

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION
 **THORN EMI**
CHAMPIONSHIP

GLOUCESTERSHIRE
v
BERKSHIRE

Saturday 15th November 1986 Kick Off 3.00pm
Cheltenham R.F.C., Prince of Wales Stadium,
Pittville, Cheltenham.

Programme: 30p



BERKING UP THE RIGHT TREE?

It could be my hungover and bloodshot eyesight, but a glance down the appropriate page of the current 'Rothmans' Handbook does not reveal that Berkshire have ever featured in a County Championship Final. Neither does my memory recall any occasion when our two teams have met before, but I could be wrong about that, too, bearing in mind the array of peculiar things which have happened to the Championship over recent years.

Of course, unfamiliarity doesn't breed contempt, and indeed doesn't mean that the lads from the Royal County are any less welcome. Indeed, it's nice to see some new faces.

Neither does the ability to keep out of the record books mean that today's visitors are likely to be anyone's pushovers. If you want proof of that, it might surprise you to learn that last season's eventual Champions, Warwickshire, hadn't won the title since 1965, while you have to go right back to 1927 before you can find runners-up Kent appearing in a Final. So the wheel does keep turning.

In some ways, it's only right that Gloucestershire and Berkshire should meet, because while we were winning our section of the South and South West Division, undefeated last season Berkshire were performing a similar feat in their section. And their opposition were Dorset and Wilts, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, all of whom have been very familiar to us in the past.

Last week, while we were being pipped by the Old Enemy, Somerset, Berkshire were losing to Cornwall. In spite of, what I am told were two good tries from Gareth Brown and Mickey Bell, so eventual placings in the Division might well be crucially affected by today's result. A big score one way or the other could necessitate the production of the calculators, depending on events at Taunton.

All in all, we have the prospect of a very interesting confrontation. So let's enjoy it. Likewise, we all hope that our visitors, their officials and supporters all have a thoroughly enjoyable visit to Cheltenham.

THANKS TO CHELTENHAM

Speaking of which, it wouldn't be right to let the opportunity pass without giving a heartfelt thanks to the Cheltenham Club for their co-operation in allowing the use of the Prince of Wales Stadium for the second year. When I came along to the Somerset game last season, I, like everyone else, was treated to one of the best games of the whole year, in spite of hurricane conditions and driving rain most of the time.

That sort of thing doesn't happen unless the organisation is right, and the facilities appropriate.

In addition, Cheltenham does seem to be overshadowed by various illustrious neighbours, and it's time that the good old club got a share of the limelight, and some of the recognition it deserves.

Thanks 'Chelt'. We're very grateful.

AND FOR OUR NEXT TRICK...

Next week sees the culmination of the initial stage of the County Championship, and in our case it isn't going to be an easy one. We're down to visit Cornwall in the cockpit of Redruth.

It's a shame that things have worked out this way really. Gloucestershire could certainly use any vocal support which may be forthcoming but the geography will probably preclude anything more than a token expeditionary force.

Nevertheless, if you can make it, or know anyone who is likely to be in that part of the world next week-end, then you can safely say that the match is likely to be good value for money. Let's face it - rugby in Cornwall usually is.

THORN EMI COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Colours: White

<p>15 P. CUE Captain Bath</p> <p>14 C. HOWARD Loughborough College</p> <p>13 C. ALLEN Loughborough College</p> <p>12 C. O'DONAGUE Gloucester</p> <p>11 T. BICK Berry Hill</p> <p>10 R. GILBERT Clifton</p> <p>9 P. HOWELL Lydney</p> <p>1 R. PICKETT Berry Hill</p> <p>2 P. NEWMAN Stroud</p> <p>3 P. MACEY Lydney</p> <p>4 A. CURTIS Lydney</p> <p>5 R. WILLIAMS Lydney</p> <p>6 C. SCOTT Newport</p> <p>7 W. HONE Bristol</p> <p>8 J. PRICE Coney Hill</p> <p>Replacements:</p> <p>16 P. KINGSTON Gloucester</p> <p>17 D. JONES Cinderford</p>	<p>Full Back</p> <p>Right Wing</p> <p>Centre</p> <p>Centre</p> <p>Left Wing</p> <p>Outside Half</p> <p>Scrum Half</p> <p>Prop</p> <p>Hooker</p> <p>Prop</p> <p>Lock</p> <p>Lock</p> <p>Flanker</p> <p>Flanker</p> <p>No. 8</p> <p>Referee: B. A. RILEY Liverpool Society</p>
---	---

Touch Judge: **C. REEVES** Gloucestershire Society

BERKSHIRE

Colours: Blue, White, Green Hoops.

<p>15 C. VAAL Bracknell</p> <p>14 M. BELL Harlequins</p> <p>13 J. MAYHEW-SANDERS Newbury</p> <p>12 R. KING Newbury</p> <p>11 W. STEWART Bracknell</p> <p>10 S. SMITH Abbey</p> <p>9 G. BROWN Newbury</p> <p>1 A. GREENE Maidenhead</p> <p>2 A. LYNCH Reading Ensians</p> <p>3 I. TURRELL Reading</p> <p>4 A. KILFORD Abbey</p> <p>5 D. PRATT Reading</p> <p>6 S. HUTTON Abbey</p> <p>8 S. NEWMAN Exeter University</p> <p>7 D. HOLROYD Rosslyn Park</p> <p>Replacements:</p> <p>16 P. WINFIELD Newbury</p> <p>17 K. BOATMAN Richmond</p>	<p>Touch Judge: B. TOZER Berkshire Society</p>
---	---

THE ULTIMATE SPONSORS

One name I have been studiously avoiding in writing this piece is that of THORN EMI. Not that I have anything against them whatsoever; it's just that I felt that I could achieve more impact for my usual word of thanks to the game's most generous Sponsors if I put all my grateful eggs into one basket, as it were.

It's no secret that my personal view of the Divisional Championship is that it is an unmitigated disaster, producing little good rugby, an unimportant title and achieving nothing other than possibly terminal damage to the County Championship. Under those circumstances, any Sponsor intending to reap full commercial advantage from their generosity, (and why shouldn't they?) could be forgiven for pulling out of the whole fracas and distributing their largesse elsewhere.

Not so Britain's leading electrical appliance Group. They took the reverse option and agreed to support the Divisional Championship as well. Could any sporting body ask for a more generous act of faith?

Whatever your opinion of the Division v. County v. Club controversy, you must pay tribute to THORN-EMI for their foresight and generosity. Sometimes I think that Sponsors don't get the recognition they deserve in rugby football, either from the Powers-That-Be or from the Media. I hope these poor words help to redress the balance a little.

THANKS ALL ROUND

We don't live in easy times for the County Rugby Football Union. Yet in Gloucestershire we are fortunate in having a dedicated group of administrators who have always done their level best for their County, and who spend an inordinate amount of time and energy in producing the best football they can.

I'm not going to mention any names: to do so would be invidious, and anyway, I'd probably forget someone. But we owe all of them a heartfelt vote of thanks; whatever the game's upper echelons may decide or intend, County Rugby is alive and well and living in Gloucestershire.

We must also thank the referees, touch judge, first-aid people, kit washers, cookery ladies, ball boys, ground staff and everyone else who contributes to what is still a special occasion. We couldn't manage without you.

A special word of thanks is also due, not only to the players, but to the clubs who have supplied them. One of the good things about the present situation is that it does give a chance for us to see players from clubs which are not usually represented at this level. There's a spot of prestige involved there, of course, but the experience of training and playing under representative conditions must be good for the standard of rugby in the County, as well as for the development of promising players.

But it isn't all good news for the clubs concerned. I know of one or two examples where sides involved in the County Cup are having to do without key players at crucial times because of County calls, and there are local derbies that are similarly affected. So a congratulatory word is definitely in order.

Finally, thanks to you, and to all the other loyal supporters of both sides. After all, if nobody came, it wouldn't be a County match would it?

Cheers everyone! Nice to be writing for you again

PETER ARNOLD