

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Marie Davies

GREGOR GILLANDERS

Back Row

2008-14

150 appearances, 20 tries

Blues fans will not forget the arrival of twenty year-old Gregor at Goldington Road and the impact he made during his first season. He won lineout ball, ran tirelessly around the field and showed a flair for scoring tries. In that first season he scored eight tries and won the Players' Player of the Year Trophy at the End of Season Dinner.

Gregor writes:

'I was born on the east coast of Scotland and my earliest rugby memories are of messing around with my brother and friends in the clubhouse after going to see my father play for Panmure, the local team in Broughty Ferry, Dundee. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) my father was made redundant when I was 7 and his new job brought us down to the East Midlands and the village of Great Bowden.

I didn't start playing rugby until secondary school, due to commitment clashes on Sundays. I joined the local Kibworth team. Aside from my parents, it was here that some of the biggest influences on my rugby career came. My dad coached my brother's age group (probably a saviour for my sanity) and Tim Bale, Rob Jeacock and Phil Jarvis were my coaches. The three gave up so much of their time but Phil probably had the biggest impact. He saw we needed help and came to join us, ensuring we got the most enjoyment we could.

At Kibworth I gained some honours, first in the county team and then the Midlands under 16s. We went to the regional trials for England selection, but due to the strength of some of the other regions, I wasn't selected. Following this I was invited to train with the Leicester EPDC. One night a week my mum would pick me up from school and drive me

to the Leicester training ground. After a year of training I was invited to join the Academy and I was ecstatic. The opportunity to be associated with the club and the names that were there at the time was incredible. I spent the best part of a couple of years leaving Sixth Form at lunchtime four days a week to travel up to Leicester for training. Then as I was nearing the end of my education, the choice arose; continue down the university route or move into rugby full time. Obviously, I chose rugby!

Two years of full-time training with the Academy followed and the highlights were my first appearance for the first team playing against Argentina at Welford Road and my involvement in the England age group set ups. I was involved in both the U19s and U20s. In the U20s we won the Six Nations Grand Slam and were the first England youth team to get to a World Cup final. We eventually lost comprehensively to an incredible New Zealand team, a lot of whom are now well established All Blacks.

GREGOR AT BEDFORD



GREGOR NOW



GREGOR AND DANIELLE

Unfortunately, prior to the U20s World Cup I was devastated to learn that I would not be offered a full first team contract at Leicester. But it was at the World Cup that I had my first conversation with Mike Rayer, who offered me the opportunity to join Bedford. I already knew a little of the club having been in the Academy with Ollie Dodge, Dan Cole and Tom Youngs. It sounded like it could be a great opportunity for me, playing the kind of rugby that perhaps suited my style a bit better.

I joined Bedford for the 2008-09 season. Some of the stalwarts of the club had moved on. Therefore, we had an exciting new, young squad. I spent six years at the club and don't think I could have enjoyed it more. I lived with Ollie Dodge for a couple of years, the first of them with the wonder kid Billy Twelvetrees. Being my first home away from my parents this was exciting. We had great fun during the week, golf, x-box, pool and sauna, basically 'living the dream'. At the weekend it was regularly "Rose 'til close". I then moved on to live with Brendan Burke (and a variety of others) for almost four years and the lifestyle stayed pretty much the same, maybe with a few more sweets and crisps lying around!

The rugby we played was amazing. Personally, Mike gave me the freedom to be the player I was probably better designed for. I could roam a bit wider, linking with the backs and working in the air, leaving the rough and tumble to Toops and Sacha which suited me fine. I think the balance we had across the forwards was perfect and we were blessed with some amazing backs. There are way too many stand out 'on-pitch' moments, but to pick a few; the double header Championship semi-final when we beat Nottingham to reach the final, the other Championship semi-final where we were a pass from beating Worcester away, and the Boxing Day game where the fans cleared the pitch so we could beat Bristol in the snow.

Memorable times off the pitch too - race days with Toops' funnel, Jersey trips and "Mikey Rayers" when



DANIELLE, GREGOR, BAILEY AND BAXTER

games were called off last minute. While I don't see them as much as I should anymore, people like Dodgey, Brendan, 'Chepstow', Darryl, Mikey Howard, Sam Walsh, Boults, Sealer, Toops, Sacha and the rest of the team Mike, Hynesy, Mair and 'Q' and too many more to mention, made the club the incredible place it was for me then, and is now.

Following my time in Bedford I moved down to London and spent another great year with London Scottish, reaching another Championship semi-final and again, losing to Worcester. I then moved towards the real world and started my current career in structural engineering where I currently work for a great company in the city. Rugby became part time at Blackheath followed by a year back at Scottish. I am currently playing for Rosslyn Park - another amazing club I have had the fortune to be involved with. The drive is potentially to be able to return to Goldington Road with them as a player in the Championship in the not too distant future!

I currently live in Twickenham with my fiancée Danielle, whom I met whilst she was as a Master's physio student on placement at the Blues for a season. We have started planning for a summer wedding in 2021. I have started to get into baking at the moment which allows me time to switch off from rugby, work and my own Master's course. In our free time we just like to get outside the M25 and spend time with our families and dogs because really, I'm a country boy at heart!

ROSSLYN PARK

