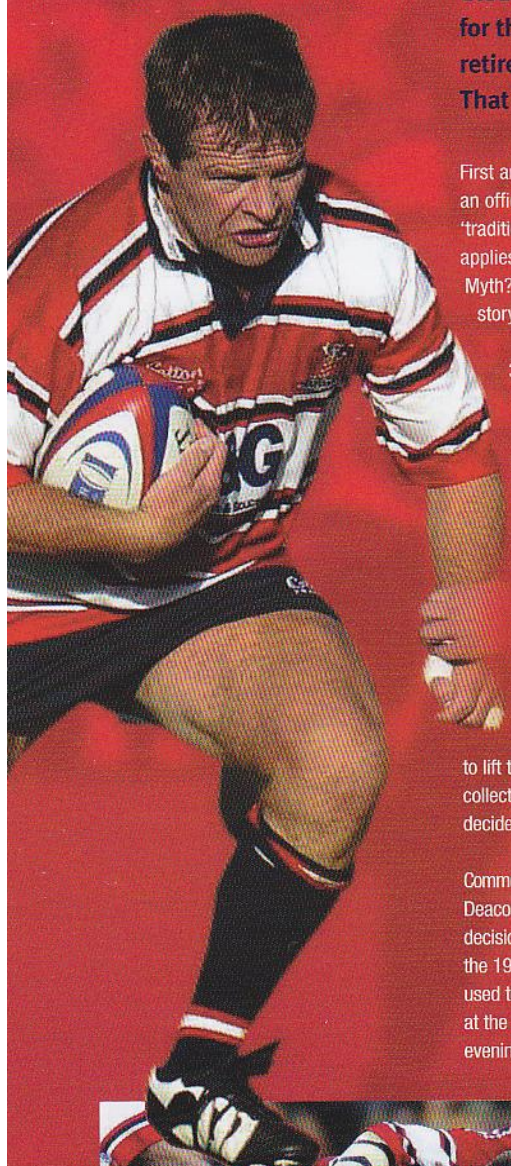


Picture by Jordan King

Andy Deacon

What more can be said about Mr Andy Deacon from Longlevens in Gloucester? He's played through three decades, he's graduated from the amateur game to the professional arena, and he's still dominating the scrum at the tender age of 38 years.

This week the Gloucester legend announced his intention to retire from Premiership rugby at the end of the current campaign. The official matchday programme caught up with Deacs in the build-up to this weekend.



Gloucester Rugby Club legend Andy Deacon, who has played for the Cherry and Whites in three different decades, will retire from Premiership rugby at the end of the current season. That was the headline at the beginning of the week!

First and foremost what is a legend? In an office pocket sized dictionary it says 'traditional myth'. Lets look at how it applies. Andy Deacon traditional? Yes. Myth? Certainly not, he's a very real story that Gloucester supporters love.

38 year-old Deacon made his debut for Gloucester in the 1980s and combined playing with a job at the local brewery, before turning professional in the 1990s.

The 15 starts during the current campaign adds to more than 250 since the tight-head prop first ran out at Kingsholm against Cheltenham in 1988.

The front row forward, who became the first Gloucester player to lift the national cup in 21 years when he collected the Powergen Cup in 2003, has decided to bow out at the top of the game.

Commenting on www.gloucester rugby club.com Deacon said: "This was a very tough decision to make. Turning professional in the 1990s was like winning the pools. I used to be at work at 5.30 in the morning at the brewery and then train in the evenings. Then all of a sudden I could

concentrate on rugby every day of every week. Having come from mixing the game with work pressures, perhaps that's what made it such a tough decision."

Deacon, who skippered the Gloucester side in 1995, added: "I know this club inside-out, and understanding the expectations of those here and the supporters has always been important to me."

When Deacon made his debut he followed a long line of top quality front row men, and on his retirement he leaves some of the best in the business.

"The front row forward is a massive tradition at Gloucester. You only have to look back at the likes of Blakeway and Burton. I am proud to be part of that. Then you look forward and you see Phil Vickery and Trevor Woodman who are part of the present and future."

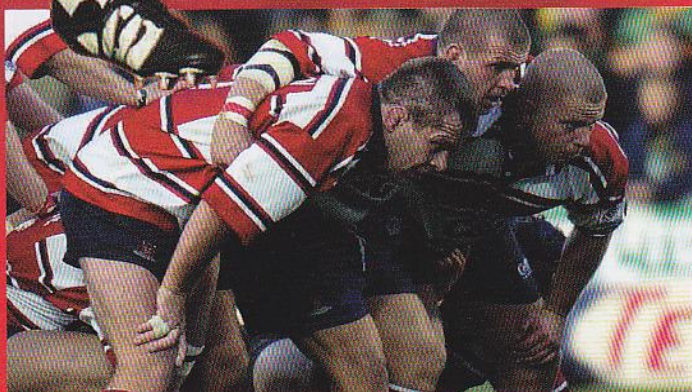
Gloucester's final home Zurich Premiership game of the regular season is against Wasps on Saturday 1 May, and it is set to be an emotional occasion for the tight head prop.

"It was a hard decision, but it was a decision I knew I would have to make at some point. To be honest, it has not sunk in yet that I will not be playing here next season, but I am sure it will when I leave the dressing room for the last time."

Deacon first picked up a rugby ball as an 11 year-old at Beaufort Comprehensive School in Gloucester, and went on to learn his trade at the city's Longlevens Rugby Club

He made his debut for Longlevens at the age of 15 and his 43 year-old brother still plays in the second row for the local side.

Deacon added: "Nigel Melville has been



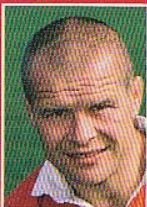
great about it and understands my decision. I have had a great career but I want to stop playing for the club at the top.

"But this is not the end - I am keeping my options open for the future - I have a few possibilities but I am willing to explore them all in good time."

Director of rugby Nigel Melville said: "It was certainly an emotional decision for Deacs to take. He has done so much for this club and you can't really sum it up in words alone. I hope that the Wasps game is a very special day."



Position: Prop
DoB: 31.07.65
Height: 187 cm
Weight: 108.3 kg
Previous Club: Longlevens
Int'l: England (A)
Honours: Barbarians



What Melville says:

"What Deacs has done is a phenomenal achievement and testament to the hard work that he has put in over the last 16 years. It was a very tough decision for him, as he's been through pretty much every emotion with this club in the last 16 years. He's an absolute legend, and everyone who arrives at this club knows of the 'Andy Deacon Legend'. We're going to miss him massively next year, but you can guarantee that he'll still have something to say on our performances, and he's earned that position. When things weren't going right, Deacs was the first person to pinpoint people's priorities."

Comments from fans on www.gloucester rugby club.com

Posted by Liz:

"I would just like to thank Deacs for everything he has given to Gloucester in the last three decades. He is a true legend. Lets hope that he gets the reception he deserves on Saturday."

Posted by ShedetteandShedhead:

Absolutely. Deacs is a top man. He is Glaws through and through and deserves the recognition and a great ovation on Saturday. A great Gloucester servant. Good luck Deacs.

Posted by Big Al:

"Just read about Deacs. Sad is the word, but I will be cheering for him on Saturday. Who is going to bring up the rear when the team run round the pitch now? All the best for the future Deacs, although after reading the announcement on the GRFC News it sounds like you may be playing on at a local club, please keep everyone informed."





Where Are They Now?

Pete Glanville

Former Gloucester captain Pete Glanville had more than 10 years as a player and more than four years on the administration side before exploring opportunities elsewhere.

The official matchday programme sat down for a chat with 'Glanners' to find out what's on his agenda these days.



After years of battling it out in the back-row with the likes of current Gloucester coach Dean Ryan and other top names including Peter Winterbottom, Micky Skinner and Dean Richards, former Gloucester captain Pete Glanville certainly has some stories of note.

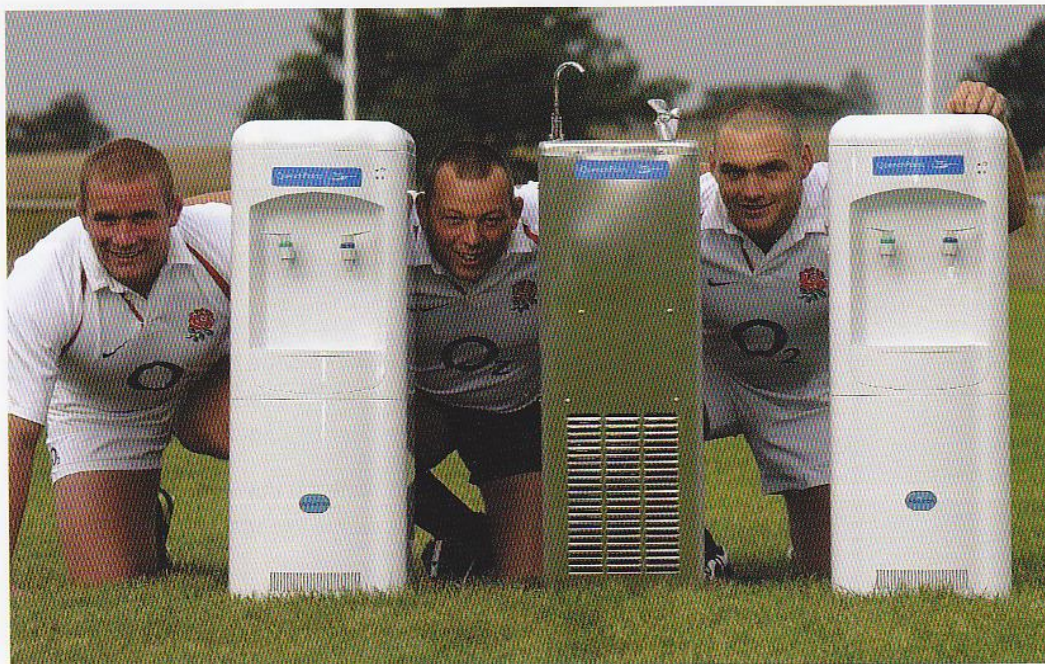
Glanners will admit that matching those war stories will be the effort he's put in over the last nine months to establish a new business as one of the leaders in its field.

The former Gloucester back-row man moved on from Kingsholm after 13 happy years in May last year and established Quench Water Systems Limited.

The Gloucester-born man is not afraid of hard work after mixing his rugby career with a role in his family's business, Glanville Tyres, before the game went professional.

Four years as team manager, after early retirement through injury at the age of 28, saw him sit down with life-long friend Fred Cairns Palmer.

Fred had been to Australia to research the business opportunities that existed in the filtered water business and it wasn't long before Pete, Fred and three others formed Quench Water Systems Limited.



Chatting to the matchday programme Glanville said: "After Fred had done his research in Australia, we decided to set up the company to provide best advice to companies, schools and homes concerning their drinking water requirements."

Glanville has certainly been making the most of the 13 long years he had at Gloucester, and coupled with the hard work from all five of the company's partners, the new company is going from strength to strength.

"The link with Gloucester Rugby Club has helped enormously, and certainly played a

role in getting the company to where it is today. We've had great support from the club and it's supporters, especially in our community projects."

One of its community projects has just received the backing of Gloucester and England stars Phil Vickery and Trevor Woodman. The project is at Longlevens Junior School.

The project is being piloted by the Department of Health and the Department for Education. Quench is one of only six companies across the UK to be selected to

support the initiative – which aims to improve accessibility to and consumption of water in schools.

As well as Longlevens, the company is working with other schools throughout the county to bring drinking water facilities to children, including those at St Peters High School and Oxstalls College.

"In some cases Quench has installed drinking water facilities at a minimal cost so that the schools do not have to worry about spending money that they could be spending on something else," said Glanville.

"Quench is looking to provide drinking water facilities for 400 primary schools, secondary schools and colleges across Gloucestershire," added the former Cherry and Whites captain.

Pete focuses on the sales and account management side of the business and maintains a close relationship with all of his customer-base.

But it's not just the business that is keeping Pete busy at the moment, as well as throwing on a suit to look after his customers, he can be seen with rugby



boots, a bicycle, running shoes and a kayak!

Seriously though, as well as taking on the role of head coach at Cinderford Rugby Club, he has been in full training for two forthcoming charity challenges.

After a successful and enjoyable Four Peaks Challenge last year with Dean Ryan, Nigel Melville, Ed Archer (fitness coach) and Kim Owen (physio), Glanville has again teamed up with Kim, Ed and Dean to attempt two adventures.

Thanks to the generous fundraisers in the region, they raised more than £7,000 for the Wooden Spoon Charity last year.

This year they're stepping up another level and taking part in the Great Lakeland Challenge (May 2004), made up of three massive events all in one day – a 27-mile cycle race, a run up the highest mountain (Scarfell Pike) and kayaking the length of Lake Windermere.

The second challenge is the Alpine

Challenge (July 2004) which sees them take on a five-mile river-raft, a six-mile assault on abseiling, waterfalls, treks and it finishes with a climb up five mountain peaks on the French-Swiss border near the Alps.

"We really enjoy the challenges and of course there's always a little bit of friendly rivalry to take on board as well.

"All the proceeds go towards the Wooden Spoon and its worthwhile projects, so we need as much support as possible. If anyone has any ideas or simply wants to chat, we'd welcome any level of support. I'd urge anyone to give me a quick call."

The on-going training schedule for the challenges sees Glanville regularly pace the streets of Gloucester in the early hours of the morning with Dean Ryan and Kim Owen.

Competition is rife, even for the smallest of advantages, especially between Glanville and Ryan.

By all accounts it was always interesting to watch the two of them fight it out on the

pitch in their playing days, and apparently the art of cycling and half marathon running is now the challenge of the day.

In the role as editor of the matchday programme, the easiest thing to do, other than to take sides, is to just to say may the best man or woman win.

For further information on Quench Water Systems Limited please contact www.quenchpure.com or call 0800 7311 491 or email info@quenchpure.com



For further information on the two charity challenges or to enquire how you can support the projects, call Pete Glanville on 07774 997399.



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Peter Arnold

25 years on and Peter Arnold sums up another season in his regular articles. The guru of Kingsholm looks back at the last nine months.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

It's been a fraught old season, hasn't it? Here we are, facing our last home game of 2003/4, and we seem to have been stuttering along, without much sense of continuity ever since last August.

The World Cup started it all of course. Great event though it undoubtedly was, it turned the early part of the Premiership into something of a lottery. Teams with players in the squad for Australia had to throw untried youngsters into the fray, which is no bad thing in itself, but didn't give coaches much of a chance to slot

them into their respective sides in any sort of a controlled fashion.

Even after the World Cup adventure, it was ages before all the players were operating at their full efficiency. Indeed, one Mr. J. Wilkinson has hardly played at all since returning home, while Mr. M. Johnson tried for a while, then retired from the International scene completely. All in all, things didn't return to anything like normalcy much before Christmas.

Here in Gloucester, we suffered as badly as anyone did, and our problems have been compounded by a series of injuries which is almost malevolent in the way it picked on key players. Thinus Delpont, James Forrester, James Simpson-Daniel... any side would struggle after losing that trio for long periods.

And take the case of Jon Goodridge. He was one of the young players who was given his chance during the World Cup period and grabbed it with both hands, to such an extent that good judges are now talking of him as one of the most promising young full-backs in the country, and must make even such a class act as Thinus Delpont wonder if he's going to be a first-choice player next time round.

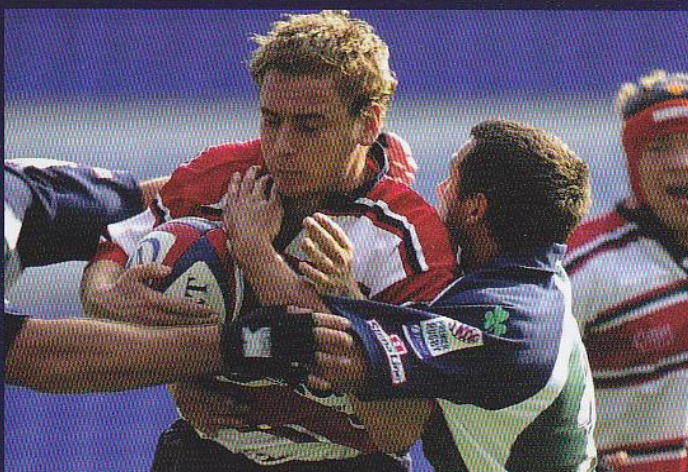
Then the lad goes and picks up a hernia - that first fine careless rupture - which will probably mean surgery. There's no justice, is there?

The whole situation, compounded by the different requirements of the Heineken Cup, and the need to cover for so many players over the Six Nations period - around nine at different levels, I believe - and you can see that 2003/4 must have been an absolute nightmare for the coaches.

In fact, one has to admit that we've done very well to do as well as we have this season. And it could just get better...

COMINGS AND GOINGS

This is the time of year when contracts are renewed, or not, when the predators are prowling around trying to lure selected players away to boost perceived weaknesses in their own squad, and indeed, when some players start getting the idea that they might do better elsewhere.



This means, of course, that rumours are as thick on the ground as bodies lying in the wake of a Junior Paramore charge up field. You'd be amazed at some of the stories I've been hearing, like Jake Boer going back to London Irish, in spite of the fact that he's already signed a new contract, and that was by no means the wildest story.

It's all a good laugh, I suppose, and there's never been a better rumour mill than Kingsholm. Through all the fog, however, one regrettable fact shines through. Robert Todd is going to Sale to renew acquaintance with Philippe St Andre, and I'm sorry about that.

I've always rated Toddy, ever since he was a bushy-haired tearaway young centre at London Irish. His forthright, no-nonsense approach in the centre always reminds me a bit of dear old John Bayliss, who performed the same role for Gloucester for years, even after he'd broken his neck.

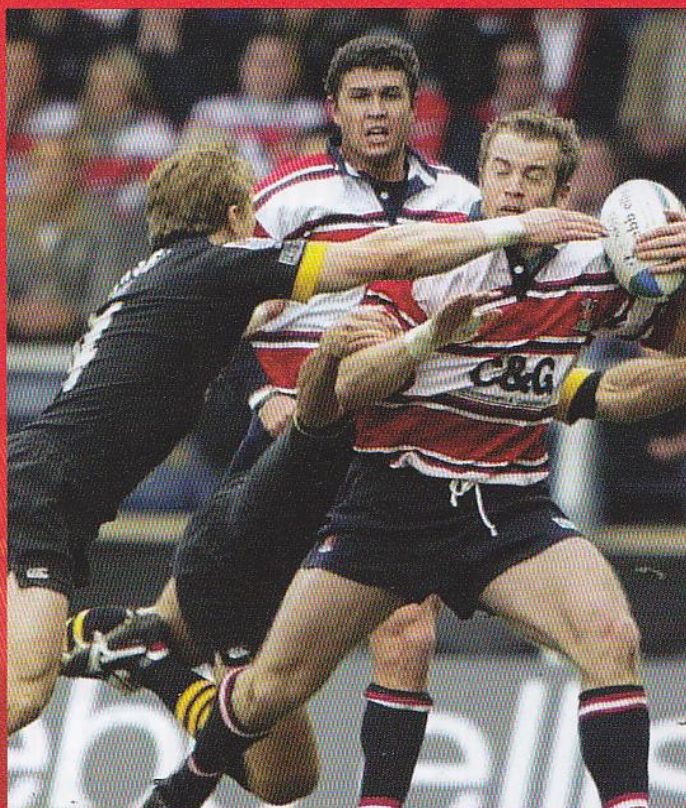
We shall miss Robert Todd, not just for his playing qualities, but also because he's a decided character who always adds a little something whenever he's out there in the middle.

Gloucester's loss is Sale's gain, and we wish him well in his new endeavours.

Just so long as he doesn't turn it on against Gloucester.

TAKES TIME

Saracens have been about the most active in recruiting thus far, and I'm interested to note that they seem to have changed their selection policy. No longer are they signing high-profile international players from overseas, and expecting them to meld into a team, which hasn't done then much good, but they've been attracting seasoned, hard old Premiership performers who have been around and know the demands of the competition.



The fact is that someone who does well in the Super 12 can find life very difficult in the Premiership. They just don't have so much room to move as they've been used to, and it takes time to adapt. If they ever do.

Look at our own experience. First we had Henry Paul, who had to make the transition from the League game. It took him a whole season to find his feet, but he has now been nominated for the Players Player of the Year Award, which he richly deserves.

Thinus Delpoit adapted more quickly than most, but even he took a few games to get acclimatised. Duncan McRae hardly lived up to his billing as the best playmaker in Australia when he first arrived, but now his midfield partnership with Henry Paul is one of the most feared combinations in the Premiership.

Most recently, Ryaan Van den Berg

looked all at sea for his first few games, but his performance against London Irish showed his undoubted class.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is a top-class Premiership player.

LAST WORD

We must congratulate Wasps on edging the most enthralling game I, for one, have ever watched on the box last Sunday. Pity either side had to lose, really. We certainly wish them well when flying the English flag at Twickenham.

Meanwhile, this is my last word for this season. Hope to see you next time round, hopefully in the company of Ollie Azam if press reports can be believed.

Have a great summer. I intend to.

BY IAN RANDALL

BBC RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

B B C



BBC Radio Gloucestershire's Ian Randall rounds up his thoughts from the week.

I spent last Sunday at Canterbury watching Gloucestershire's opening match of the new season in the Totesport League. By the time the rugby's over, Mark Alleyne's team will have played a quarter of their season in both the main competitions, and the Gloucester Festival will be less than a fortnight away. The fact that we are here on the first Saturday in May

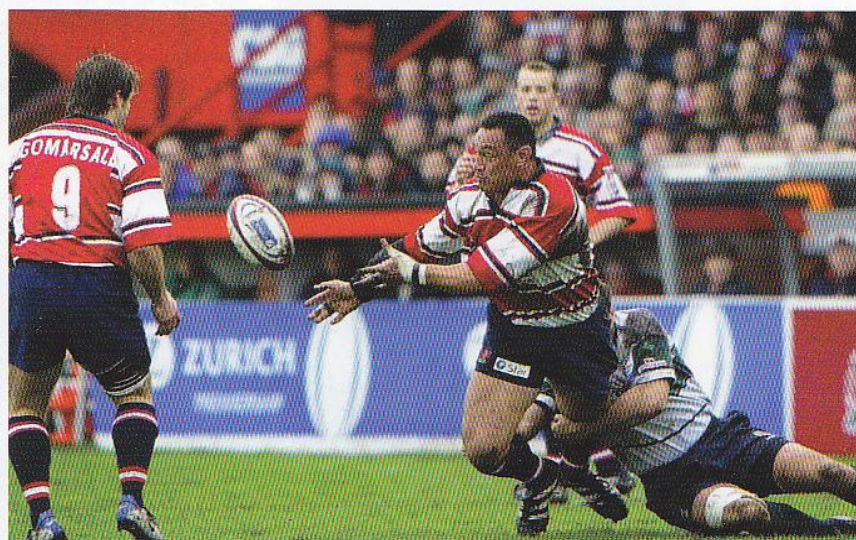
wondered if Gloucester would find them more difficult than anyone on that opening day, with Rotherham being enthusiastic and, at that stage, an unknown quantity. Gloucester won, of course, and I went away questioning Rotherham's lack of a cutting edge. Ultimately, it didn't improve, and now it's Worcester's turn under John Brain and Andy Keast to try and bridge the gap. Who knows, they may even look this way for a player or two.

"Today is Gloucester's 31st match of the season, but strangely I've seen only six games at Kingsholm."

Today is Gloucester's 31st match of the season, but strangely I've seen only six games at Kingsholm. During the World Cup, homeward journeys from away trips tended to follow defeats, except from the Stoop, where Harlequins colours were lowered without conceding a point. In some ways it was one of the most satisfying days of the season, as the Gloucester defence stood solid against everything Quins threw at it. The performance in the Heineken Cup in Italy was illuminated by an outstanding individual try by James Simpson-Daniel, and at Leicester at the start of the year the Welford Road bogey was well and truly overturned, much to the delight of Deacs and Pasty in particular. A filthy afternoon at Rotherham was the only other occasion where Nigel Melville's post match

with so much still to play for shows how rugby has become a year round game.

I remember how it all started, back in mid September. Jim Kilfoyle, the Rotherham chief executive, told me of his delight at his club being back in Premiership, and how they would make a better fist of it than before. I





interview has followed a Gloucester win.

I was discussing the level of away support the other day. Some sports, such as cricket, where memberships are very attractive, lend themselves to fans only watching their team at home, while in broad terms one in ten football supporters would watch their team both home AND away.

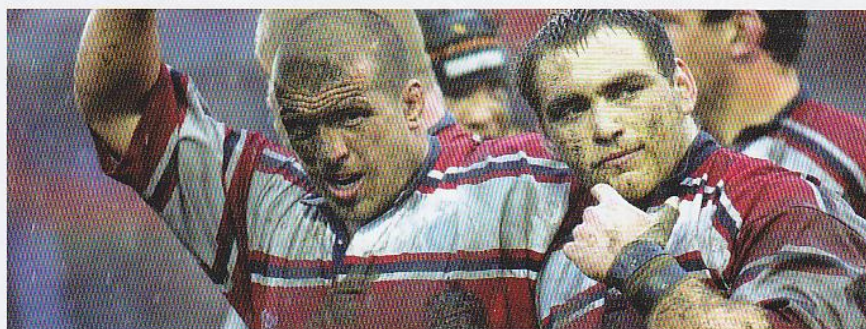
On the basis that that percentage is lower here at Gloucester, the hope would be that you've listened to the team's performances away from Kingsholm either on BBC Radio Gloucestershire or via the club website, which is linked to it.

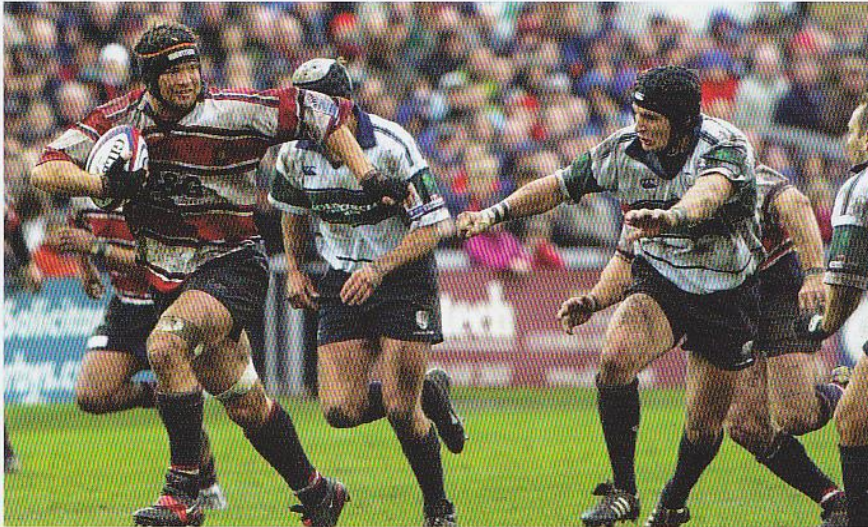
We've been fortunate this season in terms of avoiding any technical gremlins, but the afternoon at Northampton came close. I arrived early but couldn't

get the line to the studio to connect. In the end, having tried several of the spare sockets with multiple combinations of leads, some of which were borrowed, we found one that worked, only for Martin Bayfield to sit in his seat at 2.35, plug in and blow the lot! I'm smaller than him and didn't fancy suggesting it was his fault. Ultimately, we fixed it just in time.

The announcement on Monday that Andy Deacon is to hang up his playing boots at the end of the season breaks Gloucester's last link with the Keith Richardson era at the club. His record of appearing in more league matches for Gloucester since the old Courage League was formed stands comparison with the best, and his durability has made him a respected opponent at all levels.

He's a Barbarian, and a man who bares comparison





with any international prop according to that shy and retiring officer in the front row, Olivier Azam.

Deacs, however, is never one to trumpet his own cause, or gripe about the lack of an England cap. He's given sterling service, he's lifted the Powergen Cup, and he's become an oracle of knowledge for any number of players at the club. Phil Vickery calls him a hero. Today show your appreciation.

A Gloucester win would be a fitting way for Deacs to sign off the regular Premiership season, although we don't yet know if this is the last game here. Gloucester could win today, and at Bath next week, and still finish fourth and end up in the Wildcard play offs with a home semi final. They could win just one of the last two games, finish third, and face Bath or Wasps again away from home in the Zurich play off semi final.

The other benefit to that would be the automatic securing of a Heineken Cup place for next season. Gloucester however, must imagine the worst situation. Northampton win their last two games, Harlequins win the Parker Pen Challenge Cup and Toulouse win the Heineken Cup. If they're ready for that, then we should still get the right outcome at Twickenham on May 29th.

C'mon Glaws!

"A Gloucester win would be a fitting way for Deacs to sign off the regular Premiership season..."



Fans Zone

with
Bob Fenton

Regular Shed man Bob Fenton rounds up his thoughts of recent weeks and even includes a 'guest' contribution from a Wasps fan.

I wrote this stuff on Sunday, and just as I was getting ready to send it through I saw the news about Deacs retiring. Well what can you say about the man? A true Gloucester legend who never got the recognition he deserved. While the England front row were peppered with misfits and pygmies from so-called

"If he (Andy Deacon) leads the team out today the cheer you will hear will be like nothing on earth."

fashionable clubs our Deacs was overlooked, despite the fact that he munched these internationals for breakfast week in, week out.

But if anyone deserves a retirement send off it's our man from 'Levens. If he leads the team out today the cheer you will hear will be like nothing on earth. Good luck Deacs, and thanks for the memories.

But about today. Wasps, huh. If ever there was a team that you would not want to play at this time of the season then it would be Warren Gatland's black and yellow machine.

Just as they did last year, they have hit top form on the run in to the end of the season, and only the most one-eyed Shedhead would try to deny that they are one of the best club sides around at the moment. Having just squeaked past us in the quarter final of the Heineken Cup, their result in Dublin must rank as one of

the best in their history. An epic game with an epic finale – Toulouse will not fancy taking them on at Twickenham, that's for sure.

But what is it about Wasps that seems to rub so many people up the wrong way? Like the great Leicester sides of a few years ago they seem to be becoming very adept at playing on the very edge of the laws – their penalty count in the Munster match was something like three to one against them.

Of course today's game will be seen by many as a chance to write some long standing wrongs, not least what many people see as them stealing our crown last season. But isn't it time to put that all behind us now? At the end of the day Wasps were crowned champions after playing to the rules of the competition, we all knew that the league winners were going to get nothing apart from a break between the end of the season and the final, so surely it's time to forget and move on. So I'm going to break with a Gloucester tradition here. Last year Wasps WERE the Zurich champions. There, I said it. Now run me out of town or burn me at the cross as a heretic.

The simple fact is that they won the competition by playing the best rugby when it mattered, in the final at Twickenham and not in the long slog that some of us traditionalists called a league. If I can accept that, then so can anyone, and isn't it time to forget the past and concentrate on the here and now...

Trouble is, the here and now doesn't get much better when it comes to Gloucester v Wasps matches. After another drubbing in the Heineken Cup we were left to wonder why we couldn't be like them.

Robert Howley was misquoted in the press recently as saying that he thought Wasps were the best side in Europe (he actually said that on their day they were among the best sides in Europe).

That got him branded as 'arrogant' in some quarters. Maybe, but on current form who would argue with that – I think they are one of, if not the, best side in Europe at the moment

Anyone who has visited one of the many internet message boards of late will have seen that any mention of Wasps usually provokes an erudite response from Barney Burnham. For those that don't know him, Barney is an A1 bloke – a proper rugby supporter who epitomises much of the spirit that sets us apart from so many other sports.

As an example, for a while it looked like many Gloucester supporters would be left ticketless by the meagre allocation we were supposed to get for the quarterfinal. Once the tickets went on general sale Barney offered to get tickets for numerous Gloucester fans. On reflection, many of them now probably wished he hadn't bothered, but that's another story.

So, this being (probably) the last programme of the season, I thought I'd ask Barney to pen a visiting fans eye view – a Wasps view of Gloucester. Barney is, in fact, a local(ish) boy, originating from Worcester before finding his way up to the Big City. Mind you, after writing this he won't be back this way for a few months – it's been a while since the gallows were used in Gloucester Gaol, but I reckon more than a few will be down there blowing the dust off them shortly.

Anyway, here's what he sent me:

'The immortal P.G. Wodehouse once wrote that it's easy to distinguish between a ray of sunshine and a Scotsman with a grievance. Most rugby fans outside Gloucester believe the same could be said of Shedheads.'



A recent poll of ZP supporters made Gloucester fans the least popular rivals. Sad, but perhaps understandable.

Until April 11, many fellow Waspies found my soft spot for Gloucester inexplicable. Now they don't. They've been unstinting in their praise for the gracious manner in which you took defeat. Compliments mean more when they have to be surgically extracted!

But, seriously...we are awestruck at your total recall of grievances from the mists of time. Your collective memory puts pachyderms to shame, but can we call time on references to last season?

We are amused at how you perceive slights in everything. I estimate that the average Shedhead would take 30 seconds to detect an anti-Gloucester stance in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We get slightly exasperated when you keep reminding everybody that your support is bigger and better than all others, and that no big occasion can survive without it. "Nomadic" references to ourselves are also rather irksome - our ground was sacrificed to pay off QPR's

spiralling debts. Count yourselves lucky you still have yours!

Above all, we recognise that you are special. Passionate and competitive during games, first to the bar afterwards.

The media, irresponsibly, made much of the "bad blood" ahead of April 11. Did they see the way we all mingled after the game? We know that keen rivalry is based on respect, and we certainly respect you - any Waspie making tractor "jokes" gets both barrels from me.

As metropolitan types, we'll always be the antithesis of yourselves. The multicoloured lot at The Stoop - real lounge lizards - should be your real enemies, but they've never been a threat.

Keep it up, guys. You're unique and rugby needs you!

P.S. When are they opening the Kingsholm branch of Specsavers?

Okay, okay calm down now – tongue in cheek... remember humour. Oh what the heck. Have a great summer and thanks for reading my stuff.



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
Andy Deacon	03	prop
Mark Cornwell	04	lock
Alex Brown	05	lock
Peter Buxton	06	flanker
Jake Boer (c)	07	flanker
Junior Paramore	08	no. 8
Delarey Du Preez	16	replacements
Rodrigo Roncero	17	
Nick Wood	18	
Adam Eustace	19	
Andy Hazell	20	
Simon Amor	21	
Robert Todd	22	

TRY
CONVERSION
PENALTY
DROP GOAL

LONDON WASPS

Mark Van Gisbergen	15	
Kenny Logan	14	
Fraser Waters	13	
Stuart Abbott	12	
Tom Voyce	11	
Alex King	10	
Peter Richards	09	
Craig Dowd	01	
Trevor Leota	02	
Tim Payne	03	
Martin Purdy	04	
Richard Birkett	05	
Joe Worsley	06	
Paul Volley	07	
Lawrence Dallaglio (C)	08	
Will Green	16	
Mark Lock	17	
Ben Gotting	18	
George Skivington	19	
Rob Howley	20	
Mark Denney	21	
Ayoola Erinle	22	

ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 2003/04

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
Bath Rugby	20	17	0	3	445	279	3	2	73
London Wasps	20	16	0	4	533	330	6	2	72
Northampton Saints	20	13	1	6	525	384	5	2	61
Gloucester	20	13	0	7	456	346	4	3	59
NEC Harlequins	20	9	2	9	460	409	4	5	49
Leicester Tigers	20	9	3	8	414	400	2	2	45
London Irish	20	9	1	10	397	419	1	5	44
Sale Sharks	19	7	3	9	415	397	4	6	44
Newcastle Falcons	19	6	2	11	440	448	4	8	40
Leeds Tykes	20	7	1	12	414	526	4	3	37
Saracens	20	6	1	13	338	506	2	3	30
Rotherham Titans	20	0	0	20	276	669	0	2	2

1372

TODAY'S MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: T Spreadbury

1st TJ: W A Melrose

2nd TJ: R Mullis

Replacement Ref: S Lander

4th Official: M Tovey

Today's Result

Gloucester **28**

London Wasps **25**

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