

# THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1925

## FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER'S TWO DEFEATS IN WALES

SWANSEA AND LLANELLY VICTORIOUS

Though defeated in both games, the Gloucester team put up capital performances at Swansea and Llanelly over the weekend, the aggregate scoring being 16 points to 6 against the City.

The St. Helen's ground has always been regarded as one of the best in the country in bad weather, but the continuous heavy rain has played havoc with the Swansea club's enclosure, and on Saturday the playing pitch was in a shocking condition. Practically the whole length of the ground in front of the grandstand was mud and slush, making correct football almost impossible, and had the match been "called off" no-one would have complained.

Gloucester usually attract a big crowd at Swansea, but the conditions generally were so wretched that the attendance was the poorest I have ever seen at St. Helen's. The huge bank on the open side of the field was empty except for a few stragglers, and the majority of onlookers crowded into the stand and the shelter of the enclosure.

Rugby enthusiasm at Swansea is only an apology for what it was in the old days, and with the Soccer team strong candidates for promotion the future is not particularly bright.

With the exception that Triggs-Herbert took the place of Hemmings, down with the "flu," Gloucester fielded the selected team, and the City were not without hope of following Bristol's example and recording their first victory at Swansea.

And the interval score, with the visitors leading by three points, was most encouraging. But Gloucester failed to maintain the superiority displayed in the first half, and the Welshmen having drawn level by the aid of an easy goal from a penalty in front of the posts, took the lead with a clever try – the visitors' defence was caught napping here – and kept it. Thus for the second time this season Swansea triumphed over the City, and in both matches the Welshmen were a trifle lucky.

On Saturday's play Gloucester were quite good enough to draw, and such a result would have been a truer indication of the merits of the rival teams in a game in which kick and rush tactics predominated.

It would be unfair to criticise players operating under such conditions, but it was easy to judge the Swansea team to-day is only a shadow of the sides of the past. There is no outstanding personality in any one department, and the moderate successes achieved this season no doubt account largely for the lack of interest in the handling game.

The forwards are a useful lot, and in the second half they got the better of the Gloucester pack in the loose rushes. The visitors worked quite as strenuously as their opponents, but spoiled a number of promising movements by overrunning the ball and failing to get back. In several instances penalties followed for off-side infringements, and this lack of appreciation of position is not an isolated one.

In the scrums the City forwards frequently gained possession, but heeling on such a surface was of little advantage, and it would have paid better to have gone in for more solid footwork. Swansea paid attention to this after the change of ends, and the result was evident in the amount of close attacking they accomplished. There was no individual weakness in the Gloucester front, but more cohesion in the combined rushes would have given the opposing backs a lot more to do in defence.

Voyce worked cleverly at times in conjunction with Milliner, and twice in the first half Gloucester might have scored, but the slippery ball proved too difficult to hold with the defence apparently beaten.

Roberts, Short, Ayliffe, and Ford displayed rare dash in the open movements, and if the ex-Drybrook forward can cultivate more judgment and skill in the giving and taking of passes he will add to his reputation.

Short is specialising in line-out work, and doing extremely well with Hall and Duberley. Triggs-Herbert proved a very capable deputy for Hemmings, and in one respect he outshone his colleagues, and that was in dropping on the ball to check the rushes of the Swansea forwards.

Combined back play was at a discount on Saturday, and few movements attempted got very far. Milliner took risks by sending the ball out at times between his legs. The manoeuvre rarely paid, for the pass seldom reached Thomas, and when it did he had to stoop to gather the ball and was pounced on before he could do anything.

On the whole there was little to choose between the rival pairs of half-backs, but the Swansea couple worked the blind side of the scrum very cleverly when Burns scored. The wing man was well tackled by Millington on the line, but could not prevent what proved to be the winning score.

The most serviceable of the Gloucester three-quarters was Macdonald, who kicked splendidly, and made the fewest mistakes in gathering the ball. Once the Oxonian broke away with a neat run, with a possible chance of scoring on his own, but he passed inside and the transfer was ruled forward.

Hughes played the correct game by resorting to short dribbles, and he proved very clever with his feet on several occasions. Crowther and Loveridge had nothing to do in attack, but both players saved well when called upon.

Swansea's best men were Price and Burns, on the left wing. The former scored two tries against Gloucester at Kingsholm, and is the most promising of the new men called upon by the Welsh club this season.

The full-back position was anything but an enviable one on Saturday, especially during the intervals when the players were waiting for something to do. Millington and Walters, however, both did remarkably well, their fielding being exceptionally good under the circumstances.

If the game did not present any real features, play was by no means desultory, and the sporting character of the contest, coupled with efficient refereeing, made players and spectators forget for the time the very unsatisfactory conditions under which the match was played.

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