

# MIKE TEAGUE

## "IRON MAN" MIKE



MIKE TEAGUE IS ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREATS OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY. WITH BALL IN HAND HE WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO BRING DOWN. HE HAD A TECHNIQUE OF SPINNING OUT OF THE TACKLE AND CHARGING ON, ONLY TO REPEAT THE PROCESS WITH THE NEXT HAPLESS OPPONENT. IN DEFENCE HE WAS A DEADLY TACKLER, AND HIS UPPER BODY STRENGTH WAS SUCH THAT HE REGULARLY TORE THE BALL OUT OF THE OPPOSITION'S HANDS.

36

He made 306 appearances for the Cherry and Whites between 1978 and 1995, scoring 77 tries, including 20 in the 1981-82 season, when he was in the team which shared the John Player Cup with Moseley. He also appeared in the losing cup final against Bath in 1990. He won 27 England caps, and three for the British Lions. He toured with the Lions in 1989 and 1993. In the latter tour against Australia he was made "Player of the Series". He also played six times for the Barbarians.

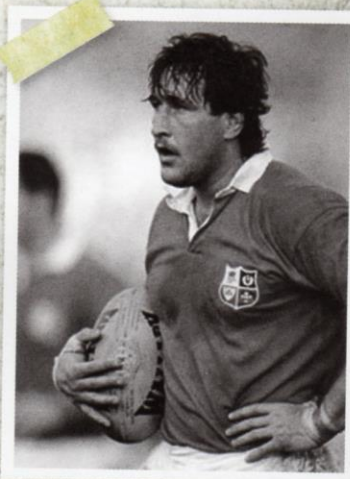
Michael Clive Teague was born on 8 October 1960 and was educated at Churchdown Academy. He played local rugby for Gloucester All Blues before making his first appearance for Gloucester on 15 November 1978 against Exeter University, scoring a try in the 46-20 win.

It was not long before Mike was on the England selectors' radar, and after appearing for England Under 23's, he played for England 'B' against France 'B' in November 1981. However, it was not until February 1985 when Mike came off the bench to replace John Hall

that he gained his first cap against France. Phil Blakeway and John Orwin were also playing in that game. His full debut came on the England tour of New Zealand that summer where he played in both tests.

There was then nearly a four year gap, and, determined to regain his place, Mike decided he had to bulk up. He undertook extreme training methods, including running up hills with logs or rocks, known as 'Mad Dog' training. Eventually the selectors again took interest and he was selected for England in all the home championship games of 1989. Indeed his form was so good that he was selected to go on the British Lions tour of Australia that same year.

He missed the first Test, which was lost, through injury, but played so well, at blind-side flanker, in the other two Tests (won 19-12 and 19-18) that he was made 'Player of the Series'. Rugby writer John Griffiths said, "Having nursed a troublesome shoulder injury for much of the



visit, he tore into the tight and loose with shoulder dipped and with total disregard for personal safety." England lock Paul Ackford christened him "Iron Man Mike".

Back home Mike was a key player in England's Grand Slam winning team of 1991. He scored a try against Wales, when the 25-6 victory was the first in Cardiff for 28 years. He also scored a try against Ireland in Dublin. Later in the same year he played in five of the six games England played



in the World Cup, including the final against Australia which was lost 12-6. Mike missed the 1992 Five Nations through injury, but in October did play against South Africa, England winning 33-16. He played in all England's Five Nations games in 1993, the last game against Ireland being his final cap. Although usually thought of as a No.8, of his 27 caps only eight were in that position and the rest on the blind-side flank.

In summer 1993 Mike again toured with the British Lions to New Zealand and came off the bench in the Second Test at Wellington. The game was won, so Teague was unbeaten in his three Lions appearances. That game would represent his last appearance at Test level.

For Gloucester Mike had a long and distinguished career. In October 1980 he was in the Gloucester team which was thrashed 38-6 at Newport. Three days later there was the daunting prospect of a trip to Pontypool for a midweek game. For the first time, the back row consisted of John Gadd, Mike Teague and Mike Longstaff. Gloucester pulled

off a famous 17-15 victory, in no small measure down to the back-row combination.

In the 1981-82 season Teague made no fewer than 45 appearances, and scored 20 tries, including hat-tricks against Clifton and Plymouth Albion. That season was the best in Gloucester's long history, when only three games were lost out of the 48 played. Gloucester made it to the final of the John Player Cup, and Mike played in every round. The Cherry and Whites were firm favourites to beat Moseley in the final, but had an off day. No tries were scored, and with the score at 9-9, extra time was required. In the end Gloucester were saved by a penalty kicked by Paul Ford to escape with a 12-12 draw. The cup was shared, as there was no provision for a replay.

At the start of the 1985-86 season Mike decided to try his luck at Cardiff, but the Welsh club's back-row was particularly strong, and, with the England international John Scott at No.8, Mike's opportunities were limited. He headed back to Kingsholm in January 1986.

In the 1989-90 season Gloucester had another good run in the Pilkington Cup. Mike scored tries in the 26-16 quarter-final win over Nottingham, and another in the semi-final at Northampton which Gloucester won 17-12. Unfortunately, a week before the final Gloucester missed the chance of winning the league title, by losing 12-3 at Nottingham. It is difficult to say if morale was affected,



but the final against Bath was a disaster, the game being lost 6-48.

From 1991 to 1994 Mike played for Moseley, but returned to Kingsholm for one final campaign, retiring after the last game of the season against Harlequins on 29 April 1995.

Between 1981 and 1985 he played four times for the South and South-West against various international touring teams. In 1982 he scored two tries in the 36-6 win over Fiji, and in 1983 when the All Blacks toured, he was in the team which was defeated 18-6. Seven other Gloucester players were in this team: Phil Blakeway, Richard Mogg, Steve Mills, Malcolm Preedy, Steve Boyle, John Orwin and John Gadd.

Mike also played seven times for the South and South-West in the Divisional Championship from 1988 to 1990, scoring tries in his first two appearances against London Division and then the Midlands.

On retirement he was appointed as Gloucester's first Team Manager, leading the club into the professional era.

