

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1936

GLOUCESTER DISAPPOINT AT BRISTOL

BACKS FAIL TO REPEAT FORM AT LEICESTER

PROMISING YOUNG BRISTOL PLAYERS

BLANK DAY FOR RUGBY

In accordance with the decisions of the four Unions, all Rugby matches were cancelled to-day.

Fixtures may be resumed on Wednesday, January 29, after the King's Funeral.

Gloucester and Bristol provided some interesting football at the Memorial Ground, with Bristol deservedly carrying off the honours, thanks to the all-round superiority of their backs.

It was a pity this return fixture between the rival Gloucestershire clubs clashed with the great attraction at Swansea. The broadcast had a big effect on the attendance, which was one of the smallest I remember for a Gloucester–Bristol match.

The question of the broadcasting of Rugby Union Internationals during the progress of the game is likely to crop up in the near future. Gates at club fixtures are being seriously affected, and there is more than a probability of the attention of the Rugby Union being drawn to the matter.

BRISTOL'S SUPERIORITY

Bristol have enjoyed a splendid home season, and the only defeat to date was against a strong Royal Navy team in mid-week. Still, after Gloucester's recent performances, I fancied the latter's chances last Saturday.

The actual play, however, furnished a complete upset. Bristol, aided by two penalty goals – gifts in front of the posts each time – won by 14 points to 3, and although the margin was flattering to the winners, there was no question as to the better team on the day's play.

Gloucester are rarely happy on a heavy ground, and the team again disappointed at Bristol. Not so much the forwards, who had rather the better of the set scrummages, but the backs were disjointed, and failed to approach the standard set up at Leicester the previous week.

WEAK HANDLING BY GLOUCESTER

Individuals worked hard – Brooks did wonders in defence – but the attacks broke down repeatedly, and the handling, so conspicuous a feature of the play at Leicester, was very poor at times.

In striking contrast was the success of the Bristol outsides, with Ronnie Morris the outstanding performer at outside-half. In this game the ex-Swansea player touched the form which gained him International distinction a few seasons ago.

At times, perhaps, he overdid the kicking, but he was always a menace to the Gloucester defenders, and cleared the opposition with consummate ease.

Morris played a big part in Bristol's triumph, although he did not actually score. He had serviceable help from Hobbs at the scrum, and the co-operation of a line of three-quarters who appeared much faster than their opponents.

PROMISING THREE-QUARTERS

This Bristol back division on the day struck me as possessing great possibilities. Patten, of course, has had a good deal of experience, but Claridge, Lewis and Russell are comparatively new to first-class football. I had not previously seen the four players together, but against Gloucester they displayed keen attacking abilities, handled amazingly well under the conditions, and marked opponents with deadly accuracy.

Meadows, Brooks and Edwards, on the Gloucester side, were all given marked attention, with the result that few passing movements carried far. Occasionally a sudden individual burst looked promising, but the following kick ahead was generally covered by a home defender.

Only once was the Bristol defence beaten, and the try fell to Edwards from a cross-punt by Hook. Gloucester should have done much better with the chances they had, but that first penalty goal against the City, within three minutes of the start, seemed to upset the players; at least they appeared a long time finding anything like their proper form.

MEADOWS NOT HIMSELF

Day was not so successful with his service on this occasion, and Meadows had to collect some very difficult transfers. All the same the vice-captain was not himself, and he concentrated his efforts mainly in getting the ball to his centres.

Morris, on the other hand, often struck out on his own, and I was surprised to see how easily he eluded the opposition. There was something lacking in co-ordinated defence which allowed this, and also the continual employment of the short side of the scrum by the Bristol half-backs. This should have been stopped with a proper understanding with the wing forward.

Edwards, so distinguished at Leicester, had a disappointing match, and his moderate display affected the whole back division.

Hook had practically nothing to do in attack, and on the other wing Roy James, clever in midfield work, had not the pace to beat Claridge and Duggan when in possession.

HORDERN MISSED

Gloucester missed Horder forward, but Bristol, like their opponents, had two substitutes in the pack. It was a resolute struggle between two hard-working eights, and on the whole honours were fairly evenly divided.

Carpenter had a bit the better of the heeling. but Gloucester's advantage in the scrums and loose were neutralised by the fine work of the Bristol men in the lines-out. The home backs were frequently set going by Payne, who has few superiors in out-of-touch play in club football.

NEW BRISTOL FORWARD

Bristol had several men in the front row new to me. Haskins, a hefty player in the back row, often came under notice, and he obtained the second try with a powerful burst, in the course of which he shook off several half-hearted tackles. He was overwhelmed on the line, and there was just a doubt as to whether he got the ball down over the mark, but the referee (Mr. R. Stanbury, the old Plymouth and England forward) ruled in favour, and that settled it. Haskins, on this showing, gives promise of a county forward in the making, and under the tuition of Sam Tucker (with whom I was delighted to renew acquaintance) he should progress on the right lines. Woodward, Henderson and Murphy were other Bristol forwards who figured prominently.

TACKLING DEFICIENT

The Gloucester pack has been seen to better all-round advantage. The work in the scrums was satisfactory, and there were several well-organised loose rushes, in which the backing-up was well done.

But the tackling was deficient, and there were too many gaps in the defence when Bristol started aggressive movements. Gloucester would probably have fared better had the ball been kept close, but the football would not have been half so interesting.

A'Bear, Harris, Morris and Welshmen were stout workers in a strenuous game, won by Bristol on account of their smarter tactics behind the scrum. And if this form is maintained our friends in the South should register many more victories.

JC