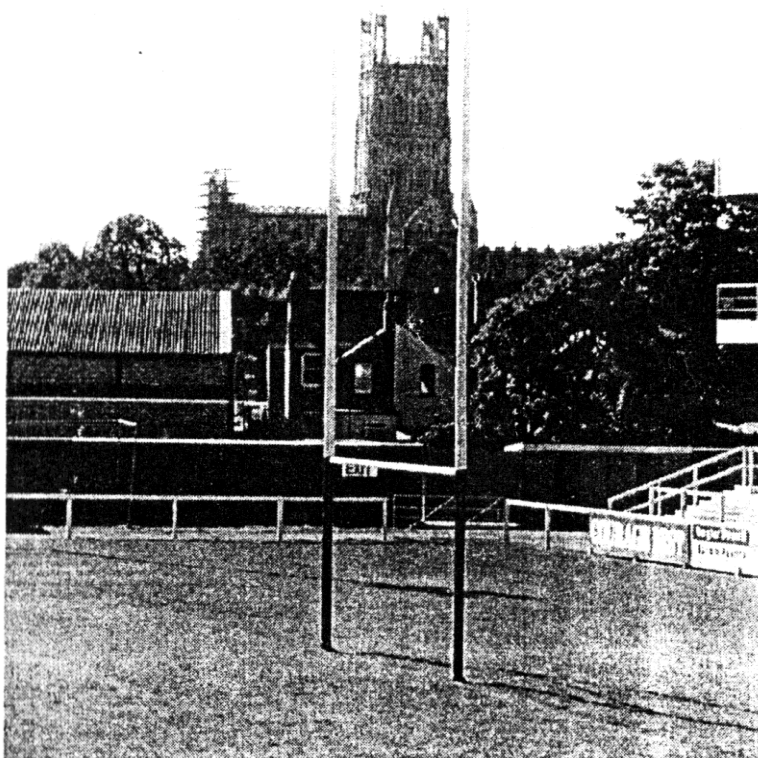


Old Spot!

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



GLOUCESTER'S NEXT MATCH
v NORTHAMPTON
Courage Club Championship
Tuesday March 4th 1997
Kick off - 7.30 p.m.

Issue 4

March 3, 1997

50 pence

Published by Newbrook Publications, Newbrook House, Queen's Road, Stonehouse, Glos, GL10 2QA

Old Spot's Tump Talk

In so many sporting events romance plays a part. We find certain scenarios almost irresistible in their appeal. So many times we cheer on the underdog because the prospect of the little man winning appeals to our natures. Indeed as paying spectators we can reserve the right to be as sentimental as we like. For example, wouldn't it have been wonderful if Lineker had played just one more game to scored the goal which would have seen him overtake Charlton and get his half-century? Who didn't cheer on Rosewall or Lendl as they both gallantly failed to capture that elusive Wimbledon title?

And there must be many of us who wanted to see Ian Smith playing for Gloucester regularly and are now hoping that Ian makes the cut and crowns his career with a tour to South Africa with the British Lions. But there will be no room for sentiment when the final squad is chosen. The Lions will be picked to do a job and picked according to their talents. This is all part and parcel of the professional era. Likewise, Richard Hill has decided that Carter and Stanley are better suited to the job and so Ian Smith is left out.

Ian played 336 games for Gloucester, scoring 52 tries. We will miss him and we wish him well for the future. Unless Moseley get promoted to Division 1, of course, we can't get sentimental!

Also in this issue.....

Ol' Babber met up with that dashing young centre Don Caskie recently. Don was pleased to give the inside information we all want to hear and you can read it all on page 4.

CodPiece! is on holiday in the South of France (nice work if you can get it!). So today we welcome Mark Graham who considers the supporter's lot.

As usual Ol' Babber previews the match and considers the personal battles (injuries notwithstanding) that will add spice to the Granddaddy of club rugby fixtures.

Please feel free to write to us, we welcome your comments

Write to:

Old Spot!, Newbrook House, Queens Road, Stonehouse, Glos GL10 2QA

email: oldspot@glawster.demon.co.uk

Why not visit our internet site? <http://www.glawster.demon.co.uk>

Strange Life - Being A Supporter!

I'm sure we all pride ourselves on being rational human beings. But what a range of emotions we have endured since the start of the September. And just this "Wakefield" Saturday, how different a journey "up" than "down".

Sundays to Fridays we go to work, play with the children, go out with friends, do the odd spot of DIY (in my case - very odd). Just get on with life - really. But think back to those first League games.

The optimism of a first journey down the M4; the frustration, anger, humiliation of the journey back. With yet more despair waiting on the M5/M42 and another M4. Aren't motorways long, lonely places in defeat? And even short journeys home from Kingsholm after Sale and Bath were almost unbearable. One lesson learnt at least - never DIY on a Sunday after defeat. Hammers and screwdrivers tend to become dangerous weapons rather than useful tools.

Then, suddenly, when least expected, came "Cloud Nine". I'm sure I floated home from Kingsholm after the Wasps game. Yet there I was before it, imagining I was a Lottery winner; sack the Board, sack the Coach, buy half South Africa and any has-been Oz or Kiwi out to line his pocket before age finally catches up with him.

M4, M5, M6, M1 - all now happy places, with conversations, rather than glum silence, the norm. Even the thought of looking forward to the next game! Incidentally, how nice if before long the RFU, or now EPRUC, could make sure League fixtures came a little more regularly. I've always had the feeling the Fixture List was based on the Twickenham bus timetable: five together, then a gap - then five more!

And another thing! How rational can it possibly be to travel M6/M62 to Wakefield just because THAT last time it was M42/M1? I'm sure decisions at work are not made on such a superstitious basis. What different journeys too. On the way - defeat at Bristol surely a bad omen for Wakefield revisited. On the way back - "what was the name of that lady who did good B&B round the corner from Twickenham?". And thoughts, too, of tonight's match - and a hoped-for victory which could put us fourth equal. Well OK - 5th behind a very superior Harlequins points difference. (A large proportion of which was against us anyway).

And finally, rugby intrudes into the workplace. Monday's lunch hour has to be taken to be next to a radio at 1.15. Half a ton of fingernail consumed just waiting for the introductions. Would deGlanville pull us out first? Not Sale away, surely? Great - at home! - ooohh! Leicester!

Five months down - two to go. And I'm sure yet more enjoyment to come on the Supporters RollerCoaster.

- Mark Graham

Don Caskie

Following Ian Smith's departure, Don is now the 2nd most experienced player at Gloucester with 34 tries from 191 appearances. Here we go then, that long-awaited expose of your favourite centre! Gasp in amazement as he plays down the Gloucester-Bath rivalry!

Old Spot: Well, that turned out to be a very close game against Wakefield - what happened?

Don Caskie: It didn't exactly go according to plan! We could easily have lost as we weren't playing very well, but the forwards gradually ground them down and we didn't allow them to play their game. It was a vast improvement on the Bristol game.

OS: How did you feel about Mike Wedderburn on Rugby Special talking about your "educated right foot?!!!"

DC: Well, I think they were only there because they were expecting Wakefield to cause an upset!

OS: Did you have any preferences for your opponents for the next round?

DC: I was hoping for Saracens, but home against Sale wouldn't be bad - I didn't play in the Sale game at Kingsholm earlier this season.

OS: What about the league situation now - do you think we're out of relegation trouble?

DC: We've set ourselves a target of another 2 wins to make sure that we stay out of trouble. The loss against Bristol was a bit of a setback, but we've got to play them again as well as Northampton at home. We feel that 2 more wins would make us safe.

OS: How big is the gap between Gloucester and sides like Wasps and Harlequins - and what can Gloucester do to try and bridge that gap?

DC: On the day we're not too worried about playing anybody. We probably play better against more fancied opposition - especially now we have the confidence that we can win games. In fact we've not played that well in our last 7 or 8 games but we've managed to win. If we play well then there's no reason why we can't beat these sides - we shouldn't be too worried about the opposition. As far as what Gloucester can do to bridge the gap is concerned, Richard's philosophy - to bring on the young boys - is clearly working. You can't fault him and all credit to him and his coaching.

OS: Money is now a major factor in the game. Do you think it's benefited Gloucester?

DC: Well, we haven't really been affected by vast sums of money - we're still very much a young side and the players don't have to be paid too much. We had some star players here already, the problem is keeping them here, like Phil Greening for example. But in this professional age we're more focused now, we're determined to win and all the extra training we do has made us all a lot fitter.

OS: How has professionalism affected you personally?

DC: I've really enjoyed it. I didn't play at the beginning of the season but I'm back in now - touch wood! The people at work are very understanding of my rugby and it's sort of an added bonus. But at my age I can't afford to give up my 'real job' because I'm now in the twilight of my career!

OS: You mentioned you weren't included in the team at the start of the season - was that a very frustrating time for you, watching these new young full-timers come in who were queuing up to take your place?

DC: A few years ago I would have been very, very frustrated but it's understandable that in the next year or so Richard will be looking for someone to take my place. But Richard knows that I've got a lot of experience of Division One rugby and Cup competitions and he knows that I'm always available to him.

OS: You're one of the most experienced players at the club now, so hopefully you can give us a long-term perspective on the development of the club. When do you think were the best times at Gloucester?

DC: When I first came here we had Gadd, Teague and Smith who were all great players and we had a different sort of teamship where we were a very close-knit group of friends. There's been a lot of change over these last 7 or 8 years. Now that camaraderie is coming back, but it's a very different sort than when I first came into it - I'm not saying it's the wrong sort, just very different.

OS: Yes, I get the impression that whenever I'm around the players after a match that the Gloucester forwards all tend to stick together and the backs all go off to their own separate groups. Do you think that sort of "Forwards' Clique" exists?

DC: Well, most of the Gloucester forwards are Gloucester boys, whereas the backs tend to be the imports - maybe that's a factor. But we're all still a very close-knit group at Gloucester and probably always will be.

OS: When were the real dark days at Gloucester?

DC: Two or three years ago we were going through a bad spell when we were always fighting off relegation. We had Barrie Corless here and the club seemed to lack any direction. Then Viv Wooley came in and brought back the Gloucester perspective and now Richard is very focused indeed! He believes in a philosophy and he knows how he wants things to be done. He's also prepared to admit when he's wrong and will do U-turns if necessary.

OS: Do you think that sort of single-mindedness can have it's disadvantages? Take the case of Ian Smith for example...

DC: Well, firstly you can't take anything away from Nathan Carter. He plays how Richard likes his open-sides to play. Ian plays a different style which is suitable for Scotland but not for Gloucester at the moment. But Ian will do very well wherever he goes. He's a good friend and it's just all very unfortunate how it turned out.

OS: What have been the highlights of your playing career?

DC: Obviously, getting selected for Scotland A for the first time was very special. Getting to play in the Cup Final a few years ago was also a highlight as was playing in that side that season. We were a very strong side and we had the feeling that we would never lose - and we're only starting to get that feeling back now!

OS: What do you remember about that Cup Final?

DC: It was a very hot day and I felt that we played better than we had against Nottingham in the semi-final when I remember that we felt that we'd played awfully. But it was very upsetting to have been washed aside by Bath like that.

OS: Not only losing in a Cup Final, but also losing to Bath!

DC: Well, I think that there's more animosity off the pitch than on it as far as Gloucester and Bath are concerned. I think the supporters dislike each other a lot but it's not really the same for the players!

OS: What do you think your main strengths and weaknesses are as a player?

DC: My strengths are my defence and my tackling and I guess I'm an old experienced head in the backs. I've built up a strong partnership with Martin Roberts which I think is going well. On the negative side I don't have the blistering pace of a Mike Peters but experience lets you judge angles better which sort of compensates. Still, it's not very often that someone will go past the outside of me - although having said that you'll probably see it happen in the next game now! It's also not very often that I go on the outside to make a break - I usually try and go through the middle.

OS: Who has been your toughest opponent over the years?

(Continued on Page 14)

Edgar "Ted" Chandler

The sad news has reached Old Spot of the death of former Gloucester player, Edgar Chandler, who died on New Years' Day aged 86. Although he did not feature in many first team games, Edgar (also known as Ted), was involved with Gloucester for many years of his playing career, which took place during the 1930s.

Edgar was a man of the true Gloucester tradition which has always been so valued at this club. To start with, he was Gloucester born and bred, spending his whole life in Green Lane, Brockworth. He learnt the game playing for various local sides from the age of 12 before coming to Kingsholm in his twenties.

Of course, not only the game was very different back then, but the nature of the club and the lifestyle of the players could not have been more different than today's professional era. For example, players were expected to be much more adaptable when it came to sorting out who was to play in which position. The most extreme case involved Edgar, still recovering from a heavy drinking session with his team-mates at lunch-time, was roped into training in the afternoon where he was tried out at stand-off, full-back and prop! But even though Edgar was prepared to play either at scrum-half or fly-half, the first-team's half back partnership was so well established that Edgar found it difficult to break into the side. On the pitch, the "major ructions" that we see players getting involved in today were made to look like playground spats in comparison to how the players welcomed each other onto the pitch in the Thirties.

On one particular occasion before coming to Kingsholm, Edgar was involved in a local derby where, no sooner had the opposing side kicked off than his opposite number had simply raced across to him and punched him in the face! Needless to say, after a brief consultation with the rest of the team, the opponent in question emerged from the next passage of play after having several teeth punched out! That's not to say that rugby was an uncivilised game back then, after all, the players always had a chance to get together in the bar afterwards and let the alcohol dissolve any previous animosity between them !

However, the involvement of alcohol in those days was more than about getting plastered. In terms of the social aspects of the game, Edgar would often reminisce about the days of amateurism, when players really had a sense of being involved in a close-knit team which was well known and respected amongst the general community. It comes as little surprise then, to find out that Edgar was not the greatest fan of the financially obsessed professional era, with it's apparent disregard for tradition. In fact, it's interesting to compare the vast sums of money being paid to the nation's top players now, and the situation of players in the Thirties. On one occasion, after having played for Gloucester against the Oxbridge sides, Edgar even had to sell his match blazer so he could afford to socialise afterwards !

We send our condolences and best wishes to Edgar's family, who have sadly lost one of the true embodiments of the classic Gloucester spirit.

Courage League Run-in

Gloucester have got all their “easy” games out of the way and are still short of the 18 points that Richard Hill believes will guarantee safety. But how easy will it be for Bristol, West Hartlepool, London Irish or Orrell to catch up?. Here are the remaining fixtures for the bottom four.

Bristol: Saracens (A - 8 March), Sale (H - 22 March), Northampton (H - 5 April), Orrell (A - 12 April), London Irish (H - 19 April), Gloucester (A - 26 April), West Hartlepool (H - 3 May), Harlequins (A - tbc)

West Hartlepool: Leicester (A - 8 March), Bath (H - 22 March), Saracens (A - 29 March), Sale (H - 5 April), Harlequins (A - 12 April), Northampton (H - 19 April), London Irish (H - 26 April), Bristol (A - 3 May), Wasps (A - tbc)

London Irish: Bath (A - 8 March), Saracens (A - 22 March), Sale (A - tbc), Harlequins (H - 5 April), Northampton (A - 12 April), Bristol (A - 19 April), West Hartlepool (A - 26 April), Orrell (H - 3 May), Leicester (H - tbc), Orrell (A - tbc), Sale (A - tbc), Wasps (A - tbc)

Orrell: Harlequins (H - 8 March), Wasps (A - 22 March), Northampton (H - 29 March), Leicester (A - 5 April), Bristol (H - 12 April), Bath (A - 19 April), Saracens (H - 26 April), London Irish (A - 3 May), London Irish (H - tbc), Saracens (A - tbc)

All four teams have to play Saracens, Northampton and Harlequins. Bristol have only three “easy” fixtures and the trip to Kingsholm on April 26th may be the crucial match for both clubs.

Trivia Corner

The game with Northampton sees Mark Mapletoft's 50th appearance in a Cherry and White jersey. With 558 points from the 49 games he has played, is Mark Mapletoft Gloucester's most prolific player?

Letter

We have received a very nice letter from the Forest of Dean. We know Gloucester has a lot of supporters on the other side of the Severn and we say a big hello to all of them, especially the big friendly crew who drink in The Jockey!

From: Paul Bevan

I am a foreigner from Somerset who has lived in Berry Hill for over 12 years and supported Berry Hill RFC through all sorts of peaks and troughs. It is bad enough that Gloucester keep pinching our best players, use them as cannon fodder and then discard them. (Ring a bell, Gloucester Spartans?)

I can almost accept (but don't) the fact Gloucester half-releases our local hero Adey Powles but only let him play for our Seconds as he is still under contract to you City slickers at Kingsholm.

However the ultimate insult is to state in your last issue that Adey is "still on loan to Lydney"!! Have you no sensitivity! Have you no sense of local pride! Have you no sense of tribal disputes going back hundreds of years!

Hang your head in shame, Old Spot! Still, what does anyone from Stonehouse know about Rugby, anyway.

Old Spot replies: Yes, indeed. I was thinking Lydney but wrote Berry Hill. Many apologies to all those from Lydney and also to Adey Powles who I'm sure is happier where he is.

Mark Hitchin wrote to us just before the Orrell game. I have to agree, this season has the potential for boring the pants off our grandchildren!

So Glaws get out of the mire and all of a sudden it's only two to go down. Is it a conspiracy??? The only good news is that the playoffs will be during the Lions Tour. - The cash rich clubs will be short. (Unfortunately so will Bristle...)

On the subject of Regan I can't see him losing his place to Greening now. He had a pretty good game Saturday, B*****d. Somehow I think this will work in Gloucester's favor - If he doesn't get many games for England he might accept less cash to stay at Kingsholm - Let's hope so.

Incidentally what about Glaws for the Cup? Could be Sale or Northampton next and I reckon we could take the finalists on the occasion. Stranger things have

s Page

happened. Just getting to the Semis is pretty impressive though. Or am I counting my chickens again?

Well, Saturday could take us above Northampton. Orrell are so demoralised now it should be a try-fest. If the fifth place is down to points difference we'd do well to try for a biggie. Then it's giant slaying season. I reckon we'll be telling our grand-children about this season.

From Iain Robertson

As someone who doesn't get down to Kingsholm as often as he'd like (every week) it's been brilliant to find your home page. I'm particularly interested in hearing all the gossip, especially about who's coming into the club (preferably a threequarter who can catch a ball and make a break rather than attempting to run over the top of the opposition - thank you Martin Roberts and good night).

Regular correspondent Lee Farrow couldn't wait to write about the recent reorganisation at Bath. Welcome to the Professional Era, Mr Hall!

I must admit I couldn't stop laughing when I heard about John Hall the other night, but it does re-inforce the "hire 'em, fire 'em" policy the "owner clubs" will pursue. I only hope the players with these clubs realise the same thing can, and will, happen to them.

Talking to the Barf fans at work, it seems as though most people couldn't wait to see him leave and the run of poor results was the excuse they were looking for, apparently, Brownhatter has said that he would take all of his teddys and leave if there was any adverse publicity surrounding the club after the alleged incident in the nightclub - which allegedly involved John Hall I believe!! Personally, I believe he should be rewarded for his outstanding service to Glawster RFC - if it wasn't for him, Richer Dill would never have left Barf and joined us!

When questioned about the vacancy at Bath, Richard Hill was quoted on Futurenet News:

"There is no chance whatsoever of me going down there," said Hill. "I am committed to Gloucester now. I am happy here and I want to fulfil my contract."

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	11th	Courage League	London Irish	A	W	21-20
	18th	Courage League	West Hartlepool	H	W	37-10
	25th	Pilkington Cup R6	Bristol	H	W	18-12
February	8th	Courage League	Orrell	H	W	30-0
	18th	Courage League	Bristol	A	L	13-18
	22nd	Pilkington Cup Q-F	Wakefield	A	W	25-21
	25th	Anglo-Welsh	Ebbw Vale	P	P	P
March	4th	Courage League	Northampton	H		
	9th	Courage League	Wasps	A		
	14th	Friendly	Bedford	A		
	18th	Friendly	Army	H		
	22nd	Courage League	Leicester	H		
	29th	Courage League	Bath	P	P	P
	29th	Pilkington Cup S-F	Leicester	H		
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 Club Championship Division 1 - as on February 23rd

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Diff
Wasps	13	11	0	2	387	268	22	119
Bath	13	9	0	4	492	269	18	223
Leicester	12	9	0	3	362	202	18	160
Harlequins	13	8	0	5	468	279	16	189
Sale	11	7	1	3	322	224	15	98
Northampton	13	7	0	6	289	266	14	23
Gloucester	13	7	0	6	315	316	14	-1
Saracens	11	6	1	4	273	241	13	32
Bristol	14	4	0	10	263	426	8	-163
West Hartlepool	14	3	0	11	271	471	6	-200
London Irish	12	2	0	10	292	424	4	-132
Orrell	12	2	0	10	171	519	4	-348

First XV Playing Record Summaries

1996/7 Season	Total	Home	Away
Played	30	16	14
Won	19	12	7
Lost	11	4	7
Draw	0	0	0
Points F	831	536	295
Points A	612	228	384
Win %	63.33	75.00	50.00

Since 1891	Total	Home	Away
Played	3927	2251	1676
Won	2404	1669	735
Lost	1251	436	815
Draw	272	146	126
Points F	55405	37764	17641
Points A	33429	15846	17583
Win %	64.68	77.39	47.61

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	32	8	0	0	0	40	1.25
Warwick Bullock	17	1	0	0	0	5	0.29
Nigel Cane	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Nathan Carter	14	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Don Caskie	191	34	0	0	0	170	0.89
Chris Catling	19	3	0	0	1	18	0.95
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	142	12	0	0	0	60	0.42
Simon Devereux	87	14	0	0	0	70	0.80
Scott Edwards	3	1	0	0	0	5	1.67
Craig Emmerson	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Gareth Fenwick	13	2	26	16	0	110	8.46
Rob Fidler	48	3	0	0	0	15	0.31
Chris Fortey	5	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Lee Fortey	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Alex Gallagher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Pete Glanville	98	15	0	0	0	75	0.77
Phil Greening	42	5	0	0	0	25	0.60
Chris Hall	2	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	60	8	9	8	18	136	2.27
Andrew Jarrett	2	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	29	18	0	0	0	90	3.10
Audley Lumsden	11	6	0	0	0	30	2.73
Mark Mapletoft	49	21	90	88	3	558	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	14	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Sam Pearman	2	2	0	0	0	10	5.00
Mike Peters	27	15	0	0	0	75	2.78
Adey Powles	38	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Martin Roberts	110	16	79	57	0	409	3.72
Alastair Saverimutto	18	9	3	2	0	57	3.17
Dave Sims	194	27	0	0	0	135	0.70
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	128	29	0	1	0	148	1.16
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

Don Caskie (continued from page 5)

DC: Well, the Bath boys are always a bit of a pain, but I used to hate playing against Smith and Bucton of Saracens. Lawrence Smith was very big and Bucton was very quick so one of them would barge through and the other just picked the ball up and raced away!

OS: How do you rate somebody like Jeremy Guscott?

DC: You've got to respect him, but I've never felt intimidated by him. In fact, I quite like playing against him because you know what's going to happen. It's the tall, gangly ones who are the trouble, you don't always know what they're going to do. I normally end up having to tackle the full-back anyway!

OS: Well, talking of full-backs, how do you rate Chris Catling? He's got to be the find of the season!

DC: Yes, he's come a long way and is a fine prospect for the future. He's a confidence player but perhaps he needs to put a bit more weight on!

OS: How do you think Gloucester's future looks over the next few years?

DC: We're building steadily now and we have to make sure that we continue in the right way this season and next, building on the foundations that Richard has put in place so that we can compete for the league and cup. I know that we've managed to reach the semi-finals of the cup, but realistically this was a year of rebuilding and laying the foundations for us to evolve and really start to compete.

OS: Do you think that Gloucester will need to buy in players?

DC: Well, Richard tends to have a good eye for young talent and he's in the perfect position in the England set-up to be able to attract new young players. Obviously, we can't make the whole team that young - we must build up gradually. But Richard's philosophy is working without buying imports. If players are young, proven internationals who have a passion to play for the club and are not just there for the money or to finish off their careers then that's OK. Buying in new players isn't a necessity at the moment.

OS: So much for the future of Gloucester, what about the future for Don Caskie?

DC: I've got a two-year contract and to be realistic, at this level and at this age I'm just enjoying playing in the first team and hopefully playing with the club next year. Then maybe I'll have to start playing in the lower divisions.

OS: Perhaps you could get involved in the coaching set-up at Gloucester?

DC: I'd love to be involved with Gloucester and pass on some of the experience I've got, but that's all still pie-in-the-sky stuff. My priority is to keep playing and help Gloucester in their rehabilitation period.

OS: How great a role do the supporters play? Are you aware of them when you're out on the pitch?

DC: When there's a lull you can always hear the comments and a lot of the banter. Then the crowd roars into action and that chanting mass of noise gees you up. It helps a lot - the hairs go up on the back of your neck when you're warming up and when you go out onto the pitch. It makes a hell of a difference, the crowd pick you up. You're aching like mad and they still manage to pick you up.

OS: Finally, do you have a message for the supporters?

DC: Just to say thank you very much for everything they do - it is appreciated by all the players - and if they keep on in the same vein then they can't go wrong!

OS: Thanks a lot for your time, Don....

01' Babber Looks *Forward*

After having been turned over at home by Sale (9-22) in their last competitive match, Northampton will be looking forward to "being able to concentrate on the league" and take further steps to achieving this season's aim – a four finish.

Northampton are the only opponents from the first division that Gloucester have yet to meet this season either home or away. Despite their impressive results achieved at home, including victories against Bath and Leicester, Northampton still find themselves in mid-table, probably due to more erratic away form, for example back in January they were swept aside 52-14 by Bath. Gloucester, on the other hand, have not lost in a league game at Kingsholm since September and will be looking to secure two of the four points which Richard Hill thinks would keep Gloucester clear of the relegation play-offs.

Our visitors will be able to parade one of the most accomplished set of backs in the first division - and Gloucester's normally excellent defensive play will have to be at its most effective if they are to snuff out the attacking flair behind the scrum. We cannot rely on them all feeling tired after their efforts in the week-end's Five Nations fixtures ! Richard Hill will have seen how Sale built their victory on the containment of Northampton's back line and he will have made clear to his players the vital importance of maintaining pressure on Grayson and Dawson in order to cut the supply line to Saints' devastating runners!

Of course, the best way of neutralising the threat of Northampton's backs is to deprive them of ball up front. Northampton's forwards, whilst boasting of some star names, have looked vulnerable on occasions and gradually, Gloucester should expect to enjoy their usual dominance in this area. It may have been interesting to see Richard Hill pick Phil Vickery to compete with his England A rival, Volland, and Gloucester's back row will be relishing the contest with Rodber and Taputu. Needless to say, Dave Sims will also be looking to make a point of out-playing the recently recovered Bayfield who will need to prove his worth again now that his height should be less of an advantage with the new line-out laws. Crucially, the whole team will have to suss out the referee at an early stage, because just like Bristol's Paul Burke, Grayson, on current form, is unlikely to show any mercy with any kickable penalties that they give away.

After having hopefully learned the necessary lessons after their close encounter at Wakefield, Gloucester will be provided with a genuine opportunity to show Kingsholm just how far they have developed over the season. This is a game they can and will have to win if they are to spare us all a few more grey hairs at the end of the season. If this game slips away from them, then it could well be that we will all find ourselves biting our nails as Gloucester fight for a crucial win on the last day of the season...at Franklins Gardens.

Line-up

Tuesday 4th March 1997 Kick off 7.30 pm

GLOUCESTER
Cherry & White

NORTHAMPTON
Green, Yellow and Black

15	Chris Catling	Full Back	Nick Beal #	15
14	Mike Peters #	Right Wing	Ian Hunter #	14
13	Don Caskie	Centre	Gregor Townsend #	13
12	Martin Roberts	Centre	Jonathon Bell #	12
11	Mike Lloyd	Left Wing	Harvey Thornicroft	11

10	Mark Mapletoft	Outside Half	Paul Grayson #	10
9	Scott Benton	Scrum Half	Matt Dawson #	9

1	Tony Windo	Prop	Matt Volland	1
2	Phil Greening #	Hooker	Allen Clarke #	2
3	Andy Deacon	Prop	Gavin Walsh #	3
4	Rob Fidler	Lock	Jason Chandler	4
5	Dave Sims *	Lock	Martin Bayfield #	5
6	Pete Glanville	Flanker	Shem Tatupu	6
7	Nathan Carter	Flanker	Jon Wright	7
8	Simon Devereux	No. 8	Tim Rodber #*	8

16	Chris Fortey	Replacements	Tim Beddow	16
17	Ed Pearce		Matt Stewart #	17
18	Laurie Beck		Grant Seely	18
19	Martyn Kimber		Matt Allen	19
20				20
21				21

Referee	# International	Touch Judges
Steve Lander	* Captain	Geoff Warren and John Theodon