

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1938.

GLOUCESTER'S BEST AWAY PERFORMANCE

FROM W.B.'S NOTEBOOK

SHOCKS FOR LLANELLY AT STRADEY PARK

FEATURES IN CITY'S REMARKABLE VICTORY

TEAM WORK TRIUMPHS OVER THE WELSHMEN

TWO YEARS AGO GLOUCESTER BROKE A LONG RUN OF DEFEATS AT LLANELLY – THE SOLITARY PREVIOUS WIN DATED AS FAR BACK AS SEASON 1898-9.

Last week the City repeated the achievement, and earned the distinction of being the first English club this season to gain winning points at Stradey Park, where the famous Scarlets are well-nigh invincible.

The performance was a noteworthy one, and featured the day's results in Rugby Union club football. The City's surprise victory was all the more meritorious as the back division was seriously disorganised owing to Boughton, Hook, Phillips and Day not being available. Llanelly, too, had to call on several reserve forwards, prominent absentees being Ifor Jones, F. L. Morgan, and Bryn Evans, the internationals.

Only six members of Gloucester's victorious Fifteen figured in the side which triumphed at Stradey two seasons ago, viz. – Meadows, Carpenter, A'Bear, Morris, Price and Harris.

The first four players can claim the additional honour of assisting Gloucester to record the one and only victory over Swansea at St. Helen's. This was in season 1933-4 (actual date of match, November 4, 1933), when the City won by 8 points to 6. That year Gloucester gained the "double" over Swansea, winning at Kingsholm by 10 points to 3. And Meadows, Carpenter and Morris also shared in this achievement – a treble record over Welsh clubs which many of the older players might well envy.

FOOTBALLER'S DISCOMFORTS

The Llanelly trip, with its long and tiring journey and the rush after the match, is not an inviting one. On Saturday the Gloucester men had to do a remarkably quick change to catch the return train.

Owing to the late kick off the game was not finished till close on 5 o'clock, and after a hurried bath the players, carrying some of their clothes, had to be conveyed in taxis to Swansea G.W.R. Station (12 miles) at a speed which, I am afraid, exceeded the limit.

One section of the party was "gonged" on the way, but the taxi was allowed to proceed on the circumstances being explained. The train, which had been delayed two or three minutes, was caught all right, and the players lost no time in completing their toilet and making themselves presentable.

Discomforts, however, are trifling things to footballers, and the Gloucester players, flushed with a memorable win, made light of their temporary troubles.

EXPERIMENTAL THIRD LINE

The constitution of the City team was not definitely known until Saturday morning, and some difficulty was experienced in completing the third line.

Finally it was decided to play the Rev. H. M. Hughes at centre and R. R. Burke on the wing, the vacant position forward being filled by F. Mustoe, a young ex-Gordon League player of considerable promise. It was something of an experimental set of three-quarters, but as events turned out the selections proved highly successful.

Gloucester, full of dash, started with the utmost confidence, the whole team working splendidly together. Llanelly experienced an early shock when Burke, who showed capital speed, beat the home full-back in a race for the ball which had been kicked over the line and scored less than five minutes after the kick-off. This was real encouragement for the City, and the visitors took complete charge of the game for the next twenty minutes.

TRY OF THE MATCH

The forwards scrummaged and heeled smartly, and Gough gave out a service of accurate passes that kept Meadows and the three-quarters busily employed. All the combined back play of note came from Gloucester, and there was a punch and initiative in the attacks lacking in many previous games.

Stephens came along with a grand penalty goal from the touch line to increase Gloucester's lead to eight points, and the try of the match followed a few minutes later.

Manning was the prime agent in this score, perfectly carried out from its initiation. Gough and Meadows did their part in getting the ball to the Wycliffian, who beat three opponents in the most approved style which brought him to the full-back.

John A'Bear had positioned himself in support with excellent judgment, and accepting a well delivered transfer burst over with a try which earned hearty appreciation from the crowd. Stephens made no mistake with the goal kick.

WELSHMEN STAGGERED

Thirteen points down fairly staggered the Llanelly crowd, and I must confess the remarkable success of the City team came as a complete surprise. But on the play Gloucester deserved every point. The Welshmen, in desperate plight, strove with great determination to wipe off some of the arrears, and from two of the fifteen penalties awarded to the home team during the game they obtained six points before the interval.

In the first instance Gloucester were penalised at midfield and Llanelly directed a high punt in front of the visitors' goal post. There was a scramble for possession of the ball ending in a scrum being ordered fifteen yards out. Llanelly heeled, D. Thomas was placed in possession, and with a glancing run he beat the defence and scored a clever try.

The goal kick failed, but a little later, after the City had gone very near on two occasions to adding to their lead, another penalty was awarded Llanelly. This time, Elvet Jones landed a fine goal, and Gloucester's lead was reduced to six points.

TERRIFIC SECOND HALF

It was a terrific second half, with Llanelly the more aggressive in their bid to gain the ascendancy. But Gloucester's defence was magnificent and the line was held against repeated attacks. Penalty kicks were awarded Llanelly with regularity for apparently "not in straight in the scrum," but the Gloucester players complained that the outside men in the front row of the Welsh pack were swinging their feet repeatedly and Gough was not to blame. Fortunately for Gloucester none of the goal kicks were successful.

As time progressed it appeared the second half would be pointless, but a mistake by Meadows led to an easy try for Llanelly, which was converted. Meadows attempted a punt out from over his own goal line; the kick was charged down with the result already explained.

The closing minutes were intense with excitement, with Llanelly all out to snatch victory, but fortune smiled on Gloucester and a two points victory was due reward for a splendid performance.

"DELIVERED THE GOODS"

So once again a supposedly weakened City team have "delivered the goods." I regard this performance at Llanelly one of the finest ever accomplished by the City on a Welsh ground. It was team work that won the day; and I pay full tribute to the Fifteen under John A'Bear's captaincy for an inspiring display. The aggressive work of the first half was full of sparkle, and the combination and handling were greatly in advance of what we have witnessed in a number of matches at Kingsholm. And when the defence was tested it proved equally effective. Llanelly players and spectators freely admitted victory went to the superior side on the day's display but they hope to turn the tables a fortnight hence at Kingsholm. Well, we shall see.

STEPHENS' FINE WORK

Stephens was admittedly not up to form at full-back against Devonport Services, but the United captain was practically faultless at Llanelly, and his fine all-round work contributed largely to Gloucester's triumph. He had a particularly trying time facing the sun in the second half, but his positioning and fielding of the ball were beyond reproach, and his kicking of excellent length and judgment. And those successful goals proved of vital value.

G. Thomas experienced some anxious moments in Llanelly's last line of defence, but on the whole he performed creditably.

Hughes proved his adaptability in the inside position in the Gloucester third line, and there should be no need to feel disturbed if a substitute is required at any time. The old Oxford Blue marked the opposition with deadly accuracy, and combined nicely when attacks were launched.

IMPRESSED WITH MANNING

Manning afforded further evidence of his ability in the highest class club football. Several Llanelly supporters with whom I conversed after the match were greatly impressed with his performance, and shared the view held in Gloucester that there was a good deal of the style of Wilfred Wooller, the Welsh international, in his play.

Dibden, who again appeared at left wing, shone with his colleagues in the work of defence during the tremendous pressure exercised by Llanelly in the second half, and also got in some effective clearance kicks at danger moments. In attack his opportunities were strictly limited.

Burke made a successful debut in the senior ranks, and on this showing should certainly get another chance. He utilised his speed to the fullest advantage, following the run of play with the greatest keenness, and was always alive to the possibilities of a score. This was emphasised when he obtained the first try. The United player was faced by a clever opponent in W. H. Clement, and occasionally was beaten, with other Gloucester players, by the trickiness of the Welsh international wing, but there were occasions when the Gloucester recruit got well into his man and hurled him over the touch line.

GOUGH'S SUCCESS

Llanelly lacked the services of their regular scrum half, J. T. Evans, injured at Cardiff the previous Saturday. His deputy, S. Pryor, was inferior to Gough, who made full use of the opportunities given him by his forwards.

The Gloucester player timed the majority of his transfers excellently, and he stood up pluckily to the many dangerous loose raids by the home pack. In these rushes the Llanelly players were given a good deal of license, but I doubt if they will get away with the same infringements under an English referee at Kingsholm.

Meadows displayed admirable judgment in directing operations in the first half, and his skilful touch-finding was extremely helpful. He was not so outstanding after the interval, and that one mistake nearly robbed the City of victory, for a successful conversion would have levelled the scores.

The critical state of the game did not allow of the slightest risk being taken. However, things turned out satisfactorily and Gloucester were left with well-earned honours.

GLOUCESTER FORWARDS SURVIVE SEVERE TEST

The Gloucester forwards were none too good against Devonport Services, but any suggestion that the men were going stale was completely refuted at Stradey Park.

Llanelly possess an exceptionally strong pack, and even with two or three of the best players away substitutes of first class ability were available. One of the reserves was J. L. C. Morgan, a 15 stone policeman and brother of the international, and an asset to any side. Three other members of the front are attached to the Constabulary.

The one player seriously missed was Ifor Jones, who, I was informed, is playing as well as ever and still regarded by Llanelly fans the best wing forward in Wales.

That the City eight were able to dominate such a powerful opposition for more than half the game was striking evidence of the success of their efforts.

The Welshmen were, for the most part, beaten for possession in the scrums, Carpenter, despite a bad cold, being in his best form. A'Bear was the leader in most of the advance movements, with Morris, Price and Harris providing close contact and admirable support. But the whole pack were keyed up for the occasion, and Mustoe, the youngest member, held his own well with his more experienced colleagues.

For the Gloucester men it was a game of two distinct parts – free movement and open play in the first half, and a fierce struggle in close exchanges after the interval – and in the respective phases the visitors struck form equal to anything accomplished this season.

The City have so often in the past failed in Wales that it was refreshing to find the team all out from the start, accepting their chances of scoring, and holding on to their lead with such grim determination.

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

March 5, 1938, will be another memorable date in the history of the Gloucester F.C., and for the benefit of those readers who keep a record of these events for reference here are the details to add to the list : –

MARCH 5, 1938.

Gloucester beat Llanelly at Stradey Park for the third time by 3 goals (1 penalty) (13 points) to 2 goals (1 penalty) 1 try (11 points).
Team : T. Stephens; R. E. Burke, E. V. Manning, H. M. Hughes and C. J. Dibden; F. Gough and D. Meadows; A. Carpenter, T. Price, C. Harris, J. G. A'Bear (capt.), R. Morris, Dr. Dick, E. Bayliss, and F. Mustoe.
Scorers : Burke and A'Bear tries; Stephens converted, and kicked penalty goal.
Linesman : H. Boughton; Committee-men : F. W. Ayliffe and J. H. A'Bear, with T. Bagwell.

RECORD AND FIXTURES

PLAYED 27 – WON 20, LOST 6, DRAWN 1.

					Points.	
					F.	A.
SEPTEMBER						
11	v. Lydney	...	W	30	3	
18	v. Moseley	...	W	9	0	
25	v. Bristol	...	W	6	3	
OCTOBER						
2	v. Old Cranleighans	...	W	5	0	
9	v. Cardiff	...	L	6	20	
16	v. Torquay Ath.	...	W	23	0	
23	v. Bedford	...	W	9	5	
30	v. Richmond	...	W	3	0	
NOVEMBER						
6	v. Leicester	...	W	14	9	
13	v. Old Blues	...	W	23	3	
20	v. Bath	...	L	0	3	
27	v. Oxford University	...	W	10	8	
DECEMBER						
4	v. Blackheath	...	W	13	11	
11	v. Cheltenham	...	L	3	8	
18	v. Newport	...	L	5	8	
27	v. O.M.T.'s	...	W	29	3	
28	V. Cheltenham	...	W	3	0	
JANUARY						
1	v. London Scottish	...	L	3	15	
8	v. Leicester	...	D	6	6	
15	v. Bedford	...	W	9	8	
22	v. Bristol	...	W	3	0	
29	v. Guy's Hospital	...	W	11	3	
FEBRUARY						
5	v. United Services	...	W	8	7	
12	v. Cardiff	...	L	9	11	
19	v. Bath	...	W	10	0	
26	v. Devonport Services	...	W	17	4	
MARCH						
5	v. Llanelly	...	W	13	11	
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MARCH

12	v. Torquay A.	...	A
19	v. Newport	...	A
26	v. Llanelly	...	H

APRIL

2	v. Devonport Services	...	A
9	v. Harlequins	...	H
16	v. London Welsh	...	H
18	v. Universities A. U.	...	H
19	v. Lydney	...	A

JC