

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1923.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL.

GLOUCESTER v. NEWPORT.

The visit of the famous Newport team to Gloucester is always regarded as one of the chief fixtures of the home season; add to this the fact that the Usksiders held an unbeaten record, and one could easily understand the exceptional enthusiasm aroused in the appearance of the Invincibles at Kingsholm this afternoon.

For weeks past the match had been anticipated with the keenest interest, not only in Gloucester and district, but for a wide area round, and applications for the limited number of reserved seats inside the enclosure could by no means be satisfied. All the City Club wanted was favourable weather to easily ensure a record gate for the season, though no one expected figures of 1921 (over £768) to be reached.

What were the prospects? On form and results Newport were undoubtedly strong favourites, but so they were two seasons ago, when Gloucester rose to a great occasion and administered a check to the all-conquering Fifteen captained by Reg Plummer, winning by 12 points to 9.

The names of the defeated Newport team were given last week; the victorious Gloucester side was composed as follows : C. Cook; Sid Brown, T. Millington, Stanley Cook, and F. Webb (capt.); W. Dix, and A. Robbins; F. W. Ayliffe, G. Holford, T. Voyce, S. Smart, J. Harris, J. F. Lawson, A. Hall, and F. W. Warde.

On paper, neither side possessed players of such established reputation as in 1921, but Newport's team work this season has been brilliant, and it is the all-round strength of the side, especially forward, that has enabled the visitors to keep their record unsullied against all comers.

For comparison, the records of the rival teams are appended :

		P.	W.	L.	D.	For	Agst.
Newport	28	26	0	2	357	88
Gloucester	32	21	9	2	370	201

Newport's two drawn games were with Cardiff; whilst the City's defeats were to Cross Keys, Pontypool, Swansea (2), Llanelly, Newport, Cardiff, Guy's Hospital, and Bath. Two of these reverses were sustained at home (Cross Keys and Swansea), so that Gloucester had nothing at stake in the shape of a record to maintain.

It was unfortunate the fixture clashed with the all-important International struggle between England and Scotland, for this fixture robbed the City of their best forward in Voyce. Newport had Macpherson and Edwards away, but the Welshmen are rich in first-class forwards, and they were able to replace the two absentees far more easily than Gloucester could Voyce. However, the situation could not be averted, and despite the handicap the City, if unable to repeat their former triumph, had great hopes of improving on the result of the first match, when Newport were returned winners by 14 points to 6.

Extraordinary rumours were current in Gloucester during the week as to the constitution of the City team – Dix, Roderick and David were all mentioned as certain to play – but the reports turned out to be merely the result of gossip. The team that fielded was as originally selected, and in the Newport side W. Radford stood down out of the nine forwards chosen.

The gates were opened at 2 o'clock, and an hour later the enclosure was well packed, though crowds still poured in, and there was a number of excursionists from Newport still to arrive. The weather, fortunately, was fine, and the ground was in splendid condition for a fast, open game.

The rival teams were enthusiastically cheered on fielding as follows : —

GLOUCESTER.

BACK : J. C. Collett.

THREE-QUARTERS : S. Crowther, S. Brown, S. Stone, and N. Daniell.

HALF-BACKS : W. Collins, and E. H. Hughes.

FORWARDS : F. Ayliffe (capt.), G. Holford, A. Hall, S. Smart, S. Bayliss, T. Coulson, M. Evans, and H. W. Collier.

NEWPORT.

BACK : F. Baker.

THREE-QUARTERS : A. Stock, Harold Davies, W. Jones, and G. E. Andrews.

HALF-BACKS : E. Dowdall and J. Wetter (capt.).

FORWARDS : J. Whitfield, T. Roberts, T. Jones, Mapson Williams, Dr. W. J. Roche, S. Skuse, J. V. Waite, and Ebb Wetter.

Referee : Mr. Gil Evans.

THE GAME.

Previous to the kick-off a visitor caused amusement by climbing one of the goal-posts, and tied a flag of the Newport colours at the top. The crowd at this time must have been well over 10,000. Newport won the toss, and Ayliffe kicked off, J. Wetter returning with a fine touch-finder ten yards beyond the centre line. Gloucester heeled from the first scrum, and the ball went from Collins to Hughes and then to Stone, but the latter was immediately collared. A free to Gloucester saw Baker field the kick and reply to Collett, but the latter responded well and the City gained an advantage. Fumbling behind the scrum lost the City ground, the players evidently suffering from the excitement of the occasion. Gloucester were awarded another free, but Collett screwed the ball almost straight to touch, and little ground was made. Heeling by the City forwards saw the home backs handle, and Stone tried to break through, but was stopped immediately.

A great dash by the Newport forwards looked dangerous, but the City saved close in. A loose rush and a punt by Ayliffe carried play out a little, but the Newport backs attacked with passing, Stock failing to take the final transfer from Davies. Newport made a few yards with a loose dribble, and J. Wetter further improved with a kick to touch. But for feet up the visitors were penalised, and Collett, with a huge punt, found touch near the centre.

Some strenuous forward work followed at this point, in which Gloucester quite held their own. Newport wheeled but lost the ball, and Coulson gathering started the backs going, but the handling broke down. The City were now penalised ten yards inside the half-way mark, and J. Wetter, with a fine kick, only just failed to land a goal, his effort being loudly cheered.

The Gloucester drop-out was charged down, but Brown relieved with a useful punt to touch. Newport lost ground by passing, the Gloucester marking being very close. J. Wetter, however, came to the rescue and got in a clever left-foot kick to beyond half-way. Here Holford fielded, but his punt was charged down, and the ball being taken on by the Newport forwards, Waite was credited with a try in the corner. Baker landed a magnificent goal, and the Invincibles were five points up.

Gloucester resumed with vigour, and had the better of the exchanges. Feinting to pass out, Collins beat Dowdall and started a series of exchanges which ended with Daniell. The right wing dashed down touch and cross-kicked beautifully. A couple of City players dashed up and took the ball over the line amidst exultant cheering, but disappointment followed when the referee pointed for a scrum five yards out.

Gloucester were penalised almost immediately, and Newport were able to clear from a dangerous situation. Collins was prominent with a nice bit of footwork, but was unsupported, and Baker turned the ball to touch. Big kicking by Newport gave the visitors ground, but Gloucester returned to mid-way, where the Usksiders were penalised for illegal charging.

Twice the Newport halves were checked in trying to open out, the collaring being very deadly. Hall showed up with a dash from a line-out and a pass, but a kick went straight to an opponent, who sent to touch well inside the Gloucester half. Here T. Jones dribbled away from a scrum, and later Roche made further headway. Eventually the ball was taken over the Gloucester line, and Whitfield fell on it for a try, which Baker failed to convert.

Newport had taken full advantage of their two chances of scoring, and it was apparent the visitors were great opportunists. Re-starting, J. Wetter shone with some clever play, and the Newport captain had, so far, been the outstanding player on the field. A fine kick by Wetter gave Newport territorial advantage, and a little later he started his backs in a lovely movement which finished with Stock being pulled over by Crowther and Brown. Play was keen and hard, but not free from mistakes.

Gloucester emerged from some gruelling forward work with credit, but a big kick over the line by Wetter forced Collett to touch down. Gloucester gained nothing by the drop-out owing to the kick being charged down, and a couple of minutes later the City were penalised. Wetter had a shot for goal, and with a fine kick covered the cross-bar. This gave his side an eleven points lead, and there was no question as to the superior side.

Gloucester re-started, and put up a creditable fight for the next few minutes. Brown distinguished himself with a single-handed effort, but J. Wetter eventually brought off a deadly tackle. More kicking enabled Newport to change the venue, but the Gloucester forwards responded with a brilliant loose rush. The ball, however, was kicked a bit too hard, and Baker gathering sent to touch cleverly. Even play followed till the interval.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
NEWPORT 2 goals (1p) 1 try
GLOUCESTER Nil

If the game had not been a great one from a spectacular point of view it had been exceptionally keen, with Newport clearly on top, especially forward. The second half opened in favour of Newport, who attacked at the outset owing to mistakes by home players in fielding. The Newport forwards dribbled almost to the line, where Evans picked up, but he missed his kick and the City were in a dangerous situation. Fortunately a flying kick came off at the critical moment, and later Gloucester cleared to the centre, thanks to a penalty taken by Collett.

Gloucester, with a sharp dash on the left, made progress, and Newport coming under the ban of the referee Collett had a place for goal, but his kick fell short. Working well together, the Gloucester forwards burst away in grand style, and Baker was hotly pressed. Several scrums followed in close proximity to the visitors' goal, from one of which Hughes tried to barge through, but succumbed to numbers. Gloucester maintained the pressure, and Newport being penalised, Collett opened the City's score with a good goal, the recording of the points being loudly applauded.

After two fruitless attempts to restart the game was resumed with a scrum at the centre. Here Hughes broke away smartly and fed Hall, who transferred to Daniell. The latter shook off the attentions of Andrews and passed inside, but a good tackle prevented further headway.

[Truncated report; the remainder, of unknown length, unavailable.]

RESULT :
GLOUCESTER 10 Pts.
NEWPORT 14 Pts.