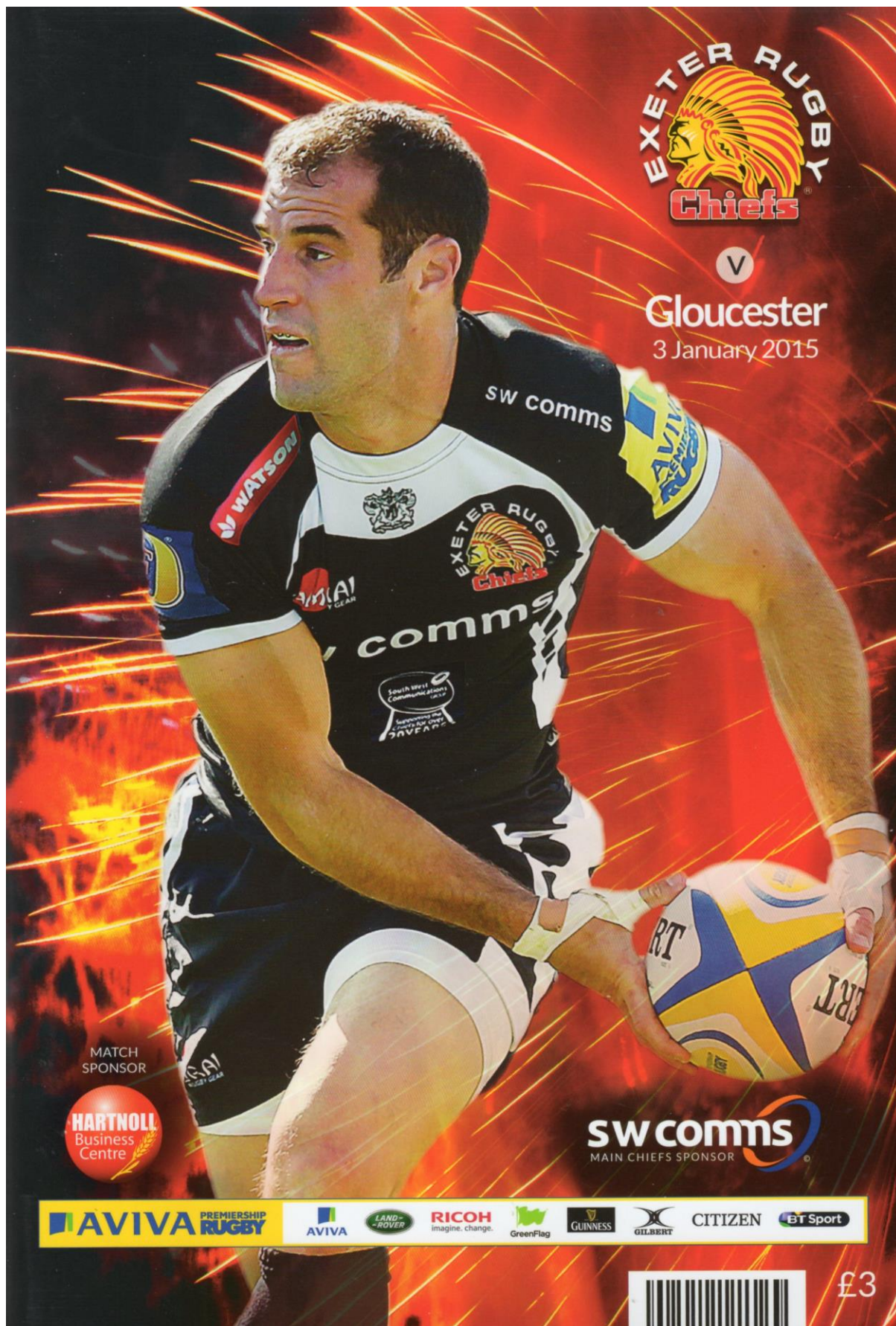




V

Gloucester

3 January 2015



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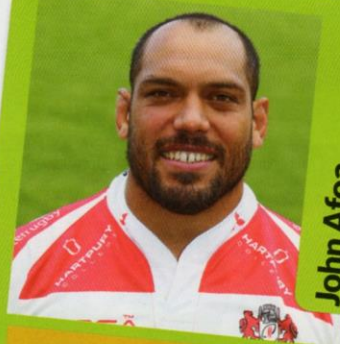
# the Opposition



Founded: <b>1873</b>	Ground: <b>Kingsholm Stadium</b>	Capacity: <b>16,500</b>
Coach: <b>David Humphreys</b>	Captain: <b>Billy Twelvetrees</b>	Website: <b>www.gloucester rugby.co.uk</b>
Aviva Premiership Record <b>P 393 W 210 D 12 L 171</b>		
Total points for: <b>9,111</b>	Top points against: <b>8,396</b>	Total tries for: <b>917</b> Total tries against: <b>815</b>
Most appearances: <b>Nick Wood (186 appearances)</b>		Top points scorer: <b>Ludovic Mercier (855 points)</b>
Top try scorer: <b>James Simpson-Daniel (63 tries)</b>		
Biggest win: <b>68-12 v Bath Rugby (2002)</b>		Heaviest defeat: <b>6-53 v Northampton Saints (2014)</b>
Highest Attendance: <b>59,400</b>	Total home attendance: <b>4,061,705</b>	

## Exeter's Aviva Premiership head to head (v Gloucester)

PLAYED **9**    WON **5**    DRAW **0**    LOST **4**    FOR **215**    AGAINST **203**    POINTS **23**



**John Afoa**

Nationality: **New Zealander**  
Year of Birth: **1983**  
Height: **1.83m (6')**  
Weight: **118kg (18st 8lbs)**

**Prop**

Premiership Appearances **10**  
Premiership Points **5**  
International Caps **36**



**Ben Morgan**

Nationality: **English**  
Year of Birth: **1989**  
Height: **1.83m (6')**  
Weight: **118kg (18st 8lbs)**

**No.8**

Premiership Appearances **47**  
Premiership Points **36**  
International Caps **15**



**James Hook**

Nationality: **Welsh**  
Year of Birth: **1985**  
Height: **1.83m (6')**  
Weight: **96kg (15st 11lb)**

**Fly-Half**

Premiership Appearances **8**  
Premiership Points **12**  
International Caps **77**



**Incredibly, given that we're only in the first week of 2015, this will be the third time that these two teams have met this season. And these are all competitive games, no friendlies or A League fixtures included!**

It's 2-0 to the Chiefs at the moment, but there has been little to choose between the two sides so far. The combined points difference across both games is four points in favour of Exeter – it's been that close!

What is for sure, is that it will be another step along the learning curve for Gloucester Rugby in what has been an eventful season to date.

After the many changes in personnel during the close season, both on and off the field, the main message from Kingsholm was a plea for patience. Everything will take time to gel was the predominant theme.

After all, incoming Director of Rugby David Humphreys didn't take up his post until August 1st, and new Head Coach Laurie Fisher didn't arrive until after the Brumbies' Super Rugby season came to an end.

In hindsight, perhaps winning the Premiership Rugby 7s season for a second season running didn't help with the tempering of expectations!

Even then, "...judge us after the first phase of the Premiership is over..." was the Gloucester mantra, even after the heavy opening night defeat at reigning champions Northampton Saints.



Indeed, Gloucester have got steadily better. Defensively in particular against Premiership opposition, the improvement has been marked.

And the development continued through the first two weeks of European action. A 55-0 victory over CA Brive at Kingsholm was followed by a hard fought win in France over Oyonnax – wins on French soil are not to be sniffed at.

That French 'double header' was followed by the return of the LV= Cup, and a tough opener against the current holders, Exeter Chiefs here at Sandy Park. The Chiefs sneaked that one with a last minute penalty try, but Gloucester

bounced back with a dogged win on the road at London Welsh.

That set up the return to Aviva Premiership action, and the Cherry and Whites will be disappointed to have suffered two defeats in a row against Harlequins and Newcastle Falcons.

Both setbacks were frustrating as Gloucester led in both matches. An early 12-0 advantage over Quins was eventually overturned, and a first minute try at Newcastle couldn't pave the way to victory.

The defeat at Kingston Park was at least the final game for which Gloucester were deprived of the services of so many players. By the time the second half kicked off, 20 regulars were missing!

However, Gloucester welcomed back their Tongan contingent, the Welsh duo of Hibbard and Hook and Greig Laidlaw as they travelled to the Madejski Stadium to take on London Irish, who were similarly desperate for a win.

It wasn't a classic, but Gloucester did what they had to do on the day and scored two tries through Purdy and McColl, backed by the accurate goal-kicking of Laidlaw, to secure the victory.

This was followed by back to back wins in Europe over a potentially tricky Zebre side. The Italians have taken some notable scalps this season, particularly in front of their home crowd in Parma.

However, Gloucester have set themselves a target of a home quarter-final in the European Rugby Challenge Cup this season, and four wins from four pool matches have put them in a great position to achieve this goal.

But, the return to Aviva Premiership action was a sobering one. Against their bitter local rivals, Bath Rugby, Gloucester came up second best and were left to contemplate a Christmas off the back of a tough defeat.

The Cherry and Whites will be looking to kick off 2015 today on a more positive note.

**Billy Twelvetrees**

Nationality: **English**  
 Year of Birth: **1988**  
 Height: **1.91m (6' 3")**  
 Weight: **100g (15st 10lbs)**

**Centre**  
 Premiership Appearances **72**  
 Premiership Points **311**  
 International Caps **16**



# the Opposition



**Gloucester Director of Rugby David Humphreys believes there are seeds of encouragement for him and his team to take into the New Year, this despite suffering back-to-back home defeats during the festive period.**

Currently languishing ninth in the Aviva Premiership standings at the halfway stage, it's hardly been the kind of start the Irishman had envisaged when he took over the Kingsholm hot-seat at the start of the current campaign.

With big-name signings such as John Afoa, Richard Hibbard, Greig Laidlaw and James Hook brought in to help bolster the Gloucester ranks, previous woes have continued to dog the progress of the Cherry & Whites.

However, Humphreys believes recent displays - albeit in defeat - have shown that his team are beginning to show their quality and that an upturn in fortunes may not be too far away.

Commenting after his side's latest setback against Wasps, the former Ulster coach said: "Coming into this run of four games with Bath, Wasps, Exeter and Saracens, we knew it was a huge challenge and would really test us as a team and where we are.

"Two gone, we're definitely not where we want to be so going down to Exeter will be another big test. But if we show the commitment, hard work and energy that we saw in the second-half against Wasps and a good deal against Bath, with the players and squad that we have, at some point results will turn around.

"We talked all week about a reaction to the Bath came and in the first half we were a little bit flat, we lacked that edge and it took some pretty strong words at half time to get that reaction.

"In the second-half certain parts were very good, we managed to get ourselves into the game but in a couple of key opportunities we lacked a bit of composure on the ball, a couple of poor decisions and Wasps hung on."

Today, though, Gloucester face an Exeter side who themselves are looking to bounce back after successive away defeats to Sale Sharks and Bath.

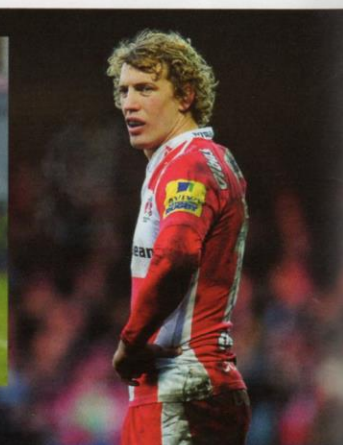
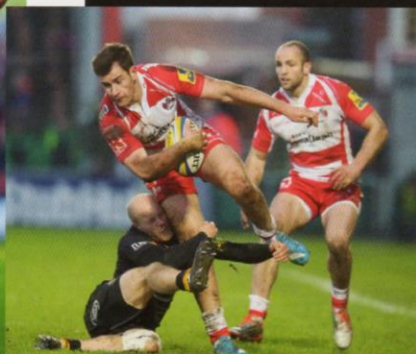
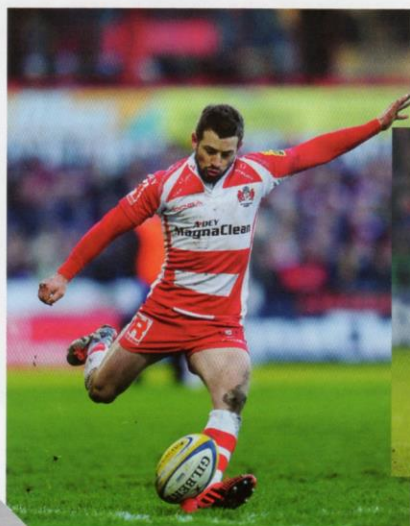
When the two met earlier in the season, the Chiefs triumphed 25-22 at Kingsholm - one of four home defeats for Gloucester already this term - and Humphreys admits his side's home form must improve over the second half of the season.

He said: "We're disappointed to lose again at Kingsholm. At the start of the year we set out to make it a difficult place to play and with the results in the last couple of games we've not backed that up.

"After another home defeat the long term plan doesn't seem as important as short term results. We all know we're in the results business and we want to win.

"We also know we have some very good players, there are certain aspects improving and others that need to be better if we want to compete against the best teams, but we're fully aware we're four months into a long-term project and we've got to see an improvement on a regular basis.

"In the last two weeks, with two full houses it has been a fantastic place to play and the response of the crowd has been outstanding. When you meet supporters everybody understands we're not where we want to be and it is a work in progress but we do know we have to perform better than in the last couple of weeks."





# On the pitch today

## The Teams



### starting XV

Phil Dollman	15	Steve McColl
Jack Nowell	14	Charlie Sharples
Henry Slade	13	Mark Atkinson
Sam Hill	12	Billy Twelvetrees (capt)
Matt Jess	11	Jonny May
Gareth Steenson	10	James Hook
Will Chudley	9	Greig Laidlaw
Ben Moon	1	Nick Wood
Jack Yeandle	2	Richard Hibbard
Moray Low	3	John Afoa
Dean Mumm (capt)	4	Tom Savage
Mitch Lees	5	Tom Palmer
Dave Ewers	6	Sione Kalamafoni
Don Armand	7	Matt Kvesic
Thomas Waldrom	8	Gareth Evans

### on the bench

Luke Cowan-Dickie	16	Darren Dawiduk
Carl Rimmer	17	Yann Thomas
Tomas Francis	18	Shaun Knight
Ben White	19	James Hudson
Kai Horstmann	20	Ross Moriarty
Haydn Thomas	21	Dan Robson
Ian Whitten	22	Billy Burns
Fetu'u Vainikolo	23	Henry Purdy

## The Officials

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