

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1954

NEATH PACK TOO POWERFUL FOR GLOUCESTER

A good fight by Gloucester to try to break their losing sequence at the expense of Neath, came close to success – but was just not quite good enough.

The Welsh All Blacks, who had come to Kingsholm with a formidable record of only three defeats in 17 games, held off a strong Gloucester challenge in the second half and gained the decision by six points to three.

Neither side was at full strength, though Neath were still able to field a pack containing three internationals, Roy John, Rees Stephens, and Brian Sparks.

And it was this power in the visitors' pack as much as anything which proved the decisive factor.

Gloucester's eight – with Hodge, Wells and Ibbotson always to the fore – battled grimly and often gave the All Blacks plenty of trouble.

But for lengthy periods the visiting forwards proved a livelier raiding force than Gloucester's, being more together as a pack and, on the whole, faster on the ball.

TOO LATE THEN

It was not until well into the second half that the Gloucester team began to show the cohesion that might have beaten Neath – and by then the damage had been done.

With a blustery wind tending to play tricks with the ball, and much of the game being contested between the forwards, it was not often that either back division was really seen to advantage.

Usually, however, it was Neath who opened out better thanks to some effective work by their halves.

Though less successful than Gloucester in the tight, the visitors generally had the edge in the lineouts.

Pick of the Gloucester backs were Roy Blair and Michael Baker, who both tried hard to make the most of limited opportunities.

GOOD GOAL

Baker opened the scoring mid-way through the first half when, kicking across the wind, he landed a very nice 45 yards penalty goal for Gloucester.

Harry Thomas soon replied with a penalty goal for Neath from an easier position, and before the interval the visitors went ahead.

They gained their try – the only one of the match – when the forwards were quick to mount an attack following a dropped Gloucester pass; Rees Stephens sending Harry Thomas over wide out.

During Gloucester's strong second half rally the Red and Whites handled more freely and on two occasions were somewhat unlucky not to get tries.

Once there was a desperate scramble between Neath and Gloucester players to get the touchdown near a corner flag, and on the second occasion Blair and Baker both ran well in a movement which broke down just at the last minute.

"No-side" came with the score the same as at half time.

UNITED COULD ONLY BLAME THEMSELVES

Marred by a strong cross wind of almost gale force that made accurate kicking an impracticable proposition the game between Worcester and Gloucester United at Bilford-road was never of a standard to satisfy the purists, yet it was rarely lacking in interest and incident.

Both sides had their glorious opportunities and the fact that an unconverted try by Brian Jones in the first half proved sufficient to give Worcester the verdict by 3 points to nil was hardly a true reflection of the course of the game.

A draw perhaps would have been a fair result; yet United have only themselves to blame for the defeat. They showed far more thrust behind the scrum but indifferent passing when well placed cost them at least two tries. And Trevor Jones must still be wondering how he missed that simplest of penalty shots from in front of the posts.

Hollingsworth, Hill, Meadows and Jennings all made thrilling runs that deserved better reward but those muffed passes combined with some desperate Worcester covering thwarted United.

And when the home side in turn made determined efforts to increase their lead they found the visiting defence, with Jennings and full back Trevor Jones veritable towers of strength, equally impregnable.

Except for that epidemic of passes going astray the United pack did all that was expected of them, and none worked harder than Solomon, Bowdler, Wilce, Smith and Ivor Jones.

At times they outplayed the Worcester pack in the loose exchanges, but could not produce that necessary finish to ensure success.