

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

GLOUCESTER V HARLEQUINS

Quins go back a long way

The Harlequins club was founded in 1866 as Hampstead Football Club, and played their first game in 1867. They played in black and gold. But a dispute resulted in the club splitting. Half of the membership left to form a new club which would become Wasps and retain the black and gold colours. The remaining club decided to change its name in 1870 because many of the members were no longer from Hampstead, but wanted to keep their HFC monogram, and so they came up with Harlequin FC, and adopted their distinctive quartered jerseys. They were one of the founding members of the RFU in 1871.

During its first 40 years Harlequins was a peripatetic club, playing on 15 different grounds, but when a new national ground was opened at Twickenham, they were invited to use it for their club matches, and it quickly became the Club's headquarters.

The start of fixtures with Gloucester

Gloucester were delighted to secure their first fixture against Harlequins on 29th March 1913 at Kingsholm, and regarded it as the match of the season. Harlequins boasted a fearsome three-quarter line, containing four internationals including Ronnie Poulton, about to become England captain, Adrian Stoop, after whom the present Harlequins ground is named, John Birkett, who scored the first try for England at Twickenham, and Douglas Lambert, who scored five tries on debut for England.



Lionel Hamblin



Arthur Hudson

Both sides had an A. Hudson on the wing, but it was the Harlequins Hudson who opened the scoring with a try, which Lambert converted. Lionel Hamblin responded with

a wonderful try, which he converted, and before half-time Gloucester took the lead when their A. Hudson, Arthur, pounced on a fumble and raced over for a try. The only score of the second half came when Poulton cut a lovely line to run in under the posts, but the conversion kick was charged down. So the match ended in an 8-8 draw, with the visitors having had the better of it in the backs, and Gloucester amongst the forwards.

The following season, Gloucester visited Twickenham for the first time, and were definite underdogs in what was again regarded as their most important game of the season. Gloucester rose to the occasion, kept Harlequins pointless, and Lionel Hamblin dropped two fine goals in the second half to win 8-0. "Twas a famous victory – they had the 'Quins beaten everywhere" exulted The Citizen.

The Great War then intervened, during which Ronnie Poulton played alongside ten Gloucester players in a famous match behind the British lines at Nieppe. Unfortunately, neither Poulton, nor two of the Gloucester players, Sydney Sysum and Sydney Millard, survived the war.

For three seasons after the war the teams met only at Twickenham, but Gloucester won each time. Harlequins did not manage their first win until 1924-25 at Twickenham, and their first win at Kingsholm the following season. Thereafter the teams normally met once a season, alternately home and away, until the advent of league rugby.

Cup success



Steve Boyle



Bob Clewes



Eddie Pinkney

The clubs first met in cup rugby in December 1976 at the Stoop in the John Player Cup. Gloucester won 17-9 with tries from Steve Boyle, Bob Clewes and Eddie Pinkney. The following season they met in the semi-final at Twickenham in April 1978, when Gloucester won 12-6, Bob Clewes scoring the only try of the match. Two weeks later Gloucester returned to Twickenham to defeat Leicester 6-3 in the final.

A statistical summary

Harlequins had a run of nine consecutive victories in the second half of the 1990s, and have the opportunity to match that sequence today, having won the last eight matches, and indeed 12 of the 14 played in the last seven seasons.

The biggest winning margin came in 1996, 'Quins winning 75-19 in a league game, when Richard Hill decided to send a second team to be slaughtered, including young Phil Vickery in only his second game for the Club. Gloucester's best has been 46-6 in another league game in 2010, Sinbad scoring a hat trick, and only six days earlier Gloucester came back from 0-20 to win 31-29 in an LV Cup game at the Stoop with Sinbad scoring twice.



Overall, Gloucester are still ahead with 66 victories against 60 defeats from the 131 matches played to date, although Harlequins have the advantage 2339-2244 in points scored. But home ground advantage weighs quite heavily – Gloucester have won 43 and lost 21 of the 65 matches played at Kingsholm.