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Replacements:
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Peter Arnold ...

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO PUT AWAY THE INSECT REPELLANT...



Just about ten days ago, a three-year old friend of mine was scared by a marauding wasp. It was the last incident of its kind, ending a summer which was almost as remarkable for its infestation of stripey buzzers as it was for its long spells of sunshine.

The sun has gone, but we still have to contend with Wasps, and the fact that they only have two legs each, rather than the conventional six, doesn't reduce the danger of getting stung in the least. And the way today's respected and welcome visitors have been playing their rugby, over the last season or two, does make one wonder if they don't, in fact, possess more than the regulation number of lower limbs

We found out all about that, right at the beginning of last season, and it was as traumatic an experience as any we endured in a season remarkable for its alternating spells of depression and euphoria. As you may well recall, we went to Sudbury as full of optimism as we have ever been at the start of a new campaign. We had new faces in the side, a new Director of Rugby, a new Team Coach with a slightly awesome track record. On September 10th we arrived at the Wasps ground on the end of a run of five victories, including one over South Africa's famed Stellenbosch University, on their own turf. Small wonder we all anticipated a positive start to the League season.

So what happened ? Wasps beat us by 45 points to 8, and seven tries to one. Earth has seldom been come down to with quite such a bump.

We also lost the return fixture on January 7th. The scoreline was 21-16, but rather like the encounter with Leicester, a couple of weeks ago, it doesn't really do Gloucester justice. The game was a close one all through, and could have gone either way. I would like to think that we shall see a similar occasion today, although it is a little difficult to prophesy what either side will do at any given time, just at the moment.

I suppose that the surprise of Wasps' season so far, has been the defeat by old rivals, Harlequins, who are proving formidable opposition for anyone this time round. One is bound to note, however, that it took a whole hat-trick of Pears drop goals in the last five minutes to work the oracle for 'Quins. Good for him, but you can't actually rely on that sort of performance every week.

In spite of last Saturday's dire events, if Gloucester play to the peak of their potential today, they can win. So, very obviously, can Wasps. One way and another, it should be a very good game. What's more, there seems no reason to doubt, that given decent conditions, it will be a highly entertaining game. While Wasps don't seem to be quite as frenetic in their ambitions to run the ball from all over the place, these days, they are still a highly mobile side, with a great deal of sheer talent to call upon. What's more, they have, for the moment, anyway, Rob Andrew's trusty boot, which could make all the difference - again, in spite of the dire events of last week.

Let's, as Confucius is reported to have stated on one memorable occasion, 'lay back and enjoy it'. Wasps are always worth watching, and they are always very welcome to Kingsholm. We hope they have a thoroughly enjoyable visit, and wish them luck for the 1995/6 season.



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ONE FOR THE CHRISTMAS LIST

Our old friend Gwyn Hiatt of the County Library Service has been at it again, assiduously as always, digging out rugby books recently acquired by the Library, and giving us details of them. This time, he's told me about a compendious volume entitled 'The Handbook of Rugby'.

As the title suggests, it's an all-things-to-all-men sort of publication, containing enough variety of information to ensure that anyone interested in the game, from any point of view at all, will find something to interest him, or her. I'm careful to include the Distaff Side, because there is, unusually, a section headed 'Women's Rugby'.

The Handbook has been compiled by Keith Miles, who has gathered an impressive list of contributors around him. Dusty Hare provides advice and instruction about both kicking and full-back play generally. J.J. Williams does the same service for aspiring wingers, with David Duckham weighing in on behalf of the centres. Scrum-half and outside-half play is covered by Les Cusworth, with the interests of the boiler room up front being served by Nairn MacEwan, Peter Brown and Sandy Carmichael, handling the back-row, second-row and front-row respectively.

But the 'Handbook of Rugby' is far more than an instruction manual. There are sections devoted to Officials, to the Laws, to history, mini-rugby, refereeing and coaching, together with much more. The style is eminently readable, and the whole thing well worth adding to your Christmas list.

And I do have to add, in case Gwyn Hiatt takes me to task for the lack thereof, that if you don't want to buy the book, you can always borrow it from the wide range of rugby books available from the County Library.

Thanks Gwyn! It's nice to know that current pressures on the Service's book fund are not yet so great that you can't keep the interests of rugby people at heart.

WE GET LETTERS (1)

Talking about books, David Pryce, of Dursley, harks back to a piece I was able to include in the Leicester programme about a lovely old volume unearthed at a sale by my good friend and colleague, Brian Ward-Ellison. But let David speak for himself.

Dear Peter

The article in the Leicester programme under "Fascinating Find" stirred my interest in rugby books old and new. Amongst the many publications on this subject in my possession is one entitled "Rugby Football" by H. B. T. Wakelam which was first published in 1936, but my copy is dated January 1945.

According to Chapter II, "Refereeing & control of play", Gloucester were at that time affiliated to the London Society of Rugby Union Referees. To quote from the book "Mr Arthur J. Trollope of the Rugby Union, who is in supreme charge, actually "places" every Saturday from 130 to 150 referees, catering for almost every club in the London area, as well as places as far afield as Brighton and Portsmouth. Incidentally too, such provincial clubs as Leicester, Coventry, Gloucester and Moseley are subscribers to this L.S.R.U.F.R.; although they are only served upon occasion."

We all know in how much esteem London Society referees are held in at Kingsholm. So therefore can we ask at the next AGM for the Club to confirm whether or not we still subscribe to the L.S.R.U.F.R. . . and if we do, then can we withdraw immediately and save the Club a few bob!

Yours sincerely, David Pryce

Point taken, but let's not be beastly to London refs. in spite of the mythology which exists in these parts. Anyone who takes more than a passing interest in the rugby scene will be conscious that some disquiet is being expressed, currently, about the quality of refereeing in quarters much more rarified than the Gloucester Match Programme.

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WE GET LETTERS (2)

This week's second piece of correspondence refers back to another topic of some importance. You may recall that, a couple of weeks ago, we printed a stern warning, issued by the RFU, about the dire consequences which could ensue if International tickets, issued to clubs, were to be found in the hands of unauthorised bodies such as hospitality package organisers. Briefly, a club, such as Gloucester, could have their ticket allocation withdrawn for up to three seasons, even though the offending passports had been sold in all good faith to apparently trustworthy Members.

But read what Mr. Renfield has to say:

Dear Mr. Arnold,

In last Saturdays programme you carried a warning of what might happen if Twickenham tickets were sold on.

On a different but related topic, I enclose a copy of an article from "When Saturday Comes", a football comic (I have some odd friends) which you might find interesting.

Thanks for the continuing good read in the programme. I had to go to Wasps recently (brother in law's birthday, no excuses acceptable) and there was nothing to read while Rob Andrew placed the ball as if he were balancing angels on the head of a pin, contemplated the far horizons, compensated, in best chaos theory style, for the effect on his kick of a butterfly breaking wind in Walsall, mentally did his tax returns and then booted it. Of course, against Australia this is all perfectly acceptable.

Regards, Herbie Renfield

The article to which Herbie refers is too long to reproduce in full, and I'd probably be infringing copyright if I tried. But basically, it refers to provisions in the Criminal Justice Act which allows legal action to be taken, by the Police, against ticket touts. Unfortunately, they can be applied, apparently, to ordinary supporters who simply have a ticket or two to get rid of, and don't want to make a profit out of them - and that's happened to all of us, at one time or another.

One or two remarkable examples are quoted, the most mind-boggling of all being the case of a 10 year-old Stoke City supporter who had an £11.00 ticket for a game which he found he wasn't able to attend. He attempted to resolve the problem by putting a small ad. in his local paper, offering the item for £7.00. Then he found himself reported to the Police for so doing!

Three Birmingham City supporters were actually arrested for trying to sell one spare ticket for face value, after being approached by a plain clothes officer, who should have been able to tell the difference between genuine fans and people making a business out of it.

Finally, there was the case of a coach driver finding himself with seven spares after that number of passengers had failed to turn up. He attempted to minimise his firm's losses by selling them outside the gates, again at face value. Consequently, the poor chap found himself in court, where the judge confessed himself at a loss to know what the defendant was doing there, and asked if the tickets were forgeries, or had they been stolen?

My point is that I can't quite see how the Criminal Justice Act can make a distinction between tickets for a soccer match, and those for a game of rugby. Therefore, we might all be vulnerable in similar circumstances. I'd like to think that the Gloucestershire Constabulary has more sense, but you never know what you might be getting yourself into at a venue outside our area.

You have been warned, and thanks to Mr. Renfield for pointing the matter out. I suppose the answer is to sell any spare tickets before you set out, or better still, return them to the issuing club, who normally wouldn't have any trouble in getting rid of them.

As to Herbie's rude remarks about Rob Andrew's kicking style, my apologies to Rob with the contention that Our Man in Longhope is only pulling his leg, if you'll pardon the expression.

But why confine yourself to Australia, Mr. Renfield? We can all think of sides much nearer to home where Rob can use a rocket launcher, as far as we're concerned.

Anyway, I'll take a small wager that we're the only rugby programme in the country, today, which prints a discussion about either Chaos Theory, or the digestive processes of the Lepidoptera of the West Midlands.

SO YOU WANT A TIME-PASSER...

Just for Herbie Renfield, here's a little teaser to pass the time when he's not particularly interested in what's happening on the pitch.

We're all used to lock forwards changing positions during the line-out, so why can't we do it in the Programme ? Can you change 'WEST' to 'SIMS' in six steps by changing one letter of the name 'WEST' at a time, providing a genuine English word at each stage ? Here's a little grid for you, and I'll give you the answer in 'Tailpiece'.

WEST

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SIMS

FINALLY, ON BOOKS...

... at the same sale that Brian Ward-Ellison acquired the book referred to above, he also got his hooks on a copy of the 'Official Guide to the City of Gloucester', published by the Corporation in 1930. Obviously, it's a nostalgia-packed publication, but I won't go into that now. More relevant, is the description of Gloucester RFC, included under the heading 'Sports and Pastimes':

Rugby Football has always been the premier winter game in the City. The Gloucester Club was founded in 1873, and throughout its career, has held a foremost position amongst the leading Rugby Union organisations in the country.

The Club has a splendid ground at Kingsholm, a distance of only five minutes' walk from the Cross, where accommodation is afforded for over 20,000 spectators....

20,000 spectators ! In 1930 ! Of course, that was before the Clubhouse and the Complex were built, not to mention the Hospitality suites, but it's still a far cry from the 10,500, or thereabouts, which the Fire Officer lets us have now. And it's interesting that the maximum capacity which Mike Coley and his architectural advisors can foresee for an all-seater stadium is 17,500.

How Richard Hill Sees It



In the Leicester programme, I ventured to remark that I hoped that Richard Hill would supply me with a piece for this page at some stage. I'm happy to report that he didn't need asking twice, and that said piece is duly to hand. Here goes.

The first 3 weeks in my role as Director of Coaching have been spent, trying to get to know the players, the coaching staff **and** the committee members. It has also provided the opportunity to have a crash course on how the playing side at the club operates, ie recruitment, preparation for matches, selection, training facilities, fitness programme etc.

I have no doubt, that you will **not** be surprised to hear that there is much to be done. There are a lot of very good aspects on the playing side and this is down to the hard work and honesty of the people who have been involved, but I am afraid that there is no escape from the fact that Gloucester has fallen way behind other 1st Division clubs.

The problems that Gloucester now face, will not be solved overnight by some magic formula.

I accepted the post of Director of Coaching because Mike Teague, Alan Brinn and Mike Coley have convinced me that everyone at Gloucester now understand the problems and all want to work together to resolve them.

There is a definite view that Gloucester have realised just in time the importance of making some significant changes.

The Coaching staff and players are now under **no** illusions as to the

enormity of the task ahead. The initial aim being to avoid relegation to Division 2.

In order to achieve our first aim all concerned will have to dig as deep as they can into their physical and mental resources and prepare themselves for a battling 6 months.

With the enthusiasm and determination that already exists here and with typical Gloucester and West Country character I firmly believe that Gloucester will weather the storm before Christmas and with an even greater need of the fanatical Gloucester support — we **will** begin to improve and start on the ladder to climb towards the likes of Bath, Leicester and Harlequins.

Success will come for Gloucester the hard way, and at the end of the day we will have earned and appreciated every bit of it.

Richard Hill

Peter Arnold (cont)

GOLDEN WINNERS

It's only right that we publish the names of our 'Golden Gamble' winners, from time to time. Mellifluous though the tones of the estimable Graham Spring may be, once his announcement at half-time is over, it's gone for ever, so here is some hard copy for you.

Here are our September winners. Why shouldn't you feature in this list about this time next month?

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'CHIP OFF OLD BLOCK' TIME

Remember Dave Pointon? I'd be surprised if you didn't, and there are those among us who would contend that we could do with his quicksilver running and metronomic left boot about now.

Gloucester RFC never had a trustier servant than Dave, willing to slot in at just about any back-division position he was asked to fill, and certain to perform creditably in any of them. So when we come across a youngster bearing the Pointon genes in his genetic make-up, it behoves us to treat him seriously. That's one reason why we're delighted to welcome Daniel Pointon as our Match Mascot, this afternoon.

Daniel - AKA 'Danni' to the family - has just attained the ripe old age of seven. He, together with Mum, Dad and older brother, Joseph, live at Witcombe, and he attends St. Mary's School in Churchdown. Knowing that Dave, himself, teaches at the 'Rugby Academy' of St. Peter's High School, you won't be at all surprised to learn that Joseph attends that centre of educational excellence, and plays for the school's Under 13's.

No doubt, young Danni will do the same, in the fullness of time, and although he's interested in any ball game, he states that his two major preoccupations are rugby and cricket. Again, knowing Dave Pointon's considerable abilities with the bat, that should not surprise anyone.

Today, however, is Danni's day, we hope he thoroughly enjoys it, and thank him for doing us the honour of turning out in this way.

No doubt we shall see both the Pointon brothers running out in the cherry-and-white strip in a few years time. We look forward to it.

COACH TO BRISTOL

As you might expect, there will be a club coach to Bristol next week. The fare is £4.00.

Fair enough so far, but there is one variation which you should note, whether you're travelling by coach, or making your own way there. As you may have heard, the match is to be covered by Sky, which means an *early* kick-off, the tea-time experiment having been terminated for this season. The game kicks off at 2.15, and the coach will leave Kingsholm at 11.00am.

Whether you're travelling or watching on the box, don't forget the earlier time. I'd hate you to miss it.

TAILPIECE

Had a conversation with one of our most respected and cherished opponents of a few years back, just a little while ago. To wit, one Mike Rafter - 'Rafter the Grafter' himself. As you'll affectionately recall, Mike was a flaming nuisance when he played for Bristol, and a bloke we were delighted to have on our side when he was skippering the County.

It was good to see him again, he sends his regards to everyone who remembers him, and still goes on about how much he enjoyed playing at Kingsholm. Most of us will remember the cheer he used to get as he ran up past the Shed before the kick-off - whichever side he was playing for.

Actually, Mike tells me that that 'Grafter' nickname is now outdated. Apparently, nowadays, he is known far and wide as 'Charlie'.

This came about when touring, on one occasion, towards the end of his career. His room-mate wandered into the hotel bedroom on arrival, dropped his bags on the floor, and said "Cheers Rafter! My God, you haven't half lost some hair. You look like Charlie Drake!" And the name stuck.

And the answer to my little puzzle earlier is as follows:

WEST, WENT, TENT, TINT, TINS, SINS, SIMS

SPANNERS SPIEL

Where do you begin to explain last weeks performance against ORRELL's 2nd string at Kingsholm.

It goes without saying we were poor in all departments, with the exception of some clean lineout ball, but even that was wasted, almost immediately.

We were slow to the breakdowns and generally one pace all afternoon, with very poor handling and ball retention in the tackle was at its worst.

We could never seem to put any continuity to our game and couldn't find that vital spark from any department. All the lads were under no illusions how badly they played and training has been very intense this week. Addressing all the problems — lets hope it was just a one off!

This week we travel to Sudbury to play Wasps and hopefully with a few changes to the Team and a good shake up of the rest, they may feel the backlash of the Orrell defeat — something which was so out of character of the United Team — especially on our own patch!

So, for everyone who braved the weather last week and supported us, which I know many of you did and have done all season, the lads send a big apology and will endeavour to put things back to normal for BRISTOL UNITED in a weeks time for our Mid-West League match at Kingsholm.

PLEASE DO NOT ADJUST YOUR SETS!!!

Dave Spencer, United Coach

Ed Martin ...

Seventy years ago, Gloucester was recovering from their first-ever loss at the Memorial Ground – on Saturday October 3, 1925, Gloucester were finally proved not to be invincible at Bristol, the home side breaking the Gloucester “jinx” nine points to five.

Bill Bailey duly recorded the matter the following week in the Citizen: *“... and who is there amongst followers of Gloucester who would wish to rob our friends at the southern end of the County the glory of their achievement? I have spoken to a few who witnessed the match, and one and all agreed that on the day’s play victory went to the better equipped side. That is a candid admission, but no more than I expected from impartial supporters of the Gloucester Club...”*

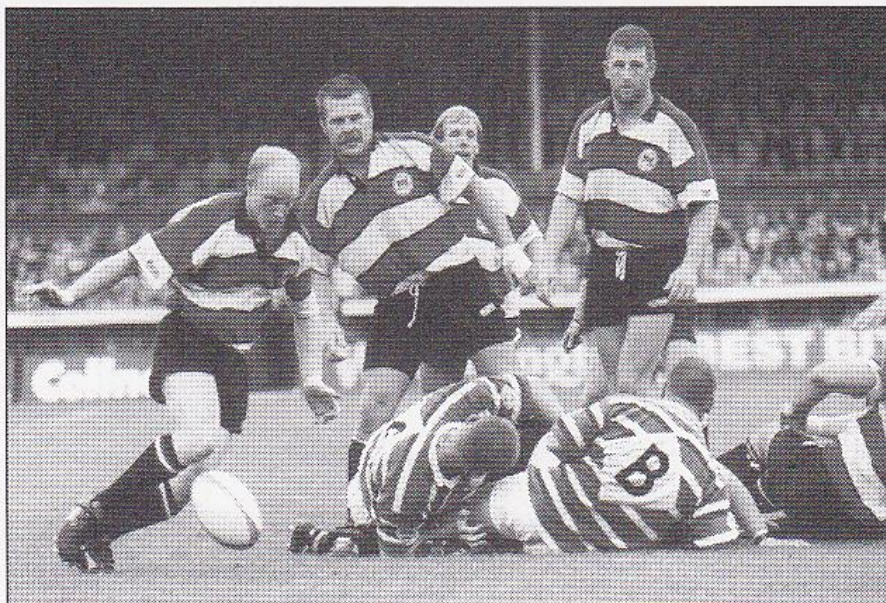
How times change! In the Nineties, is there such a being as an impartial Gloucester supporter – especially when it comes to a match against Bristol? And it is difficult to imagine that back in the Twenties there were too many impartial supporters. But the words are there, on the front page of the Citizen ... *“impartial supporters of the Gloucester Club.”*

The Bristol Times and Mirror described the match as *“a battle royal between the forwards, and the Bristol eight, contrary to previous experience, proved not only as good as Voyce and his comrades, but a shade better. No secret was made of the fact that Gloucester expected to get the upper hand in this department, and thus counteract the acknowledged superiority of Bristol’s three quarter line.”*

The London Times, perhaps really impartial, reported that the result *“showed that Bristol again possesses a fairly well equipped side.”* The unnamed sportswriter went on to say that the Bristol forwards were *“remarkably quick on the ball and capable of holding their own even against their lusty neighbours in the scrummages and mauls.”*

And at this point the “Thunderer” got down to the nitty gritty... *“it was in fact a true West Country battle fought out mainly with archaic weapons, but raised above the level of mere forward scrapping by the speed with which both teams conducted operations.”*

Ah, that’s more like it... An impartial Gloucester supporter, indeed. Will the Citizen ever live that one down?



Bruce Fenley in action during the match at Kingsholm against Leicester two weeks ago

(Photo Tony Hickey)