

CUP TIES AND NEEDLE MATCHES

GLOUCESTER V NEWCASTLE

A LOOK BACK AT THREE OF THE GREAT MATCHES BETWEEN GLOUCESTER AND NEWCASTLE - BUT FIRST, A BIT OF HISTORY...

The original Gosforth Football Club was founded in 1877 by a group of Old Boys of Durham School, who met in a private house in the Gosforth suburb of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to discuss the formation of a new rugby club in the area. The club played in the Durham School colours of green and white hoops throughout the amateur era.

For many years the premier club of North East England, supplying players to county, regional and international sides, Gosforth enjoyed great success and national recognition in the 1970s with the introduction of a club knockout competition, winning the John Player Cup in 1975-76 and retaining it in 1976-77, their centenary season. On the way to the final that year they played Gloucester for the first time, winning 3-0 in a home quarter-final, the first of four cup ties played between the two clubs in the amateur era, honours being even, two wins apiece.

The club moved to their present home at Kingston Park in 1990 and the name was changed to Newcastle Gosforth. Placed in National League Division II, when the John Courage Leagues were formed in 1987-88, Newcastle Gosforth gained promotion in 1992-93 and played Gloucester home

and away, drawing 12-all at home and losing 15-9 at Kingsholm before being relegated after one season.

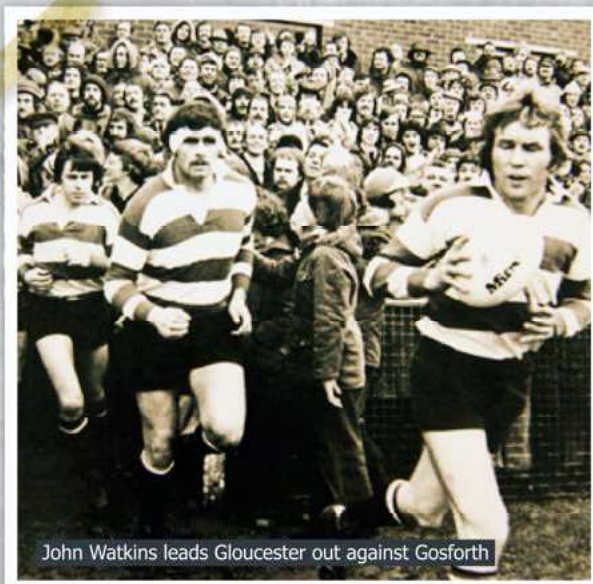
Then, with the onset of professionalism in 1996-97, everything changed. Local businessman Sir John Hall took control of the club with the vision of creating a multi-sports club, comprising football, basketball, ice hockey and rugby union. The club split into professional Newcastle (in their new black and white strip) and amateur Gosforth (who retained the traditional green and white), Newcastle were promoted to the top flight and the following year, with Rob Andrew as Director of Rugby and Dean Ryan as captain, won the inaugural Allied Dunbar Premiership as Newcastle Falcons.

GLOUCESTER 19 GOSFORTH 10 JOHN PLAYER CUP 2ND ROUND 25 FEBRUARY 1978

Gosforth came to Kingsholm for this second round tie, aiming to win the cup for the third successive season. Gloucester, under the captaincy of John Watkins, were enjoying one of their most successful seasons and were eager to avenge their quarter-final defeat at Gosforth the previous year. The stage was set for an epic contest in front of over 10,000 fans.

Gloucester opened the scoring in the tenth minute when scrum half Paul Howell made a blind-side break, feeding the ball to wing Bob Clewes who kicked ahead. The defending full back slipped in attempting to gather the ball, and back row Viv Wooley went over for an opportunistic try, full back Peter Butler converting. Butler added a penalty and, with Gosforth missing a series of penalties, Gloucester led 9-0 at half time.

Gosforth started the second half strongly and only a last ditch tackle by wing Richard Mogg prevented a try. Back came Gloucester and a move involving Howell and Watkins saw hooker Steve Mills go over in the corner. The score was 13-0, but Gosforth



John Watkins leads Gloucester out against Gosforth

were still in the game and further penalty kicks were awarded – and missed. The coup de grace was delivered when a dummy run by Howell created a break by his outside half Chris Williams who went all the way to score between the posts, Butler converting. Gosforth, to their credit, kept going to the end and consolation tries were scored by Moor and Robinson, leaving the visitors to rue what might have been.



Mark Mapletoft, who kicked 17 points

GLoucester 27 Newcastle Falcons 29 ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 11 APRIL 1998

Gloucester, fresh from their victory over Bedford in the final of the C & G cup, welcomed premierships leaders Newcastle Falcons to a packed Kingsholm for a pulsating and controversial encounter.

A Rob Andrew penalty goal opened the scoring but then Gloucester went into a ten point lead through two penalty goals from Mark Mapletoft and a try by Philippe Saint André, following a Mapletoft tapped penalty. Controversy came in the 34th minute when referee John Pearson ran round the scrum to award a premature penalty try against Gloucester, following the entreaties of outside half Rob Andrew, although the lowering scrum appeared to be still up. Andrew, belying his 35 years, then rubbed salt into the wound by beating Mapletoft, and despite tripping, bouncing over the line for a try which he converted.

Gloucester dominated the second half territorially. After Mapletoft converted an early penalty, they regained the lead through a splendid try by Steve Ojomoh, twisting and turning the Falcons' defence, which had tested the offside law throughout the game, before Saint André on the wrong wing sent Ojomoh charging through Tait's tackle to make the score 21-17 after 47 minutes. Andrew regained the lead for the Falcons four minutes later with his second try, following a line-out feed from Dean Ryan, which he converted. A further Mapletoft penalty levelled the scores 24-24 before Walton scored what turned out to be the winning try with the touch judge furiously flagging offside and half the Gloucester defence watching the official rather than the ball. A further Mapletoft penalty brought the score back to 27-29. In the last seconds his 30metre dropped goal attempt to win the match

just sailed past the upright. A vital win for Falcons but a huge morale-boosting performance from the Gloucester pack.

GLoucester 41 Newcastle Falcons 32 ZURICH PREMIERSHIP 17 OCTOBER 1998

Six months later and a new season...

"It was" to quote David Hands, The Times rugby correspondent, "a day from which the players of both sides can take pride and pleasure." Steve Lander, the referee, placed the match in "the top three of my career" and Richard Hill, Gloucester's Director of Rugby, was prompted to ponder "Why can't it be like that every week?"

Ian Sanders had been promoted to scrum half ahead of Scott Benton with a brief to move possession to Simon Mannix as quickly as possible and the play worked to perfection. At full back, the 22 year-old Chris Catling had the game of his life in front of England coach Clive Woodward, running smoothly out of defence to score a hat-trick of tries, and displaying his bravery under the high ball. In the pack Steve Ojomoh was equally outstanding.

Gloucester stated their intentions from the beginning and were rewarded by early tries from Saint André and Catling with the rampaging Gloucester pack dominating the first quarter. Back came Newcastle, with centre Va'aiga Tuigamala and backrow Peter Walton outstanding in an onslaught that produced 17 points in a seven minute burst and the home side found themselves 16-25 down at half-time.

Against the wind, however, Newcastle were penned back in their own half and two tries within two minutes, scored on the hour by Audley Lumsden and Chris Catling, shaped the result. Both chances were created by the strength and speed of Saint André. The Falcons were not finished, however, and a try by Jonny Wilkinson, which he converted, brought the score back to 34-32. It was only four minutes from time when Chris Catling made the game safe with his third try, after fine approach work from Steve Ojomoh, bringing the curtain down on a match to remember.



Steve Ojomoh on the charge against the Falcons