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The Rocket Man

LONDON WASPS
Challenging the critics

PLAYER'S PAGE
New Year's resolutions



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15 FULLBACK 15
 14 RIGHT WING 14
 13 CENTRE 13
 12 CENTRE 12
 11 LEFT WING 11
 10 FLY HALF 10
 9 SCRUM HALF 9

1 PROP 1
 2 HOOKER 2
 3 PROP 3
 4 LOCK 4
 5 LOCK 5
 6 FLANKER 6
 7 FLANKER 7
 8 NO. 8 8

16 REPLACEMENT 16
 17 REPLACEMENT 17
 18 REPLACEMENT 18
 19 REPLACEMENT 19
 20 REPLACEMENT 20
 21 REPLACEMENT 21
 22 REPLACEMENT 22

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 Tom **FRENCH**
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T C P D

FINAL SCORE

TODAY'S OFFICIALS: Referee | Romain Poite

Touch Judges | Stuart Terhegge and Paul Dix

FINAL SCORE

WILT'S

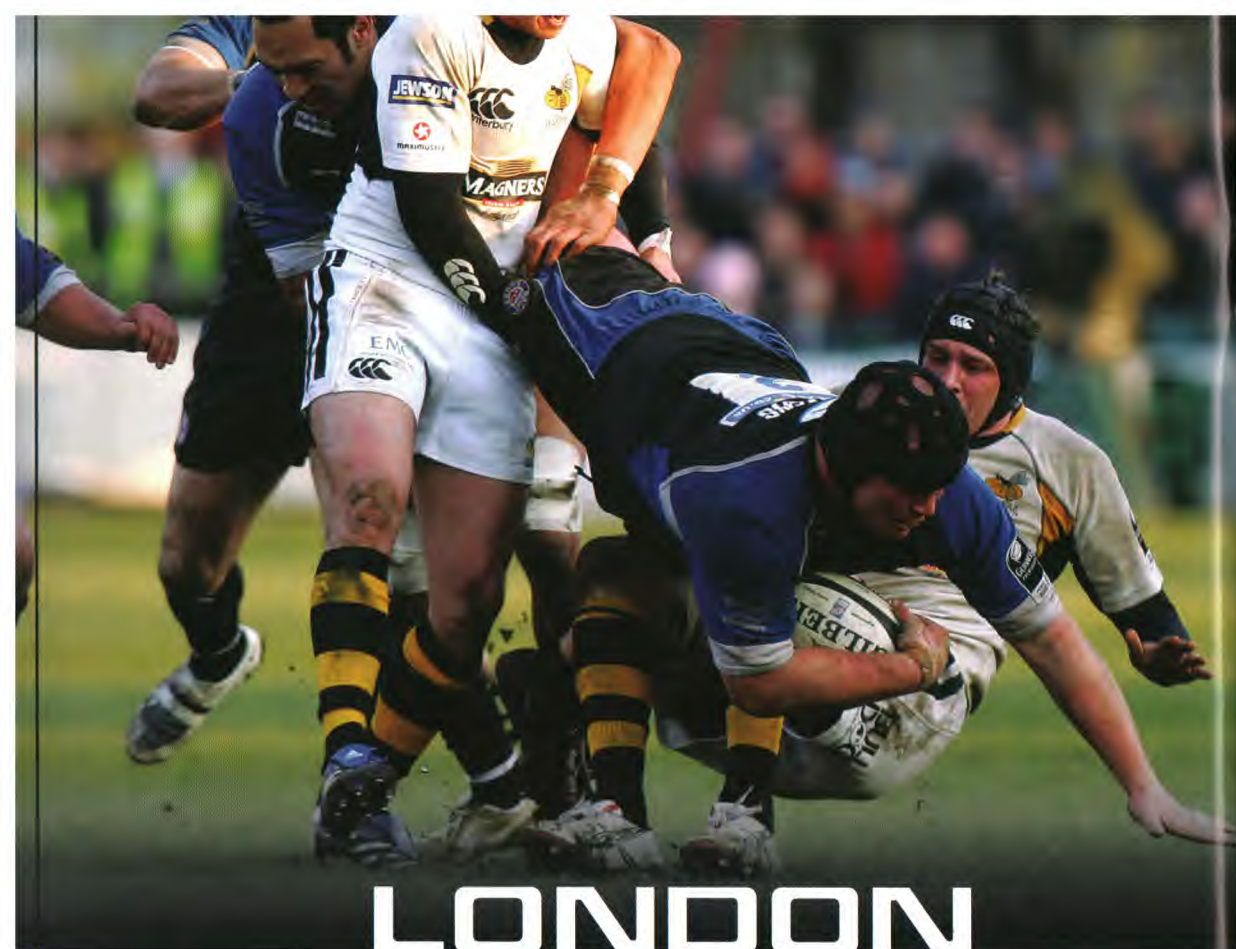


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LONDON WASPS

London Wasps season so far has been one of many ups and downs. For the first few months it was one mainly of downs but recently the belief around the team has been building and the results have begun to go their way.

Many of the fixtures early in the season were lost to last minute tries or penalty kicks, as was seen in the last meeting between these two sides. Played on a cold mid October evening the game was a close fought affair that was lost late-on to leave wasps trailing 23-27,

recording their second consecutive defeat at Adams Park. During the early rounds of the Guinness Premiership there were glimmers of potential with a notable victory away to old foes Leicester Tigers and a win at home to tough French opponents Castres Olympique in the first round of the Heineken Cup. The Jekyll and Hyde nature of Wasps on pitch performance resurfaced again when the team travelled to Dublin the following week and lost heavily to Leinster and severely dented their hopes of progressing from Pool 2 of the Heineken Cup.

Wasps, synonymous late bloomers, always seem to struggle during the first few months of the season. This is surely not helped when you consider 10 internationals are lost for a month, which would leave most other sides struggling to field a side of premiership quality. Following the November internationals, the club found itself with back to back fixtures against Edinburgh Rugby in Rounds 3 and 4 of the Heineken Cup. Both fixtures proved to be an excellent test for a team trying desperately to regain the form of the previous season that

saw them end the year at Twickenham Stadium lifting the Guinness Premiership Trophy having not lost a game since the turn of the year. With two wins under their belts the men in black and gold could sense momentum building and continued this with a Christmas victory over local rivals Saracens. Sending the Wasps faithful off the with perfect Christmas present, however the team's momentum was quickly halted come boxing day, when a 31-3 defeat away to Sale Sharks put a dampener on seasonal celebrations.

Entering the New Year in 8th place in the Premiership would leave most sides questioning themselves and whether their season was already over. Whilst the team have experienced more losses than victories this season, it is something they are certainly not used to and in front of a capacity crowd at Adams Park, they showed their supporters glimpses of the Premiership winning team as the ran out 24-18 victors of London rivals Harlequins in the first game of 2009.

2009 is on the cusp of being another great year for London Wasps. Victory today at The Rec and then at Twickenham for the Battle of the Capitals against Leinster Rugby in a game that could very well decide the outcome of pool 2 of the Heineken Cup, will set Wasps up for a season run in that could see the challenge their critics right down to the last and crucial stages of both competitions.

PHIL VICKERY

Taking the reigns from Raphael Ibanez, currently rested following a series of concussions, Phil Vickery will lead the side at The Rec today hoping to maintain Wasps run of winning form which has seen them secure victory in five of their last six games. One of the most-respected props in the world Phil Vickery, now in his third season with Wasps, has collected a Heineken Cup and Guinness Premiership winners medal and will this season be looking for yet more silverware with his club.

Joining the men in black and gold after ten years with Gloucester Vickery has seen a resurgence to form both on the domestic and international stage coming back from injury to claim honours with Wasps as well as the England captaincy in 2007 taking his side all the way to the World Cup final. The former Lion will have his sights on the summer tour and described as being in the best shape since joining the club by Director of Rugby Ian McGeechan, Vickery is ticking all the boxes for Wasps this season

