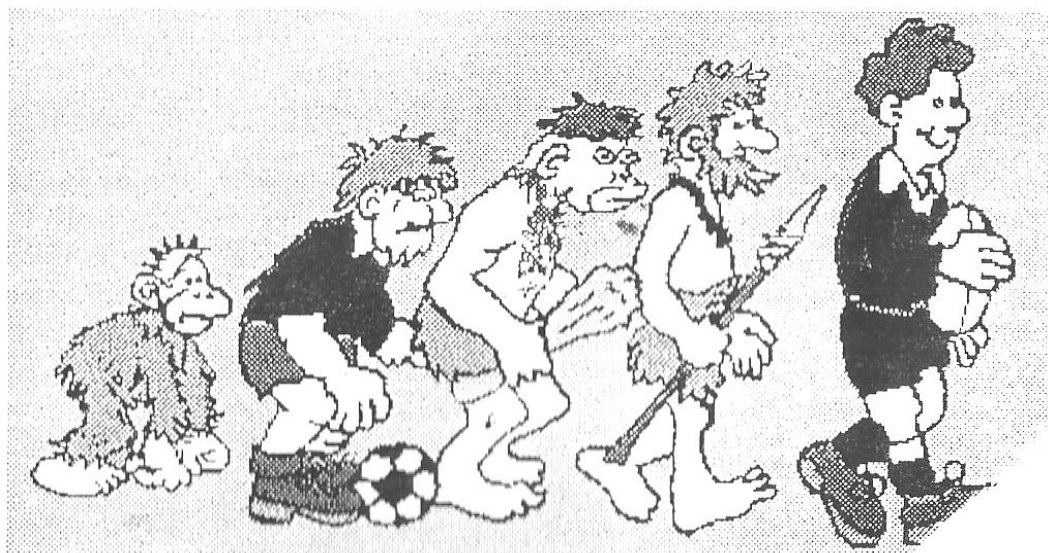


Old Spot!

Your Independent Match Day Newsletter
News and Views, Facts and Figures



GLOUCESTER'S NEXT MATCH

v BRISTOL

Pilkington Cup

January 25th 1997

Kick off at 3.00 p.m.

Ja

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Old Spot's Sheditorial

Everyone is talking about the Courage League winning streak which began with that win over the then League leaders Wasps. So I decided to look at Gloucester's record and in retrospect it would seem that the winning habit started four days earlier with the Anglo-Welsh encounter with Dunvant. Compare the records before and after:

Before								
P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff.	Av.	%
7	2	0	5	126	233	-107	-15.3	28.6

After								
P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff.	Av.	%
19	14	0	5	619	328	+291	+15.3	73.7

That's a swing of nearly 31 points per game and a 45% increase in the winning percentage, quite a remarkable turnaround. I note also that 3 of the losses after the Dunvant game occurred when Gloucester fielded a less than full strength side. Richard Hill mentioned after the London Irish game that Gloucester had a slow start to the season and suggested that a pre-season tour would have given the team a flying start. Now there's a thought.....

Also in this issue.....

Mark Mapletoft confesses! We have the full story of Mark's excesses whilst fighting home from Australia. Now, where is that sick bag Alice?

Transcript of Richard Hill's post-match press conference following the 1st match. He passes judgement on the performances by Mike Pearce and makes a clear statement on club loyalty. Richard also discusses the pros and cons of foreign imports, the effect money is making on the recruitment policy at centre.

As a sideways look at the apparently intractable dispute between the RFU and draws an interesting analogy between Rugby and

Tabber previews the match and considers the personal battles (including) that will add spice to the Granddaddy of club rugby

Confessions!

Victory in Australia for the 1993 England U21s was a highlight for every player. But, as MARK MAPLETOFT explains, a foolhardy attempt to break cricketer David Boon's Sydney to London drinking record, almost cost him a friendship and his representative career.

The culmination of the U21s tour to Australia in 1993 was a performance which proved to be far more memorable than either of my test appearances. The squad (now reading like a current professional players directory) which included a number of my Loughborough University counterparts, was on fine form throughout the tour, but after two incredible victories over the Aussies we decided to really go out with a party! We'd all been a bit subdued on the flight over with the prospects of some hard matches ahead of us, but with 24 hours of travelling time to kill we decided to take full advantage of the Air Malaysia hospitality.

Myself, Tony Handley, Darren Crompton and Darren Molloy settled ourselves down with the sole intention of working our way through the entire drinks list. We'd heard a vicious rumour that David Boon held the Australia to England drinking record with some sixty plus cans, and were determined to live up to our 'wild boys of rugby' image by going one better.

I was sandwiched in between Handley and Ali Metcalfe, who weren't partaking with such vigour, but undaunted I set off to sample the joys of southern hemisphere wines, beers and spirits. A couple of hours into the journey the plan was all going splendidly, we'd sampled a variety of local lagers and a number of RFU polo shirts and slacks could be seen gyrating in the aisles. The rest of the flight however is a bit of a blur and I have had to rely on the testimonies of Tony Diprose and Mike Catt among others to guide me through the peak of my performance.

I vaguely remember hitting the later stages of the alcohol list about three hours before we were due to land for a re-fuel. Whether it was the mixture of Baileys, Port and Fosters I don't know, but to say I reached a state of heinous intoxication would be an understatement. I wasn't however the first to go, about six hours into the marathon Darren Molloy could be viewed in a posture resembling that of a Water Buffalo; sneezing in his sleep! Never to be outdone though, my performance went one better; with a slight hiccup and blabbering something about feeling the worse for wear, I promptly turned to poor Ali Metcalfe sitting next to me and deposited the entire contents of my stomach into his lap. How the future Cambridge University blindside reacted I cannot recall, but needless to say he received the benefits of an Air Malaysia cocktail at first hand!

At Kuala Lumpur however, things got a little more serious. The Malaysian airlines were threatening to refuse me entry back on to the plane, and the rest of the squad were terrified of the reaction of John Elliot, tour manager and England selector. Whilst Ali got started on the clearing up, it was up to Tony Diprose and Rich Hill to attempt the sobering up process. Allegedly, during our two hour stopover they took it in turns to walk me round and round the airport. They also faced the rather difficult task of trying to remain inconspicuous in front of the tour management and stony-faced Malaysian officials.

Thankfully, twelve hours later by the time we had landed at Heathrow to be met by a number of the England management eager to congratulate us on our momentous victory, I'd managed to sober up. A few of the squad members had decided to get their own back for having to endure a stinking plane for most of the journey and had sought immediate revenge.

During my slumbering state Austin Healey and Catty had taken it upon themselves to relieve me of most of my hair, so upon departure from the plane I not only resembled but I also smelt like one of England's origin exports to Australia.

For the next few months I waited in terrified anticipation to see if the episode had put paid to my future England career. Unfortunately however, injury stepped in before I got a chance to judge the various reactions. One thing is for certain though, if Ali and myself ever come face to face in a Gloucester v Saracens clash then I doubt he'll be quite so eager to get close to the legendary Mapletoft stomach!

(Reprinted by permission of Rugby News)

Match Report

Gloucester 37, West Hartlepool 10

There were quite a few side shows at this game. Would Gloucester beat their record of 5 Courage League wins in a row? Would Mapletoft reach the milestones of 300 points for the season and 500 points for his career? Would Ed Pearce rise to the challenge of replacing the awesome Pete Glanville? Would the Gloucester team perform when given the tag of favourites?

The answer to all these questions was a resounding YES!

In the pre-match interview on Radio Gloucestershire Richard Hill predicted that the Gloucester team would start strongly - "We are strong starters" - and that this would build the platform for victory. True enough, Gloucester started strongly but this was nothing to the level they would attain later in the game.

Early dominance was not converted into points despite some Scott Benton magic and a fantastic long pass from Ed Pearce to Chris Catling on a powerful run. West managed to hold the line but barely cleared their lines.

After 14 minutes Mark Mapletoft, who has clearly decided to attack predecessor Kimber's drop goal record, was successful with a drop to reach 500 points for his Gloucester career.

Scott Benton took a quick tap penalty following a West transgression from the restart but he was too quick for both teams. Gloucester regained the ball and a phenomenal period of exciting play followed as all 15 players handled the ball. Up to this point Gloucester had been unable to provide quick second phase but the front row began to dominate the loose and Benton was always on hand to release the back division. A 20 yard run by Devereux brought Gloucester closer to the West line. Another huge pass from Pearce to the incoming Catling split the West defence and the simplest of passes to Lloyd gave him the easy task of falling over for Gloucester's first try. Mapletoft missed the conversion.

Regaining the ball from the restart Mapletoft sent a huge kick high and towards Liam Botham. Buoyed by his score Mike Lloyd raced forward and took a superb catch to prevent Botham. However Devereux blatantly dived in to waste good ball. Stabler kicked the penalty into touch only a few feet from the Gloucester line. West won the throw-in but excellent defence by Gloucester prevented the score.

West were still in contention at this stage and a penalty for handling in the ruck gave Stabler an easy opportunity to open his account for the day. He made no mistake and brought West closer to 8-3.

Gloucester marched up the field and with the final kick of the half, Mapletoft converted a penalty to stretch the Gloucester lead.

Half-time score: Gloucester 11 West Hartlepool 3

Scott Benton had looked really sharp all through the first half but there were moments when poor communications between Benton and Mapletoft meant that promising positions were wasted. By now though the Gloucester team were beginning to look as if they would cut loose at any moment. Whatever Mark Ring said to his team clearly didn't prepare them for the onslaught that Richard Hill was planning.

Mike Lloyd caught a drop 22 just inside the Gloucester half and weaved almost untouched through the sleeping Hartlepool defence. By the time they woke up, Lloyd had scored his second try of the game and Mapletoft had converted. Just over five minutes later, it was the turn of the forwards as Greening fed Windo for Tony to score his second try of the season. By now it was all Gloucester and we were betting on who would score next.

A West kick was charged down by Benton and recovered by Fidler, supported by the ever-present Pearce. Peters took one of his few chances to make a hazy run towards the line only to be stopped agonisingly short. Gloucester retained possession and the ball came to Mike Lloyd and he scored his hat-trick in the corner. Mapletoft slotted the conversion.

Whatever the Gloucester pack had done to change things, it was most effective in the second half as quick ball from breakdowns became the norm. Gloucester were no longer giving West time to organise any form of defence as major territory gains were made almost at will. The second half performance by Gloucester was almost perfect and bodes well for the future although the opposition were made to appear weak.

With less than 15 minutes to go and with Gloucester leading comfortably at 30-3, Scott Benton was replaced by Charlie Mulraine. Scott had picked up a foot tendon strain in the win over London Irish and had aggravated it. He was taken off as a precautionary measure and Richard Hill is confident that Scott will be fit for the Bristol game.

Another rampaging Gloucester attack foundered after Mike Peters was callously fouled off the ball. Huge cheers came from The Shed when Mike eventually got back up but amazingly no yellow card was produced. Gloucester failed to immediately capitalise from this but shortly after Mapletoft made the most of a quick penalty and raced through to score. A quick conversion made the score 37-3.

As West glumly slouched up field for the restart, one wit in The Shed called out "Come on Liam! Why don't you ask the Duke of Edinburgh for his cricket bat??!". West would have needed more than that to stop Gloucester.

West received a consolation prize as Chris John scored a try after charging down a kick. Stabler converted but it was Gloucester's day.

Man of the Match: Ed Pearce. Although Mike Lloyd scored 3 good tries this was a truly awesome performance from the back row forward who hasn't even played at this level since November. He turned up everywhere covering even his own mistakes. Some superb long passes, including the one which lead to Lloyd's opening try, and an ability to be at the right place at the right time are just some facets of one of the best performances I have seen at Kingsholm this year. Another display such as this against Bristol and Richer Dill will have one the hardest yet more pleasant decisions to make.

Teams:

Gloucester: Catling; Peters, Caskie, Roberts, Lloyd; Mapletoft, Benton {Mulraine 66}; Windo, Greening, Deacon; Fidler, Sims (captain); Pearce, Carter, Devereux.

Tries: Lloyd (3), Windo, Mapletoft; Conversion: Mapletoft (3); Penalties: Mapletoft; Drop Goal: Mapletoft

West Hartlepool: Silva; Wood {C John 68}, Botham, Connolly, S John; Stabler, Harvey; de Jonge {Painter 23}, Whitehead {Peacock 76}, Whitelock; Murphy, Moseley (captain); Roderick {Yeoman 70}, Ions, Morgan.

Richard Hill

Richard Hill gives a press conference after every match. Here's what he had to say to the members of the press.

Q. So that makes it 6 wins.

RH. Yes it does and I'm very pleased for the players. Its a nice record for them to be proud of. No other Gloucester team has actually won six out of six on the trot. So delighted for the players really as they deserved it. This was a tricky hurdle psychologically for them because we were going in as favourites which is unusual for Gloucester in a league match. They've been able to cope with the pressure of not being the favourite and playing some difficult away games like at Orrell, West Hartlepool and London Irish. They came through those tasks and I thought they had mentally passed the test as well as physically and this one here was, as far as I was concerned, a big stepping stone for the whole of the squad, to see whether or not if they could cope with the tag of being the favourites and playing accordingly. I was expecting a much closer game I must admit and if we had won, say 18-10, I suppose I still would have been pleased with that bearing in mind the importance of this game. They came through with flying colours and it was a big part of their development as a side.

Q. It was quite close at half-time.

RH. Yes. I think we had totally outplayed them in the first half and it was slightly worrying when we didn't have the points margin that perhaps the possession and territory deserved. Full credit to the West Hartlepool defence but it looked like there was only one team in it for 25 minutes of the first half. We went 8-0 up and then we just relaxed and this is something we have done on too many occasions and we let them back into the game and they came into it for the last 15 minutes of the first half. So at half-time I asked them for a big effort at the start of the second half to lift the tempo again and they responded accordingly in the best possible way with that superb Mike Lloyd try.

Q. That was an excellent finish by Mike.

RH. When he plays well there are few better wingers in the country. When he's on a purple patch then he's the best there is and he's on one now. Its not just his attacking work, everyone knows he's not the fastest thing on two legs but he can bounce through tackles, he chases kick-offs and he's normally the first bloke there and beats the second rows to the restarts. He gives everybody a lift as well and he's a nice character and everybody really likes him.

Q. Ed Pearce had a good game.

RH. There was a lot of pressure on Ed. Pete Glanville has been one of our best players in our recent matches and he had a stormer last weekend and I must admit I was a little concerned that he was missing. I had agreed with him that he could go at this period at the start of July when we did the contract so I knew he was going to be away. But I was a little bit worried because he was a very important part of the side and Ed had a lot to live up to. I have to say that he's done exactly what I had asked him to do and I'm very pleased. In attack and defence I thought he was outstanding. That's probably his best game of the season and it was important to become accepted as part of the first team squad and today he's passed his test with flying colours.

Q. Can you sum up the way things have gone for Gloucester such that Mike Lloyd can score three tries and yet he's still a part-time delivery driver.

RH. Its nice but it's not the ideal situation. I would much rather have Mike Lloyd training up here a lot more I must admit. Mike Peters is the same, he's at college down in Bristol, Don Caskie's still working, Martin Roberts is still working, Chris Catling is a student at Exeter University. We can't get these players here in the day and its very disappointing. So the only two [backs] that are

professional are Benton and Mapletoft. It would be nice to have the rest of the backs training full time as well and I've no doubt that it can't carry on like that but at the moment we're having to make up the deficiencies in skill and fitness with good attitude, self-belief, a will to win and a big team spirit. Unfortunately at the moment there's no chance of offering a full time contract.

Q. Bristol have expressed an interest in Ian Smith. Would you be prepared to let him go?

RH. That's a good question and I'm not sure I really want to comment.

Q. Does he figure in your plans?

RH. That's difficult. Nathan Carter's number one open-side and Andy Stanley is number two. So you can draw your own conclusions from that.

Q. What do you think the big money clubs make of Gloucester's achievements?

RH. They must be slightly worried. We've actually jumped above Saracens in the league table. When you think of the phenomenal amount of money they've spent on their squad and I just daren't think of how much money they've spent, I would think that the bloke that's put all the money in is having a word with the people down there and saying "What is going on? Why are we 5th from bottom and Gloucester are above us in the table?". It'll be worrying times down there but I've no doubt the fixtures will even out and Saracens will move back up the table. But we'll take a quiet satisfaction in seeing ourselves above the likes of Saracens whose philosophy I have to say I do not agree with.

Q. In what sense?

RH. Importing overseas players. I'm not decrying them for having money, at the end of the day Gloucester needs the money to keep the players we've got and to buy high quality English players. Francois Pienaar's salary would probably keep 20 players going.

Q. If you had the money would you not buy an overseas player?

RH. I wouldn't rule that out, no. I think if you've got a good quality player who isn't there just for an easy ride and the big fat salary, they can help the players around them and other people can benefit. So I'm not against foreign players because they have a lot to offer with a different philosophy and certainly a lot of expertise which they can impart to our younger English players.

Q. Have you personally had any offers considering how successful you've been and would you seriously consider them?

RH. I'm having a great time here. It's a tremendous club. I love the attitude here and it's my type of people. The players have been loyal to Gloucester at the start of the season by staying when they quite easily could have disappeared. Players like Phil Greening and Dave Sims, who had very good offers, and Benton and Mapletoft have showed their loyalty to the club and I will do likewise.

Q. Is there anything you can put your finger on to explain the turnaround in form?

RH. I don't think there's any one factor - we've brought a lot of new players into the side. We moved Mark Mapletoft to outside half and for the first five games he didn't know what he was doing but he has got better and better as he's gone on. Deliberately I brought in a couple of centres, Craig Emmerson and Andy Metcalfe and Saverimutto, and played them at the start of the season. I said to Martin Roberts and Don Caskie "You're well established and I want to have a look at these youngsters". Now those youngsters came on but they weren't ready for First Division rugby. What I've had to do is revert back to the Roberts-Caskie centre partnership and they're actually doing a very good job. I did experiment with selection, I didn't keep a settled side, I kept looking at Metcalfe, Emmerson and Saverimutto and they had a number of first team games. Poor old Craig Emmerson played against Philippe Sella one week, Guscott and de Glanville next week and it was a big test for him. I threw him in there and he's learnt a lot from that. Now he's in the United side and he and Andy Metcalfe are forming a good partnership and at some stage we'll have another look at them.

Gloucester's next home match at Kingsholm is against Orrell in the Courage Clubs Championship on Saturday February 8

Letter

More correspondence from the internet. We start this week with a very amusing tale of former Gloucester player Richard West.

From: Ceri Hyett

An exiled ShedHead now living in Bucks I find myself employed by Oracle the sponsors of Richmond Rugby Club. Last night I took part in a company General Knowledge and Rugby Quiz night. Six teams of four made up of three Oracle employees and a Richmond player. Scott and Craig Quinell and the ex-Cardiff and Wales pairing of Andy Moore and Adrian Davies took part along with Ben Clarke and ex-Glawster man Richard West. Brian Moore was the quiz master and asked the following question: "Which is the oldest established first class Rugby team in Wales?". I fully expected one of the Welsh contingent to hit the buzzers, but no, Westy was straight in with "Trick question, there are no first class sides in Wales". Brian Moore responded that while it was not the answer on the card it was clearly correct and awarded the points.

From: Matt Carter

Hello from Canada! I'm a transplanted Gloucester boy living in Hamilton, Ontario. I'm a member of the Burlington Centaurs R.F.C. which was one of the clubs that Gloucester played when they came over here on tour back in the early 1980's (my Dad, Steve Carter was playing for Burlington at the time). I just wanted to congratulate you on your site and let you know that it's being appreciated over on this side of the pond. There are quite of us over here who once called Gloucester home.

My Gramp, Ken Carter, is an avid rugby supporter and was quite amazed when I told him about your site – unfortunately being in his 70's and rather "old fashioned" he has no idea about what the Internet is - nor does he care to learn, "I've no need for those bloody computers". None the less, he's asked me to ask you a question. Can you tell me a little bit about Dave (I think it's "Dave"...) Saxby? Apparently he was the oldest player ever to be capped by England, and of course, he was from Gloucester. My Gramp was just wondering if this was true or not. I'd really appreciate it if you could confirm this for me. Take care and keep up the good work!

s Page

(We asked club historian Andrew Harley and he was able to enlighten us)

Plenty of "Daves" have played for Gloucester, but only one Saxby. He was one of the Gloucester Greats. E.L. Saxby first played for Gloucester in 1923 and made 169 appearances in a Cherry and White jersey, playing his final game for the club in 1931. He also played for England and Gloucestershire.

Along the way, he scored 30 tries and in the kicking department booted one conversion, one penalty goal and one dropped goal. In today's "currency" that is 158 points. He is, indeed, the oldest player to have ever been capped by England.

From: Irwin Wilson

I see from your update message that Chris Catling links into the pages (which seems to be getting better all the time). I took my daughter (10) to the Leeds game and managed to get in the middle of the front row of the Shed. I then got that typical line from a child 'I want to go to the toilet'. I didn't have a clue where the Ladies was (you wouldn't would you!), so asked the lady immediately to my right. Better than giving directions, she kindly took her.

Only after the game did Lucy say 'That lady's son is the full back and she's come to watch him from London'. Her excitement and deafening shouts every time Chris had the ball then all made sense!

Chris, please pass my thanks on to your mum. She's a great lady!

From: Victoria E Chopping

I'm looking for cartoons regarding rugby players (especially women players) to be used on Tour T-shirts for the Isle of Man Student Sports Festival in April. I play for Salford Uni's WRUFC and we need a design for our t-shirts ASAP. If you have any such scribblings (the funnier and more beer-related the better) then please could I have a squiz?

E-mail me at v.e.chopping@mcs.salford.ac.uk, and I can give you my snail mail address.

Cheers in advance

(or write to us and we'll pass it on to Victoria)

Fixtures and Results

August	23rd	Friendly	Pontypridd	H	W	15-5
	31st	Courage League	Harlequins	A	L	19-75
September	7th	Courage League	Sale	H	L	12-16
	11th	Anglo-Welsh	Newbridge	A	W	26-17
	14th	Courage League	Saracens	A	L	11-41
	21st	Courage League	Bath	H	L	29-45
	28th	Courage League	Leicester	A	L	14-32
October	2nd	Anglo-Welsh	Dunvant	H	W	64-16
	6th	Courage League	Wasps	H	W	28-23
	12th	European League	Ebbw Vale	H	W	59-7
	16th	European League	Begles Bordeaux	H	L	10-17
	19th	European League	Swansea	A	L	9-62
	27th	European League	Bourgoin	H	L	9-24
November	2nd	European League	London Irish	A	W	29-13
	5th	Friendly	Combined Services	H	W	32-7
	9th	Courage League	West Hartlepool	A	W	23-14
	16th	Courage League	Orrell	A	W	49-3
	19th	Friendly	RAF	H	W	33-7
	23rd	Friendly	Wakefield	A	L	24-29
	30th	Anglo-Welsh	Newbridge	H	W	76-0
December	7th	Courage League	London Irish	H	W	29-19
	10th	Anglo-Welsh	Ebbw Vale	A	W	22-15
	15th	Friendly	Moseley	A	L	7-22
	21st	Pilkington Cup R5	Leeds	H	W	55-20
January	4th	Courage League	Northampton	H	P	P
	11th	Courage League	London Irish	A	W	21-20
	18th	Courage League	West Hartlepool	H	W	37-10
	25th	Pilkington Cup R6	Bristol	H		
February	8th	Courage League	Orrell	H		
	14th	Friendly	Newport	A		
	18th	Courage League	Bristol	A		
	22nd	Pilkington Cup Q-F				
March	25th	Anglo-Welsh	Ebbw Vale	H		
	9th	Courage League	Wasps	A		
	14th	Friendly	Bedford	A		
	18th	Friendly	Army	H		
	22nd	Courage League	Leicester	H		
	29th	Courage League	Bath	A		
	29th	Pilkington Cup S-F				
April	2nd	Anglo-Welsh	Dunvant	A		
	5th	Courage League	Saracens	H		
	12th	Courage League	Sale	A		
	19th	Courage League	Harlequins	H		
	26th	Courage League	Bristol	H		
May	3rd	Courage League	Northampton	A		
	10th	Pilkington Cup Final				

Club Statistics

Courage League Division 1 - as on January 19th

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Diff
Leicester	12	9	0	3	362	202	18	160
Wasps	11	9	0	2	303	233	18	70
Bath	12	8	0	4	474	256	16	218
Harlequins	12	8	0	4	438	248	16	190
Sale	10	6	1	3	291	194	13	97
Saracens	10	6	1	3	263	224	13	39
Northampton	12	6	0	6	272	256	12	16
Gloucester	11	6	0	5	272	298	12	-26
West Hartlepool	12	3	0	9	236	387	6	-151
Bristol	12	3	0	9	232	395	6	-163
London Irish	11	2	0	9	265	392	4	-127
Orrell	11	1	0	10	139	462	2	-323

First XV Playing Record Summaries

1996/7 Season	Total	Home	Away
Played	26	14	12
Won	16	10	6
Lost	10	4	6
Draw	0	0	0
Points F	745	488	257
Points A	561	216	345
Win %	60.00	69.23	50.00

All Courage League	Total	Home	Away
Played	134	68	66
Won	64	43	21
Lost	63	23	40
Draw	7	2	5
Points F	2246	1336	947
Points A	2219	945	1284
Win %	50.37	64.71	35.61

First XV Appearances and Scores

	Gloucester Career						
	App	Try	Con	Pen	DG	Pts	PPG
Eral Anderson	10	3	0	0	0	15	1.50
James Bashford	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Laurie Beck	56	10	0	0	0	50	0.89
Scott Benton	28	7	0	0	0	35	1.25
Warwick Bullock	17	1	0	0	0	5	0.29
Nigel Cane	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Nathan Carter	10	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Don Caskie	187	34	0	0	0	170	0.91
Chris Catling	15	3	0	0	0	15	1.00
Nick Cooper	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Mark Cornwell	25	12	0	0	0	60	2.40
Howard Dawson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Andy Deacon	138	12	0	0	0	60	0.44
Simon Devereux	83	14	0	0	0	70	0.84
Scott Edwards	3	1	0	0	0	5	1.67
Craig Emmerson	5	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Gareth Fenwick	13	2	26	16	0	110	8.46
Rob Fidler	44	3	0	0	0	15	0.34
Chris Fortey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Lee Fortey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Alex Gallagher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Pete Glanville	96	14	0	0	0	70	0.73
Phil Greening	39	5	0	0	0	25	0.64
Chris Hall	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Peter Hart	17	0	4	0	1	11	0.65
John Hawker	138	17	0	0	0	85	0.62
Paul Holford	105	43	0	0	0	215	2.05
Martyn Kimber	59	8	9	8	18	136	2.31
Andrew Jarrett	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00

First XV Appearances and Scores

	Gloucester Career						
	App	Try	Con	Pen	DG	Pts	PPG
Tim Lacey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Mike Lloyd	25	17	0	0	0	85	3.40
Audley Lumsden	11	6	0	0	0	30	2.73
Mark Mapletoft	45	19	84	81	3	515	11.4
Andy Metcalfe	8	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Alex Morris	4	0	8	5	0	31	7.75
Charlie Mulraine	8	2	0	0	0	10	1.25
Bill Nicholls	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Lee Osborne	49	6	31	27	2	179	3.65
Nick Paisley	1	0	1	0	0	2	2.00
Ed Pearce	12	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Sam Pearman	2	2	0	0	0	10	5.00
Mike Peters	23	13	0	0	0	65	2.83
Adey Powles	38	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Martin Roberts	106	16	79	57	0	409	3.86
Alastair Saverimutto	18	9	3	2	0	57	3.17
Dave Sims	190	27	0	0	0	135	0.71
Ian Smith	336	52	0	0	0	260	0.77
Nick Smith	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Andrew Stanley	129	25	0	0	0	125	0.97
Dave Timmington	4	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Phil Vickery	10	1	0	0	0	5	0.50
Richard Ward	4	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Kester Wilkinson	1	1	0	0	0	5	5.00
Tony Windo	124	28	0	1	0	143	1.15
Trevor Woodman	5	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Chris Yelland	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Rob York	11	6	0	0	0	30	2.73

CodPiece!

This is, they say, “the professional era”. So how come that the powers that be let the professional era apply to the on the field activities but not in the administration department.

The recent mumblings from the bowels of Twickenham that yet again the promotion/relegation might be changed yet again took no one by surprise. The only redeeming factor about the rumour of two up, two down is that at least it is sensible - how could anyone justify the relegation of one quarter of the entire first division?

Or did the season start with the bottom two relegated and there would be some sort of a play-off for the two teams who finished third and fourth from bottom, or was it something else back last August?

Frankly, we cannot remember, it was that long ago and in rugby, like politics, a week is a heck of a long time!

The problem with the governing body of the sport is that they just will not learn from other professional team sports who have been around for years. Has anyone at Twickenham ever said: “How would they approach this at Lancaster Gate?” Had the boring old you-know-whats at Twickenham have done this, they would have found out that the handful of clubs at the top end of the game (the Premiership and Football League) are run very differently from the majority of clubs who make up the membership of the Football Association.

The RFU never learned. Because of this, we have, in soccer terms, the Premiership being controlled by clubs like Gloucester City or even those clubs in the Stroud League!

Is it any wonder that relationships between the top clubs and the powers that be are, to coin a phrase, somewhat brittle?

Let us go a step further. How about the position of player recruitment and imports from the southern hemisphere? It is all getting quite ridiculous, and this was brought home by some of the rugby writers who are now pointing out that own Mark Mapletoft is one of the very few outside halves playing in the first division who is actually qualified to play for England!

There are, of course, the “right to work” laws of the European Union, so in the wake of the Bosman case, there is freedom of movement of European citizens to work. This allows French and Italian rugby players the right to play professionally over here along with Scots, the Welsh and Irish.

Perhaps the powers that be want us spectators to be playing a new game when the sponge-person is on the field - that new game is called “Spot the Englishman” and, no, you cannot include the man with the whistle.

Now, before rules are introduced by the RFU, here is the “codpiece” dastardly plan for Gloucester to win the Pilkington Cup.

Imagine that we have won the semi final. What Richard Hill should then do is to pick a team for the final from those international players who have remained in their native South Africa, New Zealand, Australia or Argentina during the English season. Pay them £10,000 plus expenses each. Gloucester wins some silverware. Nothing in the rules to prevent it.

There are problems. Where is the sugar-daddy with a quarter of a million smakeroots to spare? What about the players who won the four cup games that got us to the final?

...Welcome to the professional era!

Ol' Babber Looks Forward

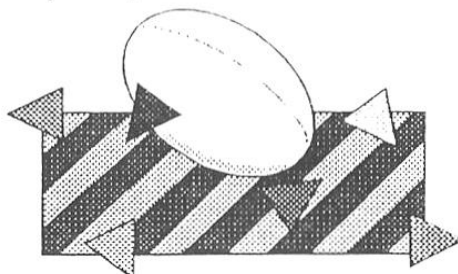
According to the form book, the outcome of today's game should be a foregone conclusion. In the Courage League, both teams are setting club records - Gloucester having completed a record six successive wins whereas Bristol find themselves in the less enviable position of having to stem the tide of seven successive defeats. Small wonder then, that Bristol are being cast in the role of relegation favourites and there is talk of "a crisis of confidence" at the Memorial Ground - a story all too familiar to Gloucester supporters in recent years.

However, despite their wildly different fortunes in the league, these two sides share similar playing strengths - which makes for an absorbing set of confrontations around the field today.

In the forwards, the battles between Regan and Greening, and Shaw and Sims will provide some indicator of the justice of the England pecking-order.

Behind the scrum, the young England "A" half-back partnership between Benton and Mapletoft will be tested against the considerable international experience of Jones and Burke, whilst Chris Catling has the chance to demonstrate how far he has developed against former England full-back Paul Hull. The battle between the back-rows should also prove fascinating as Richard Hill selects from his increasing options in that area to cope with the aggressive force of Martin Corry. Even in their present rampaging form, the Gloucester forwards will have to perform as well as they have done all season if they are to dominate proceedings up front today. If they can provide enough quick ball the fluent 15-man game being developed by the Cherry and Whites played by an increasingly confident side may provide the edge against a demoralised Bristol team. However, the Bristol players will be just as keen to win their personal battles against Gloucester's "young pretenders" and a win against the odds in a passionate derby clash would provide the jump-start to the season they have been looking for.

So although form would suggest a non-contest, the match is certain to be fiercely contested all over the field with not only club but also individuals' international prospects potentially at stake. After all, we all know how reliable the form book can be where cup competitions are concerned.



How They Will Line Up

Saturday 25th January, 1997 Kick off 3.00 pm

GLOUCESTER
Cherry & White

BRISTOL
Blue & White

15	Chris Catling	Full Back	Paul Hull	A
14	Mike Peters #	Right Wing	Dave Tiueti	B
13	Don Caskie	Centre	Simon Martin	C
12	Martin Roberts	Centre	Kevin Maggs	D
11	Mike Lloyd	Left Wing	Ben Breeze	E

10	Mark Mapletoft	Outside Half	Paul Burke	F
9	Scott Benton	Scrum Half	Robert Jones	G

1	Tony Windo	Prop	Alan Sharp	H
2	Phil Greening #	Hooker	Mark Regan #	I
3	Andy Deacon	Prop	David Hinkins	J
4	Rob Fidler	Lock	Chad Eagle	K
5	Dave Sims *	Lock	Simon Shaw	L
6	Ed Pearce	Flanker	Martin Corry *	M
7	Nathan Carter	Flanker	Eben Rollitt	N
8	Simon Devereux	No. 8	David Corkery	O

16	Laurie Beck	Replacements	Richard Smith	P
17	Martyn Kimber		Barry McConnell	Q
18	Mark Cornwell		Josh Lewsey	R
19	Chris Fortey		Phil Adams	S
20				
21				

Referee	# International	Touch Judges
	* Captain	