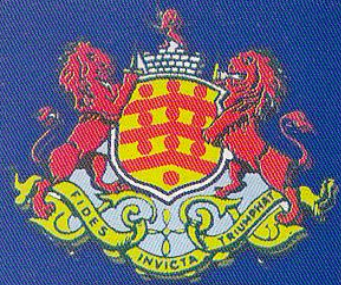


FDR
FIRST DIVISION
RUGBY



FOUNDED 1873

RUGBY


P R O M A G

Vol 1/19
£2.00

GLOUCESTER
V
HARLEQUINS
19th April 1997

**HARD
SEASONS SLOG**

 **COURAGE** 
CLUBS CHAMPIONSHIP

Westbury 



FOUNDED 1873



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Saturday 19th April 1997

Kick-off 3.00pm

GLOUCESTER

Cherry & White

HARLEQUINS

Light Blue, Magenta, Chocolate,
French Grey, Light Green & Black

15	Chris Catling	Full Back	Jim Staples (I)	21
14	Audley Lumsden	Right Wing	Darren O'Leary T	30
13	Craig Emmerson	Centre	Peter Mensah W 32	15
12	Don Caskie	Centre	Will Carling (I)	13
11	Mike Lloyd	Left Wing	Jamie Williams T	24
10	Mark Mapletoft PP	Outside Half	Thierry Lacroix (I) PPC	10
9	Scott Benton T	Scrum Half	Nick Walshe	22
1	Tony Windo	Prop	Jason Leonard ✓	1
2	Phil Greening (I) 20	Hooker	Keith Wood ✓	25
3	Andy Deacon	Prop	Alton Ozdemir 3	17
4	Rob Fidler	Lock	Gareth Llewellyn (I)	11
5	Dave Sims *	Lock	Luke Gross	34
6	Andy Stanley	Flanker	Rory Jenkins 2 INX	28
7	Nathan Carter	Flanker	Laurent Cabannes (I)	27
8	Simon Devereux	No.8	Bill Davison	33
	Laurie Beck	Replacements	Gareth Allison ✓	2
	Mike Peters		Laurent Benezech (I) ✓	3
	Alastair Saverimutto		Glyn Llewellyn (I)	12
	Trevor Woodman		Chris Wright	26
	Rob York		Jason Keyter ✓	32
	John Hawker		Paul Delaney	31

Referee

J Pearson (Co. Durham/RFU)

(I) International

* Captain

Touch Judges

S Savage (RFU)

C Leeke (RFU)

A Vote of Thanks...

...is probably due to us from today's welcome and distinguished visitors.

After all, their position in the Courage League table wouldn't look so healthy if we hadn't beaten both Wasps and Leicester. And it might encourage them to know that we intend to do them the same favour when we visit the 'Rec' in about ten days time.

Indeed, they may already have reciprocated by the time you read this. They were down to entertain Bristol on Tuesday evening. Of course, we could undo all that goodwill by coming first today. Don't make any mistake Quins. It could happen. It could just happen.

The relationship between Gloucester and the Harlequin Football Club goes back a very long way. Indeed, they were the first side I ever saw at Kingsholm, and that wasn't too long after William Webb Ellis got kept in after school at Rugby. As a very small boy, I recall being impressed by the pretty shirts, and enquiring why our team couldn't wear something like that.

Times change, of course, and so do reputations. Long gone are the days when one Shedhead was prompted to enquire of a departing Harlequin, nursing an injury, "Wassamatter, mate? Chipped yer nail varnish?" Unfair, of course, but when was the Shed ever expected to be impartial?

That archetypal Gloucester forward, Roy Fowke, famous both for his straightforward methods on the field, and his capacity for bitter beer, once asked a Harlequin back (at Twickenham, it was), what he did for a living. "Well, actually, old boy," came the reply "I'm at the Bar."

"Ooh, ar!" sallied 'Fowker'. "Which pub d'you serve in then?"

In these professional days, the trenchant and much-missed Roy Fowke wouldn't have found it necessary to ask that question. What's more, he would probably have approved of the way Harlequins play their rugby. No longer are they a set of highly dangerous backs who, at times, found it difficult to get a decent service from their scrum. The backs are as threatening as ever, but the front eight can be as formidable a proposition as you'll find in England. The one weakness, that of a reliable goal kicker, has been eradicated, and then some, by the arrival of Thierry Lacroix.

In fact, it's difficult to see a weakness in today's star-studded outfit from The Stoop. But then Leicester could have said the same when they arrived here, ten evenings or so ago. The memory of that famous victory will, no doubt, spur Gloucester on, as it will the supporters, but the players will know that they can't afford to give today's visitors an inch, in any aspect of the game. Similarly, Harlequins will be well aware that it isn't easy to win at Kingsholm, these days. They'll know that the early-season hammering they gave us was an aberration, unlikely to be repeated.

One way and another, it should be an intriguing game. Gloucester certainly want to win for security reasons, if nothing else. Harlequins need a victory if their European ambitions aren't to be shattered.

But, whatever the occasion, it's always good to see London's most famous club here at Kingsholm.

We hope they enjoy their visit.

Peter Arnold

5

Gloucester News

Where's Your Car

You will have noted that the local press has been harping on about the thorny issue of parking in the streets around the Ground again. They have a point. It must be galling in the extreme to find that you can't get your vehicle in or out of your own property because some rabid rugby supporter has been thoughtless enough to block your access. I've heard one or two people make remarks such as "Well, they knew what to expect before they came to live here", but that attitude is no way to win friends and influence people. The point is that, not only will this problem not go away, it will get worse. The attraction of coming to an improved ground, to watch International-class players just about every other Saturday, from September to May should ensure that. Games of the intensity of some we've seen lately will become more common. Quite a few organisations have a part to play here. The City Council, its Government-funded Safer City Scheme, public transport companies and bodies, local resident and tenant organisations, local traders, all have a legitimate interest. And what are the implications of the impending pedestrianisation of Northgate and Southgate Street? What will that do to traffic flows and bus routes and timetables? It's to be hoped that, sometime during the close season, all interested parties can get together and try to thrash out some systems, facilities and

guidelines which have a chance of satisfying everyone, at least partially. Here's an idea. Around Gloucester, various companies and organisations having a significant impact on their surrounding residents, have Local Liaison Committees which meet a few times a year to discuss matters of mutual interest, and hopefully solve problems, often before they arise. I've served on some - even Chaired a couple - and know they can be effective. I would certainly recommend Gloucester RFC to consider setting up such an organisation. Meanwhile, where are you parked today? Only one more home game - next Saturday - may give us problems, but that's no reason to ignore the neighbours, is it? We want to get on well with everyone.

Catching 'Em Young

Our Match Mascot today is George Yates, who at the advanced age of four-and-a-half, attends Dinglewell Infants School in Hucclecote. He doesn't miss many matches, doesn't young George, and usually watches from Hospitality Box 13, which he attends with his father, Tony, and his grandfather, Bill. Box 13, incidentally, is occupied by transport company Atcheson Topeka, who you may recall, recently generously sponsored new blazers etc. for the players.

Peter Arnold

Bristol Next Saturday

Our last home First XV fixture of the 1996/7 season kicks off next Saturday. Isn't it amazing how the wheel comes full circle ! We battle our way through the most fraught season any of us can recall, and in the end, find ourselves facing the Old Enemy themselves. There seems an element of Greek Tragedy about it.

That's just me being philosophical. The real point is that the lads have given us one hell of a season this time round, battling against odds that most wisecracks regarded as insuperable. You may have forgotten now, but hardly a commentator (with the honourable exception of S. Barnes Esq.) gave us a dog's chance of avoiding relegation at the beginning of the season, and yet, only ten days ago, some starry-eyed optimists were discussing our chances of 'getting into Europe', as the saying goes.

You'll agree with me, I know, that Hill's Angels deserve a real, old-fashioned, Kingsholm send-off during their last home game of the season.

We should all be here, roaring them on for all we're worth. We owe them that much at least.

Of course, that game doesn't end the season.

We still have to go to Bath (on the 30th) and to Northampton on May 3rd. Neither of those will be easy, as both sets of opposition still have a

great deal to play for. Details about coaches for those games, sufficient interest warrants either or both are as follows:

Bath: cost £5.50, departs Kingsholm 5.00pm

Northampton: cost £8.00, departs Kingsholm 11.00am

The Die is Cast...

...the Rubicon crossed, and any similar cliché you like to throw at me applies. After the momentous General Meeting at the Birdseye Walls Club, just over a week ago, one thing is for certain. Gloucester Rugby Football Club will never be the same again.

I know no more than you what the decision to allow the Directors of Gloucester RFC Limited to sell up to 75 per cent of the Club's shares to an unnamed investor, or investors for something in excess of £2 million really means. What investor? What players shall we purchase? What are the implications for the development of Kingsholm? All will be revealed, I'm told, in the very near future.

And it's that word 'future' which dominates everything. At least we know we now have one.

Peter Arnold

An Audience w

When I arrived back at Kingsholm after twelve years in exile, one of the first fellows I met was Andy Mitchell. In the intervening 25 years, I don't think I've ever visited the ground without meeting him again, and have also been a member, on occasion, of his legendary 'Andy's Army' coach trips to away games.

I have a theory, actually. I think Andy may be an android like Data in 'Star Trek - The Next Generation'. At the end of the season, they just switch him off, and prop him in the corner. Nowadays, of course, he has left us poor peasants far behind, and is now in the exalted position of Hon. Sec. of Gloucester RFC, filling the capacious shoes of such magnificent club servants as Doug Wadley, who has been elevated to the Upper House in the shape of Secretary to Gloucester RFC Limited, and the late, and much missed Terry Tandy.

But what does the job entail, in these professional days? I got him to sit still long enough (it took beer to do it), to tell us something about it

Q. Can you tell us about your typical day?

A.M. No. I can't. I haven't got one. One of the charms of the job is that I never know what's going to be on my desk when I arrive in the morning.

Q. Like what?

A.M. There are so many facets to the job that it's difficult to know where to start. For example, I look after the interests of the players in all respects which don't come under the umbrella of John Fidler as Team Secretary. If a player has a ding in his car, for example, I have to sort the insurance out. And there are other insurances also, as specified in players' contracts. If a chap is injured on the field, he's probably whipped straight down to the Accident Unit, but a longer term injury, one that entails hospital treatment, has to be dealt with under the private health insurance policy we have in the players' names, and again, that's down to me to organise.

I also handle players' registrations, according to the rules laid down by the RFU. That can be complex, as one or two other clubs have found this season, to their cost.

In fact, it sometimes feels as if anything which doesn't immediately fall into the remit of one of the other officers, gravitates to my desk.

I think one has to remember that, by the nature of things, rugby players are young, and haven't had the experience of such things as form-filling and dealing with officialdom as we more senior citizens have.

Q. Sounds a bit desk-bound

A.M. Not at all. I also look after the ground maintenance, for example, not only supporting the ground staff, but also dealing with things such as the occasional incident of vandalism. The ground has to have safety inspections

Peter Arnold

20 Gloucester News

ith Andy Mitchell

before each match, which includes such things as checking fire extinguishers, and replacing if necessary.

We do have a ground inspection rota, and I think we must be the only First Division club where the President can be seen doing his stint in inspecting the ground. And it's amazing how many things can go wrong in a complex operation like Kingsholm. I mustn't forget, either that I have a hand in organising Stewards on match days.

Q. Well, at least you get in free to see the game !

A.M. Don't you believe it ! I might see a few minutes of play, here and there, but there's always something which needs my attention while everyone else is enjoying themselves.

Q. You, of course, are a long-time Kingsholm regular. Gloucester has always had the reputation of being a difficult club for newcomers to be accepted into. How have the 'new faces,' slotted in with the old stagers ?

A.M. You mean people like Barry Preece, Jon Davis, even Richard Hill. There have been no problems at all, as far as I can perceive. Quite the reverse. Let me give you an example. Just before the Saracens game, we became aware that we had two problems. The hospitality marquee had no power, and the telephone lines to the press box were down. Both of them had to be attended to like NOW. Now, I can do all sorts of things, but I

can't be in two places at once. One of the 'newbies'. I won't say which one - immediately came along and said "All right Andy. I'll handle that for you !" And did. And that's the sort of spirit we've had all along.

Q. Similarly, from your point of view, how are relations between the 'traditional' Club Committee and the new Board of the Limited Company ? Can you foresee any conflict of interest ?

A.M. I can't see any conflict. Of course, one never knows what may crop up five years down the line, and it would be silly to say one can, but this season we have all been on such a steep learning curve, all of us feeling our way in a totally new era, that we've simply had to pull together. At the moment, relationships are excellent, and I can't see any reason why that should change. We're helped by the fact that almost all the Directors are long-time supporters of GRFC, and we all know each other well.

Q. Finally, Andy. Why would anyone want to do your job ?

A.M. Search me. I can't think of one good reason, except that Gloucester RFC is a way of life for me. My club, and I'll do anything to help it. So will a lot of people. Including yourself.

Q. Thanks Andy !

A.M. That's all right Pete. I think it's my round !

Congratulations Dave !

Can't let this earliest opportunity go by without congratulating Dave Sims, although just where to start does provide problems. First of all, he led the side to that heart-stopping win against Leicester. Then he played his 200th game for Gloucester, and his 100th up at Sale. By the time you read this he may well have won a place on the Argentine tour - at least, if he hasn't, then the selectors need guide dogs, white sticks, and treatment for incipient dementia. But of course, his main reason for rejoicing

has to be the arrival of his son, just 50 minutes before the Saracens game kicked off. We couldn't be more pleased for Mr and Mrs Sims, and we'll look forward to seeing the name 'Nat Sims' on the teamsheet, one of these days.

TailPiece

...and touching that subject, it must have done his heart good to hear a section of the Shed shouting 'One for the boy, Simsy !' when there was a line-out on their side of the field at the Leicester game.

Peter Arnold