

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1920

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S BRILLIANT WIND-UP AT KINGSHOLM

CONQUERORS OF NEWPORT BEATEN BY A TRY

SWANSEA DESERVEDLY BEATEN ON THE PLAY

For the closing match of the home season Gloucester had a most attractive fixture in the return meeting with Swansea, who held the distinction of being the only team to lower the colours of Newport.

The "All Whites" are amongst the oldest and keenest opponents of the City, and always popular favourites at the Kingsholm enclosure.

In the earlier matches of the season Swansea experienced a bad time, and occupied, for them, a humble position in the Welsh senior club championship. But the difficulties of team building were boldly faced and overcome, and since Christmas the team has accomplished some noteworthy performances. When Gloucester visited St. Helen's the City lost by 12 points to 5, but with a bit of luck the result might easily have gone the other way.

For to-day's contest Gloucester had selected a strong fifteen, but there were the inevitable late hour changes, caused by J. Humphries "crying off." At Newport, it was stated, a Northern Union agent was after the young Gloucesterian, and this week another club sought his services. Whether Humphries had actually signed on for any N.U. club was not definitely known officially, but it was concluded his defection from the City team had something to do with this.

To fill the vacancy there was a re-arrangement of positions. A. Hall was brought out of the forwards to partner Dix at half-back, and the vacancy in the pack was taken by Tom Voyce. The International was not originally chosen, as it was understood he was under the doctor when the team was picked, but later in the week Voyce was given permission to play. It was understood he intimated this fact to a member of the County Selection Committee, but Voyce was not selected to go to Bradford next week, the Committee evidently being of opinion he would not be fit.

After a succession of wet days the afternoon turned out gloriously fine, and the big crowd assembled gave the Welshmen a hearty reception. The ground had recovered splendidly from the heavy rain, and favoured a fast game.

Swansea came short of Joe Rees, the brilliant Welsh International full-back, and both half-backs. The forwards, however, were a strong lot.

GLOUCESTER

BACK : G. Welshman.

THREE-QUARTERS : F. Webb, T. Millington, A. Hudson, and S. A. Brown.

HALF-BACKS : W. Dix and A. Hall.

FORWARDS : G. Holford, S. Smart, F. Ayliffe, F. Ward, N. Hayes, T. Voyce, F. Mansell, and C. Mumford.

SWANSEA

BACK : D. J. Grey.

THREE-QUARTERS : Howell Lewis (capt.), E. Davies, F. Palmer, and A. Rogers.

HALF-BACKS : W. Griffiths and A. Davies.

FORWARDS : T. Morgan, T. Parker, R. Huxtable, M. Jones, A. E. Jenkins, A. Wheeler, G. Evans, and A. Evans.

Referee : Mr. J. Southby (Bristol)

THE GAME

Holford started the game for Gloucester, and there being only a moderate reply play opened in the Swansea 25. The City heeled from the first scrum, and the half-backs sent to Millington, who punted down, but the bounce of the ball beat Webb, and Swansea dribbled back. Off-side gave Gloucester a penalty, but Lewis fielded grandly and returned to Welshman, who sent to touch at the half-way.

Gloucester again heeled from the subsequent scrum. Millington kicked to Grey, who, though pressed, cleared several opponents before being finally brought down. Play continued to hover in the Swansea half, where Hall opened out from a return kick by Grey. Millington and Hudson in turn handled, the latter punting to touch nicely.

From a scrum Dix gathered, and feinting to pass out beat the opposing half-backs and went straight up the field, but his pass was ruled forward. Gloucester tried hard to effect a score, but they were beaten off, and Brown knocking on from a kick down, Swansea got to the centre.

For a scrum infringement the Welshmen were penalised, but Welshman's kick failed to find touch, and Grey returned. Hall was prominent with a strong effort and pass to Voyce, but it was not accepted. Chiefly through the aid of Lewis, the All Whites made some 20 yards, and the Gloucester quarter was reached for the first time. Hall again came into prominence with a useful bit of work, and the forwards got away with a useful dribble, but it was checked cleverly. The Swansea front replied with a good rush, and they were not checked until the ball was sent over the line for a minor.

Even play followed just inside the Gloucester half, but the close marking and sure tackling prevented either side gaining an opening. Dix failing to pick up after his forwards had heeled, Eddie Davies put Swansea well down, but a forward pass spoiled the movement.

Swansea at length tried to open out, but the passing went astray, and Hudson and Webb transferred operations to the other end. From a long kick there was a fine chance of a score, but the ball rolled awkwardly, and Swansea cleared luckily. The Welshmen made further ground with a strong forward rush, and the City were called upon to defend, which they did successfully.

So far play had been very much confined to the forwards, and the visiting pack proved themselves a pretty formidable opposition. Dix eventually set Hall on the move, and a punt down the field saw Webb gather and put in a short dash, but he was pushed to touch. However, Gloucester, with a fine effort, set up a hot attack, but only a touchdown resulted.

Beautifully judged kicking by Hudson put Gloucester well down again, and the Swansea line had a couple of narrow escapes. A loose flying kick by Palmer brought relief, and then came a pretty movement by Dix, Hall, and Brown, ending in the latter running to Grey before being well tackled.

Then ensued an unusual incident. Jack Bancroft, the Swansea touch-judge, gave a line which favoured Gloucester, but which decision the referee overruled. Bancroft declined to move, and the referee took the flag off him, but after a brief delay Bancroft again took up his duties.

Subsequent play was scrambling, and there was no finish to movements by either side. A fine kick by Hudson and follow-up and tackle by Webb earned the applause of the spectators, and the effort led to Gloucester securing a good attacking position. But it was soon lost, and Welshman was quickly called upon to clear. A splendid rush by the home forwards taxed the Swansea defenders, but Grey saved at the critical moment. The Welshmen relieved with good kicking, and the centre was the scene of operations at the interval.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

GLOUCESTER	Nil
SWANSEA	Nil

Swansea resumed, and the opening incident was a clever interception and dribble by Dix, but it was stopped at midfield. Dix again did well with a flying kick which went to Grey, and the Gloucester forwards following up tackled the visiting custodian in possession. There was just the possibility of an opening on the left wing when Brown cross-kicked, but the City forwards fielded off-side and a penalty was given against them.

Swansea benefited by the kick, but Gloucester soon regained the ground. A round of passing by the home backs gave Webb possession, and the right winger got well away to the corner, but being pressed, he punted over Grey's head, a Gloucester forward just failing to gain the touch before Morgan, the Swansea forward. This was the finest movement of the match so far, and was heartily applauded.

Millington replied splendidly to the drop-out, and Gloucester continued to hold the upper hand. Brown, being fed by Hudson, tried hard to get clear, but was finely tackled and thrown to touch. From the line-out Voyce secured and had a dash for the corner, but only a touch-in-goal was given.

After this Swansea took charge of the game for a brief period, and forced their way to the home end. The Gloucester defence, however, was sound, and a loose burst soon brought the City to more favourable quarters. On the whole play was very disappointing, and few passing bouts were attempted. Swansea especially relied entirely on their forwards – quite a new experience in a match where the Welshmen are engaged.

The Gloucester forwards put in some sharp dashes, but the Swansea pack replied similarly, and so the game went on. Eventually Gloucester got well away, and the kick went to Grey, who attempted to run round. Being hampered he kicked, but the ball was charged down by Millington and rebounded over the line. The City man promptly utilised his chance and scored a good try amidst tremendous cheering. Welshman missed the goal points.

Resuming, the game became very vigorous, and some keen tackling was witnessed on both sides. Swansea heeling, Griffiths and Davies initiated a round of passing, but G. Davies kicked straight to touch. Dix stopped a couple of Swansea forwards cleverly with a flying kick to touch, and then Hudson from a pass by Hall punted well down to Grey. The latter tried to run instead of kicking, and was upset by Webb and another, but he held onto the ball and Gloucester failed to benefit.

Play was very warm at times, but the football was not of any great class, and was mostly confined to the forwards. Dix, working the short side of the scrum, Hall, Millington, and Webb handled nicely. The wing man gave an inside pass to Ayliffe, who was pounced upon and heavily tackled directly he received. The City forward tried to continue after a minute's delay, but had to go off. Soon afterwards the end came.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER 1 try (3 points)
SWANSEA Nil

REMARKS

It was a glorious wind-up of the home season at Kingsholm, and on the day's play there could be no question as to the City meriting their splendid victory. It was a narrow win, it is true, but Swansea were more than a trifle lucky in getting off with a three points' defeat. Only about twice during the game were the All Whites really dangerous, whilst Gloucester missed at least two other scores by the merest shaves.

It was a dour struggle throughout, but one could not class the display as one of spectacular brilliance. Those of us who remember Swansea's standard of back play before the war were struck by the comparative absence of any attempt to make the game open. From the start the Welshmen relied mainly on their forwards, and only on rare occasions did the ball get out to the threes. Gloucester, on the other hand, did their best to brighten the game, and the backs indulged in a few movements which deserved some tangible reward.

I refer especially to the efforts in which Fred Webb shone refulgently. The County winger tried his hardest to reach the point, and when baulked attempted the next best thing – viz., to give a colleague a chance of gaining a score, but success was not attained.

As already mentioned, the game was chiefly forward. Swansea pride themselves on possessing the best pack in Wales, and it was due to the men in front that Newport were beaten. I fully recognize the Gloucester eight were up against it to-day, but the men came through the ordeal with every credit. In controlling the ball in the scrums the City had the best of it, and the heeling generally was smartly accomplished.

The contest in the loose was more even, and both sets of forwards got through a lot of fine work. Swansea were very clever at wheeling, but the City men got down to the rushes well, Hall being of great service in this respect; whilst Dix showed adaptability to the occasion by cleverly turning the ball to touch.

The Gloucester forwards were a sound eight, and all worked vigorously. There were plenty of hard knocks going around, and the deadly tackling must have shaken up the players a good deal, but the men never wavered.

In the long lines-out Hayes and Holford did excellently, Smart and Voyce were ever on the go, and Ayliffe, Mumford, and Ward came under special notice. Ayliffe sustained a nasty kick in the head a few minutes before the end, but I hope it is nothing serious.

Swansea had a good sporting scrum half in Griffiths, but Dix found ways and means of circumventing his opponent, and the Gloucesterian, as usual, put in a capital afternoon's work.

Hall played a strong game and proved a useful deputy to Humphries. I understand the latter was on the ground, but could gather nothing definite as to his actual intentions re the report that he was going North.

At three-quarter Gloucester were more prominent than the opposing set, chiefly on account of the fact that the men had more of the ball. The passing was good at times, but there was a tendency to let the ball go before the defence had been drawn, with the result that the movements were the more readily checked.

To Millington belongs the honour of registering the winning try, and the centre is to be congratulated on utilising his opportunity. The scorer did much good work all through, and Hudson was very effective at times though well marked. Webb and Brown, on the respective wings, both put in some capital runs, and all round showed enterprise and resource.

Swansea were best represented in the front by Tom Parker (the International, and regarded by some critics as one of the best forwards of the year in the four countries), Huxtable, and Morgan, though the pack were a good level lot, and took some holding. Griffiths was the pick of the two halves, and at three-quarter Eddie Davies and Howell Lewis were seen to most advantage, though their opportunities were very limited.

Grey, at full back, was a moderate substitute for Joe Rees, the Welsh International. He was at fault more than once in tactics – trying to do too much before getting rid of the ball. Welshman was the best custodian on the day's play. He kicked a fine length, but did not always gain touch.