

Semi-final showdowns

London Wasps v Bath

Sunday, 2pm Adams Park



Strengths

Been there, done that, got the trophy. Good coaches, good players, experience in every area, home advantage and one of the most conscrucating counter-attacks in the English game

Weaknesses

Lineout has its off days, back three sometimes less than secure in defence, out-muscled in recent defeat by Gloucester but that reverse could be turned into a strength

Form

Only Gloucester have interrupted a magnificent run of success that has helped them to climb from the bottom half of the table to the top two

Injuries

Serious concern over Paul Sackey's knee, already missing England captain Phil Vickery (knee ligaments) and another prop, Nick Adams, plus David Walder, back-up fly half

Play-off record

2003 winners; 2004 winners; 2005 winners; 2006 beaten semi-finalists (by Sale Sharks)



Danny Cipriani

Strengths

Have developed best offloading game in the Premiership, variety in attack, strong set-piece, good decision-making from scrum half, high-quality goal-kicking

Weaknesses

A certain rawness in back three and impetuosity when things are going against them, not the same quality in playing depth as some Premiership rivals, rucking game can be disrupted

Form

Majestic before Saturday's defeat away to Gloucester, most consistent challengers for top spot all season, well-suited to hard grounds and eager for first trophy after ten-year drought

Injuries

Matt Stevens and Lee Mears need assessments to knee and shoulder respectively, David Barnes has calf strain, Ryan Davis out for season

Play-off record

2004 beaten finalists



Steve Borthwick

Gloucester v Leicester

Sunday, 4.30pm Kingsholm



Strengths

Strong competition for places, notably back row, the confidence that comes from dominating the Premiership all season, a burning desire to make up for last season's grand final embarrassment

Weaknesses

Lineout sometimes goes on the blink, defence down fly half's channel can be vulnerable, but otherwise the most obvious defects – sustained physicality, solid scrum – have been addressed

Form

Premiership leaders for all but one week, beaten closest rivals (Wasps and Bath) in the past fortnight, lost only one of their past 23 home Premiership matches – to Leicester on February 9

Injuries

Critical that Mike Tindall recovers from ankle damage Anthony Allen's right shoulder is sore

Play-off record

2003 beaten finalists; 2007 beaten finalists



Lesley Vainikolo

Strengths

Old-fashioned cussedness, good set-piece and, on their day (in EDF Energy Cup semi-finals, for example) as creative a team in the country backed up by potentially punishing boot of Andy Goode

Weaknesses

Utterly inconsistent all season, uncertainty over best XV, coaching team still to gel, not the same physical dominance of old and Goode's boot has been known to let him down

Form

Only once put together more than three successive wins all season and, before Saturday, scrambled no more than a dozen points from previous six Premiership matches

Injuries

Lewis Moody for the season, Louis Deacon and James Hamilton, the international locks, out of contention

Play-off record

2005 beaten finalists; 2006 beaten finalists; 2007 winners



Martin Corry

NB: Play-off system was introduced in 2002-03 but has involved the top four teams only since 2005-06

Words: David Hands