

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 1921

FOOTBALL

GROUND RECORD INTACT

SWANSEA, CARDIFF, NEWPORT – AND NOW LLANELLY BEATEN

TERRIFIC STRUGGLE WITH FAMOUS SCARLETS

GLOUCESTER'S MAGNIFICENT SECOND-HALF EFFORTS

For their last Saturday home fixture of the season Gloucester had Llanelly for opponents, and considerable interest was centred in the meeting of these old rivals. The famous Scarlets were the first team to defeat the City at Kingsholm last season, and the Welshmen were not without hope of repeating their triumph to-day, notwithstanding the fact that Newport, Swansea and Cardiff had all gone down at Gloucester.

The City were unfortunate in not being able to command the services of their best side. Tom Voyce was engaged with England against Scotland at Edinburgh, C. Cook and Stanley Cook both cried off yesterday owing to injuries, and W. F. Warde was also absent from the forwards.

Burns again deputised at full back, and in the three-quarter line D. J. Brown, of the A team, was brought in at centre. Sid Brown was originally first reserve, but when the Second team match with Tredworth was cancelled he was invited to assist Cheltenham and consented.

Llanelly had to make several important changes in their team. Fred Samuel (back), Albert Jenkins (centre), and Edgar Morgan (forward) were all unable to play, the absence of the two Welsh Internationals being a source of disappointment.

After a fine morning the weather turned dull, and a drizzling rain commenced to fall at 3.15. The attendance reached about 5,000 at the start.

Teams :

GLOUCESTER

BACK : T. Burns.

THREE-QUARTERS : N. Daniell, D. J. Brown, F. Webb (capt.), and A. Robbins.

HALF-BACKS : W. Dix and T. Millington.

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

LLANELLY

BACK : Ll. Evans.

THREE-QUARTERS : Emlyn Morgan, Albert Reece, Bryn Evans, and J. Thomas.

HALF-BACKS : S. Congdon and Frank Evans.

FORWARDS : W. J. Jones, E. Jones, Rev. J. Stephens, E. Stephens, Rhys Davies, Gwyn Francis, G. Thomas, and A. Thomas.

Referee : Mr. W. H. Vanstone (Bath).

THE GAME

Gloucester started against the wind, but the home forwards over-ran the ball and a visitor kicked to Millington, who promptly sent the ball to touch. From a long line-out a Llanelly forward gathered and started a round of passing. The ball was quickly got out to the right wing, where Emlyn Morgan executed a sharp dash, but could not get through.

The visitors attacked keenly after this, and the Gloucester defence was sorely tried. The Welshmen twice got possession smartly, and the handling was clean and accurate, but keen tackling prevented a score. A penalty to the City brought temporary relief, but Llanelly were soon on the aggressive again, forwards and backs playing with a snap and dash that was exhilarating.

From an attempt to drop a goal Gloucester were pressed right on their line, Hall being collared in possession. Matters looked dangerous for the City, but a penalty helped them. With a neat passing bout Gloucester made headway, and Robbins cross-kicked cleverly, but the movement was stopped at midfield. A long punt and follow up by E. Morgan transferred play to the Gloucester 25, where the game was keenly waged.

A breakaway by Hall enabled Gloucester to clear, but a loose kick back was fumbled by Daniell, who was pushed to touch. This was a dangerous situation for the City, but Millington cleared with a useful dribble. He, however, overran the ball, and a visitor picking up passed out to Bryn Evans. The latter gave a nice transfer to Thomas, who, sprinting down touch, beat Burns for speed and scored in the corner. The place kick failed. Up to this point Gloucester had been completely outplayed.

Ayliffe resumed, and F. Webb was early prominent with an intercepted pass. He cleared nicely, but stumbled, and Robbins was not able to do anything with the pass sent him. The visitors broke away cleverly on the left, but a good tackle by Burns saved the situation.

Llanelly, however, kept up the pressure, and Stephens gathering in the loose, beat the defence cheaply, and scored behind the posts. The goal points were added, and the Welshmen held this substantial lead fifteen minutes after the start.

On the restart the Gloucester forwards were conspicuous with a good dash, but the visitors were a real "live" side, and continued to have the best of matters.

F. Webb again effected an interception of an opponent's pass, but his punt went straight up into the air, and the visitors easily checked. At length the Gloucester forwards got well away, and some dribbling took the ball over the line, but only a minor resulted.

After this Llanelly asserted their superiority, and play was in the home half. Clever kicking kept Gloucester confined to their 25, until Millington broke away and passed to Brown. The latter kicked ahead, but the ball bounced the wrong way for the Gloucester men, and Llanelly kicked to touch.

A smart run by Thomas, and a fine loose rush by the Welsh forwards tested Gloucester, but Burns changed the venue with a good touch-finder. Following this the City broke away, Smart following up beat Evans, the full-back, and dribbled on. There was a race for possession, but touch was given a few yards outside. Previous to this Holford had shown up finely with a couple of individual efforts, which were loudly applauded. Some exciting work ensued near the Llanelly line, in the course of which a Gloucester forward was injured, and had to be assisted to the touch line.

Gloucester were in a good attacking position now, and once there was a possible opening, but Brown missed fielding the ball, and only a touch-down resulted. From the drop-out Llanelly, by big kicking, gained a footing in the home 25, and Gloucester just escaped a score against them.

Just now the home tackling was weak, and more than one visitor was allowed to clear and get in his kick. The Gloucester forward injured was Lawson, and he had to be carried off the field with a damaged knee, with no prospect of his returning.

Rain was falling heavier now, and made the surface greasy. Llanelly, awarded a penalty, had a shot for goal, but the kick fell short. Hall, however, was quickly collared, and a scrum ensued ten yards from the home line. Llanelly here opened out, but the passing went astray, and the City dribbled out to beyond midfield. There was another stoppage for "man hurt," but he was soon able to resume.

Clever touch-finding by Llanelly put the visitors well down, but the Gloucester forwards, headed by Holford, put in a great dash half the length of the field.

The ball was eventually crossed to the right, where Fred Webb fielded, but could not beat the defence. Gloucester went very close after this, but the Welshmen eventually cleared. A tremendous struggle ensued, both sides working with desperate energy.

Owing to the slippery state of the ball mistakes were made in handling when there were possible chances of scoring. Llanelly cleared with a great effort, but Gloucester worked back and again had the better of the exchanges.

Following some loose work Dix snapped up the ball and sent out wide to Robbins, who took the pass neatly and slipped over with a good try – a well-deserved reward for sustained hard work. The place-kick failed.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
LLANELLY 1 goal, 1 try
GLOUCESTER 1 try

Though Gloucester had done uncommonly well in the last ten minutes of the opening half, there was no question that on the play Llanelly well deserved their five points' lead at the interval. Lawson was still absent when the visitors re-started.

Carrying a scrum Llanelly gained some twenty yards before Millington turned the ball out of play. The same player was prominent with a short run and high punt, but Lt. Evans made his mark. Dix replied well to the kick, and then the City forwards, using their feet well, set up an attack. The visitors partially checked, but a clever punt by Brown took Gloucester further on. The City struggled valiantly to effect a score, but Robbins just failed to gather from a judicious punt by Brown to the left wing.

From the next scrum Dix got the ball out to Millington, but Robbins' pass was fumbled by Brown, and Llanelly kicked down the field. Hall, however, got back, and with a strong dash reached the centre before being pulled down.

Midfield play followed, until Fred Webb came into the picture with a lovely run from an interception. Side-stepping and dodging, the City captain cut out a lovely opening, and a score seemed probable. Mumford and Ayliffe shared in a little passing, but Dix, the last to receive, was pushed to touch mid-way between the 25 and goal line.

Exciting moments followed, Gloucester making strenuous efforts to pierce the defence. Mumford took the ball very close, and a throw-out took place a couple of yards from the mark. There was a scramble for possession, but the ball became loose, and the City forwards dribbled over. In the scramble for the touch Brown beat his opponents, and scored in a good position. Robbins essayed the kick at goal amidst much excitement, but he successfully accomplished the feat, at which the cheering was loud and prolonged.

With the teams level the contest was waged more furiously than ever. Gloucester were doing finely now in all phases, the seven forwards working magnificently. Millington and Brown showed up well with neat efforts, and Robbins also came into the picture.

Play for several minutes operated at the centre, until the Llanelly front broke away. Jack Webb, however, got back and effected a daring save. The forwards were mainly engaged, and the struggle was indeed a great one. Llanelly eventually got the ball, but Robbins charged down Bryn Evans' kick, and Ayliffe following up the visiting custodian only just had time to send to touch. Gloucester rushed closer still, and a visitor mis-kicking sent to touch near touch-in-goal. Millington lined quickly to Dix, who simply trotted over the line amidst cheers and laughter at the simpleness of the try. Robbins failed at goal.

With Gloucester ahead the excitement was intense. Playing in irresistible style Gloucester swept everything before them on the restart, and Llanelly had a very hot time. A sweet bit of combination between Dix and Millington paved the way for a try, but Robbins could not hold the greasy ball.

After this Llanelly had a couple of narrow escapes, but Gloucester could not quite do the trick. Following a clever punt into the open by Robbins, the City had a chance with Daniell and others following up. Reece was collared in possession a few yards outside, but weak passing by Gloucester lost the position.

Llanelly carried on from this relief movement, and the Gloucester end was visited. Here some strenuous play was witnessed, Hall and Jack Webb doing fine work. A combined rush by the City brought the side well out of danger, and the Welshmen, in turn, were called upon to defend. Back the game went, and then the Gloucester backs passed perfectly until Brown mis-handled. In the last few minutes Gloucester came near increasing their lead, but the defence held out.

RESULT :

GLOUCESTER 1 goal, 2 tries (11 pts)
LLANELLY 1 goal, 1 try (8 pts)

REMARKS

By their splendid victory to-day Gloucester repeated their triumph of 1898-9, when they defeated the four principal Welsh clubs in one season – a record which, I believe, is only held by one other English team – the old Devon Albion side. It is such a notable achievement that I append the results of the four matches for each season :

Season 1898-9

- v. Llanelly : Won 2 tries (6 pts) to 1 try (3 pts).
- v. Swansea : Won 1 goal (m) (4 pts) to 1 try (3 pts).
- v. Cardiff : Won 1 goal (5 pts) to 1 try (3 pts).
- v. Newport : Won 1 goal, 2 tries (11 pts) to nil.

Season 1920-21

- v. Swansea : Won 1 goal (d), 2 tries (10 pts) to nil.
- v. Cardiff : Won 2 goals, 2 tries (16 pts) to 1 goal, 2 tries (11 pts).
- v. Newport : Won 2 goals (1d) 1 try (12 pts) to 3 tries (9 pts).
- v. Llanelly : Won 1 goal, 2 tries (11 pts) to 1 goal, 1 try (8 pts).

To-day's struggle was remarkable for the complete transformation that came over the game in the second half. At the interval Llanelly looked all over a winning side. They had played clever and resourceful football, both individually and collectively, and the Gloucester team compared unfavourably all round.

With Lawson off the field (injured) Gloucester were under a severe handicap when the teams crossed over, but this only served to put the Kingsholm men on their mettle. The Welshmen gave nothing away in the second half, but the superiority they displayed in the opening stages veered round in Gloucester's favour, and the City's great efforts were crowned with complete success. Well done " The Boys ! "

The game produced some very fine football. Gloucester took a long time to settle down to things, but how gloriously they finished! The seven forwards performed magnificently, and credit is due to every man in the pack on the achievement. The opposing set were keen, sturdy, active, and clever, but they could not hold Ayliffe and his colleagues at times. Those sweeping rushes of the City men were thrilling in the extreme, and the Llanelly back division were a trifle lucky in warding off two or three tries.

It is a difficult matter to pick out the most prominent of the Gloucester front, but I don't think I have seen Holford and Hall in better form. They were truly great in all phases, and their lead brought out all that was best in their colleagues.

Taking the game throughout, honours were fairly even in the scrums, but the Welshmen were smarter in the lines out and open. One or two of the visitors showed extreme cleverness in running and passing, and Stephens' try was quite an individual effort.

Behind the scrum Llanelly were the same fast and nippy combination of old, and all kicked with good judgment. They proved far too clever for the home men at the outset, Bryn Evans and Thomas, on the right, especially giving trouble.

But the City backs came into their own later in the game. The rain by this time had rendered the ground and ball slippery, and that mistakes in handling occurred were excusable. Dix and Millington had a sharp couple opposed to them in Congdon and Frank Evans, but the Gloucester pair quite held their own. The couple worked the winning try between them very simply, and the visitors stood gaping whilst Dix went over the line.

At three-quarter Fred Webb played a strong game – smart in attack and doing some capital defensive relief work. He made the best individual run seen during the match, and it was a pity the effort did not lead to something tangible. D. J. Brown played a sound game, and was responsible for many good things. Daniell and Robbins both rendered useful and effective service, but, like the others, all their best work was done in the second half. The rival full-backs were well matched. Burns occasionally stood too far back, and as a result the fast Llanelly forwards worried him occasionally, but he kept a cool head and no serious mistake could be urged against him.

Llanelly may not possess so many star performers as of old, but they are a really good side, and they gave Gloucester something to think about this afternoon. Bryn Evans, the International, took a lot of watching at right centre, and Thomas's sprints down the touch line were a source of worry. Frank Evans opened up well at outside half when Llanelly were getting the ball, and Congdon proved a smart scrum worker. The forwards were a well-balanced eight, full of dash and triers all.

Next week : Gloucester v. Newport, away;
Gloucester A v. Newport A, at Kingsholm.

JC