

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1920

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S LAST MINUTE VICTORY

BRISTOL BEATEN AT KINGSHOLM AFTER A STRENUOUS STRUGGLE

TRIES BY JACK AND FRED WEBB

The first post-war meeting of these keen but friendly rivals at Kingsholm aroused all the old-time interest. Early in the season Gloucester visited Bristol and won by ten points and on the day's play that was a fair criterion of the merits of the rival teams. Since then Bristol have put up some wonderfully good performances – notably the two fights against Newport – and though a nasty upset was experienced at Cross Keys last week there were contributory causes which could not be overlooked.

At full strength Bristol are undoubtedly a tip-top combination, and whilst one fully recognised that Gloucester, at Kingsholm, are a formidable proposition to tackle, the form of the respective teams suggested the final issue to-day was an open one.

Forward, Gloucester fully expected to hold an advantage, and it rested with the back division – chiefly at three-quarter – as to whether the Kingsholm side would pull through. In more than one match this season the City threes have proved disappointing in pressing home attacks, but it was hoped better luck would attend the efforts of Hudson and his colleagues this afternoon.

With the exception of L. Corbett, Bristol were strongly represented, and Gloucester played the Fifteen originally selected.

Dix was doubtful earlier in the week, but he was fortunately able to take his place in the ranks. Lionel Hamblin came back after a few weeks' absence, and played centre with J. Brown, the left-wing position being occupied by Hudson.

Unfortunately heavy rain set in at mid-day, and rendered the conditions very unfavourable. The ground in front of the grand stand was very sloppy in places, and made football a matter of difficulty. The unpleasant weather had a considerable effect on the attendance, though a good crowd was present.

Bristol made one late hour change, F. J. Coventry (who it will be remembered played centre for the County against Cornwall) taking the place of J. Leahy (forward).

During the interval of waiting the Wagon Works Band played selections of music.

Teams : –

GLOUCESTER

BACK : G. Welshman.

THREE-QUARTERS : F. Webb, L. Hamblin, A. Hudson, and J. Brown.

HALF-BACKS : J. Humphries and T. Millington.

FORWARDS : G. Holford (captain), S. Smart, T. Voyce, A. Hall, F. Ward, F. W. Ayliffe, J. H. Webb, and N. Hayes.

BRISTOL

BACK : T. Bateman.

THREE-QUARTERS : R. Quick, F. M. Arkle, R. C. W. Pickles, and H. Feltham.

HALF-BACKS : W. J. Wring and S. H. Budd.

FORWARDS : M. Shaw, F. V. Feltham, J. S. Tucker, P. J. Williams, F. J. Coventry, S. Carey, J. Boughton, and H. Haysham.

Referee : Mr. Wheeler (Leicester).

THE GAME

Gloucester lost the toss, and Holford kicked off against the wind. The ball went to Wring, who ran across and passed to Pickles, but the Bristol captain could only punt straight to touch. Gloucester got the ball thrown out, but the handling was wild, and nothing resulted. Off-side by Budd gave Gloucester a penalty, and Coventry only putting in a poor return the City got to the centre.

Loose play and a punt by Budd transferred play to the home 25, where Arkle received and punted high. Welshman, however, got to the ball well, and though pressed by Pickles and Feltham managed to get in a fine touch-finder to beyond the quarter flag. Play, however, was confined to the home 25, Bristol working very hard. A clever kick by Budd put the visitors very close, and Gloucester were hard pressed.

Taking advantage of a lapse on the part of the home forwards a couple of Bristolians dribbled right away, and Welshman was upset under his goal. Things looked ugly for a time, but Hudson eventually gained a useful relief. Later, however, the ball was kicked over the line and Gloucester conceded a minor.

Following the drop-out a fine rush by the City forwards was not checked until well beyond the centre. A fine kick by Arkle sent play back, Welshman only getting the ball to touch a few yards ahead. Gloucester cleared again through Hamblin, but Hudson, who received, could do little. A penalty to Bristol saw an attempt for goal, but the shot went wide, and only a minor resulted.

Bristol continued to have the better of the exchanges, the home forwards being beaten for possession. In the home 25 Wring gathered smartly, and darting round the "blind" side of the scrum whipped out a sharp pass to Feltham, who took the pass beautifully on the run and dashed over in the corner with a good try. Pickles failed at goal. Up to this point the visitors had certainly had the best of the play, and deserved their lead. But the wind was an important factor, and the visitors took full advantage, the backs kicking with good judgment.

Resuming, Millington put Gloucester well down with a useful kick, and then in a melee at midfield F. Feltham was injured and had to retire. Restarting, the City got in a good dribble and later Ward burst away from a line out but after securing a good opening threw the ball away wildly.

Working well together the home forwards broke away with a grand rush, which Bateman only checked at the critical moment. Gloucester, however, were not to be denied, and with another superb effort they pushed their opponents over the line. A scramble ensued, ending in Bristol touching down.

Ensuing play was fast and exciting with the forwards. The home pack, with Hayes, Holford, and Ayliffe in the van, rushed in fine style, and tackled every opponent who tried to pick up. The movement was eventually checked, and a long kick by Arkle changed the venue.

Inside the Gloucester half there was an attempt at passing, but it broke down, and Voyce following up dribbled clear. Holford continued the movement, and took the ball over the line, and scored, but Voyce had been ruled off-side, and the game came back to the centre with Bristol awarded a free.

Up to now the Gloucester forwards had seen little of the ball, and the backs, for the most part, were unemployed as regards attack.

At length Dix got a chance, and he got the ball away smartly to Millington, who fed Hamblin nicely, but the centre threw behind Hudson. Immediately after another movement initiated by Dix and Millington brought no result.

Still Gloucester persevered, and getting a pass from Dix, Hudson found touch with a fine kick to within ten yards of the Bristol mark. Gloucester struggled hard for the equalising try, but nothing better than a minor resulted.

Receiving the drop-out, Webb replied with a high punt and follow-up. Arkle missed, and Webb gathering on the bounce, he ran a few yards and then gave an inside pass to Jack Webb, who raced over with a try amidst enthusiasm. Welshman missed the goal points.

Having drawn level, Gloucester played up in fine style. Hamblin brought off a nice run down touch, and later Hudson punted ahead, but the ball went out of play. Millington was prominent with some good work, and the forwards were now all out, especially in the loose.

Bristol were kept at it in their half, but the defence and saving were excellent. Quick, with a clever solo effort, kicked away and past Welshman, but Hudson came across and saved. The visitors, however, dashed further ahead, and the Gloucester line narrowly escaped. Voyce eventually brought relief with a kick to touch at the 25.

HALF-TIME SCORE ;

GLOUCESTER	1 try
BRISTOL	1 try

Bristol resumed, and the opening incident of note was a fine dribble by Millington, who took the ball straight up the field cleverly. Pickles eventually checked and punted, but the ball hit Hudson on the shoulder and rebounded forward to Feltham, who picked up and kicked to touch.

Subsequent play was scrambling amongst the forwards, but there was little in it. Then Bristol heeled, and there was a series of exchanges between the half-backs, Pickles and Feltham. The latter cross-kicked, but the ball travelled no distance and Gloucester easily saved.

Dix was instrumental in gaining a few yards with a punt to touch, and next the Gloucester forwards burst away in irresistible style with the ball at their feet. They, however, kicked a little too hard, and Batemen made a good mark.

After this there was a spell of rough-and-tumble at mid-field, ending in Hayes securing and punting in the open. Wring got across and managed to gather and send to touch.

A neat bit of combination between Millington and Hudson gave Gloucester a nice slice of ground, and gradually Bristol were forced beyond the 25 flag. Here Bristol were penalised for an infringement in the line-out. Millington had a place for goal, but the kick just fell short. Wring securing punted out to Holford, but for off-side Bristol were penalised and a scrum was ordered five yards from the visitors' line.

Gloucester were in a good attacking position now, but they lost it, and Bristol rushed out to the half-way line. The visitors again came under the ban of the referee for an infringement, and Hudson taking the kick found touch nicely.

The game now resolved itself into a battle of the forwards, for the ground was in such a state as to be all against back play. The Bristol pack were playing a keen, close game, and by dint of all-round work gained a footing in the home half. The visitors heeling, Wring opened out, but Arkle was upset by Brown, causing him to throw the ball yards forward.

A kicking duel between Bateman and Hudson ended in favour of the City player, who found touch splendidly with a big kick some 30 yards down the field. Jack Webb, who was playing a remarkably fine game, was conspicuous, with Hudson, in a clever bit of work, but it was neutralised by the Bristol forwards, who shone in a good combined effort.

Ensuing play was fought out just inside the home half until Webb and Jack Brown got away in a fine effort on the right, but Arkle effected a tackle when things looked dangerous. Gloucester, rushing the ensuing scrum, went very close, but again the defence held out. By strenuous forward work Bristol removed the danger, and although subsequently penalised only a touchdown resulted.

The drop-out brought relief to the visitors, and centre play followed. Brown changed the venue with a run and kick, but a knock-on spoiled subsequent headway being made. The ball getting loose, Pickles gathered, and with a lovely kick sent play to the other end, but it quickly came back, and midfield was again the scene of operations.

A penalty to Gloucester helped the City down to their opponents' 25, where a hot struggle ensued. Gloucester made desperate efforts to score, but were met with a splendid defence, and gradually Bristol got out of danger.

Eventually, from a scrum 20 yards out the City forwards heeled, and Dix beating Wring started a bout of passing. The ball went along the City third line in perfect style to Webb, who was partly tackled, but being twisted round fell over the line with a try, which failed in conversion.

Only a couple of minutes were left, and Gloucester holding their own a strenuous struggle ended.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER 2 tries (6 points)

BRISTOL 1 try (3 points)

REMARKS

Gloucester snatched winning points to-day with a combined effort which easily stood out as the best bit of passing seen on the side; and, in fact, in the match. It was, perhaps, rough luck on Bristol, for on the play generally a drawn game would have best represented the merits of the two teams.

Bristol could certainly claim to have had the better of the exchanges territorially in the first half, but the advantage was reversed on the change over, when Gloucester did more of the attacking. But the defence for the most part was always on top, and in this department both sides accomplished some magnificent work.

It was a great pity the weather turned out so badly, for in a large measure it accounted for the scrambling play that was witnessed at times. But there was no slacking in keenness and vigour, and the contest forward was a veritable battle of the giants.

In the tight scrums Bristol created a surprise by the manner in which they continually got the ball. In the opening stages they heeled five times to Gloucester's once, and Dix got no chance at all. The City pack improved later on, but it could not be claimed they were really on top at any point in the game.

In the loose Gloucester did much better, and taking play throughout they were the superior set. But Bristol accomplished fine work at times, keeping good control of the ball and exhibiting a cohesion that was refreshing. The line-out work on both sides was not altogether satisfactory, and there was far too much pushing in the back on the part of certain players. Bristol were the greatest offenders in this respect, and the infringements caused them to be penalised on several occasions.

Individually, I should place Jack Webb as being the best forward in the City pack, if not on the field. He was ever in the right spot – this was exemplified when he was up to take that pass from his namesake and score Gloucester's opening try. The amount of saving Webb did to-day was remarkable, and he reminded me a good deal of Charlie Hall in the old days – one of the best players to check forward rushes who ever donned a football jersey. Next to Webb, Hayes, Ayliffe, Voyce, and Holford were the leading City forwards, but all worked with a will and entered the fray with a zest and determination that could not be mistaken.

Bristol are a good, sound pack, with plenty of dash and cleverness with hands and feet. Carey, one of the veterans, played a sterling game, and Tucker, Boughton, and F. Feltham proved their worth in all phases of play. The visitors had no cause to complain of the fight put up by their front rankers this afternoon.

Behind, Bristol had far more opportunities than the home division, but though movements were initiated with skill and judgement they did not fructify. At half, Wring and Budd showed nice understanding and were very nippy. The scrum worker, however, had a distinct tendency to off-side, and Budd several times over-ran the ball when Gloucester heeled.

The visiting three-quarters all kicked well, but they did not prove so effective a scoring line as expected. Pickles and Arkle, in the centre, kicked with splendid judgement, but did not show to any advantage in making openings for the wings, of whom Feltham was the most prominent, chiefly owing to the fact that most of the play went to his wing. Quick displayed a nice speed and quick intelligence, and on a dry ground and well served would give a lot of trouble to defenders.

As already indicated, the Gloucester backs were not over-employed in attack. With limited opportunities, Dix opened out to the best of his ability, and that movement he initiated at the end of the game which resulted in victory being secured was a sweet effort. Millington more than fulfilled my expectations. He was smart in anticipating, combined well with Dix, and exhibited a cleverness in dribbling that came in most useful at times on the treacherous surface.

At three-quarter the Gloucester line were seen at their best in checking and clearing. Hudson rendered yeoman service in these departments, and he also kicked with splendid judgment.

Of the two centres, Brown was the pick, and the recruit marked Arkle with good effect. His showing this afternoon all round was distinctly encouraging.

Fred Webb was not overburdened with work, but what he did was real class. He had a hand in both the tries obtained by Gloucester, and on another occasion it was not his fault a score did not come following a clever move on his part.

The full backs were fairly well matched. Welshman did not get the length behind his kicks as in recent matches, but on the whole he sustained his reputation, and one of his clearances, with four Bristol forwards on top of him, ranked amongst the best things seen in the game.

GLOUCESTER A v. ST. MARK'S

The bad weather prevented the usual followers from supporting Gloucester A and St. Mark's in the return match played at Sandhurst.

The teams were : –

Gloucester A. – G. Smith; N. Daniell, W. Washbourn, T. Burns, and S. A. Brown; R. Cook and G. Thomas; C. Mumford, E. Richardson, A. Comely, Hodges, S. Bayliss, G. Turner, R. Curtis, and J. Merrett.

St. Mark's. – F. Ashmead; J. Barnes, P. Cummings, J. Bayliss, and G. Cole; H. Griffiths and W. Corbett; F. Westbury, J. Westbury, Mann, Pitt, Bridges, Peacey, Dradge, and G. Westbury.

Referee : Mr. Curtis.

Fortunately the rain had ceased when the match commenced, but Gloucester A had to play against a strong cross-wind, and were quickly called upon to defend. They, however, succeeded in getting the ball out well on several occasions, but could not make much headway. St. Mark's at length scored, Cummings picking up in some loose play and dashing over with a try. Cole failed to convert.

The visitors now exerted pressure, and play was carried to the centre, but there was little in it until the Seconds went away with a good rush and forced a minor. The Seconds got back to the St. Mark's 25, but were soon forced to defend, and were in difficulty when the interval came.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

St. Mark's 1 try
Gloucester A Nil

On the resumption the visitors came away and a dangerous scramble took place in the corner, but the Saints kicked clear and continued to keep the Seconds at a safe distance.

From a line out the Gloucester forwards came away with the ball at their feet, and what looked like a certain score was saved by Bayliss, who kicked the ball dead just as it was about to be touched down.

After the kick-out the Saints penetrated to the Gloucester line, but a mark and a good touch-finder sent play back to their twenty-five. Still the Seconds could not open their account, although they forced the homesters to touch down again on two occasions, both very narrow shaves. Towards the end the visitors struggled hard to mend their fortunes, but the defence was sure, and after a good run by Daniels the Saints worked up again.

RESULT :

St. Mark's 1 try (3 points)
Gloucester A Nil

REMARKS

St. Mark's put up a keen fight, and deserved to wipe out the defeat inflicted upon them by Gloucester A earlier in the season. There was not much to choose between the teams, however, and the Seconds should certainly have drawn.

The Saints' pack were generally beaten in the scrums, but they were quite equal to the visiting forwards in the loose. Cook worked the scrum very well, but he had a keen opponent in Griffiths, who gave him but little time to get the ball away, with the result that there was but little handling.

The Gloucester back division seemed to be off their game, and failed to impart just that finish to their play which would have made all the difference. The Saints' threes were keen, but lacked combination. Both the backs played well. The wind and the state of the ground, of course, prevented anything like accurate football.

JC