

# Late Tewkesbury try breaks OPMs' hearts

## EDF JUNIOR VASE

by ALAN MANSELL  
and CONRAD SUTCLIFFE

Rugby Correspondents

OPMs...15 Tewkesbury...18

A TRY with only minutes to go ended OPMs' EDF Junior Vase dream in the last 16.

Gloucester One side Tewkesbury now go into today's quarter-final draw and are only two wins away from Twickenham.

"We are devastated by the result, but we can hold our heads up because we played a good club," said OPMs chairman Chris Pascoe. "I hope Tewkesbury go on to win it."

A Tewkesbury spokesman added: "OPMs didn't deserve to lose. They asked us questions, but we came back with the answers."

The early tactical game went the Old Boys' way, making ground against the forward strength of Tewkesbury.

Tewkesbury conceded a penalty after five minutes and Sammy Matts put the Old Boys 3-0 in front.

The visitors were pinned back in their territory and on 17 minutes OPMs' fly-half Keith Pascoe slipped around his marker to draw Tewks' full-back Brad Maver and Neil Bellamy headed unopposed for the line.

Until half-time OPMs' backs looked sharper but a well drilled Tewkesbury pack dominated the scrums and line-outs.

Props Dave Warner and Stuart McVicker provided a solid platform for the visitors and Simon Bytheway and fellow back rower Jason Partridge were always in at the breakdowns.

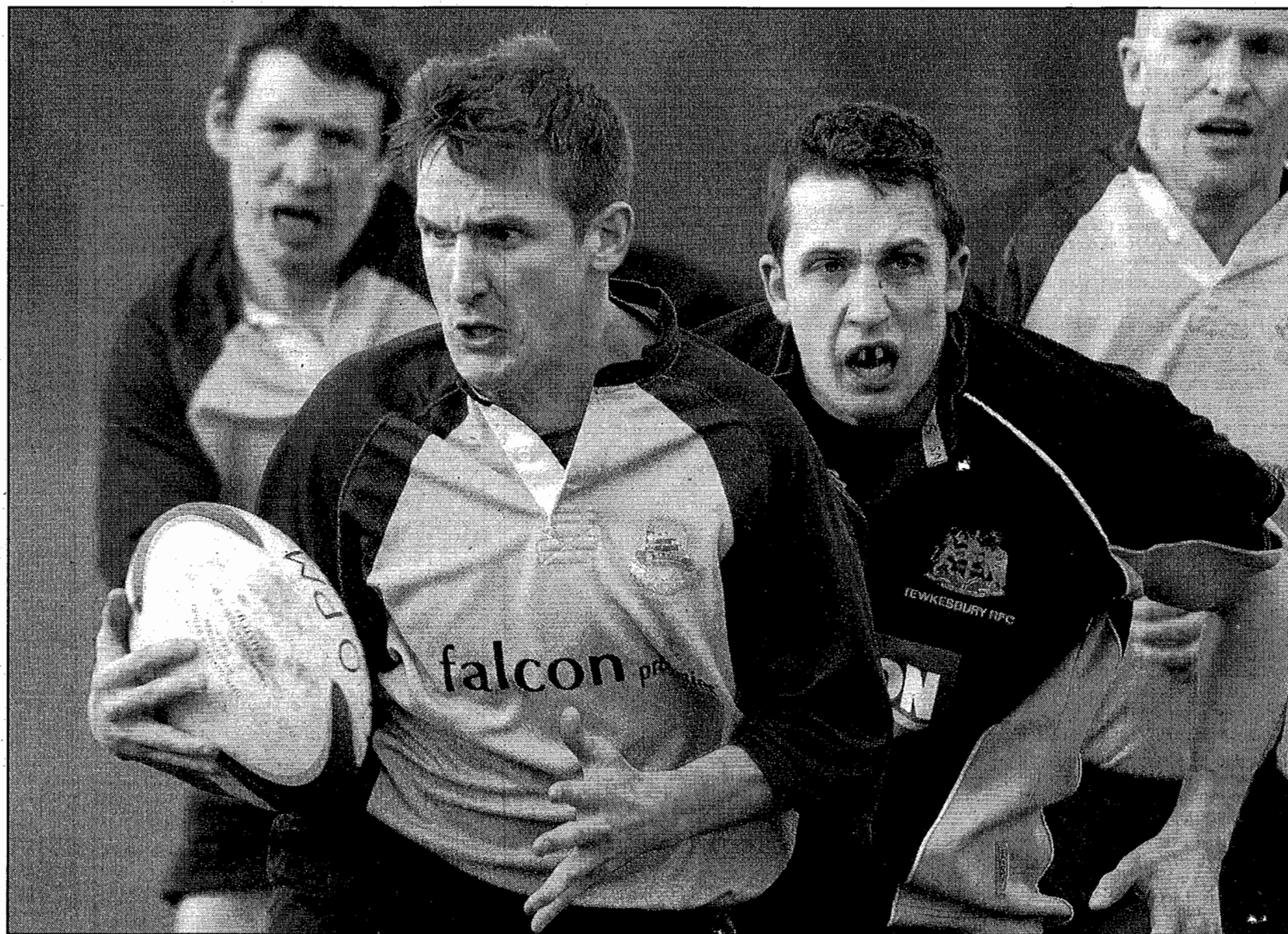
And right on the first half whistle Maver broke free from a tackle and supporting centre Paul Bates evaded the Old Boys' defence for the touchdown.

Tewkesbury kicker Russell Nunn closed the gap to 8-7 with the conversion.

OPMs rejigged their pack during the interval, knowing they were going to come under pressure after the turnaround.

Tewkesbury went ahead 10-8 soon in the second half after OPMs conceded a penalty and fly-half Russell Nunn slotted the ball neatly through the posts.

But Graham Pascoe and Elliot James snuffed out any attacks from the Tewkesbury backs and with the ball taken cleanly off the top of a lineout OPMs span it wide to winger Martin Skelley, who dotted down under the posts and Pascoe obliged with the conversion and OPMs were back in



**BREAKING THROUGH:** Keith Pascoe breaks out to set up OPMs' first try against Tewkesbury in the Junior Vase on Saturday

Picture John Allen EH020208\_JA03\_001

front, 15-10 up. Close to the last 10 minutes a Tewkesbury breakout was halted illegally by OPMs flanker Rhys Phillips who headed for the sin-bin.

Russell Nunn, kicked his side down into OPMs' 22 from the resulting penalty.

And Tewkesbury number eight Shaun Evrin drove over for a try, and Nunn added the conversion to help his side retake the lead, 18-15.

There was enough time left for Matts to try to level the scores, but his long-range penalty was short.

OPMs chief Pascoe said: "We came out of the blocks fast, earned the hard

yards tactically and were happy being 8-0 up after 17 minutes.

"Tewkesbury were well drilled in the forwards - we struggled in the mauls and the line-outs - but we had the beating of them in the backs.

"When Tewkesbury did run at us our backs defence of Graham Pascoe and Elliot James snuffed them out.

"We got in front with about 10 minutes to go and from the restart kick tried to run the clock down in their 22.

"They broke out, we had the sin-binning and the rest is history."