



NEC HARLEQUINS

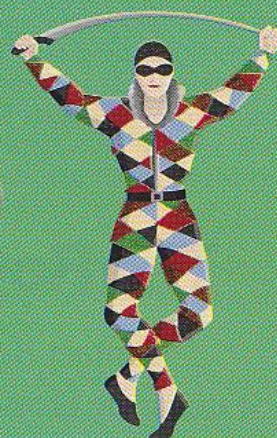
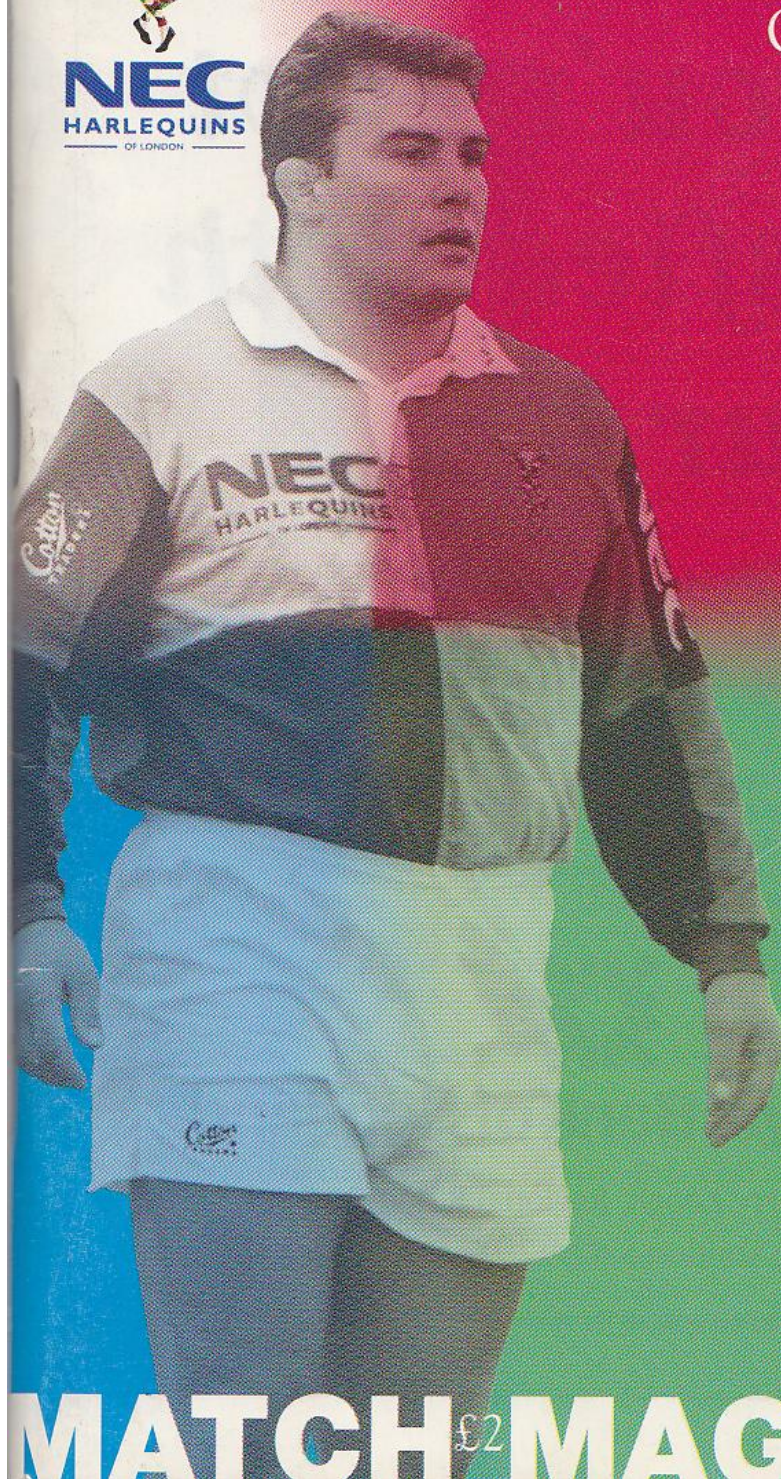
V

GLOUCESTER

LEAGUE

SATURDAY

AUGUST 31 1996



MATCH <sup>£2</sup> MAGAZINE



# NEC HARLEQUINS V GLOUCESTER

Saturday 31st August 1996

Kick-off 3.00 at The Stoop Memorial Ground

## NEC HARLEQUINS

Colours: Light Blue, Magenta,  
Chocolate, French Grey, Black and  
Light Green Shirts, Shorts: White

**Jim Staples** 21 Full back 15

Daren O'Leary 30 Right Wing 14

**Will Carling** 13 Right Centre 13

Peter Mensah 15 Left Centre 12

Spencer Bromley 4 Left Wing 11

Paul Challinor 6 Stand Off 10

Rob Kitchin 10 Scrum Half 9

**Jason Leonard \*** 1 Prop 1

**Keith Wood** 25 Hooker 2

**Laurent Benezech** 3 Prop 3

Alex Snow 20 Lock 4

**Gareth Llewellyn** 11 Lock 5

Bill Davison 33 Flanker 6

**Laurent Cabannes** 27 Flanker 7

Gareth Alison 2 No. 8

**Andy Mullins** 16 Replacement 16

Hilton Brown 5 Replacement 17

Steve Pilgrim 36 Replacement 18

Ian Pickup 19 Replacement 19

## GLOUCESTER

Colours: Cherry, White & Black  
Shorts: Black

Peter Hart

Paul Holford

Don Caskie

Lee Osborne

Dave Timmington

Martyn Kimber

Charlie Mulraine

Adey Powles

John Hawker

Phil Vickery

Richard Ward

Mark Cornwell

Rob York

Ian Smith \*

Simon Devereux

Scott Benton

Alastair Saverimutto

Andy Deacon

Scott Edwards

Referee

J.J.M. Pearson (RFU/Durham)

Touch Judges

G. Warren (RFU), C.J. Harrison (RFU)

**International/\*Captain**





## ONE NIGHT IN PARIS!



Just over a year ago I was at the Oval Test Match looking over the wall watching Colin Herridge being interviewed by Sky Television outside "The Cricketers". It was the morning after the announcement that rugby was to become professional. The rugby world was stunned, the Rugby Union speechless (after all, their representatives had been mandated to oppose any further relaxation of amateurism) and I was beginning to get annoyed.

I have not played rugby since 1980 - so I am hardly a child of these supposedly mercenary times. The only "freebie" I remember was the night a home-brew materials manufacturer came down on a training night and we all stood round looking jolly, drinking while photographs were taken. We were on "drink as much as you like terms" but it was so bad even Terry Claxton paid for a decent pint.

In subsequent years the chemistry of League competition, commercial and sponsorship involvement and rugby's rising public profile was destined to produce only one result. The Southern Hemisphere read the tea-leaves correctly and for 5 to 10 years ignored the regulations. The transition from amateurism to professionalism was consequently seamless and the quality of their rugby underscores their progress. Not so in the UK. Following the example of the Lord's Day Observance Society's dedication to outdated licensing laws, a small minority decided to stand in the way of the inevitable - usually in blazer and tie. Thus, what should have been a 5 year transitional programme happened, literally, overnight. The physical manifestation of such insanity is the unfinished stand before you - the structural damage to the game is the hiatus surrounding the Five Nations Championship and the gap in playing standards that has emerged between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

In the face of this confusion we have been totally focussed on building a squad that can compete with the very best irrespective of the ultimate competition structure that emerges in Club rugby.

Fortunately some things do not change. NEC Harlequins v Gloucester represents the meeting of the perceived poles of rugby - the City Slickers and the West Country Farmers. It has been going on for more than 100 years and I am sure we are all looking forward to the first instalment of the professional age.

ROGER LOOKER, Chairman



## JASON LEONARD talks to Editor MICHAEL WALE

No-one is relishing today's match more than our skipper Jason Leonard saying: *"Names don't mean anything to them. It's normally a hard, tough, game"*.

And his mind goes back to two years ago at Kingsholme when nothing but victory would keep the Quins in the First Division. Victory was achieved. The club never looked back. Jason remembers: *"Years ago Gloucester were always a very big forward side. Games against them were very tough. I think they looked upon Quins as the fancy Dans of London. I think they respect us now, because we've had success against them."*

*"They've had some brilliant players over the years like Mike Teague. Their present captain Dave Sims is a class player. He has been a regular in the England A side, and must be very close to making the full international side"*.

Jason should know, of course, because he has already made 49 appearances for England. And yet he comes from a very unlikely background as far as playing rugby is concerned. Born in Barking in that part of London on the way from the East End to the rest of Essex he went to school just around the corner from West Ham's training ground at Chadwell Heath. And yet Warren Comprehensive School was a hotbed for every sport. Besides Jason they produced at the same time the soccer player Tony Cottee and World champion featherweight boxing champion Colin McMillan.

Jason says: *"We had very good teachers right through the school. I'd played rugby from the age of ten. To be honest I was never agile enough to play soccer. Although we had a really good rugby side when the soccer lads could play."*

*"They made very fast wingers, and scored a lot of tries. But then the teachers dispute happened and master confined their out of school work. So the soccer lads just played and we continued to play rugby without them. Anyway one of our masters was Mickey Eyres, who played with Barking took me there, and I was in their Under 16's, when I was 13 or 14. Then when I was about 15 I played for the Under 19's. I was more shoulders than anything else in those days. I was by no means massive. I was still with Barking when I played for the England Under 19's. About 1987 I played my first full season for the firsts. We won the Essex Cup, the first time the club had ever done it, although they have repeated it several times since. By then they were in Division 5."*

He has always remained loyal to Barking whose clubhouse has many of his international shirts framed. And it is not unknown for him to take a pint or two there on a Sunday morning!

But then he decided to switch to Saracens, because he wanted a shot at



## JASON LEONARD

talks to Editor MICHAEL WALE

continued

higher class rugby. They were in the Second Division then with Tony Russ as coach, Almost immediately his international career began to hot up. *"I was on the bench for the England Under-21's against Romania. It was the first game played over there, and it was a curtain raiser before the full international. But I never got on".*

That first season he spent with them Saracens were unbeaten and promoted to Division One, where they finished fourth in their first year. He remembers in particular a sweet victory over Bath.

By 1990 he was picked for the England squad's tour of Argentina: *"it was their summer, and not only were the pitches hard but they played a very physical game. It was like a development squad really. England had just been pipped to the Grand Slam by Scotland, and half that squad stayed at home.*

David Pears, Dean Ryan, Tony Underwood, were all making their first appearances on that tour.

A year later he joined Quins: *"it was wonderful for me to play in such a great pack of internationals like Brian Moore, Paul Ackford, Troy Coker, Skinner and Winterbottom, Andy Mullins, Chris Butcher. It just brought my game on that much quicker than if I had stayed at Saracens, where I was becoming the most experienced player."*

He is glad the game has turned professional, but feels that many players will keep their job *"in case you break an arm or a leg. Until it all works out I think that is how it will be. But professionalism will mean that the players will get fitter and faster. So the game will be more exciting. Yes, I wish it had happened five years ago (he is now 28). I think it's very important though that youngsters coming into the game get an overall perspective, and keep their enjoyment of the game, and are aware of the social as well as the playing side of the game. Obviously things will change. As far as Quins are concerned on the day we've got a squad that could take on the best in the world. I'm sure we can win something this season"*.

Jason is obviously one of those players who enjoys his rugby, despite the pressures on him as captain: *"I find it quite enjoyable being captain. I've got no airs or graces. You have to spread yourself out among the players. As far as on the pitch is concerned you have to concentrate a little more on other people's game putting confidence into other people's play."*

When I first knew him he was a self-employed carpenter. Now he says: *"I've come off the tools. I'm on the management side I'm working for a demolition company"* . . Gloucester beware!



## OUR VISITORS TODAY - GLOUCESTER

In the great summer scramble to sign new players Gloucester's Richard Hill, Director of Coaching, has invested in youth. Two new players in the first team squad reflect this policy. Full back Chris Cattling comes into the first team squad, while still a student at Exeter University and Richard Johnson, former England under-21 scrum half was signed from Bath. An even more important signing from the same club came with the capture a fortnight ago of Ed Pearce, one the most promising back row forwards. He has already been marked out for an international future with appearances for England Colts and the Under-21 side. The gigantic Pearce, weighing in at 17 stone and reaching six foot six inches high with size 16 boots was indeed a coup for Richard Hill.

We're indebted to Katie Coker, the Gloucester Citizen's rugby reporter these past four years, for assistance in these notes. Excellent to welcome a woman rugby correspondent!

Gloucester's captain Dave Sims, lock forward now 26 years old is another player with England potential. He had already represented his country at Under-18 level, but this summer he was called up to train with the full England squad. Hooker Phil Greening, although only 20, has played for England at every level up to the A team. And he is another player hoping to represent his country at senior level not too far in the future.

Team manager John Fidler reports that the West Country side's preseason has gone well and pays tribute to the club's supporters: *"In the last game of last season when we needed to beat Saracens at Kingsholme to stay up there was a capacity 12,000 in the ground. After that game the goalposts were moved and Saracens and West Hartlepool allowed to stay up. And we're expecting a big invasion of The Stoop by the Red Army for the opening game."*

Like everyone else in his position Fidler admits: "We're all treading new territory this season. We're coping quite well. Some of the players, about half a dozen, are full-time. Some of them want to keep their jobs. It's no longer training 7-9pm three times a week. The players are doing gym work, training on the pitch during the day."

At least 12 players have left Gloucester since the end of last season. Some have been let go, but high profile lock forward Richard West was signed by Richmond, and Hilton Brown a South African, who plays hooker, came to The Stoop. His work caused him to move to London. He made several first team appearances last season.