

Gloucester Rugby

Gloucester Rugby Official Matchday Magazine | 2005/06 Season | Issue 11 | Price £3.00



GLOUCESTER RUGBY

The Honourable History



Phil Vickery

No looking back

Land Rover Challenge

Gloucester star

Fans zone

Remember Leicester's 32-30 defeat under lights?

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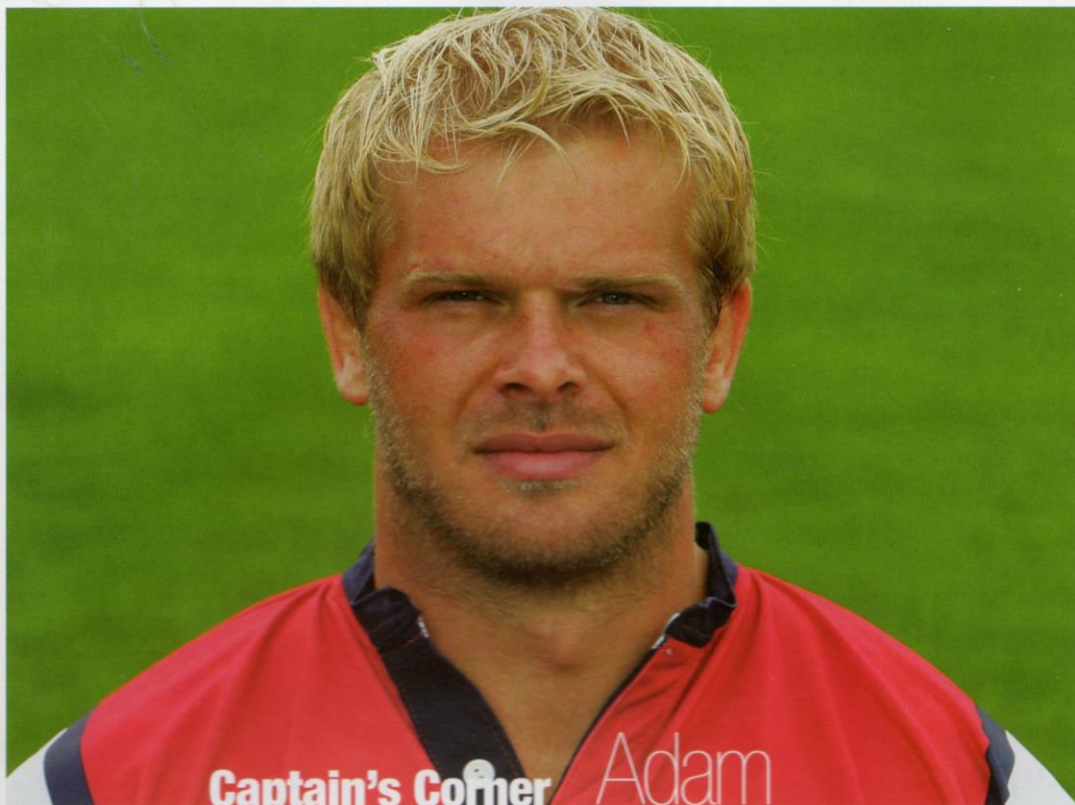


VS **Leicester Tigers**

Friday 10th February | Kick Off 19.45pm



www.guinnesspremiership.com



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dair*

Balding

TONIGHT will be a very special occasion at Kingsholm.

We welcome Leicester Tigers for a Guinness Premiership encounter under the lights which will ensure a very special, tight, atmospheric occasion today.

We have had nearly a fortnight to contemplate, digest and analyse our defeat against London Irish and I can tell you it's been a pretty unpleasant experience for all of us.

It was the first time this current group of players had lost a

game like that here and it hurt – it hurt more than it ever has.

A lot has been made of referee Jonathan Kaplan's performance and although there were elements of his display we were not happy with, we simply didn't react quickly enough to what was in front of us and paid the price.

London Irish did far better in terms of game management and we have to be big enough to admit they deserved to win on the day.

But what it has done is to

tighten the squad together even more. The sheer feeling of anger, emptiness and sense of loss in the dressing room afterwards was not something I want to experience again.

Our task now is to go somehow to putting that feeling behind us. I think if you had asked any of the guys immediately after the Irish game they would have been prepared to play again immediately if there was a chance of changing the result.

It has made tonight's game against Leicester even more important than usual – if that's

possible – and we know it should be one hell of a contest.

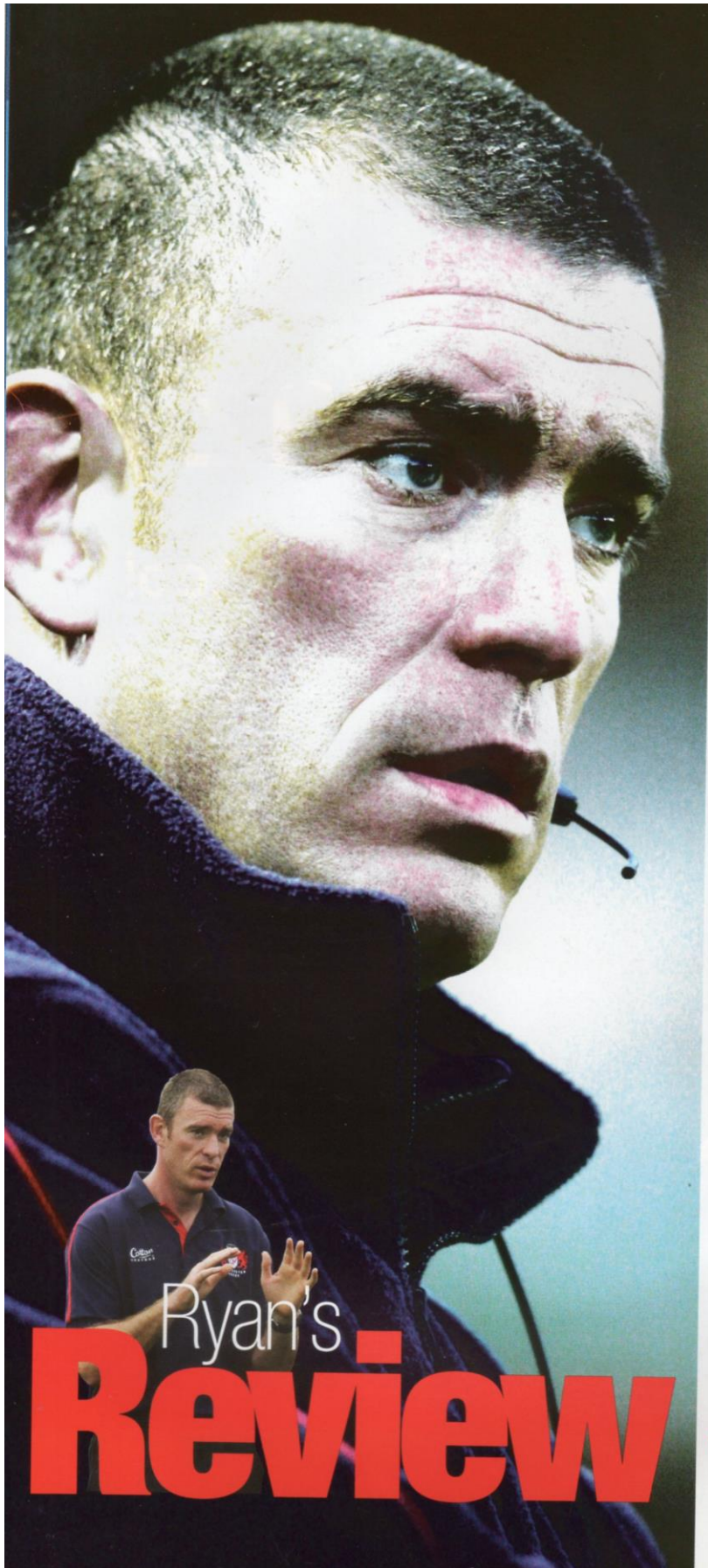
Even without a host of international players, they are still a formidable unit. They are well coached, do the basics brilliantly have pace and power in key areas.

They were unbeaten through January and that included victories over Stade Francais and Clermont Auvergne in the Heineken Cup and a draw with Premiership leaders Sale.

In short, they are still one of the benchmark clubs and we have to get the better of them tonight. We are out to put things right so get right behind the boys and create another fantastic Kingsholm night under lights.

The **Passion**

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Ryan's

Review



The London Irish defeat was the first one at Kingsholm when the full squad has been available, how do you expect to react tonight?

DR: Yeah, the London Irish defeat was the first time we had lost at Kingsholm with everyone available and it hurt, it hurt badly. But I think the important thing is that we looked at why we failed at certain aspects of our game. As a group we felt we let each other down and we were not happy with the way we performed.

I am positive we will see a reaction but we are now at a stage of the season where we change between competitions and personnel also alters but these guys now have an opportunity to put pressure on the rest of the squad and we have to view that as a positive.

Hopefully, we have learned our lessons and can put that right.



The performance of the referee against London Irish was highly scrutinised but where was the Gloucester performance not up to standard?

DR: The major thing to come out of the game was that we contributed massively to the problems we faced. We didn't hit touch regularly enough, we kicked poorly and kept ourselves under pressure. When it came to problem solving we tried to do it from deep and it was not in an area of the field we could control. We have held some pretty frank discussions since then about that because there are not many parts of a game you can control from inside your own half that are not set in stone.

We simply didn't carry out our plans well enough and that allowed London Irish to play the game they wanted and it put us on the back foot.



Did the defeat undo all the good work away at Saracens?

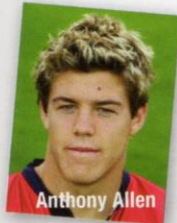
DR: I think any time you lose at

home it requires you to get on the road again and win another match. I don't think it unduly harms our work at Saracens because the nature of the performance, the execution and control was to the standard we set ourselves. It's never nice to lose at home and we have to undo that damage when we are away again.



You will have played both London Irish and Leicester twice during the international period - can that be good for the game?

DR: My opinion is that it is highly unfortunate we have played both of those teams twice during the international release dates. I am

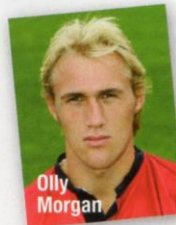


not sure whether my opinion will change anything but Gloucester against Leicester is a massive fixture and I think we sell the supporters

“They have a fantastically deep squad and are used to being without a number of high calibre internationals.”

short when the squads are so badly depleted. We are in a worse situation now compared to the autumn because we don't have players like Anthony Allen and Olly Morgan available.

We saw the autumn as a great opportunity to develop the likes of Anthony and Olly and that is not available because of Under-21 commitments. But we have to cope without these players - pretty much like Leicester have to.



from the Tigers this evening?

DR: We know Leicester will also be without seven or eight players but the difference for them is that they have been able to plan for the disruption for a number of years. They have a fantastically deep squad and are used to being without a number of high calibre internationals which in some ways make the absences easier to handle.

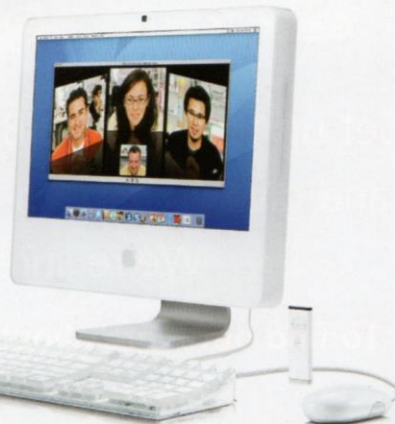
But we know they will be very, very physical, well organised and capable of attacking the set-piece. They are an outstanding side and have done remarkably well in January in the Premiership and the Heineken Cup. I am sure it will be a fantastic occasion.



Leicester are equally disrupted tonight but what do you expect

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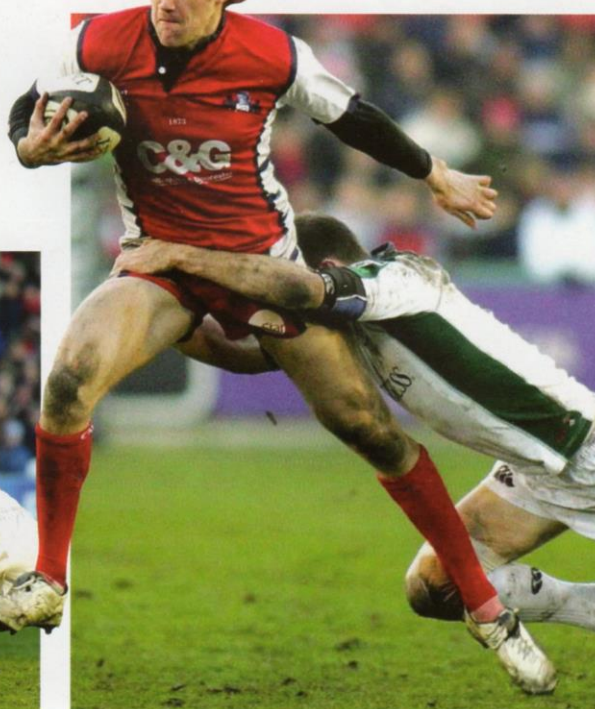
Match Action



Gloucester Rugby 9 London Irish 13

Saturday, January 28
Attendance: 11,709
Referee: Jonathan Kaplan

Pictures by Bruce Seabrook – GPA Images info@gpaimages.com



LONDON IRISH completed a Guinness Premiership double over Gloucester with a tense, narrow victory at Kingsholm.

Despite creating a number of high-quality opportunities, Gloucester could not cancel out Olivier Magne's first-half try to fall to their first defeat in five matches.

All they had to show for their efforts were three Ludovic Mercier penalties and plenty of frustration following the performance of South African referee Jon Kaplan.

It was the over-riding emotion of head coach Dean Ryan, despite the fact his side remain in fourth place in the Premiership.

"There were a lot of things we were unhappy about on the pitch," Ryan said.

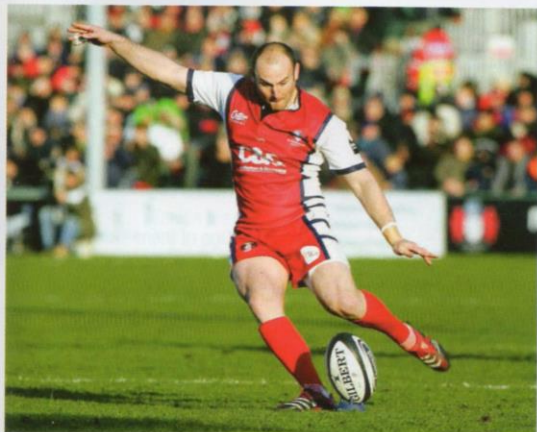
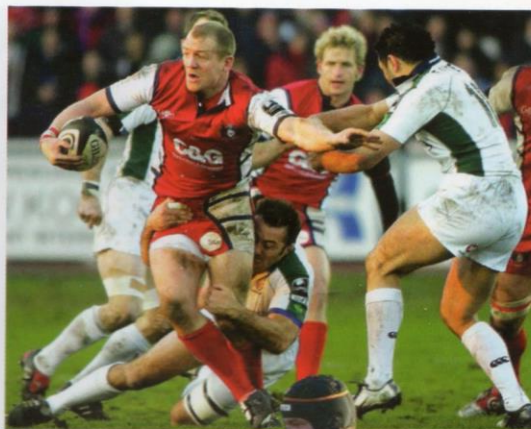
"Jonathan Kaplan is a world class referee and I've endorsed those guys being here. But it's unfair for him and for us to come in as one-offs on warm-ups for internationals.

"The Premiership is unique, as is the Super 14 and

international rugby. Although the same laws apply to all of them, it would be naïve to say they're interpreted the same around the world.

"We were unhappy with the priority he puts on things that we're not used to.

"And for us to get hit for one day is not fair for the game, the spectators or the referee.



"We don't have international quality referees in abundance in the Premiership and therefore the idea of extending that is a huge boost.

"But please bring them for six or seven weeks, please give everybody a go with them and don't put them into a tournament for one week and out again. That doesn't do anyone any favours." However, Ryan did not lay the

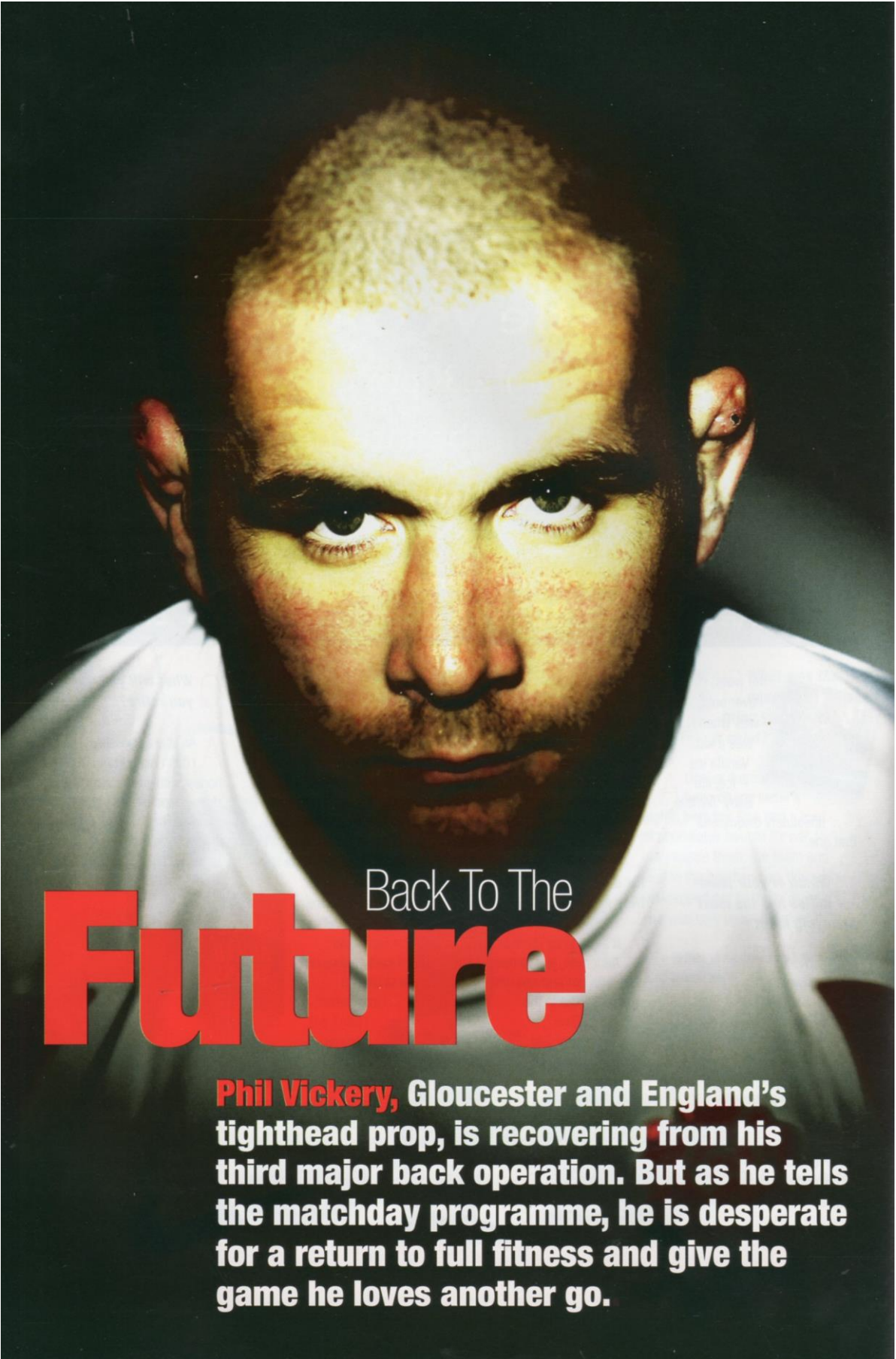
blame for his side's defeat entirely at Kaplan's door.

In an error-strewn match, London Irish adapted well and played a cute game that caused Gloucester problems. They notched up their first league win at Kingsholm in 12 seasons by restricting the home side to sporadic breaks and forcing them to counter-attack from deep

"We were out-thought in terms of field position," Ryan added. "The Irish half-backs were very smart and kept their pack in the right areas of the field which we couldn't do."

Magne scored the game's only try in the first half, with Riki Flutey slotting the conversion and two penalties. Mercier's three penalties secured a losing bonus point for Gloucester.

The **History**



Back To The
Future

Phil Vickery, Gloucester and England's tighthead prop, is recovering from his third major back operation. But as he tells the matchday programme, he is desperate for a return to full fitness and give the game he loves another go.



IF YOU HAVE never been down among the hacking boots, contorted and claustrophobic in the crushing weight per square inch of a scrum or had bones smashed by a forearm or flying knee, it is impossible to understand the world in which Phil Vickery spends his working life.

Vickery is proud of where he comes from and proud of what he has achieved in a sport that has stretched the bounds of his personal endurance and pain barrier to the utter limit.

A fortnight ago tomorrow he had his third back operation on his L5-S1 (fifth disc) and as the doom mongers predicted a grim future and a fight to save his career, Vickery began his rehabilitation this week – in his words ‘starting from scratch all over again’ – with a series of basic exercises at Gloucester’s Hartpurp College training base.

He has never been anything but positive – his outlook hardened after years of punishment,

“Proud of what he has achieved in a sport that has stretched the bounds of his personal endurance to the utter limit.”

countless operations and plenty of set-backs. If there is a mentally tougher athlete in the many streets of the Guinness Premiership, he will be a very special creature indeed because Vickery has been through more than most and then some.

For a farmer’s boy from Cornwall, Vickery is Gloucester through and through. He plays rugby to find a channel for his aggression and anger and before his latest injury, was in fierce form.

When he was not dishing out all manner of discomfort in the scrum, he was a menacing ball carrier and a damaging defender and Gloucester are sure to miss his unique brand of forcefulness from now until the end of the season.

“I am positive about recovering, very positive,” he told the matchday programme. “Mr Nelson [the specialist who carried out the surgery] said he couldn’t see any reason why at this stage I couldn’t get back and that was a huge boost.

“It was obviously the third time he had been into my back in roughly the same area but he said it wouldn’t have mattered if I had been a normal bloke in the street – I needed this operation regardless of whether I wanted to play rugby again or not.

“The damage is remarkably small and that can only help the problem. I am starting from scratch all over again. It is surprising how weak the left side of my back has already become and I know if I don’t

The **History**

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“I love rugby and I cannot help that – I am looking forward now, that’s all I can do.”

get the foundations right from the start, it will just crumble.

“But I am not thinking about that. It’s a day by day process at the moment but I am confident.”

The pain was so bad on this occasion that his doctor ended up prescribing morphine. He was expected to take 5 millilitres every two hours but ended up taking 20 – and sometimes that was not enough to ease his condition.

There were times when it was difficult to stand-up, almost impossible to sit down and hard to lie down. It is not easy to imagine an individual with Vickery’s pain threshold so thoroughly at his wits end because of the discomfort. It’s a sobering thought.

He couldn’t lift his daughter, Megan, because of the pain but he went on: “Rugby is my passion, I have dedicated my life to it.

“I love it and I cannot help it. I

love being part of Gloucester and everything it has to offer and I couldn’t bear to lose it. But we need to see how things are three or four months post op. Everything is going so well and is right on course I have no reason to even suspect things won’t be okay at the moment. “There are wonderful things in this game I still want to achieve and be a part of and my desire to do them has not been dimmed.”

This week he was a guest on Radio Five Live and during a 20-minute interview, received 100s of texts and emails wishing him well from all over the country. It had a profound effect on him, highlighting the kinship experience in rugby.

“To have so many people wishing me well – from Northampton to London – was a fantastic feeling and if I am close to people’s affections, that is really nice,” Vickery added. “That is the spirit rugby creates. I like to think I have not upset too many people

along the way but I have always been my own bloke and always will be.”

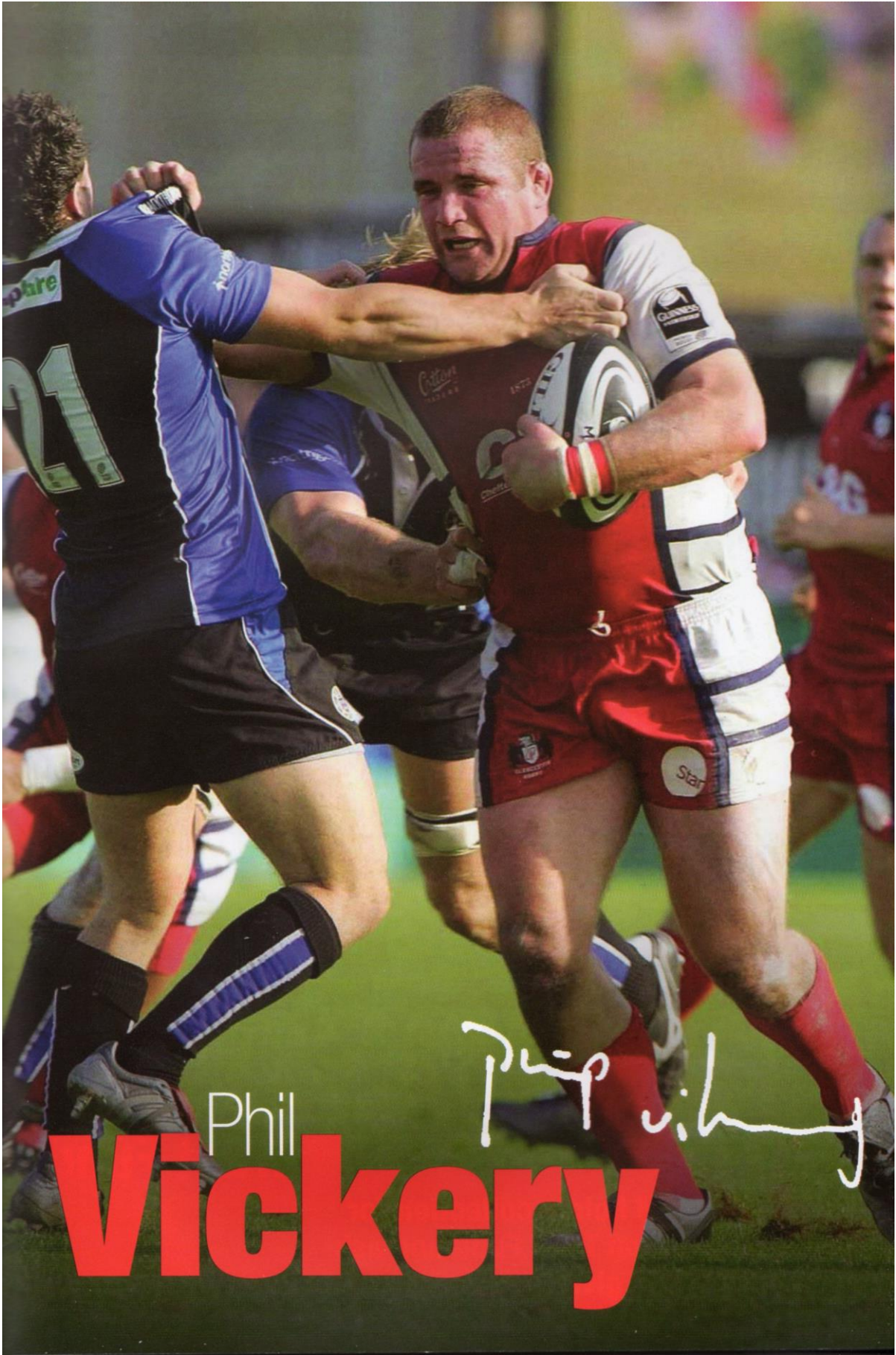
While his rehabilitation process continues, including regular walks with his dog Boris, Vickery is heavily involved in his Testimonial year following 10 years’ service to Gloucester.

He made his debut a horrible dismemberment against Harlequins in 1996 but has gone on to win the World Cup and ensure his place among England’s greats is secured.

“I have a really good team behind me for the Testimonial because it’s not until you start one you realise just how much work it takes.

“Everybody will have their opinions about it but I want to get a huge cross section of people involved who love the game of rugby.

“I have got great support round me from my family and that is the most important thing to me. I love rugby and I cannot help that – I am looking forward now, that’s all I can do.”



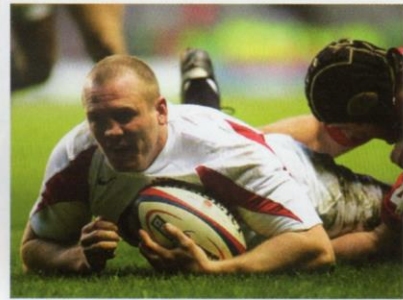
Phil
Vickery

Phil Vickery



Peter Arnold delves right behind the headlines of all the latest news at Kingsholm and believes Mike Tindall did everything that was required against Wales last weekend.

Peter Arnold



NO NEED TO PANIC

SHOCK! HORROR! Gloucester to move from Kingsholm to a new super-doooper stadium on the triangle land behind Gloucester railway station!

That's what you would have been led to believe if you had

been content to receive your information from newspaper headlines. However, a more critical reading of the entire article reveals that the facts of the matter aren't quite like that. As I understand it, the situation is as follows.

The 'railway triangle' has been a derelict eyesore in the centre of the city for decades, as anyone who stands on the station platform and looks towards the hospital can readily see. It's past time that something was done about it.

There have been various solutions to the problem suggested over the years, and we now have another proposal that seems to have a bit more substance to it than some I've seen. A major element in that proposal is the idea of providing a major state-of-the-art sports facility, and surely none of us will object to that.

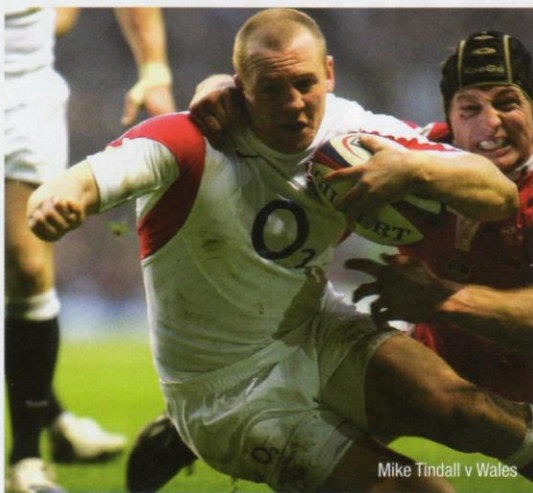
At the moment, none of this

seems to be much more than think-tank stuff, but I for one, hope that flesh will be put on the bones without too much delay.

I gathered, from the newspaper article, that the spokesman who presented the proposal was airing possibilities, and that's about all. He remarked that the new complex could become a home for Gloucester Rugby. Or for Gloucester City Football Club. Or both. Or perhaps a college-based facility for youth sport.

Naturally enough, the paper sought the club's views on the matter. Not unreasonably, Ken Nottage inferred that, if such a proposal were to become a reality, then the club would have to consider it seriously. However, he also stated that Gloucester's policy is to stay at Kingsholm and redevelop as necessary and desirable.

All this seems very reasonable



Mike Tindall v Wales

gloucester rugby.co.uk

The Honour

to me. I would be as sorry as anyone if Gloucester were to desert Castle Grim, but one does have to look at the reality of the situation. A thoroughly modern ground, close to the city centre with good access to both rail and major road links would obviously be a proposition difficult to resist, but I'm not holding my breath. This would be a major undertaking for the city, and won't happen overnight.

Remember how long it took to get the Docks development off the ground? You can think of other operations which have been rumbling on for yonks. It will probably all come down to money in the end, and the development value of Kingsholm could well become a factor, and that opens another bag of worms, with things like 'change of use' and vehicle access coming into the equation.

We shall all watch events with interest, but I don't think the landlords of the Kingsholm Road pubs need be worrying just yet.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

MY FAVOURITE passage during the England versus Wales didn't take place on the field at all.

It was listening to Jeremy Guscott wriggling and trying, with marked lack of success, to justify the way he rubbished the selection of Mike Tindall and Jamie Noon as England's centre pairing in the days leading up to the match.

Personally, I thought they both justified Andy Robinson's selection.

We always expected them to be a strong, powerful combination, but they also showed a degree

of penetration which we hadn't seen from them before. Noon made a couple of dangerous breaks and looked a dangerous handful with ball in hand, although he is certainly no James Simpson-Daniel.

I thought that our own Mike Tindall had the best game I've seen from him since he came to Kingsholm. You can discount his try: after all, he didn't have to do much more than fall over, and it was a question of being in the right place at the right time, but then, he'd been doing that all game. His mini-break and pass which put Cueto away for his try was a gem, I was also impressed by his kicking, which generally speaking, showed considerable vision and not a little skill in execution. It is obviously a great advantage to have a centre behind your outside-half who can belt a ball that far when the occasion arises.

The Welsh midfield seemed to me to be decidedly wary whenever Mike got the ball, and with good reason.

There is obviously a long way to go before the Tindall-Noon combination reaches its full potential, but the signs are good so far. It will be fascinating to see how the pairing fares in the sterner tests to come over the next few weeks.

USUAL SUSPECTS

NO DOUBT there will be those who disagree with me about Mike's performance at Twickenham, and that's their prerogative. I expect the usual suspects will be among their number. You know who I mean: the chaps who write to the press screaming "Sack the coach" whenever Gloucester loses a game, or demands that a player is consigned to the outer darkness whenever he knocks a ball on or misses a touch kick.

"I thought that our own Mike Tindall had the best game I've seen from him since he came to Kingsholm."

Nobody's perfect including players and coaches, but you don't do your team any good by persistently telling them they're no-hopers, as the Scottish players were saying after their stunning win over France last Sunday.

We've always had them at Kingsholm. The sort of bloke who takes it as an article of faith that his team is rubbish and insists after a 50-point win that it should have been 100.

I, for one, wouldn't be without them.

FULL HOUSE

THAT WAS a clean sweep over the weekend. Mike Tindall's try against Wales followed James Forrester's score for the England 'A' side, and Olly Morgan's for the U21's. Pretty good full house. And we still have a pair of Jacks – Adams and Forster – to play.

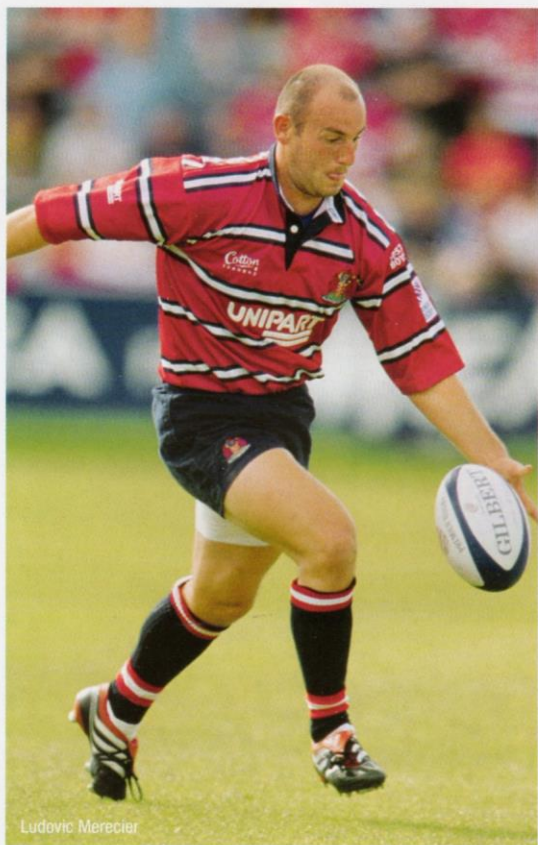


The History

Behind The Scenes

There is often a tale to tell behind every Gloucester debut as **Dave King** delves into the Kingsholm vaults for another fascinating look Behind the Scenes.

AS FAR AS debuts are concerned in rugby union, they can often be non-eventful and fruitless affairs as far as points-scoring is concerned.



Ludovic Mercier

Here at Gloucester Rugby we have 44 professional players on the staff. Only one has not featured at senior level, Ryan Lamb. But it should be only a matter of time before he is able to make that quantum leap.

If we divide up the 41 players who have played at first team level we find that the following made a full appearance on their debuts.

Anthony Allen, Adam Balding, Jake Boer, Alex Brown, Patrice Collazo, Mark Cornwell, Quinton Davids, Bradley Davies, Mefin Davies, Adam Eustace, Terry Fanolua, James Forrester, Mark Foster, Jon Goodridge, Ludovic Mercier, James Merriman, Duncan McRae, Luke Narraway, James Parkes, Henry Paul, Gary Powell, Peter Richards, Terry Sigley, Rob Thirlby, Mike Tindall and Phil Vickery – a total of 26.

Those who have come on as a replacement to make their first team debuts are: - Jack Adams, Simon Amor, Olivier Azam, James Bailey, Peter Buxton, Rob Elloway, Marcel Garvey, Andy Hazell, Will Matthews, Olly Morgan, James Pendlebury James Simpson-Daniel, Haydn Thomas, Jack Forster, Nick Wood and Rudi Keil

- a total of 16.

Amazingly, four of those debuts came in a drawn match, with Richards, Thirlby, Thomas and Tindall all featuring in the opening day fixture at Worcester on 4th September 2005.

Of the 42 players to have made their debut for the 1st XV, 21 have been in a winning team while 17 have been in a losing team. As previously stated, four players have encountered a draw on their debut.

Obviously the players who are the club's nominated place kickers have the advantage of not only recording points on their debut but also considerably adding to the initial points. In this respect both Henry Paul and Ludovic Mercier have both recorded double figures on their debuts for the club at senior level.

Paul scored 28 points on his debut in a European Shield fixture against Caerphilly on 27th October 2001. An attendance of 7,336 witnessed the former Bradford Bulls star score a try and kick 10 conversions as well as landing a solitary penalty.

Mercier scored 17 points on his debut on 1st September 2001 at Kingsholm against Northampton in a 22-9 victory in the first fixture of that Zurich League season of 2001-2002. All of his points came from his kicking prowess, five penalties and the conversion of Junior Paramore's try.

There have been three other players in the current Kingsholm squad who have matched Paul's feat of scoring a try on his debut for the club. They are James Forrester, Jack Forster and Marcel Garvey.

James's try came in a 35-10 defeat at the Majdeski Stadium, Reading versus London Irish on 16th April 2001, in the final League Zurich League match of the 2001-2002 season. Jack scored his try in this season's rout of Toulon in European action.

Garvey made his debut versus Leeds at Kingsholm on 1st December 2001 in a 58-17 victory. This emphatic victory saw Marcel score one of eight tries on that winter afternoon. There were no fewer than seven players who recorded tries against the Yorkshire club. An attendance of 7,516 wallowed in the pre-Christmas festivity!

Both Mark Cornwell and Phil Vickery made their first team debuts in what could be termed as a more amateur era with Mark first appearing against Cheltenham on 3rd November in 1992 at the Prince of Wales Stadium.

Phil made his league debut Harlequins at The Stoop on 31st August 1996 in that heavily criticised 75-19 defeat. This was when Richard Hill was Head Coach and adopted



Henry Paul

“Both Henry Paul and Ludovic Mercier have both recorded double figures on their debuts for the club at senior level.”

a non priority attitude to certain fixtures.

Hill, not to be deterred is still adamant with this view with regard to some of Bristol's fixtures this season. Only recently he spurned the opportunity to field a full strength team against Narbonne in the European Challenge Cup at the Memorial Stadium and clinch a quarter-final place, instead choosing to concentrate on League status.

Of course, no player has partaken in such a high scoring match as Paul did on his debut. Not even the overwhelming defeat of Bucearesti in late October in the European Challenge could match it.

Incidentally, although this was a club record 106-3 victory,

this was only the fifth highest recorded in the history of the competition. However, this scoreline did surpass the largest win in the club's history when Gloucester United XV defeated visiting Hereford in the 1973-1974 season by 103 points to three.

Digressing from club debuts, despite the fact that Paul collected his points from a try, conversions and a penalty, versus Caerphilly just consider what a feat Percy Stout achieved in 1898.

Percy completed the full hand versus Weston by scoring 4 tries, 5 conversions, 2 penalties and a dropped goal, an amazing achievement!

Returning to the club debuts by the current squad of players,

22 of the players have partaken in a winning debut, while 16 have experienced a loss. The four who played on the opening day of the season at Worcester encountered that rare score line – a draw.

Cornwell is the oldest of the club debutants at first team level in 1992 while Rudi Keil, with his second half appearance in the recent match with London Irish became the club's most recent debutant preceding Jonathan Pendlebury and Jack Forster.

The club that has featured the most in the opposition ranks for debutants is London Irish, where six players have met the men in green for their first encounter at senior level, namely, Rob Elloway, James Forrester, Jon Goodridge,

James Merriman, Nick Wood and Rudi Keil.

Three players have made their debuts on foreign soil. Terry Fanolua at Stade Andre Moga versus Begles Bordeaux in 1997, with both Quinton Davids and Pendlebury making theirs at Stade Jean Dauger last October versus Bayonne and Jack Forster in our 66-5 victory over Toulon on 17th December in our European Challenge campaign became the most recent.

Seventeen players have made their first team debuts at Kingsholm out of the 44

currently on the playing staff. While 26 players have made their debuts in away matches.

So, from Kingsholm you would have to have travelled to the Memorial Ground, Vicarage Road, Headingly, Kingston Park, Prince of Wales Stadium, Stade Jean Dauger, Causeway, Goldington Road, Stade Andre Moga, Madejski Stadium, The Stoop, Edgeley Park and Sixways to have witnessed each debut.

At International level no fewer than seven players from Gloucester have registered points on their debut for England.

Pride of place goes to Arthur Hudson as the only player to have scored a try. Arthur did so versus Wales at Richmond on 13th January 1906 in a 16-3 defeat.

The most points recorded by a Gloucester player were by Graham Parker who kicked six conversions and a penalty at Lansdowne Road, Dublin in a 36-14 victory on 12th February 1938. The other players with this coveted achievement are Harold Boughton who kicked an equalising penalty on 19th January 1935 versus Wales at Twickenham and William Hook who kicked a conversion versus Scotland at Twickenham on 17th March 1951 in a 5-3 victory.

Don Rutherford appeared for England prior to joining the club but in his first appearance for England as a Gloucester player he kicked England's solitary penalty in a 14 points three defeat on 16th January 1963 at Cardiff Arms Park.

Peter Butler made his debut at Sydney Cricket Ground versus Australia on 24th May 1975. He kicked a penalty and added a conversion in a 16-9 defeat. Joining Peter in making his debut outside Great Britain was Mark Mapletoft who kicked a penalty versus Argentina at Ferro Caril Oeste Stadium, Buenos Aires on 7th June 1997 in a 33-19 defeat.

Mark recently signed for Hertford in National Three South and landed eight out of nine kicks in a 45 points to 37 points victory against Paul Johnstone's Ding Crusaders!

There is often a story to tell behind a player's debut.....

“Seventeen players have made their first team debuts at Kingsholm out of the 44 currently on the playing staff.”



Marcel Garvey, a try scoring debut

Bob Fenton recalls a famous night in the Shed many moons ago when Gloucester got the better of Leicester's famous all-stars and hopes for a similar night of celebration today – without the tension.

Fan Zone



Simon Devereux

OVER THE last week or so there has been a stream of messages talking about the last really exciting match that has taken place at Kingsholm. The basic thrust of the messages suggested that some of the more recent matches have not been all that exciting.

When I last looked at it, the topic had shifted slightly to the most exciting matches people could remember. Lots of 'votes' for the infamous win over Llanelli

a few seasons ago when Elton Moncrieff produced the flukiest drop-goal in the history of rugby union – winning the game with a kick that was heading for the corner flag before it went over via a defenders back.

From this season the last gasp wins over Sale and

Hill was not long into the job and some new faces were appearing from all over the place to mix with the local lads who made up most of the side back then.

The team that took the field that day – Lumsden, Anderson, Roberts, Emmerson, Peters, Benton

“The visitors that night were Leicester Tigers, it was their second visit to Kingsholm in a matter of days.”

Northampton were right up there, but for me the most memorable match took place on the evening of 8th April, 1997. The visitors that night were Leicester Tigers, it was their second visit to Kingsholm in a matter of days, having dumped us out of the cup the weekend before.

Just as it will be tonight, Castle Grim was packed to the rafters, you could hardly breathe, let alone move, in the Shed – the noise was immense. And there's something about night games at Gloucester, the place seems more intense and more closed in than on a normal Saturday afternoon fixture. Everyone just seems more 'up for it' – on and off the field.

We were not going through the best of spells, Richard

and Mapletoft in the backs. Deacon, Greening, Windo, Sims, Fidler, Carter, Stanley and Devereux up front.

They couldn't have known it when they ran out, but by the end of the evening they were going to be forever ingrained in the folklore of Gloucester Rugby Club. (I wonder where they are now – some Fids, Reg, Deacs, Phil G and Sims are all still around the game in one way or another, and the last time I saw Simon Devereux was in Debenham's but the others - no idea.)

The result – a 32–30 home win – shows how close the game was, but it doesn't go anywhere near telling the story of the match. I'm not going to go through a blow by blow account – it's probably

elsewhere in this magazine anyway – but the last few moments of that game...

Trailing by five points with seconds left on the clock, a try in the corner of the old Worcester Street Stand and Shed by Greening to tie the scores, Mark Mapletoft placing the ball for the conversion from almost on the touchline... Seconds later the ball was between the uprights and the win was secure.

Tofty later claimed that the kick was taken from inside the shed, but you know these half-backs... always exaggerating everything.

The cheering and celebrations could have been heard all over the City – you would have thought we'd won the league, not just one match. The final whistle saw the crowd spill onto the pitch from all corners, and the Gloucester boys mobbed for hours. Check out the pictures from that night, they are still around the bars today.

The next morning, minus any kind of voice, happy shedheads made their way to work still buzzing. Those passing the Dean's Walk couldn't have helped but notice the number of players cars – they had little red Peugeot 306s with their names on the side so you couldn't miss them – were still around the place showing the celebrations were not confined to the fans:

Richard Hill later confessed that he didn't make it home that night; instead he kipped out in his office. Happy days – and the special commemorative mug we



“Tofty later claimed that the kick was taken from inside the shed, but you know these half-backs... always exaggerating everything.”

made to celebrate the occasion still has pride of place on a shelf at home.

We could do with a large dollop of that spirit tonight – a game like that will do much to wipe away the disappointing memories of our last home game.

Leicester will be a very different side than the one we faced up there earlier in the season as many of their squad will be away on international duties. We'll have one or two players missing so it becomes a bit harder to predict how things will turn out. We do know though, that any Leicester squad will be a fearsome outfit no doubt buoyed up by some more huge players from the Tuilagi production line that

must be hidden in the depths under Welford Road.

I still firmly believe that this part of the season gives an unfair advantage to certain teams as they are not affected by international call ups, and there has to be an argument for not playing Premiership games at this time.

It would never happen in Football and with Rugby Union supposedly being a professional sport it's high time the administrators started acting in a more professional way. It didn't matter so much in the old amateur days but with so much riding on every game and the financial Holy Grail of Heineken Cup positions, clubs are being forced to recruit more and more

overseas players just to make sure that they have a decent squad to select from.

Not fair on the clubs, and not good for the long-term future of the game in England either. But what do I know, I am just a paying fan like you – I just have a soapbox to whinge from about the injustices of it all!

But enough about things I can't change – lets look forward to tonight's game and hopefully a result achieved in the same style to the famous victory eight years ago.

If we can do it without the nerve-shredding tension of the last few minutes that would be great... At my age I'm not sure my heart could cope with it now!

