

THE
GLOUCESTER
RUGBY FOOTBALL
CLUB
v
BIRKENHEAD

YEARS AT
100
KINGSHOLM



80p.

Official Programme



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Monday, April 20th 1992

Kick-Off 3.00pm

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TOUCH LINES

by
Peter Arnold

LONG WAY FROM THE MERSEY

The visits of teams from the North at Easter have always been something of a tradition at Kingsholm. If you bought a programme last Saturday, for example, you'll have seen that, as long ago as 1898, a team called Rockcliff, from Whitley Bay, played here over the holiday weekend. You'll also be well aware that, if it hadn't been for the necessity of rearranging the game with Wasps, then we would have welcomed Headingly here last Saturday. Other teams who have been good enough to spare us their time over Easter over the years have included Fylde, Broughton Park and New Brighton.

It's nice to see such traditions perpetuated, and it's too to be hoped that the proposal to play Courage League games on a home-and-away basis won't get in the way to much. It's even nicer when our Easter Monday visitors are such long-established friends as Birkenhead Park.

It would be true to say that no club has a much longer or more honorable history than today's welcome visitors. In fact, being founded in 1871, they are a couple of years older than Gloucester. From an area which most people are more likely to associate with Liverpool and Everton Football Clubs, Birkenhead Park can still field five senior sides, 2 youth sides, and a couple of minis, so Rugby Union is alive and well and flourishing on Merseyside.

It's also worth mentioning that the floodlit Upper Park ground can accommodate 8,500 spectators, so it's no three-men-and-a-dog outfit. Indeed, they have had their stars. J. R. Paterson had 21 caps for Scotland, playing against all conceivable opposition from 1925 to 1929. On the English side of the border, they can point to A. H. Ashcroft, J. Baxter, C. S. Edgar, G. E. Hancock, L. W. Haslett, F. C. Hulme, P. D. Kendall, T. C. Knowles, D. E. Law, H. M. Locke, who had a round dozen caps, W. M. Lowry, J. C. Marquis, B. B. Middleton, E. T. Nicholson, C. Phillips, J. Ravenscroft, J. V. Richardson and F. W. Spence, which is enough for a side and four replacements. If they could pick from that lot today, Gloucester would be in trouble.

Who knows — we might be anyway. I've had to write these notes early, this week, so I haven't seen the side, but if Easter takes its usual toll, then we may have two evenly matched sides here.

Be that as it may, it's good to see the red, white and blue of Birkenhead Park here again. We hope they find the safari from Merseyside well worth making.

Not one, not two, but three Gloucester players in the England 'B' squad to tour New Zealand later in the year. I suppose that all of us would have been mightily surprised if Dave Sims hadn't made the trip, after his regular appearances and excellent performances for the highly successful second-string side this season, but I, for one, never thought much further than that. The presence of Martin Bayfield in the squad, quite apart from Johnson of Leicester and Haag of Bath, complicates things for him, but we all have great confidence in Dave's technique and athleticism, and I'm sure he'll do well.

Neil Matthews deserves his chance. In his first full season of first class Rugby, he has had a considerable impact on the Gloucester side — not to say on opposing outside halves — and his promotion from Under 21 status can't be anything but good for him. Again, with Bath's Stewart Barnes as Captain of the side, and the inclusion of the much-improved Steele of Northampton, his chances may be limited, but you never know with Neil. He could well spring a few surprises.

Kevin Dunn is an entirely different kettle of kippers. I imagine that when John Hawker took over the hooking duties for Gloucester, and let's face it, held the spot on merit, most of us would have thought that 'Dunny's' chances had evaporated. How much John's dislocated shoulder, and Kevin's subsequent performances, notably against Bath, had to do with Kev's catching the selectors' eye again is difficult to say, but no one would disagree that Our Mister Dunn has all the qualities to impress in New Zealand, and probably will.

The down under experience can't be anything but good for both players and club. I'm sure that all three richly deserve their trip, and will come back better players for it.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

What a season it has been for Ian Smith! Captain of Gloucester, Scottish International Caps, a tour of Australia with clubmate Pete Jones, and now an invitation to tour with the Barbarians.

That's always an honour, of course, and has as

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MORE TOUCH LINES

much to do with the way in which you play your Rugby, together with your qualities as a tourist, as it does with how well you play it.

However, I'm sure that Ian will be most pleased by the fact that it has enabled him to follow in his father Dick's footsteps, and as far as I can find out, having asked around, it's the only example of a father and son Barbarian double which Gloucester can claim. Before anyone asks, I have talked to Gordon Hudson, and his distinguished father, Arthur never was invited to play for the Baa-Baas, which I find surprising.

There must have been other such pairings in the 100 years of the Barbarians — Mike Burton thought that the two Windsor-Lewises might be an example — but there can't have been all that many. It would be interesting to find out.

THANKS, BOSS!

This has been my first season writing the Programme Notes under the auspices of Mike Burton. Obviously, the whole structure of the thing changed, and the process has been something of a learning curve for all of us.

However, I would like to state that it has been a delight. The various young ladies, notably Sue, Vicky and latterly, Nicola, who have had the unenviable task of ministering to my needs have been invariably efficient: if I needed information, I received it at the drop of a scrum cap.

People seem to like our programme, and I'm referring to opposing supporters as much as to our own. Last Saturday, a Bristol regular described our notes as "informative, kindly in tone, and written with wit." I thank him for that, but must point out that the job has been made much easier by the unfailing support I have received from the people at Bastion House.

Thanks, everyone. I'm happy to do it again, if you are.

And while I'm on the subject of my own personal affairs, may I thank the quite unprecedented number of people — including Mike Heasman who has unfailingly kept me abreast with the betting side of things — who have written to me this season. I haven't been able to respond to all of them, but they do provide me with ammunition, and are greatly appreciated.

WHAT, ALREADY?

Mention of Mike Heasman reminds me that he has

informed me that they are already taking bets on next season. Apparently, if you get on now, you can get 10 to 1 on Gloucester winning next season's Courage League.

THANKS, AND SYMPATHIES, TO WHITE HART CATERERS

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to be invited along by one of our valued sponsors this season will have enjoyed the fine food and excellent service provided by White Hart Caterers. The buffets have been just a little out of the ordinary, adding that vital something, so important to a day out. Certainly, the food provided is a cut above the sausage-on-a-stick affair featured at some venues I could name.

Now, for the last match of the season, the 12-year old company has decided to cross to the other side of the bar and sponsor their own game, a gesture for which we thank them sincerely.

White Hart Caterers tend to specialise in corporate entertainment, which is quite an art in itself, but they can, and do, provide food and drinks for just about any function you can name.

Have you considered holding an event right here at Kingsholm? The Centenary Suite under the main stand, and indeed the whole Complex is available for hire all the year round, and White Hart Caterers are happy to contribute a reasonable discount to Gloucester RFC members.

If you have a celebration of any kind planned, then I'd certainly recommend you give White Hart Caterers serious thought. Janet Walters, the proprietor, will gladly chat to you on 0633 859041 and arrange to send you menus and things.

Which brings me to the sad bit. In a season notable for the number of obituaries which I've been required to write, that sad duty has now even invaded the Sponsors' notes. Brian Walters, who presided so amiably and with considerable charm and dignity over the hospitality boxes, died suddenly just at the height of the season. He is, of course, sadly missed, but it's a measure of the company he developed so successfully that our own hospitality arrangements proceeded with scarcely a hiccup. Obviously, Brian is missed, and Janet and the family have all our sympathy. But it's good to note that Brian's daughter, Sarah, has taken over all her father's duties, and we wish her all the luck in the world.

Meanwhile, we hope everyone has a thoroughly good time today.

ONE FIRST CLASS TEAM SUPPORTING ANOTHER

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

If things work out that way, I always try to give my own impressions of the Gloucester season in the programme for the final home match. It's as well to emphasise that these are purely my own personal opinions, not dictated by, or discussed with, anyone, and I don't expect everybody to agree with me, I do hope I don't tread on too many toes, but if I do, then please accept that I'm trying to make an honest contribution, and nothing more.

To start with, it's been a good season. Of course, to fail so narrowly at the final hurdle against Bath was heartbreaking, and to have stumbled late on in the League scarcely less disappointing, but we shouldn't let those things blind us to the fact that the 1991/2 season has reinforced our position as one of the best three or four sides in England. Orrells may come, and Northamptons may go, but Glos. rolls on for ever; many of us can remember the years when Bath couldn't live with Gloucester.

I can just hear some of you saying, "Good old Arnold, living in the past again!" but honestly, I'm not. We started the season with a side, to some extent, in a period of transition, and as far as some positions are concerned, that continues to be the case. Several

regular First XV players are still relatively inexperienced, and there's hardly a spot on the field where the present incumbent doesn't have a promising young player breathing down his neck. Watch the United and the Under 21's if you want proof of that.

However, there's no blinking at the fact that we do seem to fade at the end of each season. I know all the conventional explanations — demanding schedules, increasingly crowded fixture lists, the sheer pressure of modern Rugby, and all those factors are undoubtedly relevant, however, other sides seem to manage it; to be able to pace themselves better. Leicester, for example, looked like relegation fodder when we thrashed them early in the season, but they've stuck with it, and now can point to a season at least as good as Gloucester's.

I don't pretend to know the answers. Undoubtedly, without mentioning names of clubs or individuals, a class of Rugby mercenaries is beginning to emerge. Chaps who don't seem to do much that isn't involved with Rugby. I'm not advocating that Gloucester treads that road, far from it, but there must be a happy medium somewhere.

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ED MARTIN'S FACT FILE

If it's Birkenhead Park, then it must be Easter — and it's an even year! Yes, even in the age of leagues and cups that have paid havoc with rugby tradition, Birkenhead Park still come here every other year as they have done at this time of year since Easter 1954.

The first fixture between the two clubs was in October 1951 when the Merseysiders were pipped 9-6. The following season saw the Cherry and Whites make their only visit to Birkenhead, returning with a 9-3 win.

"Our visitors this afternoon are fielding a strong fifteen," the Birkenhead Park FC programme said on the occasion of the Gloucester visit of October 27, 1951. "Well known among their backs are Halls, Taylor, Terrington and Cartmell, while Hodge and Hudson, the latter an English Trialist, should be prominent in their pack. Most of our supporters will remember Bill Cartmell (Liverpool Varsity, Waterloo and Lancs.) who always reserved his best performance for us in our game against Waterloo."

Since that visit north in festival of Britain year, Gloucester have lost two of their Birkenhead fixtures — 9-5 in 1962 and 6-3 in 1968.

Alas, these days the fixture has become somewhat one-sided. The last visit by Birkenhead two years ago produced Gloucester's second highest score (84 points) and tied Gloucester's winning margin record

(also 84 points) with the 87-3 Kingsholm blow-out of Exeter University six seasons ago.

Finally, something to ponder over the summer while you wait for the next match at Kingsholm in September. What difference is there between the Gloucester team of today and the Gloucester team of 40 seasons ago (apart from the full back wore the number 1 jersey etc. — and the players have changed!). And for you youngsters who want a clue, Birkenhead Park are the same today as they were 40 years ago, subject to the same exceptions as for Gloucester.

GLoucester v BIRKENHEAD PARK

1950-1 to date

	P	W	L	D	PF	PA
At Kingsholm	20	18	2	0	569	89
At Birkenhead	1	1	0	0	9	3
TOTAL	21	19	2	0	578	92

NICE ONE COLIN!

Our Match Mascot today is Colin Davies. He's 12 years old, and plays for his year at the Crypt, having originally been coached by Nick Marment at the King's. He's also just coming up to his brown belt at Karate.

Thanks for stepping in at short notice, Colin.

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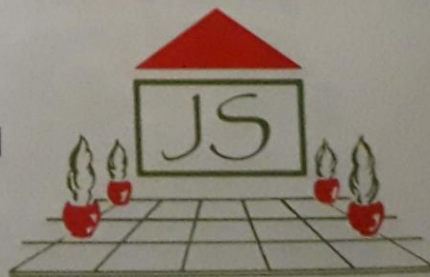
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TAILPIECE

by
Peter Arnold

THANKS

I spent quite a lot of space, last Saturday, in thanking all those people who do all the jobs around the place which make the Club function. But there are other people, not connected with the Club to whom we owe our thanks, too.

First of all, there are the Sponsors, Bass, of course, are our major benefactors, and our gratitude to them is unbounded.

Then, week by week, we are grateful to our match sponsors. The change in the Club's commercial management has brought with it a whole clutch of new companies to whom sponsorship at Kingsholm is a new experience. I hope all of them found their projects rewarding, in all senses, and that we can look forward to welcoming them again.

But we musn't forget our tried-and-true sponsors: those organisations who have stuck with us over the years, come hell, high water or recession. The season wouldn't be the same without that happy band, and again, we thank them most sincerely for their continuing support.

Then we have the people who don't necessarily take on an entire sponsorship package, but who hire a hospitality box, sponsor a Match Mascot, or whatever. We do appreciate their efforts, and hope that they too can continue to support us in this way.

Don't forget the advertisers either. The income from boards around the ground is more than useful, and we hope that the companies concerned find them profitable. As for the advertisers in the Club Programme — well, there wouldn't be a programme without them, so I have more reason to be grateful to them than most.

Finally, I'd like to mention the Press. We get tremendous support from the 'Citizen', who claim to be the only paper in Britain which consistently regards Rugby as its 'lead' sport. Both local radio stations do us proud, and with limited time at their disposal, Central South TV give us as much coverage as we can reasonably expect.

Any first-class Rugby club needs that sort of publicity. If we didn't get it, we wouldn't get the sponsors, or the size of gate we get, for that matter. It's easy to criticise the Press, who are only human, after all, but, by and large, we really can't grumble about the way we are treated locally.

Thanks chaps! Keep covering!

MATTHEW'S PLAYING AWAY

I have just one more Mascot to tell you about, this season. He's Matthew Hart, and he had hoped to run out at Kingsholm for the Bristol game.

Unfortunately, it proved impossible for reasons too boring to waste your time on, but we do seem to have found a reasonable alternative for him.

Matthew's father, Robert, works for Select Feeds and Seeds, who were supplying hospitality for the Bristol encounter. I'm told that, rather than disappoint the lad, the company contacted Team Secretary, Fred Reed, and asked if there would be any objection to Matthew leading the team out at the Harlequins game next week. Fred said that, as long as his Dad takes full responsibility for young Matthew, sees he gets there and back, and squares things with the Harlequins Club, then Gloucester would have no objections.

Robert Hart tells me that the 'Quins greeted the idea with absolute open arms, and expressed the opinion that they would be delighted to see a cherry-and-white clad lad running out with Gloucester at the Stoop. Arrangements weren't quite complete, last I heard, but all looks set fair for Matthew Hart to become our first, and perhaps only, because we musn't regard this as a precedent, away Match Mascot.

For the record, Matthew plays for All Blues Under 12's and his father still turns out for the same club — although he admits to being a 'Golden Oldie'. It's not surprising, therefore, that one of Matthew's Rugby heroes is Mike Teague, and that his most treasured possession is a match programme obtained for him by Mike, bearing the signatures of the entire England side.

It's Matthew's other hero that sends a shiver up my spine. I can imagine any lad idolising Mike Burton, who could give lessons to just about any other prop I ever saw, but it does come as a shock to the system to learn that Matthew's admiration stems only from what he has read and been told, and that, at 12 years old, he is too young to have seen Mike play.

It all makes me feel terribly, terribly old.

UNITED NEXT WEEK

Don't forget that United finish their season at home to London Irish next week. They, as you know, have had a superb season, winning their own League for the second year in succession. They deserve a good send-off, and I hope they get a full house to play their final game of the season to.

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