

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1927

HARLEQUINS 11 PTS., GLOUCESTER 3 PTS

LONDONERS FINISH STRONGLY

THREE TRIES IN TEN MINUTES

CITY BACKS BEATEN FOR SPEED

Following the terrific gale during the night, the weather turned bright and fine to-day and ideal conditions prevailed for Gloucester's important match with the Harlequins. Two years ago the Londoners beat the City for the first time at Kingsholm, winning by 1 goal 3 tries (14 pts.) to 2 goals (10 pts.).

The Harlequins team this afternoon included several new men, but there was a good leaven of well-known players, chief of whom were W. W. Wakefield (the famous English ex-captain), J. C. Gibbs, V. G. Davies (Internationals), A. Verger (France) and H. P. Marshall (the old Oxford University forward).

Gloucester were short of Voyce and Loveridge (the latter being taken ill overnight), the vacancies being filled by T. Wadley and A. Hough.

Teams : –

GLOUCESTER

BACK : H. Boughton.

THREE-QUARTERS : A. Hough, A. M. David, J. Stephens, and Roy James.

HALF-BACKS : R. Milliner and D. Meadows.

FORWARDS : L. E. Saxby (capt.), T. Wadley, A. Hall, J. K. Evans, T. East, A. Comley, R. Smart, and J. Hemming.

HARLEQUINS

BACK : E. Taylor.

THREE-QUARTERS : J. C. Gibbs, F. S. Hodder, A. Verger, and H. C. Pattison.

HALF-BACKS : V. G. Davies and J. H. Cole.

FORWARDS : W. W. Wakefield (capt.), A. E. C. Prescott, D. H. Duder, C. D. Adams, E. H. Fouraker, H. P. Marshall, M. W. Watson, M. Marsh.

Referee : Mr. F. F. Gething (North Midlands).

THE GAME

The ground recovered splendidly after the heavy rain during the week, and was in capital condition. There was an attendance of about 5,000 when the teams took the field. The Harlequins kicked off, and a couple of scrums followed inside the home half. Gloucester heeled, and Milliner sent his backs away smartly, the ball going nicely to Hough on the left. The Second teamer tried a short punt but mis-kicked. Stephens, however, recovered and kicked to touch.

Immediately after the home backs were off again, and Stephens selling the "dummy" nicely went clean through. He was, however, pushed over from behind, but getting up dribbled to the line, where Taylor effected a lucky save. A punt by Gibbs was well taken by Boughton, who screwed the ball to touch with the Harlequins wing close on top of him. Some fast play ensued at mid-field, but Meadows with a fine kick sent to Taylor, who misfielded, the ball re-bounding straight to Meadows who had followed up. He, however, knocked on and a fine scoring chance was lost.

Both sides were giving the ball air, but the handling was faulty and ground in more than one instance was lost. Close work by Gloucester enabled the City to take up the attack, but failure to field the ball in the open allowed the visitors to clear. Fine kicks by Boughton and Meadows enabled the City to return, but the home attack was beaten off.

In some loose play Gibbs broke away with a dribble half the length of the field, but James and Boughton checked just past the centre. A penalty here fell to the Harlequins, but Verger's shot for goal was very wide, and a Gloucester forward punted out.

A passing move initiated by Davies saw Verger slip the defence cleverly, and there was a fine opening, but Pattisson failed to accept the pass. Keen forward play followed with little advantage to either side. Then in attempting to open out the Londoners failed badly, and three Gloucester forwards dribbled well beyond midfield.

The Gloucester backs next shone in some neat handling, but Stephens could not clear the defence. Comley broke away prettily from a line-out and started passing, but it broke down and the Harlequins benefited. Still the City had the better of the exchanges, and David put his side well down with a nice kick.

Weak play by Taylor allowed the home team to get very close, and there was some hot forward work inside the Harlequins' quarter. Useful kicks eased the pressure, but Hemming dribbled back finely and the Londoners' line had a narrow escape.

A wild pass was captured by an opponent, and relief came later with a great solo dribble by Fouraker, who was not checked until he reached Boughton. The football, though very fast and keen, lacked finish, and a number of promising movements went astray.

At length Milliner, though partly tackled, got the ball away to Meadows, who handed to Stephens for the latter to break through strongly. A well-judged transfer to JAMES was accepted, and getting away with great determination the wing man doubled the full-back and scored a fine try. Boughton missed the goal kick.

Resuming, Gloucester played up strongly, a pretty bit of work between Hough and Meadows going unrewarded owing to a forward transfer.

A fine breakaway by Comley saw the City forward race to Taylor, with Hemming in close attendance, but Comley tried to beat his man and was tackled. Gloucester tried hard to add to their lead, but they were foiled, and a good kick went to Boughton, who gathered and got in a fine left-foot return. In doing so, however, the City custodian apparently twisted his knee and had to be carried off – a serious loss to the home team. Smart was brought out to full-back.

With seven forwards Gloucester got possession but in the loose the Harlequins were dangerous with footwork. Gathering later Stephens punted high, and Hough racing up took the ball on the bounce and sped away. Gibbs, however, was after him, and fetched him down five yards from the line.

Gloucester struggled hard against the handicap and twice they attacked through Milliner. Something, however, went wrong, and the 'Quins got out of danger. Smart, called upon, was rather shaky, and just after Comley changed places with him.

The Gloucester forwards shone in a good rush, Hemming leading, but Taylor gathered well and got in a good touch-kick. Twice later Gibbs was served with long passes, but though the International ran strongly he was brought down each time by David and Meadows respectively. Again the Londoners opened out, and the ball came along to Gibbs, but David was too watchful, and the old Oxonian slung his man into touch amidst cheers. Soon after the interval arrived.

HALF-TIME :
GLOUCESTER 1 try
HARLEQUINS Nil

Boughton returned when the game was resumed, but limped badly. Play opened at a fast pace, the rival forwards using their feet well, but honours were pretty easy. Milliner opened up cleverly twice, once throwing the ball over his head to Meadows, but the passing did not gain much ground. A smart bit of work by Meadows led to Gloucester making headway, Davies saving daringly under the posts.

A kick went to Boughton, who dropped for goal, but missed. Gibbs received the ball, and running round punted to touch near the centre. Later Milliner got the ball away neatly to Meadows, who served Stephens. The latter jumped past Hodder and beat Taylor, but stumbled and fell, and Comley, to whom he passed, was collared from behind.

Just now Gloucester were all over their opponents, and had James accepted a sharp pass from Stephens he would have crossed in the corner. The Harlequins, with desperate work, got out a few yards, but the City came back with a brilliant burst. James made a rare dash for the corner, but was pushed to touch a yard outside. The City from this advantageous position tried hard for a score, but the defence held out. Boughton next had a shot for goal from a penalty, a fine effort just failing.

Big kicking brought the Harlequins to more favourable quarters, and in the next few minutes the Londoners worked hard for a score. The combination of the visitors, however, was sadly at fault, the ball being thrown about very wildly. Gibbs, on the left, twice tried to get clear, but could not find an opening.

Mistakes in passing by the visitors, and sharp tackling by David, placed Gloucester in the ascendancy again, and they were appreciably helped by Boughton's fine touch kicking. The City forwards, working well together, made a couple of sharp attacks, but they could not break through the defence, the tackling being very deadly. Gloucester kept up the pressure, and David once looked like going through, but Wakefield pounced on the Old Oxonian and effected a smothering tackle.

The City were still on the aggressive when in some loose play Cole picked up and shot away on the left. The home players were out of position, and with Hodder and Gibbs in attendance a score seemed certain. The ball was eventually got out to GIBBS, and the International, beating Boughton, who could only hobble across the field, he ran round behind the posts.

No charge was allowed, and Davies kicked a goal, giving the Harlequins a two points' lead. Boughton now went off, Comley coming out to full-back.

The Harlequins, on the resumption, had the better of the exchanges, and they kept the defence busily occupied. For a time it held out, but from a series of sharp exchanges GIBBS received and dashed over with a good try. Verger made a poor attempt at conversion.

The City team were a well beaten side now, and after more passing PATTISSON ran over wide out. Verger's shot for goal went just outside of the upright.

Before the end Gloucester made a big effort to add to their score, but the Harlequins' defence was equal to the occasion, and the City had to admit defeat by 11 points to 3.

RESULT :

HARLEQUINS 1 goal 2 tries (11 pts.)
GLOUCESTER 1 try (3 pts.)

REMARKS

The Harlequins owed their victory to the superior speed of the backs, especially Gibbs on the left wing. The International was yards faster than any player on the City side, and whenever in possession of the ball he was a real danger. That he failed to score more than twice was largely due to the close marking of David, who judged his tackles beautifully and brought his man down with unerring accuracy.

In actual play, Gloucester were distinctly the superior side for three-parts of the game, but as in defence so in attack – pace was lacking when real opportunities presented themselves. Once the Harlequins took the lead the result was practically a foregone conclusion. Gloucester played up desperately at times, but the Londoners in the last quarter crowded on full pressure, and following Gibbs' opening try two other scores came in quick succession.

The game produced a lot of attractive football, but at the same time there were numerous mistakes in handling, and both sides erred frequently in this respect. The best passing movements were witnessed in the concluding stages, when the Harlequins were often in possession and displayed a marked superiority all round.

The injury to Boughton was a serious handicap to the City, for though the young custodian pluckily returned to the field for twenty minutes in the second half, and kicked well with his right foot, he could only move about the field with difficulty, and had no earthly chance of getting anywhere near Gibbs.

Prior to his unfortunate mishap Boughton had shown splendid form, and his kicking either foot was great. He was far in advance of Taylor on the other side, though the Harlequins' full back improved as the game progressed, and towards the end he accomplished a lot of good work. It was a stirring struggle forward, with the Gloucester pack the more dangerous aggressors in close footwork and general ability.

Until reduced to seven men the City front had more than a fair share of the ball in the scrums; they were well together in some fine open movements, but bad judgment on two or three occasions robbed the home team of tries. Comley and Hemming were the shining lights in these raids, and their work in the first half was highly meritorious. The pack, as a whole, kept Wakefield and his colleagues fully occupied until towards the end, when the City players appeared to "crack" and their fighting spirit faded away somewhat.

Saxby, Evans and Hall were prominent for a lot of sound work, and no blame could be attached to the forwards for the defeat. The Harlequins were a fast set, keen tacklers, and clever with their feet. Fouraker stood out in this department, and he had splendid support from Wakefield, Marshall, and Adams. The ex-English captain was also distinguished when the scrums broke up, and one smothering tackle of David in the second half stopped an almost certain try.

At half-back, Milliner for a long while had the pull over Davies, but the Harlequins' wingers later proved troublesome to the Gloucester scrum half, and some of his passes went wide of Meadows. The latter had every reason to be satisfied with his showing in his first big match. He displayed every confidence, and played intelligent football all through.

The Gloucester third line were best represented by David and Stephens but their work was mostly individual. The combination exhibited was not sufficiently effective to beat such fast opponents. Hough found Gibbs too fast for him, but the recruit did one or two good things. James scored his try cleverly, and with a bit of luck he might have added a couple more in the second half.

The Harlequins have been seen to better advantage behind the scrum, and it was not until well in the second half that the backs were able to utilise their speed and efficiency in passing to full advantage.

Davies, in a new position at scrum half, did fairly well, and Cole proved a useful partner. Gibbs was easily the pick of the three-quarters, and he put in several dashing runs. Verger was erratic in the centre, though at times he proved elusive, and Pattisson did his best work in the concluding stages.

Next week : Thursday, Gloucester v. Oxford University, at Oxford;
Saturday, Gloucester v. Swansea, at Swansea,