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GLOUCESTER v. NEATH

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Saturday, 14th April, 1984

Kingsholm, Gloucester

Kick-off 3.00 p.m.

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GLOUCESTER

Cherry & White

	Full Back
15.	T. Smith
	Three Quarters
14.	D. Morgan
*§	13. R. Mogg
*	12. P. Taylor
*	11. N. Price
	Half Backs
10.	M. Hamlin
*§	9. S. Baker
	Forwards
*†	1. G. Sargent (Capt.)
*†	2. S. Mills
*	3. R. Pascall
*	4. J. Orwin
*†	5. J. Fidler
*§	6. J. Gadd
	7. I. Smith
*§	8. M. Teague

REPLACEMENTS

R. Wilmott
G. Manns

NEATH

	Full Back
15.	S. Powell
	Three Quarters
†	14. E. Rees (Capt.)
	13. D. Jacob
	12. K. Jones
	11. G. Tucker
	Half Backs
10.	
	9. G. Jones
	Forwards
1.	B. Williams
2.	P. Hitchings
3.	P. Langford
4.	S. Dando
5.	A. Hopkins
6.	G. Jones
7.	L. Jones
8.	D. Morgan

REPLACEMENTS

C. Bridgewater
T. Waldron

Referee: D. J. WILSON (Yorkshire Society)

† International

§ Under 23 International

* County



NORMAN P. PARTRIDGE
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Not all that it seems

Eleven winning games in a row, and then two defeats, at the hands of Newport and Ebbw Vale — that's the recent record of today's visitors, and when you consider that one of those wins was the Welsh Cup Semi-Final, you could be forgiven for wondering if Neath are coasting along with their eyes on the Final, in two weeks time.

However, if you take that to mean that Gloucester are in for an easy ride, this afternoon, you could be in for a rude awakening. The fact is that Neath operate a squad system, and use a strict rota to determine who is going to play where. This combined with a crop of injuries, unavailabilities and commitments to Crawshay's XV, to such an extent that only eight players from the likely Final side played at Newport, and five at Ebbw Vale.

So it wouldn't be wise to think that the Welsh All Blacks are either punch-drunk or pre-occupied.

All of which makes it a bit difficult to make a prediction about today's result. We don't have much previous form to guide us, either. Gloucester won handily enough last season — which wasn't one of our vintage years — but that was the first time the teams had met for some time.

So we have an intriguing prospect. Not having seen the lads at home since March 24th makes it all the more pleasurable, and we should be in for a good afternoon.

We certainly hope the Neath lads enjoy themselves, and we wish them the very best of luck in their Cup Final.

Dont's give up yet!

At the time of writing, the sun is shining, and the dandelions are out in the blasted heath that my wife fondly refers to as 'the garden'. Of course, having written that, I've probably condemned us to a return of the ice age, but, if not, don't get too involved with the pleasures of Spring yet. We still have three perfectly good home matches to go.

First of all, we have the two Easter matches, which are always pleasant. The first one, next Saturday, is against Birkenhead Park, who always try very hard, and the Monday game features Headingly, an underrated club, rather in the Nottingham mould, who have sprung one or two happy surprises lately, and won't be a walk-over by any means.

The final Saturday of the season, of course, sees the visit of Exeter, old friends with a Merit Table connotation, who, I might remind you, have been known to beat us at this time of the season.

Incidentally, 'Terrible Terry' Tandy tells me that, while All Is Not Lost, it is now looking more and more unlikely that we shall be able to rearrange the weather-smitten Bristol game, which is a great shame for all concerned. This, of course, could have implications for next season's John Player Cup. I'm told that Bristol will probably be all right, in that respect, and, of course, they could still win it this year, which would put the issue beyond doubt.

Of course, you could say that any side which wins the thing one year, and gets to the Final on the following occasion deserves some consideration anyway...

Thanks to Farmplan

You may have noticed that we have yet another new name on our list of generous Sponsors today, to whom we're exceedingly grateful. If I remember correctly, we haven't been afforded that privilege by a Ross-on-Wye company before, but in any case, Farmplan Computer Systems Limited are a very interesting company in their own right.

Farmplan aren't by any means the only computer company supplying computer systems to the agricultural community, but they are certainly the market leaders in the UK. Furthermore, they are selling their systems in six countries, and have the classic 'coals-to-Newcastle' situation of exploiting large gaps in the USA scene.

When you know the background, that isn't too surprising. Farmplan aren't a computer company who supply systems to farmers. They are a group of farmers who have devised computer systems, so that grass roots knowledge is, quite literally, invaluable. In fact they've even gone to the extent of writing their own computer language, specifically for their purposes.

Farmplan are nothing if not soundly practical, and they place great emphasis on training and supporting their customers. If you'd like to know more about them at Netherton, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7HZ. Telephone: 0989 64321.

Champions again!

Quite simply, it was the best County match I have ever seen. Don't make any mistake — injuries or not, Somerset were a good side, yet after the first half-hour or so, in my opinion, they were never in with a chance.

Surely, the ten-man rugby jibe must now be firmly laid to rest, and I couldn't help being amused by the air of surprise there was about some of the press reports.

It was a great occasion, on and off the field. The atmosphere was terrific, the supporters of both sides acted impeccably, and I had the Winner of the Grand National on the Patrons' coach.

And it all happened at 'Twickers'! Whether you think that was a good thing or not, you have to admit that the occasion must have sent England selectors, officials and committee men home that night in a slightly puzzled frame of mind. If they were wondering 'where did we go wrong', they should know now.

Congratulations are in order to the whole Gloucestershire side, but perhaps we should single out John Fidler, — described by Phil Blakeway in the press as a 'big lump' I note — on his record nine County Finals. With the new system it seems unlikely that his achievement will ever be beaten. And he could extend it yet!

300 Club Draw

Terry Close rang to tell me about the end-of-season draw, which will take place on Friday, April 27th. Should be a good night.

Even more interesting, is that the prize money has been increased, and if you're a member of the 300 Club, you could win £300, all to yourself.

That's the top prize, of course. The others are one prize of £150, one prize of £75, one prize of £50 and four prizes of £25.

Terry does point out that you have to be a fully paid-up member of the 300 Club before your number goes into the hat. The other side of that coin is that, if you fancy an end-of-season flutter, you could pay up for the whole season now.

Why not? You never know your luck!

South Africa

Saw a cartoon I liked, the other day. It pictured a notice, outside the Welsh National Stadium. It read WANTED — DEMONSTRATORS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S XV MATCH. (BRING YOUR OWN TICKET).

Whether you agree with the South African tour, or not, I suspect that you'll be awaiting the announcement of the tour party with more than passing interest. Surely, after the dismal England season, some Gloucester lads must get their chance now?

Personally, having seen both the England Trial, and the County Final, I'd send the whole Gloucester front five, with Mike Teague and John Gadd thrown in for good measure — and I don't think I'm being unduly biased.

Naturally, it would be unwise of the selectors to send a team full of newcomers, but Messrs. Blakeway, Fidler and Mills can hardly be called that.

In the light of recent events, I wouldn't actually object if Messrs. Hesford and Rafter went, either!

Tailpiece

Can't resist a comment on the fact that the Twickenham licencees closed their pubs at lunchtime on County Final day.

It occurs to me that the Worcester Street publicans don't close when we have a County match. Indeed, the last time we had a Final here, they applied to the Magistrates to have their opening hours extended! And they should know more about Gloucestershire supporters than anyone.

No rugby man who knows anything, drinks in the centre of Twickenham anyway.

PETER ARNOLD.