

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: THE GLOUCESTER v WORCESTER DERBY MATCH



Billy Burns

A BIT OF HISTORY

Although Gloucester and Worcester met twice on Worcester's ground in 1877 and 1881, it was over a hundred years before the two clubs played their third match, a fourth round encounter in the Tetley Bitter Cup at Kingsholm in January 1999. For most of this time, the relative status of the clubs had kept them apart, with Gloucester's fixture list featuring the best clubs in England and Wales, while Worcester had a more parochial and less demanding fixture list.

All this had changed by the 1990's, however, as Worcester, driven forward by the financial backing of businessman Cecil Duckworth and a grant of £1.3 million pounds from the Lottery Fund, improved their facilities and their performance on and off the field, went rocketing up the leagues. By 1998-99 they were lying third in Allied Dunbar Premiership Division 2 (now the Championship) and they gave Gloucester a few anxious moments in that first-ever visit to Kingsholm (at 18-17 the match was in the balance) before the home team pulled away to win 31-17.



David Halaifonua

THE DERBY GAME

Worcester finally made the breakthrough into the top tier of English Rugby in 2004 under the direction of former Gloucester forward John Brain and today will be the 27th Premiership game between the two clubs. The matches quickly became typical derby games – often tense hard-fought dogfights – and we can expect the same today. Four of the 26 games have been drawn (an unusually high proportion) and twelve losing bonus points have been won. Let's go back today and look at some of those desperately close games.



Henry Trinder

SEPTEMBER 4 2005, SIXWAYS, WORCESTER 15 GLOUCESTER 15

After Gloucester had completed a fairly comfortable double in Worcester's first season in the Premiership, they met determined opposition at the start of the following season in a Worcester pack that dominated the scrums and held their own throughout. The fact that two heavyweight packs virtually cancelled each other out did not make for pretty rugby for the impartial observer and a score of five Brown penalty goals to Worcester, countering four penalties and a dropped goal from the siege-gun boot of Ludovic Mercier for Gloucester tells its own story. Nevertheless, for the faithful it was a tense and gripping, if ultimately frustrating, derby dogfight.

JANUARY 2 2010, KINGSHOLM, GLOUCESTER 13 WORCESTER 13

Gloucester created all the chances in the second half of this match but failed to take them and Worcester, with heroic defence and an outstanding display from Australian World Cup-winning full back Chris Latham, held on for a draw. Deservedly leading 13-5 at half time, Worcester appeared to attempt to sit on their lead, a policy which should have cost them dear, but for Gloucester handling errors. Gloucester finally drew level through a Dave Attwood try with just 15 seconds remaining on the clock, but Carlos Spencer missed the conversion and the spoils were shared.

MAY 8 2010, SIXWAYS, WORCESTER 22 GLOUCESTER 23

Worcester were already down, having lost their relegation battle with Leeds Carnegie the week before, when they took on Gloucester in the final

match of the season at Sixways. In an exciting and entertaining first half, Chris Pennell scored first for Worcester after a good move begun by fly half Joe Carlisle. Chris Latham, playing in his last game for Worcester, then had a try disallowed and Gloucester came back to take the lead through a Nicky Robinson penalty and an Akapusi Qera try. When Lesley Vainikolo went over in the corner, Gloucester increased their lead to 13-8. Back came Worcester through an interception try by Alex Grove to go into half time 15-13 ahead. Third quarter changes took the intensity out of both sides and the game became scrappy, Gloucester finally going ahead through a Nicky Robinson penalty. The last ten minutes then provided a grandstand finish. First Scott Lawson scored a try for Gloucester which was converted by Robinson and then, fittingly, Latham scored in the dying minutes to leave Worcester agonisingly close, perhaps summing up their whole season.

**SEPTEMBER 15 2012, SIXWAYS,
WORCESTER 16 GLOUCESTER 16**

Warriors' chances of a first home win of the season disappeared in a dramatic finish at Sixways when Freddie Burns, who had come on as a replacement for Gloucester, kicked a penalty in the dying moments to secure a barely deserved 16-16 draw. It had seemed that Andy Goode, who had an excellent game, had secured victory for the home side two minutes earlier after Jim Hamilton, the Gloucester captain, had pushed James Percival in the lineout, but Burns who had replaced Mike Tindall, kept his nerve amid tremendous tension, to slot the ball between the posts. Gloucester had led 6-3 at the interval, thanks to penalties from Billy Twelvetrees. In the second half both sides scored tries, Gloucester's try coming from Henry Trinder.

**OCTOBER 31 2015, KINGSHOLM,
GLOUCESTER 24 WORCESTER 22**

Gloucester dominated the match up front but Worcester would not lie down and their determined challenge made this one of the best and certainly one of the most exciting matches between the two sides. Gloucester went ahead within two minutes of the start when an excellent kick by James Hook gave them a lineout from which Richard Hibbard

drove over. From the restart, however, Cooper Vuna intercepted a pass from Bill Meakes for a simple run in and the conversion put the visitors in front. Following a penalty from Twelvetrees to regain the lead, Meakes, Jonny May and Billy Twelvetrees all handled slickly to create a try for Sione Kalamafoni. Twelvetrees missed the conversion but kicked a penalty to give Gloucester a 16-7 lead after twenty minutes. A penalty from Ryan Mills reduced the arrears before hooker Annett went over. The conversion briefly restored Worcester's lead before a long distance penalty from Twelvetrees, rebounding in off the post, gave Gloucester a 19-17 lead at the end of a breathtaking first half. An excellent movement from deep inside their own half enabled Pennell to send in Cooper Vuna for his second try and Worcester had regained the lead. Billy Burns came on for Gloucester and galvanised the attack, his second clean break sending in Halaifonua for the try which retook the lead. The match ended with the visitor's Nick Schonert yellow-carded and Gloucester bombarding the visitor's line, but they held firm, denying Gloucester the bonus point.

**SEPTEMBER 9 2016, SIXWAYS,
WORCESTER 23 GLOUCESTER 23**

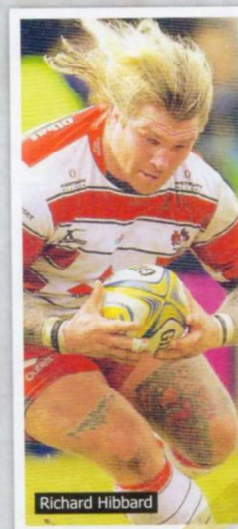
This match came just one week after Gloucester's 38-31 defeat by Leicester at Kingsholm, where they had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, and in some ways was equally hard to take. Although the visitors came back from 11 points down after Faosiliva had been shown a red card with 50 minutes on the clock, their supporters were left with the feeling that this was a match that they should have won. 20-9 down at that stage, they had dominated for long stretches of the game, but had been unable to find a way through a Worcester defence that had scored three tries to nil on the counter-attack, three Laidlaw penalties being Gloucester's only reward. Now they took advantage of the extra man and first Matt Scott was sent under the posts by Mark Atkinson and, after a Heathcote penalty for the Warriors, Purdy finished a glorious move in the corner, Laidlaw's conversion levelling the scores. There was still time for Gloucester to lay siege to the Worcester line, but they hung on bravely for the draw.



Jonny May



Ludovic Mercier



Richard Hibbard