

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1919

FIRST FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S GREAT TRIUMPH

OXFORD UNIVERSITY WELL BEATEN AT KINGSHOLM

BRILLIANT CITY FORWARDS

A visit of one of the University teams to Gloucester is an event of rare occurrence, and the appearance of the Oxford combination at Kingsholm to-day had been looked forward to with exceptional interest as certain to provide a keen, hard, and sporting Rugby game.

In 1912-13 the Dark Blues, on their first visit to the City Club's headquarters were returned victors by 3 goals (1d 1p) (12 points) to 1 try (3 points), but the following season Gloucester went to Oxford and triumphed by 1 penalty goal 2 tries (9 points) to 2 tries (6 points). Previous to these two engagements Oxford had beaten the City at Oxford by 18 points to nil in 1911-12. In the latter match the late Poulton-Palmer was captain of the side, and was then playing at his best.

Oxford have done wonderfully well this season, having beaten the Old Merchant Taylors 37-0, Richmond 36-0, The Army 10-6, Harlequins 33-0, and United Services 19-6, as against one defeat, to Guy's Hospital by 21-3. Gloucester, too, could show a record of only one reverse (Swansea), with capital wins over Bristol, Cardiff, and Abertillery. Form, therefore, pointed to a well-contested game, with the University slight favourites.

It was a misfortune for the City that just at this time the ranks should have been weakened by the accident to Brown and the retirement of Alec Lewis. Further, J. Hall, who was selected at full back, could not accept owing to indisposition, and a call had to be made on the services of Hayward, of the A team.

Hamblin was moved up to half-back; Washbourn returned to the side; and a trial was given at centre to T. Millington, of the Seconds. Forward, Gloucester were at full strength, and it was in this department the real test was expected, the University enjoying the reputation of possessing one of the finest packs in the country.

The morning opened in typical November weather, but fortunately the mist dispersed later, and the afternoon turned bright overhead. Despite the wet the ground appeared in good condition, and there was a splendid crowd to welcome the 'Varsity; Crole (the Scottish International) and Jenkins (who has played for Swansea), both Old Blues, appearing for the first time.

GLOUCESTER.

BACK : F. W. Hayward.

THREE-QUARTERS : F. Webb, A. Hudson, T. Millington, and W. Washbourn.

HALF-BACKS : W. Dix and L. Hamblin.

FORWARDS : G. Halford (captain), S. Smart, A. Hall, W. Davis, L. W. Ayliffe, J. Harris, T. Voyce, and J. F. Lawson.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

BACK : G. W. H. Nicholson (Trinity).

THREE-QUARTERS : C. L. Skeet (Merton), C. G. Davies (Exeter), O. Jenkins (Jesus), and G. B. Crole (University).

HALF-BACKS : G. E. J. Gent (Trinity) and V. R. Price (Magdalen).

FORWARDS : J. Moresby-White (New College), C. H. Evans (Brasenose), R. G. Sharp (University), H. F. Woldock (Hertford), B. G. Schofield (Christ Church), and J. E. Maxwell-Hyslop.

Referee : Mr. Hancock (Bristol).

THE GAME

Oxford started the game, but some of the visitors getting in front of the ball a scrum was ordered at the centre. The Gloucester forwards got the ball away nicely to Dix, and a round of passing followed, but a low transfer from Hudson to Washbourn was not accepted. Gloucester heeled again from the next scrummage, and Millington kicked to touch nicely. The 'Varsity forwards wheeling, dribbled some 20 yards before being checked by Webb, who turned the ball to touch inside the home half.

The City forwards quickly recovered the ground with a sharp dash, a flying kick finally sending the ball out of play near the Oxford 25. An exchange of kicks between Hayward and Crole ended in the Gloucester man finding touch in the visitors' 25. Here Hall picked up in some loose play and started passing, but something went wrong. The City, however, made headway a moment later with a dashing dribble, and the University were seriously pressed.

Gloucester confined play to their opponents' quarter, where the forwards heeled, but the attack was checked well. The City front were doing splendidly in all phases of play, and another fine burst looked promising, but a player picked up and was soon brought down. The Oxford backs, with some good kicking, gained a footing for the first time in the home half, but a penalty to the City changed the venue, Smart and Voyce following up and tackling Skeet in possession.

Oxford now began to get the ball out, and twice the university players indulged in some clever exchanges, which were heartily applauded. An infringement, however, gave Gloucester a free, and with the kick Hamblin gained 30 yards with a splendid touch-finder. The 'Varsity replied with an equally good effort, and then the Oxford backs, fed by Gent, were set going. The ball was beautifully handled, but Jenkins' re-pass went astray, and a dangerous movement was stopped. It might be mentioned, however, that the ball never went properly into the scrum in the first place and the referee was sadly at fault in allowing the game to proceed.

Play was contested in midfield, where the visitors were twice penalised for off-side play by Gent. The kicks, however, availed very little. It was a great contest forward, but Gloucester were holding their own finely.

The City opening out, the ball was sent across to Webb, who, after running a short distance, cross-kicked. There was a splendid chance of a score, but some irregularity took place outside the line and a scrum was ordered. Here Gent again got off-side, and Gloucester had a splendid position for a kick at goal. Hamblin, however, missed it, the ball going wide of the posts for a touch-down.

On the drop-out, Millington returned well to touch, and then Voyce brought off a brilliant solo dribble, which took the ball to Nicholson. Oxford saved, but their line was in danger again a minute later. Keeping up the pressure, Gloucester attacked strongly.

Hamblin, picking up the ball from a loose scrum, gave a visitor the dummy, and secured a fine opening. A well-judged long pass out to the threes was well taken by Millington, who raced hard for the line, and got the ball down safely near the mark amidst tremendous cheering. Hamblin failed with the place-kick.

Voyce received the kick out, and put in a sharp dash, which was well followed up by the forwards. Working desperately, Gloucester seriously tested the Oxford defence, and Smart was nearly over once with a great effort.

Loose play ended in the ball being kicked across to the Gloucester right, and Webb put in a short punt, but the defence prevailed.

Gloucester lost their territorial position through a mistake in fielding the ball, which Oxford took full advantage of. A visiting forward dribbled right away, and passed Hayward, but Smart got back and saved. Passing out from the scrum to Jenkins, the latter took a drop for goal, but the ball went under the posts.

In the next few minutes, Oxford tried hard to score, and Crole, from passing made a splendid dash for the corner, being held up outside. A combined effort by the forwards brought relief, and later Hudson, with a nice touch-finder, sent play to the centre.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
GLOUCESTER 1 try
OXFORD Nil

Halford restarted for Gloucester, and the first item of note was Hall starting the backs from a line out, ending in Hudson getting in a good screw kick, but just failing to find touch. The reply, however, was only a poor one, and Gloucester gained a position in their opponents' half.

Pushing well, the City forwards rushed the visiting pack off their feet, but the ball went nicely to Crole, who punted finely to the centre flag. From this point the Gloucester halves got the ball away, and Washbourn was set going by Hudson, but Nicholson effected a good tackle. A Gloucester man, however, picked up, and kicked across over the line for a minor.

Ensuing play was waged in the University half, the forwards being chiefly engaged. Dix and Webb worked a short line-out cleverly, but they were called back for a knock-on. Passing by the City backs later lost ground, a visitor gathering after Washbourn had been tackled, and running to beyond mid-field. The home forwards quickly regained the ground, and a lovely movement took them down to Nicholson, but the latter gathered the ball beautifully and broke through. Being collared, he let the ball go to his forwards, but Gloucester checked by terrific tackling.

Skeet was at this time limping, the result of a heavy tackle in the first half. In the next melee a Gloucester forward was laid out, and after receiving attention from the ambulance men retired to the touch line. In a couple of minutes, however, he resumed.

A brilliant loose rush by the Oxford forwards was well checked by Hudson, and then the City pack responded with an equally fine effort. This led to Gloucester getting on the attack again, and for offside by Gent the University were penalised right in front of goal. This time Hamblin made no mistake with his kick, and Gloucester now enjoyed a six points' lead. It was well deserved, too, for the City had had heaps the better of the play.

Oxford restarted, and aided by a long kick down, which Hayward failed to field, they gained a position ten yards from the home line. The ball came back from the scrum to Dix, who passed to Hudson on the line for the latter to punt out safely to touch. Later Hamblin, with a clever kick under difficulties, further improved Gloucester's position, and the forwards, by keen following up and tackling unerringly, aided still further.

From a pass by Dix, Hamblin beat several opponents cleverly and got in a nice touch-finder inside the Oxford 25. Here the forwards went right to the line in a body, but the 'Varsity just managed to save. Then Millington, receiving from Hamblin, tried hard to get through, but was smothered.

Keeping up the pressure, Gloucester fairly ran over their opponents, and Hudson after a dash down touch, cross-kicked. There was a splendid opening, but the referee ruled a home player off-side. The 'Varsity got out of danger with good kicking, but Hamblin sent them back beautifully. Oxford could not make any headway, and the excitement grew intense as Gloucester pressed continually. For off-side by Gent, Oxford were again penalised, and with a lovely kick Hamblin landed another goal.

On the restart Hall and Smart were distinguished for some brilliant work which confined play to the Oxford half. Then at the centre Jenkins intercepted a Gloucester pass and ran clear to Hayward. He then transferred to a forward who raced hard for the line, but Hudson got back and effected a superb tackle on the mark.

A scrum followed five yards out, and the Oxford halves getting possession, Crole received and dashed over in the corner. Price kicked a nice goal. The success of the 'Varsity was heartily applauded by the crowd.

The game was nearing its close, and Gloucester playing for safety kept their lead to the end.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER 2 goals (p) 1 try (9 pts.)

OXFORD 1 goal (5 points)

REMARKS

True to the Club's tradition, the City rose to a great occasion to-day, and achieved a victory over powerful opponents, which can well be included amongst the most noteworthy performances in the history of the Club.

Oxford came with a brilliant reputation, but reputations always put the Gloucester men on their mettle, and the players were all out this afternoon. In a few words the University met their masters, and were fairly and squarely beaten in a contest full of exiting incidents, and waged at a pace that only highly-trained exponents could possibly hope to last out.

To the Gloucester forwards first praise is due for their magnificent all-round display. They were meeting to-day one of the best packs in the country – Oxford's achievements this season have been mainly due to the work of the front – and that they were able to beat their opponents in all phases of play is sufficient testimony to their prowess. Oxford tried their hardest, both in the scrums and in the loose, but generally speaking, the City were top dog.

There was no slackness in the home pack this afternoon. All through there was a wholehearted desire to get at it, and to the end the men maintained their superiority in no uncertain manner. What tackling !

Not this season have the City players been seen to such advantage, and the University will probably be the first to admit they never met a keener set. "Go low" was evidently the order, and the injunction was laid to heart with a vengeance.

For the most part the Gloucester forwards held the advantage in the tight scrums, and there could be no complaint to-day as to the heeling. Once in possession, the men let the ball come back sharply, and Dix was able to do the work of feeding the backs with far more accuracy and effectiveness than against Cardiff.

In the open and loose – Oxford's recognised forte – the City accomplished much that was brilliant – individual and combined – and in the long lines out there was also some fine work accomplished. Halford proved a most efficient leader, but the players who shone most – though I mention their names without disparagement to their colleagues – were Hall, Davis, Smart and Voyce. Smart played fully up to his International reputation, and Hall's value to the side could not be over-estimated. Two or three times he opened out the game in the most approved style, whilst his smothering tackles and saving were simply great.

I have long held the opinion that Lionel Hamblin's best position – for the side – was at outside half, and the vice-captain's exhibition today confirmed this impression. Not that Hamblin would not in time make an ideal full back. I believe he would, for a player with his skill, ability, and resource could hardly fail in any position. But fly-half affords a player more opportunities, and Hamblin is the kind of player to make the best use of them. Quick away, and accepting transfers with perfect accuracy, Hamblin was wonderfully effective in all that he did. His timely and well-judged kicks were a prominent feature, and the forwards were often helped appreciably in this way. Dix was in his element at the rear of the scrum, and had Gent beaten repeatedly. The University player was very prone to off-side tactics; but he ran the risk too often, and two penalty goals against his side were the result. I fancy his captain will have a word to say to him on his indiscretions.

The Gloucester three-quarters had a fair sight of the ball this afternoon, but the attacks had no real sting, though once or twice smart movements were carried through. In defence all the players showed up well, Hudson especially being to the fore in this direction.

The Old International made no mistake in getting his man down, and opponents knew they had been in the hands of a player experienced in these matters. Millington, without being brilliant, shaped promisingly, and he went for his try well. He should certainly get another trial. Webb and Washbourn performed with credit on the wings, but the latter is not yet back to his pre-war form.

Hayward at full-back, had a comparatively easy time and had no really defensive work to do. With the exception of one mistake in the fielding he did fairly well, and his kicking was of good length.

Oxford were never really allowed to settle down to any preconceived plan. Worried in the forwards, and beaten for three-parts of the game territorially, their attacks were few and far between, yet the University displayed the best combined efforts seen during the match. Against a less strenuous side the Dark Blues might easily become a dangerous attacking combination.

Forward, Moresby-White, Duncan, and Evans were prominent, but the whole pack put plenty of life into their work. Gent, at scrum half, has already been referred to. Price was a useful asset at times, but, like the centre three-quarters, he did not relish going down to the loose rushes of the home forwards. Jenkins made a couple of nice runs, but Davies was not seen to any striking advantage. Skeet, the right wing, was crocked half-way through the first half of the game, and was consequently more or less a passenger afterwards. Nicholson was often hampered by the close following up of the Gloucester front, but on the whole he got through an arduous afternoon's work with credit to himself and advantage to his side. Gloucester's great win was received with enthusiasm, and the crowd cheered both teams as they left the field.

GLOUCESTER A v. LYDNEY A

Played at Lydney.

The home forwards dribbled to the Gloucester line, but Griffiths saved by a good kick to touch. The visitors then attacked through Daniells, but Kerwood saved well. The Lydney backs passed well, but the Gloucester defence was sound. Good footwork by the home forwards forced Griffiths to concede a minor.

The Gloucester backs then showed good passing and tested Kerwood, but the home custodian saved by a lovely kick to touch. Even play followed, first one side and then the other attacking. Daniells set the visiting three-quarters going, but the Lydney defence proved equal, Probert well saving. The Lydney forwards dribbled to the Gloucester end, and it seemed certain Fletcher would score, but he passed forward with the defence practically beaten. Gloucester were now busy defending, but Welshman relieved by a good run and kick to touch.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Lydney A.	Nil
Gloucester A	Nil

The visitors went strongly, and from a cross-kick Ashmead secured and crossed with a try, which Welshman failed to covert. Lydney played well after this reverse, but the Gloucester back, Griffiths, effected some good saves. The Gloucester three-quarters handled with good judgment, and Bloxsome cut out a good opening for Ashmead to score a second try, Welshman this time adding the points.

Although now feeling beaten, the home team played up with good courage, and the ball was well handled, James being nearly over. The Gloucester forwards, headed by Webb, dribbled to the Lydney end, Kerwood effecting a good save. Lydney pressed and kept Gloucester busy defending till the finish, but they could not score.

RESULT :

Gloucester A 1 goal, 1 try (8 points)

Lydney A Nil

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