

Gloucester

vs Northampton Saints

Zurich Premiership fixture



[cost] £2.00

kick-off 3.00pm

Saturday 1st September 2001

www.gloucester rugby club.com

[issue] 2 Gloucester RFC official matchday programme 2001-2002



Line-ups



22 Gloucester VS Northampton Saints 9

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----|-----------------|-----|
| | Chris Catling | 15 | Nick Beal | i |
| | Daren O'Leary | 14 | Craig Moir | i |
| | Joe Ewens | 13 | Peter Jorgensen | i |
| i | Cristian Stoica | 12 | John Leslie | i |
| i | Diego Albanese | 11 | Ben Cohen | i |
| | 1c5PG Ludovic Mercier | 10 | James Brooks | |
| | Dimitri Yachvili | 9 | Matt Dawson | i |
| i | Federico Pucciariello | 1 | Tom Smith | i |
| | Chris Fortey | 2 | Steve Thompson | |
| i | Patrice Collazo | 3 | Matt Stewart | i |
| i | Rob Fidler | 4 | Olivier Brouzet | i |
| | Adam Eustace | 5 | Jon Phillips | |
| | c Jake Boer | 6 | Andrew Blowers | i |
| i | Andy Hazell | 7 | Budge Pountney | c i |
| i | 1T Junior Paramore | 8 | Mark Soden | |

[replacements]

| | | | | |
|--|-----|----|--------------------|---|
| | TBC | 16 | Steve Brotherstone | i |
| | TBC | 17 | Chris Budgen | |
| | TBC | 18 | Andy Newman | |
| | TBC | 19 | Rob Hunter | |
| | TBC | 20 | Dom Malone | |
| | TBC | 21 | Paul Grayson 3PG | i |
| | TBC | 22 | Mark Tucker | |

[teams correct at 29/08/01]

i [denotes international]

c [denotes captain]

[today's officials]

[referee]

[touch judges]

Welcome

From Tom Walkinshaw

[club chairman]



I would first of all like to convey my deepest thanks to all the supporters of Gloucester Rugby Club for their loyalty last year.

The events at the end of the season, where such passion and colour are still vivid in the memory, were some of the proudest moments I have experienced in my association with Gloucester Rugby Club.

In my opinion all games involving Gloucester Rugby Club are big events, I would never ask a player to give less than 100% in any match, because the opposition were not considered as strong. Any player who signs for Gloucester Rugby Club agrees to perform for the club for a whole season.

This is precisely why we asked all supporters of Gloucester Rugby Club to commit themselves to the club for the whole season. The club have asked the supporters what they wanted and I believe have produced a package to reflect the requirements of our fans. I would now ask all supporters to demonstrate again the loyal and passionate Gloucester support that is the envy of every other club in the league.

I have said that I am fully committed to the future of this club. I believe we have assembled a squad that is

capable of challenging in all competitions. The Zurich Premiership will again prove to be the strongest league in the Northern Hemisphere and make no mistake I consider the European Shield competition a very important gauge for this season's success.

We begin this year's campaign with a visit from Northampton Saints and I wish to welcome their team and their supporters to Kingsholm at the start of what I hope will be another great season for Gloucester Rugby Club.

"I would never ask a player to give less than 100% in any match, because the opposition were not considered as strong"

Philippe [director of rugby] Saint-André

"I prefer each week to have a big headache when I pick my team because I have so many good players and they are all playing well"



I am very pleased with the way pre-season has gone this year. I think against Bezier, it was a relatively good result.

We had a lot of players out, resting and we had just four or five sessions of rugby before this game. The game was very early in our preparations but as we have a lot of new players at the club this year I thought we needed four or five games to prepare this squad and discover which is the best unit. We then must take some credit for the result against Toulouse. They came here with all their internationals and of course beat Leicester three days after losing to us. The true test starts today. This is the league; it is not about friendly games.

The player's fitness at the beginning of this season is looking much better than last year. Last year it was hard for me to pick a team for the first two games as we started last season with eighteen injured players. I think we can also be very pleased with the number of Season Ticket Holders.

We have more new members than last year. This shows that although many people, including the papers in London, think we will finish eighth, ninth or tenth the supporters of Gloucester believe in this team. All I can say is that we will do everything to give 100% on the pitch each week. We will play with pride and a big heart.

For all our supporters I think it is important that all our players, whether they are born in Gloucester, Cheltenham, London or South Africa or Fiji, have come here, not for a holiday, but to wear the Cherry and White jersey and always give 100% for the club for the City and for the supporters.

Against Northampton today, we know it will be very tough. They beat us two times last year, both home and away and this will be a very tough game to start the season. I just hope the supporters will get behind the team for eighty or eighty-five minutes and I hope the guys will give everything on the pitch.

I prefer each week to have a big headache when I pick my team because I have so many good players and they are all playing well, than to have a scenario like last year when no-body was fit and it was difficult to put twenty-two names on the programme. What I want is for all the guys to stay fit and focused and keep good discipline and show that everyone here is ready to give 100% for this club.

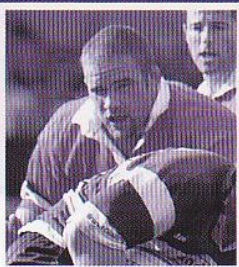
As a new league season starts I believe again we must look to Leicester as the team to beat. You know it is always difficult

to catch Leicester and that type of team. They are always one step ahead it seems, but they are an example for a team like Gloucester. They are a team that do the basics well, week in week out. When the international players are unavailable they have more guys to come in who are focused on playing for Leicester. They are the team that show if you want success, you must be consistent. You cannot play very well one week and terribly the next to win this league.

The next four weeks will be very important for Gloucester but today we must focus on the Northampton game. After this we will think about Saracens, Leicester and Sale. Today, although we welcome Northampton and their fans, we must focus on beating them on the pitch.



Photography Supplied by GPA



Phil [club captain]

Vickery

D.o.B: **14/03/76**
 Position: **Tight Head**
 Height: **1.91m**
 Weight: **125kg**
 Former Club:
Bude/Redruth
 Int'l national Honours:
England 15 – Caps,
British Lions

Monster of a prop born in Cornwall. Was part of the British Lions team in Australia in 2001, and has further enhanced his reputation as one of the best Tight Head's in the game. Doubts about his scrummaging ability were quickly quashed and his handling and running skills in the loose would make the best three-quarter jealous.

'Make them beat us' is what I have said to all our players this season. They will all be sick of hearing it come June I am sure.

We will lose games this season, it is inevitable, but I want to make sure that whoever comes to Kingsholm this season or whenever we go away, each team we play has to work very hard for their points.

As I see it, from a supporter's point of view, if you see your team give their all and lose, you can still be proud. If you watch them fold on the field, that is when people get frustrated.

It takes a lot to win the Premiership, you always need

a bit of luck that goes without saying. You need to grind out your results when you are not playing well, or when you are freezing cold on a Wednesday night in the middle of winter. You need to dig deep and come up with a win. It doesn't matter by how many points I just want us to get the 'W' in the result column.

We also need all the fans and everyone involved with the club to get behind us and to believe we can do it. All I want is for this club is to be successful, to give all you supporters something to shout about.

There can be no better place in world rugby than Kingsholm when Gloucester are winning. It is a fantastic feeling and I have high hopes for this year.

It is good for the club that this year we have a lot of young lads coming through the ranks. They are all talented and whether they will all make it I don't know, but you have to start somewhere. The club ethos has completely changed in my time here. We are all here to do a job, and that job is to be successful.

That is one of the things that, as club captain, has pleased me most. Regardless of what anyone says about our new squad, they are all fantastic

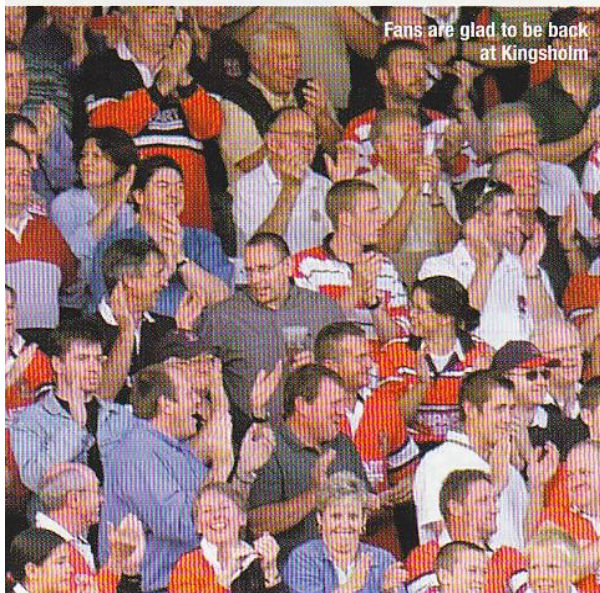
guys. That for me is 70% of the job done. Everyone wants to be here and involved and they have all trained their backsides off this summer.

This year for whichever game we are playing, all I want is 100% commitment from the players. That is all I am interested in. If we get this, the results will follow.

I am a great believer in the fact that you can only be a good captain, if you have good people around you. There are a lot of people at this club and it is up to everyone, from kit man to Director of Rugby to take responsibility for doing their jobs well. If this happens we will succeed.

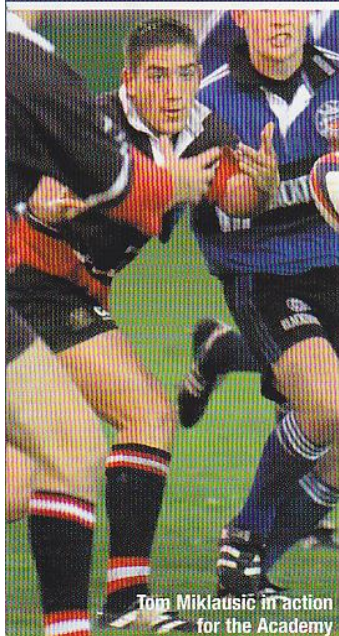
I think it is up to everyone to make it their ambition to play well for Gloucester, to want to play for Gloucester and in the last six games of the season to be challenging for the Premiership, or challenging for an England shirt or an Argentinean or French shirt.

If every player strives to achieve greater things, it makes the captaincy job so much easier. I now ask all supporters to get behind the team this season-starting today.



Fans are glad to be back at Kingsholm

Gloucester Academy



"The club has given its full support to the new Academy structure and is completely behind the staff"

Gloucester Rugby Club's Academy starts its second season with an away game versus their Northampton counterparts at Franklin's Gardens.

This year, the U21 teams of all the Premiership Club's have entered into a full league structure with home and away fixtures.

This will hopefully enable all Premiership Club's to offer their supporters meaningful fixture at their home venue all season. The highly contested league structure will also bring much needed development to all the players involved.

Last year, in its first season, the Academy achieved tremendous success. It finished fourth in the unofficial u21 league, and won the National Knock-out Cup for Colts. This year eight of the Academy players have been contracted into the GRFC 1st team squad. To follow such success will be difficult, but every effort will be made to enable the Academy to reach its aims and objectives of developing players for Gloucester Rugby Football Club.

The Academy has been restructured to enable it to move on even further from last year. Sean Holly, a Welsh National Coach and Hartpury Colleges' Director of Rugby has taken the role of Head Coach. Former Gloucester players Andrew Stanley, (forwards) and Peter Kingston,

(backs), will assist him. They will be responsible for producing teams to play at U21 and U19 levels.

In conjunction with this coaching team, the club have formed an official Youth Development section headed up by Dave Pointon, a senior coach at the club, and assisted by Phil Stanlake, England U16 coach and Pat Kiely a senior RFU coach. Their aim will be to produce players to support the Club's Academy structure, whilst enabling them to continue with their school and club rugby.

The club has given its full support to the new Academy structure and is completely behind the staff in their aims of developing players, particularly locally born youngsters for GRFC.

None of this would be possible however, without the work done by numerous mini sections run at local clubs or the rugby playing schools who do the ground work on any young player, prior to him being identified by Gloucester as a star for the future. For all their hard work we thank these people.

Both pre-season Academy matches were played away

and with mixed results. They won a hard fought contest at Gordon League by a healthy 30-point margin. But lost to a last minute penalty by newly promoted Old Patesians.

The Old Pats result showed the new Academy squad had a lot of character as they came back from a 19 point half time deficit to lead 21-19 before the winning goal was kicked. Their determination to fight back against opponents physically bigger and stronger than them should stand them in good stead for the start of the season.

**Academy Manager
John Haines**



[from the commentary box]

B B C

Ian **Randall**

What a Summer

The Aussies beat us at just about everything; Gloucestershire's cricketers only get to one Lords final; and Gloucester sign a player from a Rugby League club.

"I've not seen all the warm-up games but the strength of the squad is shifting."

What is the world coming to. Oh, and I move house for the first time in 12 years, and find a Kingsholm season ticket holder living next door. Maybe life's not so bad after all.

Rarely can so much have happened in playing terms at

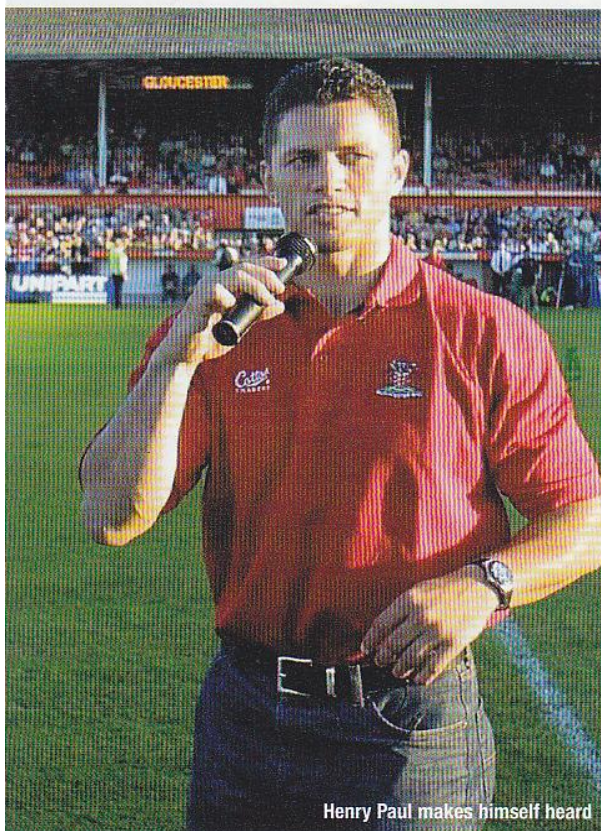
Gloucester in a closed season. The squad has been overhauled to such a degree from 12 months ago barely enough players remain to field a team. Jones the taller and Jones the shorter have both gone, and their impact will probably be missed the most. Others, like Herve Gregoire-Mazzocco and Stephan Sanchez hardly did enough to make us realise they were here. I'll leave you to debate which bracket Jason Little falls into.

I've not seen all the warm-up games but the strength of the squad is shifting. Last season we were craving for Simon Mannix to have a good day every day, and for some fit backs to do something with the ball the forwards won.

Now the main concern appears to be how Ed Pearce, Adam Eustace and Mark Cornwell compensate for Ian Jones' retirement, and how the embarrassment of riches behind the scrum can be condensed into the backs. Injuries such as Terry Fanolua's against Toulouse are inevitable, but the club have to somehow keep everybody happy with regular rugby.

All this will take on a new dimension when Henry Paul arrives. Paul is a man of considerable talent, and Gloucester have to fit that ability around the other players. New defensive coach Dave Ellis has already said he may play initially at centre, but if Ludovic Mercier can show the same form in the pressure games as he has in pre-season, he'll be difficult to prize from number 10 on the line-ups page in the programme, by Paul or anyone else. His kicking in particular has been impressive - reminiscent, as I was reminded, of Peter Butler at his best - only with the other boot, of course.

With Kingsley's fire and brimstone leadership now a thing of the past, the squad have a new man to motivate them. Phil Vickery is a giant in every sense, yet not someone you can imagine raising his voice to make a point. In interviews, he's far less vociferous, and we may find he's a clone of Dave Sims, leading more by example than the spoken word. That could be just as well bearing in mind the mix of nationalities he'll have to deal with - Koli Sewabu, whose English is very good, may be



Henry Paul makes himself heard



Ed Pearce in action

his best bet for on the field translations.

Phil has been on his own individual pre-season programme after returning from the Lions Tour, yet it's possible he could be up against another Lion, Tom Smith, in one of today's key tussles. Smith was playing in France with Brive until the Saints signed him during the summer, and he'll ably fill the void left by Garry Pagel's retirement. How they'll now cope without Rodber, Bateman and Pat Lam is another issue, so maybe it's just as well we play Northampton today before the team settles too much.

Assessing other teams

chances, it's hard to look beyond Bath or Leicester for the title. Danny Grewcock's arrival at the Rec will hardly weaken their options, while the majority of England's best young backs seem to be concentrated at Bath and Newcastle, who could have a big season if Pat Lam can recapture his best form on his return to Kingston Park. Leicester's emphasis may be even more towards the forwards, having balanced the departure of Pat Howard with Josh Kronfeld, and with Welford Road seemingly impregnable, they'll still be the team to beat. It would be a surprise if Wasps, even without Dallaglio, weren't in the top half, and Quins may present a

greater challenge to their status as the home counties' top team ahead of Saracens, who have lost Luger, Diprose and White to other clubs as well as Grewcock, and face six months without Thomas Castaignede because of injury. London Irish and Leeds would appear to face the greatest challenges.

And Gloucester? A win here today, and a first ever triumph at Vicarage Road next week would make a few people sit up, before the Champions come here on September the 15th. As my new neighbour said over the hedge on Monday, it's an optimistic time.....

C'mon Glaws !!

"Now the main concern appears to be how Ed Pearce, Adam Eustace and Mark Cornwell compensate for Ian Jones' retirement."

Head2Head

In a new feature for the match day programme we turn the spot light on to two players whose actions on the pitch may have a great bearing on the outcome of today's game.

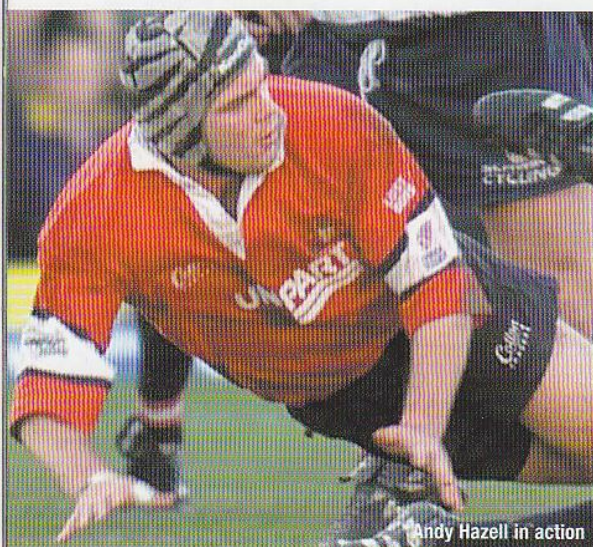


Both players are open-side flankers, who just love being involved in the thick of the action. Both see their role in the side as being a linkman between backs and forwards as well as being the first player from their respective

teams to get to any breakdowns in play. Both have worn the number seven jersey for their country and their individual contributions today could well swing this Zurich Premiership fixture in their sides favour.

Hazellstats

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Nickname | 'Haze' |
| Position | Flanker |
| Born | Gloucester |
| Age | 23 |
| Height | 1.83m |
| Weight | 92kg |
| Club History | Gloucester Old Boys |
| Int Hons | England Tour 2001 England A |



Andy Hazell in action

Andy Hazell

Strengths

His main asset is pace. Last season he was the quickest player when clocked over 30m. His speed off the mark enables him to get to the breakdown's quicker than most and his unwavering commitment to the Gloucester cause means his is usually the first on the floor and last up from a ruck.

Weaknesses

Has very few that come to mind but if there is one it is that maintaining his intensity for eighty minutes is difficult. A military style pre-season training regime has however, made him fitter than ever.

Special interests

Music, all kinds wherever Hazell is there is likely to be sound, and his love of the latest techical gizmo's mean it is probably played on a very hi-tech stereo. After working hard on his game and fitness he admits to loving nothing better than relaxing with a new CD or a good video.

High Point

Undoubtedly, last season's summer tour to North America was a high point. "Just being involved and being in a position to learn from those around me."

Low Point

Breaking his thumb a couple of seasons ago. It became an injury that wouldn't heal and happened at a time when he was in great form. Thankfully now all problems with his digits are gone.

"Hazell on Poutney"

Every time I have seen him he has given 100%. He's my type of player, always contesting around the break down. He is a player I respect and one I look forward to playing against. It's always good to play against internationals in my position. I have a healthy respect for him off the field, but once the whistle blows it's every man for himself.

Toulouse

[match action]

Pre-season
22-08-01



27



5

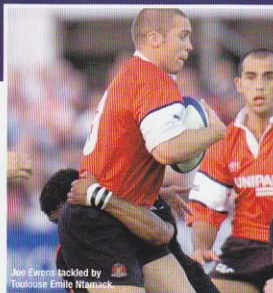
matchstats

| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Gloucester: | 27 |
| Tries: | O'Leary, Stoica |
| Conversions: | Mercier(1) |
| Penalties: | Mercier(5) |
| Toulouse: | 5 |
| Tries: | Jeanjean(1) |
| Conversions: | - |
| Penalties: | - |

pre-season friendly

Photography Supplied by GPA

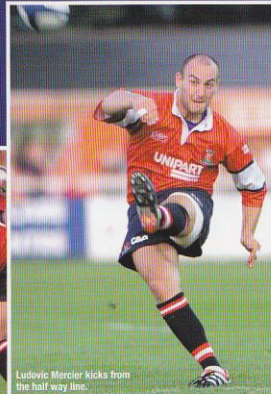
32 [match action] www.gloucester rugby club.com



Joe Evans tackled by
Toulouse Emilie Wtamak



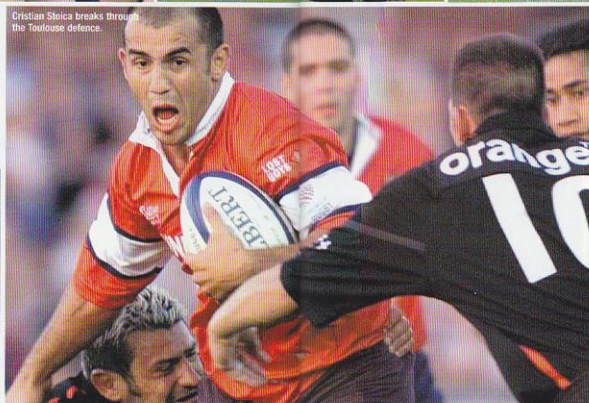
Federico Pucciariello tackles
Toulouse Cedric Heymans



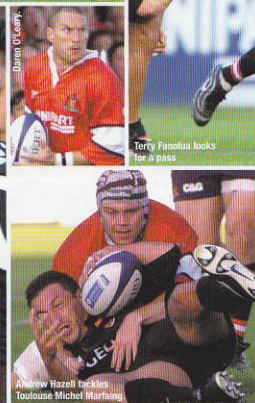
Ludovic Mercier kicks from
the half way line



Terry Fanolua looks
for a pass



Cristian Stoica breaks through
the Toulouse defence



Andrew Hazell tackles
Toulouse Michel Marfaing

Photography Supplied by GPA

www.gloucester rugby club.co.uk [match action]

33

Peter **Arnold** [contributor]

— This is where the story really starts —

...as they used to say in the revered Goon Show.

“such high-quality opposition will have set alarm bells ringing in the Northampton ranks.”

The splendid win over Toulouse ten days ago was one of the most satisfactory early-season results I can recall, especially as the visitors contributed hugely to the occasion. Delighted though we are with our own side's performance, you do have to give credit to the sheer brilliance of the French team's efforts. Make no mistake, they came here to win, and the 22-point margin defeat doesn't alter the fact that on that evidence, they're going to take an

awful lot of stopping in their own competitions.

Which brings us to today's confrontation. Such an emphatic win over such high-quality opposition will have set alarm bells ringing in the Northampton ranks, and in those of every other Premiership club for that matter.

But now we are down to the real thing. Northampton are formidable opposition indeed.

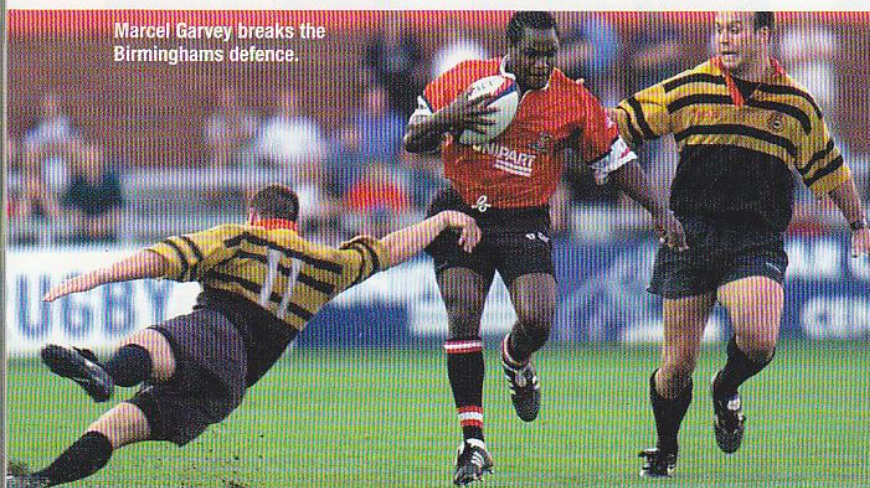
They beat us twice last season, and the loss of one or two high-profile players doesn't alter that fact.

Nevertheless, they will be bearing in mind that the team which beat Toulouse was nowhere near a full-strength Gloucester side. No Vickery, no Woodman, no Catling, and for most of the game, no Fanolua, either.

We should be in for a good one, today.

— The future's here —

One of the most pleasing features of the pre-season programme has been the way the young, 'home grown' players have made their mark.



Marcel Garvey breaks the Birmingham's defence.

While we are delighted with the 'big' names that have arrived at Kingsholm, they won't count for much in the long run if we don't continue 'rolling our own'.

The time will come when such names as Forester, Garvey, Goodrich and Cox, all mentioned in dispatches over the past few weeks, will be as eagerly welcomed on the team sheet as those of Albanese, O'Leary, Stoica and Paul.

Pots and kettles

Of course, one player who did not participate, the other Wednesday, was Henry Paul, who hasn't officially arrived yet, and won't for a while.

That's a prospect to savour, and it will be fascinating to see what sort of a fist he makes of the Union Code. Everyone seems to think he'll make a mighty impact, but we mustn't expect too much, too soon.

The thing about that whole saga which has made me cock a sardonic eyebrow is the chorus of dismay and howls of "Foul!" which have emanated from some Rugby League circles. A phrase about 'pots' and 'kettles' springs to mind.

For many decades, the Rugby League creamed off a whole legion of class performers from various Union clubs, and indeed, almost decimated the Welsh national side over one period. They were perfectly

entitled to do so, of course, but shouldn't complain now that chickens are coming home to roost.

More senior Gloucester supporters will recall that our own Richard Mogg was offered terms at one point, but rightly or wrongly, declined. Mind you, in Moggy's case, I suspect that the prospect of being banned for life from the old Tredworth clubhouse might have influenced his decision.

The earliest such defection I know about concerned a player called Ginger Hughes. He 'went North' to join Barrow-in-Furness, and had a distinguished career.

In the fullness of time, he took

unto himself a wife, and begat a son who was named Emlyn. He took up the round ball game, and became one of the best-loved characters to walk on to a football field. Years later, Emlyn 'Crazy Horse' Hughes achieved fame by putting his foot in Princess Anne's handbag during a memorable edition of BBC 1's 'Question of Sport'.

But Emlyn has always been a staunch follower and supporter of Gloucester RFC. I can vouch for that, because I once had the pleasure of presenting him with a Gloucester sweatshirt to wear during a celebrity pro-am golf tournament.

Man of many parts, our Crazy Horse.

Henry Paul watching and waiting



Photographs Supplied by GPA

Red cards

You might think that Trevor Woodman broke some sort of a record by getting himself sent off around 15 minutes into the first game of the season, before the middle of August.

You'd probably be right, but Gloucester players have managed to secure some other notable dismissals, over the years.

Ian Smith, for example was sent off in the very first game he played, which is quite a feat. If memory serves, it was for the United against Rosslyn Park, but the blot on his record didn't stop him winning a dozen or so Caps for Scotland at No.7.

Mike Burton, of course, almost

made a career of it. We all know that 'Burto' was far from being an angel, but there was more than a suspicion that there was a touch of the 'give a dog a bad name' syndrome about some of his dismissals.

"We all know that 'Burto' was far from being an angel"

He did, of course, achieve the distinction of becoming the first English player to be sent off in a Test Match. That was against Australia, and was a

bit of a carve up in itself. As emerged afterwards, the game had started very nastily, and the ref. felt he had to make an example of someone if he was to retain control. This was acknowledged by the ensuing disciplinary hearing, which imposed no further punishment.

But my favourite dismissal comes courtesy of my old friend Henry Amphlett, well known and respected former local referee. He declares that the last bloke he sent off was dispatched for

kicking another player in the head. "And they were both standing up at the time!" says Henry. Apparently it was a karate sort of job, probably inspired by the famous Eric Cantona escapade.

All jolly fun, but we don't want too much of it, and here's hoping for a good, sportsmanlike season, whatever the pressures, and whatever the occasion. It's perfectly possible to play the game hard and play it fairly at the same time.

Phil Vickery



Vickery in training

"Make them beat us", was Phil Vickery's battle cry to his troops today as they enter the fray once again.

Today's game marks the start of another marathon season and after Gloucester's pre-season exploits where their results show three wins out of four, the air in the camp is of optimism and expectation.

New Club Captain, the 'Raging Bull' himself has however, taken very little part in the on-field preparations. After a summer representing the best of Northern Hemisphere rugby against the World Champions in their own back yard, Vix has been granted an extra week or two's rest from the rigours of domestic club competition.

Win, lose or draw, Lions tours are always surrounded in mystique and steeped in history and the ethos of the Lions is certainly not lost on this year's pride. "You are representing the Northern Hemisphere, and not just the people, but the players that have gone before you. All the famous names, the famous results and the sacrifices people made years ago to tour. It's all of that. You wear the shirt for everyone who has played or supported down the years".

The true extent of a players actions when touring with the best of British are often not measured until after the event and Vickery himself is still coming to terms with his summer down under.

"To be honest it hasn't sunk in 100%. It's a very special thing and when you are doing it you think, 'British Lions, here we are', but it's not until you come back, and step away from it you realise just how special the whole thing was, just being a part of it".

The Lions were unable to record what would have been a very famous test series win, but this has not dimmed any of the many high points Vickery experienced.

"One high point was winning the first test, but there were so many others. Selection, I was pointing my walls when I got the phone call to tell me I was selected. That is something I will always look back on and find funny. Then there was meeting up with everyone and the general excitement. It doesn't matter if you have 1

cap or 100, you all get nervous in this company, but they get on and buy into it".

There are other famous sons of Gloucester Rugby Club that have preceded Vickery in his elevation to Lion status. The legendary Mike Teague who Vickery has spent much time with over the years, Phil Blakeway and Mike Burton. It was to these people he turned to for advice before departure.

"The best piece of advice I got before leaving was from Phil Blakeway, he said, 'treat every session and every scrum as the most important thing you do that day. Make every session count'. It is something we have tried to achieve with England and lately at Gloucester but the intensity is very important".

Intensity throughout the tour was also created by the sheer numbers of supporters who made the journey to the other side of the world. Support that Vickery admits took him by surprise.

"We got letters from mates of



www.philvickery.com

Lions tour 2001

mates who just want to say good luck, faxes, phone calls from family and friends. When you are involved in it you don't really see it all, but it was such a big thing for every one".

The levels of intensity have obviously taken their toll on Vickery who is currently watching from the sidelines as his team prepares for an explosive month. As last season wore on with Gloucester, then England and eventually the Lions, the games just got bigger.

The British season reached a crescendo at Stadium Australia on the 14th August. Almost a year after it had begun, the 2000-2001 season climaxed in the Olympic Stadium. The Lions prepared to play the Wallabies in the final test of the tour, with the series at one a piece. There can surely be no bigger challenge for the modern day rugby player?

Vickery however, sees it slightly differently, perhaps the product of so many 'biggest games of the season'. "There all much of a much-ness to be honest", he says almost apologetically as he deals with the biggest game in modern times so apathetically. "Obviously you mention the first test because we won it.

The first one for me, because it was my first test match for the Lions, and just because there were thirty-five thousand Lions supporters, in a forty thousand crowd, in Australia. The whole atmosphere in Brisbane was absolutely unbelievable".

"The last test though, your playing the World Champions, you're playing for the British Lions, in the best stadium in the world, on the biggest stage in the world, probably in front of the biggest audience in the world. It was just unbelievable! That's why you play the game, it's what all the heartache is for this is what it's all about it's the pinnacle of your career".

Along with all these highs however, there were some well documented lows and for all the harmony Vickery talks of rifts were apparent throughout. Vickery himself has been quoted in the press as condemning those he thought were forsaking the name of the Lions.

"I never launched a scathing attack on anyone, I was asked the question, 'What do you think about people who said such and such'. I have no problem with them saying things, the only thing I was disappointed with was that it takes that little bit of the dynasty away for the

supporters". So did Vickery feel he had something to say on management of the tour. In a nutshell, no!

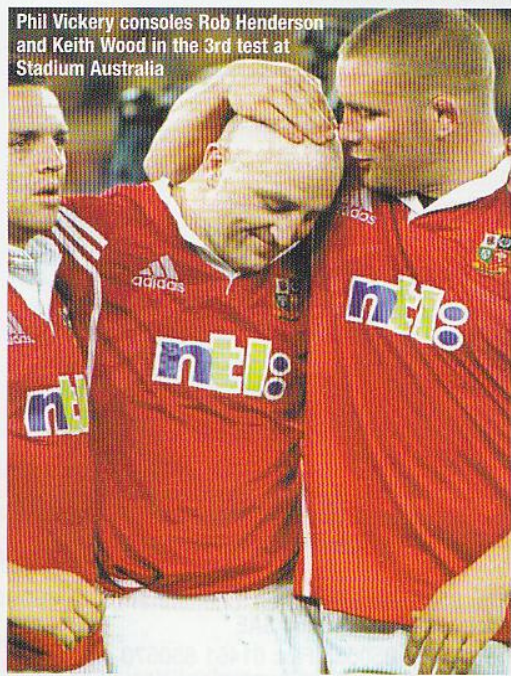
"I personally enjoyed the tour, I don't know how best to prepare the team. It's a mammoth task to prepare a squad of thirty-seven players to take on the World Champions within a month, with no game plan no calls and no routines, nothing. It's hard for players and very difficult for the coaches to get it across".

Vickery then, was disappointed with how the Lions tour finished and with the comments that were made. His disappointment though is not from what occurred on the pitch, but rather he worries that the fans may feel this tour lost some of its mystique. Don't worry Phil, you're still our hero.



Vickery on the attack

Phil Vickery consoles Rob Henderson and Keith Wood in the 3rd test at Stadium Australia



tourstats

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| web site: | www.lionstour.com |
| Lions tours: | 1 (Australia) |
| Vickery Appearances: | 6 (all 3 test matches) |
| Top try scorer: | Jason Robinson (10) |
| Top point scorer: | Jonny Wilkinson (72) |