

LV= CUP SUCCESS IN 2010-11



Ollie Morgan

Gloucester are past winners of the LV= Cup, which preceded the Premiership Cup, but also included Welsh clubs. Gloucester embarked on their 2010-11 campaign as runners-up from the previous season, when they had lost 24-30 to Northampton in the final at Sixways, Worcester. It was mighty close – it looked as though Nicky Robinson had scored a try to win the game, only for it to be disallowed on review. Despite this pedigree, the 2010-11 campaign did not start well.

NEWPORT GWENT DRAGONS 18 GLOUCESTER 12

A trip to Rodney Parade on a damp and dismal evening in early November, ended in defeat by Newport Gwent Dragons. Playing with the wind at their backs in the first half, Gloucester errors were punished, and only a penalty try on the stroke of half-time kept the margin to 13-7. The Gloucester scrum functioned better in the second half, but the Dragons kicked long to keep pinning them back. Lesley "Volcano" Vainikolo scored a try wide out to put Gloucester only one point behind, but it was the closest they came.

GLOUCESTER 36 SARACENS 10

Next up were Saracens at Kingsholm. Gloucester dominated possession despite the visitors' sizeable South African contingent. They played adventurously, while Saracens preferred a kicking game, and it paid off. Charlie Sharples scored an early try, and another by James Simpson-Daniel from a break by Eliota Fuimaona-Sapolo, both converted by Tim Taylor, made it 14-0. Henry Trinder picked off a loose Saracens pass on his own 22, and sprinted home for a half-time score of 24-3. After the break, Saracens resumed with an attack, but the ball was stripped, Fuimaono-Sapolu passed to Simpson-Daniel, who made fifty metres and slipped the ball to Trinder to score. The Gloucester pack was now in full cry, and burst into the Saracens 22 for a catch and drive which saw Olivier Azam score Gloucester's fifth try to popular acclaim.

LEEDS 16 GLOUCESTER 30

A trip to Headingley at the end of January saw a hard fought game against Leeds. The Volcano scored an early try, but Leeds came back strongly and it was only 8-6 after an exchange of penalties. Freddie Burns set up a chip and chase involving Jim Hamilton, and finally Tom Voyce who scored. Another penalty was conceded for a half-time score of 15-9. After the break, Nicky Robinson stretched the lead with a penalty, but Leeds fought back to draw close at 18-16, before two late tries by Nick Wood on the end of a catch and drive, and Tim Molenaar following a break by Charlie Sharples, carried on by Jonny May, settled the match.

GLOUCESTER 41 LONDON IRISH 8

A week later, Gloucester were back home at Kingsholm to take on London Irish, and ran riot in the first half to build a handsome 29-3 lead. The pack advanced 30 metres with a rolling maul, Tim Molenaar scored the first try, and Charlie Sharples soon added a second. Concerted pressure forced a penalty try, Jim Hamilton stretched over the line for another, and Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu put Ollie Morgan in for the fifth. The heat went out of the game in the second half, but in the last ten minutes Akapusi Qera broke several tackles to score, and Sharples took a reverse pass from Freddie Burns to secure his second.



Jim Hamilton

GLOUCESTER 45 NEWPORT GWENT DRAGONS 17

This took Gloucester through to a semi-final, where they again faced the Dragons, but it was a very different result at Kingsholm. The Gloucester pack played particularly well, and a catch and drive led to the first try by Andy Hazell. A few minutes later Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu touched down after collecting from Nicky Robinson, who later intercepted and ran sixty metres to score. At half-time Gloucester led 17-0. Charlie Sharples dominated the second half with four tries, before the Dragons ran in two in the last ten minutes, but it was far too little far too late.

GLOUCESTER 34 NEWCASTLE 7

The final was played on 20th March 2011 against Newcastle at Franklin's Gardens, Northampton, where the sun shone, and Gloucester's stranglehold of possession through the pack eventually paid off handsomely. Early on, slick passing put Tom Voyce over in the corner, Nicky Robinson converted, and then added a penalty, but that ended the scoring in the first half.



Tom Voyce

Another Robinson penalty was the only score before the game burst into life in the final quarter. A stylish move on the left by the Gloucester backs involving Matt Cox, Robinson and Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu sliced open the Newcastle defence for an elegant try. Robinson then exercised good game management to hem Newcastle in close to their line. The backs put together a move which resulted in Charlie Sharples crossing in the corner. There were near misses at both ends as the match ran down, and Eves finally scored for Newcastle to put them on the score sheet. In the dying seconds of the game Gloucester mounted a catch and drive which saw Darren Dawidiuk touch down, and Robinson's conversion rounded off a comprehensive victory.



The Cherry & Whites celebrate their success