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Peter Arnold ...



THE GREATEST ROUND ROBIN IN THE GAME

Bath beat us in the Cup, a couple of weeks ago, having defeated Bristol by a similar margin, and with almost as much difficulty, in the previous round. Today, we complete the 'round robin' with the visit of the Old Enemy to Kingsholm.

Quite simply, there isn't anything like the competition between the three great West Country sides anywhere in the English game. It's been going on for generations, has a passion about it which outsiders find difficult to appreciate or understand, and needs no external aids to boost its importance and commitment.

As some poor hack, whose name escapes me for the moment, wrote in the Bath programme for the Cup Semi Final: *"This is a private affair. Games involving Bath, Bristol and Gloucester always are, and we don't need cups, leagues, lottery draws or demonstrations of Rugby League to make them special, highly competitive and occasions to savour."*

So what of today's game? The old phrase, 'you tell me' springs to mind. I think that any Gloucester supporter finds it difficult to understand why today's welcome and respected visitors aren't right up there at the top, knocking on the doors of the Baths and Leicesters of this world. At one point this season, Bristol had Arwell Thomas playing for Wales, Messrs. Archer and Regan playing for England and Paul Hull who should have been.

They also have a whole clutch of players who one would expect to be making their mark in no uncertain manner. Yet, from the point of view of an outsider looking in, they don't seem to have gelled the way one would have expected. Perhaps the new coaching structure will change all that, and the stimulus of a visit to Kingsholm might just be the factor required to pull it all together. Today, both sides badly need to win, and perhaps the old cliché about the 'side which wants it most' will apply.

Which brings me back to where I started, really. Gloucester and Bristol games are something special, and that applies just as much off the field as on. It's always one of the highlights of the Season to welcome Bristol, yet again, and this, very peculiar, season is by no means any exception.

Have a great time with us, Bristol. The season wouldn't be the same without you.

ALL RIGHT - SO WE LOST

So Bath beat us in the Semi Final. But I gather that John Hall and Phil de Glanville weren't very happy with the manner of it. I don't think they should be too downhearted, though. They were up against a Gloucester side which fought for everything, which looked stronger than Bath at the end, and were tigerish in their determination to do well. It's arguable that there isn't another side in the land which could have kept Gloucester out in that furious second half, and it took a team fielding the experience of thirteen International players to do it.



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From our own point of view, I think we can look back on the game with enormous pride. A little bit more luck, a shade more experience and discipline in the early stages, when Jon Callard's boot did the damage which eventually won the game, perhaps a few minutes of injury time in either half, and who knows what might have happened ? The lads did us proud, and have no reason to let their heads go down whatsoever.

And all that was only the *hors d'oeuvre*. The main course arrives next Wednesday evening, right here at Kingsholm, when Bath arrive to contest their Courage League fixture.

That's going to be an electric occasion. The fact that we are playing it under lights in the evening adds, I think, to Gloucester's home advantage, because, inevitably, it will have an effect on the travelling support which Bath can muster. If they thought the Gloucester noise was intense at The Rec, they - quite literally - ain't heard nothing yet.

Bath will certainly be up for it, as the current idiom has it. Remember, a loss next Wednesday could cost them the Championship, and they're not going to surrender that at all lightly. On the other hand, a win for Gloucester could go a long way towards securing First Division status next season, whatever the RFU decree on the structure which will apply at that time.

Don't forget that it's a late kick-off. 7.45, as ever was. I will repeat that. SEVEN FORTY-FIVE.

Tickets are available from the Office, if there are any left by the time you read this, but do remember that as an 'ordinary' (if you'll pardon the expression) Courage League game, the match isn't an all-ticket affair. However, we're obviously expecting a crowd of sardine-tin proportions, so it might behove you to get here a bit early.

It might not be a bad idea for you, if possible, to leave the car at home that evening. The car park will inevitably be jam-packed, and we certainly don't want to offend the neighbours any more than we can help by parking thoughtlessly.

And, to complete the saga, Bath still have to visit Bristol in the League. We wish tonight's visitors all the luck in the world.

THERE FOR THE BEER

It might come as an unwelcome shock to learn that, after today, there are only two more First XV home games this season, i.e. Bath as aforementioned, and the vital Saracens visit on April 27th. The spectre of the wasteland stretching from May to September therefore, begins to loom large on the horizon.

This year, however, All Is Not Lost. You could meet up with like-minded, right-thinking Good Fellows (and Ladies) at the Spartans Ground, in St. Oswald's Road, on the 28th and/or 29th of June.

The occasion is the First Gloucester Beer Festival, organised by Gloucester Rotary. I'm told that, not only will there be a ginormous range of beers and ciders available, some of them of decidedly esoteric vintage, probably brewed by naked virgins on a Blasted Heath somewhere at midnight on Midsummer Eve, but also a Wine Bar, for those whose taste is vinous rather than hoppish.

There will also be jazz groups and Country and Western entertainers, so you will have something to listen to when you fall over.

If you have friends visiting, or decide not to go home on the Friday evening, there will be camping and caravanning facilities. This could well be of interest to today's visiting Bristol contingent, in whose home area, I'm told, the event is also to be promoted. Which is why the Organisers particularly wanted me to mention the event today.

Opening hours will be, Friday, 28th June: 6.00pm to 11pm.

Saturday, 29th June: 11.00am to 11.00pm.

Cost will be £4.00 per day, which includes a special pint mug, and tickets are to be available from the Club Office - indeed, may be already, for all I know - as well as other local rugby clubs.

I'm sure a great time will be had by all. See you there. To start with, anyhow.

WE GET LETTERS

Over the years, a whole host of literate, articulate and learned people have contributed words of wisdom to the pages of Gloucester RFC's Programme to the benefit, and I'm sure, edification of all of us lesser mortals. However, seldom, if ever, has a correspondent of such suave elegance graced our humble publication as deigns to appear this time round.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to present to you, 'Ed O' The Shed', doyen of columnists of our delightful 'Shedhead' fanzine, of which even the Bath authorities are now taking notice:

Oi, Arnold!

Yer army game programme credits Pete Wilson with coining the 'andle "Richer Dill" fer are d'rector of coaching. Lemme put ya rite:

It was Shedhead wot used it first an' I should know, it was me wot wrote it! Shedhead bin usin' it since ishoo too - published the week Richer arived yer!

Now, f'yew doan' put matters strait in yer next programme yew'll be earring frum Shedhead's loyer - Sir Edmund Bludde-Shed QC - an' 'e can be a write b\$&!@d mind.*

Pardon me if I lapse into the vernacular.

Now lissen yer, Ed my son. Thee's got it all ass-backards. I never said as Pete Wilson coined the name 'Richer Dill'. I just writ as how I liked it. And so does Richer, I'm told. Says it makes 'im feel as 'e'd arrived, like.

So let's get that straight. And as fr yore loyer bloke. Send 'im down Barton Street. We'll soon sort b\$&#%r owt !*

This correspondence must now cease.

GRAHAM HANNAFORD'S QUIZ

You may remember that, in the programme for the Wasps Cup game, which seems an awful long time ago now, I printed a rugby quiz compiled by Graham Hannaford. The idea was to publicize an Old Cryptians reunion dinner at which the revered Horace Edwards was to be the guest of honour. That event has now passed, and I'm sure was a considerable success.

There was one prize on offer - two tickets for the Saracens game at the end of the season, generously provided by Gloucester RFC. This is the first opportunity I've had to announce the winner. He's Alan Kear of 69 Mayfield Drive, Hucclecote, a circumstance which surprises me not in the least, because I've had more than sufficient evidence of his erudition in such matters on previous occasions.

In fact, Alan supplied the only all-correct entry, although a Wasps supporter, living near Slough, got pretty close. My sympathies must, however, go to another regular correspondent, Roger Gibbons, equally erudite, who wrote 'Bob Hannaford' as the answer to Question 5, when I'm sure he knew as well as anyone that it was brother Charlie who won four Caps while playing for Bristol. Simply a slip of the pen, I'm perfectly certain.

Here's Alan Kear's winning entry. I'm sure that if he drops into the office, he'll be supplied with his tickets. Now see if you can supply the questions !

GRAHAM HANNAFORD'S RUGBY QUIZ

1. 1972
2. Alan Brinn. John Watkins
3. South Africa
England Beat SA 18-9, Biggest upset in Rugby history, after losing seven in a row, SA unbeaten in last seven tests.
England last of home unions to tour SA, at that time. The first time SA had been beaten at home by any of the four home unions.
England first touring team from any country to leave unbeaten since the first British 'Missionary' Tour of 1891.
4. Sydney Cricket Ground
Parc Des Princes, Paris
5. R. C. Hannaford (Charlie)
6. Cardiff Arms Park 1971
7. Gordon Hudson
8. New Zealand Natives 1889 at Blackheath
9. 1986 '87
10. T. W. Price (Tom)

continued on page 20

HOW VIKKI SEES IT



All sorts and conditions of Gloucester-oriented people have done us the honour of writing pieces for this page over the course of the past couple of seasons. These last few months have been so frenetic that I haven't liked to bother the club officials all that often, because it really has been the busiest period for them that I can recall, and they probably have better things to do.

The advantage of that situation has been that I've been able to open this page to a very wide variety of people, who don't normally get much of a platform, but whose interest in, and loyalty to, Gloucester RFC is nevertheless undoubted. However, there has been one sad lack. We haven't had anyone of the feminine persuasion gracing this spot. This, we are about to rectify.

Vikki Hyett is an unashamed, even proud, Sheddite, who misses very few games, home or away. So here's what she thought about Semi Final day, and hopes for this afternoon.

Well who would have thought that before Christmas Gloucester would reach the semi-finals of the Pilkington Cup and draw Bath away? I travelled down to Bath, as usual, on Andy Mitchell's coach, but beforehand our little group met in the Jockey (along with hundreds of others travelling on the club coaches) at 10.30am to have a drink or two, and the general feeling was that if one listened to one's heart Gloucester would win but if one listened to one's head Bath would win!! We arrived at the Rec (Rec by name and Rec by nature!) in plenty of time in order to get a good view. As regular visitors to the Rec will tell you — if you do not get there early the only thing you see is the ball being kicked up in the air! The atmosphere did not seem like the usual cup game, but then again there is never much atmosphere at Bath at the best of times! However, the grandstand side of the ground during most of the game seemed like The Shed revisited - 'Glawster' could be heard everywhere! I believe this helped lift the lads in the second half and at one point I thought we could win - however, it wasn't to be, and I came away from Bath very disappointed. I'm looking forward to the league game on Wednesday - and I have a feeling in my water that we can put one over them. It's about time and if we do, I'm sure there will be lots of hangovers on Thursday morning.

Now about today's game against the old enemy Bristo - this is always one of my favourite fixtures. I work at Nuclear Electric with many Bristolians and there is always plenty of friendly banter between us (especially with Paul Shone and Richard Nash - who will hopefully have made the trip up the M5 today). I am hoping for a Gloucester win in order to win a long-time bet with an old friend - every time the two teams meet we bet on a drink - if Gloucester win he coughs up and if Bristol win I cough up. We're about even at the moment.

Let's hope the RFU announces the 12-team league for next season soon so myself and my rugby companions Mike Warrior and Malcolm Ashdown can organise our trip to West Hartlepool - a trip we always look forward to. I couldn't make the trip last September, and I have been told by many people that I missed another good weekend away - so here's to the next one - I will definitely be there!

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OPTICIANS

Here's Vikki Hyett with one of those Newcastle players. Hasn't he got a brother who plays a bit, somewhere ?

Don't read too much into this picture, though. I'm told that Vikki's preferences run more towards a certain blond, hard-tackling Scottish centre. Play your cards right Donald....



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Ian Smith

Gloucester & Scotland

Peter Arnold (cont.). . .

COACHES FOR HARLEQUINS

I'm having to prepare this programme very early because of the advent of the Easter holidays. Even printers are entitled to time off now and then. As a consequence, at the time of writing, I don't have full details about coaches for the League game against the on-song Harlequins at the Stoop on Saturday next.

I am told, however, that coaches will be laid on, and I can only suggest that you enquire from the Fair Geraldine in the office.

STOP PRESS — a little bird called Bob Barge has now been in touch, and I gather that the cost of a coach ticket will be £7.50, leaving Kingsholm at 11.00am.

NICE TO SEE YOU, DOMINIC !

Our Match Mascot today is Dominic Harris, who has achieved the ripe old age of six. He attends Longlevens Infants School, which puts him well within reach of Longlevens RFC, in the fullness of time.

More to the point, he's the grandson of our own Trevor Pritchard, so the pedigree is obviously fine. Thanks for coming, Dominic ! Have a great day.

TAILPIECE

A while ago, I happened to switch on the telly, and by sheer chance, found myself watching Terry Wogan, of all people, interviewing Mickey Skinner, he of the remarkable line in waistcoats and bow ties, who is becoming a highly effective commentator, these days.

The tenor of the conversation was that Mickey Skinner, known in some circles as 'The Munch' because of his predilection for eating soft centres, was acknowledged to be something of a hard man in his playing days, and which others of similar persuasion did he respect most ?

His response was immediate and quite without any doubt at all.

"Mike Teague", he breathed, in hushed, awe-struck tones, quite unlike his usual delivery. "Oh ! Mike Teague ! The mighty man from Gloucester. Oh ! That man !"

He then proceeded to tell a couple of Mike Teague stories, one of which I'm pleased to pass on to you.

It concerns the World Cup Final at Twickenham, when England lost to Australia. I reproduce Mickey Skinner's words as closely as I can remember them.

"Mike got crunched, really crunched, in the middle of the field, by a big Australian forward, and knelt there with claret all over the place.. Will Carling ran over, very concerned. 'Mikey', he said, 'Mikey, are you all right ?'

'Ar ! said Mighty Mike. Ain't got time to bleed !' "

Sounds just like the Teaguey we know, doesn't it ?

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Ed Martin ...

Those of you that took a peek at Stuart Barnes' new organ — the December issues — will have noticed no less than two separate articles on the Cherry and Whites. The "Home Turf" section featured Gloucester's other cathedral — Kingsholm — with a description by Louis de Villiers, South Africa's Sportswriter of the Year, on watching the Harlequins match in The Shed, before widening into Kingsholm in general.

De Villiers refers to two publications — this august tome and the wonderful Shedhead, the "nasty and biased . . . funky fanzine" that Sports Pages bookshop in London is wanting to stock. The good people in what is probably the world's best sports bookshop pride themselves in stocking all the soccer club fanzines that they can get their hands on. But rugby 'zines are a rarity — word has it that Bath either have one or had one, as did a club "up north".

The second article was headlined: "Where Did We Go Wrong" in which Chris Hewett asks Richard Hill what happened at Saracens on November 4. There was a memorable line by Mr. Hewett, who I seem to remember once working the toy department of the Bristol Evening Post, *If Gloucester fail to survive the dogfight come April, they will regard the events of Bonfire weekend with the sort of relish Guy Fawkes reserved for firelighters*; he wrote. Nice one Hewett!

Two articles of Gloucester in one magazine is, to say the least, unusual. Could it be that Barnesey, who is the editor of First XV, is a closet Glawster supporter. Ever since he hung up his boots and decided that the word processor was better than a Bath strip, he has said some nice things about Gloucester in the Daily Telegraph and

on Sky. My, it's a crazy world! Next thing we know he'll be playing hooky from Sky's studio on stilts and popping over to have a chat with the supporters in the Shed.

In these 'ere parts there is the hope that Gloucester can turn Bristol over today beat Bars on Tuesday night (the moment of truth for Barnesey) and continue winning in seven day's time . . . there's no harm in dreaming.

One wonders if Katie Coker (who my spell checker tells me should be "Cooker" but I ignore it), of the Citizen's toy department, is hastily looking up what is probably the best opening to a newspaper sport report ever written in the English language, *"The million-to-one shot came in. Hell froze over. A month of Sundays hit the calendar . . ."* That was the legendary lead-in to a sports report of a shock result written by Shirley Povich (Shrilly Pivot, according to the gizmo) in the October 9, 1956 issue of the Washington Post. Ms. Coker will hopefully be able to paraphrase Mr. Povich's intro in Wednesday's Citizen after a home win against Bath!

COURAGE LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Bath	13	12	0	1	421	181	24
Harlequins	15	11	0	4	455	235	22
Leicester	13	11	0	2	339	164	22
Wasps	14	8	0	6	290	276	16
Sale	14	7	0	7	255	273	14
Orrell	14	6	0	8	226	331	12
Bristol	13	5	0	8	199	312	10
Saracens	14	5	0	9	237	374	10
Gloucester	13	3	0	10	199	275	6
W Hartlepool	13	0	0	13	223	423	0