

Rugby Football Union



**THORN EMI
CHAMPIONSHIP**

SEMI-FINAL
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
V
MIDDLESEX

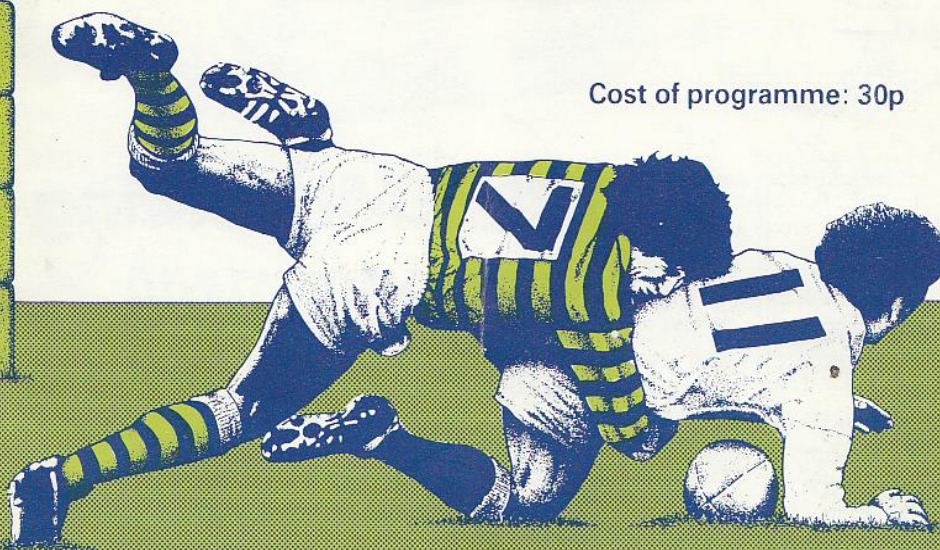
Saturday 26th November 1983

GLOUCESTERSHIRE R.F.U.

Kingsholm Ground, Kingsholm Road, Gloucester

KICK OFF 2.30 p.m.

Cost of programme: 30p



THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

GLoucestershire

Colours: White & White Shorts

- 15 S. HOGG (Bristol)
- † 14 A. MORLEY (Bristol)
- 13 R. KNIBBS (Bristol)
- 12 R. MOGG (Gloucester)
- 11 N. PRICE (Gloucester)
- 10 S. BARNES (Bristol)
- 9 R. HARDING (Bristol)
- 1 M. PREEDY (Gloucester)
- † 2 S. MILLS (Gloucester)
- † 3 P. BLAKEWAY (Gloucester)
- † 4 J. FIDLER (Gloucester)
- 5 J. ORWIN (Gloucester)
- 6 J. GADD (Gloucester)
- † 7 M. RAFTER (Bristol) Capt:
- † 8 R. HESFORD (Bristol)

Replacements

- 16 G. SARGENT (Gloucester)
- 17 P. TAYLOR (Gloucester)
- 18 D. PALMER (Bristol)
- 19 M. TEAGUE (Gloucester)
- 20 T. SMITH (Gloucester)
- 21 P. HOWELL (Lydney)

Touch Judge: J. ROBERTS (Gloucester Society)

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

† International

MIDDLESEX

Colours: Blue and White Hoops - Blue Shorts

- † 15 N. STRINGER (Wasps)
- 14 A. DENT (Harlequins)
- 13 R. GORDON (London Scottish)
- † 12 R. CARDUS (Wasps)
- 11 S. O'REILLY (Metropolitan Police)
- 10 M. WILLIAMS (Wasps)
- 9 J. CULLEN (Wasps)
- 1 P. CURTIS (Rosslyn Park)
- 2 J. OLVER (Harlequins)
- 3 M. CLAXTON (Harlequins)
- † 4 W. CUTHBERSON (Harlequins)
- 5 R. RIDDELL (Harlequins)
- 6 K. BOWRING (London Welsh)
- † 7 D. COOKE (Harlequins) Capt.
- 8 C. BUTCHER (Harlequins)

Replacements

- 16 N. GEMMELL (West London Institute)
- 17 G. REES (Old Gaytonians)
- 18 A. KEAY (Saracens)
- 19 A. N. OTHER
- 20 A. N. OTHER
- 21 A. N. OTHER

Touch Judge: P. FITZGIBBON (London Society)

Referee: D. THOMAS (North Midlands Society)

PRESIDENTS WELCOME

I would like to welcome Middlesex to Kingsholm. Unlike Yorkshire who, until last season, we had not met for many years, Middlesex are old friends.

We have played each other on six occasions since the War, five Semi-Finals and one Final.

We know and respect their prowess and look forward to a keen and close encounter this afternoon.

On behalf of the County I thank the Gloucester Club for their magnificent hospitality and congratulate them on their excellent new facilities.

It is because of the backing of the Clubs great and small, and faithful supporters that County Rugby is so important in Gloucestershire.

I W. Pearce, President

MANY HAPPY RETURNS !

Not that it's anyone's birthday, as far as I know, but there must be many people here who are happy to return after a bare two weeks since the Yorkshire match.

Similarly, we all hope that the Middlesex contingent see this as a 'happy return' too, because this is by no means the first time they have played at Kingsholm.

Admittedly, we haven't had the pleasure of seeing them recently, although just about everyone will have played here in their club capacities, but I well remember a spell in the late 40's and early 50's when they were 'regulars' at the Semi-Final stage. Indeed, in that period, Gloucestershire Lancashire and Middlesex seemed to make up three out of the four places with indecent regularity.

Middlesex have always been bonnie Championship fighters, The earliest reference I could find indicated that they were 'Group Winners', under the mysterious system which was then operated, as long ago as 1893. (Yorkshire were the Champions that year!), and they popped up again, narrowly losing to Durham at West Hartlepool in the Final of 1905.

They had to wait until 1929 for their first Championship, beating Lancashire at Blundellsands by the odd point in 17. The following year, Gloucestershire avenged them by beating the same opposition, 13—7, on the same ground.

In 1952, Middlesex won their title at last - again by beating Lancashire, by 9 points to 6, having lost in the Final to East Midlands the previous year. That first Championship win had the distinction of being the first County Final played at Twickenham, and Middlesex have played four finals there since, so don't run away with the thought that this year will see the first County Final to have been played on 'Billy Williams Cabbage Patch'. Indeed, for some reason, Warwickshire beat Hampshire there in 1962.

But perhaps the Final we all remember best is the one played at Richmond in 1976, when Gloucester beat Middlesex by 24 points to 9, all two dozen points coming from Peter Butler. Not all with the boot, either. If memory serves, there was a try in there somewhere.

This season, today's visitors have been going like an express train, and looked unstoppable until our old friends and rivals from Somerset sent them off the rails with a real knee-trembler at Bridgwater. But then - that's always likely to happen, as Gloucestershire have painful reasons to remember.

Comparisons are, however, highly dangerous things when you get to this stage of the competition. We're in for a good game today, with forwards and backs of genuine class on both sides.

Should be a day to remember.

NICE TO SEE YOU !

Obviously, we extend our heartiest welcomes to everyone, and if you seem to have read that before, you have - just a fortnight ago.

However, It's worth remembering that Yorkshire brought a highly vocal contingent with them, and the relative geography being what it is, we might expect that Middlesex will be even better supported, both in numbers and decibel count.

The Gloucestershire contingent are very much at home, of course, and that includes the Bristol players, who must regard Kingsholm as a second home, for County reasons, and also through the agency of some of the epic encounters that regularly take place here between Bristol and Gloucester. That's no reason why we shouldn't say 'welcome' to them, is it?

The Middlesex players and officials are very pleasant visitors. We shall see many of them, with their respective clubs, later in the season, and the occasion adds spice to the pleasure we feel in greeting them.

The referee and touch judge are indispensable, and can make or mar the game. We're sure that it will be the former, today, and we extend our welcomes to them too.

Any player will tell you that a good crowd increases the enjoyment and commitment that the game engenders, so all supporters, West Country or Metropolitan, are exceedingly welcome. The 'buzz' around the ground before and during the Yorkshire game was a bit special, and it will probably be even more noticeable on this occasion.

So wherever you've arrived from, from Mayfair to Matson, thanks for coming. You're adding to a big occasion.

NAP HAND FOR THORN EMI

One of the more arduous chores of people responsible for Rugby programmes, is the trek around local businesses to find people willing to take advertising space, and so increase income from that source. The County Rugby Unions don't have that problem, these days, which is just about the only outward and visible sign of the tremendous support which THORN EMI have given the game, which you will see today.

No one would disagree that any company, which displays such generosity, has a perfect right to tell us about their products and services in such a way, and indeed, try and persuade us that we really ought to buy some of them when we're in that sort of market.

This is the fifth year during which THORN EMI have sponsored the County Championship. They have certainly been five good years for County Rugby Football, which we, here in Gloucestershire, have always supported wholeheartedly, and regard as the most important competition in the Game, save only the Five Nations Championship itself.

It's an arguable point whether such a large and diverse competition, covering 27 Counties, could survive in recognisable form, in any sport without sponsorship of considerable magnitude, in this day and age. In Rugby Union we are fortunate enough to have the wholehearted backing of one of the most famous electrical and electronics-based companies in the world, and our sincere thanks go to them.

England did not have a good year, last season. Perhaps the judicious use of the skills on view here, and down in Somerset, today, could change all that - and if so, then selectors administrators, players, and - not least - supporters, would have a very great deal to thank THORN EMI for.

You're very welcome Gentlemen (not forgetting any Ladies you've brought along). And I hope I have the opportunity of writing similar pieces to this for many years to come.

WELCOME FROM GLOUCESTER R.F.C.

Once again, I have the pleasant duty of passing on the welcomes of all of us Kingsholm based Rugby people on this memorable occasion.

This time, we would like to add our thanks to the London Irish Club - whose ground is in Surrey, not Middlesex - for readily agreeing to postpone their match against Gloucester, originally scheduled for today, so that the County game could be staged here.

Just one more point, while we're talking about Gloucester R.F.C., you won't be able to get into the Clubhouse for a drink after the game unless you have your Social Club Membership Card with you, or, as an esteemed visitor, have a complimentary ticket.

Sorry about that, but we're sure you appreciate the reasons.

HARD LUCK MIKE!

At the time of writing it isn't known whether Mike Rafter will be fit to play this afternoon. Naturally, we all hope he is, appreciating that it was him who led Gloucestershire to the first new style County Championship, and that one of his great ambitions is to perform a similar service this season, and receive the THORN EMI Trophy at Twickenham itself.

He is a man passionately committed to County Rugby, and an outstanding flanker and Captain. To have missed the play-off round will have been a bitter pill for him to have swallowed, and to be prevented from appearing in the Semi Final will be little short of disaster for him.

So it will be either "Welcome back Mike!" or "Very hard luck, Skipper"

We'd be delighted if it were the former. It isn't the same without the old 'Grafter'.

PETER ARNOLD