

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1923.

GLOUCESTER'S TRIUMPH OVER BATH.

CITY FORWARDS AGAIN DO WELL.

THE FULL-BACK POSITION.

COUNTY SELECTORS' HALF-BACK PROBLEM.

HARLIEQUINS' VISIT TO KINGSHOLM.

There were a few pessimists who doubted Gloucester's ability to beat Bath, but the City won handsomely on points, and in actual play were clearly the superior team. Bath's strong finish and their cleverness in utilising mistakes by home players to beat the defence twice in the last ten minutes, enabled the Somerset men to emerge from a stiff contest with eight points to their credit, but the score rather flattered them. Saturday's experience should put the Gloucester players on their guard against taking unnecessary risks when holding a substantial lead. It does not pay in first-class football.

Bath had the sympathy of the spectators in the misfortune sustained in the loss of H. Richardson, but on the form of the visitors in the earlier stages I don't think his presence would have affected the result. Gloucester were too strong forward for their opponents, though one recognises the Bath seven put up a splendid fight.

The City pack are fulfilling the highest expectations, with Voyce more brilliant than ever. What a game he played again last week ! The International came very near scoring on three occasions with typical bursts, and he was always a source of worry to the Bathonians. His dropped goal from 30 yards range was a lovely effort. It was not one of those pot shots that come off occasionally, and the success of which surprises the kicker more than anyone else, but a deliberate aim after manœuvring for position.

Including the Scratch match at Stroud, Voyce has already scored 23 points this season – two dropped goals and five tries. For a forward this is remarkable scoring, but the popular International is a remarkable player.

One noticed on Saturday some very clever work by the Gloucester forwards in the open, and one of the best bits was accomplished by Stan Bayliss, who initiated the movement which led to Millington scoring. This was as fine a piece of combination one could possibly wish to see. Every pass was perfectly given and taken, and the return transfer to the Captain from Sid Brown had the defence completely beaten. A few more tries of the same sort, and the football at Kingsholm will be a sheer delight to witness. Hall, Ayliffe, and Coulson are other forwards who possess skill and judgment in handling, and constant practice should enable their colleagues to attain the same level of excellence.

With S. G. U. Considine among the prospective candidates for the outside-half position for England this season, the form of the Bath and Somerset player was watched with a good deal of interest by the "experts" at Kingsholm. Considine has for several years been in the front rank, but with Davies available he had no chance of gaining honours. It is early yet to judge a player's form, but Considine was not so effective all-round on Saturday as I have seen him. Hughes worried him a good deal, and on one occasion the Gloucesterian forced his opponent to run back some distance. Considine tried hard to escape Hughes' attentions, but he had to give it up and finally got in a screw kick to touch. The Bathonian failed to kick with his accustomed judgment in the first half, and his forwards did not seem to relish the running about. Considine, however, is a fine player, and a valuable asset to any side.

Vowles found Collins a worthy opponent at the rear of the scrum. The Bath captain was inclined to break the off-side rule, but the referee was alert to this infringement, and penalised early on. Collins is playing a very sound game. There is nothing showy about his play, but he works hard and is thinking all the time.

He and Hughes attempted one or two clever moves during the game, and they are beginning to play into one another's hands better. Hughes is very quick off the mark and his solo efforts are very dangerous. He is also one of the best tacklers in the team, and seldom forgets the old motto, "Plant 'em deep." If Collins and Hughes could attain that ideal understanding set up by Gent and Stephens or Dix and Millington, they would make a fine pair.

A. Hall is undertaking his duties as leader of the pack very seriously, and so far there has been a splendid response to his calls. I don't fancy the vice-captain will trouble much about the loose-head. "Get down and push" is his maxim, and if the instruction is acted upon there is sufficient weight in the pack to hold the majority of opposing forwards.

Hall does not show the slightest sign of wear and tear of years of football; he is as keen and enthusiastic as ever, tackles with his accustomed vigour and deadliness, and is as dashing as ever in the open. The City forward, on present form, is a certainty for the County team again, and the honour of captaining the side should follow, both on merit and service.

The inclusion of J. Merry in the Gloucester forwards adds to the scrummaging power of the front. The ex-Cinderfordian put in a tremendous amount of hard work against Bath, and with experience of first class football he should add to his effectiveness in other departments later on. Carter, too, is performing excellently. He strips well, and plays the game as if he thoroughly enjoys it. The recruit requires a little more polish in the finer points, but this will come.

I always had a good opinion of Bayliss from the first time I saw him against Newport two seasons ago. He did not develop his game quite so quickly as expected, but this season he has been in the limelight, displaying cleverness with hands and feet. Bayliss should be in the running for County honours if he maintains this form, for he has height and weight to recommend him.

Coulson and Collier are so much alike in the field that I am afraid "marks" for good work have been wrongly awarded occasionally. Coulson can hold his own with the best as regards football ability, and if he had a few more inches he would rank among the best all-rounders in the County. However, Coulson always utilises what there is of him to advantage, and does not miss much. Collier had the honour of scoring the first try against Bath, thanks to his smartness in being well up, and he is generally with the leaders in advance movements. A very successful forward is Collier, with a penchant for always being "at it."

The forwards, as a whole, have performed extremely well, but I am looking forward to still further improvement. At Northampton, to-day, they were likely to be hustled by A. G. Bull and his colleagues, but I had confidence in the City eight more than holding their own in most phases of play.

In conversation with a City supporter before Saturday's match I gathered he held rather a moderate opinion of the Gloucester three-quarters. Granted the City are not possessed of an International line, I hold the view the form of Millington, Brown, Daniell and Stone, at this early stage, is more promising than anything seen last season. The quartet combined much better than the Bath line last week, and both Daniell and Brown only missed scoring twice each by very narrow shaves. Fed judiciously, and given all the encouragement possible, I don't think there will be much the matter with the City wing men.

At centre, Millington's generalship, judgement and experience have given a distinct confidence to his colleagues, and the Captain and Brown should make a strong left wing. Stone has the correct idea of cutting through, and beats an opponent very cleanly, but at present lacks the happy knack of serving his wing at the right moment. With a few more games I am looking forward to this fault being rectified, and Daniell, furnished with opportunities of showing his dash and pace. The right winger made some praise-worthy efforts last week, and was unlucky in not being rewarded with a tangible score.

One is forced to recognise the limitations of R. James, the City custodian, but at present Gloucester are not in a position to make a change unless the back division is rearranged. James' defence, as already indicated, is his chief weakness, and it is generally felt, on his displays so far, that he will not be strong enough when opposed to the class teams to be met.

If an alteration is made Tom Millington is apparently the only alternative, but it would be a great pity to remove the Captain from his present position, though there is little doubt he would make an admirable full back.

James was given a further trial at Northampton this afternoon and if he could produce the form displayed at Leicester and Bristol two seasons ago, it would be very acceptable.

Saturday was Bath's third successive defeat, but how many clubs could tackle Leicester, Aberavon, and Gloucester in the early days of September and come through successfully? The Somerset men will make amends for these reverses later on, for they are a capable side – efficient in every department. Bath still adhere to the eight-back formation, but Richardson's accident upset matters last week, and the visitors were robbed of the services of the extra man outside.

In Comm Bath possess a useful full-back, and Considine, Vowles and Gibbs did some capital work behind. The latter is a strong runner, and struck me as a dangerous man in attack. The forwards were a set of untiring workers, and are likely to severely test the best Club packs in the country.

The London Harlequins will be visitors to Kingsholm next Saturday, and there is hardly any need to remind Rugby enthusiasts in the Gloucester district, and for a good many miles outside, of the importance and attractiveness of the fixture. The Harlequins first figured on the Gloucester card in 1913, when the Londoners were at their strongest and best.

What a galaxy of stars they brought to Kingsholm! Five Internationals – Adrian Stoop, Poulton-Palmer, J. G. Birkett, D. Lambert, and J. E. Greenwood – and other well-known players were included in the ranks, but Gloucester held their famous opponents, and effected a draw of 8 points each. It was a fine game on a sloppy ground.

The following season Gloucester made history by defeating the powerful Harlequins at Twickenham by 8 points to nil. Lionel Hamblin dropped two lovely goals – all the scoring in the match. The City have maintained their unbeaten record since, as will be seen by the following results;

1913, at Kingsholm: Drawn, 8 pts. each.

1913, at Twickenham: Gloucester won, 8 pts. to nil.

1920, at Twickenham: Gloucester won, 10 pts. to 8.

1921, at Kingsholm: Gloucester won, 6 pts. to nil.

1922, at Twickenham: Gloucester won, 11 pts. to nil.

Gloucester hope to add another victory to this splendid record next week.