

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1912

FOOTBALL.

GLOUCESTER v. WATSONIANS.

CITY'S BRILLIANT START NOT MAINTAINED.

A DRAWN GAME.

The famous Scottish combination brought their Christmas tour to a close to-day, when they opposed Gloucester at Kingsholm. Last year the teams furnished a great game, with honours easy at the close.

Unfortunately the City were placed at a disadvantage for the present fixture, as owing to the clashing of the county match at Bristol Gloucester were deprived of the assistance of L. Hamblin, W. Washbourne, W. Johns, G. Vears, and N. Hayes, whilst Smart (who was also chosen to play for Gloucestershire) wisely took no risks to jeopardise his first International game for England next Saturday. Thus more than a third of the regular team was not available, and against a side of the reputation of the Watsonians this was a big handicap.

The visitors, who had been beaten by Swansea and Newport, were also below strength, Angus and Milroy being prominent absentees.

Gloucester. – F. W. Hayward; E. Bowen, R. A. Clarke, A. Lewis, and F. Webb; W. Dix and W. Wilkes; G. Halford, H. Berry, S. Millard, A. Saunders, J. Meadows, A. Cook, W. Dovey, and E. Nash.

Watsonians. – E. G. Pyott; J. P. Wilson, J. Melrose, J. Pearson, and N. B. Lothian; J. P. Royce and T. C. Bowie; P. J. McMillan, A. Morrison, J. L. Martin, J. J. Martin, E. Ranken, H. McMillan, H. L. Armstrong, and J. L. Hatton.

Referee : Mr. R. J. Parkes (Midlands).

THE GAME.

There were further changes in the home team at the last moment, Hudson and C. Cook (both reported on the injured list) standing down and letting in Hayward and Bowen. The weather was dull, but the rain kept off. The ground was still very heavy, though it did not present such a condition as on the two previous days.

Gloucester kicked off, and a visitor fumbling a scrum followed in the Watsonians half. The City opened out from the first line, and pretty work by Clarke and Lewis put the home men well down, a forward pass checking the movement. Gloucester maintained their position, and from a scrum a few yards outside Dix gathered and went over with a try in clever style. Hayward missed the goal kick.

This early success was loudly applauded, and the City men resumed the struggle with great earnestness. A clever feint by Clarke enabled the centre to effect a nice opening, but his wide pass out was forward with a possible opening on the left wing.

Dix set his threes moving immediately after, but Lewis was well smothered and could not pass. However, the ball was dribbled very close, and the Watsonians were in danger. Dix and Wilkes tried to work the blind side of the scrum close in, but it was frustrated. Still Gloucester were having the better of the exchanges, the forwards heeling well and doing splendidly in the loose. The backs, too, showed smartness, and but for a forward transfer by Lewis a score must have resulted. From a long throw out Meadows passed wide to Lewis, and Wilkes tried his best to keep the ball in play, but just failed.

The hot attacks were maintained, and a clever cross kick by Webb put the City forwards on-side. A visitor, however, marked and saved the situation. Immediately after the City backs were on the move with a brilliant round of passing, and Bowen, beating the full-back, scored well out. Hayward failed with the goal kick.

Try as they would the Watsonians could make no headway on the restart, the whole of the Gloucester team playing wonderfully well together. The forwards worked down with a desperate rush, and from a scrum Dix got the ball well away. Wilkes and Clarke in turn handled, and the centre cutting inside beautifully left the defence standing and scored a glorious try. No goal resulted. Three tries in ten minutes was a veritable surprise to the home supporters, and be it said the play thoroughly deserved it; in a word the City had not shown such form in any match this season.

The Watsonians dropped out, but a lovely touch-finder by Lewis put Gloucester on the visitors' 25. Loose passing by a home player saw a Watsonian pick up and race clear. There was a splendid opening but on passing to colleague the latter was tackled.

Soon afterwards there was another bit of faulty handling by the home backs, and the Watsonians dribbled past Hayward. Lewis got back and kicked to touch, but a quick line-out followed, and the Gloucester men not being up, M. McMillan crossed with a try. R. McMillan missed the goal points.

Resuming, Gloucester made headway with forward rushes, and the Scotchmen[*sic*] were forced to defend. Clarke and Lewis distinguished themselves with smart efforts, and Webb later effected a good dodgy run. Well inside the home 25 Dix fed Wilkes, but the latter punted over the line and only a minor resulted.

Hayward received a long drop-out and instead of returning, ran back. He cleverly side-stepped several opponents, and then passed to Bowen, who kicked ahead. Pyott fumbled right on his line, and Gloucester were dangerous again.

A passing bout right across the field saw Lewis hold on a bit too long before yielding to Webb. The latter made a creditable attempt to break through, but was legged from behind.

The Watsonians cleared to near the centre, where Dix received and dodged beautifully. He gave a nice transfer to a forward, but the next pass was intercepted by Melrose, who ran and punted well.

Some good footwork, with a final hard kick, caused Hayward to have to run behind his goal to clear, but he managed to get the ball to touch.

Combined work by Dix and Bowen gained a few yards, and subsequent play was fought out a few yards inside the home half. Berry and Halford broke away finely from a line-out, and their colleagues backed up well, but Pyott effected a good save.

Centre play followed, until Dix worked the short side of the scrum with Clarke and Bowen. The movement was stopped, but a big dash by the City forwards sent the ball over the line for a minor. The drop-out was well returned, and to the interval Gloucester confined the game to their opponents' half.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester 3 tries
Watsonians 1 try

The Watsonians re-started, and early on there was a spell of indiscriminate kicking which ended in honours easy. The visitors showed up with some neat exchanges and a kick to Hayward, who returned, but did not find touch. Pyott, however, sent out of play close to the City line, and a little later Hayward was forced to kick dead from the field of play. A scrum followed five yards out, and Gloucester heeling the City succeeded in clearing their lines.

The Watsonians were playing a stronger game all round now, and another series of exchanges looked promising. The attack, however, was beaten off. Gloucester gained a few yards, but for an infringement the City were penalised some distance out. Pearson took a shot, and with a lovely drop kick landed a goal.

Only three points now separated the teams, and the game was in a very interesting state. Gloucester resumed, and Wilkes was prominent with a fine dash down touch and a pass to Webb, but the transfer was ruled forward. The visitors, with a big burst, came away to Hayward, who gathered and found touch with a good kick. Then in some loose play Dix kicked down to Pyott and charged down the return. There was a possible chance of scoring, but the visitors cleared effectively.

From a scrum Dix sent to Wilkes, who passed out wide to Bowen, but the latter could not clear the opposition. He tried an inside pass to Lewis, but the ball was lost, and the Watsonians dribbled to beyond the centre. The Gloucester forwards were going rather weakly now, and the backs could not reproduce their form of the early stages.

From a long kick down Bowen was slow in fielding, and he was upset before he could get in a return. A visitor picked up, and there was a clear opening, but his pass was knocked on. Mistakes were frequent on both sides after this, and play was very scrappy. Gloucester several times tried passing, but it broke down badly every time, and ground was generally lost.

Hayward, with a mighty punt, at length gave Gloucester a position at midfield. Here Dix intercepted a pass from Royce to Bowie and very cleverly ran clear. He punted ahead and running hard collared Pyott on the line. A scrum followed five yards out from which the visitors made headway. Then Gloucester attacked, and Dix was prominent again with a neat effort. Finding himself in front of goal he took a left foot drop, but got under the crossbar for a minor.

After the drop out the Watsonians gained a footing in the home half, where they started passing. Lewis, however, snapped up an opponent's pass and raced down the centre of the field. He passed to Clarke when pressed, but the latter was upset. Midfield play followed until Dix opened out to Wilkes. The latter passed to Lewis, but Clarke failed to accept.

Working well together Gloucester rushed very close, and there looked every chance of a score, but the ball was missed. The Watsonians cleared, but for off-side a visitor was penalised, Hayward having hard lines in his drop for goal. Nash and Berry later charged down a visitors' kick, and there was a glorious chance. Berry appeared to be on the line with the ball and only had to drop down, but he passed and a colleague missed it.

Gloucester robbed of this point struggled hard to add to their lead, but their efforts were not rewarded. Playing with great dash the visitors rushed away, and the Gloucester backs failing to field the City were in danger. In some loose play R. McMillan fielded, and running strongly scored behind the posts. There was a great chance of the Watsonians winning the game, but McMillan sent wide of the posts.

Just before the end Clarke, taking advantage of a mistake by Pearson, kicked down the field. There was a race between Pyott and Lewis for possession but the Scotchman got there first and dropped on the ball and saved. The end came immediately after.

RESULT :

Gloucester 3 tries (9 points)
Watsonians 1 goal (p) 2 tries (9 points)

REMARKS.

Gloucester missed a great opportunity of scoring winning points to-day. The form of the whole team at the start was a revelation to everyone, and with a lead of nine points in less than a quarter of an hour there were visions of a handsome triumph. But these early successes proved the team's undoing in the end, for in subsequent play the forwards dropped off 50 per cent., and with the Watsonians improving every minute the game lasted the City at the finish found themselves fighting hard to avert defeat. And it came too near to be pleasant. With such an expert goal-kick as R. McMillan, the old Scottish International, it was odds on the last try behind the posts being converted. But the veteran missed from the simple place, and Gloucester were able to share honours – a similar result to last year's struggle.

It was a bright, open game, and in the early stages, before the ground cut up so badly, there were many brilliant bits of combination. Gloucester took the game in hand right from the kick-off; the forwards commanded the ball in the scrums almost at will, and the backs ran and passed in perfect style. The two tries by Bowen and Clarke were admirably worked out, the defence being beaten all the way.

There were other occasions when Gloucester narrowly missed scoring, but bad tactics spoiled one or two good openings. The Watsonians occasionally broke away, but territorially the Scotchmen[*sic*] were a well beaten side at the interval. In the second half the City clearly went off their game, and they did nothing to compare with the brilliant work in the opening stages. True they had chances of scoring, but there were many mistakes, and the visitors were quick to take advantage of these errors.

The Watsonians were not up to the standard of last year's team. The forwards were splendid in the loose, but for three-parts of the game the City front more than held their own. Behind, Pearson and Lothian were the pick, with Bowie very smart at outside half. Pearson's dropped goal was a beauty and well deserved the three points.

Gloucester's front apparently played themselves out, for in the second half they had periods of slackness and indecision which were very noticeable. Cook played a particularly fine game, and this young forward is coming rapidly to the front. Berry and Halford were good in the open, but Smart's fast following up was greatly missed. Nash, of the Gloucester Regiment, was a hard worker, and Millard did a lot of saving.

Behind the scrum, Dix was immense, and the City half-back has not given a more convincing display this season. With the quick heeling of the forwards in the first half he got the ball away smartly, and some of his runs were exceedingly clever. Wilkes did well on the whole, handling with accuracy and judging his passes nicely. There were two occasions, however, when he might have started his threes instead of punting.

The three-quarters got through some fine work, though there was a falling off in the second half. Clarke showed plenty of resource and dash, and Lewis was always doing something useful. Webb tried hard with the chances he got, but more often than not he was hopelessly placed. Bowen scored his try very well, and his tackling was sound. Hayward proved a capable understudy for Cook.

Scorers for Gloucester : Dix, Bowen, and Clarke; Hayward failed to convert.

Next week : Leicester, away.

JC