



BLACKTHORN



Volume 1 Issue 1

BATH RUGBY

VS

LONDON IRISH



Saturday
30 October 1999
Kick-Off 1.00pm



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OFFICIAL
MATCH DAY
MAGAZINE

£2.50





in Bath Rugby



in Bath Rugby



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No	Player	Position	Player	No
15	Jon Callard (Capt)	Full Back	(Capt) Conor O'Shea	15
14	Iain Balshaw	Right Wing	Justin Bishop	14
13	Shaun Berne	Centre	Ben Whetstone	13
12	Mike Tindall	Centre	Robert Todd	12
11	Kevin Maggs	Left Wing	Jarrood Cunningham	11
10	Jon Preston	Fly Half	Stephen Bachop	10
9	Gareth Cooper	Scrum Half	Kevin Putt	9
1	Clem Boyd	Prop	Neal Hatley	1
2	Mark Regan	Hooker	Mike Howe	2
3	Chris Horsman	Prop	Kristyan Fullman	3
4	Warwick Waugh	Lock	Nick Harvey	4
5	Steve Borthwick	Lock	Ryan Strudwick	5
6	Gavin Thomas	Flanker	Jake Boer	6
7	Nathan Thomas	Flanker	Mark Gabey	7
8	Ben Clarke	No 8	Keiron Dawson	8
R e p l a c e m e n t s				
16	Ricky Pellow		Michael Horak	16
17	Andy Long		Steve Hatley	17
18	Victor Ubogu		Andrew Mower	18
19	Mike Catt		Adrian Flavin	19
20	Tokunbo Adebayo		Mike Worsley	20
21	Martin Haag		Rob Gallacher	21
22	Ben Sturnham		Brent Cockbain	22

Referee: Geraint Ashton-Jones Touch Judges: Fred Spong, Nigel Yates



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Ireland's unexpected 28-24 defeat by Argentina in the 1999 Rugby World Cup quarter-final play-off game in Lens last week may have dented pride back home in the Emerald Isle, but for London Irish, who take on Bath at the Rec this afternoon, it was a result that had mixed blessings.

Patriotic followers of the Exiles were no doubt disappointed at the shock demise of the national team, but on the domestic front the outcome was perhaps tinged with some relief because that setback, combined with Samoa's defeat by Scotland at the same stage, meant that five out of six of Irish's World Cup contingent would be available to return to Premiership action against Bath.

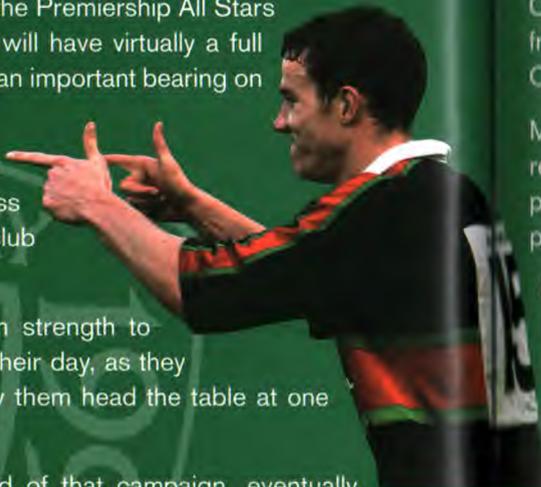
Donor O'Shea, winger Justin Bishop and flanker Kieron Dawson have all reported back to have the Samoan pair, fly half Steve Bachop and No 8 Isaac Feunati.

What apart from Ireland international wing Niall Woods, who will miss the rest of the season suffering cruciate ligament damage when playing for the Premiership All Stars. In the build up to the World Cup, London Irish will have virtually a full squad to choose from for today's game which could have an important bearing on the prospects of both clubs this season.

The outcome, however, there can be no dispute that London Irish, once something of a 'Cinderella' outfit in first class rugby, have developed into a major force in English club rugby since the game went professional three years ago.

After promotion to the top flight, Irish have gone from strength to strength, winning themselves as a match for the very best on their day, as they demonstrated last season when a sequence of impressive victories saw them head the table at one

London Irish ran out of steam somewhat towards the end of that campaign, eventually



results, a competent 27-8 victory at Bedford and a crushing 56-8 home triumph over former champions Newcastle, which put them top of the table.

But they were brought down to earth with a bang when Wasps overcame them 43-20 and then suffered a disappointing home setback against reigning champions Leicester when they surrendered a 20-3 lead and eventually went down 30-31 to a last gasp Tim Stimpson kick.

However, neither defeat was clear-cut because against Wasps, they were well in contention until conceding a debatable penalty try which tipped the balance, while an unfortunate injury to promising young fly half James Brown proved a crucial turning point against the Tigers when victory had looked assured.

Dick Best, the former England and Harlequins coach and now the Exiles' Director of Rugby, and their coach Andy Keast were naturally unimpressed with that second half display, but their disappointment will perhaps be tempered by the progress made within the rest of the squad while their World Cup stars have been unavailable.

Perhaps the most startling impact has been made by full back Jarrod Cunningham, who, in the absence of O'Shea, has taken his chance to establish himself in the No 15 shirt, piling up no less than 91 points to date, from consistently accurate place kicking and scoring five tries into the bargain, a record that even the prolific O'Shea could hardly have bettered.

Much of that success has been due to a regular supply of ball from an effective forward unit in which the relatively unheralded front row of Neal Hatley, Richard Kirke and former Bristol prop Kris Fullman have been particularly impressive, while another former Bristol player, lock Mark Gabey, has also made his mark with his new club.

Bath fans will be interested to hear that scrum half Steve Hatley, brother of Neal, has also made a positive impression since leaving Bath to join the Exiles this summer and he will no doubt relish the chance to upset his former team-mates at the Rec by helping London Irish return to winning ways this afternoon.

