

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

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GLOUCESTER AND BIARRITZ: THE HISTORY

This will be the eighth meeting between Gloucester and Biarritz Olympique Pays Basque.

The series started with a pre-season friendly played in Biarritz on a hot evening in early August 1997, and has continued through six rounds of European competition in 1999-2000, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. Every match to date has been won by the home side.

THE FIRST MATCH

BIARRITZ 35 GLOUCESTER 19
9TH AUGUST 1997

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY

The first match between the clubs was played over three periods to allow both teams to use a large squad of players.

The evening temperature in Biarritz was 30 degrees and the home side were further forward in their preparation than Gloucester who faded badly after taking a 12-7 lead.

It was an early opportunity to see summer signings Philippe Saint-André, Terry Fanolua and Richard Tombs go through their paces but the highlight of the game was a brilliant try by Chris Catling who jinked his way round several tacklers, using his pace and balance to beat three or four lines of defence and run round to

▼ Chris Catling



score under the posts.

1999-2000 EUROPEAN- CONFERENCE

GLOUCESTER 22 BIARRITZ 13
20TH NOVEMBER 1999

What a contrast! On a bitterly cold November day at Kingsholm, Gloucester got their European campaign off to a winning start.

It was a fiery encounter between two well-matched packs which erupted into a massive brawl as the first half closed.

From a Gloucester viewpoint the match was notable for two things: an outstanding performance by the young open side Andy Hazell, who seized his opportunity in the absence of club captain Kingsley Jones, and the debut for Gloucester of legendary All Blacks lock Ian Jones who scored the match-clinching try.

BIARRITZ 39 GLOUCESTER 25
15TH JANUARY 2000

Gloucester's European adventure was blown away by a brilliant 26 minute hat-trick by French international wing Philippe Bernat-Salles.

Tackles were missed as Biarritz ran the ball from all parts of the field extending their lead to 36-10 by half time, Gloucester replying with an excellent try for Tai Glassie created by Richard Tombs.

Gloucester came back well in the second

half with tries from Richard Tombs and Neil McCarthy, but they'd left themselves far too much to do.

2008-2009 HEINEKEN CUP

GLOUCESTER 22 BIARRITZ 10
13TH OCTOBER 2008

This was a good result for Gloucester, but was, in truth, a rather undistinguished and very physical battle, dominated by the boot.

The outstanding players for the home side were Mike Tindall, who, as so often, made the hard yards and Olly Barkley who had one of his better days in a Gloucester shirt, kicking four penalties and a conversion. James Simpson-Daniel scored Gloucester's only try.

BIARRITZ 24 GLOUCESTER 10
23RD JANUARY 2009

Biarritz deservedly won this game against a Gloucester side that had travelled with high hopes of victory.

Former Gloucester scrum half Dmitri Yachvili ran the match for Biarritz, scoring 14 points, including a try from his own chip ahead.

For Gloucester, 14-0 down after 15 minutes, James Simpson-Daniel stepped inside the Biarritz defence to score a superb try in reply.

With the half time score at 17-10, Gloucester were beginning to get back into the game, but they were slow off the blocks again at the start of the second half and, after allowing Biarritz an early score from a charged down kick, spent the rest of the match chasing a lost cause.

2009-2010 HEINEKEN CUP

BIARRITZ 42 GLOUCESTER 15
17TH OCTOBER 2009

There can be few better places to watch rugby than Biarritz on a glorious October afternoon. A stroll across the beach in the morning and lunch at a small bistro was followed by a walk along tree-lined avenues to the ground.



▲ Mike Tindall



▶ Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu

◀ Stade d'Aguiléra

The locals were getting quite used to Gloucester fans by this time and the atmosphere was warm and welcoming.

On the field however, Biarritz showed no mercy to a Gloucester side, ravaged by injury. Badly beaten in the scrums and making numerous handling errors in the backs, Gloucester were blown away by a brilliant hat-trick from American wing Takudza Ngwenya, who was unlucky not to score a fourth, and by further tries from Erinle and Courrent.

To give Gloucester credit, they battled to the end and were rewarded by consolation scores for Tom Voyce and for Jake Boer, who played the last half hour, having been brought out of retirement to provide injury cover.

The waiter that evening expressed his deepest condolences (and I think he was sincere...), but by that time they were hardly needed.

GLOUCESTER 23 BIARRITZ 8
16TH JANUARY 2010

This was by far and away Gloucester's best performance of the season after the humiliation of the Stade d'Aguiléra, three months earlier.

Now it was Gloucester who played the creative rugby, taking the game to Biarritz in an exciting first half performance.

Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu and James Simpson-Daniel were outstanding but try-scorers Tim Molenaar and Lesley Vainikolo also had excellent games. Equally dangerous was prop Alasdair Dickinson, who had a storming game in the loose and played his part in a dominant scrum, having looked out of his depth in the first leg.

Biarritz, who were the only unbeaten club in the Heineken Cup at that stage and were firm favourites, were rocked back on their heels and they were the team who found themselves playing catch-up rugby, offering too little, too late.



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