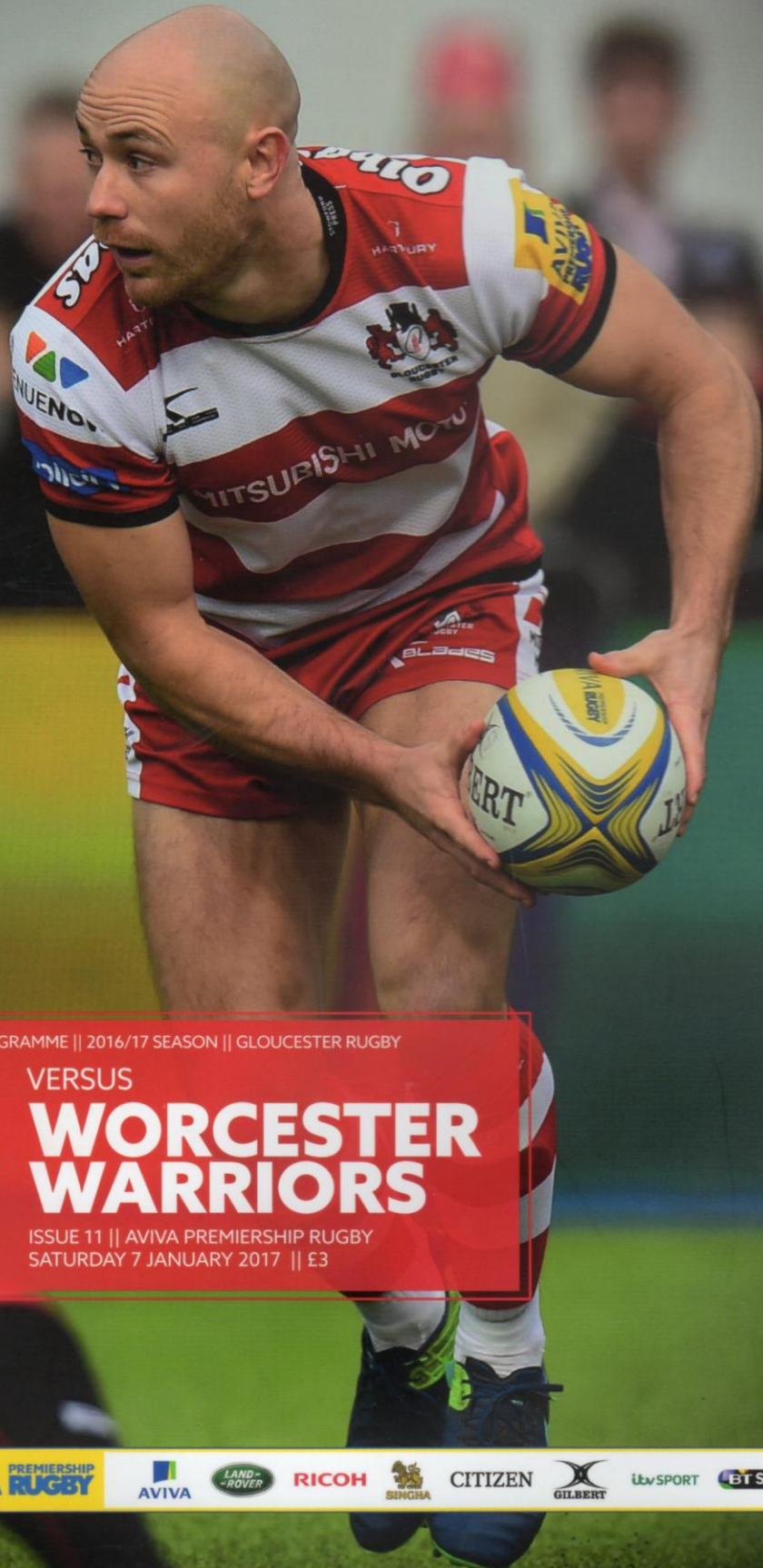




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OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME || 2016/17 SEASON || GLOUCESTER RUGBY



GLOUCESTER  
RUGBY

VERSUS

# WORCESTER WARRIORS

ISSUE 11 || AVIVA PREMIERSHIP RUGBY  
SATURDAY 7 JANUARY 2017 || £3



RICOH



CITIZEN

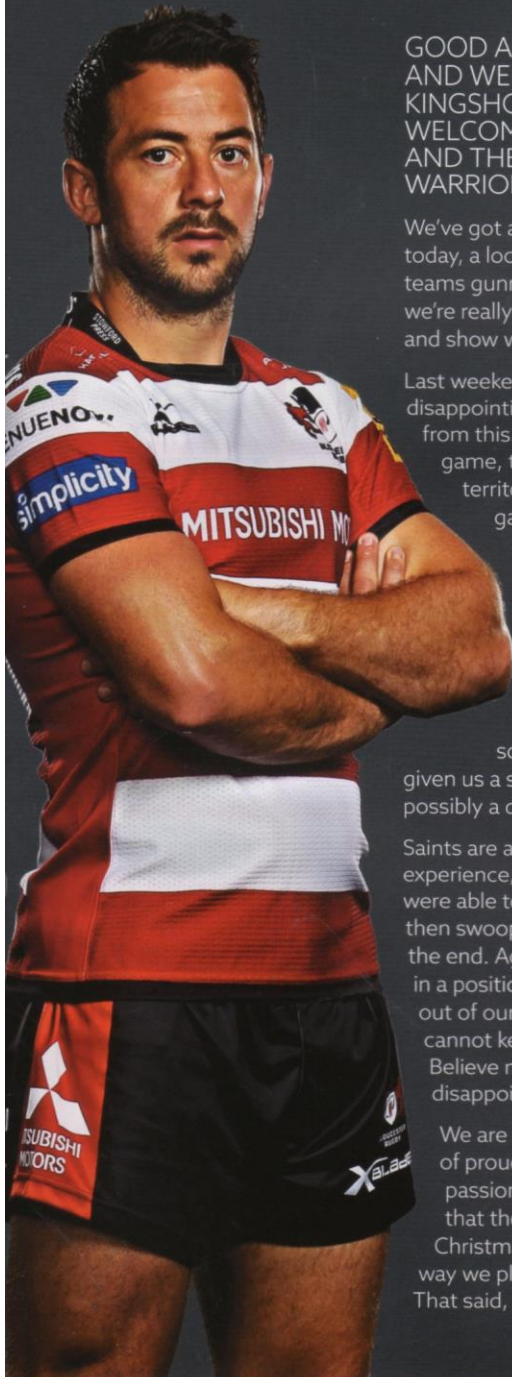


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CAPTAIN'S CORNER

## GREIG LAIDLAW



GOOD AFTERNOON AND WELCOME TO KINGSHOLM, AND A BIG WELCOME TO CARL HOGG AND THE WORCESTER WARRIORS.

We've got an exciting game ahead today, a local derby with both teams gunning for the points, and we're really determined to get out and show what we're about.

Last weekend was hugely disappointing, there is no hiding from this. We controlled the game, the tempo and the territory for most of the game. But as the game went on, we couldn't put the game to bed.

Ben Morgan felt he scored a try when he drove over, so we were gutted that it didn't result in the score which would've given us a strong advantage, possibly a decisive one.

Saints are a team packed with experience, however, and they were able to hang in there and then swooped to steal the result in the end. Again, we put ourselves in a position where the result was out of our hands again, and we cannot keep letting this happen. Believe me, we share your disappointment.

We are a changing room of proud, determined and passionate players, and feel that the two results over Christmas didn't reflect the way we played and prepared. That said, we have a chance



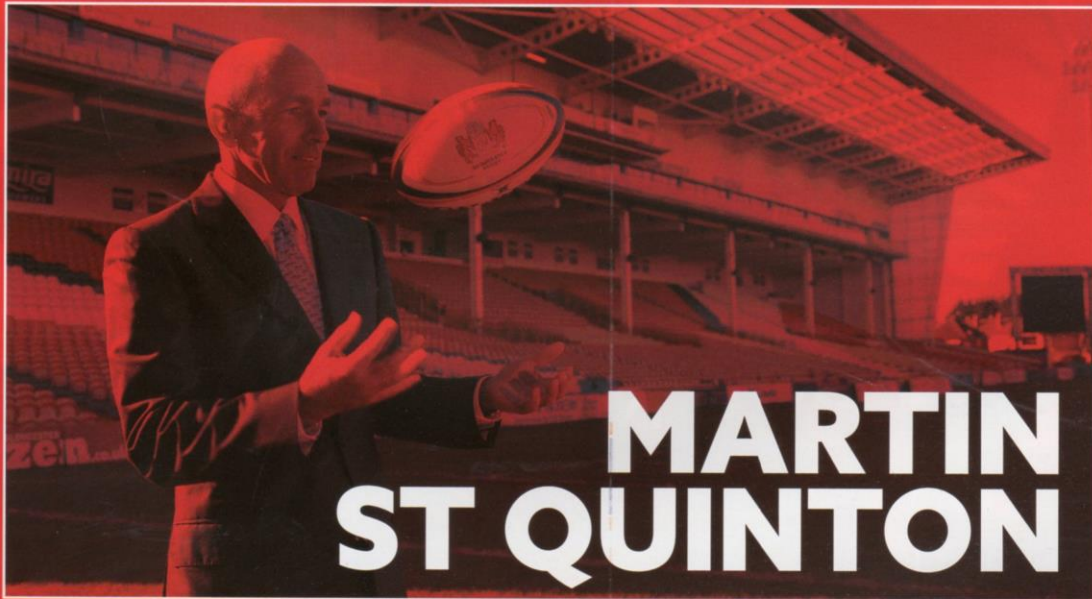
this weekend to bounce back immediately in front of our own fans, and with it keep in touch with the top six, and where we know we should be competing.

In this competition, we face huge challenges every week, and it is clear that there are no easy games. But rather than focus on opponents, we have to put total faith in each other and what we are trying to do.

There is no hiding place now, the final few minutes were awful for all of us on Sunday, and this week is our chance to fire into another big challenge and get some smiles back on our faces ahead of an important few weeks of rugby.

Enjoy the game

*Greig*



Good afternoon and welcome back to Kingsholm for what is sure to be a hard-fought local derby against our visitors from just up the M5, Worcester Warriors.

I've been fortunate enough over the past few years to watch many of these derbies in person and, one thing I can say for sure, is that they're never very good for the blood pressure!

I've witnessed a couple of draws and any number of matches settled by less than one score. For whatever reason, no matter what the form of either team is coming into the game, they always seem to be close encounters.

Worcester will also come into the game with a spring in their step courtesy of their victory last weekend over Harlequins at Sixways. That brings me on to my next point, which is turnaround time between matches.

It will have escaped no-one's notice that the Round 11 fixtures took place over four days. Northampton kicked it all off with their home



game against Sale Sharks on December 23rd, and the final game was our match against Harlequins at Twickenham on December 27th.

It means that Worcester had one more day than Quins to recover and prepare, while Saints had four more days than ourselves. With so much at stake in every game, that's a significant disadvantage with modern rugby union being such a physical game.

And, on the subject of physicality, today will be the first time that a game at Kingsholm is played with the new laws regarding tackles in effect.

The changes, brought in by World Rugby, have obviously been introduced with player welfare in mind – a bid to cut down on high tackles, head injuries and incidents of concussion.

That, of course, is to be applauded as is any initiative which focusses on the welfare of the players. We've seen too many have to retire prematurely in recent seasons due to recurring concussions.

Coming halfway through a season though, defenders are going to have to potentially refine their tackling techniques very quickly as any contact with the head area, no matter how unintentional, could result in a yellow card.

As the new laws bed in, we could very easily be watching games of 13 versus 13. Perhaps those former rugby league wingers that Sale have signed this season will be feeling right at home sooner than we thought!

Enjoy the game.

*Martin*

## GOOD AFTERNOON AND WELCOME BACK TO KINGSHOLM AFTER, WHAT WAS ULTIMATELY A DISAPPOINTING START TO 2017 LAST SUNDAY.

In last week's programme notes I talked about the mental and physical challenges for the players of playing two games in five days but no one could fault the effort and commitment of the whole squad.

In really tough weather conditions, it was never going to be a free flowing game of rugby and for 74 minutes I thought our defence was outstanding and we managed the game really well and controlled field position.

I have been asked a lot of questions about our game management over the past few weeks. The challenge in every game is to get the balance right about when to run and when to kick and, bearing in mind the conditions on Sunday, we put Northampton under a lot of pressure with our kicking game.

The game's key moment was Ben Morgan's disallowed try but then, as has been the case too often this season, we conceded a disappointing try with 6 minutes left on the clock leaving us to try and chase the win with 14 men.

Ultimately, another bonus point defeat but one that was particularly hard to take, especially at Kingsholm and following on from the disappointment of the way the previous game finished at Twickenham. In any season, there are games you win when you could have lost but equally, games you lose that you could have won. With 6 losing bonus points this season, there have only been games that



we've lost that we could, and should, have won.

It's very frustrating for us all but everyone is working hard in training and match preparation to eradicate the small errors that are costing us dearly.

Despite the narrow defeats and disappointment of the last few weeks we still find ourselves just 3 points off 6th spot and with plenty of games left and players coming back to fitness we are still optimistic that 2017 can be a good year.

Today will be another tough derby fixture. After a tricky run

of results, Worcester are coming off the back of very good win against Harlequins and I'm delighted to welcome Carl Hogg and all the players and staff from Worcester Warriors back to Kingsholm.

Thank you for the fantastic support on New Year's Day and you'll see a big performance from the players today to get 2017 up and running with an important win.

Enjoy the game.

*David*

VIEW FROM THE

# Citizen

**2** 016 was a rollercoaster year for Gloucester Rugby fans. Off the pitch, there was one takeover and talk of another one possibly on the cards, while on the pitch there were some euphoric wins and damaging defeats.

Here we look back on the most significant moments in 2016:

#### 1. GLOUCESTER ANNOUNCE SIGNING OF MATT SCOTT

In January, Gloucester took a big step forward in the recruitment process for the 2016-17 season as it was announced that centre Matt Scott would be joining the club from Edinburgh.

The Scotland international has quickly become a fans' favourite at Kingsholm, scoring nine tries in 14 starts, and Director of Rugby David Humphreys recently said he had been a "revelation" for Gloucester.

#### 2. THE END OF THE WALKINSHAW ERA

Gloucester started 2016 still up for sale but on February 15 Martin St Quinton bought out Ryan Walkinshaw's shares to own 100 per cent of the club.

St Quinton first became involved with Gloucester in 2008 when he bought a 25 per cent share and he later increased that to 40 per cent.

It ended the Walkinshaw family's 19-year involvement with the club, stretching back to when Tom Walkinshaw first became chairman in 1997 before his death in 2010.

#### 3. NICK WOOD BREAKS RECORD

Prop Nick Wood became Gloucester's record appearance maker when he took his tally to

274 in the local derby against Worcester at Sixways in March.

He broke the previous record set by Peter Buxton, making his 200th appearance in the process.

#### 4. EXIT FROM EUROPE

Gloucester's hopes of finishing the 2015/16 season with silverware were effectively ended when their defence of the European Challenge Cup was surprisingly brought to an end by Newport Gwent Dragons, who ran out 23-21 winners at Kingsholm in March.

#### 5. NICK WOOD LEAVES

After 16 years at Gloucester, it was announced in June that loyal servant and record appearance maker Nick Wood had been released by the club at the age of 33.

"I've had an amazing time at this wonderful club," Wood said at the time.

"I arrived here as an 18 year old boy straight from school, and I leave as the man I am today through the friendship and guidance of

the players and coaches I've been fortunate enough to work with."

Wood went on to announce his retirement in October.

Rob Cook was another high-profile summer departure, leaving the club on the same day as Wood.

#### 6. GLOUCESTER THROW HUGE LEAD ON OPENING DAY

The Cherry and Whites found themselves on the wrong end of one of the most incredible matches at Kingsholm this year as they were beaten 38-31 at Kingsholm at the start of the new season in September.

With Gloucester leading 31-7 early in the second half there was hope that this could be the start of something special but instead it set the tone for a difficult start to the season where an inability to hold onto leads and poor home form proved costly.

The Tigers mounted a thrilling comeback with Sam Harrison scoring a try at the death to secure their win.

#### 7. LEGENDS RETURN TO CELEBRATE 125 YEARS AT KINGSHOLM

Gloucester marked the 125th anniversary of playing at Kingsholm with a Mitsubishi Hybrid Cup game against Salford Red Devils, where a host of legends were invited back to pull on the Cherry and Whites hoops again.

The likes of Thinus Delpont, Mike Tindall, Ludovic Mercier, Lesley Vainikolo, Olivier Azam, Junior Paramore and Andy Gomarsall played for Gloucester in the cross-code match - union in the first half and league in the second - but Salford ran out 49-41 winners.



### 8. GREIG LAIDLAW DEPARTURE ANNOUNCED

After weeks of speculation, it was confirmed in October that club captain Greig Laidlaw was leaving the club at the end of the season to join French Top 14 side Clermont Auvergne.

The news came as a big blow with the Scotland goal-kicking ace becoming a huge fans' favourite at Kingsholm.

### 9. JAMES HUDSON RETIRES

It was announced in October that James Hudson was unable to recover from a serious knee injury and was forced to hang up his boots.

The second row made over 250 appearances in his career for Bath, London Irish and Newcastle, joining Gloucester in the 2013-14 season before suffering the injury in a pre-season game against Exeter in September 2015.

However, Hudson remains with the club after being handed the role of performance nutritionist.

### 10. JONNY MAY COMES BACK WITH A BANG

After missing 10 months with injury, Jonny May returned for Gloucester in October and scored in his first game back in the European Rugby Challenge Cup game at Bayonne.

He had only played three games for Gloucester, scoring another try against Treviso, before being thrown back into the England squad and he also marked his international return with a superb try against South Africa.



### 11. CARL FEARN TO JOIN GLOUCESTER

With speculation of a mass exodus, the news in November that a deal had been agreed to sign back rower Carl Fearn next summer from Lyon came as a massive boost to the club.

That was the first in a week of announcements that saw Ben Morgan, Billy Burns, Willi Heinz and Henry Purdy all sign new contracts.

### 12. GLOUCESTER BLOW WASPS AWAY

In one of the most memorable games of the year, Gloucester produced one of their best performances to run out 36-18 winners against high-flying Wasps in the Premiership in November.

Significantly, it was the Cherry and Whites' first Premiership win of the season at Kingsholm as they ran in five tries in a spectacular feast of rugby.

### 13. JAMES HOOK ALSO LEAVING

Arriving at Kingsholm in the summer of 2014 as another high-profile signing alongside Greig Laidlaw, James Hook announced that he will also leave the club at the end of the season to return to Ospreys.

### 14. THE RETURN OF THE RIFLES CUP

Gloucester renewed an old rivalry when they met Bristol for the first time in seven years at the start of December.

The Cherry and Whites overcame a disappointing first half in which they trailed 6-0 to score four quick second-half tries to win 26-18 and lift their first piece of silverware this season – the Rifles Cup.

### 15. ALTRAD CONFIRMS INTEREST

After lots of speculation, Syrian-born billionaire Mohed Altrad confirmed his interest in becoming majority shareholder of Gloucester in December.

There have been reports that Altrad could rename Kingsholm, bring in his own coaching staff with Philippe Saint-Andre heavily linked and even persuade recently retired South African international Johan Goosen to join the Cherry and Whites.

The saga has been complicated by the fact the scaffolding magnate owns 100 per cent of Montpellier Hérault and he is now waiting for consent from European Professional Club Rugby to see if the acquisition could go ahead.

### 16. DEFEAT AT TWICKENHAM

For the second year in a row Gloucester were given the chance to play at the home of English rugby in the latest 'Big Game' for Harlequins, playing in front of their largest crowd of the year with 77,567 fans packed into Twickenham.

It was a special occasion but not the result Gloucester wanted as they narrowly lost 28-24 despite a thrilling fightback.



GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
HERITAGE[www.gloucesterrugbyheritage.org.uk](http://www.gloucesterrugbyheritage.org.uk)JOHN GWILLIAM  
1923-2016

## CAPTAIN OF WALES

## INTRODUCTION

One of the great figures of Welsh rugby, John Gwilliam played No. 8 or lock in 23 matches for Wales including 13 games as captain. He was a Cambridge blue in 1947 and 1948 and played six times for the Barbarians, leading them on three occasions.

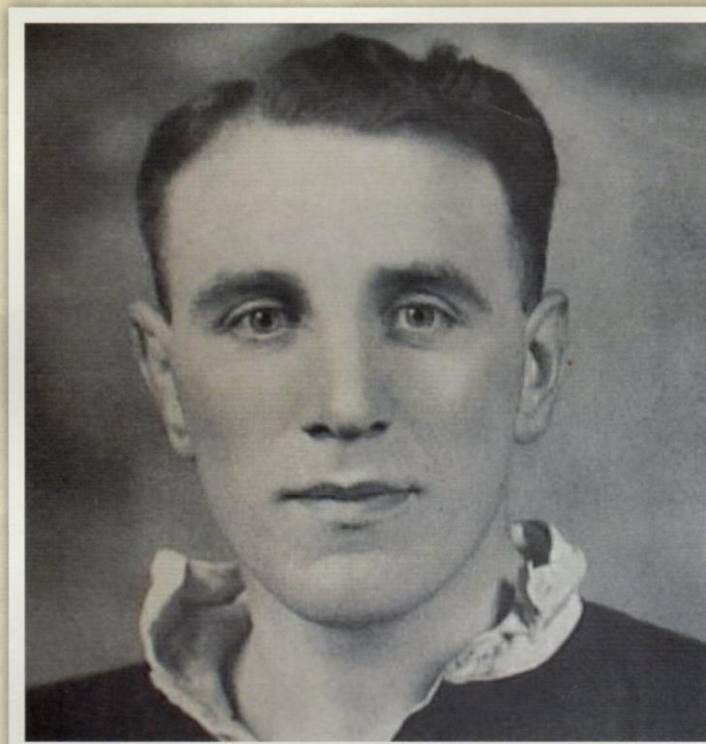
He led Wales to Grand Slams in 1950 and 1952 in a period that many regarded as the second "Golden Age of Welsh Rugby".

When his career as a schoolmaster took him to Bromsgrove School, he joined Gloucester and played 49 games for the club between 1953 and 1955. Although he joined Gloucester late in his career, he played his last 5 internationals while at Kingsholm, becoming the first player from the club to captain his country.

NEWPORT AND  
CAMBRIDGE

John Albert Gwilliam was born on February 28, 1923 in Pontypridd and educated at Monmouth School, where he won a wartime Welsh Schoolboys cap. He spent a year at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1941-42 before being commissioned as an officer in the Royal Tank Regiment.

John played for Newport in 1945-46 while still on Army service and again in 1946-47 before resuming his studies at Cambridge. In December 1947, after an outstanding Varsity match, he made his debut for Wales v. Australia in the second row. He was dropped but recalled for the Ireland match. In 1948-49 (his



final year at Cambridge) he played in all the Home Internationals, continued to play occasionally for Newport and made his debut for the Barbarians

## EDINBURGH WANDERERS

In 1949, after leaving Cambridge, he became a teacher at Glenalmond School in Perth. He joined Edinburgh Wanderers and in January 1950 became captain of Wales for the first time, beating England at Twickenham. Wales went on to win the Grand Slam under his captaincy, their first for 39 years.

The Times considered that he would have been a certain selection for the 1950 Lions tour of Australia and New Zealand had he been available, and many were tipping him to be chosen as Lions captain, but his teaching duties at Glenalmond prevented him from travelling.

He led Wales to a second Grand Slam in 1952, the only Welsh player to captain his country throughout two Grand Slam seasons, and in the process became the first player to twice lead the Principality to victory at Twickenham. In his three



seasons with Edinburgh Wanderers he had captained Wales on twelve occasions and been victorious on nine of them. Despite the brilliance of the Welsh backs, his tactical aim was for forward domination. His Welsh side were a team of forward power with Gwilliam as the dynamic No. 8 at its core.

#### GLOUCESTER

In 1952 John Gwilliam moved south to teach at Bromsgrove School. He was persuaded by Tom Voyce to join Gloucester for 1952-53, making his debut against Lydney in the first match of the new season.

Very influential in two successful years with Gloucester, he alternated between lock and No.8. Peter Ford paid tribute to "John Gwilliam, the captain of Wales - a player we all looked up to when he joined us that season. His play and his ability ... we just looked up to him so much."

John regained selection as No. 8 and captain for the first Home International against England by captaining the Possibles to victory over the Probables in the final Welsh trial. It was to be his thirteenth and last match as captain but, although Wales lost and the captaincy then passed to Bleddyn Williams, he came back to play against Ireland and France.

1953-54 was a record-breaking season for Gloucester who were captained by John Taylor, with elder statesman John Gwilliam as his vice captain. Wales continued to call on Gwilliam's services and on 19 December 1953, again under

Bleddyn Williams's captaincy, he helped his country gain their last victory (to date) against the All Blacks, whom they beat 13-8 at Cardiff.

He went on to play one further international against England at Twickenham in January and finished the season on Gloucester's annual tour of the West Country. There was one last big game before retirement when he turned out for the RFU President's XV against Wasps in September 1954.

#### AFTER RUGBY

John Gwilliam left Bromsgrove School in 1956 to become Head of Lower School at Dulwich College, moving on in 1963 to become Headmaster of Birkenhead School, where he remained until his retirement in 1988. He was noted as a firm disciplinarian with strong religious views as well as for his enduring love of rugby, which he passed on to generations of schoolboys.

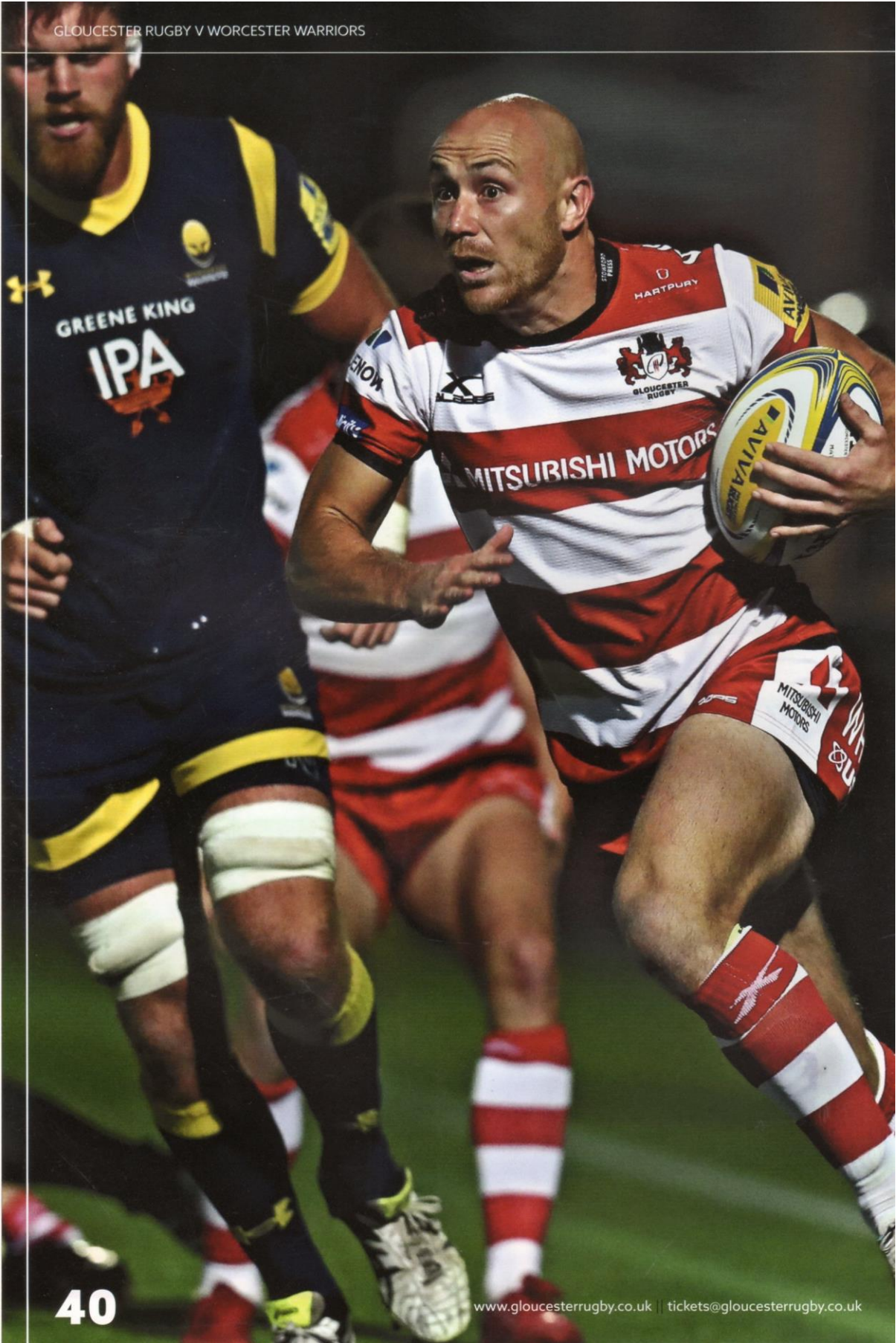


Gwilliam was added to the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame's exclusive Roll of Honour in 2005. In the centenary history of the Welsh Rugby Union "Fields of Praise" he was described as "perhaps Wales's greatest captain in a hundred years."

He lived in retirement at Llanfairfechan in Gwynnedd, and passed away at a nursing home in Deganwy at the age of 93 on 8 December 2016.







# PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS



frustrating and boring for spectators to watch at times, that is just the way it is.

"The surfaces are getting heavy due to the weather, and then it does make playing with ball in hand tricky, so there is a lot of kicking.

"And, without boring anyone with details, the stats do show that the team that kick the most, and kick well are tending to win the games. It's part of the game, and it is something that if you do it well, it can pile a lot of pressure onto the opposition.

"Territory is such a big part of the game, and it's a way of putting pressure on to win turnovers and force points in that way."

And when it comes to putting boot to ball, the scrum half is a key cog in the plan to gain the crucial territory in narrow games.

"It's between your nine and your ten, and sometimes the fifteen in terms of controlling the game through your kicking game.

"If your forwards can provide you with the platform up front, and then you can get your blockers in and put in a contestable kick.

"We've got some great wingers at the club, in Jonny, Charlie, Henry and David Halaifonua, and they are all very strong at getting in the air and winning the ball after a good chase.

"If they don't get in the air, they are all strong at getting in the face of the opposition and putting in some good tackles and giving the forwards a target to get to.

"It's a great attacking weapon I think, definitely at this time of year too!"

Heinz, along with Greig Laidlaw and Callum Braley have been rotating well this season, with all three seizing their chances to steer the ship when called upon, and Heinz is able to appreciate the benefit of



strong competition with all three driving one another's standards.

"I think the strength we have at scrum half is a strong and important thing for the squad to have. You want to have competition for places throughout the squad, and we're getting that.

"Certainly at scrum half we have that, and Greig, Callum and myself are all keen to play and put our hand up to have a crack each week.

"With the length and intensity of the season, rotation is always going to happen and I guess that is part of the professional game that you have more than one starting player in each position in the squad.

"The three of us are all hungry and the competition is good for the squad, and brings out the best in all of us."

It can be frustrating to not start on a weekend, but Heinz made the most of his opportunities with dominant and stand out performances in the wins over Wasps and Bristol before the turn of the year at Kingsholm.

"I guess you have to take the chances in professional sport. If you

don't take your chance, then there is always someone queuing up to take theirs behind you.

"Going back to the competition for places, and when you get your chance, you have to put your best foot forward.

"When I got my opportunities, I am pleased that I was able to take them in those two wins, and it was a chance to show the fans what I'm about."

Heinz recently confirmed his intentions to build a long-term reputation at Kingsholm by signing a new deal, and he explained how easy the decision was.

"I really enjoy playing for Gloucester, it's an honour to play for this club, and one that has got so much history. I guess to be a caretaker of the jersey for this time is something that I'm relishing and I love playing for the team and the support.

"It's a brutally honest supporter base that we have, but that is good as it keeps us grounded and I'm not getting ahead of myself, I'm just trying to do the best I can for the team each week."



## KINGSHOLM NEWS

with

# Bob Fenton

**S**o here I am, match day morning (for the Saints' game) feeling, it has to be said, slightly worse for wear and looking out of the window at the teaming rain. This made me reflect a bit on the life that our team have to put up with at this time of year.

No doubt over Christmas they were training, no heaps of food for them - just something wholesome and nutritious put together by super chef Will and his nutrition sidekick James Hudson, the Batman and Robin of performance catering (you can make your mind up which one is which).

And then last night - eve of game and eve of New Year all at once... are they out drinking their bodyweight in Prosecco? Not at all, no doubt tucked up and sleeping like rather large babies from about 10pm.

So, what does that all mean, well for me it seemed that all I could do to support them was to eat and drink their shares - it seemed wrong to let it go to waste. And it's certainly gone to waist - mine! And it must be an age thing... back in the day New Year's Eve would go on until around midday and after a couple of hours sleep it would be back to looking for a bar that was open for the evening. Now it's all about heartburn and indigestion... I'm getting too old for this.

But enough of my tribulations - I hope everyone had a cracking start



to the New Year. And we do, really, appreciate the sacrifices our boys go through at this time of year.

And on to more serious stuff... Following hard on the heels of last week's 'when is a penalty not a penalty' bit, we have to follow up this week with 'when is a knock on deliberate or a legitimate attempt to intercept the ball'? As we know last week's game turned on this very conundrum.

As a game it was pretty enthralling stuff. Wet weather and the traditional heavy Kingsholm pitch that we see at this time of year was always going to make it one of the more attritional games of the season.

But there is nothing wrong with that - well not for me anyway - watching two teams slugging it out may not be to the taste of the TV audience and their demands for 76 points in every game, but sometimes an 80 minute arm wrestle can be a thing of wonder.

We've all seen those games when come full time every player has given their all, the pitch ends up looking more like a muddy lunar landscape, Dave Balmer tots up the amount of overtime it'll take to getting back to its best. And that's what we were heading for until about 10 minutes from the end.

Just in case you have been living in a cave for last week, let me recap... With not too many minutes left

on the clock Saints attacked down our right wing, the ball went wide and David Halaifonua stretched out a right arm to try to hook the ball in - or to be more precise from my vantage point almost dead in line with him as he went for the ball - it looked like he attempted to flick the ball up so he could catch it.

Unfortunately he didn't - had he done so there was little between him and the Saints try line apart from 80 metres of pitch - and instead the ball went forward. The referee saw it, blew his whistle and went back for a previous infringement. So far, so good.

Then the TMO got involved. The minute this happened the outcome was obvious. Yellow card and a penalty try for a deliberate knock on. Now here's the thing, there is no way in the world that was a deliberate knock on and there is no way in the world that it could in

any universe be interpreted in that way - except that is exactly how it was treated. It was an attempt to get the ball that didn't come off for sure, but nothing more and the sanction should have been a scrum.

Unfortunately it seems that common sense - and even empathy for the game - is being taken out of the hands of the referees who are being pushed into making these calls every week. It's almost becoming like they are asked to be judges in a 'trial by TV reality show' rather than officiating a sporting contest. It's not helping the sport and I have huge sympathy for the referees who are constantly being asked to take on new laws and protocols, and for the players who have to try to understand them.

It's ok to say that players must adapt but these are split seconds decisions and opportunities. Sure if David had deliberately slapped the

ball down then he pays the penalty. Not the case here, it was a clear and obvious attempt to play the ball and surely that should not be treated in the same way as a deliberate action to smack the ball into the floor. Time for a bit of a common sense rethink, I feel. There is too much at stake these days and huge decisions like this can lead to very real consequences for players, clubs and careers.

And so to Worcester today. As seems to be the norm, our nearest and dearest from just up the M5 appeared to have put themselves in a bit of a hole when they lost to Bristol after Christmas, but last weekend bounced back with a great win over Harlequins, though Bristol's win at Sale keeps the pressure on them.

At the risk of trotting out sporting cliché number 52, form goes out of the window in these games, and we know that Worcester will come out all guns blazing and with the kind of physical fury that we have come to expect. You only have to look back to the reverse fixture earlier in the season to see what to expect.

As you will recall, it was a last ditch effort for us to grab a draw there and, perhaps if it hadn't have been for a somewhat harsh red card for Alafoti Faosiliva (wow that took some spelling), it could have been a very different game. As it was, Henry Purdy's try and Greig's conversion with about ten mins to go put us level and despite battering the defensive line for the next few minutes we couldn't get the win.

I doubt that it's going to be pretty today - another arm wrestle of a match I suspect. Whatever the outcome - and of course you know what outcome I am expecting - I just hope that the scores come as a result of the players' endeavour and hard work, not through a contentious ruling on the field or via an outside broadcast truck somewhere in the car park.



# RANDALL on RUGBY



HANDS UP WHO THOUGHT SUNDAY'S GAME WAS AN OLD SCHOOL AFFAIR? CONDITIONS DICTATED HOW THE GAME WAS PLAYED OUT, AND MANY PREDICTING THE PATTERN AT 2.55 WOULD HAVE SEEN THEIR STORY LINE PLAYED OUT FOR 73 MINUTES. IN THE END IT WAS ANOTHER FLIP-OF-A-COIN RESULT.

I have not seen every game since September, but as we hit a break for a month from the Premiership after today I sought the views of the voice of Gloucester Rugby, BBC Gloucestershire commentator Andrew Pugh, on where the season is heading, taking the teams in the order Gloucester have played them.

Leicester (5th). Tigers' problems since their win at Kingsholm boiled over at the weekend, with not only Manu Tuilagi being injured again but Director of Rugby Richard Cockerill removed from his post and replaced by Head Coach Aaron Mauger. Leicester have been short of their historical standards, and his challenge will be to maintain their 100% record in play-off qualification.

Worcester (11th). Looking over their shoulders after the festive period. Dean Ryan was a significant individual there, and you wonder if his departure has left them short of capacity in supporting the team. They don't look to have quality in



depth either. The home game with Bristol will be huge for them, and I suspect the relegation place to be between those two clubs.

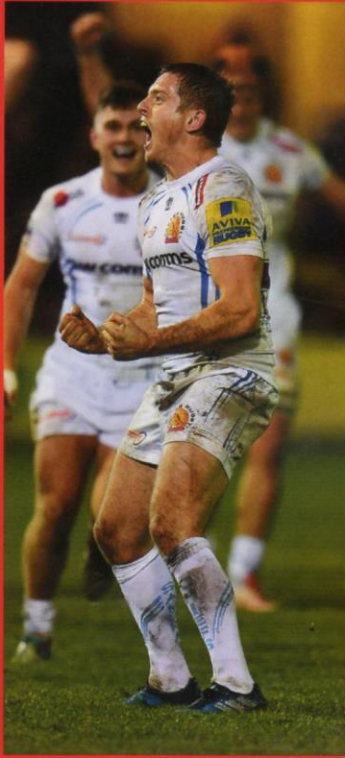
Sale (10th). Steve Diamond's boys are fallers at the moment despite having some useful backs in Haley and Addison. They have not adequately replaced Cipriani and their game plan now looks very limited. They were dreadful

at Northampton just before Christmas and both Worcester and Bristol will feel they can catch them, although I'm not sure they will.

Newcastle (8th) Dean Richards has been given time at the Falcons to build a well-drilled team who, especially at home on their 3G pitch, are playing a more expansive game - witness their thriller against Wasps a week ago. They've got a comfortable buffer between themselves and the strugglers, but probably won't make a Champions Cup place.

Bath (4th). Their best acquisition of the summer was new Director of Rugby Todd Blackadder. He has focussed the team with some pragmatism and honesty, and along with Wasps, they are probably playing the best rugby despite back row issues in recent





weeks. I would expect them to make the play offs.

Exeter (3rd). Started slowly, but building a head of steam now. Their phase play is a real strength and their game is balanced by attacking flair in wide areas, and they have try bonus points from six matches already. They lost last season's Premiership final to Saracens but I think they'll be in the top four again.

Northampton (6th). Sunday showed Saints are not the side they were. Jim Mallinder and Dorian West have worked together a long time and some supporters are asking for a new face and voice to freshen things up. There are the components of a decent team but Saints look vulnerable to finishing outside the Champions Cup places.

Wasps (1st). The most attractive team under the astute eye of Dai Young. Money has helped to bring in people like Beale and Le Roux, and Gopperth has been a revelation at inside centre.

It must also be said Dan Robson has come on a lot since joining from Gloucester. With their depth of squad, they should get a home play-off semi-final, probably as runners-up.

Saracens (2nd). Remain relentlessly efficient and confident in what they do, which coupled with a tremendous defence still makes them the team to beat. Their strength in depth is the envy of other teams, and they find a way to win games when others don't. You wouldn't put it past them to finish top again and then throttle (sic) whoever they face in the play offs.

Bristol (12th). It's remarkable they were not cut adrift after losing their first 10 games, their promotion winning squad looking short of what was required. However, from their 60 players Mark Tainton looks to have found more spirit and promise than Andy Robinson could before he left, and they will believe they have a live chance of escaping the drop.

Harlequins (7th). Stuttering along because of dreadful away form. A side commendably built around



English players, but whose first half of the season has dipped in and out, at times lacking the spark provided for so long by Nick Evans. He cannot go on for ever. In the scramble for 6th place although with no guarantee of getting it.

So, what of Gloucester? Helped by seven losing bonus points, they are only three points off the top six, although a meagre tally of three wins puts them at a disadvantage. The good news is that the injury list is shrinking, and other teams will have more players away on Six Nations duty. So the strength in depth that David Humphreys frequently talks about MUST come to the fore. The club ownership issue must not be a distraction either, and I trust that Stephen Vaughan will see to that.

Last season the sixth placed team finished with 58 points. Gloucester currently have 25 with 10 games remaining. There is not much room for error if that coveted Champions Cup place is to be achieved, starting today in a game that could resemble an arm-wrestle.

ACTION REPLAY || TUESDAY 27 DECEMBER || TWICKENHAM STADIUM || ATT 77, 567

# Harlequins

# 28

Tries: Marchant (2), Clifford. Conversions: Jackson (2). Penalties: Jackson (3).

# Gloucester Rugby

# 24

Tries: Evans, Hook, Matu'u. Conversions: Laidlaw (2), Burns. Penalties: Laidlaw.

Big Game 9 turned into a Big Disappointment for Gloucester who launched a ferocious second half comeback to take them to the verge of a famous win, only to see the game slip through their fingers, quite literally, in the final skirmishes.

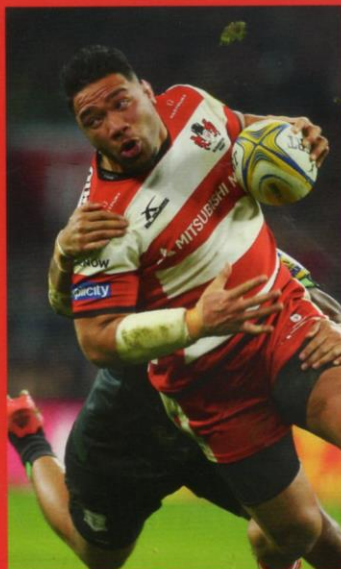
In front of nearly 78,000 people at Twickenham, Gloucester looked well and truly out of it on the hour mark but dug deep and came oh so close to overturning the odds and snatching a vital win.

However, in the final reckoning, the Cherry and Whites left themselves with just too much to do and the nature of the final few phases of play left everyone connected with the club feeling that a losing bonus point was scant reward for the team's efforts.



In perfect playing conditions, the game itself took a while to come to life as both teams very much cancelled each other out in an edgy opening quarter.

The game started to open up, however, and it was good feet by the home team's Joe Marchant which gave himself just enough room to go over for the game's opening try.



- 15 Brown
- 14 Yarde
- 13 Marchant 2T
- 12 Roberts
- 11 Visser ▼
- 10 Jackson 2C 3P
- 9 Care
- 1 Marler
- 2 Buchanan ▼
- 3 Sinckler
- 4 Merrick
- 5 Matthews
- 6 J Chisholm ▼
- 7 Wallace
- 8 Clifford 1T ■

Replacements used:  
Ward, Naoupu, Alofa

- 15 Hook 1T
- 14 Sharples ▼
- 13 Scott
- 12 Twelvetrees ▼
- 11 May ■
- 10 Burns 1C
- 9 Laidlaw 2C 1P ▼
- 1 McAllister ▼
- 2 Hibbard ▼
- 3 Hohneck ▼
- 4 Savage ▼
- 5 Galarza
- 6 Moriarty
- 7 Rowan
- 8 G Evans 1T ▼

Replacements used:  
Matu'u, Y. Thomas, Ma'afu 1T, Thrush, Kvesic, Heinz, Symons, Purdy

The ever-dependable Greig Laidlaw responded with a penalty, but Scotland team-mate Ruaridh Jackson hit back with two of his own to give Quins an 11-3 lead at half time.

Gloucester were still very much in the game, but were dealt a savage blow straight after the restart as a seemingly harmless kick downfield took a wicked bounce to elude Charlie Sharples and fall perfectly for Jack Clifford to score.

Gareth Evans, who had been a late call-up for the unwell Ben Morgan, then muscled his way over to get Gloucester back into the game, but another penalty from Jackson followed by a slightly soft second





try for Marchant as he slipped a tackle seemed to have settled the outcome.

James Hook had a try disallowed for offside as Gloucester fought back, but then dotted down for a legitimate score as the Cherry and Whites gave themselves a glimmer of hope.

Gloucester had suddenly found their mojo, and nearly scored a breathtaking third through Heinz but it was replacement hooker Motu Matu'u who crossed next as

he finished off a catch and drive.

Now only trailing 28-24, and with Harlequins losing Clifford to the sinbin, Gloucester sensed glory and poured forward in search of a winning score.

They got into superb position but then came Quins' moment of professionalism or skulduggery, depending on your viewpoint, and with referee JP Doyle claiming to be unsighted, the home team escaped.



## APPLYING THE LAW WITH



Official Legal Partner

With Gloucester pressing for the winning score with time almost up on the clock, a huge call went against them.

As Willi Heinz stooped to pick up the ball from a ruck a few metres shy of the Harlequins posts, a boot belonging to a Quins player kicked the ball out of Heinz's hands.

With Quins already having a man in the sinbin, a yellow card and a penalty award would have seen Gloucester have an attacking scrum against 13 men. Who knows what might have happened?



DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

## DAVID HUMPHREYS

"A couple of decisions didn't go our way and no matter what anybody says a bit of luck goes into the game and we just haven't had it this season in the big games away from home.

"With them having a man down I think we showed some good composure, despite a couple of mistakes to get back into their 22, and it was hugely disappointing having done all the hard work to get there to miss the opportunities to score."

ACTION REPLAY || SUNDAY 1 JANUARY || KINGSHOLM || ATT 16,115

# Gloucester Rugby 12

Penalties: Burns (4).

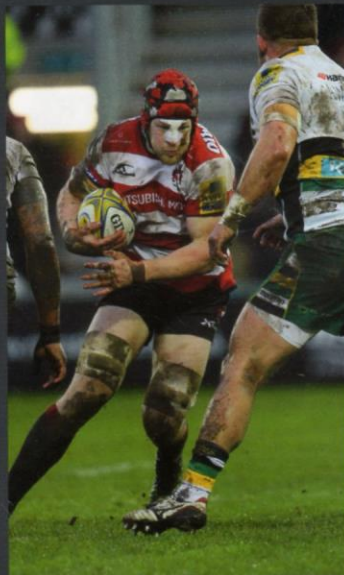
# Northampton Saints 13

Tries: Penalty. Conversions: Myler. Penalties: Myler (2).

Despite the difficult weather conditions, Kingsholm welcomed its first capacity crowd of the 2016-17 season on New Year's Day, but the home faithful were to leave with their spirits dampened as a late penalty try saw Northampton snatch a 12-13 victory.

As has already happened on several occasions this season, Gloucester will look back on this game wondering how on earth they didn't come away with the win.

The Cherry and Whites held the lead for the vast majority of the game but, crucially, didn't hold it as the final whistle blew. It's a trend that has Gloucester supporters scratching their heads in frustration.



- 15 Hook ▼
  - 14 Halaifonua ■
  - 13 Symons
  - 12 Twelvetrees
  - 11 May
  - 10 Burns 4P
  - 9 Heinz ▼
  - 1 Hohnack ▼
  - 2 Hlbbard ▼
  - 3 Ma'afu ▼
  - 4 Savage
  - 5 Thrush
  - 6 Ludlow
  - 7 Kvesic
  - 8 Morgan ▼
- Replacements used:  
Matu'u, McAllister,  
Afoa, Moriarty,  
Laidlaw, Scott



- 15 Foden
  - 14 K Pisi ▼
  - 13 Burrell
  - 12 Hanrahan
  - 11 North
  - 10 Myler 1C 2P
  - 9 Groom
  - 1 A Waller ▼
  - 2 Haywood
  - 3 Brookes ▼
  - 4 Lawes
  - 5 Day ▼
  - 6 Wood
  - 7 Harrison ▼
  - 8 Picamoles
- Replacements used:  
E Waller, Hill,  
Ratuniyarawa,  
Gibson, Mallinder

It was never going to be a classic, a feast of running rugby with tries galore at both ends. The weather conditions put paid to that. Rain fell incessantly all morning and didn't let up until the game was all but over.

With handling difficult and conditions heavy underfoot, the only pragmatic option was to play a kicking game and try and keep the game in your opponent's half. By and large, with Willi Heinz and Billy Burns kicking well out of hand, Gloucester got their tactics spot on.

That certainly seemed to be the case at half time, with the home team holding a 9-0 advantage from three Burns penalties. Everything was proceeding according to plan.



George North appeared to knock on a cross kick in the build-up to Myler's second penalty and nerves were jangling. Not so for Burns – he coolly stroked home his fourth penalty to make it 12-6.

Then came the incident that decided the game. Northampton had got little joy around the fringes so flung the ball wide left. David Halaifonua stuck out an arm, seemingly trying to intercept, but knocked the ball on.

Referee Carley seemed content to come back for a penalty to Northampton but, following advice from Assistant Referee Dean Richards, referred the matter to the TMO. Their subsequent discussion resulted in a yellow card for Halaifonua and a penalty try.

It was a cruel blow for Gloucester. A TMO call against them had cost them victory up at Franklin's Gardens against the same opponent earlier this season. Lightning had struck twice and it came as a real shock for the Kingsholm faithful.

However, Northampton are a redoubtable outfit and showed their mettle as they slowly but surely worked their way back into the game, Myler narrowing the gap with a 46th minute penalty.

Gloucester were defending doggedly and still seemed to have matters in hand, but the rugby gods then turned their back on the Cherry and Whites.

Ben Morgan claimed a try as he drove over, team-mates around him celebrated, seemingly able to see the grounding. However, the TMO couldn't and no try was awarded. Burns then missed a penalty, his only blemish off the tee on the afternoon, and the tide had turned.



## APPLYING THE LAW WITH



Official Legal Partner

50/50 refereeing decisions, and particularly TMO referrals, have cost Gloucester dear in recent weeks.

A potential try at a pivotal moment by Morgan was chalked off by the TMO, while the second use of the TMO resulted in a yellow card for David Halaifonua and a penalty try for Northampton.



## DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

### DAVID HUMPHREYS

"The dressing room is devastated. To turn around after five days and a really huge game at Twickenham and lose by a point is hard to take.

"You knew that last 10 minutes would be tough. We defended magnificently for parts of that match. When your opportunities come along, you have to take them."



# TEAM LINE-UPS

SATURDAY 7 JANUARY  
AVIVA PREMIERSHIP  
RUGBY ROUND 13



WORCESTER  
WARRIORS

T P C D				T P C D									
				JAMES HOOK	15	FULLBACK	15	JOSH ADAMS					
				CHARLIE SHARPLES	14	RIGHT WING	14	DEAN HAMMOND					
				MATT SCOTT	13	OUTSIDE CENTRE	13	BEN TE'O					
				BILLY TWELVETREES	12	INSIDE CENTRE	12	JACKSON WILLISON					
				JONNY MAY	11	LEFT WING	11	COOPER VUNA					
				BILLY BURNS	10	FLY-HALF	10	RYAN MILLS					
				WILLI HEINZ (C)	9	SCRUM HALF	9	MICHAEL DOWSETT					
				JOSH HOHNECK	1	LOOSEHEAD PROP	1	VAL RAPAVA RUSKIN					
				RICHARD HIBBARD	2	HOOKER	2	JACK SINGLETON					
				SALESI MA'AFU	3	TIGHTHEAD PROP	3	NICK SCHONERT					
				TOM SAVAGE	4	LOCK	4	DONNCHA O'CALLAGHAN					
				MARIANO GALARZA	5	LOCK	5	DARREN BARRY					
				ROSS MORIARTY	6	BLINDSIDE FLANKER	6	DEWALD POTGIETER (C)					
				JACOB ROWAN	7	OPENSIDE FLANKER	7	SAM LEWIS					
				BEN MORGAN	8	NUMBER 8	8	ALAFOTI FAOSILIVA					
				<b>REPLACEMENTS</b>				<b>REPLACEMENTS</b>					
				MOTU MATU'U	16		16	JABA BREGVADZE					
				PADDY MCALLISTER	17		17	NA'AMA LELEIMALEFAGA					
				JOHN AFOA	18	<b>MATCH OFFICIALS</b>		18	BIYI ALO				
				JEREMY THRUSH	19	REFEREE: Wayne Barnes		19	TEVITA CAVUBATI				
				LEWIS LUDLOW	20	ASSISTANT REFEREES: Tom Foley & Luke Pearce		20	PHIL DOWSON				
				GREIG LAIDLAW	21		21	GEORGE DE COTHI					
				ANDY SYMONS	22		22	CONNOR BRAID					
				HENRY PURDY	23		23	WYNAND OLIVIER					