

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1931

GLOUCESTER'S OPENING WIN AT STROUD

HOW THE PLAYERS SHAPED

KEEN FORWARD PLAY, BUT BACKS MODERATE

FROM "W.B.'s" NOTEBOOK

Gloucester won their opening match of the season, at Stroud, on Thursday evening, by 9 points to 3, but the City had little in hand against a virile opposition, whose splendid defence was one of the features of the game.

Stroud's revival is certainly an accomplished fact, and on the team's showing against Gloucester there are distinct possibilities about the side. J. F. Evans, the popular captain, has gathered round him an enthusiastic set of young players, and with the experienced Hughes in charge of the back division, a successful run should be assured.

LIVELY STROUD PACK

Gloucester turned out a stronger representation than I expected for the game, Franklin and J. Davies being the only absentees from last year's successful forward division. But in A. Welshman, who deputized for Franklin, the City had one of the best forwards on view. Generally speaking, Saxby and his colleagues had the best of matters in all departments; they were too good for the opposing eight in the scrums, whilst the work in the line-out and loose was also superior. There were occasions, however, when the Stroud front let themselves go in combined rushes, and when this happened the visitors had many anxious moments.

There was a keenness and liveliness amongst the home forwards that suggested a real liking for the job on hand, and if Evans can instil in the minds of the players the absolute necessity of combining skill and judgment at critical moments, they should train into more than a useful eight.

PROMISING CITY FORWARD

There was a lot of exceptionally close tackling in this match, and the pace of the game was a severe test on the players' stamina at this early stage of the season. But the majority of the Gloucester eight lasted fairly well, though it was apparent in the finer points of the game the form left something to be desired. A few more outings should fit the men for the strenuous contests to be faced in the near future, but one or two of the old hands will have to fight hard for their places.

I liked the general form of Welshman, but more particularly his enterprise and initiative in opening up the play. He is a young player of great promise, and unless I am mistaken he will have to be considered for a regular place in the pack before many weeks. Welshman can afford to wait to gain experience, but with Tom Voyce's coaching he should make good.

DISTINGUISHED FOR STROUD

C. W. Luker, an Old Wycliffian, stood out prominently for Stroud, and here is another forward who should be closely watched. Luker was generally in the advance of all the home team's aggressive movements, and did an immense amount of tackling. He was a tireless worker for his side, and ever in position to snap up stray openings. From one interception of a Gloucester pass he got clear to Masters, but preferring to punt over the line instead of trying to beat his opponent he sent the ball out of bounds. This was not the only occasion Stroud had a chance of scoring, but the players concerned were either too hasty or did the wrong thing.

For the most part the Stroud forwards did their work thoroughly well, and showed a commendable backing up in loose rushes. An improvement in scrum work is needed, but this should come with regular practice and a "talk" together on tactics. The performance against Gloucester was encouraging in every way, but there is no reason why they should not improve on this and achieve further distinction.

THE CITY BACKS

The form of the rival back divisions, except in defence, was very moderate on the whole. Occasionally there was a bright interlude, but there were far too many mistakes in handling to make play attractive.

Gloucester had the greater number of opportunities, but Orpin, at centre, could not find his form, and passing movements frequently broke down. Orpin can do much better than this, but things went badly for him on Thursday.

Brookes and James were the strongest wing, but even the Oxford player was not always certain in his handling. He, however, made several strong runs, and accomplished one or two classy bits of play. James ran hard, and it was a smart try he scored with the help of Fifield on the short side of the scrum.

Hook had few chances of showing his pace; I should like to see him outside a really clever centre capable of doing the right thing for his wing.

FIFIELD'S SUCCESS

Fifield was very nippy at scrum half for the City, and, individually, gave more trouble to the defence than any other player on the side. He slipped his opponent (Carter) cleverly more than once, and going straight on, was only pulled up just in time. He, however, got amongst the try-getters, the Stroud defenders allowing him to go through cheaply from a scrum a few yards from the line.

Fifield's service is one thing that needs immediate attention; otherwise the ex-Gordon League player did extremely well. Meadows had [1 or 2 words unreadable] training, and a further handicap [1 or 2 words unreadable] injury which caused him to go lame in the second half. But there were times when he proved his worth in an emergency, and kicked with judgment.

MASTERS COOL AND CONFIDENT

Gloucester had a pull at full-back, where L. Masters proved much the sounder exponent. He shaped like the player who gave such promise in his earlier displays last season – fielding with certainty, and exhibiting coolness and confidence throughout. He also kicked a good length with his right foot. Masters was not called upon to do much in the way of open tackling – the great test for a custodian.

When will Boughton turn out ? I cannot say, but he is keeping fit, and was selected to play for the Gloucester City A.F.C. in their replay cup-tie against Keynsham on Thursday. Boughton has played Soccer regularly in mid-week for a couple of seasons, being a member of the Bristol Tramways team.

USEFUL BACK DIVISION

Stroud possess more than a useful rear division, though the club will miss the services of Bruton at full-back. Hopes, I gathered at Fromehall, are entertained of C. A. Watkins, the former County player, being induced to turn out again, and in his old form he would solve the problem. Edgeworth, injured, was unable to appear against Gloucester at scrum half, and though Carter played pluckily, he is not the equal of Edgeworth. Cullimore missed his regular partner, the ball coming too slowly to him to make much ground before parting with the ball.

The backs opened out nicely once or twice, but, as already remarked, the combined movements on either side were not very impressive.

Hughes' best work was in tackling, and the ex-Gloucestrian was the means of breaking up some dangerous attacks on the part of the City. Phillips made several good clearances under pressure, and looked a likely man in attack if properly served.

All round Stroud had every reason to be satisfied with their showing. Gloucester's visit to Fromehall attracted a big crowd, and all the old-time enthusiasm was there. Rugby should boom in the district again.

THE RIVAL TEAMS

For future reference I append the names of the rival teams : –

GLOUCESTER : L. Masters; Roy James, A. E. Brookes, G. Orpin, and R. Hook; F. Fifield and D. Meadows; L. E. Saxby (capt.), A. Carpenter, E. Comley, F. Russell, J. Hemming, Dr. Steele-Perkins, F. Wadley, and A. Welshman.

STROUD : R. Tyler; H. W. Phillips, M. D. Stear, E. H. Hughes, and C. S. Minchin; R. C. Carter and M. H. Cullimore; J. F. Evans (capt.), W. Ryland, F. Wedel, F. Jefferies, A. Lane, S. C. Smith, G. Solomon, and C. W. Luker.

Try-getters for Gloucester : James, Fifield, and Welshman. Wedel kicked a penalty goal for Stroud.