

# EUROPEAN CHALLENGE CUP 2016-17 THREE GAMES AGAINST LA ROCHELLE

## 8 DECEMBER 2016: GLOUCESTER 35 LA ROCHELLE 14

In the first of the group games, La Rochelle drew first blood when Kevin Gourdon scored an early try, which was converted by Zac Holmes. Gloucester swiftly struck back when Henry Purdy set up a try for Mark Atkinson. Greg Laidlaw converted. Laidlaw was starting to dictate proceedings, and he added a penalty. He then broke down the blind-side; Henry Purdy carried the move on for Josh Hohnock to score his first try for the club. Purdy featured again with a break, Billy Burns chipped through for Ollie Thorley to gather and score. Laidlaw converted, so at half-time Gloucester were leading 22-7.

La Rochelle had a huge pack, and early in the second period put the home side under heavy pressure. In the end David Raikuna scored for Holmes to convert. Laidlaw settled any Gloucester nerves with two penalties, and gradually the Cherry and Whites pack turned the tables. Matt Scott powered over with two minutes to go to seal a fine win.

## 17 DECEMBER 2016: LA ROCHELLE 42 GLOUCESTER 13

The massive French pack was soon well on top. Somehow Gloucester struck first with a Billy Burns penalty. However, two scrum penalty awards resulted in six points to La Rochelle through Brock

James. The Gloucester defence was then stretched to the limit before Gabriel Lacroix scored a try in the corner. La Rochelle scored two more tries by half-time, to a single Burns penalty.

In the second half Gloucester fought back bravely, and Matt Scott and Richard Hibbard almost scored. Eventually persistence was rewarded when Mark Atkinson broke through and John Afoa scored, for Burns to convert. Unfortunately, any revival was thwarted when Scott was yellow-carded. La Rochelle proceeded to score three further tries, one of which was a penalty try.

The quarter-final saw Gloucester see off Cardiff Blues 46-26, so the stage was set for another meeting with La Rochelle in the semi-final.

## 22 APRIL 2017: LA ROCHELLE 14 GLOUCESTER 16

By this point in the season La Rochelle were top of the French Top 14 League, and unbeaten at home. However, Gloucester had obviously done their home-work. They had to counter the huge French pack. This they achieved by taking quick line-outs, swift scrum heals, and throwing the ball around at every opportunity, to wear out the La Rochelle forwards. The plan worked. La Rochelle became frustrated and Qovu was yellow carded for foul play, Burns kicked the penalty, and added another before half-time. By this time James had also kicked two for La Rochelle.



Billy Burns

After the break La Rochelle threw the kitchen sink at Gloucester, but brave defence kept them out, and Burns even had the luxury of kicking a penalty. Back came La Rochelle, and with a clear overlap, James looped a pass which Burns plucked out of the air, and set sail from his own 22, went all the way for the try, which he converted himself. James kicked another penalty, and it was all La Rochelle; Damien Lagrange managed a try, but Gloucester clung on for one of the best wins in the club's history.



## GLOUCESTER RUGBY WERE LAST IN ACTION AGAINST NEWCASTLE IN ROUND 6 OF THE GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP.

It was a tight first half and initially it looked like Gloucester Rugby would be first to get on the scoreboard. An attacking link up between Matt Garvey, Joe Simpson and Alex Craig got within metres of scoring before Newcastle turned the ball over and Adam Radwan made a break and went over for a try.

Toby Flood missed the conversion but it was Newcastle who were next to score when Matias Orlando caught the defence napping to go through for the hosts' second.

Flood converted the score but it wasn't long until Gloucester Rugby were on the scoreboard themselves.

The Cherry and Whites had a penalty and Lloyd Evans fired the ball to touch. It was a great set piece with the forwards creating a maul at the lineout and then the backs piled in to help it over. It was Jonny May who dotted down, his first score for Gloucester Rugby since re-joining the club.

Just before half time, Gloucester Rugby put in a solid stint in defence to stop a Newcastle try leaving the score 12-7 at the break.

Gloucester Rugby came out with a point to prove and got on the scoreboard through a Evans penalty but in the end, it wasn't enough.

Cannon slotted a penalty and then George McGuigan scored at the death giving the hosts a 22-10 victory.