

PHIL VICKERY



ONE OF THE GLOUCESTER ALL-TIME GREATS, TIGHT HEAD PROP FORWARD PHIL VICKERY PLAYED 155 GAMES FOR GLOUCESTER BETWEEN 1995 AND 2006 AND CAPTAINED THE CLUB FROM 2001 TO 2003.

He won 73 England caps (47 of them as a Gloucester player – a club record) 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. He went on two British Lions tours (to Australia in 2001 and to South Africa in 2009), playing in 5 of the internationals.

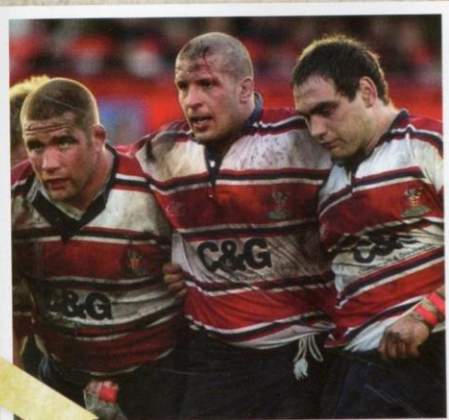
Philip John Vickery was born of farming stock at Barnstaple on 14th March 1976. His family lived at Kilkhampton near Bude in Cornwall and he was educated at Budehaven Secondary School. He first met fellow Cornishman Trevor Woodman, his front row partner for Gloucester and England, at the age of 11, Vickery playing for Bude and Woodman for Liskeard. One of his early rugby memories is of going up to Twickenham from Bude in 1991 with 40,000 "black and gold" supporters to watch Cornwall in the County Championship final. He went on to gain England caps at Colts and Under-16 level, and played club rugby in Cornwall for Bude and Redruth before joining Gloucester in 1995 at the age of



19. The game was still amateur and he worked on a local farm at Churchdown until signing as a professional the following year.

Earning the nickname "Raging Bull", which was to stick with him throughout his career and later become his company trade mark, his sheer size and power marked him out from the rest. He established himself in a Gloucester side who were not short of top class props and, after playing at England Under-21 level, he quickly graduated to the senior England squad. Within three years of

joining Gloucester the 21-year-old Vickery was chosen by Clive Woodward to start against Wales at Twickenham. The match on 21st February 1998 resulted in a historic drubbing as England beat Wales by 60 points to 26. Phil's debut was followed by a summer tour which took in internationals against Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Nicknamed the 'Tour from Hell' it was perhaps the most demanding tour ever undertaken by England and ended a number of potential England careers. Phil played in the four tests, all of which were lost, England conceding



198 points in the process and scoring just 32, but Phil Vickery's ability was recognised and, despite sustaining a neck injury which kept him out of the International Championship the following season, he came back strongly to play in the 1999 World Cup.

Another injury, this time to his shoulder, provided a further setback, but again he came back to tour Australia in 2001 with the British Lions, playing in all three tests in 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 short-lived Zurich Championship, beating Bristol in the final at Twickenham 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. In the early years of the millennium, the front row of Phil Vickery, Olivier Azam and Trevor Woodman was arguably the best ever to represent Gloucester. As Phil himself said, "When Olivier's in the right frame of mind and wanting it, you wouldn't have found anybody better in the world. So, I'd have to have Olivier and I'd have to have Trev on the other side, for sure."

Returning again from injury in the 2003 end of season tour of Australia and New Zealand

which preceded the World Cup, Vickery came on as a replacement in the Wellington test and was part of a six man pack that repelled repeated attempts by New Zealand to score a pushover try, holding out for a 15-13 victory. He played in all seven games of the 2003 World Cup, captaining England for the first time

against Uruguay. Vickery's front row club partnership with loose head prop Trevor Woodman stood England in good stead and



the two Gloucester Cornishmen dominated all opposition they met in the competition, although notoriously falling foul of South African referee Andre Watson in the epic final at Sydney, where England beat the host country 20-17.

Phil returned home with the victorious England team to be awarded an MBE and was also granted the Freedom of the City of Gloucester in 2004.

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 from injury and resurrected his career, playing a further 26 times for England. He won the Premiership in 2008 and the Heineken Cup in 2007 with Wasps, starting in both finals. He captained his country throughout the 2007 Six Nations and the 2007 World Cup in France, where they were beaten 15-6 in the final by South Africa. Two years later he toured South Africa with the British Lions, playing in two of the three tests. Although struggling against Tendai "the Beast" Mtawarira in the first test where he was substituted, he came back triumphantly in the third against the same opponent with a dominant scrummaging display. Ironically, his last game for Wasps was at Kingsholm on 25 September 2010, when coming back yet again from injury, he suffered a further injury to his neck and on 28 October announced his decision to retire.

In retirement, Phil Vickery owns a clothing brand, Raging Bull, which he first set up in 2003 and, since winning BBC 1's Celebrity Masterchef in 2011, he has worked on a number of catering projects. On the rugby front, in addition to broadcasting, he has put in a coaching stint with Worcester Warriors and acts as an ambassador for sponsors RBS.

He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire in 2015 and is an ambassador of the Prince of Wales Trust.

