

CONNACHT RUGBY

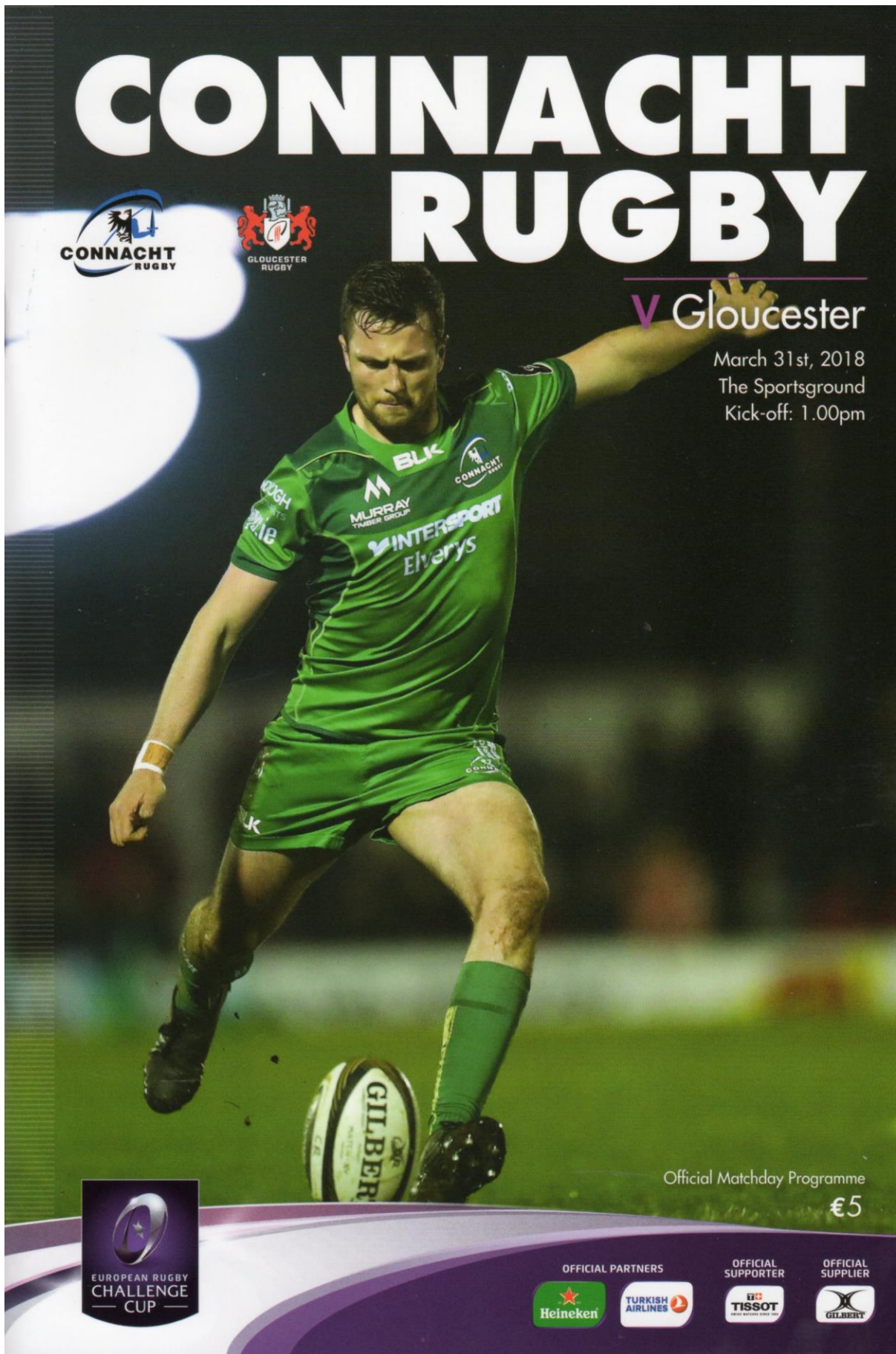


V Gloucester

March 31st, 2018

The Sportsground

Kick-off: 1.00pm



Official Matchday Programme

€5



OFFICIAL PARTNERS



OFFICIAL SUPPORTER



OFFICIAL SUPPLIER





CONNACHT RUGBY

Tiernan O'HALLORAN	Full-back	15
Niyi ADELOKUN	Wing	14
Bundee AKI	Centre	13
Tom FARRELL	Centre	12
Matt HEALY	Wing	11
Jack CARTY	Out-half	10
Kieran MARMION	Scrum-half	9
Denis BUCKLEY	Prop	1
Tom MCCARTNEY (c)	Hooker	2
Finlay BEALHAM	Prop	3
Gavin THORBURY	Lock	4
Quinn ROUX	Lock	5
Eoin McKEON	Flanker	6
Jarrad BUTLER	Flanker	7
John MULDOON	No.8	8

REPLACEMENTS

Dave HEFFERNAN	16
Peter McCABE	17
Conor CAREY	18
Utan DILLANE	19
Eoghan MASTERSON	20
Caolin BLADE	21
Craig RONALDSON	22
Darragh LEADER	23

Saturday, March 31st, 2018

Kick-off 1.00pm
The Sportsground,
Galway

Referee: Romain Poite (Fra)
Assistant Referees: Pierre Brousset (Fra)

Vincent Blasco Baqué (Fra)
TMO: Nail Hennessy (Wal)

All teams correct at time of going to press

SCORE BOARD

Final Score: -

Tries: -

Pens: -

Cons: -

Drop Goals: -



GLOUCESTER

Jason WOODWARD	Full-back	15
Charlie SHARPLES	Wing	14
Henry TRINDER	Centre	13
Mark ATKINSON	Centre	12
Tom MARSHALL	Wing	11
Owen WILLIAMS	Out-half	10
Willi HEINZ (c)	Scrum-half	9
Val RAPAVA RUSKIN	Prop	1
James HANSON	Hooker	2
John AFOA	Prop	3
Ed SLATER	Lock	4
Jeremy THRUSH	Lock	5
Ross MORIARTY	Flanker	6
Lewis LUDLOW	Flanker	7
Ben MORGAN	No.8	8

REPLACEMENTS

Motu MATU'U	16
Josh HOHNECK	17
Fraser BALMAIN	18
Tom SAVAGE	19
Ruan ACKERMANN	20
Callum BRALEY	21
Billy TWELVETREES	22
Billy BURNS	23



OPPOSITION FEATURE



CUP PEDIGREE

Last season's runners-up, Gloucester will be aiming to go one better after losing out to Stade Francais in the decider at BT Murrayfield last May.

Before that, though, they must overcome a Connacht side who have been impressive at home – although the visitors can point to a decent recent record against the Western province, albeit at their Kingsholm home.

The sides last met in the Challenge Cup in 2015, when Gloucester emerged victorious en

Two-time champions Gloucester will be targeting a third Challenge Cup title after coming agonisingly close last year

Above
Gloucester's Billy Twelvetrees lifts the Challenge Cup Trophy in 2015

route to ultimate glory in the final, accounting for Pat Lam's side on a 14-7 scoreline at the quarter-final stage.

Gloucester hosted Connacht again just weeks later, with the home side edging a thrilling Champions Cup play-off 40-32 after extra-time at Kingsholm in May 2015.

Currently sixth in the Aviva Premiership under the stewardship of former Ireland and

Ulster out-half David Humphreys, who has been in situ as Director of Rugby since 2014, the Cherry and Whites qualified for the knockout stages of this season's Challenge Cup after finishing as runners-up in Pool 3. They were pipped to first spot by French Top14 side Pau, who defeated Gloucester both home and away but those losses represented their only ►

OPPOSITION FEATURE

blips to date, with Gloucester recording victory in each of their remaining four fixtures against Zebre and Agen.

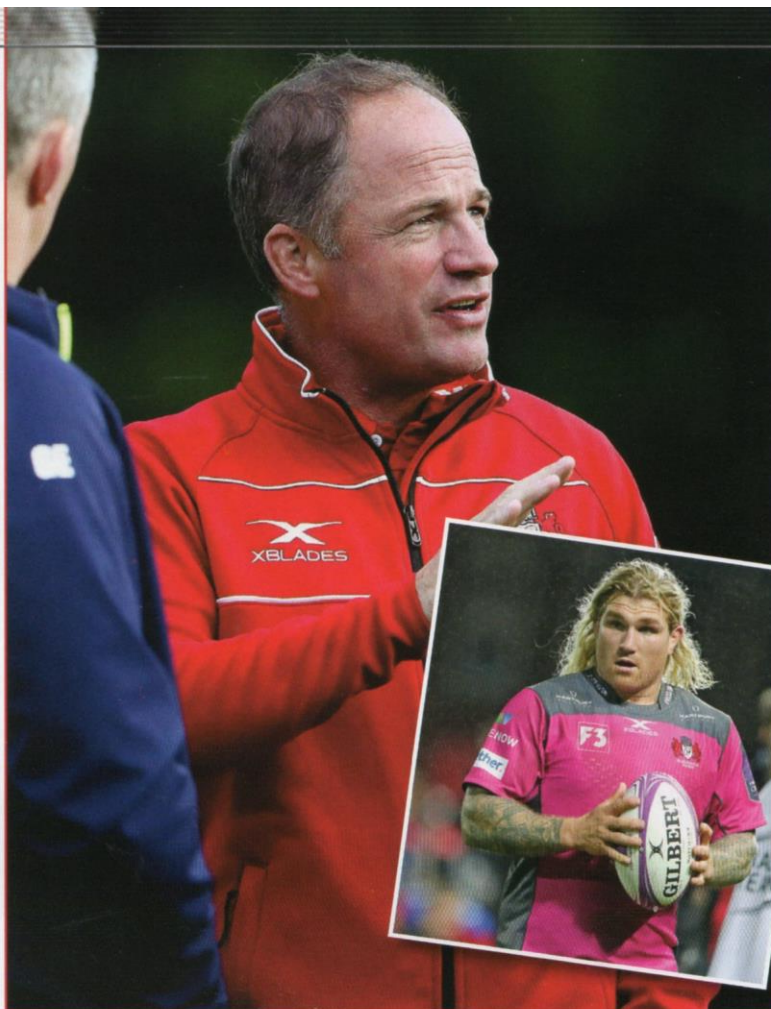
During Humphreys' tenure, the Cherry and Whites have finished 9th, 8th and 9th again last season in the Aviva Premiership but have their eyes on a play-off place this year and have certainly improved under South African Johan Ackermann, who took over as Head Coach at the start of the campaign.

Of course, they were Challenge Cup winners in Humphreys' first season with the club when they defeated Edinburgh Rugby 19-13 in the 2015 decider. That victory made them two-time champions in this competition, having first lifted the trophy in 2006.

Absence

A lot has changed for Gloucester since then but they remain well served up front with some big names in the front row including former All Black and Ulster prop John Afoa and Welsh and British & Irish Lions hooker Richard Hibbard. The Welshman's fellow Lion No 8 Ross Moriarty is fit again having not yet appeared for Gloucester this season and will be pushing hard for a place after three appearances for the Welsh during the recent Six Nations.

In his absence Jake Polledri, Lewis Ludlow, Ruan Ackermann and Freddie Clarke have emerged as top performers for Gloucester in the back



"THEY WERE CHALLENGE CUP WINNERS IN HUMPHREYS' FIRST SEASON WITH THE CLUB WHEN THEY DEFEATED EDINBURGH IN THE 2015 DECIDER"

Main
Gloucester
Director of
Rugby David
Humphreys
(inset) hooker
Richard Hibbard

row, with no room for England international Ben Morgan in recent games.

Behind the scrum they are led by former Crusaders scrum-half Willi Heinz, with the captain having returned to full fitness after suffering injury last month. Elsewhere former England centre Billy Twelvetrees is a key man, with his experience and unerring boot proving vital to the Cherry and Whites' cause this season, while Henry Trinder is enjoying one of his best seasons in a decade

with Gloucester and has been their chief try-scoring threat this term.

Gloucester remain very much in the hunt for a place in the Premiership play-offs after last weekend's defeat of London Irish but at the same time they will be eager to go one better than last season in this competition.

With a fine pedigree in the Challenge Cup, few would be surprised if the two-time champions added a third title, providing of course they can overcome Connacht first tonight.

