

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1929

REFLECTIONS FROM W.B.'s NOTEBOOK.

WHY GLOUCESTER FAILED AT SWANSEA.

TOO MUCH CONCENTRATION ON "SAFETY" PLAY.

CRICHTON-MILLER'S GLORIOUS TRY.

Hopes that Gloucester, encouraged by their victory at Cardiff, would also "lay the bogey" at Swansea were not fulfilled, and that first win at St. Helen's has still to be recorded. On the whole, however, the City team did quite as well as I expected in running the Welshmen to six points.

The inability of Saxby and McCanlis to accompany the side was a serious handicap, though on Saturday it was not the forwards who failed. Where the City was beaten was behind the scrum, there being an entire lack of initiative and thrust in attack, and little in the way of combined effort. Gloucester had their opportunities in the second half of winning outright; the forwards by sheer determination successfully gained attacking positions, but when the ball got amongst the backs there was too great a tendency to kick. At the time I could hardly understand the tactics adopted by Stephens, but I was informed after the game that he was "playing to orders." If that was the case there was some excuse for his display, but all the same the policy, in my opinion, was altogether wrong.

That the Swansea defence could be pierced was plainly shown when Crichton-Miller obtained his try – one of the finest I have seen scored by a forward for a long time. It was not a case of getting

possession and running straight for the line. The old Cambridge Blue had to beat the opposing three-quarters and full-back and travel some 50 yards.

Displaying surprising speed, Crichton-Miller eluded the defence in fine style, and clearly showed the City backs the way to do it. Had this successful effort come a little earlier it might have had its influence on the visitors, who badly wanted an inspiration in aggressive work. Matches cannot be won by wholesale concentration on safety play, and the sooner the Gloucester backs realise this the better for the side.

Swansea adopted the right tactics from the start, and took risks in throwing the ball about. Their first try came from a perfect bit of handling, and they had the extra man at the finish. Boughton did his part in trying to prevent a score, hurling himself at his opponent to get him to touch. But Tyler just managed to get the ball over the mark. The Welshmen's second try ought never to have been allowed, for there was a palpable knock-on yards outside which was allowed to pass. Swansea generally get one of these "specials" against Gloucester.

The third try was certainly an opportunist one, but the scorer had all the luck. Boughton – I could not see who it was at the time – attempted a catch close to his goal line when the ball bounced out of his arms and straight into the hands of Evans, who had only to put the ball down. It will thus be seen Swansea, on the scoring, had nothing much in hand, but that they were the smarter combination and deserved their success. I would not question for a moment. In all the finished football behind the scrum the Welshmen were superior; there was more enterprise and keenness in attack, and better judgment all round.

Swansea were short of five of their regular side last week, but they have reserves of real merit – keen youngsters who possess football ability and are worthy of inclusion in any first-class English club side.

At the outset the home forwards had the best of matters – the City pack took some time to settle down, as they did at Oxford – but Gloucester took command of the second half, and were playing a strong game at the finish.

Heavy rain had made the ground conditions difficult, and a strong wind was a handicap which the City had to contend with in the first half. The Gloucester forwards by no means did badly in the scrums – they were not a clever heeling pack – but their finest work was in the loose. It was attack and counter-attack by the respective divisions, and if Swansea had the advantage, taking the play throughout, it was mainly due to the better support they received from their backs.

Crichton-Miller greatly pleased with his display at Oxford; he was even more effective at Swansea, and that glorious try was a fitting climax to a splendid afternoon's work. The old Cambridge Blue has the pace of a three-quarter – at least of anything we have in the City team – and his quickness in movement and keen tackling are invaluable in harassing opposing backs when on the move. G. C. McIlwaine – a colleague of Crichton-Miller's in last year's Cambridge team – was a big favourite at Kingsholm, and I think Gloucester's latest recruit will please equally as well.

Other City forwards who shone at St. Helen's were Davies, Wadley, Carpenter, and Comley, though Hemming, Russell, and Foulkes put in a lot of sound work and kept going to the finish. The tackling on both sides was very hard, but there were no complaints; all was clean and above board. Swansea had the misfortune to lose the services of Long a quarter of an hour before the end with a sprained ankle, and just on time a three-quarter was laid out in a smothering tackle by Boughton.

The Swansea half-backs have had the experience of coaching by Dicky Owen (who has returned to the Rugby fold), and Evans and Trew made a successful combination. Trew had been doing extremely

well of late, but he was rather subdued on Saturday, though now and again he shone with clever touches. Twice he was closely pressed by a Gloucester forward on either side of him, but with a deft change of foot he slipped them neatly and coolly sent the ball to touch. Price held his own fairly well with Bryn Evans, and got the ball away a sufficient number of times to give the outsides something to do.

But, as already mentioned, Stephens generally put his foot to the ball, and his upfield kicking was not of the best. More often than not the ball went to Jones, who returned with such interest and to touch that Gloucester lost ground. These mistaken tactics were disappointing, but they were continued to the detriment of the side's interest.

Except in defence, the Gloucester third line were not distinguished, either individually or collectively. Abbey, who took up the inside position, accomplished a lot of splendid tackling, but McCanlis was missed in attack. Loveridge was the best of the two wings, but neither got many chances. Orpin made no serious mistake, but I hardly think he will make a success in the outside position. Swansea have a young lot of players, but they have been trained in the right "school." Tyler and Davey were determined runners, and the line handled the greasy ball splendidly at times. All round they were a far more likely set than their opponents.

We had two fine displays at full-back from Boughton and Efyrd Jones. The City player, apart from the one mistake referred to, was at his best, and I have never seen him tackle better. Some of his clearances near the line, too, were wonderfully smart. In the matter of kicking and fielding there was little to choose between the two players, and both were frequently applauded for their fine work.

#### GLOUCESTER A *v.* BERRY HILL.

On the run of the play Gloucester A did not look 18 points better than Berry Hill (writes "R.C."). Territorially it was an even match.

In the opening stages Berry Hill appeared to be a winning team, but the Gloucester backs knew how to tackle, and succeeded in keeping them out. Critchley and Voyce had a particularly strenuous time marking the opposing centres.

However, Gloucester settled down to a hard game forward, and a try resulted almost the first time they heeled the ball. From that point onwards the home three-quarters were dangerous whenever in possession.

Critchley, who took Orpin's place, played a sterling game. He has a useful turn of speed and kicked well. He and Thompson combined nicely on the right, and with Voyce and Pitman on the other wing they formed a strong three-quarter line, and this was the chief factor in the A team's victory.

The Seconds could not claim an advantage forward. The pack worked exceedingly hard, but the Berry Hill eight were a strong combination, particularly in the loose. They were also faster, and their rushes generally gave them territorial advantage, though they did not often result in a score.

Rea, Ken Smith, and Edwards were prominent in the home pack. Ash's tackling at full-back was effective, and he completely over-shadowed his opposite number on the general run of the play.