

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

GLOUCESTER V NORTHAMPTON

In 1880 Northampton played their early games under the name of Northampton St. James, which soon gave rise to the well-known nickname “Saints”.

Early home games were played at Abbey Fields, next to the decorative Franklin’s Gardens. And it was not until the late 1880’s the Saints moved into Franklin’s Gardens. Since then, the club has gone from strength to strength. They were European Champions in 2000, and Premier Champions in 2014. Northampton were European Challenge Cup winners in 2009 and 2014. In 2010 Saints won the Anglo/Welsh cup and in 2019 the inaugural Premiership Cup.

It was not until 1899 that Gloucester first played Northampton. The game was played at Kingsholm and Gloucester won 18-8. Tries were scored by Jack Lewis (2), Charles “Nobby” Hall and Walter Taylor. Jim Cook kicked a conversion and a dropped goal.



For many seasons Gloucester had the better of things, and remained unbeaten at Kingsholm for 22 matches until September 1930, when Northampton won 11-8. But for many decades now there has been nothing between the clubs. To date there have been 163 games played. Gloucester have won 95, Northampton 62, whilst six have been drawn. Many exciting games have taken place over the seasons.

5 April 2003: Powergen Cup Final, Twickenham: Gloucester 40 Northampton 22

Team: Thinus Delport; Marcel Garvey, Henry Paul, Terry Fanolua, James Simpson-Daniel; Ludovic Mercier, Andy Gomersall; Trevor Woodman, Ollie Azam; Andy Deacon, Rob Fidler, Adam Eustace, Jake Boer, James Forrester, Andy Hazell. Replacements: Robert Todd, Ed Pearce, Junior Paramore.

Tries: Simpson-Daniell (2), Forrester, Garvey; Conversions: Mercier (4), Penalties: Mercier (3); Drop goal: Mercier.



The final was played in front of 75,000 spectators. Early on Paul Grayson kicked a penalty for the Saints, but Gloucester soon applied pressure and an error by Matt Dawson handed possession to Simpson-Daniel who darted over unopposed. Paul's long grubber kick was well chased, possession regained, and Mercier dropped a goal to make the score 10-3. But after 20 minutes the Saints got on top. Grayson kicked two penalties, and with Fidler yellow-carded, Nick Beal crossed, Grayson converted and Northampton were 16-10 up. For a brief moment Gloucester regained the lead after Forrester broke and fed Garvey who used his speed to beat the defence. Mercier converted. But by half-time Grayson had kicked two more penalties to one from Mercier, which put the Saints 22-20 up.

But in the second half Gloucester became dominant and Northampton would not score again. Fanolua made a break, and Simpson-Daniel almost made it to the line. The ball was recycled to Paul who put Forrester into the corner. Mercier converted, and kicked a penalty after a foul tackle on Paul. Another Mercier penalty meant that Gloucester were nearly there. Then with little time left Mercier intercepted on the Gloucester 22, raced on to half way before passing to Simpson-Daniel. There was only one way that move was going to end.

7 March 2015: Premiership: Gloucester 33 Northampton 33

Team: Steve McColl; Charlie Sharples, Billy Twelvetrees, Billy Meakes, Jonny May; James Hook, Greg Laidlaw; Dan Murphy, Richard Hibbard, John Afoa, Tom Savage, Tom Palmer, Matt Kvesic, Sioni Kalamafoni, Gareth Evans. Replacements: Yann Thomas, Darren Dawidiuk, Ross Moriarty, Henry Purdy, Billy Burns, Elliot Stooke.

Tries: Sharples, Hibbard, Murphy; Conversions: Laidlaw (3); Penalties: Laidlaw (4).

This was a game Gloucester should really have won, but they could not quite finish off the Saints, who fought back well at the end to snatch a draw. It was a fine example of Premiership rugby at its best, thrilling the Kingsholm crowd.

Northampton took early advantage with two Stephen Myler penalties, before Greg Laidlaw struck back with three of his own. Jonny May had to chase back and snuff out a dangerous break from Ken Pisi, before James Hook collected mid-field, and went through a gap to produce options to right and left. He produced a perfect kick from the side of his boot for Charlie Sharples to score amid great rejoicing from the crowd. Gloucester nearly scored again, before patient re-cycling and a catch and drive resulted in a try for Richard Hibbard. Just before half-time Myler reduced the deficit with a penalty to make the score 23-9.

Saints fought back with a try from James Wilson who followed his own grubber kick to score. Gloucester restored the two-score lead when Steve McColl made a fine break, and although not making it quite to the line, patient re-cycling resulted in a try for Dan Murphy. But Gloucester could not finish the Saints off. Wilson scored a second try, then Laidlaw and Myler exchanged penalties. With minutes to go Gloucester still led by seven points, only to be penalised. Saints kicked to the corner, and the inevitable maul resulted in a try for Samu Manoa. Myler's conversion squared the game.

7 April 2019: Premiership: Northampton 31 Gloucester 40



Tries: Atkinson (3), R.Ackermann, E.Slater, F.Marais; Conversions: B.Twelvetrees (5).

This was a fine away win, completing the double over Northampton. The win came at a cost as several players sustained injuries. Tazele Naiyaravoro scored an early try for Saints, but then missed a tackle which let in Mark Atkinson for his first try. Saints replied with a second try almost immediately, but a perfectly worked line out move allowed Atkinson to score his second. That was four tries in the first 15 minutes!

Team: Tom Hudson; Charlie Sharples, Mark Atkinson, Billy Twelvetrees, Matt Banahan; Danny Cipriani, Willi Heinz; Fraser Balmain, Franco Marais, Josh Honeck, Ed Slater, Franco Mostert, Ruan Ackermann, Jaco Kriel, Ben Morgan. Replacements: Callum Braley, Val Rapava-Ruskin, Jake Polledri, Freddie Clarke, Tom Savage, Tom Seabrook, Ruan Dreyer, Mike Sherry.

Ruan Ackermann powered over, only for yet again Saints to reply in kind. Just before half-time Jaco Kriel broke and put Atkinson in for his hat-trick try. In the second half Ed

Slater forced his way over from short range, and with a 14 point lead Gloucester were well placed. As injuries started to take their toll, Saints hooker, Rees Marshall touched down from a five metre catch and drive, only for Gloucester to reply through Franco Marais. The Cherry & Whites now had players out of position which probably contributed to Rory Hutchinson slicing through for a try. But time ran out before Northampton could close the gap further.

