

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

Our Oldest Opponents

The Bath club was founded in 1865 by members of Lansdown Cricket Club “for something to do in the winter”, so predates the Gloucester club by eight years. Bath was a nomadic club for almost thirty years, until a lease was taken out on the “Rec”, where Bath played their first game in 1894, three years after Gloucester had moved to Kingsholm. Amongst the Premiership clubs, Bath are our oldest opponent, the clubs having first met at the Spa, Gloucester, on 2nd December 1882.

Gloucester Reign Supreme



George Coates

Gloucester won that first match by three goals and three tries to nil, George Coates scoring a hat trick of tries. Two weeks later a return match was played at Bath, and Gloucester won again by one goal and two tries to one try. These wins came during the only unbeaten season in Gloucester’s history, when the team were dubbed “The Invincibles”. The following season, Gloucester travelled to Bath early in the season and won by the massive margin of 5 goals and 12 tries to nil. Back at the Spa for the return match, Gloucester managed a mere 2 goals and 6 tries, with Coates scoring 5 of them.

Bath came very close to emulating Gloucester’s Invincibles season in 1885-86, the best in Bath’s history, when they won 17, drew two and lost one. That solitary loss was to Gloucester, who won by three goals to nil at the Spa, and later in the season came away from Bath with a draw. George Coates, Bath’s early nemesis, scored in both matches.

In fact, Gloucester’s dominance lasted for many a year. Of the first 45 fixtures between the clubs, Gloucester won 39 and the other six were drawn. It was not until 1922, forty

years after the first match, that Bath registered a win, 9-6 at Bath. Victory at Gloucester was even more elusive – Bath finally winning there, 5-3 in 1938, at their 39th attempt and after 56 years of trying.

A Tragic Connection – Unlucky Number 13

Clifford and Oscar Walwin were brothers born and bred in Gloucester. Oscar played several games for Gloucester just before the First World War, during which he died for his country in the fighting on the Somme. Clifford did not play for Gloucester, but returned from the war to play rugby for Bath. Tragically, he was injured, and subsequently died, whilst playing for Bath against Cross Keys in 1919. As a mark of respect, the Bath Club withdrew the number 13 jersey which he had been wearing. Supporters of a certain vintage may recall Bath playing without a 13 jersey, and their fullback wearing number 16. This tradition lasted for some 80 years, but did not survive for long in the professional era.

First Cup Match



Mike Nicholls



Eric Stephens

Matches became more competitive after the Second World War, but Gloucester still generally had the better of it. When the first national cup competition was introduced in 1971-72, Gloucester were drawn away at Bath in the first round. Hastily arranged on a Thursday evening, it was the first cup match played in England. It was perhaps not the greatest advertisement for cup rugby with not a try to be seen, the highlight being Mike Nicholls, Gloucester's captain and hooker, taking seven strikes against the head in the scrums. Gloucester won 12-3, all their points kicked by Eric Stephens, and went on to win 17-6 in the final at Twickenham against Moseley, having been drawn away in every round. The clubs were drawn together again in the first round the following season, when Gloucester won 16-0.

The Worm Turned

League rugby started in 1987-88 and for the first twenty years results were very much in favour of Bath. Indeed, Gloucester did not win a league game at Bath until their eighteenth attempt in 2008.

Overall Record

To date the teams have met 245 times, Gloucester winning 140 and Bath 82, with Gloucester scoring 3457 points and Bath 2765. At home, Gloucester have won 89 and lost 25.

Gloucester's two biggest wins both came at Kingsholm and in the same recent season, 2021-22. In the Premiership Cup, Gloucester racked up eleven tries, including a hat trick by Ben Morgan, and ran out 71-10 winners. A few months later in the Premiership, they triumphed 64-0 with ten tries spread across nine scorers. Our biggest loss was also quite recent - in the Premiership Cup in 2019, Bath won 52-0 at the Rec.

