

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION
COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP
FINAL



MIDDLESEX
VERSUS
GLOUCESTERSHIRE



RICHMOND ATHLETIC GROUND
RICHMOND, SURREY

SATURDAY, 27th MARCH, 1976
KICK-OFF 3.15 P.M.

Official Programme 20p

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL 1976

Middlesex

versus

Gloucestershire

County Officials

MIDDLESEX

President: R. Storry Deans

Hon. Secretary: M. J. Christie

Hon. Asst. Secretary: A. T. White

Hon. Treasurer: W. M. D. Lewis

Hon. Asst. Treasurer: E. V. Barnes

Hon. Team Secretary: C. J. W. Madge

Hon. Asst. Team Secretary: J. W. Towers

Immediate Past President: B. F. Boyden

Selectors:

W. G. Macdonald (*Chairman*), J. S. Ritchie, P. W. Sykes, P. G. Yarranton

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

President: J. S. Marsh

Vice-President: S. T. Day

Hon. Secretary: G. E. Wright

Hon. Treasurer: K. J. Cottle

Hon. Team & Match Secretary: D. J. Walter

Immediate Past President: J. V. Smith

Selectors:

S. T. Day, G. Cullimore, M. J. Pegler, E. J. Parfitt,
G. E. Wright, D. J. Walter

Middlesex looks forward to the County Championship

By BARRY NEWCOMBE (Evening Standard)

CHRIS RALSTON, born in Hendon, is playing in his third County Championship Final for Middlesex today – not a staggering achievement for the Gloucestershire players who have had seven finals in succession in which to earn honours, but remarkable just the same because Ralston spans 11 seasons of Championship rugby.

Any assessment of Middlesex must include a proper tribute to the part played by Ralston over the years (today is his 49th Championship game). He was still playing second team rugby for Richmond when Middlesex first spotted him in 1965 and at the end of that season he played in his first final – a 6-nil win over Lancashire at Blundellsands.

"I enjoyed that first season with Middlesex more than any other. It was a breakthrough for me and I learned a lot from players like Vic Harding who knew so much and were prepared to pass it on. Jimmy Ritchie ran the show in those days and I remember that we all wanted to do well for Jimmy – it was really as simple as that", he recalls.

"My second final was in 1968 when we beat Warwickshire at Twickenham 9-6. It was a cold Saturday in March and there weren't many people at Twickenham and that final lacked the atmosphere of the first I played in. Now we have another chance in the final and it has been a long time coming".

The County Championship is often criticised because of its structure and many would like to see it replaced in the hope of bringing about some improvement in England's International football, but Chris Ralston sincerely believes County rugby is a stepping stone to the top – it has taken him into the England side and the 1974 British Lions' tour party to South Africa.

"One of the reasons I enjoy playing for Middlesex now is because they did a lot for me in the past", he says. "Most of the players feel the same way. Playing with a side like Middlesex is a stepping stone and it took me in the right direction. It is a level above Club rugby when you play for Middlesex and it is different from playing Club rugby".

The question of identity with an area is something the London County sides may lack but Ralston says this is not true of the Middlesex side. "It is difficult to compare us with Gloucestershire, whose players have so much local connection, but we play to win and we play as a team and everyone has pulled their finger out to get some continuity into our play. Everyone gets on well together, the Committee and the players want to do well. Alan Friell has done a good job as Captain and we have players who want to go forward and wings who want to score tries".

Ralston's long service for Middlesex makes him the big daddy of the side – only Les Barlow, Tony Boddy and Andy Ripley of the current squad have come through with him from the last meeting with Gloucestershire, the semi-final stage in 1972. Barlow has 25 Caps for Middlesex, Ripley 23, and Captain Friell holds 21.

There is no argument with Gloucestershire's record. They come here today as a side used to winning, a side of total understanding and a full back in Peter Butler who hits over penalties with such regularity that Gloucestershire owe him an enormous debt for their success.

Middlesex and Gloucestershire have never met in a final but there have been eight semi-final meetings; 1902 at Richmond, 1925 in Gloucestershire, 1930 at Twickenham, 1947 in Gloucestershire, 1949 at Twickenham followed by a replay in Gloucestershire, 1954 at Twickenham and 1972 at Richmond. The only Middlesex win was in 1954 by 9-6.

This season Middlesex have been a free scoring side with their abilities spread through the team. This gives them many options in attack and puts the onus on them today to set the pace. Gloucestershire seem to rely on dominating up front and letting Butler's boot do the rest – a method employed by Warwickshire and George Cole when they had a major say in the Championship back in the Sixties.

Today is another opportunity for someone to write themselves into the record books in this 75th year of County rugby, and whatever the outcome, Chris Ralston has already set a record of his own.

MIDDLESEX

Colours: Blue and White Hoops, Blue Shorts

- 15 D. F. WHIBLEY (Richmond)
- 14 C. W. LAMBERT (Harlequins)
- 13 †G. A. BIRKETT (London Scottish)
- 12 A. P. FRIELL (Captain) (London Scottish)
- 11 H. E. REES (Borough Road College)

- 10 †R. WILSON (London Scottish)
- 9 †A. J. M. LAWSON (London Scottish)

- 1 R. L. BARLOW (Rosslyn Park)
- 2 G. G. BIGNELL (Wasps)
- 3 B. J. ADAM (Wasps)
- 4 †R. W. J. WRIGHT (London Scottish)
- 5 †C. W. RALSTON (Richmond)
- 6 A. ALEXANDER (Harlequins)
- 8 †A. G. RIPLEY (Rosslyn Park)
- 7 R. J. MORDELL (Rosslyn Park)

REPLACEMENTS:

- 16 P. A. TRESEDER (Rosslyn Park)
- 17 A. W. HILL (Moseley)
- 18 P. CRERAR (London Scottish)
- 19 A. V. BODDY (Richmond)
- 20 M. F. CLAXTON (Harlequins)
- 21 K. BOWRING (Borough Road College)

Touch Judge: D. O. SPYER (London Society)

SATURDAY 27th MARCH 1976
KICK-OFF 3.15 P.M.

FULL BACKS

THREEQUARTERS

RIGHT WING

RIGHT CENTRE

LEFT CENTRE

LEFT WING

HALF BACKS

STAND-OFF

SCRUM-HALF

FORWARDS

PROP

HOOKER

PROP

LOCK

LOCK

BLIND-SIDE

NO. 8

OPEN-SIDE

Referee:

Mr. K. A. Pattinson
(North Midlands)

† International

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Colours: White

- 15 †P. E. BUTLER (Gloucester)

- 14 R. J. CLEWES (Gloucester)
- 13 J. A. BAYLISS (Captain) (Gloucester)
- 12 C. J. WILLIAMS (Bristol)
- 11 †A. J. MORLEY (Bristol)

- 10 C. G. WILLIAMS (Gloucester)
- 9 P. KINGSTON (Gloucester)

- 1 †B. G. NELMES (Cardiff)
- 2 †J. V. PULLIN (Bristol)
- 3 †M. A. BURTON (Gloucester)
- 4 J. H. FIDLER (Gloucester)
- 5 R. A. POWELL (Llanelli)
- 6 †J. A. WATKINS (Gloucester)
- 8 †D. M. ROLLITT (Bristol)
- 7 M. RAFTER (Bristol)

REPLACEMENTS:

- 16 D. SORRELL (Bristol)
- 17 R. R. MOGG (Gloucester)
- 18 J. A. CANNON (Clifton)
- 19 K. PHELPS (Bristol)
- 20 A. TROUGHTON (Bristol)
- 21 J. H. HAINES (Gloucester)

Touch Judge: V. D. PROTHERO (Gloucester)

The County Union is indebted to Messrs. Gilbert of Rugby who have generously presented the ball for today's match

The Gloucestershire Players

PETER EDWARD BUTLER (Gloucester)

Full Back. Age 24. In only his fourth season in first-class rugby, and was the country's leading points scorer for three years. Generally recognised as the "king of place-kickers". Educated at Crypt School and Birmingham University, where he was rugby captain. Played for U.A.U. Production Controller in the chemical industry. Was capped for England against Australia last summer and played for England against France last Saturday.

ROBERT CLEWES (Gloucester)

Right Wing. Age 26. Height 5' 10". Weight 11st. 7lb. Contracts Manager with a building firm. Married. Regular choice for Gloucester since 1968. Played in the Final against Warwickshire in 1971-72.

JOHN ALEXANDER BAYLISS (Gloucester)

Centre. Age 34 this month. The Gloucestershire skipper. Has also led England in a Youth International. Numerous injuries in a long career, including a broken neck three years ago. First played for Gloucestershire in 1961. Stylish batsman in senior club cricket. He and his wife have a greengrocery business.

CHRISTOPHER JOHN WILLIAMS (Bristol)

Centre Threequarter. Age 25. Height 5' 10". Weight 12½ stone. Aero Engineer. Married. England Schools, played for Western Counties v. the All Blacks, and for S.W. Counties v. Australia.

ALAN JOHN GEORGE MORLEY (Bristol)

Wing. Age 25. Current England winger. Began rugby career with Bristol at age of 18 and has scored more than 125 tries for his club. Toured South Africa twice - with England in 1972 and with the British Lions in 1974. Has scored over 20 tries for Gloucestershire. Toured Australia with England in 1975. Qualified Valuer and Auctioneer with Clifton company.

CHRISTOPHER GARETH WILLIAMS (Gloucester)

Outside half. Age 25. His partnership with Peter Kingston for Lydney Grammar School, Lydney, England Schools and St. Paul's College became practically a legend in the north and west of the County. A Flying Officer, Chris has also played for the Royal Air Force and the Combined Services. Won his first England Cap against France last Saturday.

PETER KINGSTON (Gloucester)

Scrum-half. Age 24. A few months younger than his partner, he played in all of Gloucestershire's matches last season. In 1974 played in the County Championship for North Midlands while living in the area. Formerly played for St. Paul's College, Lydney and Moseley before joining Gloucester last season on taking an appointment in Swindon. Capped for England against Australia last summer. Schoolteacher.

BARRY GEORGE NELMES (Cardiff)

Prop. Age 27. Essentially a Bristol player, becoming an "exile" when he moved to Cardiff in the course of his employment. "Disappeared" from the first-class rugby scene for nearly two years, but returned to display all his old skills. Represented the Western Counties against three touring counties and the South of England against the All Blacks. Capped for England against Australia last summer. A Sales Representative.

JOHN VIVIAN PULLIN (Bristol)

Hooker. Age 34. Height 5' 11". Weight 14st. 7lb. Farmer. Married. Holder of the record number of England Caps - 42. Toured Australia with England, 1975. Made seven appearances for British Lions; three v. South Africa and four v. New Zealand.

MICHAEL ALAN BURTON (Gloucester)

Prop. Age 30. The current England prop and a British Lion. A member of the England party who toured Australia in 1975. Has also represented Berkshire, the county of his birth, in the Championship. An irrepressible character; not only knows all the rucker songs, but says he wrote the majority in his odd moments. Product of a local school, Longlevens. An oil company Sales Representative.

JOHN HOWARD FIDLER (Gloucester)

Lock. Age 27. A police officer. "Big John" began his rugby career with Cheltenham. Played for England in a National Association of Boys' Clubs' International match against Wales. Has figured in area trials and currently bidding for higher honours.

ROGER ANTHONY POWELL (Llanelli)

Lock. Age 29. Weight 16st. 7lb. Height 6' 4". Oil company Commercial Representative. Married. The first Englishman to play for Llanelli in thirty years.

JOHN ARTHUR WATKINS (Gloucester)

Flanker. Age 28. The "blonde bombshell" of England rugby, as he has been called, won his first Cap against South Africa four years ago. Like John Haines is a product of that first-class rugby nursery, Gordon League. He holds the Gloucester club record of the most tries (20) scored in one season by a forward. A Machinist.

DAVID MALCOLM ROLLITT (Bristol)

No. 8. Celebrated his 33rd birthday on Wednesday. An England flanker. His hair turned prematurely grey as a teenager. Born in Yorkshire, educated at Barnsley Holgate Grammar School. Played for Wakefield, Loughborough Colleges, Bristol University, U.A.U. and Barbarians before taking up post in Bristol. Has skipped Bristol, Gloucestershire and South-West Counties. Was a member of the England touring party to Australia in 1975. A Schoolteacher.

MICHAEL RAFTER (Bristol)

Flanker. Age 23. Height 5' 11". Weight 14st. 3lb. Schoolteacher. Single. Played for Devon when at St. Luke's College. Appeared for England Under 23, also Western Counties against Australia.

DAVID PHILLIP SORRELL (Bristol)

Outside half. Age 20. Height 6'. Weight 12st. 4lb. Heating Engineer. Single. County Colts Cap. Bristol's leading points scorer this season.

RICHARD MOGG (Gloucester)

Centre or Wing. Age 20. Height 5' 11". Weight 12st. 7lb. Civil Engineer Apprentice. Single. England Colts Cap.

JOHN CANNON (Clifton)

Scrum-half. Age 29. Height 5' 11". Weight 12st. Schoolteacher. Played in the County Championship side in 1971 also for Western Counties v. the All Blacks.

KENNETH PHELPS (Bristol)

Hooker. Age 26. Height 5' 10 1/2". Weight 14st. Single. Riding Instructor. Has been understudy to Bristol's International Hookers - John Pullin, John White - for several seasons.

A. TROUGHTON (Bristol)

Lock. Age 22. Height 6' 6". Weight 16st. Played for Coventry previously. Medical Student. Single.

JOHN HENRY HAINES (Gloucester)

Flanker. Celebrates his 27th birthday tomorrow. The natural successor to the long-serving Dick Smith. Rapidly moved to the top flight on joining Gloucester from Gordon League. With his two International colleagues forms a speedy and constructive back row. A Wholesale Meat Caterer.

PATHS TO THE FINAL

MIDDLESEX

Middlesex 38 Kent 0 (*Richmond*)
 Sussex 7 Middlesex 44 (*Brighton*)
 Hampshire 0 Middlesex 71 (*U.S. Portsmouth*)
 Middlesex 25 Eastern Counties 6 (*Richmond*)
 Surrey 14 Middlesex 20 (*Roehampton*)
Semi-Final North Midlands 9 Middlesex 20 (*Moseley*)

LONDON DIVISION LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts.
Middlesex	5	5	0	0	198	27	10
Surrey	5	3	0	2	128	63	6
Eastern Counties	5	3	0	2	101	68	6
Kent	5	3	0	2	89	94	6
Sussex	5	1	0	4	53	196	2
Hampshire	5	0	0	5	47	168	0

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Cornwall 6 Gloucestershire 9 (*Redruth*)
 Gloucestershire 34 Devon 6 (*Bristol*)
 Somerset 9 Gloucestershire 15 (*Taunton*)
Quarter-Final Hertfordshire 7 Gloucestershire 29 (*Croxley Green*)
Semi-Final Gloucestershire 15 Lancashire 7 (*Bristol*)

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts.
Gloucestershire	3	3	0	0	58	21	6
Cornwall	3	2	0	1	48	32	4
Devon	3	1	0	2	30	57	2
Somerset	3	0	0	3	26	52	0