

GLOUCESTER JOURNAL

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The Week's Sport.

A week ago yesterday the Gloucester football team left this city bound for Manchester, thus commencing the first Northern tour the club has ever undertaken. The usual team went, with a few exceptions, viz., the absence of H. V. Page, A. Cromwell, and R. C. Jenkins from the front division, and the unexpected presence of R. Grist, the popular three-quarter back, who was thought to have ended his football days with an unfortunate fall on the Spa in the match against Cardiff in December last, when his weak and bandaged shoulder gave way once more, and he had to leave the field. However, thinking that he might play a great many times, and never place such a strain upon the protection to his shoulder again, he expressed his willingness to give it another trial, and was consequently included in the team to meet the well-known and powerful Swinton XV., at the last named "village" on Saturday last.

The villagers, or "Lions," as they are commonly called in the north, had to rue the absence of their International three-quarter backs, J. Valentine, and Bumby, the Lancashire county half-back, but otherwise collected their full strength.

Powell, who went up as reserve, did not play, Grist taking his usual place. The match was played in splendid football weather, and the ground was in excellent condition and, as might be expected, a fine and interesting game resulted. The attendance, however, was not large, the gate money only amounting to £24 odd, the visiting club receiving the trumpery sum of £10 as half the nett receipts. Financially, this was not a promising start, and there is not the slightest doubt but that the club will realise a considerable loss on the tour.

The game resulted, as most of our readers know, in favour of Swinton, and this seems to be due, in part to good fortune, and in part to the inability of the Gloucester wing men to take the passes given to them. This gives rise to a question as to the wisdom of playing Grist after his lengthy rest, but his dodging powers and pace are sufficiently well known and appreciated to prevent any stigma being cast upon the committee for selecting him in preference to Powell, who is in regular form, the chance of his being a trifle off colour owing to want of practice being out-weighed by his scoring ability when once under weigh.

The home team, playing the three three-quarter system, had one more forward than Gloucester, who, of course, stuck to their old plan. Swinton pressed early into the Gloucester half, but Bagwell was soon prominent with one of his dodgy bursts, and gained the centre. Then a bit of genuine pushing, and smart passing by George, Jackson, Bagwell, and Grist placed the "Lions" on the defensive, but not to be penned, Mills, Marsh, and Murray were instrumental in taking the play to the Gloucester end, only for J. Williams to dribble splendidly out again.

Marsh looked dangerous with a dribble, Bagwell having fumbled, but Hughes saved and returned finely, the result being, however, that from the next scrummage Mills, the veteran half-back, got clear away, and, running past all opposition, scored, Paul capping the effort with a splendid goal.

From now to half-time Gloucester had the best of matters, and several opportunities offered themselves for effecting a score, but these were not accepted, mainly through the wing men missing passes. Grist made one bad mistake in this direction, and Brown was also faulty, but the passes were not so good as they might have been.

The first item of importance after the interval was a dashing run by C. Williams, who was collared by O'Kell when nearly in, and Grist made an excellent run, which was only prevented from having a tangible result by the leech-like tackling of O'Kell.

Thus put on the aggressive Gloucester now worked with a will, and gave the Swintonians a warm time of it for a considerable period. Brown got a chance, but was too slow in getting off and kicked across to Grist, who, assisted by Ellis, rushed the leather over the goal line and seemed certain to score, when Hotchkiss appeared upon the scene, and, just at the right moment, kicked the ball dead.

Thus thwarted, the visitors by no means gave up the attack, but kept up the assault with the utmost vigour, the outcome being that Jackson dribbled over the goal line, and was prevented from scoring by O'Kell falling on the ball. Grist essayed another determined attempt to secure the coveted point, and effected a fine run, though he did not accomplish his object, the only addition to the score being registered by Swinton. Hallam ran to the centre, and some capital passing between Hotchkiss, Mills, Marsh, and Murray proved effectual, the latter scoring near the corner flag, and the difficult kick being undertaken and grandly negotiated by Paul. The score at the close was thus, Swinton two goals; Gloucester two minors.

The *Athletic News* (Manchester), commenting on the match, says: – In the match between Gloucester and Swinton last Saturday, the visitors were singularly unfortunate in working out the passing tactics of their four three-quarter back system. Chances seemed to be literally thrown away time after time by the butter-fingered gentry on the wing, but, though they missed so many good things, they were certainly unlucky in getting unfavourable decisions from the referee in two cases where tries would have been an almost positive result.'

The Wigan match is described as the better of the two in every respect, though here again Gloucester had exceedingly hard lines in not scoring on one occasion at least. Wigan won the game by reason of their forwards, who played a fine game. They are of very uniform height and build, there being very little disparity between them; they packed close and tight, pushed together as one man, and carried everything before them on the majority of occasions.

The Gloucester forwards managed to effect an occasional wheel, but these performances were few and far between, whilst being unable to get in front of the ball they could not practice their usual game of heeling out, so that the halves had to wait for the ball until it was rushed through the "scrum" by the opposing forwards.

Considering the fact that they were thus beaten in the front, the Gloucester backs played remarkably well and repeatedly gained the plaudits of the spectators. Bagwell got through a deal of hard work, and seemed always in the right place at the right moment, whilst Grist delighted the onlookers with some of his sensational runs, one in particular being truly remarkable, and earning for him loud applause. He took a pass from Bagwell inside his own 25 line, and, putting on the pace, dodged beautifully past the whole team, and had a clear course in front of him to the goal. However, the slope of the ground, which was considerable, rendered the distance after the exertion of dodging too great for him, and when only a few yards from the goal line he fell winded, and was soon beneath several pursuers. This was hard lines for Grist and the visiting team.

In both the matches Jackson was useful on account of his judicious kicking, and Powell, who played against Wigan in the absence of Brown, who had left for home owing to indisposition, played well in every particular except in the collaring department, which is his weak point, and here he was decidedly wanting, two of the tries scored by Wigan being in a great measure the result of palpable mistakes on his part. Hughes played a good sound game in each match.

The Wigan backs, as is the custom in most northern teams, kick much more frequently than do the backs in this district, and they often gained a lot of ground on Monday by kicking over the heads of the opposing three-quarters, following up, and again securing possession.

The pick of the Gloucester forwards were Whitcomb, Healing, and C. Williams, and it goes without saying that against such a pack as that of Wigan they greatly missed their three absentees.

The score was a goal and two tries to nothing, but though they failed to win a match, the tour will not be without benefit to the players and the standing of the club.

The referee in the Swinton match gave the utmost dissatisfaction, and repeatedly decided against Gloucester, when they were clearly right. It is even said emphatically that had Mr. T. R. Sutton, who officiated in that capacity at Wigan, taken the place of the official at Swinton, Gloucester would have come home with an equal number of wins and losses.

The financial aspect of the tour is hardly satisfactory, but the team have proved themselves foemen worthy of the steel of the best clubs in the North, and as a result, when Northern clubs are touring in the South of England and Wales, we shall have evidences of the value of a tour such as that which concluded on Tuesday last, by the receipt of challenges from these clubs to play on our own ground. Already this is apparent, as the Wigan club, who have arranged for an Easter tour in Wales, have offered to play Gloucester on the Wednesday in Easter week if the latter can secure a ground. There should be no difficulty in obtaining Budding's Field for that day, and the prices for admission being a matter for the club independently to decide, there should be no difficulty in wiping out the debit balance of £40 which stands against the club as a result of the Northern tour.

Swinton who will be touring in the South at the commencement of next season, have also expressed their willingness to visit Gloucester. At Swinton 1,546 people paid for admission at the various turnstiles, the prices ranging from 3d. to 1s., and the receipts after payment of expenses is not yet known, but it is anticipated that about £10 will accrue to Gloucester as half of the nett. At Wigan the number who paid was 1,771, and the receipts amounted to £27 1s. 10d., and as Gloucester have half of that sum, the total receipts of the visiting club in respect of the tour will be about £24, which considering that the expenditure was £62, leaves a loss of about £38.

The tour was thoroughly enjoyed by the team, who spent an extremely pleasant time, and every man conducted himself in a thoroughly creditable manner. The only drawback was a black fog which hung over Manchester during the whole of the time the party were there, but this was not allowed to interfere with the enjoyment.

The following were the teams in the Swinton match : –

Swinton : T. O'Kell, back; S. Roberts, J. Marsh, and H. Murray, three-quarter backs; A. Marsden and J. Mills, half-backs; C. H. Horley, A. G. Paul, N. Hotchkiss, F. Lomax, W. Walker, T. Hallam, T. Clayton, W. Evans, and T. H. Astall, forwards.

Gloucester : A. F. Hughes, back; C. E. Brown (captain), T. Bagwell, W. Jackson, and R. Grist, three-quarter backs; W. George and S. A. Ball, half-backs; A. E. Healing, C. Williams, J. Williams, T. Collins, A. Collins, E. Ellis, J. G. Witcomb, and G. Jones, forwards.

Against Wigan T. B. Powell took the place of C. E. Brown, and Gorin that of Jones, but otherwise the team was identical with the above, whilst the Wigan team was as follows :

J. Halliwell, back; W. Lund, Richard Seddon, and J. Roberts, three-quarter backs; W. Halliwell, and W. Cross, half-backs; T. Brayshaw. W. Atkinson, E. Dempney, J. Hatton, R. Wardle, J. E. Lowe, J. Telford, Robert Seddon, and J. Higgings, forwards.

- Gloucester II. met a team from Hereford last Saturday at the Spa, and succeeded in beating their opponents, who turned up several men short, by a goal to nil. The game was for the greater part of the time very tame, and characterised by a good deal of unnecessary roughness. We regret to hear that James, one of the home three-quarters, has since been incapacitated by an injury he received to his knee.