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OPMs veteran set to play on

OPMs Nomads captain Ashley Brown-Williams insists veteran front-rower John Gillan has little intention of retiring from the sport he calls a religion.

Gillan has been with OPMs since they merged with Jesters in 1996, but the 58-year-old has been playing senior rugby considerably longer – since he was 15.

“It’s his passion for the game. He just loves it,” said Brown-Williams.

“You can’t believe a man who’s been playing almost 45 years is still as passionate as when he started.”

Gillan, who first played locally for Jesters back in 1975, said: “I’m always a bit suspicious of people who reminisce about the old days.

“It’s doing it. It’s being out there on the pitch.

“Basically, you can look upon rugby as a religion. There’s really nothing greater.”

Gillan first began playing senior rugby in 1959, in Bermuda, where he was born.

He went onto represent Bermuda against touring sides before moving to England and the area in 1975.

Williams-Brown said: “If a player reaches 500 games it’s a special achievement. To reach 1,000 is very rare.

“But John has definitely played more than 1,300 games and probably a lot, lot more.”

by **GLENN BRYANT**

Sports Reporter

He added: “The club wouldn’t be the same without him.

“He epitomises everything what OPMs are about.

“When he decides to retire – if ever – he’ll be a massive loss.

“But he’s got no intention of retiring in the near future. It’s not an issue.

“He’s guaranteed me he’ll play next season. He’s the sort of bloke who will play till he drops.”

Gillan said: “OPMs (newly promoted to the Cornwall and Devon League) are a very friendly club and at the level we’re playing, it’s about supporting each other as individuals rather than anything else.”

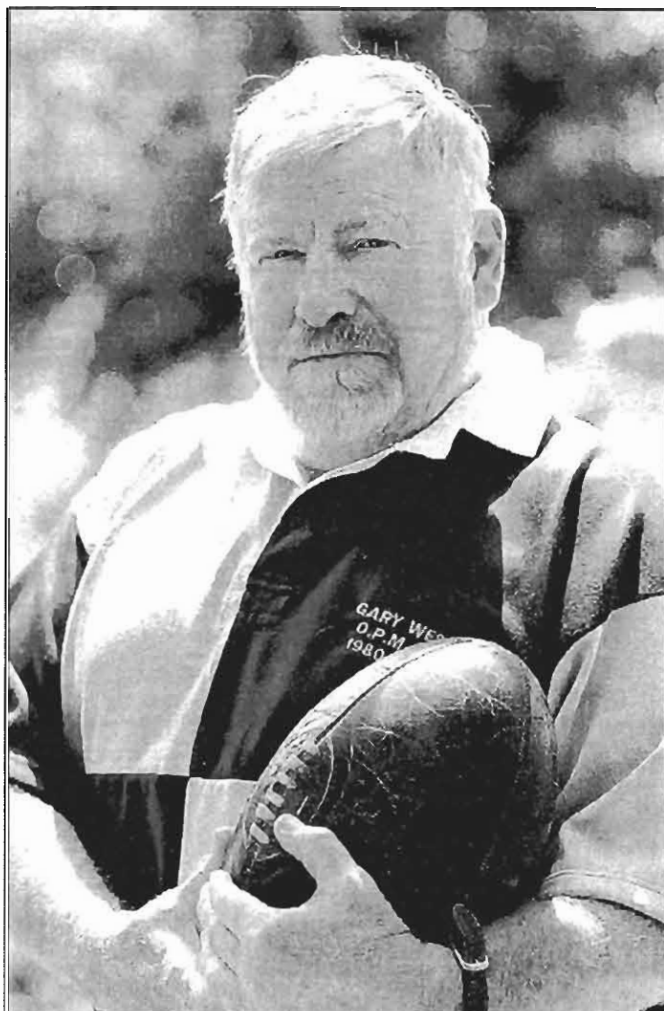
Brown-Williams added: “Every guy at the club looks up to him and he’s respected by every player, from the firsts through to the fourths.

“You generally find from other clubs, when they come up against him, they don’t believe it when you tell them how old he is afterwards.

“He’s technically very, very good and still very aggressive. He’s tenacious.

“You don’t ever have to carry him out on the field.

“He’s never been sin-binned and only ever been sent-off twice in his career, which in 45 years is a huge achievement. He’s very proud of that fact.”



DEDICATION: OPMs’ veteran front-row player John Gillan intends to play on next season despite being a 58-year-old