

GLoucester RUGBY
HERITAGE

SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTIONS – PART ONE

First contact between Gloucester Rugby and South Africa came on the battlefield rather than the sports field, during the Boer War (1899-1902). Three current Gloucester players, all forwards, signed up for the Gloucesters and fought in South Africa, where one, Alec Spence, died, and the other two, Arthur Mills and Fred Goolding, were taken prisoner. Other soldiers who served in the Boer War later played for Gloucester, most notably Harry Berry, an England international.

In 1906, a South African national team toured the UK for the first time, and were welcomed to Kingsholm by a capacity crowd. Their opponents, Gloucestershire, selected six Gloucester players – Alfie Wood, Arthur Hudson, “Whacker” Smith, “Jummer” Stephens, George Matthews and W Holder. With overwhelming strength and speed, the Springboks powered to their twelfth successive victory, 23-0. The Citizen reported that “when a man’s collared by the Colonials there is no mistake about it – down they go, planted deep”, in what was “a game fit for the gods”

More than 50 years passed before South Africans next played at Kingsholm. In 1957, the Sabes, South African Universities, played a Western Clubs side, including two Gloucester players – Ieuan Sheen at full-back and Cyril Thomas at hooker. A 6-6 draw was slugged out in the mud.

The full Springboks team were back in 1960 to face a Western Counties

SOUTH AFRICANS.	GLoucestershire.
BACK—	BACK—
2 A. F. Marsberg	1 A. Wood (Gloucester)
THREE-QUARTERS—	THREE-QUARTERS—
7 J. Le Roux (left wing)	2 A. Hudson (Gloucester)
10 J. G. Hirsch (left centre)	3 W. Hyam (Devon Albion)
3 J. Krige (right centre)	4 M. Neale (Bristol)
6 J. A. Loubser (right wing)	5 C. Smith (Gloucester)
HALF-BACKS—	HALF-BACKS—
11 H. Carolin	6 F. Niblett (Cinderford)
12 F. J. Dobbin	7 J. Stephens (Gloucester)
FORWARDS—	FORWARDS—
16 W. A. Burger	8 J. L. Mathias (Bristol), Capt.
19 H. Daneel	9 T. J. Richards (Bristol)
22 W. C. Martheze	10 J. D. Bedell-Sivright (Cheltenham)
24 W. S. Morkel	11 W. Bale (Bristol)
26 H. Reid	12 J. Watkins (Cinderford)
14 D. Mare	13 G. Matthews (Gloucester)
28 W. Burdett	14 T. Webb (Bristol)
21 D. Brink	15 W. Holder (Gloucester)

*Referee: Mr. F. J. MARSH (South Shields).
Touch Judges: Messrs. P. Le Roux (South Africans), C. E. Brown (Gloucestershire).*

side, for whom their captain, Peter Ford, was the only Gloucester representative. It was not much different to 1906, as South Africa steamrolled their way to ten tries and won 42-0. Everything about the visitors seemed bigger and better, most of all their scrum half, Dick Lockyear, who passed the ball up to 40 feet, and kicked the conversions.

When South Africa toured in 1970 they were not due to play at Kingsholm, but this was the apartheid tour. The police advised that they could not secure the Bournemouth ground against demonstrators for the match against Southern Counties, so it was switched to Castle Grim. It was a real surprise when the match



Demonstrators before the 1970 game

reached half-time with no score, but South Africa applied more power in the second half to win 13-0. The presence of 690 police meant that there were few problems inside the ground, but plenty of demonstrating outside.

In 1982, Gloucester met Moseley in the final of the John Player Cup. The teams were tied at full-time and after extra time, but a replay could not be arranged because Gloucester went straight from Twickenham to Heathrow to fly to South Africa to take part in an international tournament, so the Cup was shared. The high jinks off the field may have affected results on it, with losses 6-60 to Pretoria University, 8-25 to Bangor, and 13-26 to Club of America.

In 1993, Gloucester hosted a visit by the South African Barbarians, who included four internationals, although one was from Zimbabwe and two from Namibia. The only South African international was Tinus Linee, one of the first black players to represent his country. Gloucester squandered far too many scoring chances, so, despite a try by Dave Sims and Paul Holford's fine tackling keeping them in the game, the final score was 11-15.

The 1990s saw South African provinces organising tours to the UK. Kingsholm was a highly favoured venue, and Gloucester were happy to oblige. In 1992, Transvaal led the way, arriving with a fearsome reputation and Francois Pienaar as captain. They scored almost as soon as they ran out, but a very entertaining game saw Gloucester fight back with tries from Simon Morris and Marcus Hannaford as well as a penalty try; Martin Roberts punished Transvaal transgressions with four penalties to round off a 31-11 victory.

Next up, in 1995, were Northern Transvaal, who boasted five internationals, and their big pack dominated an ill-tempered game in wet conditions. Johann Ackermann



Scott Benton

was sent off for a head-butt on Dave Sims, although this particular skill was left behind when he later returned to coach Gloucester. With tries from Pete Glanville and Simon Morris, penalties from Lee Osborne, and controversy and violence a-plenty, the final score was 21-31.

Later that year, Vaal Triangle were the visitors, and arrived unbeaten on their tour. Scott Benton, making his first appearance for the Club, made a break to set up the first try by Don Caskie, and there were further tries by Pete Miles, Ian Smith, Mark Cornwell and Mike Peters, before Benton crowned his debut by

charging down a kick, and winning the race to touch down for a try, thus completing a 34-10 win.

Meanwhile, Gloucester had embarked on another summer tour to South Africa in 1994, captained by Andy Deacon. Lee Osbourne made his debut for the Club in the first game of the tour, a 23-27 loss to Hamiltons. The second game, in which Mark Mapletoft made his first appearance for the Club, was won 38-11 against Milnerton. Tim Smith scored a hat-trick of tries in a 41-7 victory over Belville, and Paul Holford scored two against Stellenbosch University, which rounded the tour off with a 26-9 win.

Kingsholm was the venue for England A against South Africa A in 1996. Rob Fidler and Chris Catling made their debuts at this level. Danny Grewcock so annoyed the opposition that he was stamped on twice, which resulted in two yellow cards in two minutes. Two conversions and two penalties by Mark Mapletoft put England ahead, but three tries in the last ten minutes saw the South Africans win 35-20.

The professional era in rugby has brought a succession of South Africans to Kingsholm to play for Gloucester, and these will be the subject of our article in the next match programme.



Tim Smith and Paul Holford

