



BLACKTHORN



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BATH RUGBY VS NEC HARLEQUINS



Saturday
29 April 2000
Kick-Off 2.15pm



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OFFICIAL
MATCH DAY
MAGAZINE

£2.50



Bath Rugby

NEC Harlequins



No	Player	Position	Player	No
 15	Matt Perry	Full Back	Ben Gollings	15
 14	Iain Balshaw	Right Wing	Jason Keyter	14
 13	Kevin Maggs	Centre	David Officer	13
 12	Phil de Glanville	Centre	Nick Greenstock	12
 11	Mike Tindall	Left Wing	Brendon Daniel	11
 10	Mike Catt	Fly Half	Rob Liley	10
 9	Jon Preston	Scrum Half	Peter Richards	9
 1	Victor Ubogu	Prop	David Barnes	1
 2	Mark Regan	Hooker	Colin Ridgeway	2
 3	John Mallett	Prop	Jason Leonard	3
 4	Martin Haag	Lock	(Capt) Gareth Llewellyn	4
5	Steve Borthwick	Lock	Garrick Morgan	5
6	Angus Gardiner	Flanker	Rory Jenkins	6
 7	Ben Clarke (Capt)	Flanker	Adam Leach	7
 8	Dan Lyle	No 8	Pat Sanderson	8
R e p l a c e m e n t s				
16	Gareth Cooper		Paul Graham	16
17	Lee Mears		Simon Mitchell	17
18	Chris Horsman		Chris Sheasby	18
 19	Adedayo Adebayo		Zinzan Brooke	19
20	Shaun Berne		Daren O'Leary	20
21	Gavin Thomas		Hew Harries	21
 22	Ben Sturnham		Guillaume Delmotte	22

Referee: Robin Goodliffe Touch Judges: David Sainsbury and Fred Spong

Harlequins

By Dick Tugwell



NEC HARLEQUINS, Bath's opponents at The Rec this afternoon can take pride in a long and illustrious history, dating back to the club's foundation in 1866, a year after their hosts. But for a club who were once renowned as the glamour side of English amateur rugby, this season has perhaps been one to forget.

Thanks to the proximity of their Stoop Memorial Ground to RFU Headquarters at Twickenham, their world-famous multi-coloured shirts and fashionable image, Quins have always enjoyed a reputation as a top-drawer fixture for clubs outside the capital. With a roll call of nearly 100 internationals who have graced the club colours since William Leake became their first capped player on January 3, 1891 and great names like Will Carling, Jason Leonard and Bob Hiller among that celebrated host, Harlequins have always been the pin-up club on the English domestic scene.

In the amateur days, although they invariably played an elite level of rugby and were usually a force to be reckoned with, they often failed to match their potential, although they did win the RFU Challenge Cup twice in 1988 and 1991 and came close to championships honours.

When they went professional in 1996 Quins have regularly finished top six in Premiership One, without capturing the title and have twice reached the Heineken Cup quarter-finals in 1996/97 and 1997/98. But with the loss of having a strong New Zealand input on the field with former All Blacks John Gallagher as captain and Zinzan Brook as player-coach, things have not gone right for the club on the field.

In the start of the season in which they lost four of their first five games, including a 30-10 home defeat by Saracens in their opening game, they have struggled to get out of the bottom of the table, winning only seven of their 19 league games so far. While despite being drawn in one of the weaker pools, they performed woefully in the European Cup.

Of their six pool 5 matches Quins managed to beat French side Montferrand 11-9 at The Stoop and did well to hold eventual pool winners Cardiff 32-32 in their opening clash at the Arms Park, but that was the sum total of their points haul as they somehow contrived to allow Italian outsiders Treviso to beat them twice and also lost the return games against Cardiff and Montferrand to eventually finish bottom of the pool.

Not even the return of Carling, who came out of retirement to be appointed captain this season, before finally bowing out a few weeks ago, could galvanise Quins into any semblance of consistent form as they went out of the Tetley's Bitter Cup and continued to perform disappointingly in the league, suffering the indignity of losing heavily to an in-form London Irish side, who now share their ground at The Stoop and ironically have been attracting bigger crowds. As the season has progressed it has become increasingly evident that the Harlequins squad contained too many players who were reaching the veteran stage and plans are already in hand to revamp the coaching and playing side next season when Quins fans can expect to see a host of new faces.

Indeed, that process has already begun with the recent recruitment of former Bath and England scrum-half Richard Hill, as backs coach working in tandem with Brooke Hill, who turned Gloucester's fortunes around until he left Kingsholm just over a year ago, has since enjoyed an impressive coaching spell at Ebbw Vale, while continuing his role in charge of the England A team and his arrival at The Stoop should reap dividends next season.

Hill joined his new club just over a fortnight ago and must have been impressed with the response from the player because in their next game, Harlequins pulled off one of their best results of the season as they toppled high-flying Northampton 29 - 17 at The Stoop after establishing a 26 - 0 lead with an hour gone. Tries by flanker Adam Leach, centre David Officer and a brace from newcomer Ben Gollings, a 19-year-old full back from Cornwall in only his third game for the club, gave Quins a heartening victory and also helped Bath's title aspirations.

Easter Monday's 50-10 defeat at Saracens will undoubtedly have taken the gilt off that display, but despite the fact that they now appear to have little to play for except their pride Harlequins will not be in the mood to do Bath any favours this afternoon.

With squad places and contracts still up for grabs for next season, they will be doing all they can to impress the new management team so a Bath victory is no formality. Quins may be entering a period of transition, but, as they showed against Northampton, they can still rattle the best on their

