

Rugby Football Union



THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

SEMI - FINAL

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE
V
LANCASHIRE**

Saturday 28th November 1981

KINGSHOLM GROUND

Kingsholm Road, Gloucester

KICK OFF 2.30p.m.

Cost of programme: 30p



THORN EMI County Championship

GLoucestershire

- 15 P. CUE (Bristol)
- 14 A. MORLEY (Bristol)
- 13 J. CARR (Bristol)
- 12 P. TAYLOR (Gloucester)
- 11 R. MOGG (Gloucester)
- 10 L. JONES (Gloucester)
- 9 R. HARDING (Bristol)
- 1 M. PREEDY (Gloucester)
- 2 K. BOGIRA (Bristol)
- 3 P. BLAKEWAY (Gloucester)
- 4 S. BOYLE (Gloucester)
- 5 J. ORWIN (Gloucester)
- 6 N. POMPHREY (Bristol)
- 7 M. RAFTER (Bristol)
- 8 R. HESFORD (Bristol)

Replacements:

- 16 K. WHITE (Gloucester)
- 17 A. DURKIN (Gloucester)
- 18 L. DICK (Cheltenham)
- 19 S. BAKER (Gloucester)
- 20 G. SARGENT (Gloucester)
- 21 M. TEAGUE (Gloucester)

Touch Judge: C. NORTON Bristol/Gloucestershire

- Full Backs
- Threequarters
- Right - Wing - Left
- Right - Centre - Left
- Left - Centre - Right
- Left - Wing - Right
- Half-backs
- Stand Off

Scrum

Forwards

Prop

Hooker

Prop

Lock

Lock

Blind Side

Open Side

No 8

Referee: R. C. QUITTENTON
Sussex/London Society

THORN EMI County Championship

LANCASHIRE

- 15 K. A. O'BRIEN (Broughton Park)
- 11 M. A. C. SLEMEN (Liverpool)
- 12 A. M. BOND (Sale)
- 13 A. J. WRIGHT (Sale)
- 14 J. CARLETON (Orrell)

- 10 P. N. WILLIAMS (Orrell)

- 9 S. J. SMITH (Sale)

- 1 T. TABERN (Fylde)

- 2 M. DIXON (Fylde)

- 3 D. V. SOUTHERN (Orrell)

- 4 W. B. BEAUMONT (Fylde) (Capt.)

- 5 J. T. SYDDALL (Waterloo)

- 6 P. MOSS (Orrell)

- 7 R. STEVENSON (Sale)

- 8 K. MOSS (Liverpool)

Replacements:

- 16 J. N. SPAVEN (Sale)
- 17 D. CARFOOT (Waterloo)
- 18 M. CALLERY (Broughton Park)
- 19 P. DADSWELL (Liverpool)
- 20 D. CUSANI (Orrell)
- 21 P. TURNER (Orrell)

Touch Judge: R. P. RUSSELL Middlesex/London Society

THE RESURGENCE OF THE THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

So now we know! Not just the participants in today's THORN EMI County Championship semi-finals, but the destiny of all 27 participating county teams in the league structure for the new-style Championship which gets under way next season. No wonder such excitement and commitment has surrounded each and every group match this year, when a place in higher or lower league depended on virtually every game. No wonder, too, that some players who had opted out of mid-week rugby until now were to be seen in county colours for the first time in many years in the Midland, London and Southern divisions. It was not just semi-final places that were at stake this time round, but the standing in the four league tables for 1982-83.

Although we shall not know the make-up of the two pools in League Division One until the draw is made, we do know that the eight counties who will be contesting that elite grouping are Gloucestershire and Somerset, Lancashire and Yorkshire, Middlesex and Kent, and North Midlands and Notts. Lincs. Derbyshire. Accordingly, next season the Trophy will be won by one of these eight teams – of whom only N.L.D. have never before won the county title, and Somerset and North Midlands but once. But, as with this season, the new league championship, with promotion and relegation, will ensure that every county match will have added significance from now on.

More immediately, what of today's proceedings? Once again qualification for these latter stages of this competition was in several instances a close-run thing. In both the Northern Division and South West the Pocket calculators were needed to determine that Lancashire and Gloucestershire had not taken their display of brinkmanship one step too far, which was fortunate for them, but cruel misfortune for Yorkshire and Somerset who had previously beaten their respective group winners. So now with North Midlands and Middlesex making up the successful quartet of semi-final qualifiers we look for finalists to come from counties which have all won the championship in the last six years.

Who would dare to oppose as likely winners arch-county campaigners Gloucestershire at Kingsholm? Not many, I fancy, but if I were to put money on a side that could accomplish such a feat at present, it would be Lancashire. Bill Beaumont's lads, bidding to celebrate their Centenary Year in the best possible way, have been shocked out of any complacency by what happened at Headingley, and have the right players for the big occasion. Whilst at Moseley, in the full glare of Television coverage on BBC2's Rugby Special, the meeting of the champions of 1978 and 1979, North Midlands and Middlesex respectively, looks another equally difficult match in which to predict the result. Suffice to say, it'll be a different name from last years that will win the THORN EMI Trophy at the end of this season. And it will be the last ever county to win a championship in its present format, one that's been virtually unchanged since 1921 – the year in which Gloucestershire won the title at Kingsholm by a score that's still a record.

An omen, perhaps?

By NIGEL STARMER-SMITH, Editor of Rugby Post and BBC Rugby Commentator.

THORN EMI County Championship

There are probably quite a few people here today who can remember Lancashire beating Gloucestershire by 14—3 at Kingsholm in 1947. In 1948 Lancashire were Champions again, Gloucestershire having fallen at the semi-final stage to a very good Middlesex side.

In 1939, however, the series continued. Gloucestershire found the old Blundellsands magic still worked while losing 9—3.

By then, Middlesex were coming more and more into the picture, and in both 1952 and 1954 beat Lancashire at the final hurdle. 1955 saw the right pecking order resumed, with Lancashire reversing the London trend.

After that, Lancs. took a bit of a breather, and had to be content with runner-up places in 1964 and 1966. They won the Championship again, however, in 1969 by winning at Redruth.

Even then, you couldn't keep Gloucester out of the act - the Cornish outside half was Gloucester's own Tom Palmer (if he's not here today, it will be something of a rarity), and at least one pub in Cornwall has the programme for that match proudly displayed on its bar wall to this day.

Many people will remember the next time Lancs. won the Title. It was in a sea of mud at Bristol, and the Northern forwards coped with the miserable conditions better than the home-grown variety.

In 1977 Lancashire beat Middlesex to win again, but the match which is fresh in all our minds is the very fine game at Vale of Lune in 1980.

Most Gloucestershire supporters who were there - and there were droves - will admit, ii tortured into submission, that the better team won on that day, but the 21—15 score line conceals a game full of skills and commitment. Almost to the end it seemed that Peter Butler's boot might save the day for Gloucestershire, but the cards fell the other way, in the end.

Most of us came away from the packed ground looking like drowned rats that day, but the game was a living proof that it is possible to play good Rugby in the pouring rain if you're a good enough player.

And so to today. If this game is as good as the last encounter, no one will grumble - and there are certainly enough good players on view to achieve just that.

It's quite an occasion. Let's sit back and enjoy it.

Where do they go from here?

Following on from that thought is the other one which says that we may well be seeing the nucleus of the England side today. Quite apart from the Beaumonts, Siemens and Blakeways (if fit!) of this world, there are many good Lancashire and Gloucestershire players who must be in contention for a place. And one has to admit, such is the strength of the two Counties, that by no means all the players who must be in the Selectors' minds can find a place in today's game

THORN EMI County Championship

So to all Lancashire and Gloucestershire players with eyes on an International gap - best of luck. May you do well on the right occasions, and be there to strengthen England's chances, when you're needed.

Why not stay on?

As always, Gloucester RFC extend hearty welcomes to everyone from both Counties who have done us the honour of choosing Kingsholm for this highly important - even, in a sense, historic - match. It's always great to see Gloucestershire here, and, because the occurrence is relatively rare, even greater to see Lancashire.

All of us at Kingsholm, and that includes players, officials, Patrons, and just honest-to-God supporters, hope you have an enjoyable visit, and will look in on us again, when you happen to be passing at the right time of the year.

As it happens, today's game is the first leg of a memorable week-end double. In order to accommodate the County - which we're obviously delighted to do - we've been able to switch our scheduled game with London Irish to tomorrow, and as 'the Irish' are the only unbeaten 'English' first class side this season, and Gloucester are the top English merit table team at the moment, it should be quite an encounter.

So, if any Lancashire supporter finds that his after-match celebrations, (or consolations) are weighing a little heavy this evening, why not stay over until tomorrow?

We don't have to say that to Gloucestershire supporters. They'll probably do it anyway.

Have a good day!

PETER ARNOLD.