

GLOUCESTER JOURNAL

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1890.

The Week's Sport.

Four goals and three tries ! Nil !! Surprise of surprises !!! The tremendous crowd who thronged the G.W.R. platform at Gloucester on Saturday started on their trip to the home of the Cardiffians in the highest of spirits, excited, and expectant; the same crowd presented a different aspect on commencing the return journey – disappointed, down-hearted, and perplexed.

There was a marked absence of that enthusiasm which characterised the departure of the team and its supporters from the Welsh Metropolis last year, after the memorable struggle and victory of the Gloucesterians. On that occasion all were in the best of moods, and there was general rejoicing and merrymaking, the climax of the enthusiastic demonstration being reached when the conquering XV. arrived home and were "chaired" round the town led by a brass band playing "See the conquering hero comes," and amidst great excitement and cheering.

This was all displaced on Saturday by "weeping and gnashing of teeth," and the only signs noticeable were those of mourning and lamentation.

To be beaten for the third time in one season by Cardiff is bad enough, and sufficient to cause widespread regret amongst the well-wishers of "ye faire citye," but to have such a thrashing, such a complete and unmitigated rout, administered by the team whom we had hoped to beat, and with whom we have claimed equality, is a bitter pill to swallow, the more so as every effort had been put forth to whip up the strongest possible team, and the combination which journeyed to Cardiff was thought to be, and certainly was on paper, almost the best that Gloucester could place in the field.

It was unfortunate that Healing could not go, but Ellis, who took his place, has often proved himself a valuable player, and might be expected to do himself justice, and when the team took the field no-one would have dared to predict anything but a stubborn and hard-fought game.

Gloucester's misfortunes, however, commenced early for, losing the toss, they had to kick off against the wind, which was blowing rather strongly at the time, from goal to goal, and was a very material handicap, whilst after they had a try scored against them, and a goal kicked from the place in the first five minutes, and had then warmed to their work, and, led by Page, laid a close siege to the Cardiff goal for several minutes before being driven back outside the 25 line, a very much more telling blow was experienced than that of the wind, for Page received a violent kick in the mouth, which cut his lower lip very badly, and prevented his taking any further active part in the game, though he continued in the field of play.

About this time George was winded, and lay on the ground for some time, a great deal of the go and dash usual with him being dispelled by this accident. Then came another incident not altogether calculated to inspire the visitors with energy and determination.

A round of exceedingly smart passing by Cardiff resulted in Pearson running up to the goal-line in the corner, but being collared by Hughes on the line, and knocking the flagpost down as he fell. A try was claimed, and allowed, though Gloucester alleged that Pearson had been in touch, and immediately after this the Cardiff forwards, who were playing very strongly and completely running away with their already beaten opponents, dribbled up to the front of the visitors' goal, none of the defending backs being able to hold the ball, and W. E. O. Williams, picking up, scrambled over beneath the bar, the ball being quickly propelled over the bar by D. W. Evans.

The visitors now struggled on manfully, but were sorely pressed, and narrowly averted further disaster several times. At half-time the score was two goals and a try to nil.

Now it was hoped that Gloucester would rally themselves and take advantage of the wind at their backs to diminish, if not wipe out, this formidable balance against them, but these hopes were doomed to disappointment. The Gloucester forwards had lost their leader, several of the pack had turned out for the first time for several weeks, one had only lately recovered from a serious illness, and therefore, could not be expected to be in his ordinary health and strength, to say nothing of training.

Was it, therefore, to be wondered at that their half hour's struggle against the wind, and the extraordinary exertions which they had been compelled to put forth in order to keep the powerful, heavy, and numerically stronger Cardiff pack at bay as well as they had succeeded in doing, combined with their adverse fortune, should have taken out of them all the go and spirit which should have characterised their play if they were to meet with any success? Their combination, too, which had been looked upon as their weak point, and which was not good at starting, was entirely gone by the commencement of the second half, and instead of being able to make the most of the favourable breeze, which, by-the-bye, was not so strong as at the commencement, they went completely to pieces, and offered but a feeble resistance to the fine play of their opponents. This was the secret of the prodigious whopping that was inflicted on the visitors, and though their backs were equally out-classed, there would not have been such a disparity in this respect if the forwards had been evenly matched.

The Cardiff backs played a grand game. They had every opportunity for shining, and they shone indeed brilliantly, passing and running in a style quite worthy of the reputation of the club in its best days. The passing and the way in which the passes were taken was splendid, the ball being transferred from one to another with a smartness, rapidity, and accuracy that made these bouts a treat to witness; whereas on the other hand, the Gloucester backs had no chance to indulge their passing proclivities, and only exhibited very mediocre form in that department of the game in which they were called upon to exert themselves, viz., collaring and stopping rushes.

Unlike their exhibition at Llanelly they seemed utterly unable to hold the ball on many occasions when a great deal depended upon it, and when in a forward rush they sometimes managed to get possession, the rushing pack seemed to experience little difficulty in taking the ball from them, whilst amongst the forwards the same thing was noticeable, for if a forward broke away with the ball he would be almost sure to lose it.

The collaring was loose and weak, all the three-quarter backs and the full back often allowing men to run by them who should, and would, if the Gloucester backs had shown their usual ability in the tackling line, have been stopped. Hughes's weakness in collaring is inexplicable, and we can only express the hope that this, as well as the rest of Saturday's game, was a momentary collapse of form on the Gloucester side which will be speedily recovered, and will be followed by a brilliant and spirited exposition at Swansea to-day.

Speaking of individuals, we will refrain from singling any of the Gloucester players out for comment, and will confine our observations in this direction to the victorious XV. Hugh Hughes was the only man in the Cardiff team who did not acquit himself irreproachably, and he made a number of mistakes in the way of missing the ball, and being collared without having got rid of his charge. He, however, kicked well.

The skipper, Charley Arthur, never played a better game. In fact, we have never seen him play anything approaching so good a one. His running was exceptionally good, and the way he passed with one hand on several occasions was very clever, one or two blemishes in the way of missing the ball being the only drawbacks in an otherwise fine display.

Norman Biggs, who met with a flattering reception, was too well watched to be effective; but Jones and Pearson played capitally. Jarman and Sweet-Escott proved an excellent pair of halves, running and passing in dashing style. The best of the forwards were, in our opinion, S. H. Nicholls, W. E. O. Williams, and Allen; Hill, and Evans putting too much vigour into their play.

As regards the rough play that has been alleged against some of the visitors, we can only say that taking the whole game we saw nothing that could be designated rough or foul on either side, a couple of incidents, one of which resulted in Collins leaving the field, taking place in a spot that was hidden from our view.

The following were the teams: –

Gloucester. – A. F. Hughes, back; T. Bagwell, C. E. Brown (capt.), W. Jackson, and A. Kent, three-quarter backs; S. A. Ball and W. George, half-backs; A. Cromwell, H. V. Page, E. Ellis, G. J. Witcomb, R. Jenkins, J. Williams, C. Williams, and A. Collins, forwards.

Cardiff. – Back, Hugh Hughes; three-quarter backs, C. S. Arthur (captain), F. N. Jones, W. T. Pearson, and Norman Biggs; half-backs, W. Jarman and R. Sweet-Escott; forwards, A. R. Hill, D. W. Evans, W. E. O. Williams, J. Mahoney, W. T. Morgan, G. Allen, H. J. Taylor, and S. H. Nicholls.

Referee, Mr. Heap, Weston-super-Mare.