

GLOUCESTER

The Cherry and Whites



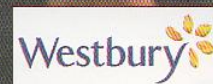
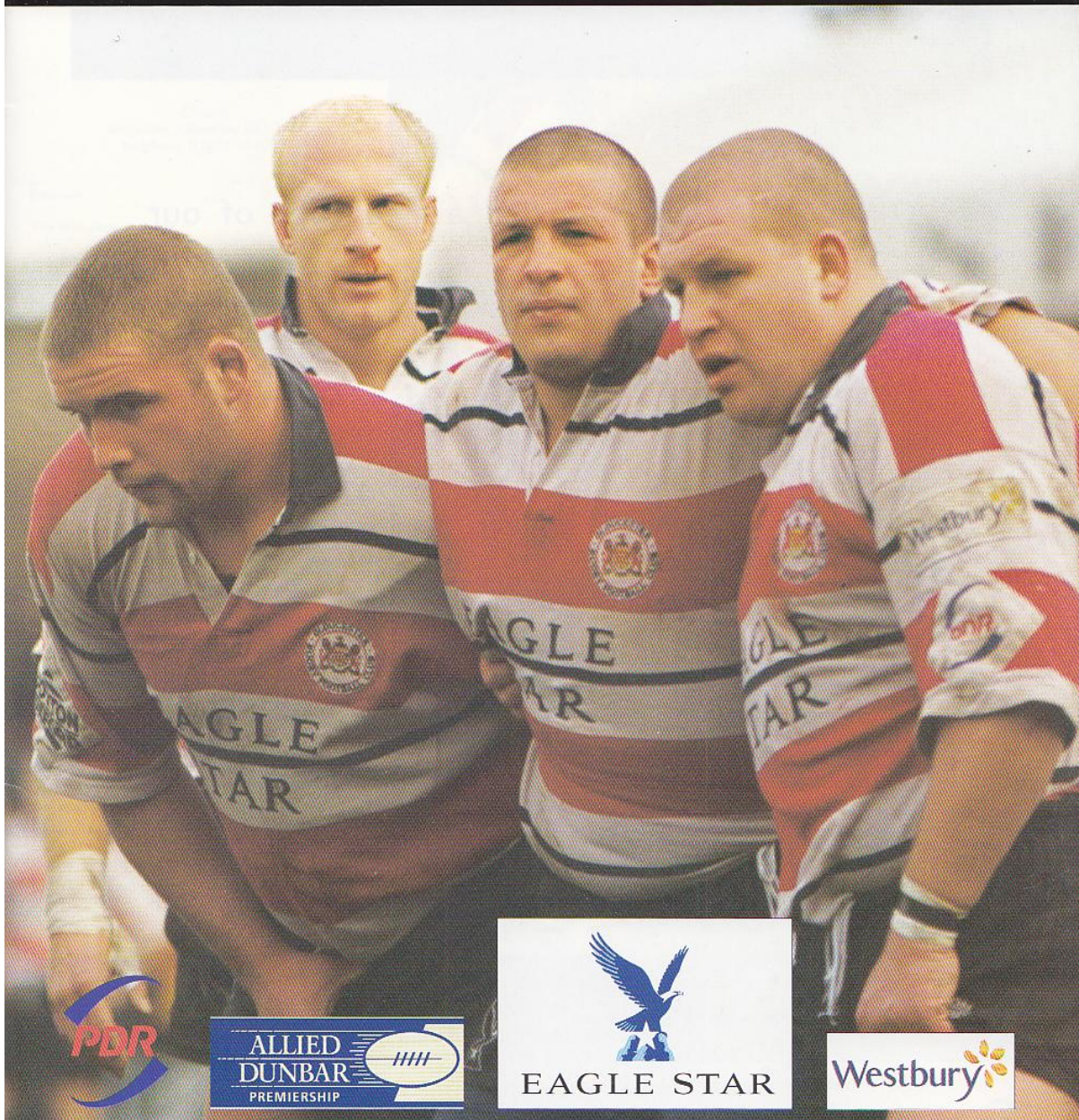
GLOUCESTER V WASPS

£2.00

11th March 1998 KO 7.30pm

Vol 2/14

Today's Match Day Sponsor: Mudie Bond



WELCOME



From the Management

We welcome tonight Wasps, the country's reigning rugby champions. When most pundits were looking to Bath or Leicester to carry off the first Courage League title last year, Wasps surprised many by coming up on the rails to take the trophy. Gloucester is one club, and not the only one, that has learnt from Wasps' success a year ago. The Londoners built their championship campaign around a strong defence and that's not to say that they were negative, dull or boring. But they were a very difficult side to score against, and were more than capable of turning defence into attack, very quickly and very effectively. Other sides quickly took notice and are in some cases now playing Wasps-style rugby more impressively than Wasps are! This year Wasps haven't had too good a season, with only the Tetley's Bitter Cup inspiring them to form. Their

performances are not that much worse than they were a year ago, but the competition has hotted up with the other sides stepping up a gear; making it harder for Wasps to do what they did so successfully last season. One player that I'm looking forward to welcoming to Kingsholm today is the England captain Laurence Dallaglio. He's a player that I have the utmost respect for, and his captaincy for England has been equally impressive. I know that the England coach Clive Woodward is keen not to make any player his long term captain, but in Dallaglio I'm sure we're looking at the man who'll lead England to the World Cup and possibly beyond.

One of our own that I'm keen to welcome back to Kingsholm is our French flyer Philippe St. Andre.

After a lengthy lay

off he's back to fitness and fingers crossed he will be able to weave his magic for the remainder of the season. And more good news is that Phil Greening is close to fitness after his irritating knee injury. I'm sure the Shed is itching to cheer on a fit again and hungry Phil Greening, and who's to say how long Mr. Cockerill will keep his England number 2 shirt if a good Gloucester boy is determined to get it off his back.

Finally I feel I must say a few words about our last game here at Gloucester. The defeat at the hands of Bedford was easily our worst performance of the season so far, I'm only glad it came in a friendly, where points were not crucial. To all of you who felt the need to leave the ground early on that day, I can't say I blame you, but I can promise you that a lot of work has been done to put things right, and I'm confident today's display will be a whole lot better.

John Fidler



Gloucester v Wasps, 11th March 1998

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IT'S CRUNCH TIME AGAIN !

Have you noticed that the Wasps game at Kingsholm always seems to be something of a 'crunch' occasion?

Last season, a lot of very good judges had written us off by the time they arrived, and were confidently predicting that we were for the dreaded drop. We knew better, of course, but if we hadn't won that memorable Sunday encounter, then we could, indeed, have been in serious trouble. As it was, the lads did the necessary, and a fair few pundits started making a breakfast of their verbiage.

As I recall, Wasps' previous visit had been a momentous one as well. It was the Cup Quarter Final, which we also won. It's a different matter when we play them away, however. We simply can't seem to get away from second place - even if it did take a rather harsh penalty try to set us back on our heels this season.

Wasps are something of an enigma this year. They are, after all, the reigning Champions, and look a far better team than their current position in the table would suggest. The squad positively oozes quality, with genuinely formidable talent in just about every position. They even have the current England Captain, and you don't get that job unless

your place in the international side is very secure

We don't have to consider the International players alone, either. Take winger Shane Roiser, who always seems to pull out something special against Gloucester. He's genuinely quick and elusive, and don't I recall him scoring a hat-trick against us a few seasons ago ?

The scrum-half battle looks to be one to savour, as well. I don't suppose Andy Gomersall was actually very happy to read that Clive Woodward now regards Scott Benton as England's number three scrum-half behind Kyran Bracken and Matt Dawson, and he'll be out to prove him wrong. From Scotty's point of view, there will be a little nigggle about the fact that, so far, Andy has been preferred to Scott in the 'A' side, in spite of Mark Mapletoft playing at No.10

Steve Ojomoh will be out to impress, too. He makes no secret of his ambition to get back into the England reckoning, and the chance to strut his stuff in direct confrontation with the England Captain will be one he relishes.

After beating Gloucester on their own midden, and having a great deal of experience of Kingsholm,

Wasps won't be too intimidated by their visit. But one thing is different this season. I don't think they have played us under lights in recent years, and that could come as something of a culture shock. They might think they are used to Kingsholm with the shed in full cry, but it's a different ball-game when the floodlights turn Kingsholm into a veritable cockpit - a genuine arena, with everything seeming so much closer, and you can't even see who is shouting rude things at you.

Perhaps Wasps should ask Bath and Leicester about it. They know, if anyone does. It's also interesting that Wasps were down to play Saracens last Sunday. Old rivals, of course, but they may not have caught up with the fact that we entertain Sarries next Sunday, so last weekend's encounter and tonight's little soiree may give valuable pointers to the way that game will go.

It's always good to see Wasps at Kingsholm, of course. We've been playing them for so many years that the season wouldn't be complete without them. They are valued and respected opponents, and we do hope they have a thoroughly enjoyable time with us

By Peter Arnold

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Opponents SPS



TODAY'S OPPONENTS - WASPS

In Wasps today we again come up against a side reaching the peak of their form. A good run in the Tetley's Bitter Cup has galvanised the London side into reproducing the sort of performances which saw them become last season's national rugby champions. Up until recently Wasps have not reached their full potential but coach Rob Smith is quick to jump to the defence or his players.

"Whatever the results show in the Allied Dunbar Premiership, we haven't played that badly. Last year things went our way more often than we could have hoped for. Yes we played well, of course we did, but we did win a lot of matches in the closing minutes. This year things have evened up, luck certainly hasn't been on our side and we've suffered because of that. Hopefully where we've failed in the Premiership, we can succeed in the cup."

Injuries have played their

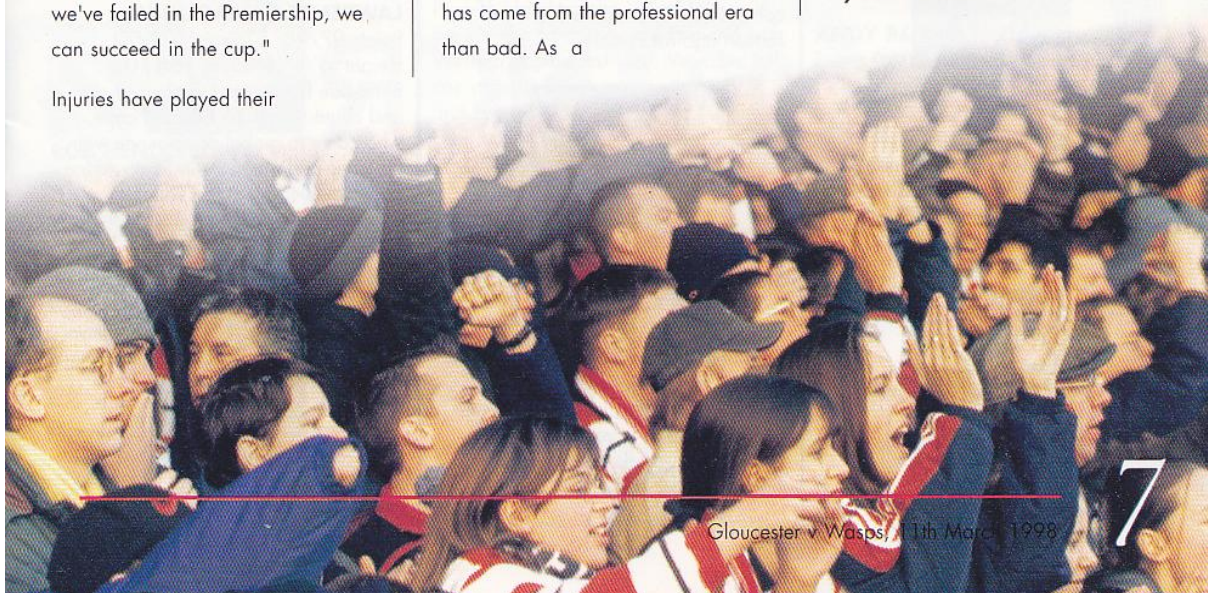
part in Wasps' less than impressive league form. Losing two internationals in Irish centre Rob Henderson and England fly half Alex King from the backline for weeks on end would tax any coach. And in Rob Smith Wasps have a coach who's something of an endangered species. The former flanker has been coaching at the club for thirteen years and before that played for the London club for nine seasons in a row. It doesn't take a great deal of research to discover that there are not too many other Premiership coaches who can boast that sort of loyalty to a single club in this professional era. But Smith doesn't look back at the old days through rose tinted spectacles:

"Full time rugby has brought along its problems, but much more good has come from the professional era than bad. As a

coach I now have time to do things that I could only dream of doing in the past. I spend more time with the players than ever before, and the players are prepared to work much harder. We still need to learn, we are still some way behind the likes of New Zealand and South Africa, but English domestic rugby is definitely on the up."

And Rob Smith doesn't believe an open cheque book is the way to success even though the rich clubs will always have an advantage. The Wasps team that visits Kingsholm today is based around a thriving youth policy at the club which has produced such talents as Messrs Dallaglio, Gommershall, Sampson and White...not bad for a London club.

By Keith Malcolm





SCOTT BENTON



Gloucester's first-choice scrum half Scott Benton has, this week, been called into the England squad, Clive Woodward naming Benton as the England number three. Last week, the Kingsholm Chronicle, Gloucester's unofficial internet page, sat down with Scott to chat about England, Gloucester and Benton. One of the interesting aspects of the interview was that Benton was very "laid back" about the call from Woodward.

Note how many times that he said that when the time came, he would take his chances. And note how he managed to twist the answer to a question on his personal game round to the team game - he prefers to use "we" rather than "I". The accent might be Yorkshire, but Benton is Glawster ... his philosophy appears to be about getting stuck-in and giving 101 per cent for Gloucester RFC, anything else coming along, in the form of a summons from Twickenham, is a bonus.

Kingsholm Chronicle: You must be very pleased at being picked for the England squad!

Scott Benton: Yes, It's another step up the

ladder. I just want to go on and get my first cap for England. I'm going to keep my head down and play well for the club and wait for Clive to make the call-up and take my chance when it comes.

KC: How do you rate your chances of playing in the Five Nations this season?

SB: Obviously Dawson and Bracken are playing well at the moment, so I would have thought he (Clive Woodward) will keep them in. My idea is just to play well and get a sniff of the summer tour.

KC: Of course, if some clubs refuse to release players for those tours, then it will be to your advantage.

SB: That's right. I spoke to Clive earlier this week and he said that I'm definitely number three. I'll take my chance when it comes along.

KC: Going back to the game against Bristol at the Memorial Ground, how do you think you played that day?

SB: Personally, it was a very hard game because it wasn't a running game of rugby - it was just a "slog-it-out-in-the-mud". But to get a win for the side was very important and I had to play in a way that suited the club rather than a way that suited myself.

KC: After that game, Clive Woodward picked you out as having played particularly well.

SB: Yeah ... he came down to watch the Leicester game here at Kingsholm and he said he was happy with the way I'm playing. Against Leicester I could play more of my sort of game and run with the ball. Up until then, we were playing the sort of game which has meant I have not been able to run so much ... but it suited the club and we've got the wins. I'd prefer to run, I'm waiting to go all the time rather than kick the ball away.

KC: With no disrespect to last season's back division, how do you think this season's back line have improved the team?

SB: Last year's back line were very good and very committed. They did everything they could to help Gloucester Rugby Club. This year, Richard (Hill) has brought in some internationals, especially two good centres which were needed. They have brought the team on a great deal with their knowledge and skills. It gives the boys the confidence to be able to throw the ball out to the backs and that the backs will create something, rather than just trudging up the front. It's also better for me knowing that someone will make a break and not to have to rely on working the fringes with the forwards.

KC: Have the two Phils (Greening and Vickery) given you any advice about what to expect when you move up to the full England level?

SB: Yeah! We have a lot of good banter between each other. I've been involved with quite a lot of England 'A' team sessions and I've had a good chat with Phil Larder. I've got a rough idea of what its going to be like - I just can't wait to get down there and get involved.

KC: You must be experiencing a mix of nerves and excitement.

SB: The nerves are there because it's England and you want to make an impression but I'm excited to get there, have a run out and see what it's like.

KC: There has been a rumour that Richard Hill substituted Vickery at half-time in the Northampton match, to avoid Phil getting injured because he knew he was going to play for England the following weekend. How much inside knowledge, if any, does Richard Hill pass



A Real Team Player

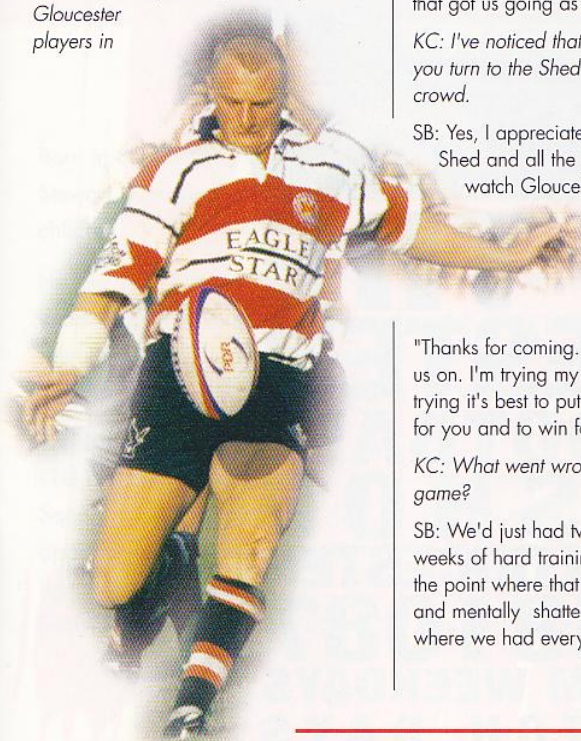
on with regard to the England set-up?

SB: That's the first I've heard of that! Richard is very supportive and lets us know what we need to know but first and foremost he wants us to be playing well for Gloucester Rugby Club and get good results for the team. Obviously being England 'A' coach things led on from there.

KC: How much has Hill's extensive knowledge helped you?

SB: A great deal. After each game we go through the video and talk about what we should be doing. He's got a wealth of experience and he passes it down to myself. We go through what we should be doing and me and Tofty are getting a lot better at that now. We just need things to start clicking which they have been over the last few games.

KC: Does it help having so many Gloucester players in



the England 'A' squad?

SB: Yes it does. Whenever you go into a new situation it's always good to see some friendly faces. We get on well with all the boys from the other clubs but it's good to have the boys from Gloucester there.

KC: What was behind that little encounter with Sleightholme at the Northampton game?

SB: To be fair it's got blown out of all proportion – even a couple of the England guys were asking me about it too. I tapped the ball and ran and the next thing I know, Sleights throwing a punch under the ball. That's all it was! I'm good friends with Sleights and his younger brother from back up home in Yorkshire. It was just a bit of friendly banter but because it happened in front of the Shed it got the crowd going – and that got us going as well!

KC: I've noticed that after many games you turn to the Shed and applaud the crowd.

SB: Yes, I appreciate the support from the Shed and all the people who come to watch Gloucester. It makes a

massive difference to us as a team and it's just my way of saying:

"Thanks for coming. Thanks for cheering us on. I'm trying my best and the team's trying it's best to put a performance out for you and to win for you."

KC: What went wrong in the Bedford game?

SB: We'd just had two very, very intense weeks of hard training and it had got to the point where that boys were physically and mentally shattered. It was a game where we had everything to lose and

nothing to gain. Bedford were coming here fresh and with a point to prove. Even if we had won by a couple of points it wouldn't have been good enough. It felt like we were on to a hiding to nothing – but we can learn from that. When we play Wasps it will be a completely different atmosphere. The boys will be fresh and ready to go and you will see a different Gloucester side. We're trying now to make Kingsholm into the fortress it was and any club that wants to come here will know they're on to a good hiding and a Gloucester win. In a midweek game, if we're getting the fans in and we get a full house, it plays such a big part towards us striding on for another win.

KC: What do you think the team have to do to win the Championship?

SB: Start winning away from home!

KC: Apart from that!

SB: I don't think we've been in the position in the last few years, when we've been in front in an away game, that we believed we would win. And now, especially this season, we've got into positions where we should have won. If we'd have been at Kingsholm we would have banged-in another try. It's just that we need to be mentally tuned-in and switched-on to thinking that we can win away. I think that's the only problem. There's a hell of a lot of grit and determination and people wanting to play for one another which makes a big difference when the going gets tough. You get some clubs where the players may only be interested in picking up their wage packets – down here we just want to play rugby and play for each other. We've become a very close knit family!

KC: When Richard Hill was looking to sign new players at the end of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

MATCH DAY



MASCOT

ASHLEY YOUNG

Our thanks to Ashley Young, who is 12 years old and lives in St. Barnabas Close with his parents and a trio of brothers. As Match Mascot he will thoroughly enjoy himself this evening, because he lists rugby and basketball as his favourite sports.

He lists Chris Fortey, Phil Greening and Mark Mapletoft as his favourite players. Note he doesn't mention United player, Andrew Hazell, who is his cousin.

So it's in the blood. Perhaps we'll see him in cherry-and-white again.



TODAY'S REFEREE

STEWART PIERCY

Born in September 1951, Stewart is married with two children.

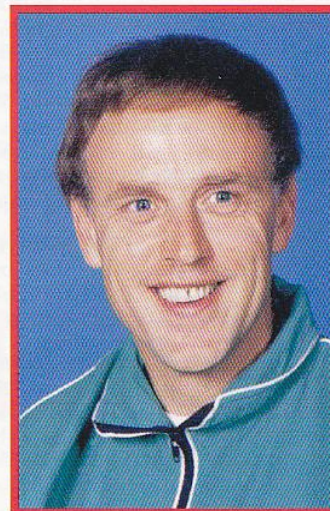
His playing career ended at 26 years of age when he took up refereeing with Yorkshire Referee Society.

This is his third season on the RFU National Development Squad, which has given him the opportunity to referee an 'A' International, Schools Internationals and to run touch

with his international colleagues at four matches.

Stewart's profession as the Head of Upper School at Brumby Comprehensive in Scunthorpe complemented his position as the Training Officer for his Society for three years.

In between teaching and refereeing trips including Pan-European and a tour of Argentina, Stewart's hobbies are Badminton, Cricket and DIY.



CLUB NEWS



Forth coming attractions at The all Action Kingsholm Sportsbar

GUEST BEERS

A treat for all real ale and rugby lovers is the Sportsbar's latest brew
Jolly's Rugby Special 4.3% ABV
Brewed by Batemans of Lincolnshire
A must for all Rugby men!

PRIVATE FUNCTIONS, WEDDINGS, MEETINGS & SEMINARS

(Big or small, just call Rob on Tel: 01452 528385)

KINGSHOLM SPORTS BAR

Open every evening 6.30pm to 11pm
Saturday 11am to 11pm
Sundays 12pm to 11pm

SUNDAYS

Sunday Roasts £4.95 per head
Brilliant value Book now on 01452 528385

Sunday is Bingo Night

Start 7.30pm in the Sportsbar

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Stetson Express Line dancing
New Country line dancing every Wednesday evening (except Match days), a
great social evening with instruction
Beginners, intermediate & advanced
Starts 7.00pm

FRIDAY NIGHTS

Name that Tune
The musical challenge for all ages, three hours of fun music & competition
(sheer nostalgia)
Starts Friday 20th March, 8.00pm

SATURDAY

Disco every Saturday evening in the Sports bar. All the best sounds with Studio 45,
a great night out for all.

POST MATCH ENTERTAINMENT.

Saturday 15th March
Gloucester v Saracens
Enjoy a pint and pop along to Sheer Nostalgia in the Sports bar after the match

WATCH THE INTERNATIONALS LIVE ON BIG SCREEN AT KINGSHOLM

Join Gloucester Rugby Football Club for all the action televised on big screen
Take your pick of screens, sit back and enjoy a great atmosphere.

Sunday 22nd March

SCOTLAND V ENGLAND

Saturday 4th April

ENGLAND V IRELAND

CRICKET & FOOTBALL

Watch all cricket and football matches covered at the KINGSHOLM SPORTS BAR

By Peter Arnold

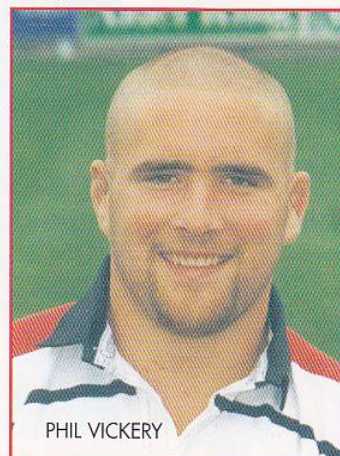
LISTEN CAREFULLY. I VILL SAY THIS ONLY VONCE...

What's with this sudden Gallic
obsession we seem to have acquired
around here ?

A new French-style cafe bar opens up in
Greyfriars, offering snails and frogs
legs, among other things. A bunch of
fitness experts from Marseilles descend
on Kingsholm, do their thing, and go on
their way, leaving the lads so stiff and
weary that they couldn't do themselves
justice in the friendly against Bedford.
More to the point is the good news
about the walking wounded. Philippe St.
André returned from his lengthy injury
for the United game last Saturday. As
did Phil Greening and Dave Sims.
Obviously, we're delighted to have a
whole trio of International-class
performers back among our ranks. And,
yes, I include Dave Sims in that
description. Can we dare hope that this
sees the end of the period of
strategically horrendous injuries which
we have been enduring lately ?
One does have to say that the lads have
been managing nobly without them.

WELL DONE PHIL AND SCOTTY

There was no doubt that once the ill-
considered citation of Phil Vickery after
the England v. Wales game had been



PHIL VICKERY

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Gloucester v Wasps, 11th March 1998



withdrawn, our large and dynamic prop forward would retain his place in the England squad. His debut was quite spectacular and any other decision would have been quite unbelievable. Well done, Phill! You took your chance when it came



SCOTT BENTON

However, I for one, didn't expect Scott Benton to win himself a place in the England squad at this point, and we all congratulate him heartily on his selection.

I suppose that his chances of getting on to the benches, let alone actually playing against Scotland are fairly slim. After all, the only two scrum-halves in England who Clive Woodward considers to rank above him are both very much alive and kicking, and will be available barring injuries. What's more, Austin Healey is also in the squad, albeit as a winger. I note that he reverted to No.9 for Leicester last weekend, so could presumably fill in for England if required. Nevertheless, it's a significant step up for Scotty, and we wish him well.

I wonder if his inclusion in the squad is an early indication of Clive Woodward's thinking ahead of the demanding summer tour of Australia, South Africa and New Zealand? He has indicated that he wants to take 36 players, which is a fairly large contingent.

SARRIES ON SUNDAY

Fascinating game here on Sunday. We have the League pretenders, Saracens here in all their glory. Well, not quite, because I was sorry to learn that injury has knocked the England No.8 out for the rest of the season. At least, I suppose, it avoids any confusion between names!

Sarries must be feeling very sure of themselves these days, especially since Northampton put it across Newcastle the other week, and they must fancy their chances against the Franklins Gardens boys in the Cup, even on their own patch. Perhaps we should point out that we beat the Saints, very efficiently, right here a few matches ago, and we could well have a stronger team out on Sunday. Should be a good encounter, God, the weather, and the referee permitting.

The following Saturday, that is February 21st, we have an even more intriguing encounter, when we travel to Welford Road in the Semi Final of the Cheltenham and Gloucester Cup. In my view, this competition has proved to be a very interesting one, because it is taking place on International days, and many of the leading clubs have their sides decimated by Five Nations calls. This enables lesser lights in the clubs pecking order to compete on more equal terms, and also gives us the chance to see up-and-coming players who we'd normally miss out on.

The Gloucester-Leicester game is a case in point. On paper, International calls are likely to harm the Tigers more than they will Gloucester, but if you take the 'A' matches into account, then the difference between the two sides is not that marked. Anyway, there's no such thing as a weak Leicester side, especially at Welford Road.

Tickets for the game are already available, and can be obtained from the office. A reserved Grandstand seat, behind the goal, will set you back £12.00. Unreserved seating costs £8.00 as does a ground, standing ticket.

And yes, we will be running a coach, if you can bear to get up early for a Saturday and be at Kingsholm by 9.30. Not surprisingly, kick-off is at 1.00pm. Should be a good game to watch, and the boys can use all the support they can get.

Neither must we forget that we're down to visit London Irish on the evening of Tuesday, March 24th. That's a must-win Premiership game. On paper Gloucester should win it, but I don't have to tell you that we don't seem to have got the hang of winning away from home thus far this season, and the Irish are notoriously more difficult to beat at Sunbury.

Again, we shall be running a coach, if there is sufficient demand. That one will cost £8.00 also.

TAILPIECE

My favourite quote of the week comes from Sale's John Mitchell, who is the England forward coach. Describing Phil

Vickery, he commented, 'He's a very big, strong lad. I'm glad I don't have to get his lunch!'



Many thanks to
today's Match Day
Sponsor: Mudie Bond



Wednesday 11th March 1998

Kick-off 7.30pm

GLOUCESTER ²²
Cherry & White

WASPS ¹⁵
Black with Gold wasps

15	CHRIS CATLING	Full Back	PAUL SAMPSON	15
14	BRIAN JOHNSON T	Right Wing	SHANE ROISER	14
13	TERRY FANOLUA (I)	Centre	NICK GREENSTOCK	13
12	RICHARD TOMBS (I) T	Centre	LAURENCE SCRASE	12
11	PHILIPPE SAINT-ANDRE (I)	Left Wing	KENNY LOGAN	11
10	MARK MAPLETOFT (I) ²⁰ P	Outside Half	GARETH REES	10
9	SCOTT BENTON	Scrum Half	ANDY GOMMARSALL	9
1	TONY WINDO	Prop	DARREN MOLLOY	1
2	CHRIS FORTEY	Hooker	SIMON MITCHELL	2
3	PHIL VICKERY (I)	Prop	WILL GREEN	3
4	ROB FIDLER T	Lock	MARK WEEDON	4
5	MARK CORNWELL	Lock	SIMON SHAW	5
6	PETE GLANVILLE*	Flanker	LAWRENCE DALLAGLIO	6
7	NATHAN CARTER	Flanker	MICHAEL WHITE	7
8	SIMON DEVEREUX	No. 8	PETER SCRIVENER	8
16	AUDLEY LUMSDEN	Replacements		16
17	IAN SANDERS			17
18	DAVE SIMS			18
19	NEIL McCARTHY			19
20	STEVE OJOMOH			20
21	ADEY POLWES			21
22				22

This is the Wasps team that played on Sunday

Referee

**S PIERCY RFU
YORKSHIRE**

Touch Judges

**A ROWDEN RFU
A REAY RFU**

Twickenham



Bound

Sadly no barbecues in the car park, no jams on the M4 and no boozing it up in Richmond for the Cherry and Whites, well for this year at least.

Our early exit out of the Tetley Bitter Cup put paid to those ambitions for this season. But if you cast your sights a little further afield than the Kingsholm gates then the Twickenham dream might be about to be rekindled. For Gloucestershire can boast two teams that are just one win away from a Twickenham final.

The County team did us proud the other week and beat our arch rivals Somerset in the quarter finals of the Championship.

Now skipper Adrian Knox and his players have the unenviable task of taking on the Cornish in Cornwall.

If Gloucestershire win that game later this month, it's either Cheshire or Yorkshire in the final at HQ.

And while the cream of the country's club players travel south, Stroud will also be looking towards a Twickenham final.

The South West Division One side are through to the last four of the NPI Cup, a competition designed for middle ranking club sides. In the quarter finals Stroud beat a little known London side

called Old Verulamians.

In the semi's the opposition will be considerably tougher when they entertain Penzance and Newlyn, a team who've already played and beaten Stroud in league rugby this season.

The man at the helm at Fromehall Park these days is the Gloucester old boy Dave Spencer. With Gareth Fenwick, Jerry Perrins and Mark Nicholson amongst others Stroud have plenty of top class experience.

Good luck to all Gloucestershire teams

By Keith Malcolm

What The Papers Said

Busy Osman, normally a fly half, punched holes in the Richmond defence throughout the evening and was one of the most impressive of Gloucester's second-string men on duty.

John Hawkins,
Western Daily Press

The forwards were prominent with their handling and the pace of the wings was a feature under skipper Richard Tombs - the first Australian to captain the club.

Gloucestershire Echo

Man of the match? No doubts ... Alex Morris who produced a display at fly half that won the approval of The Shed and sent a clear message to Mapletoft.

Steve Hawker,
Kingsholm Chronicle
(internet web page)

The forwards all contributed to some good handling rugby and the pace of Gloucester's wings showed up well. They continued to play well in a drizzle-soaked second half under the leadership of Australian skipper (or should that (be) Skippy) Richard Tombs, and scored five tries, with Nick Osman bagging two, while Alex Morris kicked 14 points.

Katie Coker,

Scott Benton



continued

season he said he wanted to bring in players who would fit in, who wanted to play for Gloucester and not just come here for the money. Do you think he was successful in that aim?

SB: Yes, definitely! I think that Richard Tombs, Terry, Philippe and Raph have fitted in tremendously. They're a great set of lads. It's a bit hard for them coming to a completely new country but they fit in really well. We give them as much banter as they give us so they're used to it now. I still get a lot of stick about my accent though!

KC: What improvements have you made to your game since last season?

SB: I think my all-round game has improved 100%. My passing at the moment is spot-

on, touch wood, I'm trying to get the breaks going as much as I can and my awareness is better. That all comes from going through games with Richard Hill, picking up more experience every game every week. Me and Tofy have settled in to a good partnership now and when we're on song, as we proved against Dawson and Grayson, well you wouldn't have thought they were the England half-backs. When I'm up against someone like Dawson or Bracken I really want to up my game and put one over on them, like they want to put one over on me. When we play at Kingsholm we want to beat the opposition, we want to play well for the crowd. We've put in a lot of hard work this season and we're becoming a good side. We're lying fifth in the table, we've played all the big teams away and they all have to come to Kingsholm and so hopefully we can snatch a few more points.

KC: What do you think of the structure of the season?

SB: The structure has to be looked at very

seriously. Personally I don't like the structure at the moment, I think it's all wrong. I don't know how clubs have survived. In summer we only get a couple of weeks off and then we're straight back into it again. Your body has got to take a rest.

KC: In terms of team and player development, how important is European competition?

SB: You can take something from every game you play in and use it in the learning process. It's a good experience to see how other teams play but at Gloucester we use that competition to bring players on.

KC: Who has been your hardest opponent?

SB: I would say that would be Gary Armstrong (of Newcastle) mainly because the Newcastle pack were on fire that day. It's very comforting being behind a pack that's going forward and that makes it hard for the opposition scrum-half. Gary is a very good player, very strong but I look forward to him coming down here and hopefully our pack will be going forward and we'll have a good look at him then!

KC: What has been your most memorable game since joining Gloucester?

SB: What sticks in my mind is when we beat Bath in the midweek game last season. That was unbelievable and the crowd was immense ... so much noise and atmosphere ... they were brilliant. And then to make that break that led to the try and when Sinbad (Dave Sims) carried me off the pitch - I'll never forget that!

KC: So are we going to see Scott Benton scoring the winning try for England in the World Cup final?

SB: It would be nice definitely! If I get the chance I'm going to grab it with both hands.

KC: Congratulations on your place in the England squad and thank you very much for sparing time to talk to us.

The url for the Kinsholm Chronicle is www.glawster.demon.co.uk

The site is updated daily...take a look if you are on the internet.

