

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1906

TO-DAY'S MATCHES

GLOUCESTER v. LYDNEY

CITY'S OPENING FIXTURE

A DISAPPOINTING GAME

GLOUCESTER WIN BY TWO TRIES

The opening of the season at Kingsholm took place under somewhat unfavourable circumstances, and only a very moderate crowd of spectators attended to witness the match with Lydney.

This was not due to any lack of appreciation of the abilities of the visitors, but by order of the County Union the prices of admission to the ground were doubled as a punishment for the misconduct of a section of the spectators at the cup final with Bristol last season, and this kept hundreds of enthusiasts away.

At the time fixed for the kick-off there were only about 400 or 500 spectators, including supporters of the Lydney team. Rowland's band was in attendance, and enlivened proceedings somewhat, but generally speaking things were very flat.

Gloucester were short of Romans, "Whacker" Smith, and E. Hall, though the latter was on the ground.

Lydney had Hayden and Oswell away, but otherwise were at full strength.

The weather was beautifully fine – rather too warm for football, though the conditions were nothing like so trying as on the first two Saturdays of September.

The teams were five minutes late in taking the field, the men lining up as follows : –

Gloucester. – A. Wood, back; A. Hudson, W. Holder, F. Smith, and L. Vears, three-quarter backs; D. R. Gent (capt.) and J. Stephens, half-backs; B. Parham, W. Johns, A. Hawker, H. Collins, G. Matthews, Pegler, J. Merchant, and G. Vears, forwards.

Lydney. – C. Meek, back; A. A. Lewis (captain), A. Huzzey, T. Wild, and L. Powell, three-quarter backs; J. Miles and E. Bayliss, half-backs; G. L. Jones, T. Downing, T. Huzzey, F. Lewis, J. Nemes, G. Charles, G. Williams, and G. Royal, forwards.

Referee : Mr. F. Smith (Bristol).

THE GAME

Gent won the toss and deputed Lydney to kick off against the sun. Jones started, and the ball going to Hawker the latter ran and punted to Wild, who returned to touch in the home half. Gloucester quickly reached the centre, where Gent got the ball away, but Hudson passed forward. The City captain dribbled away nicely from a scrum, but Powell saved by falling on the ball.

In some loose work F. Smith picked up and punted to Meek, who sent almost straight to touch at the 25 mark. Gloucester tried to open out, but Stephens failed to gather his pass. He, however, kicked to Holder, who sent to Hudson, the latter finding touch a dozen yards from the Lydney line.

The visiting forwards relieved, but off-side by their halves cost them a penalty, and Wood put in a lovely touch-finder. Gloucester were in a good position, and from a pass by Stephens, Hudson tried to break through, but was unsuccessful. A sharp rush by the Lydney forwards took the ball to Wood, but the latter fielded and returned in fine style.

Carrying a scrum, the Gloucester forwards dribbled brilliantly, but Meek effected a daring save. Play was continued in the Lydney half, and eventually Wood forced a minor as the result of a kick over the line. L. Vears fielded the drop-out, and with a cross kick put his men on side. Johns secured and raced for the line, but passed wildly on reaching Meek, and a good opening was lost.

Bayliss gained relief for Lydney with a timely kick, but Gloucester eventually set up a hot attack, and L. Vears had a dash for the corner. Lewis and Meek, however, stopped the Gloucesterian, who was winded, but quickly resumed. Immediately Gent and Stephens got the ball away, but the centres showed lack of initiative, and Hudson was pounced upon directly he received.

Good work by Gent, who charged down a kick, enabled Gloucester to reach their opponents' 25, where Stephens fed Hudson, but the International failed to accept the transfer. Scrambling play followed, the few attempts at passing by the home backs being attended with poor success.

F. Smith broke through prettily, and slipped a couple of opponents in tricky style, but Holder, to whom he passed, was pulled down immediately. Clever footwork by Jones for Lydney sent the ball to Wood, who cleared under pressure. Then Charles made his mark, but with the kick Wood made headway.

Midfield play followed, but F. Smith getting a kick charged down, Lydney appeared likely to get away, but an infringement stopped them. A penalty was given against Gloucester for off-side, and Lewis punted well to Wood, only to see the latter find touch in good style at the centre.

Miles and Bayliss attempted to work the short side of the scrum, but the latter failed to take the ball, and the Gloucester forwards came away with a dangerous rush. Lydney managed to save in front of their posts, and matters looked serious for them. F. Smith, from a pass, tried to drop a goal, but did not raise the ball. However, from a punt Holder marked, and following up his kick again secured possession.

A bad pass spoiled any chance of scoring, and the forwards, a minute later, threw away another good chance by reckless play on the line. Profiting by weak play behind the Gloucester scrum, Lydney made considerable progress, and a combined forward rush was only stopped in the nick of time by Gent gathering and running to touch.

Gloucester were sorely pressed for a few minutes, Lydney making desperate efforts to score. Slight relief came through a penalty kick, but Lydney worked back, and but for a smart tackle by Stephens, Huzzey would have been through.

Gloucester gradually worked out of danger, but the visitors, with a pretty combined movement, saw Wild dash through and pass to Powell. The latter, however, was tackled and his pass spoiled. The City relieved to more favourable quarters, though just before the interval Meek found touch in the home end with a lovely kick from a penalty.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester	Nil
Lydney	Nil

Parham re-started, and an exchange of kicks left play at the centre. Gloucester early got the ball out, but the passing was slow and ill-timed, and ground was lost, Lydney reaching the home 25 before being checked by Wood. Parham, securing from a line-out, punted down the field, and Meek was floored before he could get in his kick. From this point Gloucester made further headway, but Lewis picked up and ran across the ground. He was upset by Hudson, but got up and eventually got in his kick.

A lot of loose forward play followed, in which skill and judgment were at a discount. Wood was several times called upon after this, but he proved safe and kicked excellently. Meek also distinguished himself on the other side. Gloucester eventually got close up, but the attacks were sadly lacking in effectiveness. After Hudson had [c. ten/twelve words unreadable] for goal, Stephens led a clever dribble to the Lydney line, but the visitors saved luckily.

Following this was a spell of scrambling play of a rough and tumble character. Mistakes were frequent in handling, and both teams appeared sadly out of form.

At length Hudson picked up, and after hesitating for a few seconds as to what to do, passed to Gent, who was on his left. The captain raced down touch, and Wood, seeing an opening, backed up, and received the ball. Going strongly for the line, Wood beat the opposition and scored in the corner amidst cheers. The same player took the kick at goal, which failed.

When play was resumed Powell (Lydney) retired with a damaged arm. The visitors, however, held their own very well a man short. The game did not improve, and smart football was lacking. Austin Lewis eventually relieved the monotony with a clever individual effort, but after working out a splendid opening he passed forward.

Lydney was able[sic] to get to the home quarters through intercepting a pass, but Gloucester soon worked to half-way. Here Stephens got away prettily, and passed to Holder, but the centre was stopped in his attempt to go straight up the field. Hawker, who had previously been injured, now retired, and the teams were 14 all.

From a line-out Johns secured and put in a strong burst, but he was collared from behind, and although throwing out a pass no further progress was made. Lydney came back by the aid of some useful kicks, but for the most part play was of a most uninteresting description.

In the last ten minutes Lydney worked strenuously, and Gloucester had an anxious time. Smith eventually gained relief with a good punt, Meek only partially returning. Matthews led a sharp dribble of the Gloucester forwards to the Lydney 25, but Wild effected a good save.

Hudson, from a pass by Stephens, got well away, but was touched by the toe and fell headlong into touch. After this Holder had a chance of putting a colleague in, but he held on to the ball.

Gloucester were doing better just now, and Smith tried hard to get over after cleverly beating several opponents. The City continued to press, and Gent tried a drop at goal with the left foot, but without success. Meek ran out instead of touching down, and found touch nicely.

Gloucester at once worked back, and Hudson kicked across the ground to the right wing. Lewis fielded and eluded L. Vears, but a Gloucester forward brought the Lydney captain low. In simple style Lewis allowed the ball to roll away from him, and Johns being up gathered the leather and scored a try far out. Wood's shot was a failure, and immediately afterwards the end was whistled.

RESULT :

Gloucester	2 tries (6 points)
Lydney	Nil

REMARKS

Those who absented themselves from Kingsholm to-day had no reason to regret their decision, for the game was of a most disappointing character. There were one or two redeeming features – Wood's splendid display at full-back being a case in point – but for the most part the play was of a strenuous forward nature, in which skill and resource were conspicuous by its absence.

For a first match one does not wish to be too critical, but it is clear far better football will have to be displayed in future matches if the support accorded the City club in the past is to be continued. One recognises that the Gloucester back division was disorganised to-day, and this must be an excuse for the poor show afforded.

Gloucester have anything but a pleasant experience of playing men out of their proper position, and we consider the introduction of Holder into the City three-quarter line this afternoon a mistake. As a forward Holder, although he has still something to learn in the finer points of the game, is a great player, and will undoubtedly still further improve his reputation; but as a centre three-quarter he lacks the resourcefulness and initiative required of a player in that position.

To-day no man on the field worked harder than Holder, or received more knocking about, but a lot of it was so much wasted energy. In our opinion it would be better, when a vacancy occurs in the third line again, to give a Second Teamer used to the position a chance.

Taking the play throughout Gloucester deserved to win, and the six points' victory about represented their superiority. For the greater part of the first half the City had clearly the best of matters, and a little judgment and head-work would have resulted in more than one score. It was just that bit of finesse that was lacking in the home players, the men blundering badly at the critical moment.

Lydney came strongly at times, and more than once in the second half the Gloucester defence was sorely tried. The visitors, however, like the home team, did not possess that happy knack of turning chances to the best account. Considering Lydney's reputation for playing an open game, it was surprising to find the team rarely resorting to handling. Certainly they did not get the opportunities that fell to Gloucester, but on several occasions the visitor played for safety, when there was a possible chance of opening out with success.

The rival packs of forwards played a vigorous game, and the tackling was exceptionally keen. On the hard ground it was no wonder there were a few casualties, but nothing serious fortunately occurred. The Gloucester eight were smarter in heeling, and they took part in some dashing loose rushes, but the work in the open was a trifle uneven. Matthews, Johns, Merchant, and Vears were distinguished for special efforts. Hawker did some good kicking, and Pegler, Parham, and Collins were noticeable in the line outs. For Lydney, whose fort  appeared to be loose rushing, Jones, Nelmes, and Royal were always conspicuous.

At half-back it was heart-breaking to see the smart work of Gent and Stephens so badly supported. The captain worked like a Trojan, and when the game was going in favour of Lydney his defence was remarkable. Miles and Bayliss were keen workers, but were not particularly prominent.

Neither set of three-quarters were seen to advantage in combination, and the players individually were a lot below form. Hudson only had one decent chance in attack, and L. Vears was similarly treated.

The Gloucester centres were not a success, though F. Smith hardly had a fair trial. Wild did great things in defence for Lydney, and Powell was useful. Austin Lewis is by no means the player he was, and the manner in which he gave away the last try was very galling to the Lydney supporters present.

Wood, as already indicated, played a great game at full-back, and it will be a difficult matter to choose between him and Romans. Wood was responsible for the first try scored, and his play throughout was class. He kicked a fine length, seldom failing to get the ball in touch, and he scarcely made a mistake in fielding. Meek, too, distinguished himself for Lydney, and on more than one occasion he got the visitors out of a tight corner.

JC