

GLOUCESTER JOURNAL

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The Week's Sport.

The second engagement of the Gloucestershire team came off at the Spa on Saturday last, the visiting county being our old opponents, Devonshire. The conditions under which the match was played were anything but encouraging, and were calculated rather to allay than to excite public interest.

During the preceding week the weather had been very treacherous and a good deal of rain had fallen, whilst, after the hopes of the Gloucester football enthusiasts had been raised by the promising weather of Friday, they were dashed to the ground on Saturday morning by a renewal of the unwelcome wet.

Of course this rendered the ground very heavy and another circumstance which did not tend to increase the importance of the fixture was that the home county had the greatest difficulty in raising a team; and when at last their efforts were successful in placing 15 men on the field, the team was not one which might be expected to strike terror to the hearts of the visitors.

Marshall, the new Gloucester three-quarter back, Bagwell, W. George, H. C. Baker, A. E. Healing, and E. Leonard, occur to us as the most notable absentees, and it was behind the scrummage that the team was weakest.

Hughes was in his place at full back, as were the captain at three-quarter, and Ball at half, but the other three-quarters were Whitcomb, the Gloucester forward, and H. George of the city Second XV., whilst Phelps, also of the Second, took George's place on the skirts of the "scrum."

There were various reasons for this non-representative combination, but we will merely mention two. Walter George, we regret to learn, strained the muscles of his leg in the Old Merchant Taylors match, and was consequently unable to turn out, whilst Bagwell refused to do so, preferring to watch the game from the ropes.

With regard to the former we sincerely trust that he will speedily recover from his injury, both for his own sake, and for that of the Club; and as regards Bagwell we are informed some misunderstanding has arisen which it would be well to clear up. It is an open secret that Bagwell took offence at not being picked in the first instance to represent the county against Somerset, and, perhaps, had there been any grounds for it, justifiably so. But, as a matter of fact, he was the first player chosen as centre three-quarter to play against Somerset. When the county committee picked the team to represent Gloucestershire in that match, they left the centre three-quarter place open, and gave the city selection committee power to choose between Brown and Bagwell, after seeing their play in the Swansea and Cardiff matches at the Spa. However, in the Cardiff match, Grist, who had been chosen as wing three-quarter, was injured, and this made room for both Brown and Bagwell, who were accordingly asked to play. Having stated the facts concerning this matter, we should not imagine that Bagwell will still consider himself very much aggrieved, and we will return to Saturday's game.

Putting against this so-called Gloucestershire team the full strength of Devonshire, the former's chance of success appeared a little shady before the match, and had they not played up in surprising fashion they would undoubtedly have had a severe reverse to put up with instead of a highly-meritorious victory to compliment themselves upon.

Notwithstanding all the deterring influences a fine game resulted from the meeting, a deal of interest in the encounter being denoted by the splendid attendance, whilst the excitement during a large portion of the game ran very high.

Not many minutes from the kick-off, some clever passing, in which several forwards took part, gave T. Collins an opportunity, and he fell over the Devon goal line with a try, amidst tremendous cheering. The place was close to the touch-line, and Hughes could not convert the point; but the home men, not to be denied, continued to press their opponents, and a minor was quickly followed by a second try, T. Collins again distinguishing himself by taking the leather in a line-out a few yards from the goal line, and scrambling over close to touch. Hughes could not send the ball over the cross-bar, and, after another minor point had been gained, the visitors worked out to safer quarters, and Willcox, making a brilliant run, passed to Body, near the home goal, enabling the latter to score an easy try, which was not improved upon.

At half-time Gloucestershire had scored two tries and two minors to their opponents' try, and after the usual "breather," the game was so stubbornly contested that a couple of minors to Devon were the only points added, the play being most exciting and interesting, so that when the time arrived for the suspension of hostilities, the score stood in favour of the Gloucestershires, the margin being one try.

The home forwards were more than a match for the visitors, being stronger in the tight packs and more effective in the loose, but the position where the greatest disparity existed between the teams was at half, where Ball and Phelps played hard and well, and prevented the pair opposite them from passing at all.

The Devon three-quarter backs were far superior to the home trio, their kicking being more serviceable, whilst in running there was no comparison. But the visitors failed utterly to take advantage of this fact, and it was only on a few occasions that either of the three-quarters got a chance to make much headway, though in those few instances they gave sufficient evidence of their ability to cause some additional anxiety to the well-wishers of Gloucestershire. H. V. Page was in grand form, and was constantly to the fore with some fine pieces of play. He followed up, dribbled, tackled, ran, passed, and pushed all equally well, and was the best forward on the ground, whilst Smith, of Cambridge University, was also in evidence, and played a remarkably fine game.

Of the other forwards all played well, A. Collins being amongst the best. Before passing from the forwards we should like to remark that Cromwell plays an unnecessarily "vigorous" game.

Hall worked like a horse, and was seen to as great advantage as on any occasion this season, his collaring being particularly fine, and though Phelps was a little erratic and uncertain at times, he acquitted himself, on the whole, creditably. Hubert George hardly came up to expectations, his tackling being feeble, but he made one or two neat runs. Whitcomb was chiefly noticeable for his collaring, but Brown played all round better than we have ever seen him before. He was much ahead of his two colleagues, and got through an astonishing amount of good work. He was tricky, often gained a lot of ground by his peculiar punts, passed accurately, and was safe at collaring; but the chief feature of his play was his saving tactics, for he never allowed the ball to be taken past him once, except when kicked out of his reach, and whenever a dribble was started by the visitors he invariably barred their progress. Hughes, too, was in his best form; having said this, there is no necessity for further comment.

The visitors' full back did not appear to be a very brilliant exponent, but Willcox and Holme-Davies at wing three-quarter proved themselves to be dashing players, and it was fortunate for the home team that the Devon half-backs were over matched, and were not allowed to feed their three-quarters as assiduously as they should have done. Toller, in the centre, also played a sterling game. The visiting forwards dribbled well on occasions, Williams, Bennett, Ashworth, and Toller being, perhaps, the pick.

The following were the teams : –

Gloucestershire. – A. F. Hughes, back; C. E. Brown (captain), H. George, G. Whitcomb, three-quarter backs; T. Phelps, S. A. Ball, half-backs; S. W. Browne, (Bristol), H. V. Page, A. Collins, T. Collins, A. Cromwell, and R. C. Jenkins (Gloucester), J. Smith (Cambridge University), Lockey (Bristol), Edwards (Bristol), forwards.

Devon. – C. G. Middleton, back; H. Holme-Davies, M. H. Toller, J. Willcox, three-quarter backs; J. Davies, W. Sayer, half-backs; G. Body, H. Toller, C. Hawkins, W. Ashford, W. M. Ball, G. Williams, G. Bennett, C. Collier, L. H. Biddle, forwards.

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