Gillian Florence

The encouragement to be the best that you can be is offered to many but the opportunity to be the best among all is accorded to few. Gillian Florence seized that opportunity and became Canada's most outstanding female rugby player.

Gillian graduated from Hudson High School in 1992 and became a member of the John Abbott College rugby team in the fall of that year. A year later, she was named the team's most valuable player and led the Islanders to their first college championship.

During her pursuit of a physical education degree at McGill University, Gillian played with the Martlets. In her rookie year, she led the league in scoring and was named to the All-Conference team. Her skill level and contribution to women's rugby at McGill was recognized by the McGill Tribune as one of McGill's top twenty athletes of all time.

Throughout this period and beyond she was also a mainstay of the Sainte-Anne's rugby club playing through twenty-two seasons. She had the opportunity to represent Québec eighteen times and won the national championship in 2001 and 2002.

She had also been recognized by Rugby Canada as a highly skilled player and became a national team player while still at John Abbott.

NATIONAL TEAM HIGHLIGHTS
• Debuted for Canada in the 1994 World Cup in Scotland at age eighteen
• Played in a record 66 international matches
• One of only five players to play in five World Cup tournaments (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010)
• Selected to the All-World team to play against the world's number one team, the New Zealand Black Ferns

Her ability to adapt to the needs of her team and contribute to all aspects of the game was an indication of her remarkable skills. A constant offensive threat, Gillian led the team in scoring; she was also a stalwart defence.

Gillian's ultimate acknowledgement as a remarkable rugby player was provided by Rugby Canada. Among the eight awards presented annually, the Gillian Florence (Players' Player Award) recognizes the player who best represents the qualities of Canadian rugby as voted by her teammates. It is the only award which honours a player in its title. She was inducted into the Canadian Rugby Hall of fame in 2016 becoming the first woman to receive that honour. Simply stated by Rugby Canada within its description of her accomplishments: *"An astonishing talent, Florence is the most decorated Canadian female player of all time after a fantastic two decade plus career"*.

Gillian retired from international competition in 2011 and now lives in Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia with her family.