

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1929

REFLECTIONS FROM W.B.'S NOTEBOOK.

A WELCOME LIFT UP.

WHERE GLOUCESTER BEAT LEICESTER –

ABILITY TO SNAP UP CHANCES.

The Gloucester Club wanted a lift-up badly, and it was forthcoming in bulk on Saturday as a result of the Leicester match. The City's triumph, welcome as it was surprising, was, of course, the most important feature, but with success on the field of play came a substantial increase (£50) on last year's return in gate receipts – some compensation for the disappointing attendance, owing to bad weather, at the Bristol fixture the previous week.

Added to those satisfactory records was the provision of some delightful open football, and an atmosphere was created which it is hoped will be maintained. Gloucester's form in the earlier games did not suggest the City had a real chance against Leicester, even with the Midlanders deprived of the services of Greenlees and Babington.

One fatal weakness with the City team for several seasons has been inability to make the best use of their chances. In this match the players absolutely confounded their critics, and it was their opportunism, combined with a better understanding, that led to a very handsome win.

Gloucester, as a team, were not nine points superior in play. Man for man, Leicester, I should say, held the advantage, but there was

something lacking in the visitors' attack, especially in the first quarter of an hour, when the backs were repeatedly in possession.

I must pay full tribute to the close marking and tackling of the City men – determined and whole-hearted and a big improvement on the display against Bristol – which forced their opponents to pass straight across the ground without making any headway.

No doubt Buckingham's mishap contributed to Leicester's discomfiture, and whilst he was off the field the City gained an ascendancy which was consolidated later.

The Gloucester forwards were hopelessly beaten in the scrums, and in this connection it was remarkable that the side were able to do so well. Sound scrummaging is not a strong point with the City eight, and ability to get possession is still a lost art. Carpenter's absence from the front row may have had something to do with the failure on Saturday, but it should not have been so marked. Apart from this weakness Gloucester performed brilliantly, and they were more dangerous in the open than Prentice and his colleagues, well as they played.

Saxby got through a tremendous amount of work, tackling hard and breaking away with several strong bursts. He was not always backed up properly, otherwise better results would have been obtained. Davies was another notable performer, and his fine display in this match undoubtedly carried him into the County side. Franklin and Hemming also distinguished themselves for special efforts, but the whole eight were well together when the ball became loose, and it was superiority in this department that countered the advantage held by Leicester in the scrums.

Meadows, who came in as reserve for Carpenter, had the distinction of scoring one of the tries and very smartly the work was done. Unmarked in a throw-out, he took the ball neatly and dived over

the goal-line without being touched. It looked simple enough, but players are not always alive to such possibilities, and Meadows must be given credit for his alertness.

Leicester had one of the best balanced sets of forwards seen at Kingsholm for some time, and in Prentice, Beamish (the Irish International), Norman and Coleman four players of established reputation. Prentice maintains his form wonderfully, and he was one of the best of the visiting pack on Saturday. He can also kick goals, and that successful shot of his from a penalty a few yards from the centre was a magnificent one, made without any apparent effort. Earlier in the game Boughton had experienced hard lines with a long kick from a more difficult angle, the ball striking the upright high up and rebounding some 20 yards into the field of play.

Ideal conditions prevailed for the handling game on Saturday, and a good deal of passing was attempted. More finished and accurate exhibitions have been witnessed, but the open character of the play was fully appreciated by the spectators.

The Gloucester backs did not get a fair share of the ball, which was to be regretted, for the players exhibited a better understanding, and there was more dash than in any previous game. Price continues to improve at the scrum, and that he has an eye for an opening was testified when he scored his try – a very clever effort. The Leicester backs were spread out, evidently expecting the orthodox attack, but Price decided on a cut through, and, evading the defence, smartly scored near the posts.

But good as Price's try was, it was eclipsed by Burton on the other side. Here again the defence was tricked neatly at the outset, but Burton had to travel a much longer distance – from nearly half-way. Gloucester players were deceived with a feint to pass on three occasions and the Leicester scrum worker had the satisfaction of recording a well-deserved try. And the spectators did not forget to bestow their appreciation.

Dick Stephens impressed again with another capital all-round performance. He is remarkably adept at gathering the ball, and again on Saturday with the Leicester forwards on the move with the ball at their feet, he nipped back, robbed them of possession and got the ball to touch with neat punts.

This is a feature in Stephens' play, and his smartness in this direction is a great help to the three-quarters. Stephens' opportunities for opening out were limited, but there was one occasion, in conjunction with James, when Gloucester were presented with a lovely chance. A sharp transfer to the vice-captain at mid-field was well taken, and James was through the defence in fine style. There was only the full-back to beat, with Franklin and Loveridge on either side; the transfer was sent to the left, but it was slightly forward, and a certain score was lost.

Burton, who has succeeded J. C. Russell as scrum worker for Leicester, has some good points and he got the ball away often enough – long, swinging passes which were well directed. But his partner generally stood still to receive the ball, and this gave the home defence time to get on top of their man before combined movements were dangerous.

Greenlees would probably have made all the difference in speeding up the Leicester attacks, for besides being an individualist he is a clever strategist. Pott was hardly quick enough to make the best use of his chances, and the Gloucester defenders did the rest. Later in the game the Midlanders did get through as the result of a regulation attack, but Farndon only just got there, being tackled on the line by Abbey.

The Gloucester three-quarters shaped more promisingly than in any previous game, and of the four Loveridge was the most successful. Orpin's defection, owing to a chill, gave Loveridge his chance, and that he made good was a matter of congratulation all round. It was the best game he has played for the seniors for a long time.

Loveridge opened well with some sound tackling and smart clearances, and following his successful dropped goal he never looked back. It was an encouraging display, and a continuance of this form should enable him to keep his place in the side. Abbey, too, enjoyed a good match, going splendidly for the line when served and giving nothing away in tackling.

The Leicester wings – Farndon and Flewitt – have the reputation as speedy runners, but it was on rare occasions they were able to get the better of their Gloucester opponents on Saturday.

McCanlis, back at centre with James, gave the line more stability, and there was a sterner defence than previously exhibited. The Gloucester third line is by no means sufficiently advanced in combination to beat the best of oppositions, but there is no reason why it should not be greatly improved. I hope for satisfactory results from the special training that has been organised; the practices must be regular and systematic, and every player must take a real interest in the work.

But in matches the players must get a decent service, and it is up to the forwards to make this possible by mastering the art of ball control and clean heeling from the scrums. Cardiff to-day and Oxford University next Wednesday week will test the City pack in all departments of forward play.

I have seen the Leicester back division far more effective than on Saturday. Buckingham was the strongest centre until he met with his mishap, and on returning he changed places with Flewitt. Wood was very elusive, but often tried to do too much and got amongst the "crowd."

The handling of the visitors was too mechanical to make headway, and the players were inclined to make the thrust at the wrong moment. As a line Leicester should have done better, but the wing men

for the most part just lacked that determination to go all out for the line at vital moments.

Boughton, at full back, was fully employed, and he came through with an increased reputation. Apart from the one occasion when Burton got the better of him, the City custodian's defence was faultless, and the tackle of Flewitt in the open – a fitting test of a man's collaring abilities – was one of the finest efforts in the match. Boughton's left-foot kicking was beautifully judged, and in this respect he has no superior in the country.

Manson gave a sound display in catching and fielding, and he made no serious mistake except when he let Price through. Altogether a game full of interest, if not of the highest class of Rugby, and with the free scoring the spectators had their money's worth.

RESULT :

GLO'STER 3 goals (1d), 2 tries (20 pts.)

LEICESTER 2 goals (1p) 1 try (11 pts.)