

Old Spot!

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



GLOUCESTER'S NEXT MATCH
v SARACENS

Courage Club Championship
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Old Spot's Tump Talk

Everyone who is connected with Gloucester will tell you that its a pity that Phil Greening hasn't been picked for the Lions. But before we all get carried away and start wearing black armbands, lets consider the implications for those players who have been "honoured" by being picked. There may be some advantage to Gloucester!

This season started a full eight months ago - so much earlier than normal that it was the first time ever that a match had been played at Kingsholm during the month of August. The season finale will be the Pilkington Cup Final on the second Saturday in May - one week later than normal. But wait - for some teams the season will continue because there are promotion/relegation play-offs. 15 of the players selected for the Lions play for teams that could be involved - Bristol, Newcastle, Northampton, Richmond and London Irish are all candidates still. Indeed, will these players even be available for those play-offs? After all the Lions' first match is just 2 weeks after the Pilkington Cup Final.

Then follows a gruelling 13 match tour ending in July. So for quite a few players that will be the end of an 11 month season - they will barely have time to rest before they will need to start full training ready for yet another full-length season.

The implications are quite horrendous for teams like Leicester and Newcastle who are supplying fully one third of their squads for this tour. What will Rob Andrew and Bob Dwyer do should these players become incapacitated? Its a possibility - look at the number of players who were injured on the last Lions tour in 1980. It may well be true that the dawn of the professional era rings the death knell for the British Lions as so many commentators are predicting.

So perhaps the new season will start with some of Gloucester's rivals struggling to provide full opposition. Meanwhile a good proportion of our team will have learnt much from a quick tour to Argentina, rested well over the rest of the summer, enjoyed their 10-day tour of Italy and be raring to go come September.

Yes, every cloud does have a silver lining!

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

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Scott Benton spins the ball out

An Interview with Nathan Carter

Nathan Carter burst onto the Gloucester scene early in the season and since his debut he has hardly been out of the team. Off the pitch he is quiet and unassuming. On the pitch he is rapidly making a name for himself as a fierce competitor.

OS: Nathan, you shot into the first team back in the autumn against Wasps - what had you been doing until then?

Nathan Carter: I'd played for Gloucester Colts and U21's and the County Colts and U21's. I was at Widden Old Boys for two years and then I went to the Gordon League. I went between there and Gloucester for the past three years.

OS: Has your life changed a lot since you started playing regularly for the Gloucester first team?

NC: Well its become a lot more hectic! I have to do a lot more training which also takes place earlier - sometimes from 3.00 in the afternoon which together with work makes a busy schedule!

OS: So you're not playing as a full-timer?

NC: I'm still part-time but I'm playing a lot more rugby than at the beginning of the season. I'm still working as a builder a couple of days a week. But if the opportunity comes along I'd certainly become a full-time player.

OS: Some Gloucester supporters, for one reason or another, seem to take this idea of "Glaws - born and bred" quite seriously. For those people who don't know you, could you set the record straight?

NC: I was born in Tredworth and moved to Hucclecote. I went to Brockworth School. My Mum and Dad and all my relations are all from Gloucester as well!

OS: Last weekend you had to face Leicester and Neil Back. How do you feel that went?

NC: It was OK. He was very quick and very strong but we retained a lot of our own ball which we were happy about. We watched the video of the match on Wednesday and when you've got time to see the whole match from a distance you could see that some of the referee's decisions were.....'interesting'!!

OS: What happened at the back of the line-out? Why did Simon Devereux not seem to be able to get off the ground?

NC: Throwing to the back of the line-out has worked really well for us all season- its not something we do if things are going wrong. Simon was impeded a couple of times and the danger is, if you're like me, you're the man at the back who has to lift the jumper - if things go wrong then you've left a lot of space behind you for the opposition to run into.

OS: You've played against most Division One teams now - do any particularly tough opponents come to mind?

NC: Every game we've had this season has been hard, each game for a different reason. The atmosphere at Division One relegation dog-fights is a lot different to the atmosphere when you play against Wasps and Leicester - some games are more physical. You've just got to psyche yourself up in different ways for different matches.

OS: You're up against Richard Hill who's just been picked for the Lions. Are you looking forward to it?

NC: Yes! I haven't played against Saracens before and we owe them one from earlier this season. We want to put the cup defeat behind us as well!

OS: I suppose the danger is now that after having lost to Leicester in the semi-final and knowing that we only need one more win to be sure of staying up, the season might just drift to an end, save for the crunch match against Bristol.

NC: Well, there's no way that Richard Hill would let us drift along. He won't let anyone slack and if they do then personnel will change. We all want to keep winning our games - its not a nice feeling when you lose.

OS: Going back to the issue of the opponents you've come across this season - there's been a lot of talk that a no. 7 needs to be well over 6 ft to be successful. Do you think that's true?

NC: No I don't think its true. Perhaps the taller no. 7's were more effective a couple of seasons ago but now the rules have changes the no. 7's job must be to get to the break-down quickly. New Zealand, for example, have always stuck with an out-and-out open-side because they've always seen the need to retain the ball. Mind you, the guy they've got now is big *and* fast!

OS: have you always played at open-side?

NC: When I was at school I used to play at full-back and then at centre! I started playing flanker when I was 17 and then I played at blind-side for Widden before switching to open-side.

OS: You've got a tough few weeks coming up with 6 league matches in April. How are you going to cope?

NC: Well you've got to be mentally prepared - to be able to pick yourself up after the game and make sure you do effective training. Knowing when to rest is also very important as well.

OS: Do you think you'll play in all the games or will Andy Stanley come in for a couple of games?

NC: That's all up to Richard Hill. Stan has been there at no. 2 all season and I train with him a lot - there's some healthy competition there!

OS: As far as your own game is concerned, what are your strengths and what are the areas you want to work on?

NC: My strengths are in getting to the break-downs quickly and my work when I get there. I like to try and hit the opponent around at the break-down and I really like tackling. On the other hand I'd like to stay on my feet a lot more in the tackles and to get involved with the backs more, but we've been involved in a lot of tight games of late so the back row hasn't really been able to express themselves in the loose. But that will come along as the side develops.

OS: Has Richard Hill been a big help to you since he arrived at Kingsholm?

NC: Yes, especially when he takes us through the video analysis - you pick up on a lot of little things. John Brain has also helped us a lot with work on some of the finer details.

OS: There has also been a lot of talk about Ian Smith this season around the time of his departure. You were pushed into the background a bit - what do you think about all that happened?

NC: I've known Ian for a long time and he was fine with me, which was very good of him really. You hear about all the things which were supposed to be going on but I was just there to do a job and whatever happened was between them as far as I was concerned.

OS: But what we'd really like to know is whether you got his club car!!

NC: No!! I don't know what happened to that. Anyway I'm quite happy with the car I've got.

OS: What are your ambitions?

NC: Who knows? If the opportunities come along then I'd love to play representative rugby at the highest level that I can.

OS: Do you see yourself still at Gloucester in two year's time?

NC: I would hope so! You get a taste for playing at Gloucester and you want to try and fight to stay there.

OS: Thanks very much, Nathan.

NC: No problem.

STAT ATTACK!

Going into today's match, the Sarries have NEVER won a game at Kingsholm (except in 10-a-side competition)!

A Free Lunch?

Old Spot is not normally a publication to deal with the twilight world of rumour and gossip, but we thought that on this particular occasion we could make an exception. Now, allegedly, in the upcoming special meeting for the club members, not only will the possibility of major financial backing be discussed, but a far more concrete proposal will be put forward which will see revolutionary changes coming to the club.

But how should the Gloucester supporters, respond to this? The decision the members could be asked to make would be the most far-reaching in the club's history! The issue is not, however, as simple as some people would have you believe because the problem is this: the club desperately needs a major financial injection to be able to compete in the professional era. But how can this be done so that the club still has control over its own affairs?

The fact that we need the money is surely not in question. Either we take the route that virtually every other club who will be in the First Division next season has taken, or we make a stand against professionalism and continue to attempt to be self-financing, not unlike relegation-doomed Orrell have done. The millionaire clubs are raising the stakes for everyone else as a players' transfer market develops along the lines of that seen in the Football Leagues. If Gloucester do not secure major financial support very soon then it is questionable how long players like Greening, Fidler, Benton, Mapletoft and Catling will settle for second best. They are, after all, ambitious young men and who are we to tell them that "club loyalty" should come before everything else? Being a rugby player is fast becoming a lucrative business and these rising stars are in the right place at the right time, and Gloucester needs to retain these players or else risk becoming a feeder for the elite clubs.

It must be frustrating for Richard Hill to steer the narrow path between success and survival. If the club is too successful that will only mean players will receive bigger and better offers from elsewhere, and yet Gloucester have to achieve enough points to stay in the First Division! If Richard Hill is to sign up to three established international players then he will need the means with which to do it. For better or worse, the honour of wearing the Cherry and White jersey in itself is not enough.

While it seems that it is obvious that the club needs extra funds, we have to be very careful about how this is done. Firstly, as far as the players are concerned, it is not unlikely that the professional bubble of inflated prices being paid for players, together with their wage payments, is set to burst within a relatively short period. This is because beyond the millionaire investors, the money simply isn't there to support it because, apart from notable exceptions such as Gloucester and Leicester, the clubs in England cannot boast of huge fan bases. So if we choose to join in with the professional merry-go-round it must be done sensibly. As with football, fading international stars - both from this country and abroad - are coming to see the English game as a great way to pep up their pensions. As Richard Hill has already said, we need to strike a balance between obtaining players who are of proven ability, but who are also willing to play their hearts out for Gloucester - which means being able to play without being dazzled by the dollar signs in their eyes.

Of course, with cash comes control and expectation. Bath, for instance, were only too willing to accept Brownsword's money, but they could not deal with the huge weight of expectation that this "present" brought with it. Clearly investors are no innocent Good Samaritans who hand over the cash, say "Enjoy yourselves, kids!" and then disappear as quickly as they came. They obviously will want returns on their money and if they feel that these are endangered then they can exert influence on a cowering committee to change things - Bath again the obvious example. So whilst welcoming any investment, I would implore the Directors to ensure that Richard Hill is as protected as far as possible from any short-term worries the investors may have.

Above all else, Richard is the future of this club and everyone involved with Gloucester must see to it that he is supported in whatever he does. It is up to the Committee, the Directors and ultimately the membership to ensure that this club gets the investment it so badly needs but in a way that supports Richard and the players - not put pressure on them. In short we all have a responsibility to ensure that we learn from the mistakes of others so that, as far as is realistically possible, Gloucester gets the best of both worlds.



Simon Devereux and Pete Glanville get ready to welcome the opposition

Letter

Nor surprisingly we received quite a few letters about the Leicester game. These are just some of the more printable ones!!

From: Lee Farrow

Severely robbed or what!

On the way home we listened to BBC Radio Glaws and St. Richard of Hill said he was mystified by many of the penalties awarded against us, Katie in the Pink 'Un said she was mystified by many of the decisions, Dave Barton in the Western Daily said he was mystified and Rugby Special showed we had a penalty and a perfectly good try disallowed!

Roll on the 8th - and let's hope for Spreadbury! I don't mind losing to a better team, but I hate losing to a referee!

From: Andy Dickinson

I was one of the thousands at Kingsholm on Saturday who went away feeling cheated.

I don't mind losing (too much) when the opposition is better than Glos, but on Saturday Leicester offered nothing apart from a very good kicker.

I still haven't made up my mind whether Steve Lander was a biased cheat or merely incompetent.

The penalty decisions in the first half were disgusting - late tackles that were non-existent and guessing that Fidler was offside. Lander was facing the Gloucester backs when the ball popped out of the ruck.

The Gloucester 'try' from the lineout decision was impossible to understand.

I think Chris Reason on Rugby Special on Sunday summed up the game perfectly when he said that Gloucester were 'unfortunate rather than unlucky'.

From: Andrew Cole

Still gutted about Saturday. It really was a strange game to watch, we appeared to lack self belief at the start and again when we got within 2 points. I feel it was a real opportunity missed, there were some poor Leicester performances, John Liley was terrible. Still, I've got a good feeling about the League match, its starting to mirror last season against Barf. It would be great to bugger up the title for them [*hasn't Sale already done that? We know what you mean – Editor*]

I've just watched the Leicester v Wasps game on Sky, they've done it again, a completely negative, play for penalties, performance. It was Campsall this time forming the double act with Stransky. I never thought I'd ever say it but I'd rather

s Page

Warps won the league than them. I don't agree with Peter Arnold's "if Glaws cannot win the league of cup, we'd rather Leicester did than anyone". At least Queens & Barf score tries and try to play rugby (oh no, I've been driven to sticking up for Barf - I must be gutted)

I just cannot understand Barnes and Salmon going on about what a quality side Leicester are, (they win without playing well,... yawn). Still Barf losing tonight helped me get over the disappointment.

I cannot believe how Tom Beim seems to be starring at Sale, why didn't he make the grade the Glaws.

Shame about Phil Greening and the Lions squad, still at least he's now guaranteed a couple of full England matches. Hopefully Simsy and Tofty will get a game too. I fear that the Lions tour is going to be a complete embarrassment, Tony Underwood, Matt Dawson, Bentley (?), oh dear. You're better off out of it Phil.

From: Iain Robertson

I've just read in "The Independent" that Glos are in negotiation with Wasps over the possible sale of Greening in the summer. If true this is AWFUL NEWS and coming on top of the possible poaching of Richard Hill to the England job (last weeks Guardian) doesn't bode well for the future of Gloucester.

Don't the management(?) realise that flogging off your best players will not:

1. Encourage top quality young talent to move to the club. all it will do is tell them they are viewed as expendable assets.

2. help in the recruitment of a new, good coach (not an insider, please) if and when Hill goes.

If this is correct it is ridiculous short termism. What's more it won't help us get a backer - if that is what is needed - as selling the family silver is not the way to build a successful (and therefore, profitable) team for the future. What is going on? I know that the argument will be better to sell him now than wait until he is out of contract, no player is bigger than the team blah de blah. BUT Greening is good. Possibly the best forward I've seen down Glos. way (teague excepted). We have few that are as good as him. The potential is there within the club to be up there with the big boys but on our own terms. We NEED to keep our best players at the moment, we simply don't have enough of them to flog 'em off. To get more we must show we can hang onto the ones we've got. Aaaaaaaargh!

If this is correct (if it isn't I've just wasted a lot of typing!) can anything be done? SORRY, foolish question, I already know the answer to that one.

Anyway rant over. Sorry to bother you with this but I get so p***ed off when I see this sort of stuff in the press. Glos should be recruiting not selling.

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
November	27th	European League	Bourgoin	H	L	9-24
	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
	7th	Courage League	London Irish	H	W	29-19
	10th	Anglo-Welsh	Ebbw Vale	A	W	22-15
December	15th	Friendly	Moseley	A	L	7-22
	21st	Pilkington Cup R5	Leeds	H	W	55-20
	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
March	4th	Courage League	Northampton	H	W	19-6
	9th	Courage League	Wasps	A	L	10-36
	14th	Friendly	Bedford	A	L	19-58
	18th	Friendly	Army	H	L	29-36
	29th	Pilkington Cup S-F	Leicester	H	L	13-26
April	5th	Courage League	Saracens	H		
	8th	Courage League	Leicester	H		
	12th	Courage League	Sale	A		
	19th	Courage League	Harlequins	H		
	26th	Courage League	Bristol	H		
May	30th	Courage League	Bath	A		
	3rd	Courage League	Northampton	A		
	10th	Pilkington Cup Final				

Club Statistics

Courage Club Championship Division 1 (as on April 2nd)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Diff
Wasps	17	14	0	3	528	319	28	209
Leicester	15	12	0	3	453	226	24	227
Bath	16	11	0	5	567	299	22	268
Harlequins	15	10	0	5	572	309	20	263
Saracens	14	9	1	4	381	279	19	102
Sale	15	9	1	5	397	303	19	94
Northampton	16	8	0	8	360	330	16	30
Gloucester	15	8	0	7	344	358	16	-14
Bristol	16	5	0	11	312	483	10	-171
West Hartlepool	18	3	0	15	308	642	6	-334
London Irish	14	2	0	12	313	501	4	-188
Orrell	17	2	0	15	225	711	4	-486

First XV Playing Record Summaries

1996/7 Season	Total	Home	Away
Played	35	19	16
Won	20	13	7
Lost	15	6	10
Draw	0	0	0
Points For	921	597	324
Points Against	774	296	478
Win %	57.14	68.42	43.75

All Courage League	Total	Home	Away
Played	138	70	68
Won	66	45	21
Lost	65	23	42
Draw	7	2	5
Points For	2318	1385	970
Points Against	2279	951	1338
Win %	50.36	65.71	34.56

First XV Career Appearances and Scores

	Gloucester Career						
	App	Try	Con	Pen	DG	Pts	PPG
Eral Anderson	11	3	0	0	0	15	1.36
James Bashford	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Laurie Beck	59	11	0	0	0	55	0.93
Scott Benton	35	9	0	0	0	45	1.29
Warwick Bullock	17	1	0	0	0	5	0.29
Nigel Cane	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Nathan Carter	17	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Don Caskie	193	34	0	0	0	170	0.88
Chris Catling	22	5	0	0	1	28	1.27
Nick Cooper	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Mark Cornwell	26	12	0	0	0	60	2.31
Howard Dawson	2	1	0	0	0	5	2.50
Andy Deacon	145	12	0	0	0	60	0.41
Simon Devereux	90	14	0	0	0	70	0.78
Scott Edwards	5	1	0	0	0	5	1.00
Craig Emmerson	8	1	0	0	0	5	0.63
Gareth Fenwick	13	2	26	16	0	110	8.46
Rob Fidler	51	3	0	0	0	15	0.29
Chris Fortey	7	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Lee Fortey	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Will Gay	1	1	0	0	0	5	5.00
Alex Gallagher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Pete Glanville	101	15	0	0	0	75	0.74
Phil Greening	45	5	0	0	0	25	0.56
Chris Hall	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Adam Harris	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	106	43	0	0	0	215	2.03
Martyn Kimber	63	9	15	8	18	153	2.43
Andrew Jarrett	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00

First XV Career Appearances and Scores

	Gloucester Career						
	App	Try	Con	Pen	DG	Pts	PPG
Tim Lacey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Mike Lloyd	32	18	0	0	0	90	2.81
Audley Lumsden	12	6	0	0	0	30	2.50
Mark Mapletoft	52	21	93	95	3	585	11.3
Neil Matthews	2	1	0	0	0	5	2.5
Andy Metcalfe	10	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Alex Morris	4	0	8	5	0	31	7.75
Simon Morris	111	48	0	0	0	240	2.16
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	3	0	1	0	0	2	0.67
Ed Pearce	14	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Sam Pearman	2	2	0	0	0	10	5.00
Mike Peters	30	15	0	0	0	75	2.50
Adey Powles	38	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Martin Roberts	113	16	79	57	0	409	3.62
Alastair Saverimutto	19	19	3	2	0	107	5.63
Dave Sims	197	27	0	0	0	135	0.69
Ian Smith	336	52	0	0	0	260	0.77
Nick Smith	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Andrew Stanley	133	25	0	0	0	125	0.94
Dave Timmington	4	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Phil Vickery	14	1	0	0	0	5	0.36
Richard Ward	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Kester Wilkinson	1	1	0	0	0	5	5.00
Tony Windo	131	29	0	1	0	148	1.13
Trevor Woodman	7	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Chris Yelland	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Rob York	12	6	0	0	0	30	2.50

Liked Cricket – Formed A Rugby Club!

These days, the story is rarely told in the bar of Coney Hill Rugby Club. You see, just after the end of World War II a group of residents living in the suburb of Gloucester got together with the intention of playing cricket.

There was one problem. Winter was approaching and the cricket season was drawing to a close.

They formed a sports club and to while away the winter months they decided to play rugby. By the time that spring came around and the thoughts of the young men of Coney Hill turned to cricket, they said: "What the hell, let's keep a rugby club".

Coney Hill Rugby Football Club is now celebrating being, in cricket parlance, fifty not out.

The story of the founding of the rugby club first came out at the club's annual dinner in July 1956, which was reported in The Citizen on Wednesday July 18, 1956.

Jim Haines, the then chairman of the North Gloucester Rugby Combination, mentioned the story of how the Coney Hill club came into being and this was reported by The Citizen.

"One of Gloucester's best-known and yet young rugby clubs, Coney Hill, was originally intended to be a cricket club.

"This rather surprising information was given at the club's annual dinner, by Mr. Jim Haines, the newly-elected president of the North Gloucester Rugby Combination.

"Mr. Haines, who was proposing the toast of 'Coney Hill RFC' said that a number of enthusiasts wanted a regular game of cricket, but as the winter approached they formed a Rugby club instead."

Back Issues

We have limited copies of back issues of Old Spot! we can offer if you missed an edition. Stocks are limited – in the case of Issue One, there are only about a dozen left. As well as all the usual items such as Ol' Babber we also featured the following articles:

Issue 1 Richard Hill, Andy Harley

Issue 2 Mapletoft confesses, Richard Hill

Issue 3 Scott Benton, Richard Hill

Issue 4 Don Caskie, Edgar Chandler, Mark Graham

Issue 5 Chris Catling, Mark Graham

Prices are 80p inc P&P for the first copy, then 50p for further copies. Apply to:

**Old Spot! Back Issues, Newbrook House, Queen's Road, Stonehouse,
Glos, GL10 2QA**

Ol' Babber Looks *Forward*

Just as you thought that you were safe from Southern Hemisphere kicking machines, another one turns up on your doorstep. Equally as deadly with the boot as Stransky, Michael Lynagh comes to Kingsholm looking to boost his team's chances of European competition next season. But even to have mentioned the words "Saracens" and "top four position" in the same sentence this time last season would have seemed rather strange, unless you were forecasting their likely position in Division Two by the end of this season. The fact is, Saracens, by the grace of the RFU and a couple of million quid, not only managed to claw their way up out of the relegation trap-door, but have also succeeded in transforming their team into the standard cosmopolitan line-up rapidly becoming the norm in the top-flight. Put bluntly, we may have fond memories of the "winner-takes-all" game that was the corresponding fixture last year, but Saracens are a much improved side now and Gloucester must be under no illusions.

Gloucester will have to finally start to learn the lessons dished out to them in the last few weeks by Paul Burke, Gareth Rees and Joel Stransky. If they don't we could see Gloucester being literally kicked out of a game they are well capable of winning - and all through "over-eagerness". Conceding tries has not been the problem over recent weeks but ensuring they don't happen through constant infringements has! Not only must Gloucester begin to be confident enough in their defensive abilities to be able to stand off that extra yard, but they must suss out the referee more quickly and effectively. In matches we have seen at Kingsholm - and not only this season - it is the side who can best "play the referee" which normally comes out on top. In the Shed, we can all question the referee's ancestry until we're blue in the face, but perhaps, in the cold light of day, we should be willing to admit that perhaps Gloucester aren't as good as exploiting the referee (which is different from "cheating") as other sides.

Although star names such as Sella and Pienaar have been brought to Enfield, Saracens' strengths remain much the same as last year. Their major strong points are at the heart of the side in the back-row and half-back. Saracens' back-row line-up is particularly impressive with Hill, Diprose, and Pienaar always on hand both in attack and defence. Forever on the fringes of the England team, Bracken is also regaining his form and Benton will have yet another great opportunity to prove his credentials against a credible opponent. As for Lynagh, he will be looking to emulate the points tallies achieved by many kickers against Gloucester this season! One often underrated player who could also cause some problems is the full-back Tunningley. He played a blinder in Saracens' last match when they notched up a half-century against the hapless West Hartlepool. Yet I would expect Gloucester to enjoy their usual dominance in the scrums and line-outs and the back-row showed how they can match some of the best when they successfully neutralised Back and Co. last Saturday.

But Gloucester's biggest obstacle this afternoon could well be themselves. The players and supporters are bound to be disappointed after having come so close to Twickenham and the team may find it difficult to reach the same levels of intensity. Add the fact that everyone is aware that, realistically, Gloucester only need one more win to secure their place in Division One and that the match here at Kingsholm against Bristol will decide that particular issue, then this game could drift away in favour of the side who have realistic European ambitions. So the question is, after Leicester, are Gloucester mentally tough enough to bounce back?

How They Will Line Up

Saturday 5th April 1997 Kick off 3.00 pm

GLOUCESTER
Cherry & White

SARACENS
Black & Red

15	Chris Catling	Full Back	Andy Tunningley	15
14	Mike Peters #	Right Wing	Kris Chesney	14
13	Craig Emmerson	Centre	Philippe Sella #	13
12	Martin Roberts	Centre	Steve Ravenscroft	12
11	Mike Lloyd	Left Wing	Richard Wallace	11

10	Mark Mapletoft	Outside Half	Andy Lee	10
9	Scott Benton	Scrum Half	Kyran Bracken	9

1	Tony Windo	Prop	Tony Daly	1
2	Phil Greening #	Hooker	Gregg Botterman	2
3	Andy Deacon	Prop	Paul Wallace	3
4	Rob Fidler	Lock	Paddy Johns	4
5	Dave Sims *	Lock	Tony Copsey #	5
6	Pete Glanville	Flanker	John Green	6
7	Nathan Carter	Flanker	Richard Hill #	7
8	Simon Devereux	No. 8	Tony Diprose *	8

16	Laurie Beck	Replacements	Phil Friel	16
17	Don Caskie		Kevin Sorrell	17
18	Audley Lumsden		Adrian Olver	18
19	John Hawker		George Chuter	19
20	Trevor Woodman		Mark Burrow	20
21	Andy Stanley		François Pienaar	21

Referee	# International	Touch Judges
Ashley Rowden	* Captain	Paul Emerson & Keith Williams.
Fourth Official: Tony Parsloe		