

GLoucester RUGBY HERITAGE

BACK: J. Holder, M. Elway, T. Pritchard, C. Pope, M. Billington, E. Stephens, P. Hawker, D. Wadley (Hon Treasurer), N. Duncafe, T. Tandy (Hon Secretary)

SECOND: R. Morris, M. Nicholls, P. Williams, S. Mills, C. Williams, S. Boyle, J. Simonett, J. Fidler, G. Sargent, V. Wooley, E. Pinkey, Dr. T. Durkin (Hon Club Doctor), Canon M. Hughes (Vice President)

THIRD: D. Dawe (Fixture Secretary), D. Pinton, B. Vine, G. Hudson (Chairman), J. Watkins (Captain), T. Voyce (President), J. Haines, R. Clewes, P. Butler, M. Burton

FRONT: P. Howell, P. Kingston, R. Correia



**GLoucester
RUGBY**

THE CUP REGAINED

1977-78

Captain John Watkins

Played 49
Won 38
Lost 11
For 993
Against 501

Gloucester continued to be a force to be reckoned with throughout the 70's, consistently fielding the most powerful pack in the country. At times, their game was seen, outside Gloucester, to be limited in scope and ambition, in contrast to the more expansive game they played in the 80's, but it was mighty effective. Not least, Gloucester were led by example by a series of outstanding club men who were proud to wear the cherry and white shirt. What marks out 1977-78 from amongst a succession of great seasons is the victory at Twickenham to regain the John Player Cup and the acknowledgement of Gloucester, somewhat grudgingly in some quarters, as England's premier club.

Gloucester embarked on the new season in good shape. Under the captaincy of John Watkins, popular, dedicated and something of a perfectionist, they had scored a record number of points in 1976-77 and toured the USA that summer with great success. They started the season well and by the end of October had won fourteen of the sixteen games played.

Injuries, combined with regional and divisional trials, county calls and a demanding fixture list, now stretched Gloucester to the limit. In a disappointing but understandable end to the year the club suffered eight of the eleven losses incurred in the entire season.

Then began a transformation in fortune. Starting with a 21-9 victory over Moseley on January 2, Gloucester went on to win 20 of their remaining 21 games, losing only one, 12-6 at Abertillery when they rested their cup squad, five days before their quarter final tie away to Wasps. They began the cup campaign four weeks later following wins against Moseley, London Scottish, Leicester and Wasps and never looked back.

After a comfortable 38-6 first round win over Lydney at Kingsholm on January 28, with 17 points from the boot of Peter Butler and tries for Bob Clewes (2), Richard Mogg, Steve Boyle and Viv Wooley, the second round saw Gloucester drawn against holders Gosforth again with home advantage, in front of a 10,000 crowd. This was rightly billed as "Match of the Day" with Gosforth the defending cup-holders



who were going for a hat-trick of titles against Gloucester, the 1971-72 winners, whom they had knocked out the previous year. The match was sweet revenge for Gloucester, who outplayed the holders in every phase of the game to win 19-10, Viv Wooley, Steve Mills and Chris Williams scoring tries with Peter Butler adding two conversions and a penalty.

The quarter final away at Wasps was dominated by the Gloucester pack, notably locks Steve Boyle and John Fidler in the lineout, but illuminated by a magnificent try by Richard Mogg in which Brian Vine, Richard Jardine and Chris Williams all played their part. Viv Wooley scored a well worked try, assisted by John Simonett, and Peter Butler kicked a penalty and conversion in a 13-3 win.

Another away draw in the semi-final, this time at Twickenham, saw Gloucester, six points down at half time against the wind, pin Harlequins in their own half after the interval. Peter Butler kicked two penalties and converted a try by Bob Clewes who beat two men to score in the corner and complete a 12-6 victory.

And so to the final at Twickenham, on 15th April. Gloucester and Leicester were the premier clubs in the country that season and the match was billed in some quarters as a club championship. More than anything it was a clash of styles. Leicester played an expansive game, using their fast and talented backs at every opportunity. Gloucester, although not short of try-scoring backs, were more conservative, basing their game on their mighty pack, the tactical kicking of their half backs and their points-scoring machine Peter Butler. They kept faith with the XV that had started every round of the competition. This was Leicester's first cup final appearance and the sense of anticipation amongst both sets of supporters was immense. A crowd of 24,000 was more than double the previous record for the event and created a vibrant atmosphere in the stadium.

In the end it was Gloucester who triumphed by six points to three in a tense match, disappointing perhaps to the impartial, but greatly appreciated by the partisan. Despite the close scoreline, the Cherry and Whites dominated territory and possession, and scored the only try. Richard

Mogg was the hero of the final, not only scoring Gloucester's try, which Peter Butler converted, but also bringing off a match-saving tackle close to the final whistle.

Commemorative ties (which had been produced before the game!) were presented to the players and the Mayor gave a civic reception for the team in the Guildhall. The cup was paraded at Kingsholm after the final match of the season, which was British Lion Mike Burton's last game, and was held aloft by captain John Watkins and by Burton, the previous club captain, who were carried shoulder high by the players.

The cup success and outstanding run of victories did not go unnoticed. Mike Burton gained two further England caps and at the end of the season, no fewer than six Gloucester players - Richard Mogg, Richard Jardine, Steve Mills, Gordon Sargent, Steve Boyle and John Fidler - were chosen to tour Romania with England B. Paul Howell was described by Peter Robbins in his review of the English season as "by far and away the most impressive scrum half" he had seen and John Fidler "still the best uncapped lock".