

GRFC

vs **Saracens**



Saturday 30th April

Zurich Premiership

SARACENS

Kick Off 3.00pm

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of Season**

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THE TIMES

Welcome to Kingsholm for this afternoon's final Zurich Premiership match of the season. This is an amazing afternoon for everyone involved in the league, with just one match to go we find ourselves in the unique position of every single game this afternoon having an important outcome for every team.



At the top we still have to decide who takes the top three places, in the middle we have European places up for grabs through wildcard qualification, and at the bottom, five teams fighting to stay in the Premiership.

With every game kicking off at 3.00, at around 4.30 when games are ending, players and spectators throughout England will whip out the calculators and wait for news from grounds around the country – that's sport!

The whole build up to this weekend's games has thrown up some interesting perspectives on the psyche of the English.

Surely the big game this weekend is at Welford Road where Leicester take on Wasps to decide who tops the table. No, the press and the media focus, will be between Harlequins and Sale at the Stoop. Why? Because we seem to take more enjoyment from somebody else's failure, than to celebrate another's success. It is probably akin to the crowds that a public hanging used to receive many years ago!

At Kingsholm today our focus is on Saracens and a possible home tie in the Wildcard play-offs. Saracens have shown plenty of form in recent weeks and will be hoping to press for a top three place, depending of course on results elsewhere. Steve Diamond

the next few weeks we hope to announce more new signings in key areas for the team.

As new people arrive, others will leave and move on to new pastures, such is the nature of professional sport. For those who are leaving I would like to thank them for their commitment to Gloucester whilst they have been at the Club, and I wish them every success at their new Clubs. They can all be assured of a warm welcome when they return.

Today is also a significant day in the Club's history, the main Grandstand will be in operation for the final time. Having served its purpose for so many years, the meteoric rise of the game demands better facilities for spectators. The building of the new stand, recruitment of quality players and the investment in new training facilities is an ambitious programme that will help us maintain our status in the game.

Finally, I would like to thank all our supporters for their unflinching support this season. Yes, it has been a difficult season, whilst injuries to key players are sometimes passed off as excuses, they have undoubtedly effected our performance.

As we build the squad for next season, we are trying to increase both quantity and quality in order to sustain a level of performance that will keep us at the top.

Today may be the last League game of the season, but there are still two important games to go. Have a great afternoon's rugby!

Nigel's notes



Nigel Melville
Director of Rugby

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has done an excellent job since arriving at Vicarage Road, and after watching their game against Leicester, today's game will be a physical encounter.

This week, we announced a couple of new signings, Patrice Collazo and Peter Richards, as we begin to strengthen the squad for next season. During

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“Thanks for your support this season... you’ve been with us throughout, and this afternoon’s a big game...”

Welcome to what could be the last game of the season here at Kingsholm, and what may not. It all depends on how the table finishes this

afternoon in terms of home or away Wild Card games.

It’s certainly been an up and down season, which is not what we would have

The rest of the season is gone, it’s in the past and we now have to aim for three games, today, a Wild Card semi and the Wild Card final, in order for us to get into the Heineken Cup for next season.

We’re an ambitious club and want to be there. I came off the bench for Leicester last season in the Wild Card final and it was a tremendous occasion and a great day for all the players and the supporters.

I want to be part of that again for Gloucester, and ensure we can go into the summer months knowing we have a Heineken Cup to look forward to.

Before all of that though, there’s today’s game. Saracens have had a great second half to the season.

We’ve got a lot of respect for them, and we know they like to run the ball. But the main concern this week has been us, and putting the hours in to get it right for this afternoon.

This afternoon has to be for the fans and for us as a group of players. When things haven’t been going well, we feel it every day, and it’s important we do it for each other this afternoon.

Thanks for your support this season. There’s been some good moments and there’s been some not so good, but you’ve been with us throughout, and this afternoon’s a big game, and I know we can do it together.

Captain's corner

Adam Balding
Match Captain



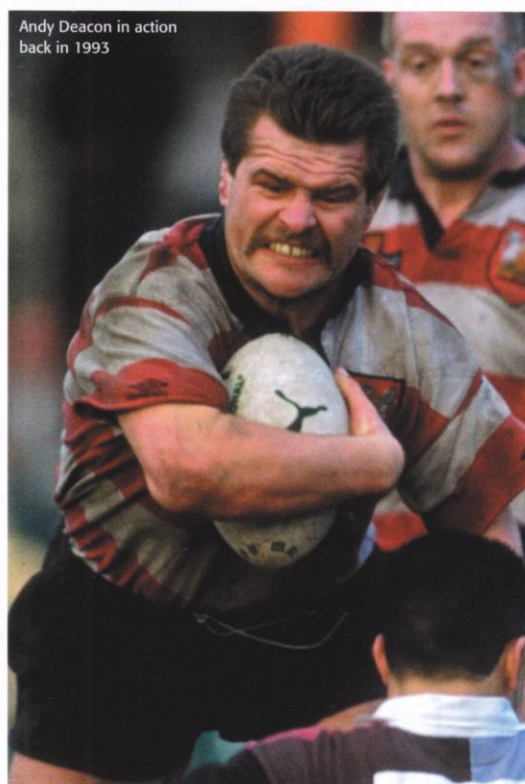
wanted, it started on an upward curve with the performances getting better and better each week, but from the Autumn onwards, we’ve been inconsistent

There are a number of reasons for why we’re only in sixth position, but there are steps in place to get us in shape to be a top three team.

We want to, and have to, finish it on a high today, and take it on another level in the Wild Card.

In the regular 'remember when' series, resident Club facts man **Dave King** looks back a previous meeting between **Gloucester and Saracens** in November **1992**.

REMEMBER when?



Andy Deacon in action
back in 1993

Back in 1992 Gloucester were seeking their first Courage home League win of the season. Prior to the match the Club had run into form with three consecutive victories in away matches at Cheltenham 37-3, Pontypool 24-10 and Moseley 34-5, interspersed with a Kingsholm win over visiting Transval 31 points to 11. The meeting between the two clubs was set for 21 November 1992.

Although the match ended favourably with a 19 points to 5 victory it was not without controversy. Marcus Hannaford the Club's scrum half spent Saturday evening in hospital after being concussed in this muddled affair between the struggling clubs. Marcus was knocked out 10 minutes

DID YOU Know?

Record against Saracens:

	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against
Home	22	20	2	0	557	264
Away	19	8	1	10	284	407
Total	41	28	3	10	841	671



Dave Sims

into the second half by an illegal challenge, unseen by referee Fred Howard or his touch judges.

The line out work of Dave Sims and Richard West was the dominant feature of Gloucester's play. The duo combined for the first try with West forcing his way over, after Dave Sims had won clean ball and a pass from the unfortunate Hannaford set the giant lock up.

Gloucester had preceded this move with two penalties from full back Martin Roberts. Within 15 minutes they were 11 points to nil ahead. Although Roberts missed the conversion he was on

target with a penalty to give the Kingsholm club a 14-point to nil interval lead.

Facing the wind and rain in the second half it looked ominous when Darren O'Leary, the Saracens winger, scored a 43rd minute corner try. However, the power and dominance of the Gloucester pack was re-asserted. Seven minutes from time Damien Cummins set off on a break from the half way line, sold two dummies and sent Derek Morgan in for a match clinching corner try.

A remarkable statistic of this match was that Gloucester lock Richard West won 24 of the 40 lineouts.

Gloucester:

M.Roberts
 D.Morgan
 D.Caskie
 D.Cummins
 S.Morris
 N.Matthews
 M.Hannaford
 (J.Perrins 50th min)
 T.Windo
 D.Kearsey
 A.Deacon
 D.Sims
 R.West
 P.Ashmead
 I.Smith (Captain)
 P.Miles.

Saracens:

A.Tunningly
 D.O'Leary
 J.Buckton
 D.Dooley
 S.Reed
 B.Rudling
 B.Davies (Captain)
 R.Andrews
 J.Locke
 S.Wilson
 M.Langley
 L.Adamson
 C.Tarback
 J.Cassell
 B.Crawley

Referee:

F.Howard (RFU)

That in the Transval match played on 13 November of the 1992-1993 season that Francois Pienaar was the Transval captain?

That Gloucester captain Ian Smith was selected for the Barbarians versus Australia at Twickenham that season?

That Ian Smith had captained the Barbarians earlier versus Newport that term?

That in 1992-1993 the club officials were all former players of this club, Chairman: Peter Ford. Hon Sec: Doug Wadley, Hon Fixtures Secretary: Mike Nicholls. Chairman of Selectors: Mickey Booth. Coach: Keith Richardson?

This match was the 2,165th played by Gloucester at Kingsholm?

In 1992-1993 Gloucester remained top of the South West chart for England International caps with 37, Bristol were in second position with 34, Bath in third position with 24 with Ben Clarke the most recent?

In the Saracens match of 1992, Pete Miles, Tony Windo, Dave Kearsey and Andy Deacon were playing their first League match of the season?



Peter Arnold is in his third decade as a contributor to the matchday programme and this week offers his thoughts on the season.

Peter ARNOLD

AND IT ALL STARTED SO WELL

When I started doing this job some of our players were just twinkles in the eye of their fathers. Even the oldest of them hadn't got to their secondary schools yet. Sadly, this is the first time, in all those years, that I've ever been glad to be writing for the last scheduled programme of the season (wildcards apart). I always try to be upbeat and positive, but it's been a bit difficult lately.

And it all started so well. Everyone seems to forget that, at the beginning of the

campaign, Northampton seemed to be unbeatable, sweeping all before them in spectacular fashion, and looking for all the world like contenders for the Championship. Then Gloucester arrived at Franklins Gardens and, not to put too fine a point on it stuffed them, starting the slide that placed them in positive danger of relegation for a significant part of the season.

A royal hammering of Ulster at Kingsholm followed, while Stade Francais were decidedly lucky to come away from the Heineken match in Paris without a

humiliating defeat. It all seemed to be downhill after that, although there were bright spots, as when we beat Leicester at Welford Road. Even the injury-time defeat by Bath in the same competition was decidedly unfortunate.

Injuries played their part, of course, but other sides, notably Bath, could claim similar misfortune. According to one report I read over 200 Premiership players have received significant injuries this season, and that's approaching half of the registered players. That's a debate for another day,

and a problem that has to be addressed, but we can't blame the injury count for all our troubles.

So I'm quite glad the season is approaching its end. We badly need a break, a period for thinking, for deciding where the problem lies, for making a few changes, perhaps, but above all, for rekindling the special fire which has characterised Gloucester Rugby Club for over a century.

Other teams have suffered the same way in recent years. Bath struggled, and were almost relegated a couple of seasons ago. Leicester went through a horrendous patch. Both are in the upper echelons now.

So let's take a deep breath and come out fighting next season. It's been done before.

SO WHAT WENT WRONG?

So why have we seen the swings from brilliance to mediocrity this season? I have no more idea than anyone else does, but a friend of mine, who has been around rugby for even longer than I have, and played the game at first-class level has an interesting theory.

He points out that, in his day, players had a couple of training sessions a week, which they quite frequently hated and arrived at the ground on Saturday with a sense of keen anticipation and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, including the after-match beers and chat with

opponents and supporters. In these high-intensity days, life is not like that.

His theory is that today's professional players eat, sleep and breathe rugby from one weekend to the next. They train extremely hard, and work their socks off to achieve the standards required of them. Coaches can't be blamed if they try to make the training-ground experience as much like the 'real thing' as they can.

There are dangers in that. I remember Nigel Melville stating on TV that there are as many injuries during training as there are during matches. The whole thing could just become a chore. Is the match itself simply becoming an extension of the training week? Just another day at the office, so to speak?

I don't know if this is true or not, but it's a possibility worth exploring. If, over a long and intense season, rugby just becomes a day-to-day grind for the players, the climactic experience of the weekend match is in danger of disappearing. In that case, the game might, on occasion, become just a matter of going through the motions.

I wouldn't, for the life of me, accuse the players of any such thing. Not on the conscious level, but could there be something in the subconscious, fighting the player's obvious intention to perform as well as he can, and achieve great things for his team, his club and his supporters?



Tom Walkinshaw announces the plans for the new stand

Today's game is a matter of precision. The difference between a perfect pass and one which causes the recipient to knock on or stop in his tracks is a matter of fractions of an inch and of a second. All that's needed is some demon in the mind asking you if it really matters, even if you're not conscious of the fact.

All this seems pretty theoretical and abstruse, but there's no obvious reason for the extremes of performance which we've seen this season, so perhaps we should look a little deeper. One for the sports psychologists perhaps.

As supporters we can help. A really good display of support from all parts of the ground could very well help defeat

that theoretical demon I talked about.

Or am I just theorising from the back of my neck?

PART SOLUTION

Some people have been advocating larger squads as a solution to the injury crisis and player burn-out. Others have said that we play too many matches and that the fixture list should be reduced.

NEW STAND

I'm delighted to see that our new stand project is getting off the ground, so to speak. But tell me. Why is it called a stand when it's designed to enable people to sit down?

Have a good summer.

BBC radio gloucestershire

In his regular programme article **BBC Radio Gloucestershire's Ian Randall** offers his thoughts on the season and what's still to come in terms of the play-offs over the next few weeks.



Cheltenham Tewkesbury Winchcombe Tetbury Bishop Cleeve
Tetbury Gloucester Wotton-under-Edge Stroud Cotswold
Moreton-in-Marsh Wotton-under-Edge Stroud Cotswold
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Painswick Cirencester Newent Painswick Stroud
Tetbury Bishop's Cleeve Chalford Cheltenham Tewkesbury
Cheltenham Mickleton Winchcombe Tetbury

the Heineken Cup. The last time it happened, Gloucester put nearly 200 points on Caerphilly and Parma in the round robin stages of what then was the European Shield, and neither game could be classed as a contest – more a glorified training run. To be in what is a completely open draw for the 24 clubs involved next season would create genuine anticipation.

Overall, I'm sure I'm not the only one to think the season has passed Gloucester by since they lost badly at Bath after opening the season with four straight wins. Each time you thought some momentum was being built, it all came to a juddering halt and took several games to get going again. The injury list has at times been very long, but all the teams have suffered and the best ones have had multiple international calls too. Privately, I suspect Nigel Melville will not see that as an acceptable excuse.

Nigel did tell me a few months back that he would like a squad of 40 players for next season. I'm not sure if that isn't optimistic and actually quite difficult to manage. Some players could play very little first team rugby, and how do you split up the salary cake? Do you put your faith in a small number of 'star' players, hope they stay fit,

Technical advances have meant the word 'interactive' has taken on a whole new meaning in the last couple of years, but to me the root of it is still what today is all about – several games going on at the same time with the mix of results determining the outcome.

It's actually a great day to be a fan, as there is an intensity of emotion and a desire for information you match on any other day – in sport, at least. Being on my side of the microphone, it is also one of the most riveting to be involved in.

In pure terms, you could argue that Gloucester have the least to play for today. The best they can achieve is a home tie in the Wildcard play offs – as they did last year – yet they could still be back here next weekend even if they lose.

We should not, however, lose sight of the considerable carrot that is dangling in front of the team. Think of next season WITHOUT the intensity of

and settle for more modest cover, or have a more interchangeable squad of more even quality?

It's not an easy one to call, and it would be very easy for Nigel to draw up a list of half a dozen areas where he feels he must strengthen the squad over the closed season. The return of Collazo and (almost certainly) Mercier is a start on their previous form, and a fit and rested Mike Tindall will add something extra at centre. Given he has started only 17 games in the last two seasons, a fit Phil Vickery would be like having another new signing too.

As we now know, by the

time the new season comes round the ground will have a very different look with a vastly increased capacity, 60 per cent of it seated. 12 months ago it was 10 per cent - how times change.

Saracens come here today as one of the form teams in the Premiership. I must say that when an injury ravaged Gloucester lost at Vicarage Road in November, Sarries looked one of the poorest sides I had seen at the top level, but they have come with a good run at the right time and could still steal third place and qualify automatically for the Heineken Cup.

On the basis it's not where

you are, but how you are playing, Bath and Sale will know they cannot afford any slip-ups. Watching Leeds' home game with Quins on Tuesday, the tension was obvious, but the Tykes' win now leaves Quins in a perilous position, particularly with a side like Sale to play. To me, it'll take a mighty recovery now for them to escape.

Gloucester will want to show some pride today after a far from vintage season, and send you away on a happy note. Don't forget, however, to clear your diary next weekend from midday on Friday onwards - somewhere, there'll be a game to go to....



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Archive specialist Dave King touches on this season with the key moments and the key milestones that have been reached, including a summary of the last three campaigns.

gloucester RECORDS



Our final Zurich Premiership match of the season brings the curtain down on a frustrating season, and a year that saw an unprecedented catalogue of injuries to key players in vital positions.

The season was heralded with the prospect of a gargantuan front row of Phi Vickery, Olivier Azam and Cristo Bezuidenhout. The reality – they played together as a trio for 25 minutes at Worcester on 16 October!

Henry Paul, James Simpson-Daniel, Mark Cornwell, Alex Brown, Duncan McRae, Terry Sigley, Olivier Azam, Gary Powell, James Forrester, Chris Fortey and Phil Vickery have all suffered intermediate and long-term injury.

It is easy to state that other clubs have encountered similar fate. True, but we are only concerned with this club. Bath are always quoted as being decimated with injuries, but their pack has remained virtually intact, a vital base from which to build around.

Facts and figures abound at the culmination of each season. It is interesting

to note that we have accumulated 215 points in Zurich League matches at Kingsholm, scored 26 tries, kicked 14 conversions, 17 penalties and recorded two drop goals.

In the Heineken Cup at Kingsholm we recorded 78 points from nine tries, six conversions, six penalties and one drop goal.

In the Powergen Cup we scored 40 points from three tries, two conversions and seven penalties.

Again, it is interesting to compare these same statistics over a three-year period in the Zurich Premiership.

First, how we have accumulated our points at Kingsholm?

Season	Total Points	Tries	Conversions	Penalties	Dropped Goals	Penalty Tries
2002-2003	342	38	27	30	1	1
2003-2004	290	31	23	27	1	1
2004-2005	215	26	14	17	2	-

In the three-season period we have conceded the following at Kingsholm.

Season	Total Points	Tries	Conversions	Penalties	Dropped Goals	Penalty Tries
2002-2003	158	13	6	25	2	1
2003-2004	156	17	13	15	-	-
2004-2005	216	19	14	30	1	-

Turning the attention to away matches in the Zurich Premiership over that three-season period reveals the following. How we have accumulated our points at away venues.

Season	Total Points	Tries	Conversions	Penalties	Dropped Goals	Penalty Tries
2002-2003	275	28	21	29	2	-
2003-2004	201	19	14	23	3	-
2004-2005	179	15	9	22	5	1

How we have conceded points at away matches in the Zurich Premiership.

Season	Total Points	Tries	Conversions	Penalties	Dropped Goals	Penalty Tries
2002-2003	237	20	12	34	2	1
2003-2004	256	24	17	32	2	-
2004-2005	257	22	18	37	-	-

The complete playing record since Nigel Melville and Dean Ryan were appointed reads as follows in all competitions.

	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	Points For	Points Against
Home	50	42	0	8	1513	822
Away	52	24	3	25	1180	1260
Total	102	66	3	32	2693	2049

Our home record is very good while in away fixtures we are almost on par.

Attendances have been excellent, home and away, six capacity attendances in our 11 Zurich Premiership matches at Kingsholm, with an average attendance of 12,427.

With the new Buildbase Stand, every attendance this season has been above the Club's previous 11,000 capacity. Last season 10,050 watched the Saracens match at Kingsholm. This year it's a 13,000 sell-out.

Away matches have seen 110,330 attend our matches with an average of 10,030 spectators. The only away venues that witnessed a reduction in numbers on the previous season were Leeds, 4,079 compared to 7,467 in 2003-2004, and at today's visitors Saracens 6,860 in comparison to 6,907 the previous season, a mere 47 spectators!

We have received 15 yellow cards, no red, with ten coming in away encounters, with David Pearson administering four of those. We have used 36 players in League matches with Jon Goodridge the only ever present.

Other notable achievements have been Andy Hazell and James Forrester gaining their first caps for England. Andy, in scoring a try versus Italy on 12 March became the 13th Gloucester player to register a try in the white shirt of England.

The open-side flanker follows in the wake of Henry Berry, Phillip Greening, George Hastings, William Johns, James Simpson-Daniel, Frank and Percy Stout, Chris Tanner and Phil Vickery who all scored a try for England. Arthur Hudson with seven tries, Tom Voyce five tries and Mike Teague three tries lead the way.

Tom Voyce is the only Gloucester player to score a try for the British Lions. He did so

in South Africa in September 1926. Phil Vickery is the only Gloucester player to score a try for England in a World Cup competition, versus Samoa in October 2003.

Other personal milestones, in terms of appearances for the club, this season include:

Terry Fanolua leads the way with 195 full appearances and 18 as a replacement in all competitions since he joined the club. Other appearance stats include Olivier Azam 77 (19), Simon Amor 12(10), Adam Balding 23(6), James Bailey 6(6), Cristo Bezuidenhout 17(2), Jake Boer 130(15), Alex Brown 55(1), Peter Buxton 55(28), Mark Cornwell 124(61), Bradley Davis 8(3), Mefin Davies 8, Adam Eustace 97(41), James Forrester 63(30), Chris Fortey 106(72), Marcel Garvey 77(6), Andy Gomarsall 111(16), Jon Goodridge 30, Andy Hazell 81(33), Seti Kiole 14(1), Duncan McRae 41, Nathan

Mauger 8 (8), Will Matthews (1), James Meriman 1(1), Olly Morgan (1), Luke Narraway 4(4), James Parkes 6(1), Henry Paul 102(6), Gary Powell 15(4), Terry Sigley 9(11), James Simpson-Daniel 77(11), Rory Teague 2, Phil Vickery 113(19), Nick Wood 10 (12).

Pride of place must go to Mefin Davies, our Welsh International hooker, cast aside by Welsh regions he maintained a high enough level of fitness, application and determination to take part in the Principality's Grand Slam achievement and help to resurrect Wales as a major force. James Merriman likewise in leading Wales Under 21s to a Grand Slam.

Summer well, the muddled oaf is almost ready to give way to the flannelled fool. Once the Wildcard and Zurich Premiership finals are through, next season will soon beckon.

David King



An upbeat **Bob Fenton** gets ready to take his spot on the Shed terrace for this afternoon's game and offers his thoughts on years gone by and his thoughts on next season.

Fanzone

BOB FENTON

And now, the end is near.
And we face etc etc...

Yup, it's that time again, time to take in the surroundings of Kingsholm for the last time for a few months before heading off into a world of Saturday DIY, gardening, shopping and other horrors that have been put off for the last six months or so.

As I said before, my list of tasks is growing by the minute as I start work on collecting enough brownie points to see me through next season. Life's tough huh...

And when we come back in August or September we'll come back to a very different Kingsholm. Gone will be the old grandstand, gone will

be the little gold stickers that glint like so many alien eyes when the sun hits them and gone will be the old bar to be replaced by a wonderful new emporium selling fine beers, wines and spirits (hopefully!).

In their place, rising phoenix-like from the rubble will be a brand new grandstand, another step towards transforming good old Castle Grim into a modern 20th century sports stadium. Except, that is, for us lot on the terrace – or steps – on the other side of the ground. We're happy with our lot, we're thought to be pretty old-fashioned and unreconstructed, so it suits us to be in a part of the ground more akin to something built in the late 1950s...

Actually I must confess that I am now starting to think of making the switch to the other side, having to get in to the ground a few hours before kick off is not the best use of a Saturday morning and at my age all that standing around is taking its toll on the system. Though that said, I would still be doing that wherever I was, as half the enjoyment of coming here is to spend time with friends having a few beers and a chat.

It won't just be the grandstand we will be saying goodbye to. A few players will no doubt be running out for the last time in the famous cherry and white shirts today. Rumours are rife about who is leaving and who is coming,

we'll just have to wait and see what happens.

One player we know who is leaving is Andy Gomarsall, making the short journey up the road to Sixways and Gloucester Old Boys – sorry Worcester Warriors. Good luck Andy, and all the best – except when you play us next when I hope you have a 'mare. Same goes for anyone else who is heading out – thank you for the memories, and best wishes for the future.

Except that it might not be the last game at Kingsholm this season. Given the topsy turvy nature of this season, and the ever-more confusing qualification criteria for the Heineken Cup, we may yet get a home play-off place. But to be sure of that we have to make sure we finish ahead of Newcastle, who are currently three points behind us, and that means we have to get a win here today.

There's a bit of irony in us having a last game of the season crunch match with Saracens. It's not that many years ago we fought out a nerve-jangling relegation do-or-die game against them. The loser of that game was heading for the drop to what was then Division Two, we came through and Saracens would have gone down had the structures of the game not changed as professionalism rode into town.

And with that in mind I can't help feeling that some of the reaction to our own season has been a bit over-the-top. I couldn't help smiling when I read about the guy (allegedly) placing his season ticket in front of Nigel Melville and saying he was never going to return. I laughed out

loud when I found out that he has only been coming here for the last five years.

It's dead easy to support a winning team, dead easy to dress yourself in the colours of the most successful team around and then profess to be a die-hard fan. In those dark days that led up to the relegation crunch game mentioned above away wins were like gold dust, and home defeats were not exactly uncommon either, you just got on with it and accepted it as being a supporter of Gloucester Rugby Club.

Now I am not suggesting that you have to have been coming to watch a side since being knee high to a grasshopper to count yourself as a fan, but maybe having some experience of bad times as well as good helps to put things into some kind of perspective. We all know that sport can be cruel, it demands winners and losers and no one, not even Gloucester, has the right to claim eternal success.

What I do know is that despite the traumas of this season, and despite some intemperate words that may have been said in some quarters, the majority of people will be queuing to buy their new season tickets before too long because that's what being a fan is all about. There is always next season, and the eternal optimism that next year could be OUR year.

Putting aside our season for a moment, and looking at the Premiership as a whole, you have to say that this has been the most exciting season for some time. Recently the top spot has been claimed long before



James Forrester in action

the final game, and the team heading for the drop is well aware of its fate long before 3pm on the final Saturday.

But not this year. At the time of writing, anyone of five teams could be heading for the drop this term, and if you think things have been a bit raw for us, imagine being a Worcester or Northampton fan at Sixways this afternoon. The tension there is going to be huge, I hope that they have sufficient cardiac arrest capability on hand.

And at the other end Wasps and Leicester are scrapping for first place and the ticket to Twickenham for the play off final. Leicester looked unstoppable earlier in the season, but they have faltered a bit and could still

end up with nothing from this term.

I don't suppose I am the only one who is quietly hoping that Wasps actually finish on top of the table this year and then go and get turned over in the Twickenham final. Then they will know what it feels like but will be completely unable to say anything about the unjustness of it all!

Finally, and in case we are not back here in a few weeks, have a great summer one and all. If you need me you'll find me traipsing around Homebase or B&Q for the next few months...

Oh, and next year IS going to be our year – you wait and see.

Text **ALERT GLOUCESTER** to **80092**

MATCH action



Gloucester
15



Leeds Tykes
33

Saturday 9 April 2005, Kingsholm

Attendance: 11,396

Referee: T. Spreadbury

Leeds boosted their Premiership standing and Gloucester lost out in their bid to move up the table, as the Tykes won comprehensively at Kingsholm three weeks ago.

Three first half tries from Leeds sealed the win, as Gloucester lacked confidence and any finishing touches, in what was seen as a key game for the West Country side in their bid to keep themselves in the play-off hunt.

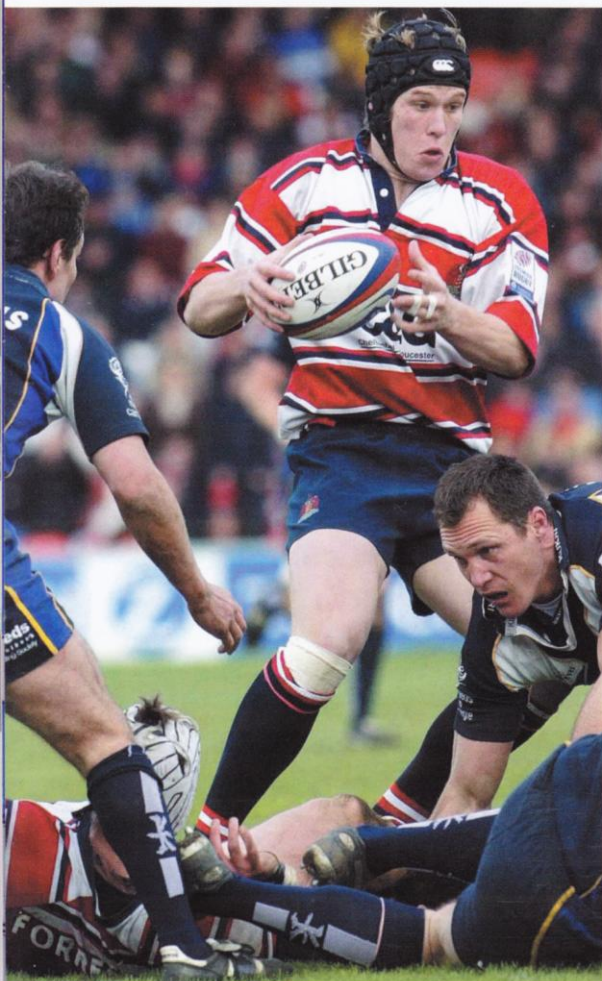
Leeds dominated the opening exchanges and tries from Shelley, Bell and Parks,

and a Ross penalty saw them take a 22-3 lead.

James Forrester touched down for a well-worked try on the half time whistle, and his gesture to the crowd, indicated a second half revival, as Gloucester went in 22-10 down, after a McRae penalty.

Leeds had other ideas and two Ross penalties, followed by a Kerr try, sealed a bonus point victory for the Yorkshire side.

A late consolation Nick Wood score saw Gloucester put some points on the board in the second period.



MATCH action



Sale Sharks
35



Gloucester
17

Friday 15 April 2005, **Edgeley Park**

Attendance: **9,456**

Referee: **S. Lander**

Despite a valiant effort in the final quarter, it was too little too late for Gloucester, as they lost 35-17 to Sale.

start of the second half with a Brad Davies penalty, and a series of phases, but the initiative was lost when Sale bagged their second try through Cueto.

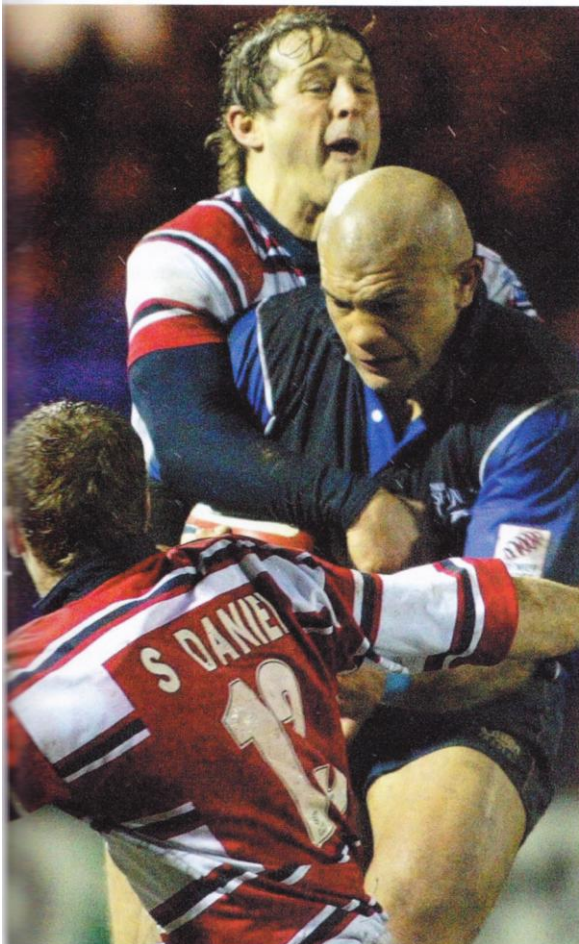
Three penalties from an in-form Charlie Hodgson and a try from Steve Hanley saw Gloucester go in 16-0 down at the break.

John Carter's touchdown took the Sharks into a 30-3 lead before Gloucester came back into it through a penalty try.

The first period was a battle of the forwards, with Gloucester's young back line seeing very little of the ball.

Again, Sale hit back straight away with a breakaway try from Steve Hanley, before Peter Buxton scored in the final minutes.

Gloucester hit back at the



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Zurich Premiership Round 22, Saturday 30th April 2005, KO 3.00pm

Gloucester					Saracens					
T	C	P	D		T	C	P	D		
				Jon Goodridge	15				Thomas Castaignede	
				Marcel Garvey	14				Ben Johnston	
				James Simpson-Daniel	13				Kevin Sorrell	
				Terry Fanolua	12				Dan Harris	
				James Bailey	11				Tevita Vaikona	
				Duncan McRae	10				Mark Bartholomeusz	
				Andy Gomarsall	09				Kyran Bracken	
				Nick Wood	01				Kevin Yates	
				Mefin Davies	02				Raphael Ibanez	
				Gary Powell	03				Cobus Visagie	
				Adam Eustace	04				Kris Chesney	
				Alex Brown	05				Simon Raiwalui	
				Jake Boer	06				Taine Randell	
				Andy Hazell	07				Richard Hill	
				Adam Balding (c)	08				Hugh Vyvan (c)	
				replacements						
				Olivier Azam	16				Matt Cairns	
				Terry Sigley	17				Nick Lloyd	
				Peter Buxton	18				Iain Fullarton	
				James Forrester	19				Ben Skirving	
				Alex Page	20				Moses Rauluni	
				Brad Davies	21				Nicky Little	
				Olly Morgan	22				Glen Jackson	

Zurich Premiership 2004/05

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	TB	LB	PTS
London Wasps	21	15	1	5	551	397	6	5	73
Leicester Tigers	21	14	3	4	620	313	8	3	73
Bath Rugby	21	12	2	7	401	356	1	4	57
Sale Sharks	21	12	0	9	490	420	4	4	56
Saracens	21	11	2	8	370	415	3	2	53
Gloucester	21	10	1	10	394	473	3	1	46
Newcastle Falcons	21	8	2	11	452	580	3	4	43
London Irish	21	8	0	13	362	398	1	6	39
Leeds Tykes	21	8	0	13	370	425	1	6	39
Northampton Saints	21	8	0	13	391	452	2	5	39
Worcester Warriors	21	8	0	13	344	474	1	5	38
NEC Harlequins	21	6	1	14	394	436	3	8	37

Today's Match Officials

Referee: Dave Rose
 1st TJ: Lloyd Jackson
 2nd TJ: Andy Melrose
 4th Official: Mark Tovey
 Replacement Ref: Wayne Barnes

Today's Result

Gloucester **13**
 Saracens **14**

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