

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 1927

FOOTBALL

CITY'S BEST PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON

SWANSEA DEFEATED BY ELEVEN POINTS

GLOUCESTER FORWARDS IN GREAT FORM

Swansea, who defeated Gloucester in the first match at St. Helen's by the substantial margin of 19 points to 3, appeared at Kingsholm to-day for the return fixture. The City were short of Voyce and Thomas, and the absence of the latter, through illness, necessitated Millington going full-back, J. Howell partnering Milliner at half-back.

Swansea were not at full strength, and neither Guy Morgan nor Rowe Harding (the Cambridge Blues) were able to assist. At right wing the Welshmen gave a trial to D. P. Manley, a 17-year-old public schoolboy, who assisted London Irish on their Christmas tour.

The ground was in fine condition, and the attendance at the start was well above average.

Teams : –

GLOUCESTER.

BACK : T. Millington.

THREE-QUARTERS : R. N. Loveridge (capt.), J. Stephens, E. H. Hughes, and S. R. Crowther.

HALF-BACKS : R. Milliner and J. Howell.

FORWARDS : F. J. Seabrook, G. McIlwaine, L. E. Saxby, M. Short, A. Rea, G. Foulkes, J. Hemming, and E. Comley.

SWANSEA.

BACK : W. H. Owen.

THREE-QUARTERS : D. P. Manley, D. M. Williams, W. J. Trew, and Rees Evans.

HALF-BACKS : Roy James and Ivor Matthews.

FORWARDS : W. Faull, D. K. Jenkins, Joe Grey, E. Long, D. C. Cooper, M. Rice, Emlyn Davies, and W. Harries.

Referee : Mr. F. G. Stephens (Moseley).

THE GAME.

Seabrook kicked off for Gloucester, and the early exchanges were fought out at the centre. By useful kicking the City reached their opponents' 25, but misfielding from a loose rush allowed Swansea to dribble away. Millington, however, gathered and found touch nicely.

Gloucester heeling, the home backs handled, and Stephens cut through smartly, and put in a short punt. Crowther picked up, but was tackled and pushed to touch. Play was keenly contested, but neither side was able to get an opening. McIlwaine fielding cleverly burst down touch and handed to Crowther, who cross-punted with his left foot, but the ball bounced the wrong way for the forwards.

Play continued to be scrambling, but from a mark Matthews found touch 12 yards from the City line. Swansea here started an attack, but it was soon checked. A break-away and punt by Crowther changed the position, but Matthews kicked back to Millington, who got in a fine touch-finder.

Twice Matthews got the ball away cleverly with reverse passes, but the passing broke down and nothing resulted. A penalty to Swansea for off-side by McIlwaine was well returned by Millington, and the game centred on the mid-field mark.

Little of real incident, however, occurred until the Gloucester forwards, led by Seabrook, broke away in a superb loose rush. The movement was well backed up, and the Swansea defence was swept aside in irresistible fashion. The ball was taken more than half the length of the field and over the line, McILWAINE completing a grand effort by scoring a try. Millington failed to convert.

Resuming, Gloucester were put beyond the half-way thanks to a well-judged return by Loveridge. From a loose scrum Howell picked up and threw out a long pass to Stephens, who ran down and secured a nice opening for Crowther. The wing man took his pass well and made a determined burst for the corner. Owen, however, brought off a fine tackle a yard from the line.

From the ensuing scrum the ball came out on the Gloucester side, and McILWAINE gathering, the Cambridge Blue plunged his way over with his second try. Millington failed to convert. These two scores coming in quick succession aroused great enthusiasm amongst the crowd.

Gloucester had the better of the play on the resumption, the forwards bringing off another capital burst. The backs, too, handled nicely, and once a pass back from Loveridge to Hughes nearly brought about a score. Loveridge, with left-foot kicks, enabled the City to hold territorial advantage.

A sharp attack looked promising, but a forward transfer was given with Stephens well away. A strong run by Manley down touch brought Swansea clear, and a little later the same player, in conjunction with Trew, worked out a fine opening. There was an inside pass to a colleague, but Millington effected a grand tackle, smothering ball and man.

Working well together, the Gloucester forwards rushed the opposition splendidly, and further progress carried them in front of the Welshmen's goal. In a scramble Milliner tried to drop a goal but failed to raise the ball, and Loveridge did similarly a minute later.

The Gloucester team were playing with great dash in the loose, and the tackling was far better in every respect. A spell of even play followed until the Gloucester backs opened out. Some inside transfers were made, but the final pass was forward. Swansea were kept well inside their half, and the City made strong attempts to add to their score, but at the critical moment things did not go kindly. When the interval arrived Gloucester were still on the attack.

HALF-TIME :
GLOUCESTER2 tries
SWANSEA Nil

Gloucester's form was a revelation after the moderate performance on Boxing Day, the forwards especially being a live force, and beating the Swansea pack in most phases of the game. The backs, too, had also shown distinct improvement.

Swansea re-started, an exchange of kicks giving Gloucester the advantage. Milliner further aided the City with a nice touch-finder, and Swansea were forced to defend. Off-side by Matthews on the 25-line gave Gloucester a penalty, but Millington's shot for goal was very wide.

Following the drop-out, the Gloucester backs were set going by Milliner, and Hughes cut through and short-punted. Owen, however, gathered and cleared cleverly. Matthews getting the ball away, a series of exchanges gave Evans possession. The left wing ran hard, and on reaching Millington kicked ahead and over the line. There was a race for possession, but Millington won and, eluding a would-be tackler, punted out to touch – a splendid effort.

Clever passing by the City backs looked promising, but the ball was fumbled. Milliner next got away prettily, but Loveridge could not take the pass. The game was very fast and both teams gave the ball plenty of air. The Swansea outsides shone in some sharp exchanges, but the tackling was too good.

Then Hemming snapped up a transfer and was well away to the full-back with McIlwaine in attendance. A certain score was in view, but the forward hung on and was tackled in possession. A minute later the home forwards were off with a splendid dash, Hemming dribbling well. Owen, however, effected a timely clearance under pressure.

The game just now was strongly in Gloucester's favour, the whole team playing with great dash. A passing move among the backs gave Loveridge a chance on the right, but though making a good attempt, the acting captain could not beat Manley.

It was hard and keen football, and the general work of the home men gave great satisfaction. The forwards were irresistible at times, the control of the ball being excellent. Inside the Swansea half Milliner got the ball away to Hughes, who slipped the opposing centre and worked out a nice opening. The ball went from Stephens to CROWTHER, and the wing man putting on full pace rounded Owen and scored behind the posts. Millington this time converted, and Gloucester led by 11 points.

Swansea resumed, and big kicking gave them a position in the home half. It was only a temporary stay, however, for the Gloucester forwards swept down the field in great style, and Short actually went over the line, but there had been an infringement and a scrum was ordered twelve yards outside.

The City again brought off some superb footwork but they were checked in time. Swansea, however, were soon placed on the defensive again, but splendid tackling saved the situation. By good kicking the Welshmen reached more favourable quarters but they were never allowed to get dangerous.

Twice in quick succession the City forwards heeled and the backs were well served but combination and judgment were lacking. Swansea also attempted open tactics, but mistakes lost ground, and Gloucester benefited. Crowther put the City close with a punt, and McIlwaine later dashed over but was called back.

Ten yards from their line Swansea handled, the ball coming across to Manley, but the wing man was upset and his pass inside went astray. Gloucester had a possible opening after this, but it was not accepted. Play to the end was well contested, but there was no further scoring.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER ... 1 goal, 2 tries (11 pts.)
SWANSEA Nil

REMARKS.

Gloucester accomplished their best performance of the season this afternoon, and the form generally, compared with recent displays, was a revelation. Swansea were a beaten side all through, but especially forward, where the City pack showed form 50 per cent. above anything previously exhibited.

The Welshmen battled bravely from start to finish, but against an opposition full of fire and dash, clever and resourceful, and admirably led by Seabrook, they were at times overwhelmed. This was particularly noticeable in the loose, where the home players brought off a number of magnificent rushes which more than once covered half the length of the field. It was pulsating football, and the work recalled the best days of a Gloucester forward division.

There was method and cohesion in the general tactics of the City front this afternoon which have been sadly lacking previously, and the combined efforts of the pack met with due reward. Except for an occasional instance of misjudgment, there was little to complain of, and the whole eight worked splendidly to a man. There was a distinct improvement in scrummaging and heeling, the tackling was keen and hard, and in the loose the ball control was excellent.

The presence of Seabrook and McIlwaine no doubt largely accounted for the fine show put up. The players were given a real lead to-day, and they responded with a wholeheartedness that was refreshing to witness.

The team spirit was in full evidence, and the success of the forwards was reflected in the whole side. Seabrook played fine, forceful football, dribbling with effect and being always near the ball. He had splendid support in advance movements from Saxby, Hemming, Foulkes and Short, though Comley and Rea put in a lot of sound work. On the fringe of the scrum McIlwaine was ubiquitous, and apart from the two tries he scored he was of immense service in upsetting the combination of the Swansea backs. On the whole, Gloucester's performance forward gave the greatest satisfaction, and it is hoped the achievement this afternoon is only a prelude of even better things to follow.

The re-arranged Gloucester back division gave an infinitely better performance all round. The men were on their toes, marked with better effect, and made many praiseworthy attempts to beat the defence by varying their tactics.

At times the handling was a bit slow, and this gave the Swansea players an opportunity of getting on top of their opponents; but there were occasions when the defence was slipped very cleverly, and the wing men given a real chance.

Loveridge made one or two smart bursts, but Swansea's latest recruit (Manley) took a lot of beating. The acting captain rendered capital assistance with relief kicking, his touch-finding with his left foot being excellently judged. Crowther ran well when opportunity served, and he scored his try with a fast sprint, going all out for the corner and finally finishing up behind the posts.

With Hughes at centre there was more "liveliness" in attack, and he and Stephens got on well together. Some of the interpassing occasionally went wrong; but the idea was all right, and kept the defence guessing as to the development of the movements. As a line the Gloucester quartet were more effective all-round than the visitors, and the success achieved should give the players encouragement to go on improving.

Millington, back in the position where he did such distinguished service for a couple of seasons, was safe in all that he attempted. He kicked a decent length, and whenever challenged in defence was never at fault. That one clearance of his from over the goal-line was a remarkable effort.

Swansea were a side of triers, but on the day's play had to bow the knee to a superior combination. The Welsh forwards had a fair share of the ball in the scrums, but they were not so well together in loose footwork as the home players. At half-back, Matthews did his part well at the scrum, and initiated a number of movements with the reverse pass, but Roy Jones, subjected to the close attentions of McIlwaine, was not allowed much scope to develop them successfully.

The visiting threes handled cleverly at times, but a lot of mistakes were made, and only rarely were the Welshmen dangerous. Of the two wings, Manley was the pick, and this schoolboy recruit should prove of valuable assistance to the All Whites. Owen had a gruelling time at full-back in facing the repeated rushes of the Gloucester forwards, but never faltered to go down to the ball. Under close pressure he did some effective clearing.

Next week : Gloucester v. Llanelly, at Kingsholm.

W.B.