

EXETER RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



Affiliated to the R.F.U. and Devon R.F.U.

COUNTY GROUND, EXETER

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Captain:
S. R. DONOVAN

Team Colours: All Black

DEVON CUP WINNERS 1971-72-73-76-78-80-82

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME 30p

SEASON 1982-83

SUPPORTERS' CLUB OFFICIALS

President: C. L. PAUL
Chairman: T. E. IRISH
Hon. Secretary: Mrs B. FERNS
Hon. Treasurer: J. A. SNELL

EXETER v GLOUCESTER

Kick Off 3.00 pm Touch Judge Mr Beaumont

Referee Mr D.W. Matthews
(Liverpool Society)

EXETER

15 John Sanders
14 Mike Bleasdale
13 Steve Donovan (Capt.) □
12 John Leyshon
11 Peter Drewett •
10 Malcolm Collins ○
9 Duncan Nice
1 Geoff Retter
2 Bruce Priday □
3 Trevor Harris □
4 Malcolm Wharton
5 Peter Harrison •
6 Neil Brown
7 Mark Lynch •
8 Andy Hopgood

Replacements Ian Wensley

• County
□ Regional
○ U.A.U.

GLOUCESTER

15 Tim Smith
14 Phil Pritchard •
13 Paul Taylor
12 Nick Price •
11 Richard Mogg □
10 Les Jones • / Mike Hamblin
9 Steve Barber
1 Mike Jones
2 Steve Mills (Capt.) +
3 Bob Phillips
4 Nigel Scrivens
5 John Brown
6 Paul Wood •
7 Mike Longstaff
8 Mike Teague □

Replacements

• County
□ England B
+ International

We extend our thanks to the Express & Echo for the reproduction of some of their photographs in our programmes.

EXETER v GLOUCESTER

Today we invite Gloucester to the County Ground for the penultimate game of the season. Next Saturday we play Northampton which is certainly a fairly demanding way to end the season. However, supporters can hardly complain - going out with a bang rather than a whimper. Although, perhaps it will depend on whose side you're on. Today is also a Merit Table game with Exeter fairly annulled at the bottom once again - only more so. However, to most people's surprise Gloucester are also at the bottom of the Merit Table, and neither club will be in next season's John Player Cup competition. Financially, a set back for both clubs, but more than that it would have been a fairly perceptive person who could have predicted their demise this season. Certainly from the glory of the last season. It may be all irrelevant when you consider Exeter's plight, but even so the change in Gloucester's values have certainly been quite remarkable.

Last season they were joint winners with Moseley of the John Player Cup. They won the Daily Mail and Sunday Telegraph pennant as top club, were top of the unofficial Anglo/Welsh Merit Table and also the English Table and in the process they had arguably, their best ever season, scored over 1,000 points with barely a handful of games lost. This season they are out of the John Player Cup, languish in the bottom half of the South West Merit Table and occupy lowly positions in all the other unofficial tables. By contrast Bristol and Bath are having tremendous seasons particularly Bath and Bristol are in the final of the John Player Cup. Gloucester did actually beat Bristol, but have lost to clubs they normally would demolish before breakfast. Philosophically it may be good for the game, but whisper that gently to Gloucester supporters.

There could be all sorts of reasons for Gloucester's poor season, improved performance by other sides, constant injury problems and even selection problems. Or perhaps they have had it 'too easy' for too long. In some ways similar to Exeter, unfortunately people will be gleeful Gloucester are not doing too well, the knives are always out when certain clubs are down. They certainly have had injury problems and at a time when county and international calls were also met, certainly of Steve Mills and Steve Boyle, particularly the latter. Ironically everything else has gone Steve Boyle's way this season, international cap as a replacement for Maurice Colclough, retaining his place and then the ultimate accolade - a British Lion place on the forthcoming tour of New Zealand. Well done and congratulations to Steve, at least Gloucester have something to smile about.

However, records are all relevant even if pundits consider that this season is arguably Gloucester's worst ever. Despite all, Gloucester have still won 24 games and the record stands at P52, W24, D4, L24 Points for 624 against 586. Quite a few quite remarkable clubs have that kind of record every season and Gloucester have scored more than they have conceded. Anyway give Lydney a break. The back row of Mike Longstaff, Mike Teague and John Gadd have never appeared together all season and they were very much a factor in Gloucester's success last year, Phil Blakeway retired and Gordon Sargeant moved to Lydney. Given the disappointing season, Paul Ford has still scored 252 points, but has now been replaced on local product Tim Smith it is a hard world. Leading try scorers include Richard Mogg with 17 and Nick Price with 8. The team is not being picked until late in the week because of injuries and a mid week game for the 2nd team, so there may be changes from the 'suggested' side in today's programme. The side will still include probably an international, 2 England B players, as well as 6 county players, so Gloucester still hope to add to their victories today and add to Exeter's unenviable record.

Exeter will of course have other ideas and despite still losing to most of the clubs they have played, recently however there has been some encouraging form. No doubt by the inclusion of several of the more experienced University players who may be able to play more permanently next season. Of course, if they cannot, the re-building and searching has to go on with very limited resources to choose from. Let us hope the University players have luck with their future careers preferably in Devon - near Exeter. Malcolm Collins has already scored 35 points in 5 games, his kicking has changed the teams endeavour quite considerably and ironically, he could end up the club's top points scorer. Just 21 points to go, and at the moment Jon Mears who has not played since October is leading points scorer with 55 points. Yes, 55 points. Despite being beaten heavily by Bristol the spirit was there and the game against Liverpool (13-18) and Glamorgan Wanderers (18-29) all away games, have been very encouraging. Losing 15-9 to Taunton last Saturday should never have happened - the story of the season, but if 'only' against Sidmouth mid week we had our first and only away win of the season winning 17-6. Although most of the 12

victories have been against junior opposition it has helped us to keep our heads up and as Tracey Turner might fairly vehemently say "At the moment there is no such thing as an easy game". Peter Thornley, another University man has injected much needed pace into the back row, but unfortunately is unable to play today. Like Gloucester, our original back row of Simon Day, Steve Lewis and Graham Bess have not played together all season and what is more all are out for the rest of the season. Steve Lewis came back from injury mid week and then had the misfortune to dislocate his shoulder, so his chances of being top points scorer have gone. Hard luck Steve and get well soon. Two scrum halves are injured, 2 are unavailable and it is just as well Duncan Nice has helped out as with Graham Milford. A quite ridiculous position to be in when 1 minute the club had 5 quite capable scrum halves and the next minute none, John May and Wayne Watkins are still injured, Phil Treseder is also injured, Kieron Northcott has a broken leg and Graham Willis a depressed fracture of the jaw, the list seems endless and includes many of the club's most experienced players, yet helped by University players, Exeter have taken on a new lease of life.

Phil Loder has returned to Newton Abbot where he is playing well and Nick Bagge has returned to Brixham. In a poor season it never rains it pours. Particularly after experienced players like Tim Woodrow and company left at the end of the season. Whatever, the record now stands at P42, W12, L30 Points for 457 against 777 (23 for the 800 against !) Leading points scorer is still already mentioned absentee Jon Mears (play it again) with 55 points, followed by Steve Lewis with 42 and Malcolm Collins with 35. Peter Drewett has gone high in the try stakes with 8 followed by Nick Bagge and David Rice with 5 apiece. Nevermind, Exeter go out against Gloucester in the hope of victory and as they should do - who knows? Arguably, they have as many experienced players as Gloucester and enough talent in the side today - we will see.

Gloucester personnel are warmly invited to partake of Clubhouse hospitality afterwards and we hope Jim Jarrett was able to make the journey.

Terry Davies.