



GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE

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GLOUCESTER PROPS PART 5

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CLUB, GLOUCESTER BUILT AND MAINTAINED A FINE AND DESERVED REPUTATION FOR HARD UNCOMPROMISING PROP FORWARDS - OTHER CLUBS, INCLUDING THE WELSH, ALWAYS KNEW THAT THEY WERE IN FOR A TOUGH ENCOUNTER UP FRONT WHEN THEY FACED THE CHERRY AND WHITES.

The final article on great Gloucester props looks at great props of the professional era.

THE CORNISHMEN
PHIL Vickery from Bude and Trevor Woodman from Liskeard first played on opposing sides as 11 year old schoolboys in Cornwall. They went on to play together for Gloucester and for the victorious England team in the 2003 Rugby World Cup Final.



PHIL VICKERY
THE sheer size and power of tighthead Phil Vickery marked him out from the rest and earned him the nickname "Raging Bull." He played 145 games for Gloucester between 1995 and 2006 and captained the club from 2001 to 2003.

47 of his 73 England caps were won as a Gloucester player – a club record. He went on two British Lions tours (to

Australia in 2001 and to South Africa in 2009), playing in five of the internationals and played in three World Cups (1999 – 2003 – 2007), including two finals, playing on the winning side in 2003 and captaining his country in the 2007 final.

Phil had already played for England at Under 16 and Colts level before joining Gloucester from Redruth in 1995, aged 19. Within three years of arriving at Kingsholm he came off the bench to play in England's 60-26 drubbing of Wales. His February 1998 debut was followed by a summer tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, in which he was one of the few successes. He played in the 1999 World Cup and for the British Lions in Australia in 2001, a series that was narrowly lost, although the forward battle was won convincingly.

Vickery was Gloucester club captain in 2001-02 when they won the Zurich Championship, beating Bristol in the final, and again in 2002-03 when they topped the Premiership and beat Northampton in the Powergen Cup Final, although he was injured and unable to take part in the match.

Returning from injury, he played in all seven games of the victorious 2003 World Cup campaign, captaining England for the first time against Uruguay and, with his club loose head partner Trevor Woodman, dominating all opposition that

they met in the competition.

Injuries to neck, shoulder, back and arm continued to hinder his career and to limit his appearances for club and country and in 2006 he was released by Gloucester and joined Wasps. Once again he came back to resurrect his career, playing a further 26 times for England. He captained his country in Argentina and to the final of the 2007 World Cup and toured South Africa with the British Lions in 2009, playing in two of the three tests.



TREVOR WOODMAN
LOOSEHEAD Trevor "Dougie" Woodman was a solid scrummager and extremely talented ball-handler, whose turn of pace made him ideally suited to the developing professional game. He played 140 games for Gloucester between 1996 and 2004 and won 21 England caps. A World Cup winner in 2003, he was regarded as one of the best loosehead props in



world rugby when his career was sadly cut short by injury.

Just five months younger than his fellow Cornishman, he played for England Colts alongside Vickery and hooker Phil Greening before joining them at Kingsholm in 1996 to form a formidable young front row.

After consolidating his place in the Gloucester side during 1998-99 and playing a full season for England A, Woodman made his full England debut as a replacement in a World Cup warm-up match against the USA in August 1999. But it was not until November 2002 that he started for the first time against the All Blacks at Twickenham. He seized the opportunity to put in an outstanding performance and remained first choice England loosehead to the end of his career.

Woodman, at the peak of his form, played his part in Gloucester's great 2002-03 season, and then went on to World Cup glory with England at Sydney that autumn. After playing in the final, he returned to Gloucester to bring the house down with a superb try against Northampton at Kingsholm the following Saturday.

Woodman joined Sale in the summer of 2004, but within weeks sustained an injury to his back which led to his retirement from rugby, aged just 28. He is now a member of the coaching staff at Kingsholm.

THE FOREIGN LEGION TIMES change and with professionalism came a succession of international props from across the world.

First to arrive in 1999 was French international **SERGE SIMON** who, signed as cover, played just 18 games for Gloucester but in that short time became a folk hero in the Shed for his tough uncompromising style and obvious relish for the game.

Another Frenchman, **PATRICE COLLAZO** joined Gloucester from Begles in 2001, playing 78 games for the club in 2001-03 and 2005-08, with two seasons at Toulouse in between. Accomplished in tight and loose, Collazo played for Gloucester in both the Zurich Championship Final victory of 2002 and the European Challenge Cup victory in 2006. He is now Head Coach at La Rochelle.

The 25 year old Argentine **RODRIGO RONCERO** joined Gloucester for two seasons in 2002, playing 33 games. A mobile prop, and destructive scrummager, he became a crowd favourite for his wholehearted performances. He went on to play 45 games for Argentina and in 2009 was ranked one of the ten best players in the world..

Italian-Argentine prop, **CARLOS NIETO**, transferred from Viadana to join his captain Marco Bortolami at Kingsholm in 2006. The 29 year old from La Plata was in



the form of his life and turned in consistently dominant performances in his three seasons with Gloucester, starting 60 of his 65 games.

When **CHRISTIAN CALIFANO** joined Gloucester from Agen in September 2006, the tighthead prop had won 69 caps for France and had a reputation as one of the most destructive scrummagers in

the game, on either side of the scrum. Although in the twilight of his career, his performances for Gloucester earned Califano one last recall for France against the All Blacks in 2007. He played 36 games for Gloucester in his two seasons with the club.

With 66 international caps, **GREG SOMERVILLE** was the most-capped All Black prop of all time when he joined



Gloucester in 2008 from the Crusaders, where he had won five Super Rugby championships. Known as "Yoda", Somerville was an influential figure, both on the field and in the dressing room, during his two seasons and 37 games at Kingsholm.

THE TRADITION LIVES ON LOOSEHEAD NICK WOOD (Radley and Brasenose College, Oxford), though not a typical home-grown Gloucester prop of the old school, is a one club man in the Kingsholm tradition who was unlucky to miss out on an England cap and, with 266 appearances for Gloucester, is now approaching the club record for the professional era.

And the powerful All Black tight-head **JOHN AFOA**, capped 36 times and a formidable competitor, has played a large part in restoring the Gloucester front row to its former dominance since arriving at Kingsholm in 2014.

