

THE CITIZEN

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1963.

GLO'SHIRE WIN WELL – BUT IT WASN'T UP TO
COUNTY-STANDARD RUGBY

Gloucestershire 16pts.
Monmouthshire Nil

Gloucestershire's County Championship hopes are going to be exceedingly dismal this season if the county selectors find themselves unable to produce a more imaginative side than this Gloucestershire XV, which put up such a disappointing performance against Monmouthshire at Kingsholm last night.

For throughout the game there was little to indicate that this was a county fixture, if only a friendly one, with the two sides consisting of top class players from the first-class clubs of two strong Rugby counties. Indeed, the instances when play resembled anything like the standard expected from county players could easily have been counted on one hand.

And the fact that Gloucestershire won admittedly convincingly by two goals, a penalty, and a try, in no way atones for the lack of county-standard football.

Time after time the backs were distinctly lackadaisical with their passing often wide of the mark, although they showed that they had the speed and the nippy dodge which would have taken them all the way through had their handling not let them down.

The forwards, on the other hand, did well with the slightly greasy ball, but were always kicking to touch, showing no inclination to take the chance with a handling movement, until mid-way through the second half, by which time they had built up a reasonably safe lead.

Skippering the Gloucestershire side wing-forward Peter Ford set the example right from the kick-off, for he was always up with the ball and in the loose proved quite a menace to the Monmouth forwards.

Had the edge

In the front row of the pack hooker Mike Wetson, included in the side after Bristol's international John Thorne had withdrawn owing to an ankle injury, had the edge over Wilkins, his opposite number in the Monmouthshire pack.

The half-back partnership between Lydney's John Morris and Bristol's John Blake just did not come off, and often the advantages which Gloucestershire won in the scrums were lost before the ball had travelled ten yards.

Morris's long service left a lot to be desired and as often as not Blake had to reach right out to gather an extraordinarily low pass before he could make any headway; in fact, on one occasion in the second half the ball grubbed along the ground before he could get a hand to it and when he did take it referee Mr. Cornish blew up for a knock-on.

When the ball did get along to the three-quarters, wingers John Hampton and Michael Collins were usually the ones responsible for the breaks but they were too often upended by Hunt and Evans, the Monmouthshire half backs, to do any consistent damage.

In the loose, Gloucestershire's props, Alan Townsend and Bev Dovey both fought hard for the ball and also combined well with the two second-row men, Brian Hudson and Dave Neate, but even so few of the forwards showed real fire or outstanding determination.

Gloucestershire took the lead approximately half way through the first half when Wetson hooked cleanly in a scrum inside the Monmouth 25.

Right across field

The ball came out to the threes via Morris and Blake, but after they had lost possession John Hampton got a hand to the loose ball and lock-forward David Rollit, who had sprinted right across field took a neat pass to touch down in the corner. His try went unconverted, and at half-time the score still stood at 3pts. – nil.

Not long after the re-start Hampton went over himself in the corner after the Gloucestershire forwards had been pressing hard inside the Monmouthshire half and the ball had been passed back for him to rush down the flank for a try.

Laurie Watts converted with a splendid kick angled almost from the touch line, and shortly afterwards he added another three points when he landed an equally accurate penalty.

Then, in the last two minutes, wing three-quarter, Mike Collins scored the best try of the match when he dashed forward in a 40 yards sprint passing at least half a dozen Monmouthshire players before touching down almost under the posts. Again Watts converted to give Gloucestershire a final 16pts. – nil victory.

In short, it was a game in which Gloucestershire dominated the play and dictated the pace, but they never attained the heights which any County XV in their position ought to have done.

Teams

Gloucestershire : A. Holder (Glos.); J. Hampton (Rosslyn Park), J. Taylor (Glos.), L. D. Watts (Bristol), M. Collins (Bristol); J. N. Blake (Bristol), J. Morris (Lydney); A. Townsend (Glos.), M. Wetson (Glos.), B. A. Dovey (Rosslyn Park), B. A. Hudson (Glos.), D. W. Neate (Bristol), P. Ford (Glos., capt.), D. Rollit (Bristol University), R. Smith (Glos.).

Monmouthshire : D. T. Jones (Newbridge); F. E. Coles (Pontypool), D. T. Hardacre (Cross Keys), M. C. Cooper (Pontypool), M. Williams

(Ebbw Vale); W. Hunt (Ebbw Vale), R. Evans (Ebbw Vale); C. Cobley (Pontypool), B. Wilkins (Abertillery), L. Dimmick (Pontypool), G. J. Bishop (Pontypool), R. Gladwin (Abertillery), A. Hughes (Newbridge), D. Hughes (Newbridge), M. Treanor (Ebbw Vale).

Referee : Mr. A. L. Cornish (Bristol Society).

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