



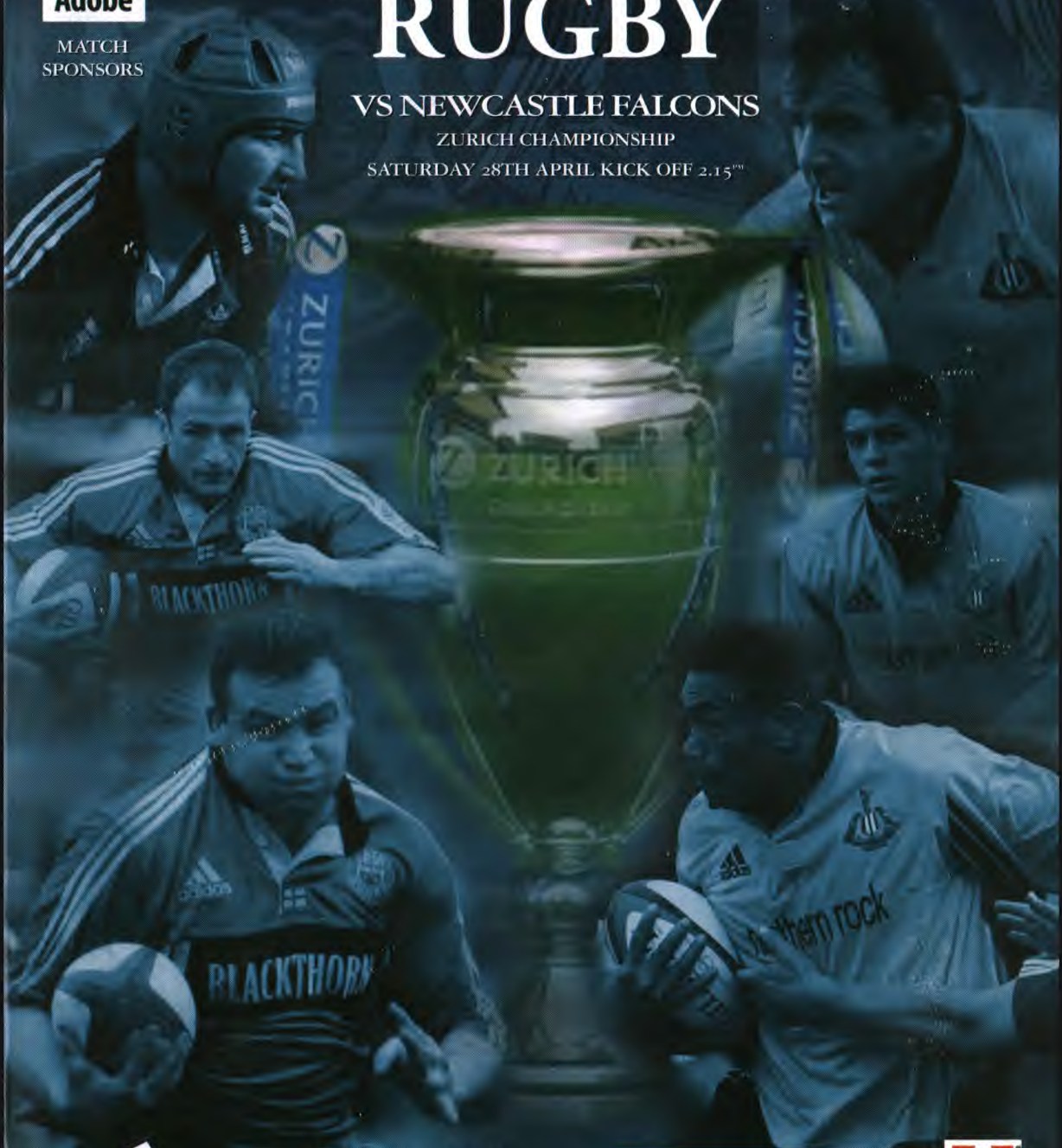
MATCH
SPONSORS

BATH RUGBY

VS NEWCASTLE FALCONS

ZURICH CHAMPIONSHIP

SATURDAY 28TH APRIL KICK OFF 2.15pm



BLACKTHORN





BLACKTHORN



THE teams



	Matt Perry
	Iain Balshaw
	Kevin Maggs
	Shaun Berne
	Tom Voyce
	Mike Catt
	Gareth Cooper
	David Barnes
	Andy Long
	John Mallett
	Mark Gabey
	Steve Borthwick
	Angus Gardiner
	Andy LLOYD
	(c) Dan Lyle

(15) Full Back
(14) Wing
(13) Centre
(12) Centre
(11) Wing
(10) Fly Half
(9) Scrum Half
(1) Prop
(2) Hooker
(3) Prop
(4) Lock
(5) Lock
(6) Flanker
(7) Flanker
(8) No.8

Mike Stephenson

Inga Tuigamala

Jamie Noon

Tom May

Epeli Taione

David Walder

Gary Armstrong

Mikey Ward

Ross Nesdale

Marius Hunter

Stuart Grimes

Doddie Weir (c)

Hugh Vyvyan

Andrew Mower

Richard Arnold



replacements

	Jon Preston
	Mark Regan
	Simon Emms
	Sam Cox
	Rob Thirlby
	Gavin Thomas
	Martin Haag

(16)
(17)
(18)
(19)
(20)
(21)
(22)

Charlton Hall

Gareth Maclure

Ian Peel

George Graham

Mike Howe

Jim Jenner

Matt Holmes

Bath Rugby Man of the
Match sponsored by





VISITORS Newcastle

THE FALCONS QUALIFY FOR THIS AFTERNOON'S ZURICH CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY OFF QUARTER-FINALS, HAVING EXPERIENCED THEIR MOST SUCCESSFUL SEASON SINCE LIFTING THE PREMIERSHIP TROPHY IN THEIR INAUGURAL SEASON OF TOP FLIGHT RUGBY IN 1998.

Rob Andrew's youthful side are already the Tetley's Bitter Champions having snatched a controversial victory from NEC Harlequins in the dying moments at Twickenham. Despite an agonising exit from the European Shield last-weekend to NEC Harlequins, in reaching the semi-final, Rob Andrew's talented young side defeated some big sides and proved that they could compete with Europe's finest. Andrew will also look back at his side's sixth place finish in the Zurich Premiership with a degree of satisfaction. Despite a 34-29 defeat to Saracens in the final round of matches, the Falcons have experienced a solid season with some impressive victories, including a nail-biting one point win over Bath Rugby at Kingston Park in February.

The Falcons are undoubtedly a better side than their final Premiership position suggests. Rob Andrew's tendency to rest lynch-pin Jonny Wilkinson and a whole host of stars in the latter stages of the season, has meant that they finished lower in the Premiership than they might have. But when Andrew does field his strongest fifteen they are a formidable force. Much of their exciting back play is built upon a rock solid pack that will give the home side some problems this

afternoon. The all-Scotland international second row pairing of Stuart Grimes and Doddie Weir will ensure quality possession is secured in the lineouts, whilst in the scrum the imposing figures of George Graham, Ross Nesdale and Marius Hurter will mean that the Falcons' scrum will not take a step back for 80 minutes.

With a solid platform up front, Andrew's young, talented backs have been setting the Premiership alight this season, having learned the harsh lessons of the professional boom. Rob Andrew's emphasis, like Bath Rugby's is on cultivating youth development and in reaching the Play Offs, the policy has already paid dividends. The Falcons have produced one of the most gifted back lines in England, who play for pride and passion rather than big wage packets. Jonny Wilkinson at just 21 is already an England veteran, and although he is likely to be missing today following an aggravation to a worrying neck injury, in Dave Walder the Falcons have a more than able replacement. Tom May, Michael Stephenson and Jamie Noon have made an impression on the England representative scene. In centre Noon, the Falcons have a real game breaker who looks set to be a star of the future. With the complicated rules of qualification for next season's Heineken Cup confusing, it is hard to judge whether as Tetleys Bitter Cup winners, the Falcons are likely to secure a place. Therefore the Play Offs represent an final chance for them to gain passage into a competition that a squad of their enormous talent deserves.

Action from this season's fixture at the Rec.

