

Mike Gibson Makes IRB Hall of Fame

Written by Alex Goff

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Hmmm ... those shouts of "about freakin' time" you're hearing would be about this.

The International Rugby Board has inducted former Ireland and British & Irish Lions great Mike Gibson MBE into the IRB Hall of Fame.

Former IRB Chairman and current Rugby World Cup Limited Director Dr Syd Millar CBE presented the commemorative cap and gold pin to Gibson at a special induction at the Ulster Rugby awards in Belfast on Tuesday evening to honour a player who, at the time of his retirement, was the world's most capped player.

"It is an honour to be inducting a man who I had the great pleasure of playing alongside for Ulster and Ireland. Mike Gibson was one of the finest players of his generation, one of the finest players ever to represent Ireland and the British & Irish Lions and a man who epitomised the very ethos of the Game and its values," said Millar, himself inducted into the IRB Hall of Fame in 2009.

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Born in 1942, Gibson established a reputation as one of the world's finest centres in a glittering playing career that featured five British & Irish Lions tours and 69 Ireland Tests.

Playing for the North of Ireland club and Ulster, Gibson's great talent was evident at an early age whether at fly half, centre or on the wing. A move to England followed to study Law at Cambridge University where he won three Blues and demonstrated his credentials to play the Game at the highest level.

Gibson made his international debut at fly half as a 21-year-old against England in 1964 and never looked back, becoming a mainstay of the Ireland team during an international career that lasted 15 years.

British & Irish Lions tours were a natural arena for Gibson to underscore his talent, playing with and against the very best in the Game. He represented the Lions a remarkable 68 times over five tours, winning 12 Test caps, and was a mainstay of the victorious tours to New Zealand in 1971 and South Africa in 1974.

Gibson said: "It is an honour to be inducted into the IRB Hall of Fame and to be recognised amongst an illustrious list of greats. I consider Rugby to be the greatest team sport and I must give thanks to all my team mates with whom I trained and played. Without them this would not have been possible."

Awarded an MBE for services to Rugby, Gibson continues to practice Law in Belfast where he plays an active role in the Rugby community. Further IRB Hall of Fame inductions will be made throughout 2011 in both hemispheres, including during Rugby World Cup 2011 in New Zealand.

- Gibson is the fourth most capped British & Irish Lion with 12 Tests - (Willie John McBride leads the way on 17 with Graham Price and Dickie Jeeps on 13)

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- Gibson was the second player to achieve 60 caps for Ireland (behind Willie John McBride)
- Gibson became the most capped Irish player when he retired with 69 caps. It took 26 years for Malcolm O'Kelly to equal the record in 2005.
- Gibson was the most capped player in the world (69 for Ireland/12 for British Lions) when he retired in 1979. Fellow Hall of Fame member Serge Blanco equalled the world record 11 years later.
- Gibson started 40 matches at centre, 25 at fly half and four on the wing for Ireland.
- Main centre partners for Ireland were Dick Milliken, who he started 13 matches with, and Barry Bresnihan for 12 matches.
- Played total of 56 matches across every Five Nations Championship between 1964 and 1979, a record for the competition, which was equalled by Ronan O'Gara in the last match of the 2011 6 Nations.