

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1954

## GLOUCESTER DEFENCE WAS LAID WIDE OPEN

Some may have summed it all up as brawn beaten by brain. To the unenlightened visitor it could certainly have looked that way.

What other possible explanation could there be for a Gloucester defence spread-eagled by the clever running of the Coventry three-quarters to the tune of 31pts. to 5 ?

This. On a day when Gloucester again found themselves without seven regulars facing one of this season's most successful point-scoring combinations, they had one sound hope – their lively vigorous forward play. They pinned their faith to it.

But it was not enough, and every one of the Kingsholm crowd must have realised it before half-time.

For by that time they had glimpsed the big scoring potential that lay in the neat, sure handling of the Coventry backs, ever ready to seize upon an opening and change a tactic.

## MAN TO MAN

They had seen it first when Graham, the full back, had cleared a Gloucester attack, not by the customary kick, but by coming up and setting those threequarters in action in a movement which ended in the former Irish international right wing, Niall Bailey, being stopped in the far corner too near to be pleasant.

They had seen the attack developing until in the 21st minute the ball was flying rapidly from man to man until Robinson finally took a pass from Sanders for the first touch down.

And if Cole's try five minutes later was not the same neat affair, it was another feat of opportunism.

It was then that Gloucester applied their answer to the full. Stepping up their close play and quick following-up in the loose they almost achieved their aim of subduing those Coventry opportunists – but not quite.

Led by that stalwart forward, and captain on Saturday, Bob Hodge, the pack fought back manfully so that the remainder of the half was unquestionably Gloucester's finest hour, crowned by their only score – a try by Counsell, converted by Baker.

### WIDE OPEN

But at best it always remained a chancy tactic, for the Coventry defence was too steady ever to allow them to look really dangerous, while at the other end too often the Gloucester defence was split wide open.

Five times it happened in all, usually with delightful handling and open rugby, and the more the fatigue of the hard-pressed Gloucester men became apparent, the easier it was.

Four times Cole, his side's top scorer with 13 points, converted – and with the final tally at 31 Gloucester's only consolation was that theirs was not the biggest total in Coventry's striking record of 176 points for to 59 against in eight games.

Then, almost ironically, in the last minute, Amos and Hill led a dribbling breakaway rush right to the Coventry line before they were checked; and the last kick of the game, almost despairingly it seemed, was by Terrington – a wide attempt at a drop-goal.

## UNITED GAVE A STORMING DISPLAY

It was a gallant and somewhat unfortunate Gloucester United who were cheered by an appreciative crowd off the Coundon-rd. ground at the end of a stirring tussle with a strong Coventry Extra 1st XV.

For Ivor Jones' men, despite the loss through injury of Alec Hollingsworth and John Bowdler for short periods, gave such a storming display that the unbeaten home side only managed to maintain their record by the narrow margin of 8pts. to 6.

The game was only three minutes old when Hollingsworth was taken off with a nasty cut under the eye. A minute later Doug. Perks had punted ahead in his own "25" – a seemingly harmless kick from a Coventry point of view.

But the crowd roared as the lithe figure of Peter Lewis followed up the kick at tremendous speed. He gathered the ball neatly near touch, rounded the groping full-back and won a thrilling race for the line.

Coventry equalised following a defensive error which allowed Ivor Preece to put Stokes in, but United regained the lead right on the interval when Ray Smart landed a penalty.

An apparent slackening off for ten minutes shortly after the interval proved United's undoing. It was then that constant pressure by Coventry brought them their winning points, Dove converting a try by Sutton.

Yet United might well have bemoaned their luck even then. With only five minutes to go Lewis almost repeated his early success.

He gathered a cross-kick, again rounded the full-back and was all set for the open line, only to be halted by the referee's whistle – for a very doubtful "off-side" decision. Bad luck, United !