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GLOUCESTER RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

30p
**OFFICIAL
PROGRAMME**

GLOUCESTER v NORTHAMPTON

Friday
3rd March, 1989

Kick off 7 p.m.



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OLD GLORY

Tonight, we have the pleasure of entertaining one of England's greatest Rugby Clubs. All right — so their playing record hasn't been all they could wish, over the past several seasons, but in terms of a proud history, of spirit, and of all the intangibles which go to make up the essential nature of a fine, old club, Northampton bow their heads to no one.

I could just about fill a page with the list of Northampton players who have attained the game's highest honours, but you probably remember the names as well as I do. Jacobs, Pearce, Jacko Page . . . And don't forget Trevor Wintle, who I'm told, came originally from Lydney. So many good, and even great, players have been proud to pull on the black, green and gold shirt, that it's doubtful if any English club has a better record in this respect.

Signs of a revival of Northampton's fortunes begin to proliferate. Their administrative arrangements are nothing to do with me, but many interesting things have been happening at Franklin Gardens, and the future begins to look more rosy than it has for a while. Just at the moment, Northampton are sitting in third place in Courage Clubs Championship, Division Three, and must have a fighting chance of promotion next season. That is a consummation devoutly to be wished, because there is no doubt at all that they belong in Division One — if only they can get their act together on the field.

We have League aspirations ourselves, of course, and that Cup Match looms upon the horizon, but it would be a sad thing if such considerations prevented us from thoroughly enjoying a simple 'friendly' between two fine old clubs with mutually healthy respect.

Obviously, England and England 'B' have taken their toll of Gloucester in tonight's game, and I also hear whispers of the odd injury or two, so we'll be a bit down on strength this evening. On paper, that should mean that we have two well-matched sides, playing for the fun of it. And when has that ever been a bad thing?

All in all, it's good to see Northampton here again. I'm sure they'll all have a thoroughly enjoyable visit, and we'll be doing our best to see that they do.

TICKETS FOR THE SEMI

First things first. We can all speculate endlessly about the Pilkington Cup Semi Final against Bath, on March 25th, and being by no means immune to that particular syndrome, I'll do that later, but what you'll really want to know about is availability of tickets.

To start with, like all Cup matches, it's an 'all pay' situation. Nothing we can do about that; the rules of the Competition demand it, because both clubs share all the proceeds. That, incidentally, includes car park charges, so Patron or not, you'll have to pay to deposit the Merc. Might be a good idea to catch the bus that day, avoiding hassle of several kinds.

This time, it will be an all-ticket game. Centre Stand will cost £6.00, Wings £4.00 (unreserved), Ground £3.00, Senior Citizens and Juniors £2.00.

As you probably know, Bath are entitled to one-third of all tickets, and it's all 'Twickers' to a Berry Hill jock-strap that they'll swallow all their allocation with no problems at all. This obviously means a dearth of Stand tickets, so the Club has had to apply a form of rationing.

Stand seats will be allocated on the basis of one ticket per Stand season ticket holder, and it's only fair that they will be strictly enforced. David Foyle is the chap to contact — write to him, enclosing akkers, at the address in your Season Ticket. Alternatively, he will be in the Clubhouse, dispensing the magic bits of cardboard in exchange for cash, from 8.00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8th and Friday, March 10th.

Ground tickets are a bit easier. Printers permitting, they may even be on sale, at various points around the ground, tonight, but they'll certainly be on sale in the Social Club from next Monday evening onwards.

Again, there are a couple of alternatives. You can buy ground tickets at Huson's sports shop in St. Aldate Street, or at Alan Brinn's in Eastgate Street, just as soon as we can get supplies to them. Somehow, if the evidence of the last Bath game is anything to go by, I have a feeling that they won't hang around for long, so it might be wise not to hang about.

WATCH IT!

One more thing. The Safety of Sports Grounds Act forbids supplies of alcoholic liquor to be brought on to the ground, and we'll be enforcing that strictly. It's fair enough; the last thing we want is any bother when the eyes of the Rugby Establishment will be firmly upon us, and as we all know, there are some misguided souls who seem to take a delight in finding something to criticise at Kingsholm.

If there ever was a time when we have to be on our best behaviour, it's on March 25th. There have been occasions in the past when Cup games of this importance have attracted stupid individuals, who are never seen here normally, and who are either out to cause trouble, or are too moronic to know the difference between behaviour which is acceptable or otherwise.

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I have no evidence at all to suggest that we might have problems, but when a club with such an exemplary record as Gordon League can get into trouble in a small market town like Ross-on-Wye, it's worth sounding a few alarm bells.

Quite simply — if you can't behave yourself, we don't want you.

Hope I'm not offending anyone. Our usual crowd, and even our more occasional supporters, present no worries at all. It's the dubious few attracted by the big occasion, and who probably wouldn't know a reverse scissors from a bull's foot who prompt me to write in such terms.

There won't be any such people here tonight, but if you know someone who you have doubts about, do everyone a favour and talk them into staying away on March 25th.

SO — WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?

I wish I had a quid for everyone who has said to me, during the past few days, "Just the draw we wanted!"

I don't know that I disagree. If we're going to win the Cup, Bath has to be beaten somewhere along the line, and that seems more likely to happen at Kingsholm than at Leicester, the Stoop, or Twickenham itself. The fact that they have already lost here won't have done them any good, even if they were a player or two short on that memorable occasion. If this was our preferred draw, then I'm certain that it was precisely the draw that Bath *didn't* want.

At this stage of the Competition, all games are going to be difficult. There wouldn't seem to be much between any of the four sides — in fact, it's the only time I can remember when all four teams are past Cup winners. A home draw, therefore, must be a distinct advantage, although it wouldn't be wise to rely too much on it.

The draw I didn't want was Harlequins away. We've beaten both the others, this season, and still have to play 'Quins in the League — away — a week tomorrow. That won't be easy, partly because we don't have that good a record at the Stoop over the past few years, and partly because the Londoners have acquired a knack of pacing themselves and coming good in the second half of the season.

It didn't happen, and we have quite enough to worry about with Bath in three weeks time.

Anything can happen in that period. Injuries, loss of form, anything at all. Perhaps we'll have a better idea of the likely outcome a bit nearer the time.

But it's going to be one hell of an occasion.

CONGRATULATIONS ALL ROUND

Given the evidence of the first two Internationals, it's no surprise that Mike Teague has retained his England spot for tomorrow's game. That simply makes our congratulations all the more sincere, and we hope he stays there for many more games yet.

Neither, I suppose, was it a great surprise when Kevin Dunn was picked for England 'B' but one or two other recent selections have given us great cause for gratification.

Richard Pascall's opportunity to prop alongside 'Dunny' is no more than he deserves. One or two of the front-line England props won't be around for many more seasons, and 'Pasc' must now be well and truly in the running for further honours. And quite right too.

It's also very pleasing to see John Etheridge get his first foot on the ladder by being called up to train with the England squad. The system of giving one or two young players that experience and opportunity is obviously far-sighted and very welcome, and it couldn't happen to a nicer bloke than John.

In some ways, however, Mike Hamlin's replacement spot for the England 'B's' is most gratifying of all. He's probably the most underrated player in the Gloucester side, and although he's had one or two Divisional spots, this is the first time he's had at least one foot on the International stage.

Heartiest congratulations to everyone — and Selectors please note — we have one or two other chaps worth considering, too.

TAILPIECE

Gwyn Hiatt, from the County Library, has sent me news of another Rugby book which will interest you. It's called 'Black & White 'Oops', and is all about 100 years of Lydney Rugby, written by our old friend John Powell.

One section I particularly like is the one which lists the Forest Rugby Clubs around 1890. It includes: *Cinderford Bridge Rovers, Gordon Boys, Bilson Bulldogs, Ruardean Rangers, Coleford Star, Lane End Boys, Royal Forest Rangers, and Bream Tumblers*, plus *The Black Hand Gang*, would you believe, and most euphonious of all, *Pillowell School Corner Hellhounds!*

PETER ARNOLD



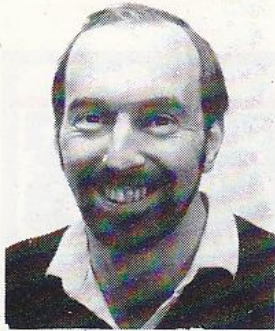
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TALKING RUGBY with . . . The Citizen sports editor Terry Phillips

Gloucester Rugby Club players, officials and supporters breathed a sigh of relief when the Cherry and Whites were first out of the bag in the Pilkington Cup semi-final draw at Twickenham.

For Gloucester away is a tie nobody wanted and Bath will not relish a return to Kingsholm so soon after seeing their 37-match unbeaten run ended.

Gloucester won 18-12 and dominated the action a fortnight ago, but Bath warn they will be a different proposition on Saturday March 25.

"We are happy to play at Kingsholm", says Bath's international centre Simon Halliday, "We know it will be hard, but we really fancy our chances of winning."

"Gloucester have a formidable pack, but they are not too hot behind."

"They do not have many internationals in their back division and we believe we have the edge."

Whatever the result on March 25 it is going to be a fiercely contested clash and even some Gloucester supporters have doubts, saying: "Gloucester played to their full potential in the 18-12 win two weeks ago, but did Bath?"

For the Gloucester players, though, it is the chance to prove a point again.

"It is the draw the players wanted," said winger Richard Mogg, "We have a solid team capable of winning the Pilkington Cup, but we have to beat Bath to do it."

"And we have more chance at Kingsholm than we would have at Twickenham. We are not at all dismayed at drawing Bath."

"We have a good chance of reaching the final."

Classy three-quarter Mogg, who celebrated his 33rd birthday this week, has played more than 450 first team matches for Gloucester — switching between the centre and the wing.

Currently he is playing on the wing — a position many supporters feel gives him little chance to shine as the ball which reaches him is restricted.

"I would play anywhere for Gloucester and I am happy to be on the wing," says Mogg, "But sometimes I don't see too much of the ball."

"The selectors asked me to play there this season and they have certainly been proved right with their line-up so far because we are enjoying an excellent season."

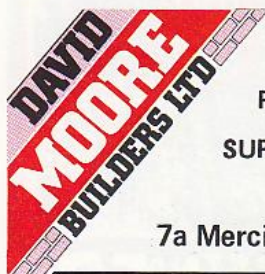
"Hopefully we can crown our season with a little Cup success."



Richard Mogg in possession for Gloucester



Bath's Simon Halliday



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