

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1923.

FOOTBALL.

COVENTRY WELL BEATEN ON POINTS.

CLEVER DISPLAY BY HUGHES.

SOME SCRAPPY INTERLUDES.

For the return match with Coventry at Kingsholm the weather was very unfavourable, and had a considerable effect on the attendance. At Coventry at the end of December the City recorded a comfortable win by 21 points to 9, but on that occasion both Clubs had several reserves doing duty.

Gloucester tried three new men this afternoon – W. Pitt (three-quarter), W. Collins (half), and P. Carter (forward). Collins had previously appeared for the premiers, two seasons ago, but the other two players were making their debut in first-class football. Coventry lacked the services of Pemberton and Elton at half-back, the latter's place being filled by A. Furber, an old Linden schoolboy player, now working at Coventry.

GLOUCESTER.

BACK : J. C. Collett.

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

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

FORWARDS : F. W. Ayliffe (capt.), G. Holford, T. Voyce, A. Hall, S. Bayliss, T. Coulson, M. Evans, and P. Carter.

COVENTRY.

BACK : J. Morton.

THREE-QUARTERS : H. Holbrook, R. Baker, R. B. Meikle, and F. M. Davies.

HALF-BACKS : A. Furber and L. Thomas.

FORWARDS : T. Carter (captain), J. L. Cruikshank, H. Morris, N. Pugh, A. Hill, S. R. Bones, J. Grubb, and Nagington.

Referee : Mr. G. L. Jones.

THE GAME.

The ground was heavy in front of the grand-stand, but considering the rain that had fallen during the week the conditions were by no means so bad as might have been expected. The start was delayed 12 minutes, the City team having undergone the process of being photographed.

Ayliffe kicked off for Gloucester, and early on the City backs broke away, but Stone failed to take from Brown. From the first scrum formed Collins secured, and sent out a nice pass to Hughes, and the ball went along the line to Daniell, who cross punted. The home forwards were well up, but the ball bounced awkwardly, and a Coventry player secured.

A minute later, however, Carter picked up and was nearly over. Coventry relieved with a sharp rush, and Hughes had to run back to gather. He attempted to run round, but was collared, and his pass was intercepted by Meikle, who gained the centre before being checked. Gloucester rushed away in the loose, but Coventry gathered. Hall intercepted a pass off-side, and sent to Voyce, who ran over with a good try, which Collett converted.

The visitors resumed, and at once showed up with some good exchanges, Holbrook failing to take the ball with a possible chance. Coventry set up a sharp attack, but Collett relieved with a fine kick. A smart effort and punt by Pitt sent to Morton, who marked with several opponents on top of him. Voyce received the kick, and started a bout of clever passing and interpassing, but Daniell just failed to retain his hold of the ball.

Clever work by Hughes started Brown going, but though the centre broke through nicely he was collared from behind. Play was inside the Coventry half, and was keen and interesting. From a kick out by Morton Voyce received, but his return was charged down. Fortunately it went into the safe hands of Collett, who ran and punted to the Coventry 25.

Soon afterwards Collins beat Furber at the scrum, and dribbled away cleverly. Voyce joined in, and the International, turning the ball past Morton, followed up, and gained possession, finishing up a solo effort by scoring behind the posts. Voyce added the goal points.

Coventry re-started, and early on the Gloucester backs came away with some capital passing, until Meikle spoiled a repass from Stone to Brown. Gloucester made further headway, but an attempt to open out broke down after Stone had cut inside cleverly, and a visitor picking up kicked well down. Coventry, benefiting by some faulty play by the home backs, set up an attack, and they were greatly assisted by Morton, who found touch well. From the line-out the Midlanders rushed the ball over the mark, but only a minor was recorded.

Ensuing play provided one or two smart bits of work, but finish was lacking on both sides. Collins and Voyce were again prominent with good footwork from the scrum, which led to the Coventry line being placed in danger. An infringement, however, gave the visitors a penalty, and Morton cleared to touch beyond the quarter flag. Gloucester lost ground by wild play, and Meikle again intercepting, Coventry had a capital opening, but a reckless pass spoiled it.

Just now the City were playing in very slip-shod fashion, and Coventry had the better of the exchanges. Morton made a wonderful clearance from a kick by Stone in the face of several oncoming forwards, and found touch close to the home line. Here the visitors worked hard to effect a score, and one pretty bout of passing gave Holbrook an opening. The wing man raced hard for the corner, but Collett tackled his man and sent him to touch.

Gloucester got out of a dangerous situation by kicking, but Morton kept his side on top. Just before the end[sic] Hughes, Hall and Daniell combined in some neat exchanges which gained considerable ground, but the latter fell to a good tackle from behind after beating Morton.

HALF-TIME :

GLOUCESTER 2 goals
COVENTRY Nil

Gloucester's play in the second quarter showed a falling away, and with a bit of luck Coventry might easily have had a couple of scores. Coventry resumed, and the first incident was a smart effort by Pitt on the left wing, but he failed to notice Voyce was alongside him waiting for a pass. From a long line-out Baker gathered and put in a long kick, the ball going to touch a couple of yards from the City line.

Play was scrambling, but Gloucester managed to work out to the centre. Here the Coventry backs handled, but Baker passed behind his wing, and the ball went to touch. The home three-quarters were twice set going by Hughes, and in the second instance Daniell ran down touch and cross-kicked. Coulson fielded and handed to Holford, but the latter, being pressed, threw out wide to the wing, but nothing resulted.

A long kick took Coventry back to the home end, where Hughes brought off a great run and pass. The City appeared to have a certain try in view, but the final transfer was intercepted by an opponent, who kicked to touch. The game travelled up and down the field at a fast pace, first one side and then the other gaining the advantage. Hughes again came into prominence with clever runs, but all his good work went for naught. It was keen football, but very scrappy.

Coventry forced two minors as the result of kicks over the line, and for a little time the visitors more than held their own, the forwards doing especially well. In falling over an opponent's legs Pitt fell heavily to the ground and was winded, but he was soon able to resume.

There was no improvement in subsequent play until Voyce, gathering in a throw-out, made a fine dash for 30 yards and pass[ed] to Daniell. The latter got past Morton, but fell a victim to Meikle when he looked all over a scorer. From this point Gloucester attacked, and following some loose footwork the ball was kicked over the line, and Evans was credited with a try, though the touch must have been very near the dead ball line. Collett failed at goal.

Coventry, 13 points down, re-started with vigour, and Gloucester were hotly pressed once or twice. The defence held out for a time, but at length from a loose scrum five yards out Cruickshank picked up and forced himself over with a try, which Morris converted with a fine kick.

Centre play followed the resumption, and then Collett failed to catch a long punt down. He got back, however, and beating a couple of forwards sent to touch in good style. After this Gloucester showed up with some splendid handling, Coulson being very conspicuous, but after a number of transfers the ball went astray in front of goal.

Gloucester were now having the better of the play, and a round of passing left the ball with Pitt, but the recruit had not the pace to beat the defence. The City tried another attack on the right, but it did not fructify. However, two minutes later another movement left the ball with Stone, who with a determined effort crossed in a favourable position for Voyce to kick a goal.

From the restart Hall initiated a series of exchanges, which looked promising for another try, but the movement broke down on the 25 line. Gloucester continued to have all the play, and set up several hot attacks in the closing stages. After Daniell had just been baulked of a try in the corner, Collins served Hughes from a scrum, the latter running strongly and scoring near the posts. Voyce landed another goal, and the end came.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER ... 4 goals, 1 try (23 points)

COVENTRY 1 goal (5 points)

REMARKS.

Gloucester won by a substantial margin, but the score flattered the winners on the run of the play. It was a remarkable game on the whole, some really clever combined movements and individual efforts being sandwiched between some of the scrappiest play imaginable.

Coventry were strong forward, and in the tight scrums they were more often in possession; but the heeling of both packs was erratic, and this proved a big handicap to the players operating immediately at the base.

Collins had no great test to-day in meeting Furber, a local lad who has played for Linden-road School, and I would prefer to see him up against a first-class player before judging his abilities over Gough. The recruit certainly served Hughes with more accuracy than his predecessor, but there was nothing striking in his general form to suggest that Gloucester have found an effective substitute for Dix.

Still, he warrants a further trial, and I would also keep Hughes with him. The latter was the best on the field this afternoon, and emphasised an impression I had previously formed that the more work he is given to do the better he plays. Hughes was especially good in attack, and his quickness in breaking away and clever dodging were a source of endless anxiety to the opposing forces. He also possesses a quick perception of an opening, and the try he scored just before the end was a fitting example of his cleverness in this respect.

The Gloucester backs saw a good deal of the ball to-day, but the great thing lacking was finishing power. As already indicted, there were a number of bright movements; but too often scoring chances were thrown away by a reckless transfer at the critical moment or running the wing man too near the touch-line. Daniell especially suffered in this manner, and though he tried hard he was rarely given sufficient room to manoeuvre. Pitt was watched with interest. He did fairly well, but I am afraid he has not the necessary speed or stamina yet to successfully operate against a good man. In the centre Stone and Brown both accomplished some smart work, but neither was consistent.

The Gloucester forwards had periods of slackness, during which time they were hustled a good deal by the vigour and dash of their opponents. Both teams played an extra man outside, and Hall was often prominent in attacking movements and sound tackling.

But the forward of the match was Voyce, who shone repeatedly in the open, and besides scoring two tries and kicking three goals did a lot of effective all-round work. Other players I noticed particularly were Coulson, Evans and Bayliss, the former being very clever in the open. The line-out work showed an improvement, but the City are not so uniformly good as in the first half of the season, and in this department the players might give some attention with advantage.

Coventry put up a better show than in the first match. The forwards were the strongest part of the team, and all of them played a hard, keen game throughout. Cruickshank, Grubb and Morris were distinguished for special efforts, but they were well supported by their colleagues. Furber shaped very promisingly at scrum half, but Thomas was outshone by Hughes. The visiting third line were only moderately successful. Once or twice by interceptions the Midlanders were presented with fine openings, but judgment was sadly lacking at the critical moment. Morton served Coventry splendidly at full back, his fielding, kicking and clearing being excellent. Collett also did good work, but several time he was too close up and had to run back to field the ball.

Summed up, Gloucester were winners all the way, but the team has not yet achieved that standard of excellence to warrant one backing their chances to beat Newport. There is still three weeks to improve, and the players would do well to concentrate on training and practice to overcome the weaknesses still apparent in combination and effectiveness in attack.

Next week ; Swansea, away; Bristol A at Kingsholm.