

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1954

HOW GLOUCESTER NEED A JOHNSTONE

"Oh, for a centre like Johnston!" sighed Gloucester's committee men as – watching from the grandstand of Oxford University's famous ground at Iffley-rd. – they saw the Red and Whites suffer yet another big defeat.

The Gloucester officials had every reason to cast covetous eyes on Oxford's South African international Paul Johnstone.

A centre of outstanding cleverness and ability and a great captain, he was the leading figure in practically all of Oxford's most dangerous attacks.

And this at a time when the Red and Whites themselves are still minus that really top grade centre for whom they have been searching ever since the war!

Johnstone's fleetness of foot, balance, thrustfulness and good judgment, made him a constant thorn in the visitors' defence . . . besides inspiring the rest of his team to do great things.

FLATTERING

However, Gloucester can draw some comfort from the fact that they certainly did not deserve to be beaten by 27 points to 3 – nor anything like that margin.

Only nine of the 'Varsity's points actually came from tries. Though, admittedly, they were all very good ones.

It was by no means uncommon for Gloucester to have Oxford on the defensive – particularly in the second half – but the Red and Whites were unable to press home their attacks with the same speed and skill as the University men.

Oxford's outsides combined more effectively, and a feature of the Dark Blues' success was the excellent backing up of the team as a whole.

HOOKING DUEL

Gloucester's greatest strength again lay in the pack, with back-row men Ford, Hodge and Ibbotson among the hardest workers on the field.

And though Oxford had a slight "edge" in the tight during the earlier stages, honours in the hooking duel between Cyril Thomas and Allaway ultimately broke even.

Outside-half David Jones made some spirited attempts to find a way through Oxford's defence but Gloucester failed to take advantage of them.

And Brian Sibery, standing the test well at full back, could not be blamed for any of the tries which the Red and Whites conceded.

For a spell during the middle part of the game Gloucester were without Roy Blair, who had to go off with a damaged ankle. During this period Ibbotson played in the centre.

FINE KICKING

Johnstone claimed one of Oxford's tries and also had a big hand in both of the others, which were scored, respectively, by Barton and Rigby.

Smith got a dropped goal and Oxford's remaining 15 points were all gained by the beautiful kicking of South African full back D. A. B. Robinson.

The latter, whose long touch-finders frequently gained valuable ground for the University, landed three penalty goals and three conversions.

Gloucester's only score was a very nice wide-angle penalty goal kicked by Roy Blair.

NOW IT'S NOT A JOKING MATTER !

It has been said in jest in past weeks that Gloucester United could give the premier side a good run for their money. If it was said after United's 24pts.-9 victory over Worcester at Kingsholm then it wasn't said jokingly – the second string put up a splendid show.

The purists might not have been so impressed but those spectators who went along for some action had nothing to grumble about.

Throughout the season, with Burford as hooker, the forwards have been a match for most of their opponents except when it was a matter of sheer weight. The Worcester men did not look a weightier bunch but if they were it availed them nothing – United's forwards were always that much better.

The most gratifying sign, however, was that of a nicely functioning three-quarter line consisting of Turner, Hill, Morgan and Crabtree. Hill and Morgan have eliminated that weakness in the centre and with P. Meadows and Terrington giving a good service from the scrum the backs put in some grand runs.

The spotlight was shared by the fullbacks. Ray Smart, the Coney Hill player making his second appearance for United, contributed half his side's score with two penalties and three conversions and put up a fine display all round.

The Worcester fullback Waters earned applause for his phenomenal long rang kicking. Two penalty kicks that were every inch of 50 yards went heartbreakingly near and a drop goal early in the second half which put the visitors on equal terms was incredible.

It was a game of action and incident – the little incidents that stand out and are remembered, like the runs and break-throughs made on a number of occasions by the threes, the kicking of Ray Smart, and one particular "corner flag and all" tackle by Ernie Turner which saved a certain Worcester try.

JC