

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 1962

HOPSON'S THRUST AND PACK'S FIRE TOO MUCH FOR THE ARMY

GLOUCESTER 16 PTS., ARMY 8 PTS.

One could scarcely believe the scoreboard when the interval came during Saturday's entertaining match at Kingsholm. Could the Army really be eight points ahead after conceding so much territory to Gloucester ?

It did not seem possible that a team so obviously inferior could have managed to wave goodbye to the Kingsholm "ground disadvantage."

But, if one is to recall, with regret, the abysmal standard of Gloucester's pre-interval handling, the phenomenon is explained. The home pack, superbly led by Alan Townsend, the skipper, gave the backs plenty of chances.

Indeed, the backs produced fine form and promising looking runs. But the end of a movement almost invariably saw a fumble, and the Army were not slow in taking due advantage.

Centre David Rosser scored a try which full-back Stevens converted, and later the Army fly-half, Reid, crossed for another.

UNPERTURBED

Upon the resumption Gloucester were again soon on the attack. But this time they had evidently been told to watch the handling.

Scrum-half John Spalding played what was – in parts – probably his best game. He made the odd mistake, but was never overawed by tough opposition and unperturbed by those slight errors of judgment.

This augurs well for the future for it proves that he is developing on the right lines and has a good match temperament.

His fly-half Terry Hopson was, after the pack I suppose, the architect of victory. His pace was well up to its usual standard and this week he produced thrilling runs which sliced the Army defences to shreds, not merely because of pace but also because of split-second body-swerving guile.

ENCOURAGING, TOO

This, too, is encouraging for the future, for when his pace begins to slacken, there will always be that almost imperceptible swerve which, as on Saturday, can take him through a tightly packed field unscathed.

It was just such a move as this which put winger Tony Osman over for a try which full-back Russell Hillier (surely Gloucester's most consistently reliable back) converted.

This was Gloucester's first score, and followed their customary period of territorial advantage. The next came from that watchful and energetic wing-forward, David Gilbert-Smith, who plays with Peter Ford's impatience for possession. While the home pack was still down in a set scrum, he had moved off to the left, ready for a catapult leap for the ball. He put hooker, Ken Taylor over.

Next came wing threequarter, Peter Meadows into a breach made by the pack during a line-out; Gloucester's third try.

FITTING

It was fitting that Terry Hopson should score the last try after Ken Taylor, successful at hooker throughout, had heeled in a scrum near the line.

Russell Hillier's place kick was a matter of form.

Some strange bug has bitten Gloucester. They are on the crest of a wave which could easily swamp Bristol next Saturday. If they can, as I have said before, hit their rivals hard and fast in the early stages.

JC