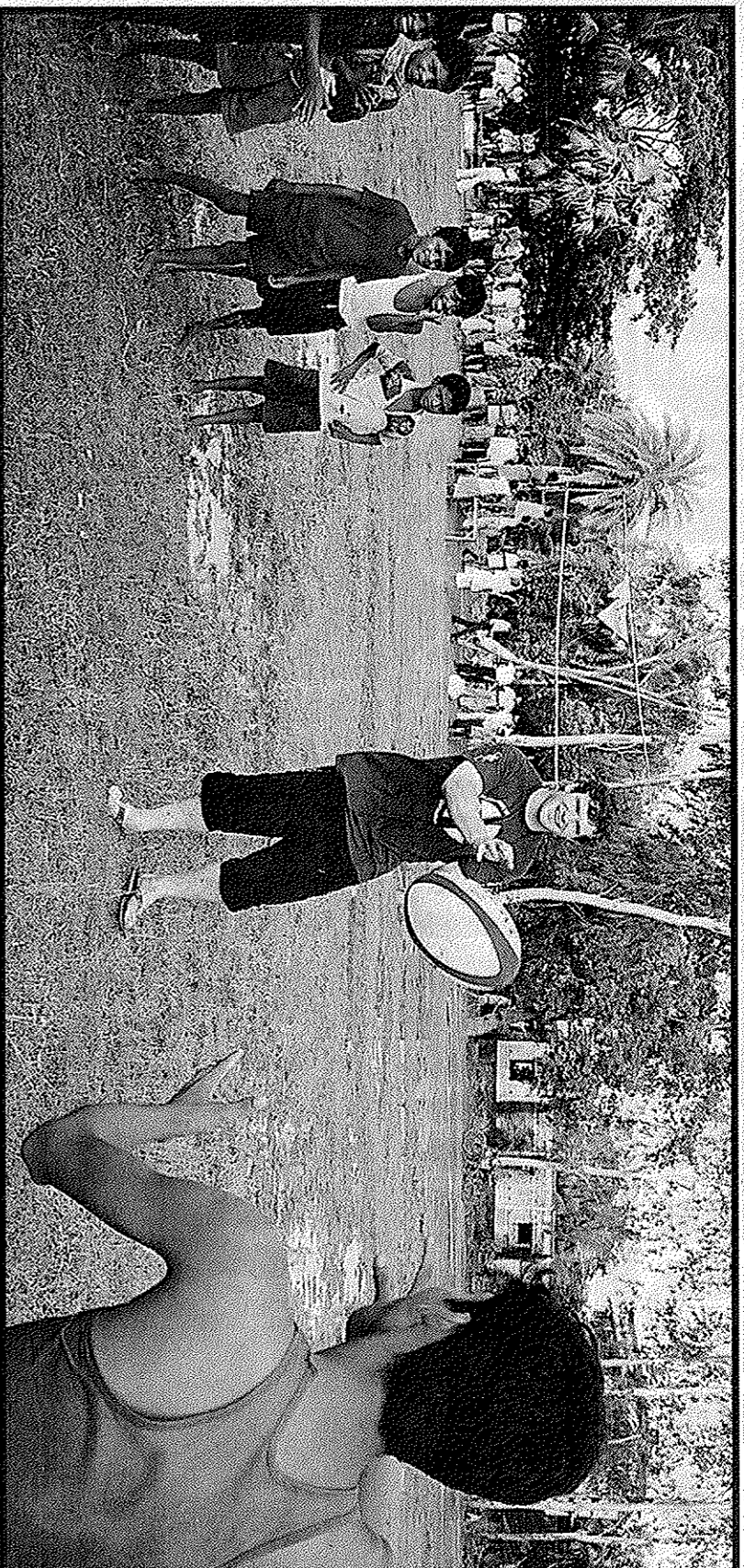


## WHILE HIS OPPOSITE NUMBER HAS WHOLE NEW GOAL IN LIFE



LOOKING AT THE REAL WORLD: Ireland centre Gordon D'Arcy putting life into perspective out in India with the boys from GOAL's street project in Calcutta

### NEIL SQUIRES

GORDON D'ARCY is an interesting counter-balance to rugby union's big is beautiful argument. Not only is he comparatively tiny by the present gargantuan standards of Test rugby, but he is actually shrinking.

In an attempt to make him lighter on his feet and increase his elusiveness, the Ireland centre has lost half-a-stone since last year's Six Nations Championship. At a relatively slight 5ft 10ins and 14st 2lbs, he is the antithesis of the modern midfield battering-ram. But there are different ways to crack a safe and high cunning can be just as effective as high explosive.

It is the contrast, as well as the combined quality, which makes his looming head-to-head with the giant Andy Farrell so fascinating.

For a novice Test centre this may not be the best time to run into D'Arcy. His partner in crime, Brian O'Driscoll, is back alongside and his own form is approaching that of 2004 when he was the player of the Six Nations, which explains the concern of England's defence coach.

"Form is something which isn't tangible. When you have it, you've just got to go with it and I'm playing some good rugby at the moment," said D'Arcy.

"We sat down over the summer and decided, since I am never going to be someone who runs over people, let's work on getting quick feet. I've gone

# Wild man D'Arcy is seeing the light

backwards in weight and it seems to have worked.

"Pretty much everybody in modern rugby is bigger than me and I probably won't look to go over Andy Farrell seeing as he outweighs me by about three stone, but I've had a look at him and I have my own ideas. I have my own attributes and hopefully I will get it right.

"It is really nice to be playing against a legend from a different code. It is a privilege in one way and I hope to be up to the challenge.

"He has good guys around him - Jonny Wilkinson being back gives

them added confidence because he is such an aggressive defender and Mike Tindall is probably playing the best rugby of his life - but I don't feel they have had to protect him in any way. We've looked at them on video and 10, 12, 13 seem to be working pretty well in defence."

D'Arcy, a reformed rugby wild child who was almost thrown out by Leinster for his party lifestyle, has an added asset these days - perspective. His life, and view on it, was changed over a week last summer by a trip to India working for the humanitarian agency GOAL when he visited

projects providing sanitation and education for the poorest of the poor. "I just had my update e-mail from my sister Megan who is out there. She's working hard but she's enjoying it," he said. "When you go to Calcutta and you see people living on the street and washing themselves with rainwater running down the gutter you realise you have won the lottery in terms of the family and society you were born into.

"When you feel down and out here, it is easier to realise how good you still have it when you've seen life there."

No doubt this gave D'Arcy a handle to hang on to after the agonising defeat by France a fortnight ago, but even so, the manner of the loss shook him to the core.

"I have tried to look at it objectively, subjectively, but I just can't make head nor tail of it. What are the odds of them getting the ball back and scoring a try with under two minutes to go?" he said.

Ireland's response will be a measure of them as a side. But ultimately D'Arcy believes tomorrow's outcome will come down to grit rather than glitz.

"You start thinking about putting on a show against England and you are going to be on the wrong side of 30 or 40 points," he said.

"We want to win but by no means is this about putting on a nice wide, showboating performance. This is going to be a hard, gritty performance and whoever wins the hard yards and collisions is going to win the game.

"We may have got a little carried away against France. There is no danger of that happening this weekend."

GOAL is an international humanitarian organisation operating in 13 developing countries. For more information visit [www.goal.ie](http://www.goal.ie)

## back into faltering engine room

desire to play again for Wales and I knew I'd make it if I was good enough.

"It took a long time to feel like I was getting back to where I was after so long out. It's such a competitive sport, it moves on so quickly that it's like you've been out for twice as long as you really have.

"It's also a strange transition in mindset: one day you're walking down the street as a normal member of society, the next you are trying to bash your opposition into

submission. It takes a while to get used to it again."

Now it is Wales who are being beaten down, by their own supporters who are threatening to turn on their heroes following successive defeats in the Six Nations.

Paris is hardly the place to go when you are struggling for form or confidence, but Cockbain insists the team can handle the mounting pressure.

"There are three million selectors in Wales so there is

always pressure and expectation - and rightly so," he said.

"There has been a lot of criticism flying around after the defeat in Scotland and it's understandable when you lose.

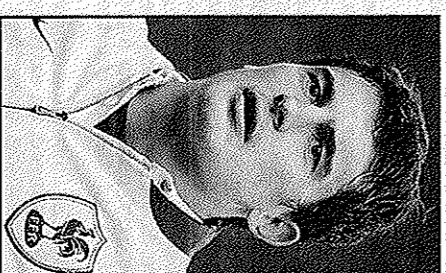
"I was disappointed for the boys because we all know we can play a lot better, but we have to keep faith and players are 100 per cent behind Gareth Jenkins."

Llanelli Scarlets and Cardiff Blues have already tasted

success on French soil this season in the Heineken Cup and France centre Yannick Jaizion, part of the Toulouse side beaten 41-34 at home by Llanelli, has heeded the warnings.

"The main lesson of our two games against Llanelli is that the Welsh are never beaten," he said.

Now Wales, who flew to Paris last night, must show the same courage of their convictions at Stade de France tomorrow.



JAIZION: Warning

## Godman ready to turn on the pace

By Gavin Anderson

NEW Scotland playmaker Phil Godman says he is ready to combat Italy's fly-guys when the sides go head-to-head in tomorrow's Six Nations showdown at Murrayfield.

Despite their lack of tournament triumphs, the Edinburgh fly-half reckons that in terms of sheer pace the Azzurri are up there with the best.

And Godman knows his own speed of thought and deed will have to be super-sharp if the Scots are to force another precious win. He said: "Beating Wales a couple of weeks ago was a tremendous boost. The aim is to keep up the momentum, but the Italians will present a whole set of fresh challenges.

"We want to play an attacking game and this time we will be up against a flying defence. That means you have to make your decisions very, very quickly - and



GODMAN: Fresh challenges

execute moves even more quickly. Whether I opt to kick over the top, shift the ball out wide or keep it tight the option must be taken instantly because they will be dishing up to get into our faces."

Godman, who made a solid Six Nations debut in the win over the Welsh, added: "We have seen in the last two games how big an improvement there is in the Italy back division.

"However, we have certain tactics up our sleeve which we can resort to. Italy gave England a lot of problems at Twickenham and they are bound to be coming here fancying themselves."

French-based pair Andrea Masi and Mauro Bergamasco have recovered from the injuries that kept them out of the England clash and will start for Italy at Murrayfield.

Calvisano flanker Alessandro Zanni has been called up by coach Pierre Berbizier in place of Josh Sole, who suffered elbow damage.

**ITALY:** R De Marigny (Calvisano), K Robertson (Vadana), G Charne (Clermont Auvergne), Mirco Bergamasco (Stade Français), A Masi (Biarritz), A Scarnacca (Calvisano), A Troncon (Clermont Auvergne), A Lo Cicero (Aquila), C Festuccia (Gran Parma), M Castrogiovanni (Licester), S Dellape (Biarritz), M Bortolanini (Gloucester), A Zanni (Calvisano), Mauro Bergamasco, S Parise (both Stade Français).

**SCOTLAND:** F Ongaro (Saracens), V Bernabo, M Zaffir, P Griffin, J Cunningham, R Izz (both Glasgow), R Izz (Glasgow), R Izz (Glasgow).