

GREAT PLAYERS FROM THE GLOUCESTER BACK ROW

PART THREE

Thirties to Seventies



Gordon Hudson

Gordon was the son of a famous father, Arthur, the Gloucester and England winger who played either side of World War One. Gordon also found his career interrupted, but by the Second World War. This was when he probably played his best rugby appearing in no fewer than nine war-time internationals, and a "Victory" international against New Zealand in 1946.

After the war he captained Gloucester for three seasons from 1947 to 1950. He made 296 appearances from 1935 to 1954, and scored 64 tries.

Gordon was born on 29 November 1915, and made his debut for Gloucester in 1935 playing on the wing, but it was not until he switched to the back row for the 1938-39 season that he became a regular choice. War then intervened, and he became a PT Instructor in the RAF.

In 1946, Gordon made the first of 34 appearances for Gloucestershire in a drawn game against Devon. The county went through to the final against Lancashire. The game was drawn, but Lancashire won the replay at Kingsholm. Gordon played in all the games.

Indeed he would captain Gloucestershire from 1948 to 1950, and another losing final against Lancashire in 1950. He also played for Western Counties against Australia in the 1947-48 season.

He was Club Chairman from 1972 to 1982. He died in December 1993.



Bob Hodge

Bob was born at Fylde, Lancashire in 1923, and started playing for his home town team after the end of the war. He played three times for Lancashire in the 1947-48 season, but missed the final which the county won.

He joined Gloucester for the 1948-49 season, and appeared in

the second row in the first game against Lydney. He soon moved to number 8, and quickly gained the attention of the Gloucestershire selectors, making his debut against Devon in November. He kept his place right through to the losing final against his home county at Blundellsands, where he actually played in the second row.

Bob went very close to gaining an England cap, appearing in three trials, and in 1953 was a reserve for all four of England's Championship games, but never made the final step to an England cap.

In November 1953 he played for the Western Counties against New Zealand. Bob was club captain in the 1952-53 season. He played 258 times for Gloucester, scoring 22 tries.

He eventually returned to Lancashire where he died in Lytham St. Annes on the last day of 1983.

Dennis Ibbotson

Dennis was an openside flanker of genuine pace, and a devastating tackler. He took the ball carrier very low, often at ankle height. He was a regular in the Gloucester team from 1949 to 1960, making 337 appearances, scoring 58 tries, and a single dropped goal against Newport in 1952. He was very versatile and at various times played at prop and wing or even centre.

Dennis was born in 1930, and played local rugby for Old



Centralians. His younger brother Ken also played for Gloucester, in the backs from 1955 to 1958.

Dennis made his debut against Universities Athletic Union in December 1949 in the second row, but for the rest of the season he played at prop. It was in the following season that he made his move to the back row, making a formidable unit with Bob Hodge and Gordon Hudson.

Considering his dynamism, it was surprising that he did not make his county debut until October 1952 against Somerset. In the following 1953-54 season he was in the Gloucestershire team which lost to Middlesex, in the semi-final of the Championship. In November 1953 he played for Western Counties against the New Zealand touring team.

Early in the 1959-60 season Dennis suffered an injury which took time to heal. In his absence a young Dick Smith took his opportunity and established himself at openside. Dennis played only nine times that season, and after playing in the end of season tour, he retired.

Dick Smith

Dick Smith is one of the all-time Gloucester greats. He is a member of the "500 Club" having made 540 appearances, second only to Alan Brinn. He scored 116 tries.

To many it is a mystery that he never won an England cap, although he appeared in several trial games.

As well as playing openside flanker, he was equally at home playing in the centre, and became famous for what was known as his "Banana run". Mike Burton said of him, "He could have played first class rugby in the centre."

Dick was born at Brockworth on 10 April 1940, educated at Crypt Grammar School, and played for Old Cryptians before making his Gloucester debut in December 1958 in the centre against Neath. He moved to the back row in the following season.

It is perhaps surprising that Dick was not selected for Gloucestershire until 1962, when he made the first of 59 appearances for the county against Somerset at Kingsholm. He appeared in three consecutive Championship finals from 1970 to 1972; the first two being lost, but the 1972 final resulted in a famous 11-6 win at Coventry against Warwickshire. This was the first time Gloucestershire had won the title for 35 years.



Dick played in England trial games in 1964-65 and 1966-67, but the full cap always eluded him. He played for Western Counties against Australia in 1967, and New Zealand in 1972 and for the South of England against New Zealand in 1967.

Dick was Gloucester captain from 1968 to 1970, and was a member of the team which won the inaugural National Knock-out Cup against Moseley in 1972. He was poked by a punch from Moseley's Nigel Horton after just five minutes, who was sent off.

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He retired at the end of the 1975-76 season, but did make one more appearance off the bench against Oxford University in 1977. Dick was Gloucester's coach from 1980 to 1984.

Dave Owen

Dave was a durable number eight who first played for Gloucester at the start of the 1960-61 season making his debut in the first game against Waterloo. It took him a couple of seasons to become fully established, but by the 1962-63 season he became a regular, packing down between Peter Ford and Dick Smith.

Although Dave played 242 games for Gloucester from 1960 to 1972 he only appeared for Gloucestershire twice. A major reason for this was that he was in competition with Bristol's Dave Rollitt for the number 8 spot. In the absence of Rollitt, he received a call to appear for his first county game against Devon in October 1964. He proceeded to score a hat-trick of tries, but Rollitt was selected for the next game!

