

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CHRONICLE

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VISIT TO GLO'STER OF FAMOUS "ALL BLACKS"

KEEN FOOTBALL AT KINGSHOLM IN THE RAIN

HOME COUNTY'S CREDITABLE PERFORMANCE

A SCRAMBLING GAME

Result : New Zealand 6 Points, Glo'stershire Nil

The conquering All Blacks visited Kingsholm, Gloucester, on Thursday afternoon, and between 12,000 and 13,000 people witnessed a game keenly and stubbornly contested from start to finish. Football, and especially Rugby football, under more unpleasant conditions could not be conceived. A continuous downfall in the morning continued with only a brief interval in the afternoon, making a scientific exhibition well-nigh impossible.

The game, if it did not produce anything in the nature of thrills or sensational individual contributions, was, however, by no means dull or uninteresting. Time and again we got glimpses of what that brilliant All Black back division could do had the conditions been more favourable. The open game is essentially the visitors strong feature. There were movements which drew from the crowd round after round of hearty cheers as the ball was seen passing, with lightning rapidity and a wonderful judgment, from one wing of the three-quarter line to the other wing. It was, however, on the whole, the forwards who had to fight the battle out, and every inch of ground was keenly contested.

It was some time before the Gloucestershire players took their bearings, and the home county supporters would have had no cause for complaint had the score been larger than it was in the first half-hour.

The slippery and heavy condition of the ball was responsible at the critical moment for the breakdown of one or two brilliant displays of combined effort on the part of the back division of the All Blacks. There was a hesitancy and an apparent misunderstanding, or lack of cohesion, amongst the Gloucester[*sic*] players, and many anxious moments were experienced actually on the Gloucester[*sic*] goal-line.

The All Blacks throughout the game were much the cleverer team, but the defensive game of the home county calls for unstinted praise. The desperate rush tactics of the New Zealanders were continuously threatening danger, but every man in the Gloucester[*sic*] rear division played as if the result depended upon his individual effort.

True, Gloucester[*sic*] very seldom looked as if they were going to score, but the New Zealand team was not altogether free from occasional periods of anxiety, brief though they were.

Most of the play was in the Gloucestershire quarter, and had the good kicking of the visitors been of even an ordinary average the score would certainly have been heavier. In the first half in particular the New Zealand backs gained considerable advantage to their side by their well-judged touch-finding kicks. The first try was the result of an overwhelming rush on the part of the All Black's front rank. They were having the best of the scrums, and their three-quarters were being well served by two smart halves.

After the resumption the Gloucestershire forwards at times actually beat the New Zealand pack at their own game. They came along with rush after rush, and Bayliss, Preece and Shaw stood out prominently, and wherever the work was heaviest they were always in the thick of it.

Pickles, Brown and Corbett never allowed any of the tourists flying squadron to take liberties. They all had their men well watched, and several smart rounds of passing by the Gloucestershire three-quarters got their side out of more than one ugly situation.

If now and again a promising passing movement was spoilt by faulty handling, it would be unfair, having regard to the conditions, to be critical. Millington did not seem altogether at home at times, but he prevented what seemed an almost certain try by one of the pluckiest and most deadly tackles that has been seen for many a day.

If I have one criticism to make, it is with the selection committee. The presence of Ayliffe amongst the Gloucestershire forwards would, in my opinion, have been decidedly better tactics than that of copying the visitors' additional three-quarters.

On such a ground and against such powerful opponents Ayliffe would have been a tower of strength, and in the loose he would have been there to back up many a promising dribble of the county forwards.

I have no fault to find with Dr. Taylor's exhibition. No pluckier footballer ever donned a jersey, but it was in the front rank, especially in the first half, where help was most needed, and Ayliffe was undoubtedly the man who would have been seen to great advantage.

To conclude, let me say that, though the honours go to New Zealand, Gloucestershire's performance will rank as one of the best defensive performances by the county. The New Zealanders, even allowing for the weather, are but a shadow of Gallaher's great men of 1905. They have the speed, but not the skill and tactics. The absence of Voyce was a tremendous loss to Gloucestershire. What a tower of strength he would have been in such a game.

The teams lined up as follows : –

NEW ZEALAND

Back : G. Nepia. Three-quarters : A. H. Hart, F. W. Lucas, H. W. Brown. Five-eighths : W. C. Dalley, C. G. Porter (Capt.). Forwards : M. Browlien, J. Richardson, R. Stewart, Q. Donald, L. F. Cupples, W. Irvins, I. H. Harvey.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Back : T. Millington (Gloucester); Three-quarters : S. A. Brown (Gloucester), L. J. Corbett, Capt. (Bristol), R. C. Pickles (Bristol), T. Spoor (Bristol). Five-eighth : Dr. G. C. Taylor (Gloucester). Half-backs : C. B. Carter (Bristol), G. Thomas (Gloucester). Forwards : M. V. Shaw (Bristol), A. S. Prowse (Bristol), A. T. Hoare (Bristol), A. R. Rickards (Cardiff), S. Bayliss (Gloucester), W. Preece (Bream), and S. Dubberley (Cinderford).

Referee : Mr. R. Fear (Somerset).

Touch Judges : S. S. Dean (New Zealand) and A. J. Gardner (Gloucestershire).

THE GAME

After the usual preliminary proceedings and the introduction of the ever-famous war-cry, Nicholls started, and in the first few minutes the spectators had a shock. Before they could realise it, the All Blacks had forced their way to within a few yards of the Gloucestershire goal-line, and everyone breathed again when they saw that the player had been shoved into touch, carrying with him the touch-line flag.

The Gloucestershire forwards, assisted by Thomas and Brown, gradually brought relief, and Corbett made the most of the effort by finding touch near mid-field. It was not to be for long, however, and having reached the home county's 25-line, a free kick was given the tourists for offside play. It was the easiest of positions, but Nicholls made a miserable kick at goal.

Millington was continually hard pressed, and at times it looked as though the Gloucestershire defence was bound to be pierced. Forwards and the backs, however, fought on like grim death, and it was Pickles who saved the situation by a tricky run and a well-judged kick.

There was, however, no denying the aggressive tactics of the All Blacks, and after some swinging passes from wing to wing the ball was dribbled over the line, and in a general scramble Donald scored. The attempt to augment the score was a failure.

The home county retaliated with renewed energy, and as they forced their way to the All Blacks' territory their progress was marked by round after round of encouraging cheers. The home captain was frequently in the picture, and his colleagues were given several good openings.

Nepia had his first busy five minutes, but there was never any doubt about his defence. More brilliant or more reliable full-back play has never been seen at Kingsholm. His fielding and his kicking was the outstanding feature of the whole day's play, and Millington suffered by comparison.

A sudden characteristic breakaway by the Colonial forwards quickly changed the venue, and one or two efforts threatened immediate danger and worry. The attack was a concentrated one, and McGregor was all but over when the whistle called him back for a forward pass.

Carter boldly went down to the ball when outnumbered, and gave a wonderful pass to Pickles, who wriggled his way in and out of his opponents until he had brought much needed relief. The forwards still continued to control the play, and the short kick and rush tactics seemed, at one time, to be almost certain to end in a score.

The slippery conditions of the ball and ground more than once stood Gloucestershire in good stead. Try as they could, however, the All Blacks could not increase their score, and the interval came with the position as follows : –

All Blacks 1 try (3 pts).
Gloucestershire Nil.

The second half was resumed with the same hustling tactics on the part of the All Blacks, but they met with an extraordinary resistance. The home forwards had undoubtedly learnt the lesson, and they were out-maneuvring the New Zealand pack time and again. Once Brown raised the hopes of the home supporters by a dashing individual effort. Travelling at a high speed, he took a pass, and was making tracks for the All Blacks' line when the whistle recalled him. It was a promising effort, but a few moments later the same player again distinguished himself by a tricky run, a smart punt, and a good follow-up, but Nepia was always there and always thwarted the movement.

Spoors failed to handle the ball, and let in the New Zealanders' who made the most of the opening, and set up a terrific bombardment on the home goal. Pickles was here responsible for one of the best individual efforts of the home side. Intercepting a pass, he was like an eel in wriggling his way through his opponents and he crowned the venture with a timely kick to the outside man who gained further ground before being pulled up. The game was stopped at this juncture owing to an injury to Prowse, who was compelled to retire for a short time, but returned later on.

It was not long, however, before the tourists came again with one of their threatening rushes, but Pickles and Corbett proved again the saviours of the side. The home forwards who were now working in full harmony and perfect understanding, pressed, and the All Blacks were more than once seriously embarrassed by their tactics.

The spectators howled with delight as their onrushing favourites carried all before them. It was undoubtedly the most critical stage in the match, and no sooner did a visitor pick up than he was promptly floored, the ball taken from him, and it seemed impossible for any defence to live against such an onrush. The New Zealand defence was in obvious distress, and after lucky and haphazard kicking into touch they were eventually compelled to concede a minor. This roused the Colonials to greater efforts, for they realised that with only a small margin dividing them, their position was none too sure.

They tried every move imaginable, and although they forced their opponents back, it was not long before they were again on the defensive, thanks to some open play and clever passing by the Gloucestershire three-quarters. Nepia, however, made his side still further indebted to him by completely changing the situation. He gave the Colonials another footing, and they made the most of it. Rapid passing by the backs forced the county to their own line. There McGregor had a glorious opportunity to score, but he missed the pass given him, and Gloucestershire was let off.

There was no mistaking the determination of the New Zealanders at this stage. They realised the home forwards were in every respect their match, and they employed every effort in their attempt to change the character of the game. They felt if only the wonderful machinery behind them could get going all would be well. Every effort towards that end, however, was promptly frustrated by the wide-awake sections of the home players. Try as they might, however, Gloucestershire could not shake off the vigorous All Blacks. For nearly ten minutes it was touch and go for the home line. Scrum after scrum was formed within scoring distance, and once in particular the ball was dangled under the posts, but fumbling and misjudgement spoiled the All Blacks' chance. It was the narrowest escape any team ever enjoyed.

The pace was now hot, and the All Blacks were putting every ounce into their game, and the whistle incessantly sounding, and the anxiety of the home supporters was intense. Again and again the visitors missed scoring by inches. As the game drew near to a close, the pressure of the visitors became intense. Nothing but a miracle it seemed could prevent a further score. McGregor gave Lucas the chance of his life, but with nobody in front of him he failed to take the pass. Heroic efforts by the county defence proved futile, and although Millington put up a splendid defence, he was frequently overwhelmed, and at last Donald walked over with an easy try, which Nepia failed to convert. The issue was now beyond doubt, but before the end came there was one humorous incident. One of the visitors had only the defending back to pass, when he threw behind, hoping to find a colleague, but the ball went into the hands of the referee.

From this time onwards the All Blacks were masters of the situation, and they were decidedly unlucky not to increase their score. Time came with the score as follows : –

New Zealand 2 tries (6 points)
Gloucestershire Nil

THE ALL BLACK CAPTAIN

SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH OUR REPRESENTATIVE

The visit of the famous New Zealand Rugby team had for some weeks past aroused the keenest interest among Rugby enthusiasts in the County and railway carriages and other places where the footballer congregates have formed the rendezvous for friendly discussions as to the prospects of Gloucestershire's team against the sportsmen from across the sea.

Middle-aged men have been heard comparing the wonder team from New Zealand of many years ago with that of to-day, and drawing pleasant reminiscences of the game then witnessed at Kingsholm. The War-Cry of those days was said to have struck fear into the hearts of the opposition, but this is no doubt the outcome of some fertile imagination. Certainly spectators looked forward with keen anticipation to the giving of this cry and much disappointment was expressed when it was announced through the medium of the London Press that it was not to be given again.

A FLAT DENIAL

In view of the interest centred in the New Zealanders' visit to the city a "Chronicle" representative endeavoured to secure a personal interview with Mr. C. G. Porter, the captain of the side, and a few hours before the game at Kingsholm was successful in catching his quarry at the New Inn, where a number of the visitors were staying. Our reporter found Mr. Porter the most genial of men, a striking personality full of vigour and the joy of living.

The reason for the War-Cry not being given was the first question our representative put, and told the captain of the disappointment which was rife in the county. "Who said we were not giving the cry?" answered Mr. Porter, and on being informed, told us that it was not true that they were not again to give the famous War-Cry.

When the cry was given at the Devon match some criticism was published to the effect that Taylor, the South African cricket captain did not go on the field of play with a "Wild-Cat cry." Mr. Porter informed us that they were not narrow-minded and realised at once that it was only the opinion of the few and decided that the cry would be given on every occasion when it was asked for and they would most certainly give it before the International games.

Asked for his opinion of English Rugby, the New Zealander said that it compared very favourably with that played in his country, but he certainly did not agree with some of the rules in force in this country. As an instance, he quoted the putting of the ball into the scrum. Much time was wasted here for the English scrum workers invariably put the ball into the feet of their pack instead of straight into the middle. In New Zealand, continued Mr. Porter, this would not be tolerated and a penalty would be immediately awarded against the offender.

Another trick of the Rose players he did not agree with was falling on the ball and holding it. If a New Zealand player at home even attempted to touch the ball when he was laying on the ground he would be penalised. However, said the All Black captain, they had to follow the game as they found it played in this country, although it was somewhat detrimental to their play. But when an English team came to his country the New Zealand rules would be enforced.

The Gloucestershire team, Mr. Porter told us, were known to them as a side which preferred and always endeavoured to play the open game. This was New Zealand's idea of correct Rugby, and he was sorry that the weather was not fine, when they could have met the ex-champions on this understanding.

His side were at their best with a dry ball, and although they were somewhat weakened in the back division, Mr. Porter was hopeful of victory.

JC