

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1954

IT WAS SO NEARLY SURPRISE OF THE SEASON AT CARDIFF

Unaccountable Gloucester failed by a hairsbreadth to spring one of the biggest rugby surprises of the year when they played all-conquering Cardiff to a standstill at the famous Arms Park ground.

At "no side" only one point separated the teams – Cardiff just scraping home by 9 points to 8.

And had the decision gone Gloucester's way instead of Cardiff's the result would have done the Welsh Metropolitans no injustice.

In the later stages of the game the home team were holding on to the unbeaten record almost by their toenails as an inspired Gloucester XV battered mercilessly at their line.

But fate was not on Gloucester's side and Cardiff – rather luckily – survived.

HIT UPRIGHT

On two occasions during the game, goal kicks which would have gained the vital points failed by inches.

In fact Michael Baker, who made a brave effort to land a penalty goal in a blustery wind, had the mortification of seeing the ball strike an upright, which deflected it at just too wide an angle.

The second kick was an attempted drop goal by David Jones, which also came very close to success.

On a day on which the heavy ground tended to discourage back play and throw the greatest responsibility on the forwards, Gloucester's pack rose to the occasion magnificently.

The return of Peter Ford and Henry Wells seemed to have a revitalizing effect, and Gloucester's superb play in the loose and quickness on the ball was Cardiff's biggest headache.

For much of the game the Welsh pack came off second best in this department.

TACTICIANS

Gloucester half-backs John Hobbs and David Jones showed themselves good tacticians, and though the visiting threes lacked the speed and thrust of their Cardiff opposite numbers the quartet got in a lot of useful work both in attack and defence.

At full back Brian Sibery had occasional lapses – to which the heavy conditions undoubtedly contributed – but on the whole stood the test exceedingly well.

Cardiff began the game as though they were going to give Gloucester a real trouncing, their speedy backs running hard and handling freely.

But the conditions were not to their liking and when Gloucester's pack began to turn on the heat the Welsh backs virtually faded out as an attacking force.

Red and Whites' wing forwards Peter Ford and Dennis Ibbotson played a particularly important part in helping to subdue the Welsh back division.

OPPORTUNIST TRY

Cardiff opened the scoring when right wing Derek Murphy kicked the ball past Sibery and pounced on it for a try.

Another try came when left wing Haydn Morris – always an opportunist against Gloucester – gained possession about 12 yards out and shot across in the corner before any defenders could get near him.

Gloucester retaliated following loose play a few yards from Cardiff's line, Jones opening out for Roy Sutton to dash over.

In the second half a third try came for Cardiff when the home team broke away with the ball at their feet and Murphy used his speed to get the touchdown after the ball had been kicked over Gloucester's line.

A lightning follow-up by Ford brought Gloucester a try near the posts after Ibbotson had pounced on Llewellyn almost on the Cardiff line. Baker converted.

BACKS WERE TOO GOOD FOR UNITED

Facing what was probably the strongest opposition they are likely to meet, it was not expected that Gloucester United would overcome Cardiff Athletic, so their defeat by 16 points to three at Kingsholm did not come as a great surprise.

In view of the fact that Athletic won by 52pts.–nil the previous week and that Saturday's victory brought their total of wins to 16, United can gain some satisfaction from the fact that they did more or less hold the Welshmen down.

In the early stages Gloucester harassed the visitors and certainly shook them when, in the second minute, Trevor Halls landed a nice penalty.

Gradually, however, Athletic gained control. The Welsh back division was the menace.

The United pack held the visiting eight and shared the honours in the set-scrams and line-outs.

In the second half good work in the loose almost saved the day for Gloucester. A number of forward rushes sent Cardiff staggering back on several occasions, but they held out.

Cardiff's first try was a scrambled effort just snatched by second row forward Ferguson after the whole of the Gloucester defence had failed to check a forward rush. Full-back Priday converted.

The other three Athletic tries, one of which Priday goaled, all came from the backs. The sheer speed of the Welsh international threequarter Gareth Griffiths absolutely paralysed the Gloucester defence when he went over for the second try.

A few minutes later outside-half K. Richards went through like a knife through butter and the same player added the final try.

JC