

MATT ELLIOTT

THORNY ENCOUNTERS



A HISTORY OF
ENGLAND
V THE
ALL BLACKS



THORNY ENCOUNTERS

A HISTORY OF
ENGLAND
V THE
ALL BLACKS

MATT ELLIOTT



Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	10
Notes to the text	13
On Facing the All Blacks.	14
1905 Crystal Palace, All Blacks 15 England 0	25
1925 Twickenham, All Blacks 17 England 11	30
1936 Twickenham, England 13, All Blacks 0	35
1954 Twickenham, All Blacks 5 England 0	39
1963 Eden Park, All Blacks 21 England 11	42
1963 Lancaster Park, All Blacks 9 England 6	46
1964 Twickenham, All Blacks 14 England 0.	50
1967 Twickenham, All Blacks 23 England 11	53
1973 Twickenham, All Blacks 9 England 0	58
1973 Eden Park, England 16 All Blacks 10	62
1978 Twickenham, All Blacks 16 England 6.	68
1979 Twickenham, All Blacks 10 England 9.	73
1983 Twickenham, England 15 All Blacks 9.	77
1985 Lancaster Park, All Blacks 18 England 13	81
1985 Athletic Park, All Blacks 42 England 15	85
1991 Twickenham (RWC), All Blacks 18 England 12.	88
1993 Twickenham, England 15 All Blacks 9.	92
1995 Newlands (RWC), All Blacks 45 England 29	98
The Professional Era	
1997 Old Trafford, All Blacks 25 England 8.	106
1997 Twickenham, England 26 All Blacks 26	111
1998 Carisbrook, All Blacks 64 England 22.	116

1998 Eden Park, All Blacks 40 England 10	120
1999 Twickenham (RWC), All Blacks 30 England 16	123
2002 Twickenham, England 31 All Blacks 28	128
2003 Westpac Stadium, England 15 All Blacks 13	135
2004 Carisbrook, All Blacks 36 England 3	143
2004 Eden Park, All Blacks 36 England 12	147
2005 Twickenham, All Blacks 23 England 19	152
2006 Twickenham, All Blacks 41 England 20	158
2008 Eden Park, All Blacks 37 England 20	162
2008 AMI Stadium, All Blacks 44 England 12	167
2008 Twickenham, All Blacks 32 England 6	171
2009 Twickenham, All Blacks 19 England 6	175
2010 Twickenham, All Blacks 26 England 16	178
2012 Twickenham, England 38 All Blacks 21	183
2013 Twickenham, All Blacks 30 England 22	191
2014 Eden Park, All Blacks 20 England 15	195
2014 Forsyth Barr Stadium, All Blacks 28 England 27 . . .	199
2014 Waikato Stadium, All Blacks 36 England 13	203
2014 Twickenham, All Blacks 24 England 21	206
 The Game that Never Was (Going to Be)	 211
Red Roses and Black Ferns.	213
 Series Statistics	 216
Bibliography	218

On Facing the All Blacks

WHAT is it like to play the All Blacks, and win? How can England be more successful against the team that is the best in the history of the game? Three former England internationals share their reminiscences and advice.

Mike Slemen (MS) played on the wing a (then) record 32 times for England from 1976–84 and for the British and Irish Lions in South Africa in 1980. Playing out of the Liverpool club, Slemen was tall, lean and very quick. A superb defender, he was great with ball in hand, though he only scored eight tries for his country in an era when ‘there were a few forwards who liked to hang on to the ball’. A great exponent of the art of following up kicks, he was well respected by the All Blacks who he faced a number of times, including for the Northern Division side that beat them 21-9 at Otley in 1979.

Nigel Redman (NR) accumulated 20 England caps across 14 seasons, from 1984–97. A lock, he made appearances in the 1987 and 1991 Rugby World Cups and was called up to the British and Irish Lions during their 1997 tour of South Africa. A dominating lineout figure in the 1993 Twickenham victory over the All Blacks, Redman’s erudite views on rugby have been heard in match commentaries and an assortment of television programmes. He has coached England age-group rugby teams and in 2014 took up the position of Elite Coach Development Manager for British Swimming.

Phil de Glanville (PdG) partnered Jeremy Guscott in Bath’s midfield for a number of seasons but his appearances in the England jersey

from 1992–99 were somewhat restricted by the Guscott-Will Carling combination. Renowned for his speed, handling and coolness under pressure, de Glanville captained England in 1997 following the retirement of Carling. His 38 caps included a win and a draw against the All Blacks. He famously started and finished a great counter-attacking try against the All Blacks in the 1999 Rugby World Cup.

MS: ‘I played three times against the All Blacks in 1978, which was hard work. I played in the Barbarians game and scored two tries. It’s the only time I’ve ever been cheered at Cardiff! New Zealand won it with a drop-kick, the last kick of the game. When you play people that many times, you get to know them and respect them. We had some brilliant times.’

Facing the haka:

MS: ‘We used to say that the haka was a bit like Morris dancing, and I don’t think they practised it very much back then.’

PdG: ‘I always loved it, as did most of the team. That day in 1997 when Richard Cockerill did get carried away, he was so pumped up before the game.

‘It always spurred me on and I looked forward to facing it. Even now when I watch matches on TV, I never miss the haka. What I never really knew until going to New Zealand was how it was used to welcome people to communities, and I saw it in a whole different light. My sister is married to a Kiwi, too, so we have a good understanding of the Kiwi culture now. We even performed it for their wedding!’

Beating the All Blacks:

MS: ‘The North had beaten New Zealand before but not many England county sides did. The day we did in 1979, conditions weren’t great. Otley, not the best ground in the world, but the crowd got very much involved in the game. It was really windy. We played very well. It was fantastic. It’s one of those things, when I look back and think of some of the internationals I played in, this was a better game than a lot of

them. We had a good set of forwards and a good backline. A good side. We scored four tries which was outstanding, as you can imagine.

‘On that particular day, I was up against Stu Wilson. He scored their only try. I got on very well with Stu. We had the wind in the second half and wanted to keep them down in their half. At one point some of our players said, “What are we going to do here?” I said, “Come blind with me, kick into the corner and I’ll chase it down. Hopefully they’ll just kick it into touch.” We did that and as I ran past Stu, he grabbed hold of me. I took a semi-swing at him and didn’t hit him, obviously. He took a swing at me and missed completely. The referee was Alan Hosie, the Scottish referee. He ran past as we had hold of each other and said, “Will you two f***** stop messing about and get on with the game.” Stu and I just burst out laughing.

‘Steve Smith scored our first try. He belted the ball down and I chased it. Stu went back and he and Richard Wilson passed the ball between them and it went down. I kicked it through and picked it up and passed to Steve Smith, who was never the fastest man in the world, and he scored under the posts.

‘Stu Wilson and I were nice small people. The first time I played an international side, against the touring Australians for the North, I was only 11st 2lb. I never got above 12½st.’

PdG: ‘Having only done it once [1993] out of four matches, with one draw, it is a very special feeling as the All Blacks have consistently been the best side in the world. They keep their standards so high and move the game on before the rest of the world has worked out what they are doing as real innovators. They are still the benchmark team to beat. For me personally it was special in 1993 because of what had happened before in the South-West Division match [*De Glanville suffered a serious cut to his face from a controversial stray All Black boot*]. Also, it was my first starting cap for my country, which is a proud moment regardless of who you are playing.’

The 15-9 win at Twickenham, 1983:

MS: ‘Scotland drew with the All Blacks the week before. The Scots weren’t a bad side at the time. I hadn’t played for England at the end

of the previous season. I felt I was getting a bit past it. But we had a new coach, Dick Greenwood, who was a northern lad and he brought me back in. I'd played quite a lot at fly-half before I moved to the wing. As I could kick the ball quite well the lads used me behind the lineouts near to the line to get the ball away. That particular day, our forwards played as well as I'd ever seen England forwards play. Maurice Colclough had a particularly good game. He's passed away now but on that day he was very much alive!

NR: 'I grew up in South Wales and we left for England when I was 11. I only started playing rugby when I was 16. My earliest memory of the All Blacks was them playing the Barbarians when Gareth Edwards scored the try in the corner. The first England–All Blacks game I really took notice of was the 1983 game when a friend of mine, Paul Simpson, who was playing number eight, was put into the hoardings by the All Blacks' centre, Steve Pokere. He actually went through the hoardings on the side of the ground.'

Touring New Zealand:

MS: 'I was the backs' coach for the England "B" team's eight-match tour of New Zealand in 1992. We had some up-and-comers in the backline such as Phil de Glanville, Tony Underwood and an old head in Stuart Barnes as captain. He thought he should have been in the main side ahead of Rob Andrew. In the forwards there was Neil Back, Ben Clarke and Victor Ubogu. Good young players coming through at that time who went on to play a lot higher up.'

PdG: 'We saw just how passionate the whole of New Zealand is for their rugby ... and how wet it can be! We stayed the first week of the tour on the east coast of the South Island and it rained the whole time. There wasn't a huge amount to do other than train. Remember, this was before satellite sport channels on TV and the internet.'

MS: 'We went everywhere by coach so we were able to see New Zealand as a place. The people were very friendly. We had a great time. We won all our games against the local sides. The only two

games we lost were against the New Zealand XV. In the first game we actually scored four tries to their two. On that day, Stu missed seven kicks out of eight and a dropped goal. We lost by six points, which was a bit upsetting. The best player on the field that day was probably Neil Back. He won a hell of a lot of ruck ball. In the second game, New Zealand really sorted us. They made sure that before they moved the ball very far, Neil had made a tackle. They held him on the ground and then moved the ball. That worked.'

PdG: 'The rugby was hard and physical, and though we lost both our matches against the New Zealand XV, they were pretty open and exciting games.'

The 15-9 win at Twickenham, 1993:

NR: 'I always thought the benefit of playing the old-fashioned tours was that you could play against a side three or four times. In 1993, I played against the All Blacks for England 'A' and before that for South-West Division at Redruth, Cornwall. It's a very rural part of England and the pitch has got a famous slope down to one corner. We actually gave them a tough game, losing 15-19.'

'Back then, there was no real analysis of teams. So we got to know their game plan by playing against them once or twice before the Test match. I remember someone saying to me very early on that when you play a side like the All Blacks there are always going to be times when you come off the field and think, we could have won that. It's about taking your chances when they come along because the thing about the All Blacks is, if you make a mistake they punish you.'

PdG: 'My experience playing for the South-West against the All Blacks was cut short by that facial injury but we should have won that day if we had our kicking boots on. I think five penalties were missed. So we knew they were beatable.'

NR: 'I played most of my rugby at the middle of the lineout which I was far too short for, at 6ft 3in. Most of the guys in those days were 6ft 7in and above. In the previous two games against the All Blacks

I had jumped at number two in the lineout against Steve Gordon. There was always someone else to cover Ian Jones. I remember when we assembled to train someone asked, who is going to jump in the middle? Martin Johnson turned around and showed what I thought was great leadership. He said, "I've never jumped in the middle so you're going to have to." I'd never played against Jones before but I always welcomed a challenge. I could jump, but with his height advantage over me it was always going to be a physical encounter. It was always about being competitive, standing toe-to-toe and not letting the All Blacks have their own way.

'We used to stay in a hotel in Petersham and we would practise lineouts on the morning of the game in the car park. We were doing our lineouts and there was one stubborn taxi driver who drove right through the middle of our lineout. He had no idea what we were doing and was abused by Brian Moore. The driver just said that he had to because he was doing his job. And it just happened to be a *black* cab. So our pre-match preparation was interrupted by a black-cab driver.'

PdG: 'It was my first starting cap as my previous two caps had been as a replacement for injury, so as you can imagine I was very nervous before the game.'

NR: 'I don't think I've ever said this before but I was incredibly ill the night before the Test. I don't know if I had food poisoning but I was up all night with diarrhoea. It wasn't great preparation but it just made me a little bit more determined.'

PdG: 'The fact the All Blacks had put 50 points on Scotland the week before was very impressive, but in a funny way it just concentrated our minds even more on how to beat them. We definitely knew the midfield would come running at us hard, but that's what All Black backlines do as a given anyway. We put a lot of emphasis on not letting them get momentum and go forward in the game, and that worked quite well across the board in the game.'

NR: 'Because the All Blacks, perhaps surprisingly, didn't get to the final of the RWC in 1991, come 1993 everyone realised the

importance of competing against the All Blacks. Most of us had played against most of the players in the Test team, at least once. Geoff Cooke was very progressive as far as coaching was concerned. He was very interested in tactics and game plans and players having a voice. He was very open about the tactics we would use and how we would play the game.

‘That 1993 Test was the first one I played in where we had a real game plan. I had been playing for Bath who were dominant and when you are dominant your confidence is high. With England, we weren’t that confident. We would win one, lose one. We had a game plan that everyone bought in to, to nullify what they did and allow us to stay in the game.

‘New Zealand had a very interesting kicking game where they’d kick it to you, you’d kick it back to them and they’d kick it back to you in the hope that you would attack on foot and New Zealand would put this black wall up. We played them at their own game. We kept kicking it back.

‘An interesting thing about New Zealand was that if they lost a key tactical player [*as they did with the withdrawal of injured kicker Matthew Cooper in the days before the Test*] they would lose their way. Also, as we’ve seen at World Cups, they would win games playing a certain way, but they weren’t good at being able to change the way they played. Certainly, on that tour taking them on at their own game seemed to ... I don’t know if rattle them is the right phrase because they had some great players ... but it seemed like they didn’t always know what to do next.

‘The thing about playing a great side is if they start to get momentum you can start to lose confidence and start to think that you need to do something different in order to change the flow of the game. Doing that can start to compound the problem because it’s different and not planned. On that day, everyone followed the game plan. When to chase, putting in your tackles, kicking for position, keeping the ball in. The All Blacks probably felt they weren’t having as many lineouts as they were hoping because we weren’t kicking the ball out. Then when we did have them, they became more important.

‘We’d first seen that kicking game from the Australians in 1988. People like Michael Lynagh were keeping the ball in the field. At first,

we thought they were bad kicks. We couldn't understand why he was kicking so badly. Our lads were kicking the ball off the field to have a set piece. It took us a while to realise what was happening. It was brilliant. In 1993 we were very mindful of territory which is why we didn't kick the ball into touch much.

'We'd spoken about keeping the mistakes down, keeping the penalties down. Jeff Wilson missed a few kicks at goal and it wasn't a case of us saying, "Crikey that was lucky." It was a case of thinking, right we need to put pressure right back on them. Psychologically, if they missed a kick it had to affect them negatively as well as being a little gain for us. But we needed to put pressure on again. Every time Jon Callard kicked a penalty or Rob Andrew kicked his drop goal, it kept the pressure on them. You take three points, another three points and the pressure starts to mount up. International rugby, I always think, is about keeping your momentum and keeping the board turning.'

PdG: 'Once the game started the concentration levels and pace were so high there was no time to think about where you were and what you were doing. The match went by in a blur for me.'

NR: 'Come the end of the game, I was walking off the field talking to Jon Callard and then someone came up to me and said, "Number five, you're going for drug-testing." So I was taken for drug-testing. I wasn't allowed in the changing room. I went straight to see the drug-testers. It was the first time I'd ever been asked to pee in a pot. I never actually got to celebrate with the team in the changing room. By the time I got there, there was no one left. I showered and bathed and then went along to the Rose Room to see family and friends.'

'I remember Sean Fitzpatrick in his after-match dinner speech saying something along the lines of, "Congratulations to England on the win. As an All Black we tend to remember our losses." That indicated to me he was telling us they didn't lose all that much. It was poignant, and in a way a bit arrogant, but he was saying it was very special for England to beat the All Blacks because it doesn't happen all that often.'

The 26-26 draw at Twickenham, 1997:

PdG: ‘There was a much more positive attacking mindset going into the second match at Twickenham [*after losing 8-25 at Old Trafford*]. Clive had set us a target to score a minimum of four tries in the match, as he knew that is what it would take to beat New Zealand. As ever, playing at Twickenham is also a big motivator and the crowd were really supportive that day, probably helped by the way we played. I think mentally we were on a much better level that day and our performance reflected that. It was a cracking game, and New Zealand came back so strongly in the second half.

‘I think given where we were at half time [*ahead 23-9*] then we should have won, but we stopped attacking and became more passive and New Zealand really stepped it up. I also think we weren’t fit enough to keep playing at that intensity and it showed in the second half.’

1999 RWC pool game at Twickenham, won by the All Blacks 30-16:

PdG: ‘I have never known such an edge in the air from the supporters going to the game. They were everywhere and it was such an intense environment. Again, it was a cracking game and after New Zealand started so well we managed to get back on a par with them. Then one magical moment from Jonah Lomu was pivotal in the match.

‘We had managed to keep him relatively quiet but off the back of a turnover ball it was moved to him. He ran past and through at least three England players including Jeremy Guscott and Austin Healy and scored in the corner. That knocked the stuffing out of us after we had hauled ourselves back. The final result doesn’t really show how close the game was as another try in the last minutes from New Zealand closed it out. They played very well in the last 15 minutes and at the same intensity as the rest of the match.’

‘Hang on and hope’ – tackling Jonah Lomu:

PdG: ‘Hang on and hope is right! He came off the top of a lineout straight at me in that 1999 game and the only reason I stopped him

was because he tripped on my head as he ran over me! He was a machine. In the match at Old Trafford, he handed me off after he caught an England cross kick to his wing – bad plan – but I did manage to catch him from behind and pull him down. That was probably the easiest way to get him: when he wasn't looking! I haven't played another team when one individual had such an effect and was such a standout player.'

How can England beat the All Blacks more consistently?

MS: 'I think individual New Zealand players know the game better than England players at times. They make better decisions at the right times. Certainly, over the last few years there are times when we've just given away too many penalties. I think also that no matter what the individual position, the New Zealand players all have very good basic skills. Handling wise, I certainly think the All Black forwards are better than the England players. The Premiership has become much more competitive and there are some good young players coming up. But the question is, how do you bring them through? I feel we don't always keep our coaches perhaps as long as we should. I also wonder, are the players having to play too many games? I think they're playing too much, but that's the way it is because it's money.'

NR: 'Every time you play there is enormous pressure on your skill-set, to be able to exercise that under pressure. Good sides like the All Blacks put pressure on you which reduces your time to think and you just have to be in the moment and knowledgeable of the game plan and so on. When to kick it back, when to run into a gap. You need discipline and to be competitive. If you give away penalties you are giving away territory and the ball. If you can be disciplined and competitive, then that's the benchmark for being a good side. Then back that up with skill. The difference in skill level between the top teams can be small margins. That sounds easy but it's not, especially when you have 80,000 people screaming at you and millions watching on television.'

THORNY ENCOUNTERS

PdG: ‘England have had highs and lows in performances, whereas the All Blacks have always been consistently high. We have periods (2000–03) and the start of the Eddie Jones era (2016–17) where we can beat anyone consistently, then we under-perform. I am sure the issue of “hunger” is a challenge, and leadership development of players. Perhaps the professional system in England doesn’t develop these characteristics as well as New Zealand. When players are first contracted to academies at the age of 18, they then don’t play that many games during the pivotal period up to the age of 21. That is a structural weakness in the England system.’