

CUP MATCHES AGAINST LONDON IRISH

Gloucester Rugby have met London Irish eleven times previously in cup competitions, and have come out winners in seven of them. The points difference to date is 323-217 in favour of the Cherry and Whites.

The teams first met in the John Player Cup on 28th February 1981 at Sunbury-on-Thames. Tries from Richard Mogg and Steve Boyle put Gloucester ahead at half-time, and Padraig Conway squeezed over in the corner to secure a 22-13 win.

The only success enjoyed by Irish at Kingsholm came in a Powergen Cup match on 15th November 2003. Gloucester were the cup holders, having defeated Northampton a few months earlier at Twickenham. But in their first match as champions, they spent nine minutes of added time at the end of the match, camped on the Irish line, but unable to get over, so went down 29-35.

The most notable encounter was a rip-roaring finale to the European Challenge Cup campaign of 2005-06. Gloucester came into that game having won all six of their pool games, demolishing Brive in the quarter-final, and slugging it out against Worcester in the semi-final. So, on to a nerve-racking but glorious final under the lights at the Stoop on 21st May 2006:



Mike Tindall with Andy Hazell in support at the Stoop

GLOUCESTER 36 LONDON IRISH 34

London Irish opened the scoring with a brace of penalty goals before Gloucester responded with a try fashioned by Mike Tindall and scored by Mark Foster. Andy Hazell powered over for a second. Delon Armitage grabbed one back for Irish, but two penalties and a conversion by Ryan Lamb saw Gloucester 18-13 ahead at the interval.

Ludo Mercier replaced Lamb and slotted a couple of penalties, but Irish were pressing when Sinbad intercepted, and there was no catching him over 50 metres, to put Gloucester 12 points to the



Gloucester celebrate their win

good. Irish fought back hard, David Paice and Robbie Russell drove over for tries, but the second conversion was missed, which sent the game into extra time.

The Exiles went ahead with a penalty, but Jamie Forrester brought off a sensational winning try, kicking the ball ahead, winning the race for it, and touching the ball down just as it was about to roll over the dead ball line.

The Gloucester team which brought the trophy home to Kingsholm:

R Thirlby; J Simpson-Daniel, M Tindall, A Allen, M Foster; R Lamb, P Richards; P Collazo, M Davies, J Forster, J Pendlebury, A Brown, P Buxton (captain), A Hazell, J Forrester;

Replacements: O Azam, G Powell, A Eustace, L Narraway, L Mercier, J Bailey

The teams next met in the LV= Cup on 5th February 2011 at Kingsholm:

GLOUCESTER 41 LONDON IRISH 8

Gloucester ran riot in the first half, being awarded a penalty try in addition to those run in by Tim Molenaar, Charlie Sharples and big Jim Hamilton. They had secured the bonus point within half an hour, and another from Olly Morgan gave them a handsome half-time lead at 29-3.

Not surprisingly, Gloucester eased off after the restart, but found their mojo again in the last ten minutes, when Akapusi Qera broke tackles to score and Sharples took a reverse pass from Freddie Burns to secure his second.

The teams were drawn in the same European Rugby Challenge Cup pool in 2012-13, and first met on 8th December 2012 at the Madejski:

LONDON IRISH 22 GLOUCESTER 29

Irish scored first with a fine try by Sailosi Tagicakibau, and Gloucester defended for most of the first half, and could count themselves fortunate to be only 6-10 behind at the break, thanks to a couple of penalties from Freddie Burns. He added a third at the start of the second half, but tries

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by Halani Aulika and Anthony Watson left Irish apparently out of sight at 22-9.

But Gloucester then scored 20 unanswered points in the final half an hour. Dan Murphy drove over from short range, as did Burns, who added the conversions and two penalties to complete a remarkable comeback.

The return fixture was played a week later at Kingsholm:

GLOUCESTER 47 LONDON IRISH 3

Gloucester achieved little for the first half an hour, before Sione Kalamafoni powered over the line with three defenders hanging on to him, and Shane Monahan scorched through on a weaving run for a breath-taking try. Kalamafoni then careered downfield to put Monahan in for his second, and Gloucester were ahead 23-3 at the break.

The start of the second half was delayed whilst Monahan threw up in front of the Shed, which raised questions about the half-time refreshment, but then came a golden moment from Rob Cook, who gathered a clearance kick and ran straight through the middle of the defence to score under the posts. Monahan had recovered in time to score his third and fourth tries, but the biggest cheer was for a break by Jim Hamilton, Nick Wood taking it on, and Dan Robson finishing it off.

Gloucester topped the pool, winning all six, Irish came second having lost only their two games with Gloucester. But Gloucester lost to Biarritz in the quarter-final at Kingsholm.

The most recent encounter was in the Anglo-Welsh Cup on 11th November 2017 at Kingsholm:

GLOUCESTER 47 LONDON IRISH 7



Gloucester seemed rusty at the start of each half but settled in, were 19-0 ahead at half-time, and ended the game with a flourish. The seven tries were spread across the team with one each from Heinz, Rapava-Ruskin, Hudson, Thrush, Trinder, Braley and Polledri. The highlights were a touchline dash by Henry Trinder and a 25-metre sprint to the line by Jake Polledri.