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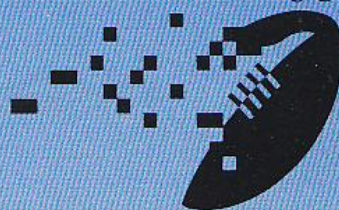
GLOUCESTER RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

30p

**OFFICIAL
 PROGRAMME**



THE
PILKINGTON
 CUP



SEMI-FINAL

GLOUCESTER

v

BATH

Saturday
 25th March, 1989

Kick off 3 p.m.



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JUST ANOTHER MATCH, REALLY

Now, let's get this straight. Today's occasion is a matter of thirty blokes, of various ages, professions and inclinations, chasing a funny-shaped ball around a field bounded by white lines and a couple of H-format goal posts. It's called Rugby Union Football. Nothing, in fact; that we haven't seen a thousand times before.

It isn't a replay of the Siege of Gloucester, or a re-enactment of the Battle of Sedgemoor, and there's very little danger of the wives and children of the losing side being sold into slavery as a result.

So I keep telling myself, anyway, but it's getting increasingly difficult to believe. In a decade or so of writing these notes, I can't remember a Club game which has generated such fervour and downright Gloucester Chauvinism as this one has. But let's try and keep things in perspective.

To any impartial observer (if you can find one), Bath must start favourites. By any rational consideration, they are the best side in England, and I'm sure that they would claim Wales too. Everyone outside a ten-mile radius from the City was extremely surprised when they lost at Kingsholm on Friday, February 17th, and immediately pointed out the fact that they were depleted by International calls.

The Gloucester faithful riposte by observing that we were a couple light, too, for the same excellent reason, but the nagging feeling remains that, regardless of reserve strength, no one can afford to lose Messrs. Chilcott, Robinson, Barnes and Halliday without feeling the pinch.

But, it has to be said, you can't dismiss the Kingsholm Factor. During the run-up to last Saturday's International, when all the pundits were prophesying an overdue England victory, I kept remarking that you can never write off the Welsh at the Arms Park, and we all saw what happened there. Similarly, it's never wise to place money against Gloucester at Kingsholm, and the same considerations apply.

Neither do Gloucester rely on mere home advantage. We have a side which is a formidable proposition for anyone, and which looks increasingly like a 'big occasion' outfit. No less than seven members of the team have received some form of representative recognition this season, and that doesn't include Malcolm Preedy, who is, of course, an International in his own right. A couple more must be in the frame for such honours in the near future.

Personally, I wouldn't take bets on this one. It will probably suit Gloucester to start underdogs, while Bath, with that defeat to digest, have a lot of pride at stake.

The 'rub of the green', the odd awkward bounce, any number of factors could influence the result, and sheer nerves could play a part too.

But it's still just a Rugby match. If Gloucester lose I shall be as sick as a pig for a few hours, but by the time the pubs open tomorrow, I shall have got over it, and be looking forward to the rest of the Season.

Bath are always welcome at Kingsholm. All other considerations apart, today sees a game between two respected Clubs who have been playing each other almost since the Gloucester Club was founded, about ten years after Bath. You could say that the Pilkington Cup Semi Final is just an excuse to play them for a third time in the season.

Welcome to everyone, players, Officials and supporters alike. Hope you thoroughly enjoy your visit.

WELCOME TO PILKINGTON

I'm told that our generous Sponsors, Pilkington PLC, have brought a large contingent along today, and we're very pleased to see them. Sponsoring a major National competition is a hefty financial investment, and the whole English game ought to be exceedingly grateful to them.

Mr. A. L. Cove, the Company's PR Manager, writes "Pilkington would like to express its appreciation for the backing it has received from all concerned, and that includes the referees and officials who have been concerned."

Likewise, Mr. Cove, likewise.

... AND THANKS TO ARJO-MECANAIDS

One of today's problems was always going to be car parking. Our thanks to our neighbours, Arjo-Mecanuids, nationally famous for the equipment they supply to the NHS, and others, who have made their car-park available to us this afternoon. It's helped a lot, and I'm sure has made the job of the Police that much easier.

I'm told that they have representatives at the game, and we all hope that it won't be the last time we have the pleasure of their company.

If you're one of the drivers who has taken advantage of their hospitality, then perhaps you ought to remember that the car-park will close at 5.45 this evening, which is reasonable enough — but I wouldn't want you to find yourself locked in until after the Easter holidays.

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DAVID I. ROBINS M.Inst.T.T.

THANKS TO THE COUNTY TOO

There's no need to go into the story about the extra 1500 tickets which became available when the 'Tump' was opened up. We should, however, offer our thanks to the Gloucestershire County Council, who relaxed the rules, for this one occasion, to make that possible.

They didn't have to do any such thing, and I'm sure will be monitoring events carefully today, in case a similar set of circumstances arise in the future. It behoves us, therefore, to be on our best behaviour and not give anyone the chance to point a finger at us if we need similar co-operation at some other time.

AND WHILE I'M ON THE SUBJECT

. . . . the Police could, presumably, have objected too. If any problems arise, they could well do so in the future. You would therefore be doing yourself, and everyone else, a favour by co-operating with the Stewards in every way possible — and don't forget, the Club has had to supply a lot more of those than usual today.

If some idiot starts shouting off his mouth, whatever colours he's wearing, don't rise to the bait. Don't try to bring vast supplies of liquor into the Ground, and please keep all steps and gangways clear at all times.

In fact, in this rather odd situation, which no one has quite faced before, it would be worth while if we all just watched it a bit. You never know — the way the game is going, it could be the usual order of things, before very long.

FYLDE ON MONDAY

Yes, there is life after Pilkington. And, perhaps, in the general euphoria of the occasion, we should spare a thought for New Brighton, who have had to step aside today, and thus lose their usual highlight of an Easter trip to Gloucester. Shame things had to work out that way.

However, don't forget that Fylde arrive on Monday, which is always an enjoyable event. This year, it's also the occasions when we say 'Thanks' to all those splendid people who sponsor games, and otherwise support us in many and varied ways.

After that, we have only one more home First XV game — the final Courage Clubs Championship game against Nottingham on April 22nd. It's worth remembering that they gave Bath quite a fright in the Cup Quarter Final, and are certainly a side to be reckoned with.

Meanwhile, United play Bridgend Sports, right here, on April 1, and it would be nice to give them some well-deserved support.

It occurs to me that, while the League does have its undoubted benefits and attractions, in all sorts of ways, it does make the job of the Fixture Secretary very difficult indeed, and distorts the fixture list, somewhat so that we do sometimes get these long barren spells. No doubt, it will sort itself out, in the fullness of time.

PATRONS' NIGHT

Wednesday, April 5th, has been fixed as the date for the famous Patrons' Night for the 1988/9 Season. If you're a Patron, you won't want to miss it.

The festivities start at 7.30 p.m., in the Complex, and Andy Mitchell or Mervyn Ellway will be pleased to give you your ticket. Please don't ask Terry Tandy for one. He's got his hands full today, without being besieged by thirsty Patrons.

ON TO THE FINAL

I'm quite sure that, whoever wins today, sizeable contingents, from both cities, will be going along to Twickenham for the Final on April 29th. It's worth pointing out that all clubs get 10% of the proceeds from any tickets they sell for that momentous occasion.

So if you're going along, and especially if you're running a coach, get your tickets from Gloucester or Bath RFC. We might as well have any money that's going.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RUARI

Did you notice that Ruari McClean was on the benches for the Scotland side playing France last Saturday? 'One more step to go!' as Apple Mosaic, our successful local rock group would sing.

I'm sure the experience won't have done Ruari any harm at all.

TAILPIECE

You have to hand it to Alun Pritchard for style. He was the only Welshman watching the England-Wales game at a party at Peter Gould's house last Saturday.

When the final whistle went, he didn't say a word. Not a gloat, not a comment. He simply took his daffodil, and with all the dignity in the world, hung it in the place of honour over the bar.

PETER ARNOLD



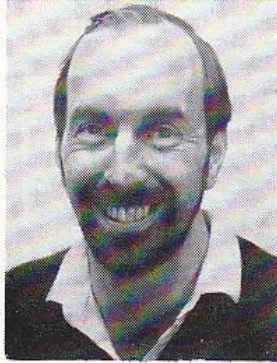
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TALKING RUGBY with . . . The Citizen sports editor Terry Phillips

Bath have their eyes on a Courage Championship and Pilkington Cup double and centre Simon Halliday says: "Gloucester feel their form is as good as it has ever been and they'll fancy their chances today.

"But it suits us to know we have a real battle on our hands. It is a question of known quantities testing themselves and if we play to our potential we have every chance."

Barry Clark will be cheered on by members of his local club Stow-on-the-Wold today when he runs out to face Bath.

He won't be able to hear them among the 10,500 people present in an all-ticket crowd, but the knowledge that his mates from Stow are backing him will be a help on a day packed with tension.

"I bought the tickets for Stow players before I knew I would be playing," says Clark, "But I am delighted they will be there.

"They have given me great support since I came to Gloucester."

Clark has made massive strides since coming to Kingsholm and establishing himself as Mike Teague's regular deputy at number eight.

Commitments on his farm near Stow restricted early season appearances, but Clark will be given a further chance to progress while Teague is out on an enforced rest due to the concussion he suffered while playing for England against Wales.

Right now Clark's work on the farm is dominated by the lambing season and he works 12 hour shifts from 5 am to 5 pm.

"I volunteered for that shift because it allows me to attend training at Kingsholm," explains Clark, "And the hours are not as bad as it first seems.

"With lambing I am not under pressure all day. There is plenty of time for cups of coffee and the odd break because I am just ensuring everything goes well with the lambing."

Today, though, Clark turns away from being gentle with the lambs to tackle the task of facing Bath's ferocious pack.

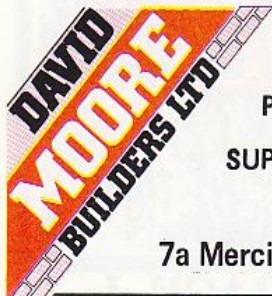
"When I played against them in a club match a few weeks ago it was the biggest game of my life," says Clark, "I thought that was the highlight of my season when we beat them.

"Now, suddenly, I have another chance and another big game. I feel desperately sorry for Mike Teague, but it is fantastic for me and I cannot wait for the match.

"I have played alongside Ian Smith and John Gadd several times this season and it has gone pretty well. Now

we face a bigger test than normal on a bigger occasion, but we will give it everything.

"Bath are an outstanding team, there is no doubt about that, but we are more than capable of winning today."



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