

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGEARGENTINIAN
CONNECTIONS

The first Gloucester players to face Argentinian opponents were Peter Hordern and John A'Bear, who toured there in 1936 with a British Isles (now Lions) side which won all their matches. Hordern played in the only "Test" match, which was won 23-0 in Buenos Aires, although caps were not awarded, and he got a bit carried away over dinner when giving the Argentinian politician sitting opposite him a ketchup shampoo.

This was probably forgotten by 1973, when an Argentinian club, Belgrano, made a short tour of England and played Public School Wanderers at Kingsholm. PSW fielded eight internationals, and Gloucester provided most of their pack with Robin Cowling, Mike Nicholls, Jim Jarrett, Alan Brinn, and John Watkins, as well as John Spalding at scrum-half. PSW won 38-20. For the Kingsholm faithful, the highlight was a stirring gallop by Brinn ending in a try, Watkins scored another, and Nicholls kicked their only conversion.

In 1978, the Argentina national team played the second game of their tour at Kingsholm against English Students, who selected Ian Wilkins of Gloucester and Lydney, and several future international stars in Marcus Rose, Clive Woodward, Paul Ackford, Steve Bainbridge and Nick Jeavons. Wilkins scored a sizzling try, running it in from 30 metres, but the tourists won, 15-9, their trump card being their world-class captain and stand-off, Hugo Porta.



One match was played at Kingsholm in the 1991 Rugby World Cup – New Zealand v USA. The 46-6 victory for the All Blacks was refereed by E. Sklar of Argentina.

Kingsholm was awarded four matches in the 2015 Rugby World Cup, which included Argentina v Georgia. Local supporters were disappointed that Gloucester favourite Mariano Galarza was unable to turn out for Argentina because he had been suspended following the Pumas' previous game against New Zealand. But it was a first appearance at Kingsholm for Matias Alemanno, who would later join the Club. Argentina scored the only try of the first-half to lead 14-9, and soon after the break a yellow card for Georgian captain and inspiration, Mamuka Gorgodze, ended the match as a contest. His team conceded 21 points in his absence, and Argentina went on to win 54-9.

PUMAS AT KINGSHOLM

Diego Albanese (2001-02) was the first Argentinian to play for the Cherry and Whites. In his one season he made quite an impression on the wing, appearing in 18 games and scored three tries. It did not help that, on his wing, he was in competition for game time with James Simpson-Daniel. He won 55 caps for Argentina, and scored ten tries. He played in three World Cups and, in 1999, scored a try against Ireland which helped the Pumas to reach the quarter-finals for the first time. He later played for Leeds and helped them to win the Powergen Cup in 2005.

Qualified doctor Rodrigo Roncero (2002-04) was a favourite of the Shed. He was a prop who could play on either side of the scrum, but his



talent did not end there; he was a strong runner, and deceptively fast in the loose. This was illustrated in 2004 when he ran in a 50 metre interception try against Sale, to huge acclaim from the crowd. He scored another try in the same game. He made 33 appearances for Gloucester and scored five tries. For Argentina he won 55 caps, and played in three World Cups. After leaving Gloucester he played with great success for Stade Francais for several seasons.

Matias Cortese had one season (2011-12) at Kingsholm, and made 11 appearances. He was a hooker with 15 Argentinian caps. He played for Northampton from 2006-08, before spending time at Biarritz and Bayonne. He then returned to Argentina to play for Pampas, which won the Vodacom Cup in 2011. After leaving Gloucester Matias moved to Colomiers to play D2 (the second level) rugby in France.

Mariano Galarza, 26 times capped, was a sizeable piece of Argentinian beef, who played for Gloucester from 2015-18. He was a powerful force in the second row and made 62 appearances. He had previously played for Worcester. His first start for the Cherry and Whites was in the semi-final of the European Challenge Cup against Exeter, and he was a replacement in the successful final against Edinburgh. In 2017 he was again a replacement in the final of the same competition, this time against Stade Francais. In 2018 Mariano played through all the knock-out stages of the Challenge Cup, including the final against Cardiff Blues that was lost in the final kick of the game. Galarza went on play for Bourdeaux and Bayonne.

No fewer than three Pumas are currently playing at Kingsholm, Matias Alemanno, Santiago Carreras and Santiago Socino.

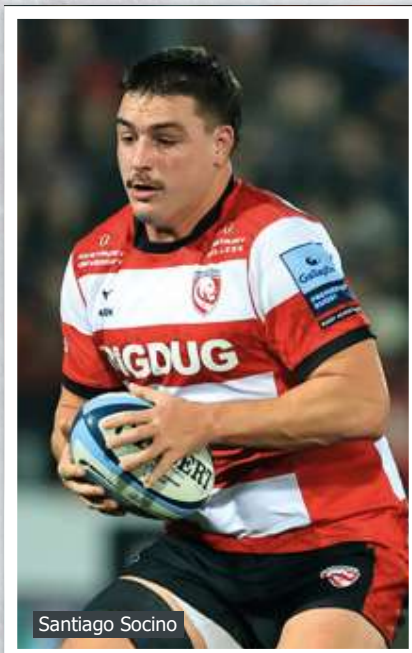
Second row forward, Alemanno, has won 71 caps for Argentina. Arriving in 2020, Matias has added his considerable bulk to the pack. He is destructive at the set piece,



Santiago Carreras

and in the loose. He was in the team which won a thrilling Champions Cup game against Ulster, and scored tries against Worcester and Northampton. In the current season he scored a try (one of eight) in the rout of Benneton in the Challenge Cup. To date he has made 29 appearances, and scored four tries. For Argentina, he scored a try on his debut and, in November 2020, he started in the team which beat New Zealand for the first time ever.

Santiago Carreras is a versatile back, capable of performing at full-back or wing. He is extremely aggressive as a back, and has won 20 caps for the Pumas. Until today Santiago has made 25 appearances for Gloucester, scoring eight tries. He has quite a penchant for snapping up interception tries. Last season he scored two tries against Bristol, and successive tries in the last two games of the season. Carreras was also in the Argentine team which beat the All Blacks for the first time.



Santiago Socino

Santiago Socino, another hooker, made 34 appearances for Newcastle, before signing for Gloucester. His game time has been limited, due to having to compete with Jack Singleton for the hooking start. So far, he has made 27 appearances, but only seven starts. Nevertheless, this season he has already scored four tries, two of them in Gloucester's last game at Sale. The club obviously thinks highly of him, as he signed a new deal in January to keep him at Kingsholm. Santiago has won seven caps for Argentina.

After the Northampton game, the three Pumas were walking together on the club's "lap of honour", when the Shed took up the chant of "Argentina, Argentina".