

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 1921

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S BRILLIANT WIN OVER LEICESTER

"TIGERS" BEATEN BY A SUPERIOR COMBINATION

FAST AND EXCITING GAME

One of the most attractive fixtures on the Gloucester card was set down for decision to-day, when the Leicester team made their annual appearance at Kingsholm. Last season Leicester accomplished the rare feat for an English Club of beating the City in both games, but the margin was a very narrow one at Kingsholm – a try (scored late in the game) to nil. Form pointed to another very close contest again this afternoon, with the result a very open one.

Leicester have a number of excellent performances to their credit this season – including victories over Blackheath and Llanelly – and are rightly recognised as one of the strongest Rugby Union teams in the country. Fortunately the "Tigers" are always able to have the call on ready-made first-class players, especially in the backs, and it was a fine side the Midlanders placed in the field this afternoon, despite the fact that A. M. Smallwood (the International) was absent.

Gloucester were unlucky in having both their wing three-quarters damaged, Sid Brown being forced to cry off yesterday afternoon owing to his leg not being right. Stanley Cook, however, offered his services, playing centre, whilst P. Gabb (Cinderford White Rose), who has recently been appearing for the Seconds, filled the other vacancy. This was Gabb's first serious test, and local supporters were anxious to see how the Forester would shape against H. V. L. Day, the Army and International wing. Tom Voyce took a rest in view of the England-Wales match next week.

Gloucester were again fortunate in the weather, and though the ground was on the soft side as the result of the recent heavy rains, it rolled out in very fair condition. There was a splendid attendance, and with visitors pouring into the field the crowd promised to approach the Boxing Day record for the season.

The following were the teams :

GLOUCESTER

BACK : C. Cook.

THREE-QUARTERS : P. Gabb, T. Millington, Stanley Cook, and F. Webb (captain).

HALF-BACKS : W. Collins and A. Robbins.

FORWARDS : F. W. Ayliffe, G. Holford, S. Smart, J. Harris A. Hall, J. F. Lawson, W. F. Warde, and J. H. Webb.

LEICESTER

BACK : J. Wilkinson.

THREE-QUARTERS : H. L. V. Day, P. Lawrie, W. Watt, R. B. Y. Simpson, and E. Haselmere.

HALF-BACKS : G. W. Wood and F. M. Taylor.

FORWARDS : G. Ward, F. Taylor, Gordon Vears, Norman Coates, C. Cross, D. J. Norman, and W. Buckler.

Referee : Mr. J. Southby (Bristol).

THE GAME

When the teams took the field it was noticed Gloucester played Hall at extra half-back. Leicester started the game, and early play was contested at the centre. A fine punt by Tim Taylor sent the ball to C. Cook, but the home custodian fielded grandly and returned to touch inside the Tigers' half. From the subsequent scrum Gloucester heeled, but the passing went astray. The City forwards again got the ball away, and Hall ran well down, but his pass was knocked on, and the visitors cleared.

Harris was prominent with some clever footwork, which was well backed up, and Leicester were pressed. A clever relief kick by Simpson sent the ball to Stanley Cook, who with a left-foot punt found touch nicely in the Leicester 25. Playing strongly Gloucester attacked resolutely, and in the left corner the City seemed bound to score. Lawson made a fine attempt to break through, but was collared. He, however, threw the ball to Robbins, who was also stopped in the nick of time. Lawson was damaged in the head in making his strong effort, and had to be assisted off the field. He, however, came back a few minutes later.

When play was resumed Gloucester set up a hot attack. Dix, getting the ball, passed to Hall, who fed Robbins. The latter was on the run, and when in front of the posts took deliberate aim and dropped one of the smartest goals imaginable amidst tremendous enthusiasm. Four points up was good for the City; but their efforts had deserved some tangible recognition.

Leicester restarted, and by the aid of a big punt reached the Gloucester 25. C. Cook cleared cleverly with a good kick, but some Gloucester forwards got off-side and the advantage was lost. Stanley Cook, however, cleared immediately after, and Gloucester found the centre.

Here the City opened out, and the ball got across to Gabb who, on reaching Wilkinson, put in a pretty left-foot kick over his head. Ayliffe and one or two other players were well up, and the vice-captain taking the ball over the line, won the race for the touch and scored a capital try. C. Cook converted, and Gloucester were nine points up. Glorious ! Fine football and a worthy score.

There was a splendid return to the kick-off, and the Gloucester forwards, by grand work in the loose and effective tackling, gave Leicester plenty to think about. The game was terribly exciting, with plenty of vigour displayed on both sides.

Gloucester got down again with a dashing burst, but were penalised for a scrum infringement. Following up the high punt a visitor deliberately tripped F. Webb, and the referee rightly awarded a penalty. The kick gained some 20 yards, and Gloucester were now at the centre. Leicester got the ball from a couple of scrums, but Wood passed out wildly, and the "Tigers" lost ground as a consequence; Dix, smart as ever on the ball, smothered Wood with an effective tackle amidst the shouts of his admirers.

Then came a lovely bout of passing by the Gloucester backs, the whole line handling smartly except the captain. Gabb, however, was well tackled and pushed to touch. Some clever dribbling by the Gloucester forwards presaged disaster to the Midlanders, but the situation was saved at the critical moment.

Leicester displayed some neat combination behind but they did not get far, and Gloucester replied. Stanley Cook punted high, but Lawrie made his mark. To the kick C. Cook returned with a fine touch-finder on the 25 mark. Here play operated for a few moments until Leicester got the ball out. Some clever play was exhibited by Lawrie and Haselmer, and as a result of the latter's final punt the ball went over the home line. Gabb raced back to effect the touch, but he was beaten by Coates, who scored nicely. Day failed at goal. Nine points to three was now the tally.

Restarting, Gloucester by strenuous work visited their opponents' quarters, where J. Webb shone in some dashing work. Dix, opening out splendidly, the Gloucester backs were set on the move twice in quick succession, but the passing broke down. Immediately after Dix and Hall were off on the short side of the scrum. A nice pass was sent to Gabb, who punted ahead, only to see the ball go to touch.

Gloucester continued to get the ball, but the passing was too obvious, and did not gain much ground. In a sharp tackle Millington received a knock on the shoulder, but he quickly resumed. The City were now well inside the Leicester quarter, and the fight was hard and strenuous, with Gloucester on top.

For off-side by Wood, Leicester were penalised in a good position. C. Cook took the shot and hit the upright with his kick. Smart following up just missed securing the ball on the rebound, with only a couple of yards from the line. Lucky for Leicester.

The "Tigers" were kept well inside their quarter until a penalty enabled Day to change the venue to mid-field. The interval was then called.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
GLOUCESTER 2 goals (1d)
LEICESTER 1 try

Gloucester had played fine football in the opening half, and their six points' lead was thoroughly deserved. Ayliffe restarted, and the ball going to a forward, he started a round of passing, but a forward transfer checked the movement. A useful kick gave Leicester territorial advantage, and Tim Taylor slipping away gave an inside pass, but the ball was captured by J. Webb. Hall, with a pick up and burst through the Leicester forwards, set Gloucester on the move, and later the three-quarters handled. F. Webb, the last to receive, kicked across to Millington, who, however, could do nothing.

Following this there was a lot of haphazard passing on the part of both sides. At length a big punt by Ayliffe was well followed up by Smart and others, and Wilkinson missing the ball Gloucester had a fine chance of getting away, but a visitor got back and saved.

A loose rush by Leicester quickly changed the venue, but only for a moment, as Holford broke clean away and ran some 20 yards before passing to Dix. The latter, however, transferred forward to a confrere when there was every possibility of a scoring chance. Two minutes later Dix, Hall and F. Webb combined in a sweet bit of combination, passing and inter-passing cleverly, but the final transfer went to a player's feet and spoiled the movement. The forwards, however, dribbled ahead and over, but a scrum was ordered five yards out.

Here some fumbling allowed Leicester to break away, and the centre was reached. Hall was frequently conspicuous with some deadly tackling, and all attempts by the "Tigers" to get going were frustrated.

A huge punt by a visitor put the game close to the home line, but Harris relieved finely. Later Dix, Millington and Gabb shone in a neat bit of work, only to see the wing man well tackled.

Leicester throwing the ball wide, Stanley Cook gathered and went up the field at a good pace. But F. Webb was too far in the rear to take the pass, and a good opportunity went astray. The same player a minute later made another brilliant run through and pass. The ball got out to Gabb, but he could not get away.

After this there was some very exciting play, first one side and then the other getting the advantage. Day, with a strong run, looked dangerous once, but he was beautifully tackled by Stanley Cook.

The City custodian next raised cheers with a grand save and clearance; and then came a fine movement by Gloucester which took play to the other end. Millington cleverly piloted the ball past Wilkinson, but just failed to get there. Leicester relieved temporarily, but the City attacked with great resolution, and there was a narrow shave for a try in the left corner.

Gloucester were awarded a penalty for an infringement by Wood, but Cook failed in his attempt at goal, and a visitor punted out. Again the Gloucester backs were set going by Dix and Hall. Stanley Cook and Millington made ground, but Day had the pace of Gabb, and the Forester was hauled down.

Leicester cleared from a dangerous situation with useful kicking, and two penalties against Dix also proved beneficial. The Midlanders were now well inside the home 25 but Dix was instrumental in changing the venue with a smart follow-up and tackle of Haselmere.

A penalty against Holford in a line-out, however, enabled Day to send to touch at the home 25. The ball coming out to the Leicester backs, Watt missed, and Ayliffe kicked hard ahead and past Wilkinson. The latter ran back and fell on the ball, but a home player picked up and passed to Stanley Cook, who raced over the line and behind the posts. C. Cook missed the easy place, but Gloucester were nine points to the good.

Following the resumption there was an intercepted pass by Haselmere, who had only C. Cook to beat with an open field. He, however, showed hesitation and ran across the ground and passed. His colleague, however, was too slow, and his pass inside was forward. And so Gloucester escaped.

After the drop-out the City took up the aggressive again. Leicester were twice severely pressed, but the defence held out to the end, and no further scoring was effected.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER ... 2 goals (1d), 1 try (12 pts.)
LEICESTER 1 try (3 pts.)

REMARKS

Gloucester's splendid triumph to-day was equal to some of the finest achievements in the Club's history. Only three times previously had Leicester been on the losing side this season – to Cardiff, Newport and Cambridge University – and against these reverses they had to their credit a record of 21 victories.

With all the talent they possess, however – and the "Tigers" had players in their ranks from Portsmouth, Sheffield, and Cheshire, not forgetting our old friend Gordon Vears, from Walsall – the Midlanders had to go under this afternoon to a side that on the play was clearly superior at all points.

Gloucester have not played a stronger or more effective game this season. They followed their opponents of adopting the eight-back formation, and let me say here the City were wise in doing this at the outset. Hall is no novice at the outside game, and his value to the side in this match cannot be over-estimated. He took the majority of Dix's passes with wonderful accuracy, and judged his transfers perfectly; but it was not only in attack Hall was so effective. His tackling was always of the deadly and smothering order, and his saving was great. Leicester pride themselves on the effective combination of their team. But at Kingsholm the "Tigers" were generally eclipsed by the home men. There were a few occasions when the visitors displayed extremely clever tactics – their one try was well thought out and carried through – but taking the game as a whole Gloucester displayed the better form.

Forward the City were masters of the situation, especially in the scrum, where they continually got the ball out. In the loose and lines-out, perhaps, honours were more even, and in this department some wonderful work was accomplished.

Gloucester started as if they meant business, and there was no faltering till the final whistle blew. To individualise is a hard matter, for the whole seven played football of the highest order to-day. Now and again I noticed a tendency to "head-scraping" in collaring, but they were passing phases, and for the most part the pack had every reason to congratulate themselves on a fine performance against one of the cleverest combinations in English Club football. Well done City !

At half-back Dix – was, well, Dix at his best. "Pedlar" Wood, an ex-International, is an old hand at scrum working, but the Gloucesterian was too smart and tricky for his rival this afternoon. With the ball coming out fairly regularly, Dix swung out passes either side with a perfection that could not have been bettered. He was also very clever at spoiling, and when danger threatened there was Dix always handy with his safe fielding and short punts to touch. Yes, a great afternoon for Dix, and England will not suffer next week if he is called upon to deputise for Kershaw.

I have already referred to Hall's effectiveness. Robbins, as the rover, fitted in admirably with his colleagues, and played a delightful game. His dropped goal was one of the best I have ever seen – a quick and deliberate movement, with the ball sailing between the posts before hardly any of the other players realised the fact. Robbins is an asset to the City – a brainy and clever performer.

The Gloucester three-quarter line did some passing to-day, and no mistake. The only criticism one might offer is that there was not enough variety exhibited, the hand-to-hand passing being too obvious. A feint or break through by one of the players might have been tried now and again with possibly good results. But apart from this I liked the line as a whole. Stanley Cook showed up brilliantly in the second half with dashing runs, and there was the hall-mark of class in all his work. Millington, too, did a lot of excellent work, both in attack and defence, and just now he is going very strongly. Fred Webb did not seem to possess the necessary pace to keep up with Stanley Cook when the latter broke away, but he did one or two good things. Gabb's debut in first-class football was very encouraging. He was beaten for speed by Day, the big Army and International three-quarter, but the Forester has football ability, and that move of his in the first half which led to Ayliffe scoring was very smart.

That C. Cook would improve on his holiday displays I felt certain. To-day the City custodian was little removed from the best standard he set up prior to the war. His fielding and catching were beyond reproach; he stopped forward rushes with all the confidence possible, and some of his kicks to touch were the acme of length and judgment. A really sound display, Cook, and this form will suit Gloucester admirably.

Now a word or two about Leicester. I expected a better showing from the "Tigers" on the whole, though one must recognise the visitors were "up against it" this afternoon. The forwards showed good footwork at times, but they were beaten for possession in the scrums. F. Taylor, Norman Coates, and Cross were three players often noticeable, and Gordon Vears was generally in the thick of it.

The half-backs (Tim Taylor and Wood) were not the dangerous pair I have seen them, and Watt, who acted as connecting link with the third line, was uncertain in his handling. Lawrie was the pick of the centres, and Haselmere and Day were strong wings, though why Haselmere did not go all out for a try when he had an opening in the second half is a mystery.

Wilkinson has done better at full back, but he was harassed by the fast following up of the City forwards, and the slightest mistake was taken advantage of.

Next week : England v. Wales, at Twickenham ; Gloucester v Moseley, at Moseley.

GLOUCESTER A v. ST. MARK'S.

The match between Gloucester A and St. Mark's, arranged to be played on the St. Mark's ground at Sandhurst, was cancelled owing to the condition of the ground.