

HOTELS BAN ON CITY RUGBY CLUB

GLOUCESTER RUGBY CLUB'S tour of Devon and Cornwall this weekend is to go ahead - despite a ban by Cornish hoteliers which seriously threatened it.

Players and officials are incensed about the "terrible reputation" Gloucester have been given by hotels in southern Cornwall. But a hotel they stayed in at Newquay last April is willing to take the club for the four nights they will be away.

Gloucester were originally booked to stay at the Westcliffe Hotel, Porth Towan, but on Monday night the owner, Mr. Philip Compton, withdrew his accommodation after making enquiries about the club. "Gloucester have got a terrible reputation for doing a lot of damage at the places they stay," he said.

Mrs. Josephine Francis, manageress of the Western Hotel at St. Ives, has accommodated the club in the past, but has now blacklisted it.

"If I was asked, I would not take Gloucester," said Mrs. Francis, whose husband is an official of St. Ives.

"We can take quite a lot of noise and late nights, but when it comes to breaking up the place for no reason at all, it is quite a different matter."

Mrs. Judith O'Shea, wife of a former British Lion and Penzance prop, John O'Shea, is manageress of the Regent Hotel, Penzance. The club has never stayed there.

She said, "I would not take Gloucester under any circumstances. They don't seem to have any respect for anybody or anything. They have been thrown out of every hotel in the area. Every time they come down, they are thrown out of an hotel."

"My experience with Gloucester is that they are a team who have never responded to the hospitality shown them."

Seething

Gloucester's officials are seething at the allegations. England selector Peter Ford, chairman of the club selectors and a former skipper, has toured regularly with the club.

He said, "The only time we have been thrown out of an hotel was last year at the Chez Anne Albany at St. Ives. There was a bit of foolhardiness last year, and we were asked to leave. Three or four years ago we decided to leave the Western Hotel in Penzance because the food was not up to standard."

And he pointed to the club's reputation in previous seasons. Several hotels had booked them more than once. Until last year, they had spent three consecutive years at the Chez Anne Albany.

"If he wasn't satisfied with us, he wouldn't have booked us for three consecutive years," said Mr. Ford.

"I would ask these hotels just what damage we have done, because I would want to know. It's easy to make these accusations. All that has been said is that our reputation is bad."

Last

Both the St. Ives and Camborne clubs have invited Gloucester to visit them during their centenary seasons. This is the club's last tour to Cornwall. They decided four years ago to change the end-of-season tour. Team secretary, George Edmunds, said, "This is all out of proportion. Fair enough, there are high spirits and things get broken, but nobody deliberately goes smashing places up."

And club chairman, Gordon Hudson, said, "Sometimes hoteliers ask for trouble when rugby clubs visit them. They leave the bars open until 2 a.m., and then when the players start getting frisky they get a bit upset. I don't think we are any worse than other clubs."

Gloucester are due to play Plymouth on Friday, Penzance on Saturday and Camborne on Monday. The players are determined to make their presence felt on the field with high scoring victories. For they are hoping to set a new record number of wins at the weekend, and also to see club fullback Peter Butler set an individual world record points score of more than 581 points.

Immediately on their return, the club players and officials are being given a civic reception by the Mayor of Gloucester, Coun. Fred King, to mark their centenary.