

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 1927

GLOUCESTER v. ST. BART'S HOSPITAL

With the arrival of April, the Rugby season is nearing its end, and indications of waning interest were emphasised in the poor attendance at Kingsholm last week. Leicester to-day should have proved a much bigger attraction, and it was hoped, provided a better class of football than recently witnessed.

Like Gloucester, St. Bart's Hospital were weakly represented on Saturday, several of their best players being engaged in examinations. With the captain and vice-captain still on the injured list, and Millington resting a damaged ankle, the City had to find a new skipper for the day, the duties devolving on George Thomas, who took up his old position at outside half for the occasion.

A lapse in the last quarter of an hour on the part of the Hospital students allowed Gloucester to win the match with a bit in hand, but it was a hum-drum sort of game, with scarcely a thrill or incident to keep interest alive. The old weakness in combination behind the Gloucester scrum was again in evidence.

The Hospital, by bustling tactics and close marking, frequently upset home attacks, and few movements were allowed to carry far. Two of the best efforts were initiated by Milliner, and led to tries by James and Pitt. James' dropped penalty goal was also a splendid achievement, but these scores did not compensate for the numerous mistakes made and the general lack of skill and judgement noticeable.

The Gloucester forwards, as usual, were the stronger part of the team, but they were not at their best by a long way. For more than half the game the Hospital gave a lot of trouble, especially in the lines-out and open, whilst they were more than useful in loose footwork.

The Londoners threw the ball about with careless abandon, and the result was several interceptions, but the tactics kept the City men guessing, and once or twice the visitors were nearly through.

In the closing stages the Hospital men began to tire, and the defence weakening Gloucester put on three tries very quickly. Saxby again did fine work in this match, and Hemming showed a return to the form which gained him county honours. Short, too, was indefatigable as ever, and Pitt (a rare worker) and Foulkes came especially under notice.

But as a pack the eight were not up to standard. The heeling was too slow and ragged, and the tackling was by no means satisfactory. The slackness in collaring would not pay against Leicester this afternoon.

Milliner, although doing several good things, was not himself at the base of the scrum, and he was often smothered by Williams, on the opposite side. The ball came from him too slowly to give Thomas much chance, and with the latter not a Millington in generalship and finesse, the third line were handicapped to a certain degree.

But the three-quarters should have made better use of the opportunities afforded them. James came into the limelight more than his colleagues as a result of his two scores, but the line as a whole were not distinguished.

The Hospital had a smart little centre in Taylor, who eluded the defence cleverly on several occasions, and Ward ran determinedly when in possession. The students did not hesitate to throw the ball about, and had more judgment been exercised another try or two might easily have been scored. But, as already indicated, neither side displayed much in the way of ability, and at its best the football was decidedly scrappy.

The one redeeming feature of the match was the exhibition of Boughton at full-back. The old schoolboy International, on his form at Llanelly, well merited a trial at home for the seniors, and his debut at Kingsholm was most encouraging.

Boughton must be the youngest full-back playing in first-class football, for he is only 16 years of age. But he is a big lad, and with his experience in schools football has a good knowledge of the game. He was pretty severely tested on Saturday at times, but never failed. Possessing a safe pair of hands, he fielded and gathered the ball perfectly, was rarely out of position, and put plenty of driving force behind his kicks. Boughton is quicker in his movements all-round since I last saw him, and he shaped well last week in going for his man when called upon for a tackle. The youngster should be given a more severe test than he was afforded on Saturday before apprising his real ability, but his display against the Hospital was full of promise.

I hope Boughton won't run away with the idea that he has touched top form and has nothing to learn. He has a long way to go yet to reach that ideal, and experience will teach him this fact sooner than anything. If he is a wise lad he will keep his head, progress slowly but surely, and never refuse to listen to advice from an older player.

Mr. Gordon Vears, who refereed Saturday's match, could not have been greatly impressed with the playing strength of the present City team. Mr. Vears had a cordial reception at Kingsholm, where he was always such a prime favourite with the crowd as a player and jolly good sport. Gordon had ten seasons with the Gloucester Club, appearing first in 1902-3, and finishing on his removal to Walsall, in 1912-13.

He captained the side in 1907-8, when Gloucester had a record of 23 wins as against nine defeats and two drawn games, with an aggregate score of 346 points for and 230 against. He was contemporary with a number of fine players, amongst whom were G. Romans, A. E. Wood (full-backs), C. Smith, A. Hudson, J. Harrison, E. Hall, G. Cook (three-quarters), D. R. Gent, J. Stephens, and W. Dix (half-backs), and W. Johns, Bert Parham, F. Goulding, A. Hawker, W. Holder, G. H. Smith, D. Hollands, G. Holford, H. Berry, F. Westbury, F. Pegler, G. Matthews, and H. Collins (forwards).

Mr. Vears represented Gloucestershire on several occasions, and had the distinction of captaining the team which won the County Championship in 1912-13, when Cumberland were beaten at Carlisle. On going to the Midlands Mr. Vears continued active participation in the game, and after a season with Moseley joined Leicester, with which club he was associated for two or three years.

He has now taken up refereeing, and his services have been in great request this season in important club and county matches. He has travelled as far north as Workington, where he had charge of the Cumberland–Yorkshire match.

Mr. Vears' football interests are now centred in the North Midlands, where he has for colleagues on the executive Mr. Percy Adams and Mr. Fred Byrne, but he retains the happiest recollections of his days with the Gloucester Club, and the re-union with many old friends last week-end afforded him the greatest pleasure.

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