

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1922.

FOOTBALL.

CLEVER WELSHMEN'S TRIUMPH.

GLOUCESTER WELL BEATEN AT KINGSHOLM.

CITY'S SECOND HOME DEFEAT.

For the opening of the Christmas holiday fixtures, Gloucester had as opponents at Kingsholm their old rivals from Swansea.

Though the Welshmen have always won consistently at St. Helen's, at home the City have generally proved doughty opponents, and a number of victories have been placed to their credit.

Swansea have not done so well this season, but they are still a powerful side, and a keen contest was fully anticipated this afternoon.

Gloucester were again without the services of Voyce and Daniell, but had the assistance of A. M. David, the Oxford Blue, who played in one or two matches at the commencement of the season.

Swansea were without both their regular wing three-quarters – Frank Palmer and Rowe Harding – but otherwise were at full strength.

Fortunately the weather held fine, and there was a good attendance of spectators.

Teams : –

GLOUCESTER.

BACK : J. C. Collett.

THREE-QUARTERS: S. A. Brown, S. Stone, A. M. David, and E. H. Hughes.

HALF-BACKS: T. Gough and T. Millington.

FORWARDS: F. W. Ayliffe (capt.), G. Holford, Major Roderick, A. Hall, S. Smart, H. W. Collier, A. Rea, and T. Coulson.

SWANSEA.

BACK: Joe Rees.

THREE-QUARTERS: D. J. Grey, R. Smithson, Bruce Barter, and D. Burns.

HALF-BACKS: E. Williams and D. J. Hughes.

FORWARDS: Tom Parker, J. H. John, G. Michael, Harold Thomas, W. Tucker, W. Lewis, D. Hunt, and Trevor Jones.

Referee : Mr. W. H. Vanstone (Bath).

THE GAME.

The Swansea team did not arrive on the ground till 2.15, and the start was therefore delayed ten minutes. The toss favoured the visiting captain, and Ayliffe kicked off against a strong wind. There was a knock-on in taking the ball, and a scrum took place inside the Swansea half. Gough, however, was penalised for not putting in straight, and Rees punted well down to Collett, but the City custodian replied with a fine touchfinder at the centre.

From the line-out the Welshmen dribbled away, and a flying kick sent the ball out of play close to the home line. Scrambling play followed, ending in a fruitless drop for goal, a minor resulting. Gloucester with a fine forward rush, Roderick leading, showed up strongly on the drop-out, and later Collier further improved matters.

Faulty play on both sides ensued, but Swansea gained the advantage, and the Gloucester 25 was again visited. David, running back to field, was pulled down in possession, and matters for a time looked ugly for the City. A visitor, however, knocked on with a possible opening. A penalty to Gloucester was finely taken by Collett, who found touch with a huge punt.

Gloucester improved after this, and a splendid loose rush took the home team to within a few yards of the mark. A forward transfer missed a good chance, and immediately after Millington was only held up on the line by a couple of opponents. Swansea cleared temporarily, but they were soon forced back, Collett being prominent with a short punt and follow-up.

The Welshmen changed the venue with useful kicks, and later a visitor made a mark from a big return by Collett. The kick went to the City full-back who waited for the bounce, and had some difficulty in getting rid of the ball. Play hovered in the home half, until Roderick broke away in fine style and punted past Rees. Hughes raced up and secured, but he was collared from behind, He, however, passed, and the ball was twice exchanged, but the last pass was forward with a try in view. For a scrum infringement Swansea were penalised, and Millington had a shot for goal, the ball going just outside the upright.

Swansea played up strongly after this, and with big kicking, aided by the wind, carried operations to the City half. Here mistakes ensued behind the Gloucester scrum, and Lewis, picking up, made straight for the line. He was upset in time but let the ball go, and Hughes gathering, the Swansea half-back burst over with a good try, which Rees failed to convert.

Gloucester dropped out, and Collier was to the fore with a dashing run and pass. This led to a sharp attack, but the ball being kicked over the line Rees touched down. Collett received from the restart and, running down, fed Hughes, on the right wing, but the latter only made a few yards before being brought down.

Swansea, thanks to good work by Williams, secured an opening in mid-field, but a wide pass to Grey was ruled forward with practically an open line. The City were not doing too well, and Gough had considerable difficulty in dealing with Williams on the other side of the scrum.

The visitors were very nippy in all departments, and for the next few minutes they had the better of the exchanges. Play, however, though very keen, was scrappy, and little back play was witnessed.

Gloucester, following up well, tackled Rees in possession, and later Grey was forced to run back. He, however, got his kick in cleverly under difficulties, and Burns did ditto a little later. Smart combination by the Swansea forwards looked dangerous, and Gloucester had an anxious time. The defence held out, but clever combined work by the Welsh backs only failed in a score through failure to handle.

Try as they would Gloucester could not get out of their half, and more smart handling by the Welshmen looked certain to pierce the defence. A knock-on, however, spoiled one effort, whilst David checked Grey just in time on another occasion.

Still Swansea kept up the aggressive, and the City just now were outplayed at all points. From a movement initiated by Williams another scoring chance presented itself, but faulty handling lost the opportunity. By the aid of a penalty Gloucester at length reached the centre, where play operated at the interval.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
SWANSEA 1 try
GLOUCESTER Nil

Allowing for the fact that the wind had been an important factor in Swansea's favour, the play of the City in the first half was by no means satisfactory. The Welshmen proved superior in general play, and one solitary try did not do justice to the advantage they had.

Play on the restart opened at the centre, but the halves found difficulty in getting the ball properly into the scrum, and the referee tried his hand. Gloucester heeled, and Millington received from Gough, but only punted straight to Rees, who returned well to touch. Gloucester rushed down to Smithson, who kicked back to the left. Brown fielded and passed to David, who had come outside, but the Oxonian stepped into touch and was called back.

Swansea heeling smartly, Williams and Hughes opened out nicely, and some neat exchanges followed. "Forward" was given when the wing man was well away, but immediately after the visiting backs were away again, passing and inter-passing with extreme cleverness. Gloucester were lucky in staving off disaster, but Swansea were not to be denied. Williams, beating Gough, sent Hughes away, and the latter beating the defence cheaply scored a fine try. The goal-kick failed.

Six points up was a well-deserved lead for Swansea. Gloucester resumed, and early on were awarded a free. Millington had a place for goal, but just missed with a splendid kick. By clever combination Swansea eased a sharp pressure on their line, and in turn assumed the upper hand. Gloucester, though apparently working hard, could not settle down to any conceived plan, and their work appeared disorganised in comparison with that of their rivals. In all departments the Welshmen were much the smarter team, and the City were well held.

For a few minutes the Gloucester forwards took the game in hand, and got in some strong loose rushes, but the Swansea defence was equal to all occasions. Swansea eventually worked out to mid-field, where the forwards broke away with a superb dribble. The home defence were beaten, but Collett managed to get back and touch down as the ball went over the line. Following the drop-out the City front shone in a good movement, which left the ball with Brown. The latter essayed a drop for goal, but the shot was very wide of the mark, and Smithson ran the ball out and kicked to touch. Later a penalty was given Gloucester, but Millington's kick for goal was a failure.

Ensuing play was even at the centre, where Millington opened out to David. The centre cut past two opponents nicely, but after making the opening he threw forward with two men well placed. Back Swansea came with sterling forward work, Millington checking, but for a period the City had a bad time. Gough was very feeble at the scrum, and allowed his opponent to get away continually.

Swansea twice went close, but eventually the visitors were beaten off, and a strong effort by the City front changed the venue. Rees, however, stopped them in wonderful style and got in his kick.

Gloucester, however, made headway later and went near scoring. Swansea tackled and cleared effectively, but the home team made desperate efforts to open their account. A neat bit of work gave Brown a chance, but the wing man was well collared by Rees. The ball was rushed over the line, but only a minor was recorded.

The end was drawing near, and without any hope of the homesters saving the game. For a few minutes the City were on top, but never really dangerous, though the forwards gave considerable trouble at times. Just before the finish Swansea made a big spurt, and the City lines narrowly escaped again. The finish came with the Welshmen in the home 25 and well-deserved victors.

RESULT :

SWANSEA 2 tries (6 points)
GLOUCESTER Nil

REMARKS.

There is no use in minimising facts, and let me say at once that Swansea were worthy winners; six points to nil did not represent the Welshmen's superiority. Gloucester were undoubtedly caught on an off day, for the team's play this afternoon failed by a long way to reach the standard displayed in the majority of matches this season. In no single department did the City flatter their supporters.

The forwards, though occasionally doing good work in the open – and here Roderick, Hall, Collier and Coulson were very prominent – were rattled by the fast and clever set opposed to them, and in the tight matters practically went one way, and that not in favour of the home pack.

The Swansea front contained several new players at Kingsholm, but under the leadership of Tom Parker, the Welsh International captain, they did magnificent work. They were not afraid to throw the ball about, and some of the handling of the forwards was equal to anything seen in the passing line during the match. The Welshmen, too, knew how to use their feet, and the cross-dribbling and close backing up baffled the home defence time and again.

At the rear of the scrum Swansea held a big advantage. Gough tried his best, but he was outplayed in all the finer points of the game by Williams, who proved very smart and resourceful. D. J. Hughes, the old Llanelly player, proved an admirable partner, supplementing solo efforts – he had the defence guessing repeatedly with his twists and turns and straight cuts through – with some clever openings for his three-quarters. Hughes' display was as good as anything seen from an outside half at Kingsholm this season. Millington accomplished some useful kicking, but his opportunities for attack were limited, and the marking was so close and the tackling so sure that he was seldom able to get far.

At three-quarter Swansea were clearly the superior line. In the first half several well-conceived movements were frittered away through faulty handling, but sandwiched between these failures were some very clever movements. There was something approaching the old Welsh idea of back play, and if not so brilliantly effective as in former days, the idea was all right. Smithson was very sound in the centre, and Grey did some very effective work on the left wing.

For Gloucester no player was outstanding, for the simple reason there was scarcely a concerted movement originated from the scrum. The line appeared to suffer from the failures in front, and this meant a general fall from the usual form.

Collett, at full-back, on the whole compared favourably with Joe Rees. The Swansea custodian showed splendid nerve in checking rushes, and he generally kicked a good length. Collett, too, did well in this respect.

For Boxing Day Gloucester will once again receive the Old Merchant Taylors, who are represented by the following, on tour :

G. Sanders; R. K. Melliush, W. M. Macgregor, W. I. Cheeseman, A. V. Shenton, and A. C. Abbott; F. H. Collier and D'N. Hodson; R. Cove-Smith, F. C. Archer, G. R. F. Bryant, A. T. Sketchley, R. F. Tebutt, H. H. Fagnani, G. H. M. Earle, G. E. King-Turner, and J. A. Jago.

On Wednesday the City are due at Bath for the return game – (the G.W.R. Company are running a cheap trip in connection with the match – and Gloucester and Bristol Boys appear at Kingsholm.

T. Millington has been notified by the Rugby Union that he is on the reserve for the International trial at Twickenham, on January 6th.

W.B.

JC