

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1961

FULL MARKS, GLOUCESTER !

PACK MUST BE BEST IN WEST

GLOUCESTER 15 Pts., BRISTOL 3 Pts.

To see every part of a machine working as it should for a given period of time is a satisfying sight – for the engineer. But the Rugby fan is no engineer and Gloucester's crack team is no machine. It is a thing of spirit; of great spirit, as Saturday's game at Kingsholm showed.

There was much more of interest to the "regular" at Kingsholm than a win by a fit and efficient home team. It was the hard but friendly spirit in which the game was fought. And, one is tempted to think, that would not have been the case if Gloucester could not boast a firm and inspiring leadership in each department.

Taking the team as it reads in the programme – the way it should read for some time to come, barring accidents and (I dare hazard) more than a few county selections – one's summary would read thus :

Full-back; Russell Hillier has overcome early-season hesitancy and played with nerve-calming reliability both as a catcher, fielder and kicker.

Peter Meadows on the right wing should stay for his all-round effort and for one brilliant one-handed catch which sent John Bayliss over for his second try.

In the centre Alan Holder used his kick ahead with devastating effect and it was an extremely foxy dummy of his which sent Bayliss over for his first try.

What better reason than that he scored two good tries need one have for keeping centre Bayliss in the side ?

Tony Osman on the other wing, as were his threequarter colleagues, was always a lusty and tenacious tackler.

TRANSFORMED

Terry Hopson at fly-half seems to have been transformed into a performer who is not only the fastest man in the Gloucester team, but is also more reliable and less inclined to show only flashes of brilliance.

And this is in part due, I feel, to the imaginative intelligence of Mick Booth at scrum half whose accurate drive-passes are not so frequent or as predictable as those of his rival Gary Mace and do not subject Hopson to such careful surveillance and marking.

Booth's ability both with his touch-finding boot when the pack was needed to wear down Bristol in loose mauls, and when he took the ball – once particularly – in his hands, was masterful.

Booth foxed Bristol defenders in the second half with two dummies and passed forward to a man on the wing. With that amount of guile he need not have passed at all !

And then, of course, we have the pack, the tremendous "eight" which is the most disciplined, fittest and fastest (on recent form) in the West.

And it would be unfair, really, to name individuals who shone therein. Townsend, the gruff-voiced general, keeps them up to form right to the last whistle while opposition packmen wilt under the fierce pace they set.

Nicholls, at hooker, continues to live up to the promise he showed at Cardiff and one is astounded that Tony Ricketts, Townsend's prop partner, has not been there, up front, more often before. One of Tony's tackles, a sliding below-the-knees effort which sent Bristol's winger John Coles flying, stands out in the memory.

IRREPLACEABLE

At the moment second row men Brinn and Long are irreplaceable, likewise the back row.

And this is where the Bristol defeat really began on Saturday with wing forwards Ford (in particular), who played brilliantly in the first half, and Dick Smith ranging the field, plundering the chances which Bristol's threes so often missed.

In the middle of the back row Tony Davies partnered the two pillaging forwards excellently and with equal swiftness broke from scrums, prepared always to handle as well as push his weight.

PAID OFF

Mick Smith scored the first try and had Ford to thank for the pass. Who, I would like to know, did not have Ford to thank for some contribution to his play? He was everywhere and his follow-ups (absent against Moseley) always paid dividends.

If this seems like an all-round pat on the back it is because your reporter is like a squirrel; he likes to store up memories against a rainy day! And everyone played well and the rain may come.

Did the presence of the County selectors have anything to do with this vintage, enthusiastic display?

Perhaps. But I think that the early score which resulted from a policy of hit them hard and hit them soon, was the real inspiration.

Booth converted all three first-half tries and Cripps responded with a penalty in the second. Line-out man Watt was virtually the only Bristol player who had Gloucester's number.