

David Gibson

A good halfback in the early days of professional rugby in this country, David Gibson in most minds would be associated with either Otago or Northland, and his time in Auckland may be overlooked. However he played a significant part of his career in Ponsonby colours, and later a significant role off the field.

He had the misfortune to arrive on the scene at a time when Justin Marshall was the undisputed No 1, and Otago rival Byron Kelleher had found favour as his understudy. In 2002, when Kelleher had an injury-disrupted season, Gibson might have fancied his chances ... until Danny Lee arrived in town, got selected and eventually made the end-of-year All Black tour. Gibson, probably fed up by this time, switched to Auckland, shared time with Steve Devine and was favoured by many to also be chosen, but lost out to the Australian in a contentious selection.

Gibson transferred to Auckland for good the following season, joined Ponsonby and played some good rugby, but the selectors had already decided on who their top two halfbacks would be in World Cup year, with Devine as third cab. Gibson therefore got plenty of playing time with both the Blues and Auckland, starting both the Super 12 final (lost) and the NPC final (won). He was rated as the best of the non-All Blacks in the Almanack's form guide, although they made no comment as to whether they rated him higher than either of the All Black understudies.

His last season in New Zealand was as a loan player at Northland, and he gave a battling side some control at a key position. Such was his form that John Senio, who had played every match for the Blues that season, was pushed back to the bench.

Gibson had the unusual distinction of being picked for five different New Zealand teams – Schools, Under-19, Colts, Universities and Maori, who he represented in 2003 – but never for the All Blacks. His 106-match career saw him pick up 17 tries, a decent strike rate for a halfback, and after retiring he was a figure of some influence in the Players Association.

