

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1925

RUGBY REFLECTIONS

GLOUCESTER'S FIRST DEFEAT AT THE MEMORIAL GROUND

BRISTOL THE BETTER EQUIPPED SIDE

CHANTRILL OR MILLINGTON THE COUNTY FULL BACK ?

Bristol 9 pts.; Gloucester 5 pts.! The City's invincibility on the Memorial Ground has been broken at last, and who is there amongst followers of Gloucester who would wish to rob our friends at the southern end of the County the glory of their achievement?

I have spoken to a few who witnessed the match, and one and all agreed that on the day's play victory went to the better equipped side. That is a candid admission, but no more than I expected from impartial supporters of the Gloucester Club.

Bristol undoubtedly merited their triumph; there was not a great deal between the teams, so close and strenuous was the play generally, but in tactics, skill and aggressiveness the winners were slightly superior, and this advantage decided the issue. Congratulations to the victors and vanquished. Gloucester were disappointed at losing their record, but they went down fighting gallantly to the end.

The surprise of the match was the magnificent way in which the Bristol forwards rose to the occasion. I must confess I had expected Gloucester to hold the whip-hand in this department, but in the many desperate exchanges between the rival packs the City could claim no real advantage.

There was one period towards the interval when Gloucester appeared to have got the measure of their opponents and had the visitors obtained the lead just then it might have had an important bearing on the result. But Bristol held out against the terrific onslaughts of Voyce and his colleagues, and the break in the game came as a welcome relief.

The respite was taken full advantage of, and the Bristol men restarted like a new team. In a few minutes they increased their lead, and though Hughes and Millington combined to place Gloucester within a point of their opponents, the City did not give the impression they were capable of winning outright.

It was a great contest between the two packs of forwards; every man was all out and played as though the result hung on his individual effort. So quick did the rival players break up from the scrum and keep close on the ball that the backs had the greatest difficulty in initiating combined movements. These tactics spoiled the game as a spectacle, but the intense earnestness of the players, and the vigour and robustness of the tackling kept the pulses tingling.

With the exception of one or two minor incidents there was nothing in the game that transgressed the legitimate, and here I would like to compliment both teams on the clean, sporting display they put up.

Having seen practically all the contests between Gloucester and Bristol, I question if a Bristol forward division ever showed a more resolute and determined front to the select of Gloucester.

The pack was splendidly led by Tucker, the newly-appointed leader, and except for the brief period mentioned were never over-powered. In some phases of play they eclipsed the Gloucester eight, notably in the scrums and lines-out. In the latter department, the work of Shaw, Tucker and Morman was particularly good. Morman is one of the younger brigade, but his form on Saturday brought him prominently under notice, and his claims for a place in the County side will have to be considered.

Hore was another solid worker for Bristol, and Prowse a fast mover in the open, and always dangerous with half a scoring chance about, as witness his snapping up the ball after it had been missed over the Gloucester goal line from a cross-kick by Corbett.

The Bristol forwards were likely to get another testing against Devonport Services this afternoon, but if they could reproduce the form shown against Gloucester, Luddington's men would have little, if anything, in hand.

The best work put in by the Gloucester eight was in the loose, though even here the visitors did not touch the standard set up in several matches last season. There was a tendency to get in front of the ball and stay there instead of getting back with the result that promising movements were checked by the inevitable penalty.

Whether the City were wise in keeping the ball so close is doubtful, but I presume there was some reason for it, probably owing to Doctor Taylor not being too fit. The occasions when heeling was attempted were certainly very few, and Milliner, at the scrum, had no sort of show in opening out.

The Gloucester forwards, as a whole, lacked nothing in dash and whole-hearted tackling, but they were not the dangerous combination in attack I have seen them. Individually, Voyce played his characteristic game, bringing off several desperate bursts, and handing off very effectively. But there were times when he was overpowered by numbers and no mistake was made in "planting him" low. The International looked all over a scorer when he accepted Hughes' pass following Taylor's glorious dash through but near the line Chantrill made a final dive and was successful in bringing the Gloucester captain down. This was one of the most exciting incidents of the match.

Of the other City forwards, Read, Short and Hemmings were frequently to be noticed for good play. Short is not showy, but he is a sterling worker, and there is no player in the City front with a safer pair of hands.

Hemmings was in the "wars" on several occasions but stuck it well. He, with Ayliffe, knows how to dribble, and this pair were generally to be seen when footwork was indulged in. Scott, the Cambridge Blue, appeared to be always in the thick of it but was not distinguished for any special play. He is pretty weighty and when accustomed to Gloucester's style should be an acquisition. Duberley and Hall both rendered efficient service in general play, and bore their share in the heavy exchanges, and it was wanted.

From the two packs fielded on Saturday Gloucestershire should experience no difficulty in securing the foundation of a powerful forward division. I anticipate the introduction of some new blood this season and Read, Prowse, Short and Morman look likely candidates. There are others from clubs outside Gloucester and Bristol, and form in the Glamorgan match will no doubt settle their final chances for inclusion in the team to meet Devon at Exeter on Saturday week.

But it is not only forward the County Selection Committee will have to give serious consideration to the merits of rival players. Chantrill and Millington, I presume, will again be in competition for the full-back position. Against Gloucester on Saturday Chantrill came back to his very best, and was a striking success. Badly judged kicking by Gloucester played into the hands of the old International, but apart from this Chantrill's display was well-nigh perfect. He never failed in his catching and fielding, and his clearances under pressure from the visiting forwards were exceedingly smart. In the matter of length kicking, he had the pull of Millington on Saturday. But the City custodian can always be relied on, and his cool sound play at Bristol enabled Gloucester to get out of some dangerous situations.

Millington or Chantrill? Well, the decision will have to be made in the near future. Possibly the Committee have already made up their minds, but which ever player is chosen the selectionists[*sic*] can't go far wrong. England will require a custodian this season, and Chantrill would appear to stand an excellent chance of regaining his place in the International Fifteen.

When Dr. Taylor informed me before the match at Bristol that his leg had given away again whilst training, the confidence I felt that Gloucester, at full strength, would pull through again was shaken.

Taylor turned out and played as well as his injury allowed him, but he was not by any means the Taylor we know. His kicking – and it would have been invaluable on Saturday to counter the tactics of Pickles, Corbett and Chantrill – was limited to a few punts, and Gloucester suffered as much from this handicap as anything. The forwards would probably bear this out, for hardly-won ground was easily recovered by a raking kick to touch by one or other of the Bristolians mentioned.

Taylor's clever bursts, too, were reduced to a minimum; the one occasion he did make a real effort nearly brought about a score. Milliner, if confined mainly to spoiling and defence, did a lot of effective work, but I cannot say his job was a pleasant one.

As a pair, Carter and Pickles were the stronger and better combination. It was the best game I have seen from the Bristol scrum worker, and he fitted in well with Pickles. The latter kicked finely, and his weight and strength were of great service to Bristol when opposed to the rushes of the Gloucester forwards.

Taylor, fit and well, would be my first choice for outside half for Gloucestershire, but in his absence Carter and Pickles should be a sound proposition. The only alternative as far as I can see would be Carter and Watkins (Stroud), or Milliner and Watkins (or G. Thomas), but the County have always been strongly in favour of a club pair.

Bristol were generally regarded as possessing the greater skill and penetrative ability at three-quarter, and though Gloucester's fine defence last week kept the scoring down to two tries to one, the home line certainly appeared the more convincing. Individually, Hughes was the equal of any three-quarter on the field; his try was a beauty, and his tackling one of the features of the match.

The City three-quarters were not given a real chance to display their worth in combination; Saxby rarely handled the ball, so far as an attacking movement was concerned, and the same may also be said of both the wings, Brown and Crowther. What work came their way was mainly defensive and in this respect they gave nothing away.

Corbett shone with his kicking, but the Bristol captain was given few opportunities of displaying his cleverness in attack, and Tucker, in the other centre position, was quite ordinary. Dr. Evans was closely watched, and the only occasion he did get away he fell a victim to Millington.

Stinchcombe, on the right wing, had the distinction of scoring the one try that came from a passing movement, but from the moment Carter let the ball go Bristol had the extra man, and it was only a question of each player taking his pass to ensure a certain score. This try was really made by Carter, and a clever move it was, too.

Corbett and Evans look pretty certain to form the right wing for Gloucestershire, but the filling of the other two positions will need careful thought. Hughes can hardly be left out of the side, and other players are Reg Pickles (if not wanted at half-back), Capt. M. A. Green, H. Warner (Stroud), and Sid Brown (Gloucester). It will be interesting to see how the Committee solve the problem confronting them.

GLOUCESTER A's FINE PERFORMANCE

FORWARDS' "SHOCK TACTICS" IN SECOND HALF

CITY'S SOUTH AFRICAN RECRUIT

"Lemon-time" in a football match affords a welcome break for players and spectators alike – a breathing space for the contestants and an opportunity for the crowd to discuss form and forecast the winners.

It also affords something else that the spectator does not realise until it has been put into action, namely, the opportunity of preparing a new plan of campaign by one or other of the teams.

Whether or not Gloucester A, as represented by Albert Rea and his fellow-players, decided during the interval of their match against Bristol A, at Kingsholm, to adopt different tactics as compared with the first half I do not know, but it certainly appeared from what happened subsequently that the City Seconds found another way of counteracting a tendency to superiority that had been shown by the Bristolians up to half-time, when each team had registered six points.

Bristol's manner of getting their two tries was much more convincing than the way in which the City Seconds obtained a penalty goal and a try. The visitors' scores came through delightful passing movements by their three-quarters, while the home try came mainly from the individual efforts of Redler and Print.

It needed but a continuation of team-work to put Bristol A on the path of victory, and so strongly had they established a proper understanding before the interval that they looked potential winners.

Without wishing to convey any impression that the Gloucester forwards were over-vigorous, one can best describe their opening of the second half as being in the nature of "shock tactics." They monopolised play in the loose, frustrated the Bristol backs' attempts to open up handling movements by what was nothing less than relentless tackling, and slowly but surely they took the initiative in deciding as to how play should go. Thus the Gloucester backs found more opportunity to set up attacks by handling, and they made the most of them as judged by the result of 25 points to 6.

Curiously enough, Gloucester A got the lead through lucky circumstances. Thomas, who has the happy knack of changing over to unorthodox methods when least expected, tried a long drop at goal from the vicinity of a "five yards" line.

The ball dropped short, but bounced away over the goal-line and in the direction of the wing, where Abbey sized up the situation and ran in to touch down for a try with two opponents on top of him. This was opportunism of a thrilling kind, though Gloucester A were not yet secure.

Pinned down as they were to their own 25, the Bristol backs tried every means in their power to open out, but the strain of the intense effort to keep the City Seconds at bay was beginning to tell. Thomas drove the next nail. About fifteen yards in front of the posts he made a neat catch with a bunch of Bristolians barring the way and ready to smother him. The last thing the visitors expected Thomas to do was to claim a mark, which he did before he could be tackled. The fly-half easily kicked the goal, and from this point Bristol were defeated, though far from being disgraced.

All through the game was extremely delightful. Even the fact that two strong sets of forwards were engaged did not prevent an abundance of combined handling movements by the backs. Bristol's passing was in general better timed and better taken than that of the City Seconds, but the latter deserve the heartiest congratulation on relying to such a large extent on this method of attack. If persisted in, it will make them a good all-round team, for they have forwards who shirk nothing either in the loose or the scrum.

The heeling of the home forwards required much improvement. The Bristol superiority in this department gave their threes many chances, but against accurate marking and intelligent methods of defence it brought little reward.

It would be unfair to the whole team to identify any one player as being more prominent than the others amongst the City Seconds, but mention must be made of Redler, the young South African player, who was making his debut. It is understood that in figuring at right centre he was in an unaccustomed position, but he fitted in admirably. He displayed a very reliable pair of hands, and gave the impression that he is more than useful.

Bristol finished with 13 players. Portman went off ten minutes before the end, after being twice hurt, while Ed. Tucker grazed a shoulder blade and retired in the last five minutes. It should be said, however, that Gloucester's victory was consolidated before these accidental casualties occurred.