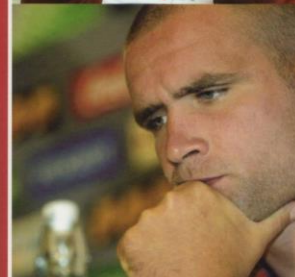
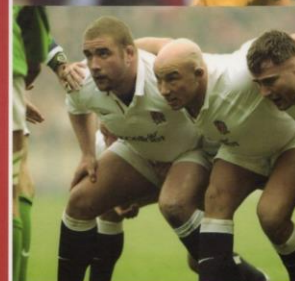




Phil Vickery^{MBE} 2006

Phil Vickery



www.philvickery.co.uk

TESTIMONIAL BROCHURE

This is just the beginning...



OF MY Testimonial Brochure and Year. It has brought together some great moments in my life. It's been a great way to kick off my Testimonial Year, contacting old colleagues and friends asking them to support me through the next twelve months.

I'm honoured to have been awarded a Testimonial Year. I never dreamed back then, newly signed from Redruth Club, emerging from the West Country, that I would have achieved so many dreams.



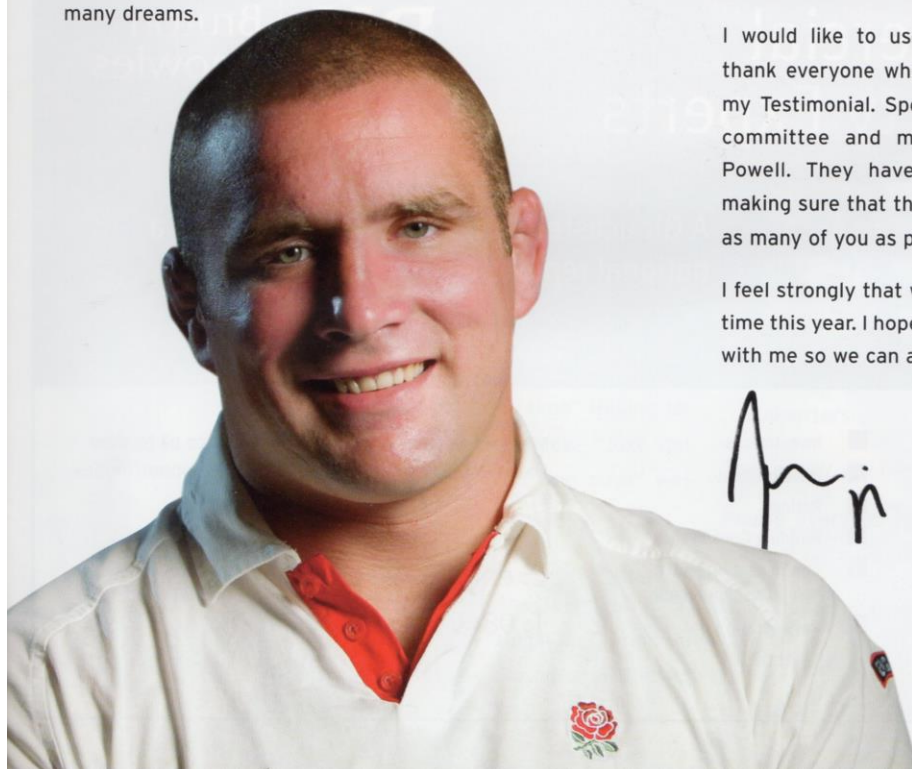
HAPPY FAMILY:
Phil with Kate

The 2003 World Cup was a particular high point which I am privileged to have been involved in. The moment England won the cup is installed in so many memories, what people were doing on that day, time etc. It was equally special to the players knowing we achieved it for England.

This is an exciting year for me in many ways. I have had my daughter Megan christened, Kate and I are getting married in the summer, and there are many exciting events planned throughout the year where I hope to meet many of you personally and thank you for supporting me.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped organise my Testimonial. Special thanks go to the committee and my Chairman Richard Powell. They have done a terrific job making sure that there are occasions that as many of you as possible will enjoy.

I feel strongly that we should have a good time this year. I hope you all enjoy the year with me so we can all benefit.





Phil...

...a true sportsman and true friend

WELL WHAT CAN I SAY about Phil Vickery, Cornwall's favourite son.

He is one of the most down to earth people you will hope to meet. He is one of the most loyal people I have ever met. A good friend who will stick by your side through good and bad times. An honest person who instead of using 100 words to sum up a situation he will only use 10. (I don't think he knows more than 10 words anyway!)

Someone who I am proud to say is a friend.

When Phil first made it on the international scene he had bags of talent but perhaps not the discipline to go with that lofty position. A tiny bit unfit, a little overweight, but he was so passionate about playing for England you could tell that he would knuckle down and be a fixture in the England team for years.

Very keen to learn he would ask anybody for advice. He once made the mistake of asking Richard Cockerill, "what do you want me to do at scrum time" Hoping for some in-depth advice back. "Just get there, bend over and f***ing push" was the reply!

My favourite story of Vicks is when I dragged him out of the team hotel on our night off to a social gathering in London. (He was not kicking or screaming I have to say!)

As the driver sped through the busy streets the very young Phil Vickery pointed out a large and very well lit building to me,

"Look at the size of that place Jase, I bet that cost a few quid". I peered through his window to see what he was talking about. "Phil, that's Buckingham Palace, you know, where the Queen lives!" "Oh, it just looks a lot smaller on TV!" Was his reply! I bet he didn't tell the Queen that story when he was picking up is MBE at the palace after the world cup!

Loyalty isn't something just given, It is something earned.

It is something that is earned after:

- A selfless act
- A gesture
- A word of encouragement
- A show of support
- A show of commitment to family, friends, workmates, charity and supporters.

That is why you have my LOYALTY.

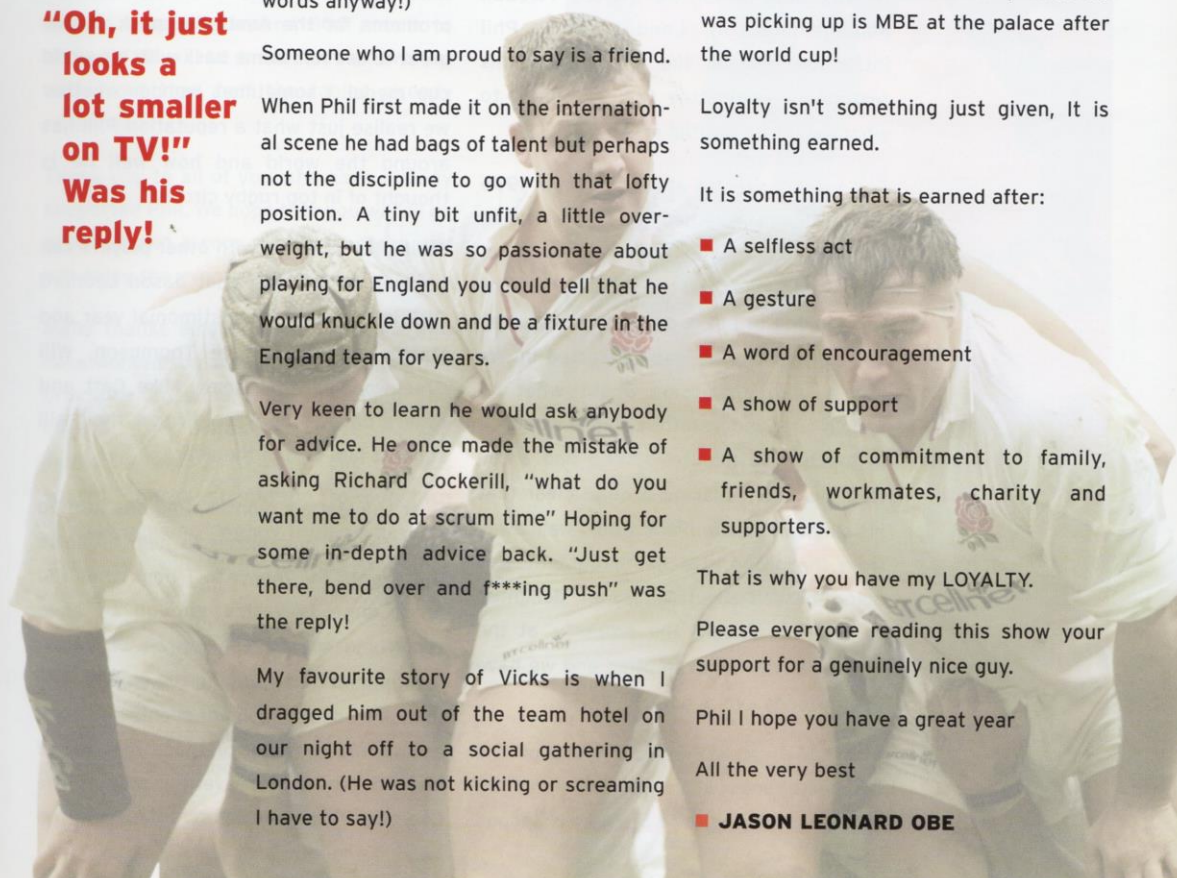
Please everyone reading this show your support for a genuinely nice guy.

Phil I hope you have a great year

All the very best

■ JASON LEONARD OBE

"Oh, it just looks a lot smaller on TV!" Was his reply!





Foreword

FIRSTLY, THANK YOU, because if you are reading this article I presume you have already supported Phil by acquiring a copy of this brochure.

Last year, Gloucester Rugby Club advised Phil that the Professional Rugby Players Association had agreed to him being awarded a testimonial year for his 10 years' outstanding service to the Club.

In the summer, Phil approached me and asked if I would help him with his Testimonial year, and I nervously agreed. It was only when we visited Fireball Management, in London, and Phil introduced me as the chairman of his testimonial committee that I realised to what extent he wanted my help!!!

Phil Vickery arrived at Kingsholm in 1995 and, although I watched him on the field on numerous occasions, I didn't actually meet him face to face until the end of 1999. Phil was looking to buy a property in the area and we had one he was interested in. We had a long discussion about what he should offer and he left saying he would be in touch. Five minutes later I had a call from his agent making it quite clear that his client was no fool and would walk away from the property if he thought he was being messed about. Well, I am delighted to say, Phil bought the property, at the figure I advised him to offer, and we have been friends ever since.

Phil has been an integral part of the Gloucester team since his arrival in 1995 and his commitment to the club is second

to none. The photograph of him holding the Zurich Premiership Champions Cup at Twickenham, in 2003, sums up his feeling for the club and to carry on playing for another ten minutes in a league game, against Bath, after breaking his arm just confirms his outstanding commitment to the game.

This commitment has, been carried through to his appearances for England (47 caps to date) and he was once described as "probably the best prop in the world." He also played in all of the games running up to the World Cup Final and, in the final itself, caused considerable problems for the Australian pack. It was great to see him come back with his world cup medal. I sometimes wonder whether we realise just what a reputation Phil has around the world and how well he is thought of in top rugby circles.

I think his standing with other players can be seen by the fact that Jason Leonard OBE is Patron of his testimonial year and Martin Johnson, Steve Thompson, Will Greenwood, Josh Lewsey, Mike Catt and others have already confirmed they will support him during the year.

Over the last six months, Phil has formed an excellent committee to help organise the events for the year. I hope that the programme is varied enough to have something of interest for all of you. I recommend that you take the opportunity to look through the list of events and book as soon as possible for those that are of interest. The major event locally is the Captains Dinner at the end of June, in the

**"Probably
the best
prop
in the
world."**



Centaur Suite at Cheltenham Racecourse. We are expecting around 800 people to attend. This will be a spectacular evening with more than half the tables already reserved.

Thank you to all of you who have already supported Phil. We hope that you will all be proud to own a copy of this brochure and will enjoy the events we have organised.

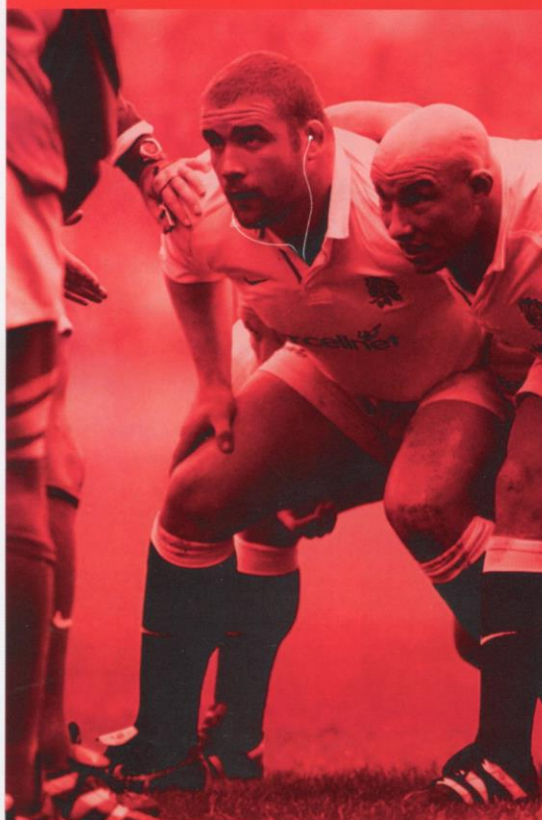
Many thanks also to the committee who have worked so hard to date in making this brochure possible, and arranging the events. The committee have worked incredibly well as a team but perhaps special thanks should go to our own "human dynamo" Wendy Fabian. I have no doubt you will all be hearing from her during the year.

Finally, congratulations Phil on being offered a testimonial year.

I wish you, Kate and Megan every success for your future together.

■ **RICHARD POWELL**

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The facts...

Name:

Philip John Vickery

Position:

Tight Head Prop

D.O.B:

14/3/76 Barnstaple

Height:

1.91m (6' 3")

Weight:

120kg (18st 4lb)

Chest:

50"

Collar:

18.5"

Boot size:

12

International Tries:

1

Honours:

- Cornwall & South West England U16's
- England U16's
- England A selection as replacement vs South Africa 1996
- England, 47 Caps
- British Lions
- Captain of England on Argentina tour
- Rugby World Cup 2003 Winner
- Awarded MBE

His Roots

Phil comes from Cornwall where his family are still based. He describes it as an 'awesome place'. He was educated at Bude Haven Secondary School. This was where his rugby began. His first major sporting achievement was playing in the U16's for Cornwall.

His parents still live on the family farm in Cornwall. If he hadn't become a successful rugby player Phil believes he would have been a farmer. He firmly believes the manual work involved on a farm helped to give him the strength he has today.

First Club

His career began at Bude Rugby Club, from here he moved to Redruth Club. During his time at Redruth he had his first game with the England Colts in 1994.

The move to Gloucester

Phil moved to Gloucester in 1995. Phil Greening was influential in this move. He arrived with Trevor Woodman at the request of Richard Hill, the England A Coach. He signed professional Terms with this first division Club.

He made his debut for Gloucester in 1996. Gloucester vs London Irish.

Along side his Club rugby he came up

through the England U21's, England A's and made his England debut in February 1998. This was the Twickenham vs Wales match.

The interesting facts you've never asked:

Phil would love to be able to sing (he can't!). He likes any music from Classical to rap. The last album he bought was The Choirboys and his favourite karaoke number is Neil Diamond, 'Forever In Blue Jeans'. He envies the voices of other players, especially Jason Robinson.

He would like to be remembered as one of the best players around.

Phil has no wish to change anything about his appearance, he is happy exactly the way he looks. His partner Kate may like to improve those ears!

He enjoys a quiet evening at his local pub rather than big clubs where you can't hear yourself talk or think.

He doesn't watch himself on TV for pleasure, only for analysis purposes. He hasn't yet watched the World Cup final, but he's saving that for his retirement when he has more time.

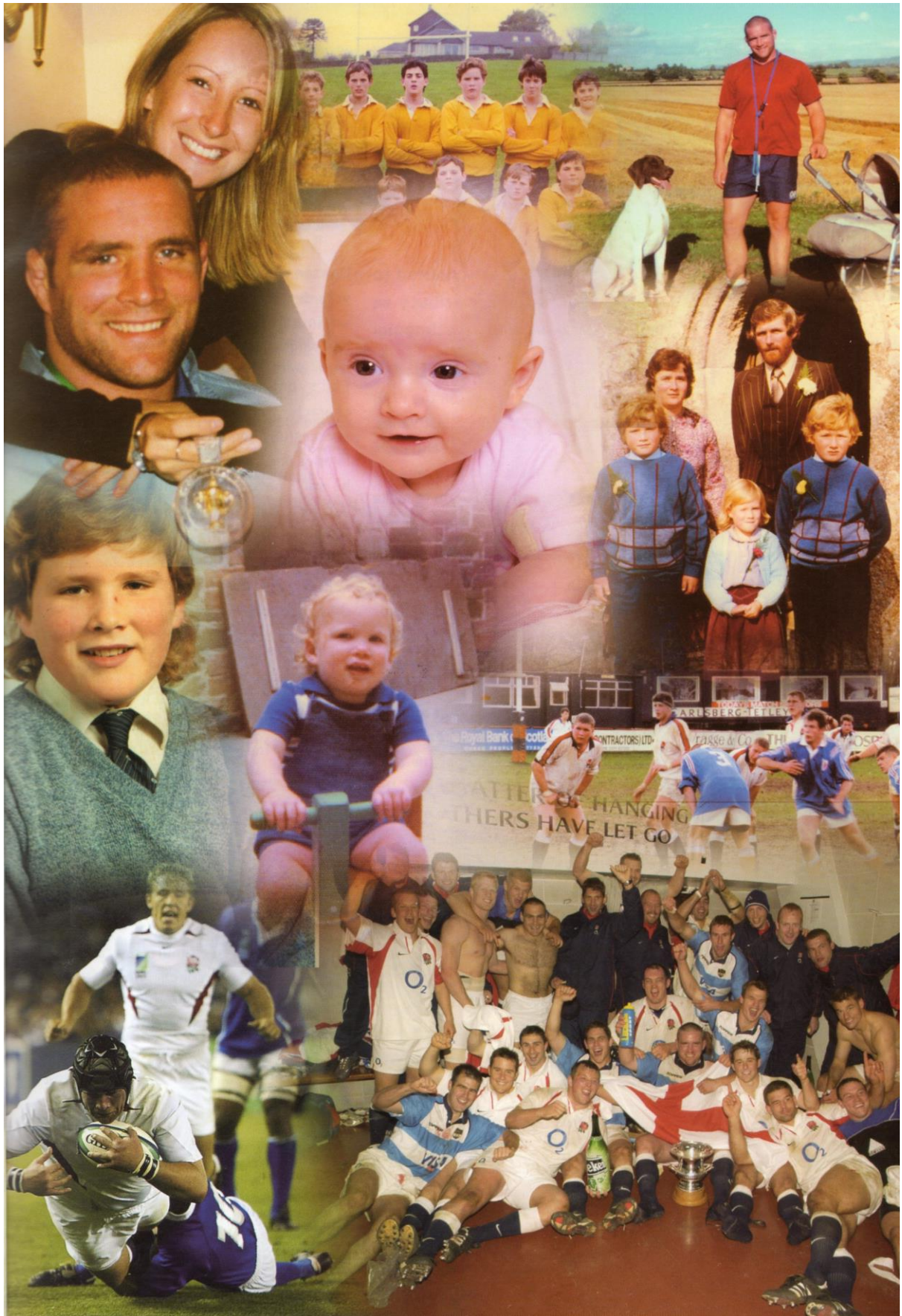
In Brief

Phil is widely recognised as one of the best front row forwards in the world. He combines an awesome scrummaging technique with expert tackling, athleticism and handling skills.

He has the ability to remain calm and think clearly in stressful situations. He is easy to get on with and makes every one feel a friend. He is very open and honest and his laid back approach reflects on those around him.

"Phil has no regrets; he has achieved every thing any rugby player would aspire to"







He leads from the

"Phil's attitude and leadership were outstanding."

I AM DELIGHTED and honoured to have been asked to contribute to this richly deserved Testimonial Brochure for Phil Vickery.

I first selected Phil for England in the 1998 Five Nations Championship against Wales. He was superb in that game although, unfortunately, he was cited. This was his first cap and he has since gone on to make his mark in the International game, thanks to his great talent and authority on the field.

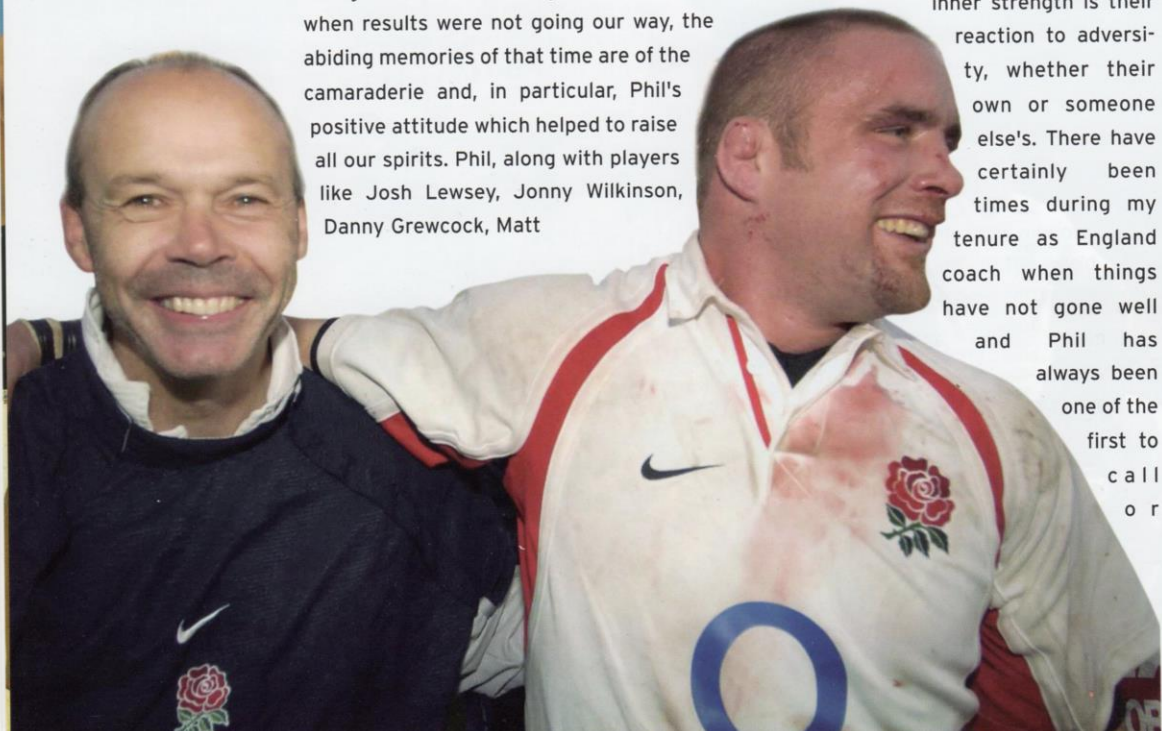
Phil was one of the players selected for the 1998 Southern Hemisphere tour with England (now affectionately known as the tour from hell) and despite our well-documented problems during that tour, his attitude once again was excellent. Even though we all felt the anguish at the time when results were not going our way, the abiding memories of that time are of the camaraderie and, in particular, Phil's positive attitude which helped to raise all our spirits. Phil, along with players like Josh Lewsey, Jonny Wilkinson, Danny Grewcock, Matt

Dawson and Lewis Moody came out of that very demanding tour and went on to play an integral part in our RWC winning campaign in 2003.

Phil's determination and strength of character are underlined by his ability to successfully come back from a number of injuries and but for these injuries I am sure he would have added to the 47 caps he has earned to date. I have no doubt that had he remained injury free, Phil would have captained England on a regular basis, such is his stature within the England dressing room.

His most recent injury will once again test his character but if anyone is capable of overcoming such difficulty it is Phil and I wish him a full and speedy recovery. For me, one of the key indicators of a person's

inner strength is their reaction to adversity, whether their own or someone else's. There have certainly been times during my tenure as England coach when things have not gone well and Phil has always been one of the first to call o r



front

to show support. I hope he knows how much that meant to me.

One of my personal favourite recollections of working with Phil was the time when he captained a young, internationally inexperienced (albeit hungry and talented) side to Argentina in 2002. No-one expected us to beat The Pumas in Buenos Aires but once again Phil's attitude and leadership were outstanding and the 26-18 result perhaps didn't do justice to the performance. Another favourite recollection is Phil's try against Samoa in the RWC when, again under pressure, he held his nerve to pull England out of a very bad situation. Samoa were superb on the night but gradually we came back into the game, with Phil leading the cavalry off the bench. He found space on the right flank about 35 metres out (it was actually about 5 metres but for the sake of the brochure we'll call it 35!!). I knew he had the speed and strength to score what was a vital try for us and thankfully the rest is history.

Very few players start World Cups and finish as winners - Phil Vickery certainly deserved the ultimate prize, along with his team mates. His trust and loyalty is one of the greatest assets any team can have and is fully appreciated by all of us who have been lucky enough to work with him.

I wish Phil all the best for his testimonial - I am sure it is one that all Gloucester and England fans will do everything they can to support.

■ **SIR CLIVE WOODWARD OBE**



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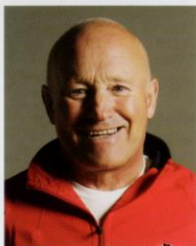


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Something Special!

ALL THE BEST to Phil Vickery for his testimonial and for the future. I'm pleased to have been asked to write something and most of all would like to say what a truly outstanding job he's done for Gloucester, England and the British and Irish Lions.

One of the finest of props and the finest of men. It's been great seeing his career go from strength to strength and yet see his unchanging, unchangeable character strong decent and kind, someone you would be proud to have as a friend. And now so well established in Gloucester with his rugby, his business, his partner Kate and his daughter Megan. It's a wonderful story and all those injuries have one by one been overcome.

In the mid to late 90s England relied on that tough resilient pair of Leonard and Rowntree. But both were loose-heads at heart, even though Jason has proved with the '93 Lions, '97 England and the '97 Lions he could do the job when required. Clive Woodward quickly spotted England needed to find a new tight-head and gave me the job to go scouting. I first saw PV late in 1997 Bath vs. Gloucester, evening kick off at the Rec. It was obvious this man was something special: a huge, talented modern prop, a powerful, dynamic flat-backed scrummager. He could do all the other things as well: lift, run, tackle, pass and drive mauls, all this and only 21. England were in luck.

In February 1998 PV was on the bench vs. France away. The scrum didn't go well and

Vicks made his debut vs. Wales two weeks later. A record win, a push over try and a one match ban! What a start. He established himself as England No. 1 No. 3. On to Rugby World Cup 1999, then on to the British and Irish Lions 2001. He made the test spot his own. He was clearly one of those rare sportsmen who the higher the stakes the bigger the challenge the better he did. The international field was indeed his natural habitat.

Some of my favourite memories in the P.V. story came in the run up to Rugby World Cup 2003 and in the competition itself.

In June 2002 P.V., captain of England, took an inexperienced England team to Argentina to take on the Pumas who had just beaten the Grand Slam French. Phil led his team to an outstanding victory against the odds in an amazing atmosphere. Taking on and overcoming the Pumas at their strongest point the scrum. 40,000 Argies were silenced. And then a night out with the Front Row. What a trip.

Autumn 2002 carried on from Buenos Aires. England beat New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

The next great journey was to try and beat New Zealand and Australia down under. Following injury P.V. returned to captain England to a mid week win vs Maori and then it was down to the Cake Tin in Wellington to take on the All Blacks. Close all the way in terrible conditions. The England Front Row of Rowntree, Thompson and Leonard did a fine job 'till half time when Vickery replaced Leonard. He stormed the New Zealand defences,

"40,000 Argies were silenced.

And then a night out with the Front Row.

What a trip."

crashing through the All Blacks mid field on a 30 metre charge. It helped lift the team, and with Back and Dallaglio in the bin it was part of the 6 man scrum that first held out New Zealand and then launched an attack from "Tindall's Scrum" when Mike Tindall made 6 men 7. It resulted in a 13 phase attack and a Jonny Wilkinson penalty goal. Victory for only the second time in history matching Stack Stevens, John Pullin and Mike Burton in 1972.

How could it get better? Well it did.

A week later Woodman, Thompson, and Vickery produced one of the most complete Front Row performances imaginable to help down the Wallabies in Melbourne. A team at its peak.

Vicks produced superb performances at Rugby World Cup 2003. The scrummaging was top of the range and his all round play outstanding. He was named Tight-Head of the Tournament at the I.R.B. Awards and I remember thinking there was nothing much he couldn't do. The Gloucester props, proud Cornishmen, had delivered. The whole squad delivered.

Since then it's been difficult. More injuries, but always a comeback. He proved in autumn 2005 and right up to a few weeks ago he's back up there..... and then another prolapsed disc. Let's hope for an injury free run and a successful testimonial. It's the least he deserves

■ **PHIL KEITH-ROACH**

"He was clearly one of those rare sportsmen who the higher the stakes the bigger the challenge the better he did.

The international field was indeed his natural habitat."





FROM ONE WEST COUNTRY BOY

to another

MY FIRST MEMORY of Vix is when we were 11 years old, my team Liskeard playing against Bude, School boy rugby. Even though that's quite a few years ago, its impossible to forget Vix, he is the only 11 year old I've ever known to have big curly hair and weigh 16 stone!

We had our first game on the same team when we were playing under 16 county rugby, for Cornwall. We then progressed to England Colts together.

I left Cornwall to play for Bath, but Vix was very influential and I soon moved to Gloucester.

We had 4 glorious years sharing a flat in Gloucester. I remember one occasion when Vix was desperate for a packet of cigarettes. It was 11.30pm and we were both in bed, not together! He was so desperate he was pleading with me to pop up into town and get him a packet. I looked out of our flat window and spotted a supermarket trolley at the end of the street. 'If you go up the street naked and fetch that trolley, I will go and get you some cigarettes' I said. Well, ten minutes later I was on my way into town to get his cigarettes!

We have a great friendship, throughout our rugby career we have played in the

same team on many occasions; he is one of my best friends both within rugby and on the outside.

We have the same background, both Cornwall boys with a talent for rugby. It's been a real pleasure and very special that we have played and progressed together. We are fortunate to have made it to the top. To play for many years together in the England and Gloucester front row is a part of my life that is very important to me.

Our highlight was playing in the 2003 World Cup. We had a fantastic time both on and off the field. The media attention, the support from back home and being given the MBE was memorable for us both. These are memories that we will think back on for the rest of lives.

I recently lost some weight, I've had comments about how good I look. I knew I should have been a centre and not eaten all the pies, but it was living all that time with Phil, he dragged me down, always in takeaways!!

I am off to Australia for an extended holiday now, stopping off in Dubai on the way. I'll be back around June in time for Vix and Kate's wedding. They are a great couple and perfectly suited. It's something Vix has always wanted, and he seems really chuffed.

Have a great year Phil, you deserve it!

■ **TREVOR WOODMAN MBE**

"living all that time with Phil, he dragged me down, always in take-aways!!"





"I am well aware Phil knows all the tricks of the trade, particularly when my back is turned"

A law unto himself

I ALWAYS ENJOY refereeing Phil Vickery; he's a top class bloke even though his knowledge of rugby's laws is non-existent. But he does play in the front row, and they are a law unto themselves in there. I am well aware Phil knows all the tricks of the trade, particularly when my back is turned and for us fellers with the whistle, the guys in the front row bring an extra dimension to the game, they are always at it!

Prior to refereeing any match the referee has to brief the front row on the engagement procedure. I was refereeing a Glos v Saracens match at Watford and both teams were very tense. I went into the Glos dressing room and was greeted by a stern looking Phil Vickery, who wanted a "big performance out of me today"

The five members of the front row were all looking at me I looked at Phil and his face began to crack with laughter, hysterics were had by all.

We all have an abundance of memories from this wonderful game, and some have absolutely nothing to do with rugby. I used to be with the Somerset Referees' Society and working as a paramedic. I remember a game at Dings Crusaders against Camborne when my pager went off after 20 minutes. There was a full alert at Lulsgate Airport.

I told the Dings scrum-half he was injured, he got the message eventually and I went to the touchline crowd and asked, "Can anyone lend me a mobile?" I phoned-in but

the alert was over, I wasn't needed. The scrum-half made a miraculous recovery and as I went to hand back the phone, a voice said, "You can keep it mate - I nicked it this morning."

On a more serious note, our Premiership games prepare a referee for anything. There is nothing like the intensity at the contact area in the southern hemisphere and we owe a huge debt to our home competition for sharpening us up, especially in this important area of the game.

I suppose the highlight of my career came with a Bledisloe Cup game between Australia and New Zealand before a crowd of 84,000 in Sydney and then, The World Cup 2003. But even a top-class game like a New Zealand and South Africa quarter-final took a novel turn, before a ball was kicked. I tossed the coin; the All Blacks won and promptly refused to say whether they would kick or which half they wanted. The Springboks replied in similar vein so I rapidly made the decision for them and they were so taken-aback, no one protested and we got started. It proved what I was always taught about this game... just about anything that can happen, does happen.

Phil Vickery and all the lads at Gloucester will know what I mean.

Another terrific season beckons and well deserved, just as Phil Vickery deserves his benefit year. He has given a lot to the game, a lot of hard work, lots of great rugby moments and lots of enjoyment too. Good luck to you Phil.

■ SPREADERS



Referee's view | Chris White



**"A good
Tight Head
is worth
his weight
in Gold"**

A true ambassador!



IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE to wish Phil all the best in his well deserved Testimonial Year. Phil has been a great ambassador for Rugby and the Gloucester Rugby public.

From the Referee's perspective Phil is very popular amongst my colleagues and he offers three great characteristics to the games he plays in for the Referee. Firstly as any Referee will tell you a good Tight Head is worth his weight in gold to shore up the scrum, keep everything straight and square and allow the scrums to go

well. Phil's power and technique at Tight Head are a great example.

Secondly Phil as a Captain is a fine communicator with the Referees and if the Referee has an issue or vice versa then he knows that Phil will sort things out and that leads to the third characteristic that Refs want - a Captain who has total control of his Team and will get the message over.

From myself and all the Refs we wish Phil all the very best for a marvellous year and continued success in his career.

■ CHRIS WHITE

EVEREST

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Local hero

PHIL VICKERY, born in Devon, claimed by Cornwall, son of Gloucester, English hero and most recently adopted by The Forest of Dean. Phil never leaves a community, he simply gets absorbed by the new one.

This is not just or even because of his international sporting status. In a very short time neighbours, regulars at the local pub, club supporters and even radio interviewers come to realise that they are engaging with a genuine and supportive character lacking in any pretentious edge. Phil has no use for the "celebrity force field" employed by some superstars to shield them from we lesser mortals.

I watch and listen to his international role on television and radio like most people, but am fortunate enough to follow and report on his busy "Cherry and White" persona around Britain and Europe as well as occasionally meeting as friends of Kate's family.

A hectic schedule for this rugby player and businessman. Not much slack time at his Forest of Dean home either. A wedding to organise, DIY tips from future father-in-law and visitors hoping to find baby daughter in playful mood. Phil's nursery talents are developing but not taken for granted. My daughter stopped conversation in the room by asking, 'Will he drop her?' One quick thinker saved the situation by observing that Phil held Megan in two hands - transferable drill skills.

In these situations the nickname "Raging Bull" seems out of place. Earned in another environment. Possibly in a mishap during his training to become a qualified Artificial Inseminator. More transferable skills. Many have commented that although a front row man, he has an eye for a gap.

Good luck in your testimonial year Phil, from an older rugby man who now, even more so, tries to talk a good game - very often one of yours.

■ **ANDY WYMAN**

Rugby Summariser BBC Radio Gloucestershire

"Many have commented that although a front row man, he has an eye for a gap."





A man's man!

IT'S A GREAT PLEASURE to be asked to write a piece for Phil's Testimonial Brochure.

As an ageing old prop, it's nice to be able to comment on the virtues of prop forwards and their vital role within the modern day team structure.... Oh enough of the bull@\$\$%, PROPS RULE OK!

In almost every club and at every level I have been to over the years the props are usually the characters, the jokers, the drinkers and where would the game be without them? Even in this professional era, Phil has all of the traits from above and is great company to be with.

But, we're not talking about a prop from yester year, we are talking about Phil Vickery.

Arguably, the best tight head prop in the world, a big man who has fantastic fitness levels, he's a ball carrier and can tackle as hard as any back row forward, he has captained England, he has a Rugby World Cup Winners Medal, a British Lion and has been honoured with an MBE for his services to rugby and finally, and just as important he is idolised by the shed!! He even looks good in the new skin tight England shirts, in my day I could not have got it over my head!

I personally wish Phil a successful testimonial year which he deserves as he has done the game proud.

As an old has been prop he's my kind of man!

■ GARETH CHILCOTT



"He even looks good in the new skin tight England shirts!!"



Handbags!

I CAN REMEMBER WELL my first training session with Glos, it was Tuesday night at Oxtalls School late november, 6pm start, 15 v 15 unopposed.

By 6.30pm we were full on hitting lumps out of each other, not too much later the first of several fights started, I was involved in one particular fight, Simmo and Pasty swinging at each other with me catching a few of the misguided hand bags!

It soon turned into a brawl with me involved, within 2 seconds I was helped in this battle, smashing about three guys over without a moments hesitation was the man I now know to be Phil Vickery, coming to the aid of a Welshman, an outsider, in his 1st session with a group of players who were hardly renowned for

their warm welcomes of new players.

From that moment on I have held Phil in the highest regard, a man who you would want in the trenches with you, who wouldn't ask or expect someone to do anything he isn't prepared to do himself, that's one of the many attributes that makes him a great leader

As a player just look at his CV and as a person, well, ask my 13 year old son Dorian who regards Phil as one of his mates, we would often get invited round to Lavi for tea, where phil would cook then beat Dorian on the play station at Lomu rugby, (one of the reasons we were invited, the then 8 year old Dorian the only person he could beat!) Good luck with all you do Phil, hope your injuries are few, just miss the Sale fixtures please.

■ **KINGSLEY JONES**

"smashing about three guys over without a moments hesitation"





The Gentleman Giant

I'M DELIGHTED TO have been asked to make a small contribution to Phil's testimonial brochure.

I first met him (along with Trevor Woodman and Phil Greening) when the three of them had been selected to play for the England Colts. Interviewing the three of them together was quite a challenge. As I recall, "Vicks" was the most thoughtful. Given the same situation more than ten years on, I'm sure that would still be the case.

In my time at BBC Radio Gloucestershire, Phil has consistently been our most prominent international sportsman. He is a steely and classy competitor on the field, yet inside his huge frame is a softly spoken, personable man with a droll sense of humour. Phil knows the role of the media, is always ready to give his time and the warm handshake that greets you mirrors the personality that has endeared

him to fans of Gloucester and England during his career.

Testimonials in other sports have been around for years. A cricketer's benefit, which serves the same purpose, was (and maybe still is) seen as a glorified pension at the end of his career. Rugby however, has moved on at such a pace that a testimonial for top players shouldn't be seen as purely financial. It is a mark of a player's contribution at one club. It reflects their loyalty, their effort, and the respect in which they are held by supporters. Phil Vickery MBE is a World Cup winner. He has suffered injuries that would have made lesser men crumble, and a third back operation in January is unlikely to stop him reaching a rare milestone - 50 caps for England in the front row. His testimonial is thoroughly deserved.

■ **IAN RANDALL**

Sports Producer BBC Radio Gloucestershire

"He has suffered injuries that would have made lesser men crumble"





"I don't give a fk about all that crap, lets just play well tomorrow."**

Solid as a **ROCK**

VICKS ARRIVAL on the scene back in 1998 was one of the keys in taking the England Team to a higher level, any Tight Head is the cornerstone of his pack and Phil slotted into the role amazingly quickly. He is rock solid at scrum and lineout and his work rate and skills around the field are world class.

None of the above will come as a surprise to anyone that knows about their rugby and some will say that Phil Vickery epitomises a modern prop forward but I will always remember his "old school" qualities.

In this age of micro coaching where they try to control everything there is still a place for Vicks and his roll ups, he never enjoyed Team meetings and would spend most of his time taking the piss out of me.

But one episode sums up how he felt about the game and how you can be a leader without ever saying a lot. It was during the World Cup in 2003 and before the Uruguay game, Phil was Captain and in the meeting the night before the game the Coaches had filled our heads with numbers and statistics for a full half-hour before leaving us for some final words from Captain Vickery. Vicks just looked around the room and said in his West Country drawl "I don't give a f**k about all that crap, lets just play well tomorrow." With one sentence he'd had more impact than the previous 30 minutes, the boys cheered and indeed did play well the next day, a testament to a man who led with actions and example not clichés or bulls**t.

It was a privilege and a pleasure to play with you mate, have a great year.

■ **MARTIN JOHNSON**





Country Gent

I first met Phil in 1994 just before the game turned professional. He turned up at Kingsholm on a night game along with his good friend Dougie (Trevor Woodman). After the game all the players came into the bar. Sat in the corner was Phil, dressed in his England U19's blazer looking extremely young, very nervous and obviously overweight!

As Phil will tell you the club has changed enormously over the years and any new player was never made to feel welcome especially if he wasn't from the local area. I don't think Deacs spoke to Phil for 3 years!!

It didn't take Phil long to start to get a reputation around the country as a strong powerful ball handling prop forward and there's an argument to say he was the first of the new breed of front row forwards and was destined to play for his country.

As the years passed Phil became a good friend of mine. Chris Fortey and I decided to introduce Phil to coarse fishing. Now Phil being the 'country gent' became very interested and within a couple of months had all the kit. Chris Fortey and I were

organising a fishing trip to Ireland, a good time to see how all the gear affected his fishing skills! I'm sure if anyone is interested just ask Phil who is the best out of Phil, Chris and myself he will put you straight on that one.

Getting back to Phil's rugby, you cannot help but admire what he has done in the game. He has captained his country on more than one occasion and has a World Cup winning medal. He has 3 British Lion's caps to his name. I also admire him for his commitment to being professional, his attitude and desire for success. Phil is one of the most physical players I have ever played with and it's no wonder that he has had so many shocking injuries, yet has still managed to come back and play at the highest level time and time again.

It just leaves me to say I think Phil's Testimonial Year is thoroughly deserved. Nick Broady (Chairman of my Testimonial committee) and I would like to thank Phil for all his help during my Testimonial Year and wish him all the success for his.

■ **MARK CORNWELL**

"Sat in the corner was Phil, dressed in his England U19's blazer looking extremely young, very nervous and obviously overweight"





The ultimate Compliment

AM I REALLY that old? Can it be true that Phil Vickery has been a Gloucester player for a decade?

Sadly, I am getting on a bit now but it only seems like yesterday that a fresh-faced farmer's boy from Cornwall started out on a career that has taken him to the pinnacle of the world game.

Rarely have I come across an individual who is capable of lifting those around him so effectively through sheer effort and endeavour where it matters most - out on the field.

Either in the colours of Gloucester, where he is one of the biggest icons ever to have played for the club, or in the white of England, his status in the game is ensured as a World Cup winner and as one of the most respected individuals in the sport.

As a leader, we miss him dramatically at Gloucester when he is not around because

he is capable of dragging the utmost out of the people he has around him through his loyalty and total commitment.

He is currently under-going rehabilitation from his third back operation and if anything emphasises his willingness to succeed, it is that desire to pull on a Gloucester shirt again.

Vicks has crossed the boundary between amateurism and professionalism and is now one of a dwindling few who can recall Gloucester's hard school of traditional forward culture that so many people talk about but few have witnessed or understand.

Good luck in your Testimonial Year Phil. After a decade of service as a true Gloucester forward your standing in the game is undiminished which is the ultimate compliment.

■ **DEAN RYAN**

"one of a dwindling few who can recall Gloucester's hard school of traditional forward culture"





Young pups running with

the big dogs!

I FIRST HEARD the name Phil Vickery at an U19 team selection meeting. Trevor Woodman and Phil were interested in coming to Gloucester, influenced by Phil Greening.

My first impressions on meeting him, well, huge, colossal, extremely large young player! Who of course became the greatest front row Gloucester has ever had.

Now Gloucester folk are quite wary of strangers, and that includes players like me born and bred in the County. Phil, coming up from Cornwall was accepted, with that Cornish accent and the way he played he was already 3 parts Gloucester.

It is my biggest regret that I never got to play with Phil. When he arrived I was involved in restructuring the club, the game was going professional and I got to know Phil in that capacity. .

In those early days I was told to keep an eye on Phil and Trevor, they were tending to go off the rails so to speak. 18/19 year old lads, first time away from home.... 2 great players having a bit too much freedom, drink, women... (He's changed now of course!)

Well, we had a chat and I explained that to continue in the game and move forward they were going to have to train. I decided to take them running, they weren't impressed at this idea, especially as they had to meet me at Robinswood Hill at 7am! But the odds were in their favour, I was the wrong side of 30, they were teenagers.

The run began, I was setting a good pace (I was fitter than them) running along the bottom of the hill. We had to cross a slippery wooden bridge, as I crossed I slipped and hit the ground, covered in mud. Of course Phil and Trevor thought it was hilarious, Iron Mike covered in mud. That first run they couldn't even make it around the Golf Course at the base of the hill.

In those days I always tried to avoid Phil, he could drink more than me and he smoked cigars. He was a bad influence on me!

Some time ago I was talking to a former Gloucester Captain, we were discussing players who would make it and we agreed Phil has that look in his eye, when challenged that no nonsense, determined look would surface. Not many people have achieved as much as Phil and he has worked hard to achieve it.

To give a measure of the man I can remember when he broke his arm, he carried on playing in the game. Within 3 weeks he was weight training with Phil Blakeway and me. As he pushed the weights we could hear noises from his arm which made us cringe, but such was his personal determination to succeed he worked on.

Through determination Phil has achieved everything you could possibly want to in rugby. I don't know what Phil is made of, maybe it's that Cornish Clotted Cream, but it has made him one of the best.

I wish Phil all the best in his Testimonial Year, he has earned it!

■ MIKE TEAGUE

"As he pushed the weights we could hear noises from his arm which made us cringe"



"An outstretched arm, a crushing handshake, a broad smile, a packet of chocolate hobnobs and a jar of coffee"



Front row play!

THERE IS NO END to learning, no moment when you sit back and say "that's it, I know everything now", there is always something else to learn.

Looking back at my time at Gloucester - a wonderful time - there was always something new to learn, a new challenge, a different situation, a new perspective.

Of course, most of that was to do with forward play, a Gloucester obsession, or to be more precise, front row play!

If we are talking about front row play, we are talking about those big brooding guys who load as many weights onto a bar as will fit, then throw it into the air with ease, sweating, arteries bulging, red faces, deafening screams. That's when they are at their happiest.

Then there is the slow 'bear' like lumbering walk, and don't forget the anger, lots of anger! Not to mention the matchday stubble, the well practiced stare that chills the blood, it's all part of the make up.

To be honest, prior to joining Gloucester I always maintained a bit of distance between myself and the front row, it just didn't feel like a healthy option for a scrum half!

At Gloucester, everyone looked like a front row player, so I thought I'd better make an effort!

Suddenly, my office door opened, the place visibly darkened, (the birds stopped singing) Phil Vickery, the 'Raging Bull' had arrived for his 2.30 appointment - at quarter to four!

An outstretched arm, a crushing handshake, a broad smile, a packet of chocolate hobnobs and a jar of coffee - maybe there's more to front row players than I originally thought.

During the next three years I used to enjoy my coffee and biscuits with Phil. He was nothing like I had expected, of course, he loved his life in the front row. He used to tell me how it all worked and what went on, what would happen if he did this or that, my respect and knowledge of front row play grew and grew.

He was also a World Cup winner, how happy he was that so many could share in his success, the national pride, the sea of happy faces that greeted their triumphant return at Heathrow, it wasn't just about him, it never is.

That's what makes Phil so special, he doesn't pre-judge people, has a strong sense of right and wrong, he is an example to us all.

Then came the injuries, the pain, the disappointments, the not knowing. No moaning and complaining, just hard work and self belief.

Now we are celebrating Phil's 10th year at Kingsholm, I feel fortunate that I spent three years working with him at Gloucester. One lasting memory was walking with him around the pitch at Twickenham after we won the Powergen Cup. Above us, thousands of cheering Gloucester fans, 'they'll have a great night to night!' he said with a satisfied smile - he did it for them!

Thanks Phil, I learnt plenty, have a great year.

■ **NIGEL MELVILLE**



Inspirational

"Game after game he continues to throw himself around with no thought for his own body"

MY FIRST memory of Vicks was as a slightly awestruck newcomer to the squad on my first tour to France about six years ago.

Myself and all the other young guys at the time including James Simpson-Daniel and Johnny Goodridge were chilling out in our rooms when Vicks came in with his front row cronies and said: "you losers have five minutes to get into the bathroom and have your heads shaved." Needless to say two minutes later we all had grade 0.5 haircuts!

But what he probably wouldn't want me to tell you is what a kind and generous person he is. He gave me a place to stay when I was having to commute from Oxford and has always been very supportive of me.

Just having Vicks in the changing room before a game is such a huge boost, not just because he is a world class player, but

because he is such a huge personality and he has such presence. Not only does he inspire but he seems to install just that bit of confidence in the players around him.

In my opinion he has no peer at prop and no prop in the game touches him in terms of work rate and ball carrying ability. He shames the back row at Gloucester with his tackle count and his general work around the park.

He seems to have no regard for his body. Game after game he continues to throw himself around with no thought for his own body.

As a Gloucester player and captain you epitomise everything that this great club, with its tradition of producing great forwards stands for, and for that reason, I wish you every success with your testimonial year.

■ **JAMES FORRESTER**



I THINK I was quoted once as saying: "After hearing a Phil Vickery team-talk, you would be prepared to run through a brick wall - only to get there and find he has already run through it."

If we are talking openly, I would say Vicks was one of the best, if not the best, player I have ever played with - without a doubt.

Something has raised him above other

players and when you see him in your team, it gives you a massive lift. I respect his achievements massively and every Sunday morning when I see these guys come in for rehab, as stiff as a plank, you realise just how special they are.

Vicks basically gets his body battered every single week and in every single game and yet comes back for more. There are not many people who can do that.

■ **JAMES SIMPSON-DANIEL**

Committed...

...maybe he should be?

TO REMAIN at the forefront of professional rugby like Phil Vickery has done for a decade is a great achievement.

And when you consider the number and seriousness of the injuries he has sustained down the years, it becomes even more significant because he is one bloke who gets smashed around for the good of the team.

Every time he takes the field for Gloucester, wearing that famous number three shirt, he demonstrates his loyalty and commitment each and every time he puts his body on the line.

Vicks is a bloke who leads by example. His deals in actions and not words and he is able to drag the best from his team-mates through his sheer intensity levels.

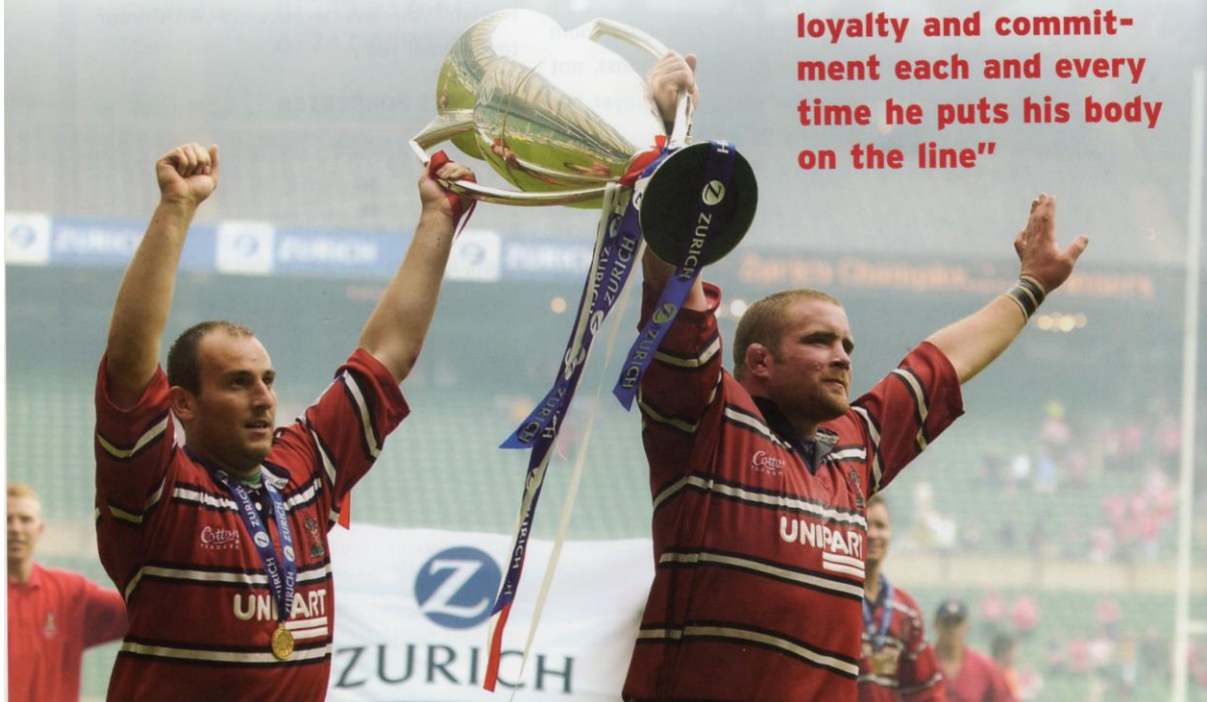
He is one of the most focussed, determined and durable athletes I have ever worked with and I look forward to a few more years with the old boy reading the Farmers Weekly and playing for Gloucester for a few years yet.

Best of luck to you Vicks.

■ **MIKE ANTHONY**

Gloucester Rugby's Strength and Conditioning Coach

"he demonstrates his loyalty and commitment each and every time he puts his body on the line"





A class above...

PHIL VICKERY, quite simply, is one of the biggest names in Gloucester's history.

To say that, puts him in the same class as Tom Joyce, 'Digger Morris', Mike Burton and Phil Blakeway among the greats who have graced the club throughout its long and proud past.

When we first started to talk about Phil's Testimonial year, we were delighted to rubber stamp it because of his contribution to the club and the team over the last decade.

Phil is one of the most committed players

involved in the sport and I am sure his efforts in the next 12 months will be rewarded with a highly successful Testimonial.

Looking at the events on his schedule, there will be some great moments to savour and I hope everyone will support him and his team in making this a year he will enjoy and always remember.

On behalf of Gloucester Rugby, I wish Phil and his family every success in his Testimonial Year and for the future.

■ **TOM WALKINSHAW**

"one of the biggest names in Gloucester's history"



Contributions | The Pub Landlord

Customer Friend Hero

When I was asked to write a few words about Phil, I wondered where to start - is it Phil the customer - Phil the friend - or Phil the hero.

As Phil the customer I could say he blends into The Glasshouse - but how can anyone of Phil's stature and presence blend in? But he does. He enjoys a meal with Kate and the odd pint while enjoying the pub banter, usually with me.

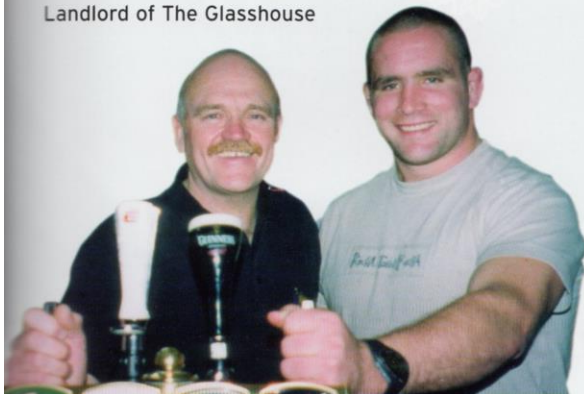
Then there is Phil the friend. How do you gauge friendship - having known Phil for a few years now, he has all of the qualities I would choose in a friend.

Finally, Phil the hero - well, anybody who knows me, knows how passionate I am about my country. When Phil puts on his England shirt, more than customer and friend he becomes what I believe, represents our country's best - that is courage and passion, both qualities in which he abounds.

Wishing Phil the very best in his Testimonial Year and every success and happiness in the future.

■ **STEVE PUGH**

Landlord of The Glasshouse



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The Daddies!!!

PHIL VICKERY, what can I say! The first time I met Phil was when I joined Gloucester on a short term contract in December 2004.

I knew Gloucester had a lot of quality players, but being a hooker it was a big plus to me having a prop like Phil.

Of course Phil is a mimic. He talks in a Welsh accent every time I'm around. He seems to think everyone from Wales is called Dai, so that is what he calls me!

I became a Dad to a baby daughter shortly before Kate and Phil had Megan. We had something in

common other than rugby, two proud parents of baby daughters. One day on Friday at the meal after a team run we were having a good, deep meaningful chat about our daughters. You know, comparisons, nappies, talc... Every one thought we were discussing rugby, tactics... but no, just babies!

Phil is a great bloke, he is a true friend. His strength is the strong values he lives by. Across the journey through life, and indeed in the rugby circuit you meet many people, you find out who your true friends are and Phil falls into that category.

Good luck with your testimonial Phil, you deserve it for all you have achieved for England, The Lions and Gloucester.

■ **MEFIN DAVIES**

"He seems to think everyone from Wales is called Dai, so that what he calls me!"

