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GLoucester RUGBY HERITAGE

GLoucester HOOKERS

PART 2

FOR MANY YEARS, POSITIONS IN A RUGBY TEAM, ESPECIALLY THE FORWARDS, WERE NOT DEFINED. IN THE VERY EARLY DAYS, AS A SCRUM WAS FORMED THE FIRST PLAYERS TO ARRIVE WOULD FORM THE FRONT ROW AND SO ON.

STEVE MILLS

Steve Mills was an outstanding hooker who won five England caps, played 26 times for Gloucestershire and appeared in three County Championship Finals. In addition he captained Gloucester from 1980 to 1983, including one season which was the club's best ever.

Cirencester born, Steve first appeared for his hometown club, before making his Gloucester debut on 10 March 1976 against Cheltenham. He quickly established himself as first choice hooker, being hardy and very mobile. He was soon attracting attention further afield and his first game for Gloucestershire was in September 1976 against Japan.

He would go on to appear in two losing County Championship finals in 1978 and 1980, but was in the winning team in 1984 against Somerset at Twickenham. He was a member of the Gloucester cup winning team of 1978, which defeated Leicester 6-3 in the final at Twickenham.

Steve would almost certainly have won more England caps had he not been understudy to Peter Wheeler, the Leicester hooker. However, in the summer of 1984, in the first test against South Africa, the front row was all Gloucester, consisting of Steve Mills, Phil Blakeway and Malcolm Preedy.

Steve was a very successful club captain. In the 1981-82



• Steve Mills

season, in which he appeared in 40 out of the 48 games played, the team won a record 41 times and lost only three. No fewer than 1045 points were scored and only 338 conceded. The John Player Cup Final against Moseley was drawn, and the title shared.

Steve played his last game on 19 October 1985 against Newport. He had made 303 appearances and scored 24 tries - not bad for a hooker.

FRED REED

Fred Reed was a gifted hooker but unfortunate to be playing at the same time as Mike Nicholls and Steve Mills, so found chances limited. Even so he still made 132 appearances between 1969 and 1980. He also played nine times for Gloucestershire.

He came more to the fore in two successive seasons 1975-77 when he managed 47 games,

and in December 1975 was reserve for the final England trial.

On retirement he became team selector and secretary. In the nineties he became the Committee Liaison Officer with the club's sponsors and is now Chairman of the Gloucester Players' Association.

KEVIN WHITE

Kevin White was another sound hooker who deserved a regular first team place but suffered from stiff competition for that role. Although he made his debut in 1977, for several seasons he could only make a handful of appearances because he was up against Steve Mills, the club captain.

He did have two seasons 1984-86, when Steve stepped down, and when he was first choice he made 65 appearances. Following that he suffered from the emergence of Kevin Dunn. In all he played in 148 games for Gloucester.

KEVIN DUNN

Kevin Dunn was born on 5 June 1965 in Gloucester, and played his first rugby for Spartans and Lydney. On his debut for Gloucester against Glamorgan Wanderers in September 1986 he scored a try, and at once claimed the hooking berth for himself.

For a hooker he scored a lot of tries. In the 1989-90 season he achieved no fewer than 13 and only Richard Mogg and



Derrick Morgan scored more that term. That season was a good one for Gloucester and they were runners up in both league and cup. Kevin scored a try in the Pilkington Cup Final against Bath, but the game was lost 6-48! He made 156 appearances



• Fred Reed



• Kevin White

for Gloucester and scored 37 tries.

Although Kevin played several times for England 'A' he could not make that final step up. At the end of the 1991-92 season he thought that a move to Wasps might further his chances of a cap. He played from 1992-97 for the London club, but no international call resulted.

He made further moves to Bristol (1997-98) and Cardiff (1998-99) before a wrist injury ended his career, but has now returned to Gloucester and lives within a stone's throw of the Kingsholm ground.



• Phil Greening

PHIL GREENING

Another local boy Phil Greening was born on 3 October 1975. He impressed from an early age and captained England Schools and Colts. Not only that, he captained Gloucester in his debut game against Clifton on 30 November 1995, aged 20!

He was a very strong and mobile hooker and was straightaway on England's radar. He was selected for England 'A' in three games that first season and by the 1996-97 season he had become the regular Gloucester hooker.

He played his first game for the senior England team against Italy in November 1996 at the age of 21, going on to win 24

caps. He made five appearances in the World Cup of 1999, scoring two tries against Tonga and one against Fiji.

His career at Gloucester was disappointingly short though, playing 66 times for the club. He appeared 28 times in the 1996-97 season, but next term he had to fight for his place against the emergent Chris Fortey and the total was cut to 14. After only three appearances early in the 1998-99 season, he signed a contract with Sale.

In 2000 he was on the move again, this time to Wasps where he saw out his career until 2005. During that time he was yet again captain, this time of the England 7's team.



• Kevin Dunn

