

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

WASPS AND GLOUCESTER ARE BOTH VERY OLD CLUBS

The Gloucester Club will be celebrating its 150th anniversary next year, with the first game having been played on 4th October 1873. Our opponents today have an even longer history, being founded in 1867. At the time in London it was the fashion to give teams exotic names such as Flamingoes, Harlequins, Mohicans, Hornets and Wasps.

When a meeting was called in 1871 which resulted in the formation of the Rugby Football Union, Wasps were invited. However, the story goes that the Wasps representative went to the wrong pub, clearly liked the beer there, and never turned up at the correct venue. So, Wasps missed out on the opportunity of being a founder member of the RFU, but had signed up by 1872.

The captain of the Flamingoes, Frank Hartley, did go to the meeting, became a member of the first RFU committee, and helped to draw up the laws of the game. Two years later he came to work in Gloucester, was the driving force behind the formation of the Gloucester Club, and became captain for the first three seasons.

For many years, Wasps played a restricted and local fixture list on a variety of rented pitches, starting in Hampstead. They played their first match at Primrose Hill. Black and gold have been their colours throughout. The club did not settle down until 1923 when they moved to Sudbury and a few years later bought the ground there.

Temporary player arrangements during the Second World War saw several internationals turn out for Wasps, and a stronger and larger playing membership was retained after the war. Unlike Gloucester, who only ever ran two teams and relied on a close relationship with local junior clubs, Wasps were running ten teams by this time. They sought to strengthen their fixture list, and secured a fixture against Gloucester.

Gloucester-Wasps Fixtures

This first encounter between the clubs was at Kingsholm on 19th October 1946, when Gloucester won 8-5. Charlie Crabtree scored Gloucester's first try, but the match was not won until near the end when a young Ken Daniell "captured an opponent's pass, cut through finely, and raced away to the fullback, when he punted ahead and over the line to score a grand try near the posts", which Bill Hook converted.



The following season, Gloucester visited Sudbury for the first time and won 17-0, with Crabtree and Daniell again scoring tries, whilst Willie Jones added a try, a dropped goal and two conversions.

The clubs then played once a season, alternately home and away. Gloucester had much the better of the results for some 40 years, although, in 1961, Gloucester visited Wasps and lost 6-10, but it seems their minds were not focused on the game, the referee explaining that “the match was played 35 minutes each way at the request of the Gloucester skipper who stated on arrival that they wished to catch an early train home”.

Wasps had to wait until 1988 for their first win at Kingsholm, at the fifteenth attempt, in a match which controversially doubled as both a John Player Cup game and as the first League match between the clubs. In January 1990 Gloucester had a stirring win, 23-19 at Sudbury in the Pilkington Cup. Tim Smith had a fantastic game, and kicked three penalties and two conversions. John Gadd and Jim Breeze scored tries, before Richard Mogg scored the winning try with 90 seconds left on the clock, and Tim Smith converted from the touch line. The Times said of Gloucester, “their red-blooded assaults, launched from almost every corner of the pitch, helped produce one of the most exciting cup games seen at Sudbury in years.”

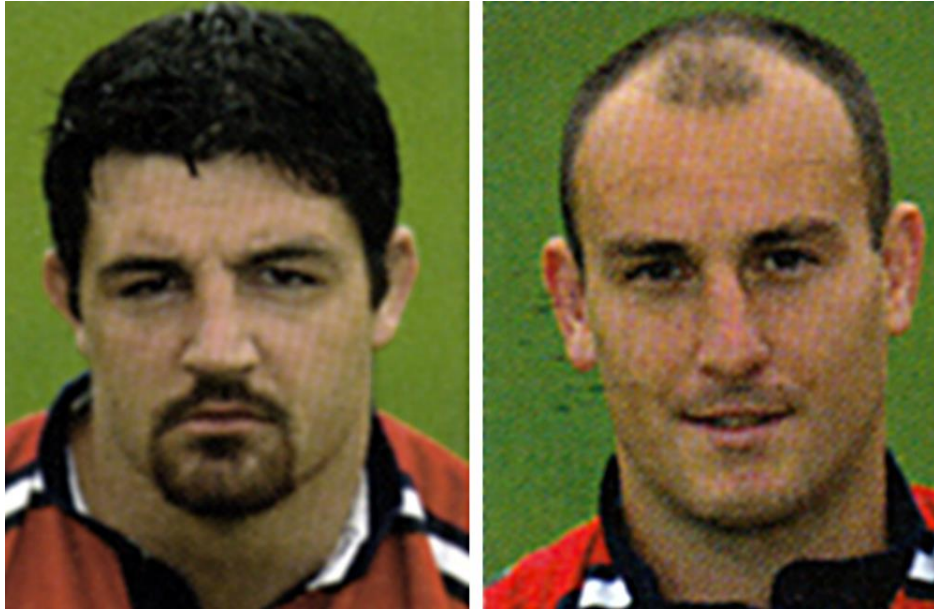


However, on the final day of that season, Wasps won against Saracens whilst Gloucester were losing at Nottingham, which gave the title to Wasps rather than Gloucester. Indeed, the introduction of leagues, followed a few years later by professional rugby, reversed the fortunes of the clubs, with Wasps having the upper hand for the next thirty years. Only in the last four seasons have Gloucester had the better of things again.

Professional rugby saw Wasps returning to a peripatetic existence, moving from Sudbury to the Queens Park Rangers ground at Loftus Road in 1996, then to the Wycombe Wanderers ground at Adams Park in 2002, and most recently to the Ricoh Arena at the end of 2014.

Some Statistics

The biggest win by Gloucester has been 43-13 at Kingsholm in November 2001, with Ollie Azam scoring two tries and Ludo Mercier scoring 15 points. The biggest win by Wasps has been 39-3 in the Zurich Final at Twickenham in May 2003, a shocking end to the season for Gloucester when they had finished 15 points clear at the top of the league.



Overall the record between the clubs is very even – of 107 matches, Gloucester have won 54 and scored 2004 points, while Wasps have won 51 and scored 2096 points. Of the 51 matches played at Kingsholm, Gloucester have won 38 and Wasps 11, with two drawn.