GLOUCESTER V BEDFORD RUGBY

Saturday 6 May 2000
Kick-off 3.00pm

Inside Today...
Match Action
...from the Wasps and Newcastle

Gloucester
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Gloucester RFC Official Programme 1999-2000 Season
Welcome from
The Editors

So, here we are at the end of another season at Kingsholm. Just one more match – a visit to London Irish at The Stoop (a combination that will take more than a few pints of Ireland’s Best to get used to!).

We are given to believe that Gloucester have set a new record – and this one is nothing to do with players (well, we hope not). It concerns the Gloucester supporters.

You see, when we visited the Stoop back last February, more Guinness was consumed than at any other match at the ground!

Paddy, the London Irish press officer, is determined that the record will be broken on the last day of the season. We’ll drink to that!

Those of you who were here for the game against Wasps might be interested to know that £1,050.98 was raised for the St John Ambulance in their traditional annual collection.

Eric John has asked us to pass on a big “thank you” to our supporters from St John Ambulance who, as you know, provide medical help for spectators during matches.

The club shop has a number of “special end of season” offers. Unfortunately, we have been unable to reflect the reduced prices on items in the merchandise supplement in the centre of this programme.

But if you care to pop into the club shop, Rachel Creed says that you could well have a big surprise.

Finally, it is with regret that we report the recent death of Rex Whitehead, a supporter of many years standing. Our sincere condolences are extended to Rex’s family.

Both Philippe and Kingsley have ended their contributions today by using their native tongues. All we can say is: “Have a good summer and see you back at Kingsholm next season”.

A Warm Welcome

Gloucester RFC participate in the Allied Dunbar Premiership Media Facilities Cash Match Scheme
The last match of the Kingsholm season was always a special event. It was a very lighthearted occasion, often tinged with a little nostalgia, because no one really wanted the season to end – and that included the players.

The affair was usually a happy little run around played in brilliant sunshine, as when a half-strength Gloucester side put 17 tries on Exeter. Unfortunately, the selectors, in their wisdom, had neglected to include a kicker, and only one of those tries was converted – by Richard Mogg this time! The Captain, who was Keith Richardson, ended up by handing the ball to the referee and suggesting that he had a go.

However, this is one of those occasions when nostalgia really isn’t what is used to be. There is no such thing, nowadays, as a lighthearted match, and during April, at any rate, we’ve had precious little sunshine. I suppose it might have been worse. Did you see those TV pictures of Murrayfield under three feet of water the other week? Serves them right for staging a rugby league match. Still, we’ve got quite a lot to look back on. To call this season ‘interesting’ would be like saying that David Campese was a bit of a winger. Supporting Gloucester has always been a bit of an emotional roller-coaster, but the highs and lows we’ve had to endure this season have been a bit extreme even by Kingsholm standards. To be bookending on the Olympian heights of the top of the Premiership table, only to watch helplessly as Gloucester lost two Kingsholm games in a row does tend to be stress inducing. But it’s worth remembering that at around this stage last year we were worrying about avoiding the play-off zone. This time round, at the time of writing, we’re sweating on a European Cup spot, so there’s a lot to be satisifed about.

Anyway, we don’t have very long to wait before hostilities are resumed. If the report leaked to the local press turns out to be accurate, we’ll be watching rugby while the cricketers still have two Test Matches to look forward to. Hardly worth going home, really.

Finally, when future researchers investigate England at the turn of the new Millennium, they’ll find that, as the fireworks were exploding all over the world, Gloucester was the top club in England. And no one is ever going to be able to take that away from us.

**SHEER ENJOYMENT**

At this point in the season it’s nice to consider which players we have most enjoyed watching over the past seven months or so. That’s not the same as specifying a ‘Player of the Year’; that accolade, in my view, should go to the Skipper, Kingsley Jones. He’s still a comparative newcomer to the Kingsholm scene, but his work rate, his dedication, and his ability to get just that little extra out of the players around him have been a revelation, even to people miles away from Gloucester.

As an old bluffer myself, I’ve certainly enjoyed watching him play, but then, I could say that about a whole handful of players. Especially Steve Ojomoh. One of my favourite moments of the season came when the Wasp’s hooker, Trevor Leota, having received a lot of TV attention over the previous few weeks, tried his impression of a rabid, blonder-rimmed warthog, and attempted to trample right through the middle of everybody. Unfortunately for him, he happened to come across Steve Ojomoh on the way, and rapidly discovered that he was not, after all, the toughest kid on the block. The look on his face as the back of his neck hit the floor was a sight to behold. Steve has made an impact this season, in every sense of the word, and he’d certainly be on my list of ‘most enjoyed’ players.

Another, for purely personal, I—I told you — no reasons is Simon Mannix. For most of last season he was suffering from comparison with Mark Mapletoft, and as he would probably readily admit, wasn’t really playing very well. Many supporters were writing him off, and I seemed to be constantly saying to people, “Wait a minute. We’ve seen him before, in his Sale days. He’s a better player than this. Everyone has an off season...”

I’m sure you’ll agree that he’s justified my faith this year. All the physical fitness, clinical, inventive, and usually reliable with the boot (even if he did miss that conversion at Newcastle last week) he seems to have been at the heart of everything. Others I have particularly enjoyed have included Ian Jones, for his sheer knowledge and professionalism, Trevor Woodman, who has been improving steadily with each match, it seems and Chris Gatting who has been a handfulwhether he plays at full-back or on the wing. You’ll have your own list of players you’ve most enjoyed watching, and good luck to you. It will give you something to think about while you get out your cricket kit, your hockey boot and spade, or whatever else you use to while away the time between rugby matches.

Summer well! And — would you believe — that’s the 20th time I’ve written that in these pages.

See you next season.
After two disappointing home defeats against Northampton and Bath, we came back with a win against Wasps in a great performance.

We really enjoyed that win two weeks ago and we felt that we had made up for some of the disappointment felt by the supporters.

Then we go to Newcastle and let everyone down ourselves and the supporters, especially all those who made the long journey to the North East.

There are no excuses. We simply didn’t play well. We have to be more ruthless when you are in the top three of the Premiership.

Believe me, it was a bad day. And all the players know it. We know just how important today’s match against Bedford is in terms of both regaining our pride and of reaching our target.

If anything positive is to come out about our defeat at Newcastle last weekend is it that it has given us a real kick up the backside and made us realise that we have to keep our feet firmly on the floor.

It has also brought home the fact that any team in the Premiership is capable of a win on the day.

The bottom line is that you cannot afford to play at 70 per cent of your potential and expect to come away with a win, particularly away from home.

This has been brought home to us on a couple of occasions. Previously, we have tended to put things right in the second half, but last weekend against Newcastle we failed to make the adjustment.

We have to learn to be more ruthless in the first 25 minutes of games, especially against sides who are lower down the table and are struggling on confidence.

It is a little early for me to speak on the season and we still don’t know our destiny! Hopefully we will be playing in the Heineken Cup – that was the target we set at the beginning of the season.

I am still confident that we can achieve our aim.

Diosch ym wawr iawn, ac mwynhau ym wreiddiol! 
Bedford arrive at Kingsholm with a former Gloucester favourite in their squad – and if Dave Sims features in the team today, as he has in Bedford’s last couple of outings, I’m sure there’ll be genuine warmth in his welcome.

He may have left the club under a little cloud, and under-performing to be fair, but there can be no question about his massive contribution to this club.

A Gloucester win can’t be seen as a foregone conclusion, given the couple of wobbly results of late, but surely a side with just one win from twenty games which has conceded almost seven hundred points can be no match for Gloucester this afternoon. The three points would virtually seal entry into the European Cup, and for the achievement of reaching his pre-season goal, much credit should be given to Philippe and his players. The heady days of topping the table shouldn’t be allowed to obscure a season of solid performances and glitches which, I’m sure, the canny Frenchman has learnt from and will iron out during the summer.

Yet even in looking forward to next season, I can’t rid myself of a sense of fore-boding that this great sport still doesn’t know where it’s going or who’s leading it! At the end of this season, there’ll be a sense of déjà vu in the Premiership play-off, as today’s visitors go head-to-head with Rotherham. Last season, as you’ll no doubt remember, Rotherham had to settle for the play off, despite finishing at the top of the table with the same points as Bristol. Then despite scoring and conceding the same amount of points over the two legs, it was Bedford who clung onto their Premiership status.

This season, the big clubs decided it wouldn’t be fair to have automatic promotion because the World Cup might throw up some freak results with weakened sides and, Heaven forbid, some of the bigger boys might have been battling relegation.

But where’s the fairness for a club a club which has once again topped the next division, scoring over a thousand points whilst conceding fewer than two hundred and fifty, having to play off against a side who have sadly so far proved the top division’s whipping boys?

We’re told we’ll prefer a British competition to a Tetley’s Bitter Cup; that we’ll prefer a season run the Rob Andrew way; that we’ll flock to watch the growing sport of rugby. But has anyone actually asked the supporters what they want?

I still catch my trousers on the same nail which has stuck up through the seat since it was nailed into position because the “tip-up” broke eight years ago. I still go through the same “Wild West saloon”-style gates to the toilets as on my first visit to Kingsholm.

It’s now eight years since I did a series of interviews about the future vision for Kingsholm which even got to the point of what kind of equipment would be needed to go into a new state of the art commentary box.

Let’s celebrate some terrific work by the players and coaches, this season and cross our fingers that by the start of next, those with the power to shape this game are pulling in the same direction and not pulling it apart.

Graham Day is a former “voice of Gloucester Rugby”. He provided the commentary for BBC Radio Gloucestershire for many years and remains a fervent supporter. Graham has moved from the sports department and is now a “broadcast journalist”. He still manages to keep his hand in at rugby commentary at least once a season.
Biting My Fingernails

It is obviously "end of season" time again, as my fingernails are bitten back further than the kids'. I do ask myself why because Gloucester are at the right end of the table and not fighting relegation like the recent few years?

I and many of my companions are a fickle bunch, seemingly never happier than when we have something to grumble about. Is our glass half full or half empty? With that reference to an earlier article here we go with a review of the last year (well, it is the last home match).

Things I have enjoyed this season. Winning away from home, beating Bath in the cup, "Jones the Tall" ascending through the atmosphere to catch a penalty attempt at Sale, the Northampton crowd, being top of the league (if only occasionally). Tai Glaister and Iowen Djondi "calming down the opposition", the GRSA referees evening and debate on "The Future of English Rugby" and feeling privileged to see a person named Serge.

Things I did not enjoy this season. Losing home matches, losing in the cup, cynicism in playing the game, not knowing the format for next season, not knowing the format for rugby as a game, feeling that the administrators have forgotten that supporters are now "customers" and a frustration that few people recognise supporters as a major sponsor of rugby.

As an individual, I can do nothing about my frustrations with the game, joining GRSA has allowed me a wider voice to the club, which is just starting to blossom (Spain trip, Bedford away, free coaches to London Irish away...); it does not allow a voice on the wider issues. Until now.

You dear reader, will be among the privileged few to know that tomorrow (Sunday 7 May 2000) GRSA will join all other Premier 1 & 2 Supporters Associations to meet with a view of forming a National Supporters Association.

This has been instigated by GRSA (credit to John for his sterling work), so whereas the old game found its roots in Rugby, has the modern game found its true roots? Gloucester?

Have a good summer break Everyone!!

GRSA: We're there for you.
The Gloucester Rugby Supporters Association (GRSA) was formed to provide a focal point for all Supporters with the club on important issues - by arranging events, increasing our knowledge and understanding of the game and giving all supporters a voice.

An Independent Voice, Run by Supporters - For Supporters.
In the Press conference following the Wasps match two weeks ago, Simon Mannix was asked by Steve Bale of the Express what, from the players' perspective, the changes had been in the last 12 months.

"I think that the raw material of the side was here to start with, though Philippe has brought in a few new players," Mannix replied. "The main thing is the intangibles - the things that Philippe has managed to instil in the guys."

"There is a willingness to learn and the desire to improve each week. And most importantly the belief."

"Working with the players we have, we came up with a game plan that was very effective for most of the season."

"Philippe got all the guys on the same wavelength and believing that the game plan will work."

"It's more the small things that have made the big changes. We had the players here."

"It's all very well having very good players, but without the right direction and the right leadership - and the guys having belief in each other, then it's not going to work."

"We've got that this year, though we have stumbled on occasions. "Today (against Wasps), you can count the bad decisions we made on one hand but you would have needed everyone's hands and feet to count the errors in some other matches."

Saint-André had previously told the press conference that he felt he had to take a fair proportion of the blame for some of the bad results - and he put this down to a lack of coaching experience.

But Mannix did not agree. "He (Philippe Saint-André) is taking far too much of the blame," he said. "It's got to stop with the players. We haven't proved an awful lot this season as individual players or collectively."

"We've got enough good footballers in the team to make the right decisions and to sort it out."

But we sort of lost our way a bit and the senior players in the team have got to stand up and be accountable."
Today's Line-Ups

Gloucester 60-16 Bedford Rugby

15  Chris Catling
14  Joe Ewens
13  Terry Fanolua
12  Chris Yates
11  Rob Jewell
10  Byron Hayward
 9  Ian Sanders
 1  Trevor Woodman
 2  Jawad Djoudi
 3  Phil Vickery
 4  Rob Fidler
 5  Ian Jones
 6  Junior Paramore
 7  Andrew Hazell
 8  Ed Pearce

15  Chris Richards
14  Ryan O'Neil
13  George Truelove
12  Dan Harris
11  Alistair McLean
10  Andrew Thompson
 9  Charlie Harrison
 1  Adrian Olver
 2  Aaron Davis
 3  Paul Beal
 4  Dave Sims
 5  Keith Stewart
 6  Nick Broughton
 7  Florent Rossigneux
 8  Ryan Banks (C)

Replacements

16  Laurie Beck
17  Audley Lumsden
18  Andy Deacon
19  Neil McCarthy
20  To Be Announced
21  To Be Announced
22  Adam Eustace

James Hinkins
Justin Abrahams
Richie Elliott
Marek Kwisiluk
Rob Faers
Chad Eagle
Jamie Cockle

Referee:
Steve Lander (RFU)

Touch Judges:
Tim Miller (RFU)
Ashley Reay (RFU)

Fourth Official:
John Watkins
(Glos Society)