

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1929

FROM W.B.'S NOTEBOOK.

GLOUCESTER v. CARDIFF.

THE DAY !

OCTOBER 19th, 1929.

GLOUCESTER'S FIRST VICTORY AT CARDIFF SINCE SEASON
1897-8.

I had a feeling on Saturday that something unusual was going to happen. Before I left Gloucester I discussed the prospects of the match with Cardiff with an enthusiastic follower of the club, in the course of which the City's poor record in Wales was mentioned. My friend passed the remark : "But a turn is bound to come; why not to-day?" It gave me something to think about.

On arrival on the Cardiff ground two other Gloucester supporters – one from Neath – were quite optimistic. "We shall win to-day!" More encouragement! Taking my seat in the Press stand, I had for my neighbour Clem Lewis, the old Cardiff, Cambridge and Welsh International captain. "You ought to beat Cardiff to-day!" was his greeting. I was pretty well convinced that Gloucester's turn had come.

What actually happened is ancient history now. A solitary point enabled Gloucester to put a check to that long series of defeats at Cardiff after one of the most exciting finishes imaginable. The Welshmen had greatly disappointed their followers for over three-parts

of the game. But they made amends in the closing stages, and came very near snatching a victory.

A successful goal-kick would have done the trick; but Cardiff had not got a Boughton on the side, and all three tries scored went unconverted, whilst two or three penalty kicks in favourable positions were frittered away. Lucky Gloucester !

Well, it might be regarded so, but credit must be given the City for their opportunism in snapping up those two chances of scoring, and making full use of them by obtaining the goal points. And Gloucester deserved some good marks for their superb defence. Well played, Boys ! Team work won on Saturday, and every man in the side shared in the triumph.

The exact date of Gloucester's previous win at Cardiff was April 27th, 1898, and the rival teams were composed as follows : –

Gloucester : Ben Hipwood, back; W. H. Taylor (capt.), W. Dovey, F. M. Luce, and G. F. Clutterbuck, three-quarters; Car Cummings and Arthur Stephens, half-backs; A. C. Williams, C. Hall, C. Rose, F. Goulding, A. H. Click, B. L. Watkins, G. H. Smith, and W. Hughes.

Cardiff : T. J. Thomas, back; F. Bush, I. P. Jones, A. M. Ricketts and J. Driscoll, three-quarters; J. Heaven and C. Halliday, half-backs; G. Dobson, W. Phillips, G. Abbott, W. W. Hughes, W. McIntyre, E. Emery, F. J. Box and J. Blake.

It is interesting to record that on the same day Gloucester A beat Cardiff A at Kingsholm, and England beat Wales at Blackheath. The brothers Percy and Frank Stout were in the English team and, I believe, both scored tries – a great day for Gloucester football.

Two members of the 1897-8 side – C. Williams and Car Cummings – were spectators of Saturday's triumph, and I warrant others

would liked to have been present[*sic*]. As I mentioned last week, George Clutterbuck dropped the goal – I should have added it was from a mark – and scored the try, which was converted by Walter Taylor.

Saturday's events necessitated a research of my record books, as numerous inquiries reached me as to how many times Gloucester had won at Cardiff. As far as I can discover, the first victory was in 1880, when Gloucester won after three drawn games, scoring 2 goals (1p) 1 try to 1 goal 2 tries. G. F. Dere and R. L. Grist scored the tries, and T. Graves Smith (capt.) converted one and kicked the penalty goal. A note recorded at the time says : "On the return of the team to the city they were met with a band and an enormous crowd, the players being carried shoulder high through the streets."

Gloucester won again in 1890-1 by 1 goal 1 try to 1 try under T. Bagwell's captaincy, Cardiff being beaten twice that season. Then followed the 1897-8 victory, not to be repeated until last week. A correspondent desired to know if this was the City's last win in Wales. It was not. In January, 1899, Gloucester recorded their one and only victory over Llanelly at Stradey Park, and Penarth have been beaten at least twice since – in 1900 and 1903. I think my facts are correct, but I know there are some keen followers of the club with long memories and accurate data at their disposal, and as my search through the records has been a hurried one I may have missed something.

But sufficient of past glories; let us return to the latest achievement. No one was more delighted than myself at Gloucester's success, but if I had been a Cardiffian I should have shared with Welshmen the bitter disappointment at so many chances of scoring being literally thrown away. The Cardiff forwards served their backs again and again, but the men behind seemed incapable of doing the right thing. The handling was mechanical in the extreme, and when a player did burst through the final transfer was either thrown forward or dropped.

The chapter of mistakes continued until Stone was moved from full-back to outside half, and then came a remarkable change in the play. It was just as well for Gloucester that the Cardiff captain delayed this experiment. Had Stone operated in the pivot position all through I think the result would have read differently.

Stone was easily Cardiff's best man in the back division, and I can understand the agitation for his retention at half-back. He transformed the Welshmen's attack when he came up to the scrum, and made some brilliant openings. With a better and quicker service from Poole he would probably have done more damage, for he was very elusive and always made headway.

Stone has been doing duty at full-back owing to the regular custodian being on the disabled list; but good as he is in the last line of defence, his value to the side as pivot cannot be over-estimated. Poole has had plenty of experience at scrum half, but he was rather out of the picture on Saturday, and the Cardiff three-quarters lacked steadiness and judgment. Graham Jones did one or two smart things, and the wings were speedy and determined, but the line did not combine at all well. It was here Cardiff were let down.

The Gloucester backs had nothing like the chances that fell to their opponents. But what work they accomplished was effective, and the two tries were the outcome of smart efforts. To McCanlis fell the distinction of making both scores, and the old Oxford Blue had every reason to feel satisfied with his first appearance on the famous enclosure.

McCanlis would be the first to recognise the help of his colleagues in paving the way for his tries, but with the openings made he finished them off in a style that denoted the experienced player. It was one of the best displays McCanlis has given since his connection with Gloucester, for, apart from his successful attacks, he did a lot of sound tackling and was often in position for an emergency.

Roy James had the honour of captaining the side, and it was pleasing to find that the taking over of the duties in such a desperately keen game in no way affected his play. James accomplished some effective collaring, and he made two or three brilliant dashes. He had a hand in the scoring of both the tries, on the second occasion giving McCanlis a straight run to the goal-line.

The Gloucester wings – Abbey and Loveridge – were not much in the limelight as regards attack, but the players had plenty to do in other directions, and they did it well. Thomas and Anderson were marked pretty effectively, and it was not until late in the game they beat the defence. Thomas might have been charged into touch – so near was he to the line – by Boughton, but the latter attempted a shoulder tackle and was shaken off. There were times in the closing stages when the Gloucester backs did not exercise the best judgment in kicking, and failure to find touch gave Cardiff opportunities of opening up play which they should not have been afforded.

One player who did fully realise Gloucester's position was Stephens, and the clever outside half has never done better work. Until Stone changed places Stephens was the best of the four half-backs, and his display all through was highly meritorious. One run of his took him past the Cardiff three-quarters to Stone. He had beaten the home custodian with a swerve when he had the misfortune to slip up with the goal-line in sight.

But Gloucester did not lose the try. Price was up when the ball became loose and, picking up smartly, went a yard or so when he found McCanlis behind him. A sharp transfer was nicely taken, and the Cardiff line crossed near the posts. A smart movement, that showed the value of close following-up and quickness in spotting an opening.

Price came through a pretty stiff ordeal with a good deal of success. He is picking up points, and is not afraid to get into the

hurly-burly with the forwards. I should like to see the City pair behind a quick-heeling pack, and given a chance of seeing what they could do in the way of opening out.

Cardiff had strengthened their front with a couple of Valley forwards, and they were a formidable eight to come up against. Saxby's services were missed, but the City eight, in all but gaining possession, put up a strenuous fight, and they rallied wonderfully at critical stages and when it was anybody's game.

The tackling was exceptionally close on both sides, and in this respect Foulkes excelled himself, several times getting across and helping the backs. Davies shone in two or three brilliant solo bursts, once dribbling half the length of the field and getting the ball past Stone, only to see another Cardiff man get back and kick to touch.

The Welshmen varied their tactics frequently, at periods concentrating on close footwork and combined rushing, and at others throwing the ball to their backs at every opportunity. Only an alert defence could have coped with these aggressive movements, but the Gloucester men were never rattled. They stuck gallantly to their task, and were deservedly rewarded with a fine victory.

Next to Davies and Foulkes I would place Wadley and Carpenter for all-round work, but the other four never flinched the hard, gruelling work, and lasted splendidly until the whistle sounded the end of a great struggle.

Cardiff were best represented by Harold Jones – a fine forward who is expected to be "capped" – Lewis, Skym and Cravos. It was through no fault of the pack that Cardiff had to lower their flag. It was the mission of the forwards to ply the backs with the ball; this they accomplished in full degree, but the men behind failed them.

Boughton's display at full-back delighted the Cardiff crowd, and the general feeling was that his form was good enough to get him in the England team if Brown did not find favour again. Boughton's fielding and catching were, as usual, practically without fault, and he brought that strong left foot of his into service with beautiful kicks to touch. Some of his punts with the right, too, gained more than half the length of the ground.

Boughton was described in the Cardiff Press as the 18-year-old Gloucester full-back. He is a little more than this, but he has not yet reached his 20th birthday.

The Sub-Committee for training appointed by the Gloucester Club arranged a meeting of the players this week for the purpose of a general talk on tactics, and a large number attended under the chairmanship of Mr. J. T. Brookes. Tom Voyce gave an interesting talk on modern methods in the lines-out, opening up play, etc. Questions were invited and answered, and a number of theories and suggestions were put forward. Some of these may be given further consideration with a view to improving the game of the local side, especially in attack. A letter of congratulation on last Saturday's win at Cardiff was received from the Rugby Union President (Mr. W. T. Pearce), who wished the Club many further successes.

The outstanding feature of Gloucester A.'s big win over Bromsgrove was the fine running and combination of the backs. The ground favoured an open game, and the play of the home left wing, Voyce and Pittman, greatly impressed. Meadows displayed cleverness and artistry at outside half, his swerving runs completely baffling the defence. Ash rendered good service at full back, and others prominent were Shelley, Hiam, Hyett and K. Smith. Rea led the forwards with success, and his hooking was invaluable. He was included in the senior ranks to-day chiefly for his ability in this department.

JC