

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1926

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S FIRST HOME DEFEAT

ABERAVON WELL-DESERVED WINNERS

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. . . Hughes at scrum half, and J. Stephens appeared at centre three-quarter, Dr. Taylor having to keep an appointment in London. Shaw replaced Roberts forward, the latter being indisposed. The visitors had to make several changes in their side.

Teams : –

GLOUCESTER

BACK : G. Thomas.

THREE-QUARTERS : R. N. Loveridge, Roy James, J. Stephens, and R. C. Thompson.

HALF-BACKS : E. H. Hughes and T. Millington.

FORWARDS : A. T. Voyce (capt.), M. Short, E. Triggs-Herbert, G. R. Shaw, G. Foulkes, A. J. Owner, L. Bartlett, and J. Hemming.

ABERAVON

BACK : J. Jeremy.

THREE-QUARTERS : E. Thomas, W. C. Thomas, F. Nicholas, and C. Griffiths.

HALF-BACKS : T. Harris and W. J. Hopkins.

FORWARDS : M. McGrath, S. Davies, D. James, I. Morris, E. Jenkins, L. Jenkins, Rev. H. Jones, and S. James.

Referee : Mr. R. I. Scorer (Midland Counties)

THE GAME

Gloucester kicked off, and from the first scrum Hughes and Hemming shone in a pretty bit of work, but a forward transfer checked. The City confined play to their opponents' 25 until the visitors opened out nicely. Stephens, however, effected a good tackle and stopped the movement.

Good work by the Aberavon forwards sent the ball to Thomas, who relieved beautifully under pressure. Gloucester cleared with a good kick, but tricky play by Hopkins again tested Thomas, who punted well to touch. Play was fast, and the ball given plenty of air, but the watching tactics of both sides was very close.

Aberavon centred play, where Hughes was penalised for off-side. The visitors started passing following a short punt, but nothing resulted. A rush by the Welsh forwards gave Gloucester trouble, and later Harris, picking up in the loose, went clean through. He looked all over a scorer, but Thomas brought off a superb tackle.

Aberavon continued to press, and a line-out took place a few yards from the goal mark. The City eventually cleared with a loose dribble, and a penalty further helped. At mid-field Thomas shone in a fine effort, gathering from a kick, clearing several players, and finding touch with a lovely punt.

Thompson, with a mark, made headway for the City, but Harris opened out wonderfully from the loose, and only a forward transfer stopped a likely try. Gloucester improved their position, and STEPHENS, taking advantage of a missed pass, dribbled through nicely. He turned the ball cleverly past Jeremy and over the line, touching down for a fine try. Millington missed the goal points.

Resuming, James was penalised for obstruction, and Jeremy had a shot for goal, but missed. Showing neat combination on the drop-out, Aberavon attacked. Griffiths, the right wing, made a determined effort to score in the corner, but touch-in-goal was given.

The restart brought no relief to the City, the visiting forwards heeling well and the backs handling with good effect. Millington once relieved with a timely punt, but Aberavon came back, and only a great tackle by Thomas saved a try.

The Welshmen nearly scored a minute later, and then came welcome relief through Thompson, who punted well out of danger. At the centre Stephens relieved and brought off a great dash, going through and handing off in fine style. He eventually passed to Voyce, but the captain was pushed off the ball and nothing resulted.

It was fine open football by the Welshmen, who gave the home defence many anxious moments. The home tackling was very ineffective at times, and once W. Thomas dodged his way through to the line, where he apparently lost the ball – hard lines.

Gloucester so far had done little in passing, the forwards being generally beaten for possession. Stephens and Thompson were prominent with good kicks for Gloucester, and later the pair did a smart piece of combination which might have brought a score with a bit of luck. The effort gained Gloucester a position well inside the visitors' half, where Hughes twice opened out, but without success. Stephens, who was doing remarkably well, again distinguished himself in co-operation with Loveridge, and Gloucester had a fine chance from a line-out, but it was thrown away. Gloucester attacked, and just before the interval MILLINGTON landed a penalty goal.

HALF-TIME :

GLOUCESTER 1 goal, 1 try
ABERAVON Nil

On the run of the play Gloucester were distinctly lucky in being six points up, for Aberavon had done by far the major portion of the attacking and were clearly the cleverer side. Aberavon restarted, and play was hotly contested.

From a breakaway the Welshmen got the ball to the backs, where Griffiths had a dash for the corner, but was well tackled. The visitors, however, were soon rewarded, for from a pass by Hopkins, W. THOMAS went straight through to score a try. Jeremy converted, and only a point separated the teams.

Voyce resumed, and the Gloucester forwards rushed well, but they were pulled up. Aberavon gained relief with good kicking and a loose dribble, but for palpable off-side play a penalty followed. Voyce punted high, and following up regained possession. He ran a short distance and passed to Short, who, however, sent to a visitor, who ran back and started passing. A forward transfer, however, spoiled a fine opening.

It was lively football in the next few minutes, and the pace was terrific. Both sides worked desperately, and there were possible openings, but something went wrong. After a spell at the centre the Gloucester half-backs opened out, and Thompson brought off a splendid run. He cleared Jeremy, but stumbled and fell, and was pounced on from behind.

Gloucester were doing better now, and there were one or two promising bits of work, but finish was wanting. Eventually Aberavon broke away, Thomas tricking the defence cleverly. He punted ahead and over the line, and a Gloucester man and Nicholas raced for possession. The City man got the touch, but to the consternation of the crowd the referee awarded a penalty try, though there was no apparent wilful obstruction. The try was converted, and Aberavon secured a lead of four points.

Gloucester restarted with vigour, but behind the scrum the advantage was always with the visitors, who combined successfully. Clever work gave GRIFFITHS the ball, and after a sharp sprint, the wing man punted, and racing up re-gathered on the bounce, finishing a fine effort by scoring wide out. The goal kick failed. After this score play slackened down somewhat, Gloucester holding their own in some forward exchanges. But when the ball came out the Welshmen always made headway, and the home defence was severely tested.

Harris, Hopkins, and Thomas combined in clever handling, the latter being held up by Thomas and another just in time. Gloucester were awarded a penalty kick under the posts, and from Voyce's punt Griffiths essayed a long distance drop for goal, but the ball went wide. Ensuing play was all in favour of Aberavon, who were the smarter team all round.

Aberavon were continually in possession of the ball, and one bout of passing among the backs promised well for a try, but Griffiths was forced to touch a yard outside. In stopping a rush Harris was laid out, and left the field, but soon returned.

In subsequent play Aberavon were penalised twice in quick succession for "four up," and the kicks benefited Gloucester to an appreciable extent. From a breakdown in some Gloucester passing the visitors started an attack, and there was a fine opening, but Gloucester saved at the critical moment.

RESULT :

ABERAVON 2 goals 1 try (13 pts.)
GLOUCESTER 1 goal (p) 1 try (6 pts.)

REMARKS

It was a wonderfully fast game in which Aberavon clearly demonstrated their superiority in no uncertain manner. Gloucester were very fortunate in holding a six points' lead at the interval, for in actual play the Welshmen held a distinct advantage, especially as regards attack. With a pack of forwards keen, fast and energetic in the open, and able to command the ball in the scrums, the Aberavon backs were afforded heaps of opportunities.

There were times when cleverly-initiated movements broke down at critical moments, but as a combination there was no comparison between the teams. The visitors were all-round superior, and but for some great tackling by George Thomas Gloucester would have suffered a much heavier defeat.

The City forwards worked desperately to hold their opponents and Voyce, Hemming and Short were distinguished in several fine rushes, but in most phases of play the advantage rested with the Welshmen, who were always well together, dribbled effectively, and handled with accuracy. On more than one occasion the visitors turned defence into attack, and the game shifted from one end of the field to the other with remarkable rapidity.

It was a gruelling time for both sets of forwards, and there were times when the exchanges became very warm, but the players kept their heads and accepted hard tackles in the proper spirit. The turn in the game came when the referee awarded Nicholas a penalty try for apparent obstruction. I saw nothing to warrant this extreme decision, but my view was obstructed and the official was certainly in a position to judge what really happened. Previous to this Aberavon had had two claims for tries disallowed; and in one instance at least there was considerable difference of opinion as to the correctness of the ruling.

There were three players in the Gloucester back division who stood out this afternoon – Thomas, Stephens and Thompson. Thomas has played some excellent games this season but to-day he touched a standard far in advance of anything he has done. He was beaten once by the ball, but as far as I could see this was the only blemish – and a small one – in an otherwise perfect display. Thomas' fielding and catching were excellent, his kicking of splendid length and well-judged, and his tackling superb. One collar of Griffiths – a smothering tackle of man and ball – in the first half saved a certain try.

Stephens, in his first big match – made a big impression, and Clem Lewis, the old Welsh International, was particularly taken with his display. Stephens was credited with Gloucester's try, and it was a solo effort entirely. Judgment and resource were emphasised in this effort, and the way he turned the ball past the full back was very cleverly done. There were other occasions when the recruit distinguished himself with strong runs, and he and Thompson were about the only Gloucester players who were able to escape the close marking of the visitors.

Hughes was not altogether a success at scrum half, and Millington was not able to do much in the way of opening out. James' defence was faulty, but there were other players who failed in this respect. Loveridge's opportunities were limited, and he had a fast man opposite him in Nicholas.

Aberavon were well served in all departments, though Jeremy (the captain and a forward) suffered in comparison with Thomas at full back. Harris played a clever and resourceful game at the scrum, and Hopkins took all sorts of passes with a facility that denoted the experienced player.

The three-quarters lacked penetrative ability, though they went very near on a number of occasions. W. Thomas was very elusive in the centre and slipped the defence in clever fashion. E. Thomas combined well, and the wings showed plenty of determination in their running.

Next week's matches : Thursday, Gloucester v. Oxford University (kick-off 3.0 o'clock). Saturday : Ex-Scholars v. Air Force Training School, and Gloucester A v. Yorkley.