



# GLOUCESTER SECOND ROW FORWARDS PART 4

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF RUGBY THERE WERE NO SPECIALISTS IN THE FORWARDS. WHEN A SCRUM FORMED, THE FIRST TO ARRIVE MADE UP THE FRONT ROW AND SO ON. IT WAS MANY YEARS BEFORE PLAYERS WOULD BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICULAR POSITIONS.

Gloucester have always been blessed with top class second row forwards. The tradition continued with the approach of professional rugby.

The final part of the story covers the last two decades.

## ROB FIDLER

**ROB, son of John, had a big act to follow when he made his debut for Gloucester against Cheltenham in December 1994. He had already played for Cheltenham, which was his place of birth on 21 September 1974.**

He would go on to make 222 appearances for the Cherry and Whites, including 148 league games. That first appearance was at No.6, where he continued until 1996 when he moved up a row. He soon settled into a formidable second row partnership with Dave Sims.

Rob was a very good front jumper and in addition an aggressive tackler. He was in the teams which lost Pilkington Cup semi-finals in 1996 to Bath and 1997 to Leicester. The transition to professional rugby was proving difficult, and Rob led the club for several games in 1998-99 in the absence of club captain Dave Sims.

Rob was soon considered an international prospect and made 14 England 'A' appearances before winning caps against New Zealand and South Africa on the England tour of 1998.

With the arrival of the millennium, the fortunes of the club rose and Rob was a regular in the Heineken Cup campaign of 2000-01 which led to the semi-final and defeat to Leicester. However, he was in the teams that won the Zurich Championship Final against Bristol in 2002, and the 40-22 win over Northampton in the final of the Powergen Cup in 2003.

After problems negotiating a new contract, Rob was offered one with Bath and played his rugby there from 2004-07. He then played a season with Cinderford accompanied by old colleagues Pete Glanville, Andy Deacon and Mark Cornwell.

## MARK CORNWELL

**"PASTY" Cornwell was born on 22 February 1973, and first played for Old Richians. He was a very tall 6ft 7ins, and made his first appearance for Gloucester against Cheltenham in November 1992. That was his sole appearance that season, and indeed in the next there would be just one more game.**

His league debut was delayed until April 1995 against Bristol. His problem was that he was up against established players like Dave Sims, Richard West and Rob Fidler, and it was not until the 1997-98 season that he became a regular choice. By 1999 he won the first of no fewer than 11 England 'A' caps, although the major prize of a full



cap always eluded him.

He came off the bench in Gloucester's losing semi-final game against Leicester in the Heineken Cup in 2001, and played in the Premiership Final against Wasps in 2003. Wasps won 39-3 after Gloucester had topped the league table by a clear 15 points, and yet won nothing.

"Pasty's" career lasted from 1992 to 2006, and covered the transition to professional rugby. He made 211 appearances, including 133 league games. He went on to play a season at Birmingham/Solihull, then player/coach at Cinderford, before becoming Gloucester's Academy Manager until 2012 when he moved to Hartpury College to become forwards' coach.

## ADAM EUSTACE

**ADAM was born on 9 January 1979 and played locally for Widden Old Boys and Coney Hill. He was naturally a second row forward but did sometimes play in the back row. He came to the notice**





**of Gloucester and Phillipe Saint-Andre signed him up for a professional contract.**

He would appear in 249 games from 1999 to 2010. His first game for Gloucester was on 21 February 1999 against Leeds in a Cheltenham & Gloucester Cup game, and later in the season he was in the team which won the final against Bedford at Northampton.

Adam continued to make impressive progress in his games for Gloucester and there was the distinct possibility that he could be selected for the England 'A' team when he unfortunately broke his leg in early 2002 against Ebbw Vale.

However, the next season he returned to club action in April 2003 and was in the team which won the Powergen Cup, defeating Northampton. Later, in May, although Gloucester had topped the Premiership, Adam was in the team which lost to Wasps in the Premiership Final.

In 2006 he came off the bench in the European Challenge Cup Final at the Stoop, where Gloucester defeated London Irish. In 2007 he again appeared off the bench in the losing Premiership Final against Leicester.

The 2007-08 season saw him playing for The Scarlets. He then returned to Kingsholm for two more seasons before moving on to Northampton. After his retirement he now works for Gloucester's Community Department.

**MARCO BORTOLAMI**  
**MARCO was born in Padua, Italy, on 12 June 1980. He was only 18 years old when he first played for Petrarca Padova, and only 21 when he won the first of his 112 caps for Italy against Namibia in June 2001.**

Not only that he became Italy's youngest ever captain at the age of 22. The game was

against New Zealand, and the All Blacks won 64-10! He was again made captain for Italy's tour of Japan in 2004. On his return he moved to France to play two seasons for Narbonne.

When Gloucester signed Marco in 2006, he was reckoned to be one of the outstanding forwards in world rugby. He was rated so highly that he captained Gloucester to start the season against Bath, and effectively shared the captaincy for that term with Pete Buxton. He was a natural leader, with great physicality and presence.



That season was a good one for Gloucester. They topped the Premiership table (again), but heartbreakingly once more lost in the final against Leicester. Although selected as captain, Marco missed the final due to injury.

In 2007-08 Gloucester yet again topped the table, and Marco was in the team which lost in the semi-final play-off again to Leicester.

In 2008-09 the Cherry and Whites did make a final and Marco came off the bench, when they played Cardiff Blues at Twickenham for the EDF Energy Cup, but Nicky Robinson and his team-mates cantered to an easy win.

Injuries and a loss of form plagued Marco in the following season, and he decided to return to Italy to play for Aironi, and when that team folded moved

on to Zebre where he remains and played at Kingsholm for them this season.

**ALEX BROWN**  
**ALEX was born in Bristol on 17 May 1979 and educated at Colston's College, Bristol. After brief stays at Bath and Pontypool he was recruited in 2000 to Bristol by Dean Ryan where, in his first campaign, he was voted the player of the season.**

By 2003 Ryan, now coaching at Kingsholm, signed up Alex, when again he promptly won the Player of the Season award, and started every game. He also holds the record for the most consecutive starts in the Premiership, with 86, spread over games for Bristol and Gloucester. He formed a formidable partnership with Marco Bortolami in the second row.

Alex was in the teams which beat London Irish to win the European Challenge Cup in 2006, which lost the Premiership final to Leicester in 2007, and the ill-fated loss to Cardiff Blues in the EDF final of 2009. But he was in the winning team against Newcastle in the LV= Cup Final of 2011.

For some years Alex was on the England selector's radar, but after appearances for England Saxons in the first Churchill Cup, he was not capped until England's tour to Australia in 2006. He won two more caps on the tour to South Africa in 2007.

Alex Brown was an utterly dependable player, whose form never dipped. He made 233 appearances for Gloucester, including 159 in the Premiership. He seemed set to play several more seasons but a shoulder injury in the first game of the 2012-13 season ended his career.

Happily he has remained at Kingsholm and is now the club's Rugby Operations Manager.

