



Back Row (L-R), R.R.Morris, R.Long, R.Collins, M.J.Potter, M.Elway, T.Pritchard, J.Holder, W.Cale N.H.B.Duncliffe, P.J.Ford, P.Hawker, F.Ewers, C.Pope, C.A.R.Lankester, J.Hickie, T.R.Tandy

**GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE**

Season 1971-72

Captain: Mike Nicholls

Played	49
Won	37
Lost	9
Drawn	3
For	821
Against	414

The 1971-72 season was one of the best in Gloucester's history. Mike Nicholls was an inspirational leader, whose pre-match team talks were legendary if frightening. Much of the success stemmed from a mighty pack, with a front row of Robin Cowling, Mike Nicholls and Mike Burton, supported in the second row by Alan Brinn and Jim Jarrett. The back row of John Watkins, Mike Potter and Dick Smith was arguably the best in the country. They pressured opponents relentlessly and created the opportunities for Eric Stephens to kick the penalties and Bob Clewes to score the tries.

This was the inaugural season for the RFU National Knock-Out Competition, popularly known as "The Cup", with 32 clubs selected to take part. There were no fixed dates for the games, so clubs had to fit games into their existing fixture lists by mutual agreement. The very first game was between Gloucester and Bath at the "Rec" on the evening of Thursday 30th September, a very low key affair, which Gloucester won 12-3 thanks to four Eric Stephens penalties.



Second Row (L-R), H.C.King (Secretary), J.A.Bayliss, T.Palmer, K.Richardson, J.S.Jarrett, A.Brinn N.Jackson, J.Haines, R.Jardine, M.A.Burton, R.J.Cowling, Dr. T.Durkin, A.D.Wadley (Treasurer) J.Fryer, S.T.Day

*Third Row (L-R), F.D.H.Dawe, Dr. A.Alcock, R.Smith, M.H.Booth, A.T.Voyce (President), M.J.Nicholls (Capt), R.J.Clewes, J.Dix, J.A.Watkins, A.G.Hudson (Chairman), Canon H.M.Hughes
Fourth Row (L-R), J.Spalding, J.Hargreaves, E.J.F.Stephens, R.Etheridge, J.Horner, R.Morris*

The next game against Bristol saw each side score a try, Peter Knight for Bristol and Bob Clewes for Gloucester, but three penalties and a conversion by Eric Stephens secured the victory. In the quarter-final, Gloucester were drawn away to London Welsh, at that time the best club side in the country. The Welsh fielded 11 internationals, including British Lions in Gerald Davies on the wing, John Dawes in the centre, and John Taylor and Mervyn Davies in the back row. Nobody gave Gloucester a chance, but the game would prove to be one of the greatest in Gloucester's long history.

Playing against a strong wind in the first half, Gloucester won the first scrum against the head, and restricted the Welsh to a solitary try through scrum-half Billy Hulin. In the second half, with the wind at their backs, Gloucester turned the screw, and the back row of John Watkins, John Haines (Dick Smith was injured) and in particular Mike Potter made life increasingly difficult for the home team.

Eric Stephens kicked a penalty and then Mickey Booth lofted a kick almost to the Welsh try line and Potter was on hand to drive over. Stephens kicked the conversion. London

Welsh fought back but Gloucester were not to be denied and hung on for a glorious 9-4 victory.

The semi-final at Coventry was a hard, bad tempered game, where according to one reporter "fear stalked the pitch". No tries were scored, Eric Stephens kicking a penalty and huge drop goal. The game ended 6-6, and Gloucester went through as the away team. Two days later, Gloucester showed their strength by travelling to Newport and winning 9-3.

Gloucester had reached the final at Twickenham having played all their games away from home, but this game was an anti-climax. Moseley lost Nigel Horton, sent off after five minutes, also suffered injuries, and finished with only 12 men.

Gloucester won 17-6, scoring first half tries through John Dix and Roy Morris. Eric Stephens kicked a penalty, and Mickey Booth and Tom Palmer both dropped goals in the second half.

Eric Stephens finished the season with 102 penalties and 388 points, a club record.