

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE



**TWO MATCHES
TOO MANY**
1989-90

Captain Mike Hamlin

Played 47

Won 34

Lost 11

Drawn 2

For 1112

Against 622

Runners-up in both
the Courage League
Championship and
Pilkington Cup

This was a season of great achievement and crushing disappointment – frustrating for both players and supporters alike.

It all started at Swansea on September 2 in a game which ebbed and flowed, with Gloucester hanging on for a narrow but notable victory 32-29. This set the tone for a month in which the club won their first eight games, including Courage League victories over Moseley and the defending champions Bath.

Gloucester came down to earth with a bump in their third league game against Wasps at Sudbury, where Rob Andrew was outstanding at outside half in a 29-4 victory for the home side.

However, two handsome league victories at Kingsholm against Bedford by 37 points to 6 and Rosslyn Park by 41 points to 12, in which winger Derrick Morgan contributed a total of five tries, set them back on track.

The 13-6 win at Bristol on November 18 was less satisfactory. Victory in a bruising encounter against old rivals on their patch is always sweet, but although the Gloucester forwards had torn the Bristol pack apart, the visitors' indiscipline had kept the home side in the game. A week later, Gloucester were back at Kingsholm taking part in a very different sort of match where they shared seven tries with Saracens in a 21-all draw.

Christmas arrived with Gloucester tucked in behind Bath in second place with a P7 W5 D1 L1 record. In all matches the playing record was P24 W19 D2 L3.

Away from the league, scalps included Leicester, Coventry, Swansea, Newport, Newbridge and Pontypridd. Success was based on a rampant pack, in which the back row were outstanding, despite the absence of Mike Teague, who was out with a shoulder injury for the first three months of the season. Add to this the skill and experience of Mike Hamlin and Marcus Hannaford at half back and an often under-



BACK ROW (L-R): T Pritchard, M Elway, B Howells, E Stephens, J Beaman, R Jardine, J Fidler, A Brinn, A Townsend, P Hawker, T Day (Vice-President)
MIDDLE ROW (L-R): F Reed (Hon. Team Secretary), A Mitchell, K'Dunn, R Phillips, P Ashmead, M Preedy, B Clark, R Pascal, M Teague, N Marmont, J Breeze, J Hawker, D Cummins, T.R. Tandy (Hon. General Secretary), K Richardson (Coach)
FRONT ROW (L-R): J Holder, I Smith, R Mogg, P Ford (Chairman), M Hamlin (Captain), H.M. Hughes (President), D Morgan, M Hannaford, T Smith
FRONT (L-R): L Gardiner, D Caske

ated back line and you have a side to take on all opposition.

Next up in the league on January 13 was a trip to Leicester, whose unbeaten ground record had stood for 13 months. With the Gloucester forwards dominating line-out and maul, the visitors scored four tries and only a late consolation try added a little respectability to the 26-16 scoreline.

Now attention turned to the Pilkington Cup. As a first division club, Gloucester entered the Cup at the round 3 stage. Supporters' spirits dropped when they were drawn at Sudbury against Wasps, with memories of the 29-4 drubbing at Sudbury in October still fresh in the mind. However, the team had other ideas and (to quote The Times) "charged into this game with the kind of rumbustious enthusiasm that can knock any side out of their stride," clinching a thrilling game 23-19 when Richard Mogg surged over for the winning try.

A fourth round win at Gosforth two weeks

later by 26 points to 15 led to a quarter final draw against Nottingham at Beeston. In 1990, Nottingham with four current internationals were formidable opposition, but Gloucester, using the wind well and dominating possession, won a comfortable victory.

And so to a packed Franklins Gardens, Northampton for the semi-final, which was the fourth successive away tie, raising memories of the famous victories of 1972. To be honest, it was a stuttering performance against the second division champions-elect, who played with great determination, leaving Gloucester 12-8 down at half time and reliant on three Tim Smith penalties in the second half to carry them home.

Meanwhile, back in the league, home wins against Harlequins and Orrell saw Gloucester topping the table, with a record of P10 W8 D1 L1 and just the Nottingham fixture to be played. However, this visit to Beeston on April 28 was very different from the match

two months earlier as Gloucester, failing to take their limited chances on a drab and disappointing day, sank to a 12-3 defeat. Wasps took the title, heading the table for the first time that season. Some things never change!

A week later, the Pilkington Cup Final was played on a firm pitch under a blazing sun at a speed almost as intense as the heat. Gloucester started well and battled on to the end, winning more than their share of maul and lineout, but ultimately had no answer to the counter-attacking of a superb Bath side whose forwards and backs combined seamlessly, running in eight tries in a 48-6 victory.

Disappointing? Yes, but still a great season. Perhaps the most appropriate tribute to this Gloucester team was made by Nottingham and England full back Simon Hodgkinson after the quarter-final at Beeston - "Gloucester haven't got many internationals, but in every position they have a player respected by everyone else".