

## GLOUCESTER JOURNAL

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1890.

### *The Week's Sport.*

Gloucester v. Llanely was the football match in which the Gloucester public centred their interest last Saturday, but the interest was very much lessened, and, in fact, gave way rather to anxiety when the names of the Gloucester team were published.

How could the supporters of the city team expect them to cope successfully with the powerful Llanely pack when five of the very best forwards who are usually to be found figuring, and figuring pretty effectively, on the Gloucester side, were conspicuous by their absence, whilst a substitute had also to be found for the captain ?

However, Kent made an efficient substitute at  $\frac{3}{4}$  back, and the weak spot was in the forwards, as was only to be expected considering that Second XV. men had to be requisitioned instead of such mainstays as H. V. Page, G. J. Whitcomb, A. Cromwell, A. Collins, and T. Collins, who were unable for various reasons to make the journey to the tin-plate town.

On the other hand the home club had their full team up, and thus had a big handicap at starting.

After a week's fine weather, some showers of rain had a bad effect upon the ground, which militated against scientific play.

But, in spite of this the game was a grand one, and was most stubbornly contested, Llanely having a marked advantage in the front, the effect of which was neutralised by the superiority of the visiting backs.

Gloucester played down the gradient during the first half, and immediately forced a minor point, and Llanelly having paid a visit to the other end, and had a shot at goal from a penalty kick, Lloyd kicked to Powell at the centre, with the result that the Gloucester man demonstrated his try-getting propensities by cleverly eluding the Llanelly backs, and crossing the goal line in a difficult position, from which Hughes failed to land a goal.

This put the homesters on their mettle, and they worked up the hill, and Lovering, from a penalty kick, only failed to lower the Gloucester goal by a few inches, a touchdown being the result.

Up to half time, with the hill in their favour, Gloucester were able, mainly as the outcome of effective runs by Kent, magnificent kicking by Hughes, and excellent play by the halves, to maintain an invasion of the home citadel, but were not able again to break through the defence and add a tangible point to their score. At half time they were leading by a try to nil.

Lovering's kick-off was followed up so well by Brazell, that the latter was on the point of scoring, when Hughes checked his progress. The centre was again reached but by this time the patched-up pack doing duty for Gloucester were showing unmistakable signs of demoralisation, and the Llanelly "ups," working well together, carried all before them, the only opposition offered to them which had any effect being the grand defensive tactics of the back division.

Stephen Thomas got over, but the point was disallowed. George's saving was a feature of the game during this portion, and time after time he nipped forward rushes in the bud, and Kent assisted in gaining temporary relief by kicking to the centre.

Llanelly were not to be denied, however, and coming again with a well-nigh irresistible rush, Hughes was only able to save close to the line, with the result that Rhys Barry, picking up a moment later charged over the line and equalised the scores.

Still further determined attacks were made on the visitors' stronghold, but were met with a plucky defence by the Gloucester backs, Bagwell touching down very cleverly just in time to prevent a score.

Gloucester now pulled themselves together for a final effort, and a combined, dribbling rush was started which was checkmated by Lovering ere it became really dangerous, and the forwards being unable to maintain the struggle, the advantage was quickly lost, Llanelly sweeping the leather again into the Gloucester end.

"Gitto" Griffiths continued the advance and completed the effort by picking up and gaining a try, which, though unconverted, decided the match in favour of the Welshmen, the scores reading – Llanelly 2 tries, 3 minors; Gloucester one try, one minor.

This result is not such as to give cause for despondency in the Gloucester camp, but, on the contrary the Gloucester team have every reason to congratulate themselves, and their partisans have every reason to congratulate them, on the plucky fight they made, and the narrow margin by which they were beaten, affording as it does very substantial grounds on which to come to the conclusion that had Gloucester not been hampered by the misfortune of being obliged to play a first-cum-second team, it would have been a case of Gloucester first and Llanelly nowhere.

It is significant that it was in the forwards, and in the forwards only, that Gloucester were beaten, and it is a justifiable assumption that, if the five absentees had been there, and had thrown their strength and skill into the balance, the front divisions would have been at least evenly matched.

This would have made all the difference for the Gloucester backs were superior at almost every point, and would doubtless have made their superiority felt in a clear and tangible manner but for the all-important fact that they were playing behind a beaten and, in fact, routed pack of forwards.

When playing down the hill, the Llanelly forwards simply ran over the visitors, but experienced a greater and more effectual stumbling block before they had progressed far with their rushes, and a stumbling block which proved on a number of occasions too sure and too stubborn for them to overcome.

The two half-backs on the Gloucester side, and particularly Walter George, who, for sooth, was not in the best of health, not having completely recovered from the effects of a nasty knock on the head which he received at Wigan, adapted themselves to the necessities of the occasion with admirable effect, and, by showing that they can play, and play finely, behind a demoralised front contingent, in addition to their capabilities when their forwards are in the ascendancy, which are undisputed, gave an unmistakeable demonstration of the fact that they possess a depth of resource which few half-backs can lay claim to, and which is of inestimable value to the team on whose behalf their exertions are put forth.

Their usual pretty passing game had to be abandoned to a considerable extent, and they laid themselves out to supply the deficiency which was only too apparent amongst the forwards as far as the deficiency could be supplied by a pair of half-backs. They tackled and checked the dribbling advances of the Llanelly "ups" in surprisingly successful style.

At three-quarter Kent played a sterling game, and with Bagwell and Jackson supported the halves in their defensive game admirably. He made a highly favourable debüt, as was only to be expected after his successful trial with the county team, and we can but express the hope that he will be available for future service. His running was strong and effective, his kicking judicious, and his tackling sound and reliable, in addition to his saving tactics. Bagwell and Jackson put in a few smart bursts, but devoted themselves chiefly to the style of play adopted by their colleagues, as, indeed, they were compelled to do; but Powell was only conspicuous on the attack, his try, which was the result of a clinking run, being his principal effort.

Hughes played grandly, tackling, kicking, and saving in splendid form, whilst the way he gathered the ball from his opponent's feet and cleared his lines was very fine.

In fact, every man behind the scrum on the Gloucester side played his best, and so far made up for the weakness in the forwards as to avert what would otherwise have been a great calamity, and the reverse sustained should not be regarded as a criterion upon which to anticipate the result of the two important fixtures which Gloucester have still to carry out on Welsh soil, viz., versus Cardiff and Swansea, but the show made by the Gloucestersians rather points to the conclusion that with their best forward team up, they will not be likely yet to allow their old opponents a walk over.

The following were the teams : –

Gloucester. – A. F. Hughes, back; T. Bagwell (captain), W. Jackson, T. B. Powell, and A. R. Kent, three-quarter backs; S. A. Ball and W. George, half-backs; A. E. Healing, E. Ellis, A. H. Gorin, G. Morgan, J. Williams, C. Williams, R. Jenkins, and F. Brazell, forwards.

Llanelly. – J. Hinder, back; D. P. M. Lloyd, T. Mc..... , Llewelyn John, and J. Lovering, three-quarter backs; Gitto Griffiths and Ll. B. Williams, half-backs; Tom Jones (captain), S. Thomas, W. Thomas, D. J. Daniel, John Rees, Elias Jones, R. Harry, and O. Brazell, forwards.

The fact that the *South Wales Daily News* and the *Western Mail*, both of which organs comment on the match, should omit to mention that the visitors were obliged to include a number of second team men in their XV. is, perhaps, not to be wondered at, but when one of these contemporaries deliberately states that both teams were fully represented, and the other gives the names of players who did not go to Llanelly as having taken part, it is somewhat inexplicable, and, to say the least, decidedly misleading.

The *Western Mail* expresses the following opinions on the match:

Llanelly's match with Gloucester on Saturday was probably the finest exhibition of football at the Stradey Grounds this season. The game was all that a spectator could wish – even, fast, and exciting.

Until the whistle blew the game was held in a delightful balance. Playing down the slope in the first half, the visitors showed very superior form, and although for the first few minutes it looked as if Llanelly were overmatched, the "scarlets" pulled themselves together repeatedly and laid vigorous siege to the Gloucester citadel.

Llanelly's tackling was, however, weak, and the manner in which they let in Powell was totally unworthy of their reputation. They atoned for this in the second half, when all played up magnificently, their dribbling and rushing particularly being a treat.

The home pack were in the best of fettle, and unmistakably beat the front contingent doing service for the Cathedral boys. The halves were very evenly matched. Bonsor Williams never played a better game for Llanelly, and George, for Gloucester, saved and attacked in grand style.

The visiting backs were decidedly better than Llanelly's. They passed and tackled with splendid precision. Both full backs played grandly, particularly Hughes, whose high reputation was worthily sustained by his cool and judicious kicking.'

- After the northern tour of the Gloucester team we announced that Wigan had expressed their willingness to return the visit then paid to them by the city club, and offered to play at Gloucester on the Wednesday in Easter week if a ground could be secured for the occasion. This would prove of immense benefit to the Gloucester Club in more ways than one. It would be certain to result in a considerable replenishing of the club's coffers, as well as affording the team an opportunity of bringing their full strength to bear upon the lads from the Palatinate, and of reversing the decision arrived at on the latter's ground.

We also suggested that Budding's field might, perhaps, be obtained for the match, and it was with a deep sense of regret that we learnt the other day of the high price asked for the use of the ground during one afternoon.

The deputation who waited upon the proper authority for the purpose of ascertaining the figure at which the field might be had, were led to believe that they would be able to have it for the usual charge of 10s., but a subsequent reply placed the charge at £5, which the club would not hear of, and which appears somewhat exorbitant.

Thus, unless some other ground is forthcoming, the match will not be played, and we mention it for the purpose of urging upon all interested in the club's welfare the desirability of using every endeavour to place a ground at its disposal.