

England are one game away from a Grand Slam after beating France 48-19 at Twickenham in April. The win over France was built largely on the efforts of fly-half Jonny Wilkinson who garnered 18 points from the game. Although the game was not all England's as France went to the half-time break with a 16-13 lead. However five second half tries had England finishing in style as they opened up a four-point gap on the points table.

Tries from Richard Hill, Iain Balshaw, Phil Greening, Mike Catt and Matt Perry mean that only Ireland can stop England. England need to beat Ireland in their final game to secure the Grand Slam and Triple Crown, and are set to face Ireland in the decider on **October 20**.

The 2001 tournament, has been badly disrupted because of the foot and mouth crisis with Ireland's games being postponed from the original schedule. The Irish side who stand in England's way also boast a 100% record from their two games so far, with three more to come at the start of next season.



To set up a tantalising final game, Ireland will have to beat Scotland at Murrayfield on **September 22** and Wales at the Millennium Stadium on **October 13**. Commercial partners BBC and Lloyds TSB, were consulted prior to dates being finalised. "I am very pleased that in these difficult circumstances unanimity prevailed," said Six Nations committee chairman Allan Hosie. "The committee were particularly appreciative of the Irish Rugby Football Union in agreeing to play two Six Nations matches on consecutive weekends."



Lions Tour underway

Ireland captain Keith Wood will lead the Lions in the tour opener against Western Australia at the WACA early in June. By the time the RGBB News goes to press, three fixtures will have been played and fans eagerly await the spectacle.



Wood has been handed the honour while tour skipper Martin Johnson sits out the first match, and takes charge of a team that includes nine debutants. Lions coach Graham Henry has pulled an immediate surprise in selection, naming Ireland's gifted young centre Brian O'Driscoll at full-back. Henry is looking at all options ahead of the Test series against Australia, which starts in Brisbane on June 30, and he is reported to be conscious of finding sufficient cover in that position.

The Squad

Skipper Martin Johnson epitomises the spirit of the Lions and is considered one of the best lock forwards in the world. The experienced Leicester forward having made his debut for England way back in 1993 in a narrow 16-15 win over France.

His Lions debut was made in the same year as his English debut, replacing the injured Wade Dooley on both occasions. Four years later Johnson was the skipper on the Lions tour of South Africa, leading his side to a memorable 2-1 series victory. An achilles injury meant that Johnson missed the entire 2000 Six Nations campaign, but he was immediately renamed as captain of England on their tour to South Africa.

With 58 caps for England the 31-year-old lock leads by example, and his 6'6" frame will again provide the Lions with considerable lineout presence. Johnson was also awarded the OBE in the New Years Honours List, proving that he is as highly regarded off the field as on it.

Initial lineup for the first of the Lions games will feature seven Englishman, four from Wales and four Irishman with Newcastle Falcons fly half Jonny Wilkinson included as another rated as one of the best in the world, despite the fact that on the British Lions tour of Australia he will celebrate just his 22nd birthday. He faces competition from Welshman Neil Jenkins and

