

Ronan O’Gara of Ireland for the fly-half spot, but with an excellent all-round game is expected to get the nod for the first test at the GABBA in Brisbane on June 30.

At the age of 18 years 301 days Wilkinson made his debut for England against Ireland in the 1998 Five Nations Championship - becoming England’s youngest capped player for 71 years in the process. Wilkinson has bad memories of Brisbane however, with his first full England cap resulting in a record 76-0 defeat by the Aussies at Suncorp Stadium.

A bonus for Lions coach Graham Henry is that Wilkinson can play in the centres, where he stood out in the 1999 Five Nations Championships. But despite stiff competition for the fly-half position, former England international Paul Ackford, now *Sunday Telegraph* rugby correspondent, believes Wilkinson will get the nod.



Welshman Neil Jenkins’ selection for the tour Down Under was considered automatic. The international record points scorer with over 1000 points to his credit, Jenkins played in all three tests in South Africa in 1997 and his experience is a great source of comfort to coach Graham Henry.

Jenkins is at his best with his right boot which has metronomic accuracy. He is a player for the big occasion, as England will never forget when he landed the vital kick that denied them a Grand Slam at Wembley in 1999. But he has been the target for criticism from a section of his Cardiff club’s support, who feel he has struggled to read the game recently. But Jenkins has seen and done it all in the game, and if the Lions need a successful kick in the final minute of a Test, they should look no further.

Also included in the squad, is the England prop Jason Leonard. Not many rugby union stars merit an appearance on “This Is Your Life,” but in this case he fully deserves the big red book he was presented with in April. The 32-year-old may be thinking of leaving Harlequins for Wasps, but it is in the international arena that he has really made an impact.

Since making his England debut over 10 years ago, he has become the rock on which they have built their team around. A powerful presence in the scrum, Leonard has become England’s most-capped player (91), and the fifth-most capped player in rugby union history. This achievement is made all the more significant when you consider the pitfalls of playing on the front row.

Down Under Leonard will be a very positive influence on the less experienced members of the squad, many of whom will be experiencing their first Lions tour. Of course he has seen it all on the international scene, this being his third appearance on a Lions tour, and this experience will be vital against the wily Australians.

A veteran of both rugby codes, having starred for Wigan and Wales in league and Richmond, Llanelli and Wales in the union version, Scott Quinnell is another with a great deal of experience under his belt. And still only being 28 years of age, the Llanelli Number 8 should add to his haul of 43 international union caps in the future.

Scott hails from a family of rich rugby pedigree - his brother is union star Craig, his father is 1977 Lion Derek, and his uncle is Welsh legend Barry John.

He made his international Welsh debut back in 1993, and despite taking three years out to play for Wigan in the 13-a-side game, the prodigal son returned in time for the 1997 Five Nations.

Playing union again proved little problem for Quinnell and his fine performances assured him of a place on the Lions tour to South Africa.



Fans of the international game may like to pop the following Tri-Nations dates in their diaries:

- July 21 .. South Africa vs. New Zealand Cape Town
- July 28 .. South Africa vs. Australia Pretoria
- Aug 11 . New Zealand vs. Australia Dunedin
- Aug18 .. Australia vs. South Africa Perth
- Aug 25 . New Zealand vs. South Africa Auckland
- Sept 1 ... Australia vs. New Zealand Sydney

Photocall

- Far Left: Clive Woodward
- CentreLeft: Keith Wood
- Left: Graham Henry
- Left lower: Martin Johnson
- Left Bottom: Jonny Wilkinson
- Right: Neil Jenkins
- Far Right: Scott Quinnell
- Below: Jason Leonard

