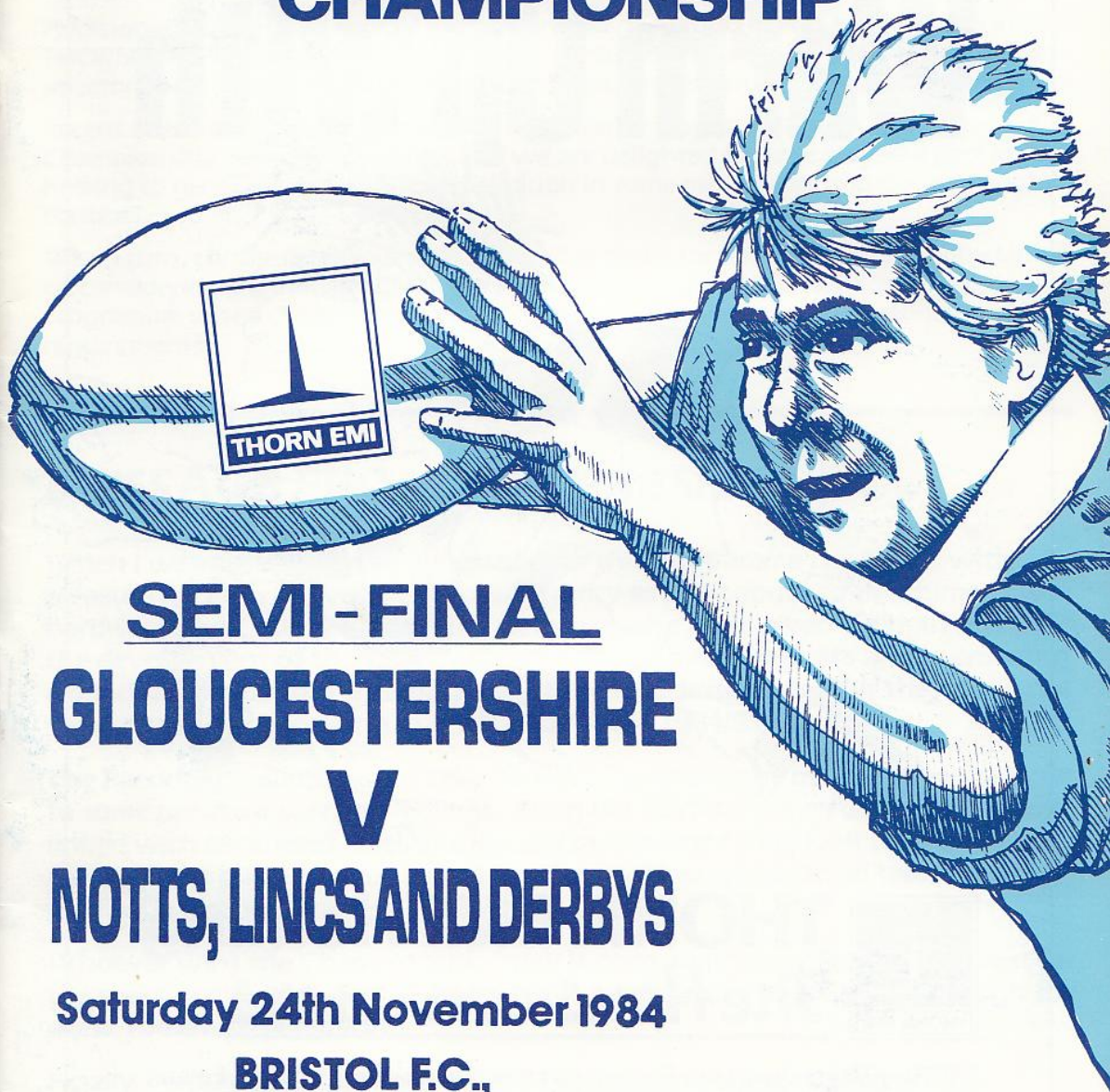


Rugby Football Union
 **THORN EMI**
CHAMPIONSHIP



SEMI-FINAL
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
V
NOTTS, LINGS AND DERBYS

Saturday 24th November 1984

**BRISTOL F.C.,
Memorial Ground,
Filton Avenue, Bristol.
KICK OFF 2.30 p.m.**

Cost of programme: 30p

THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

WELCOME TO THE THREE COUNTIES

"Notts, Lincs and Derby?" said the chap in the pub, "Sounds like a shoe shop!"

We poured his beer over his head, and asked him, as a soccer fan, whether it was true that Bristol Rovers once had a mid-field trio called Freeman, Hardy and Willis. Nevertheless, his abysmal ignorance does make an important point.

The relegation and promotion system in the new-style County Championship is working through nicely. As we know, Kent gave both Gloucestershire and Yorkshire a fright this season, and while that was going on, Notts, Lincs, and Derbys, were sailing along quite nicely to the runner-up spot in the other half of Division 1.

Indeed, if you look at last season's results, you'll find that the rise of the Three Counties has been quite dramatic. From a largely unregarded spot in Division 2, they beat Warwickshire, (How have the Mighty fallen!) by 21 points to 9, drew with North Midlands - who won the Championship in 1978 - and also accounted for Durham, 15-9.

The reasons for their success are partly that the, in my view, misguided obstructionism of one or two major clubs has weakened some of the traditionally powerful Counties, but there is also a more positive side to things.

It won't have escaped your notice that Nottingham are now one of the most successful sides in England - a development which some of us, who have had the advantage of seeing them regularly, have been forecasting for some years. And that can't be bad for either the County Championship or the English Club scene.

Not before time, some might say. I can't find any record that Notts, Lincs, & Derbys, have ever won the Championship, or indeed, featured in a Final at all. I'm sure I remember Gloucestershire meeting them years ago at either quarter or semi-final stage, but I believe that is as far as they ever got. The fact that they have fought their way, in two short seasons, to being one of the four best sides in the Championship, reflects great credit on them, and also proves that the demise of the old geographical group system is no bad thing.

Remember the days when Gloucestershire had to struggle to get through the group against Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, waltzed through the quarters against Oxfordshire or Hertfordshire, and then, it seemed, inevitably had to beat some combination of Lancashire, Warwickshire and Northumberland to win the title?

The present situation is much more satisfactory, truly reflecting the relative strengths of the various Counties.

So it's a hearty welcome to the Three Counties. We hope we'll see more of you, for seasons to come.

FOUR MONTHS TO WAIT

When Prohibition was finally abolished in the United States, the Mayor of New York is reported to have commented that "It's a long time between drinks!" We're beginning to know how he felt.

The THORN EMI County Championship Final for 1984/5 will be held at Twickenham on March 31st - more than four months away.

This is exactly the same situation as last year, and I can understand how today's crowded fixture lists make things difficult for the people who have to arrange these things, nevertheless, it can't be said to be a satisfactory state of affairs.

Those of us who were able to get along to the Gloucestershire v. Yorkshire game at Kingsholm, two weeks ago, were privileged to see what as eminent an observer as Richard Sharp described as "The best County match I've seen." If today's games work out that way, the same two sides could meet in the Final.

If that Final were to be played in two or three weeks time, the re-match of that epic encounter would be one of the most eagerly awaited - and probably best attended - events in the Rugby calendar. As it is, there's definite danger that things will go off the boil somewhat. Which is a great pity.

THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Colours: White Shirts and Shorts

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 15 | P. CUE | (Bristol) | Full Backs |
| 14 | A. J. MORLEY | (Bristol) | Threequarters |
| 13 | R. KNIBBS | (Bristol) | Right - Wing - Left |
| 12 | S. HOGG | (Bristol) | Left - Centre - Right |
| 11 | A. RICHARDS | (Gloucester) | Left - Wing - Right |
| 10 | S. BARNES | (Bristol) | Half - Backs |
| 9 | R. HARDING (Capt.) | (Bristol) | Stand Off |
| | | | Scrum |
| 1 | M. PREEDY | (Gloucester) | Forwards |
| 2 | K. BOGIRA | (Bristol) | Prop |
| 3 | A. SHEPPARD | (Bristol) | Hooker |
| 4 | J. ORWIN | (Gloucester) | Prop |
| 5 | A. BLACKMORE | (Bristol) | Lock |
| 6 | M. TEAGUE | (Gloucester) | Lock |
| 7 | D. PEGLER | (Wasps) | Blind Side |
| 8 | R. HESFORD | (Bristol) | Open Side |
| | | | No. 8 |
| Replacements: | | | |
| 16 | P. HOWELL | (Lydney) | |
| 17 | D. SORRELL | (Bristol) | |
| 18 | C. HOWARD | (Loughborough Coll & Bristol) | |
| 19 | S. EVERALL | (Cheltenham) | |
| 20 | N. POMPHREY | (Bristol) | |
| 21 | R. PICKET | (Berry Hill) | |

Touch Judge: M. COVENEY Bristol Soc.

NOTTS, LINCS, & DEBBYSHIRE

Colours: Blue Shirts and White Shorts

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 15 | M. DRANE | (Nottingham) |
| 14 | S. HOLDSTOCK | (Nottingham) |
| 13 | M. NORTHARD | (Nottingham) |
| 12 | G. HARTLEY | (Nottingham) |
| 11 | D. HOLDSTOCK | (Nottingham) |
| 10 | S. HODGKINSON | (Nottingham) |
| 9 | K. MURPHY | (Nottingham) |
| 1 | J. WARD | (Nottingham) |
| 2 | B. MOORE | (Nottingham) |
| 3 | M. GRINDLE | (Nottingham) |
| 4 | P. NIXON | (Nottingham) |
| 5 | N. MANTELL (Capt.) | (Nottingham) |
| 6 | J. TAYLOR | (Nottingham) |
| 7 | P. COOK | (Nottingham) |
| 8 | G. REENC | (Nottingham) |
| Replacements: | | |
| 16 | P. MOSS | (Nottingham) |
| 17 | C. CORNFIELD | (Derby) |
| 18 | C. ROSSIN | (Paviors) |
| 19 | R. SALMON | (Mansfield) |
| 20 | D. TOWNSEND | (Newark) |
| 21 | R. LUCAS | (Derby) |

Touch Judge: J. A. F. TRIGG
Middlesex & London Soc.

Referee: T. R. FRIEND Leicester Soc.

THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

There's another factor too. There can be an awful lot of injuries, suspensions, weddings, emigrations and retirements before the end of March, and it's quite possible that the two sides which eventually meet at Twickenham won't be the same two sides that win through today. Which isn't fair on anyone, including the supporters.

Of course, it would be making a large assumption to think that a Gloucestershire and Yorkshire Final is the most likely outcome. The 'Tykes' won't find Middlesex easy to beat on their own midden, and I know that Gloucestershire won't be taking today's game lightly.

We know that, over the years, one of Gloucestershire's great strengths has been that they draw their players from only two clubs. Today's visitors have the same advantage, relying heavily on the Nottingham side which are certainly no one's pusovers.

On the evidence of the Kingsholm encounter, if the Three Counties can win through to Twickenham, then they'll thoroughly deserve it, and will have a good chance of becoming the eventual Champions. As a wholeheartedly partisan observer, I hope they don't have that opportunity, but if they do triumph in the end, it would be good for the Championship and the game itself.

THANKS AGAIN TO THORN EMI

This is the third time this season I've had the pleasant duty of thanking the Sponsors, THORN EMI for their most generous support of County Rugby. If this does happen to be the last season they feel able to do so, then we'll quite understand, but regret their departure.

I don't intend to say all the things I've said before, for several seasons now, but would just point out that, when you're buying Christmas presents, you could do a lot worse than patronise the various brand names which feature elsewhere in this programme.

The undoubted success of the 'new' County Championship has been due, in large measure, to the involvement of THORN EMI. English Rugby people everywhere have a great deal to thank them for.

THANKS TO BRISTOL

So here we are at Bristol again, for the second time this season. Even a Kingsholm diehard, like me, has to admit the justice of that, bearing in mind that we had the Semi Final at Gloucester, this time last year.

Agreeing to hold such a match at two weeks notice brings with it some complications for the club concerned, and we're all very grateful to Bristol RFC for taking on that burden. Mind you, I think that the worthy Fixture Secretaries of the two clubs likely to be involved must have been indulging in a little tea-leaf reading, because I note that Gloucester are away to London Irish, while my list of major fixtures doesn't state that Bristol have a game at all.

Nevertheless, the gesture is much appreciated, and we're thoroughly enjoying the traditional Bristol welcome.

...AND WELCOME TO EVERYONE ELSE

One of the features of the Yorkshire game was the quality of the refereeing, which was very high indeed, and contributed greatly to the game. It's only justice, therefore, to welcome the Officials first ... this time, and point out that they are in a 'follow that' situation.

Naturally, we also welcome the Notts. Lincs. & Derbys. contingent, both players and supporters, who we are quite confident, will be here in their hordes.

In fact, everyone's welcome today. It should be a great occasion.

PETER ARNOLD