

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1907

TO-DAY'S MATCHES

SENIOR COUNTY CUP COMPETITION

CONTESTS AT GLOUCESTER, BRISTOL, AND STROUD

The interest of Rugby enthusiasts in the county were to-day chiefly centred in the opening round of the senior cup. This was the third year of the competition, and likely to be the last on the knock-out principle. Endeavours have been made to run a competition next year on the League system, but nothing definite so far has been arranged.

Eight teams originally figured in the first round, but as Bream (who qualified as winners of last year's junior championship) scratched to Cinderford, only three games were left to be decided. The draw resulted in Gloucester, Bristol (holders), and Stroud having choice of ground, the opposing teams being Lydney, Cheltenham, and Clifton respectively.

Gloucester had already defeated Lydney in a friendly at Kingsholm, and form certainly pointed to another victory for the City, though Lydney's excellent fight against Bristol a fortnight ago encouraged their supporters that they would make a good show. Stroud, too, had twice disposed of Clifton this season, but the Gothamites were very weak to-day, and were doubtful as to the result.

Cheltenham's visit to Bristol was regarded with more than ordinary interest, as the teams had not met for a couple of seasons. The holders of the cup had selected a powerful side to oppose the Town, and though the latter could be relied upon to make a plucky fight, it was felt they would prove unequal to the task of ousting the Bristolians from the competition. The best Cheltenham hoped for was a draw, and in that event the Town were confident they could go one better on their own ground in the re-play.

GLOUCESTER v. LYDNEY

AN INTERESTING GAME

TWENTY POINTS' WIN FOR THE CITY

There was a sharp frost in Gloucester on Friday night, but thanks to the bright sunshine the Kingsholm ground was in fair condition for this tie.

There were several changes in the Lydney team, Meek and Wild being prominent absentees. Merchant stood down from the home side owing to an abscess, Purton filling the vacancy.

There was a fairly good crowd of spectators present when at 3.15 the teams took the field as follows : –

GLOUCESTER	Positions	LYDNEY
A. Wood	Backs.	W. Hill
F. Smith	Three-Quarter	A. A. Lewis (capt.)
A. Hudson	Backs.	A. Huzzey
C. Smith	"	H. Rudge
F. Bloxsome	"	L. Powell
D. R. Gent (capt.)	Half-Backs.	F. Miles
J. Stephens	"	G. Ellaway
B. Parham	"	G. L. Jones
W. Johns	Forwards.	T. Downing
G. Matthews	"	W. Biddle
W. Holder	"	F. Sleeman
F. Pegler	"	J. Nelmes
H. Collins	"	G. Charles
G. Vears	"	W. Wilcox
A. Purton	"	W. Probert

Referee : Mr. J. Milburn.

Linesmen : Messrs. J. H. Tratt (Stroud) and F. J. Hannam (Clifton).

THE GAME

Lydney won the toss, and Parham kicked off against the sun. There was no return, and the first scrum was formed in the Lydney half. In the loose Stephens picked up and handed wide to Hudson, who burst through and fed F. Smith. The latter was covered by a couple of opponents and tackled, but he managed to pass to Stephens, who cross-punted in front of the visitors' goal. There was a fine chance for a score, but a knock-on lost the opportunity.

A useful rush by the Lydney forwards gained some dozen yards, and later Huzzey kicked down to Wood, who sent to touch. The home forwards heeled twice in succession, but Stephens' transfers were too high and slow to allow of the three-quarters getting away. A minute later Stephens took a difficult pass from Gent and sent to Hudson, but the centre was tackled.

Ensuing play was fought out at midfield, where Gent and Hudson made headway for Gloucester with clever kicks to touch. The Lydney back fumbled and the Gloucester forwards robbed him of possession. Stephens essayed to open out, but the pass was not well directed, and Bloxsome kicked almost straight to touch.

More faulty handling by the Gloucester backs let Lewis through, and Wood was tackled with the ball. A scramble ensued, and Huzzey tried to pick up, but knocked on, and a scrum followed. Wheeling in fine style, the Gloucester forwards came right away, Vears and Pegler being prominent. The ball was taken to Hill, who failed to gather, but an infringement stopped further headway.

From a scrum the Gloucester backs handled smartly, and Bloxsome had a dash down touch, but was pushed to touch by Powell. Lydney worked down by the aid of useful kicks and loose forward rushes, and subsequent play was of an even character. A mis-kick by Gent lost ground for his side, and Lydney visited the home 25. Gloucester tried to relieve with a passing bout, but Bloxsome knocked on and the movement came to a stop.

Good work by the City forwards brought play to the centre, where Ellaway was penalised for off-side. Immediately after Lewis gained considerable ground with a couple of fine kicks. Gloucester were hard pressed in the next few minutes, and Wood was called upon to save.

From a scrum F. Miles broke away cleverly, but his pass was intercepted by Bloxsome, who raced away with Hudson in attendance. Hill stopped his man, but Bloxsome gave up the ball to Hudson, but he too was brought down, Lydney thus stopping a certain score.

The visitors quickly got out of danger, and later a forward kicked over the home line, Gloucester conceding a minor. Following the drop-out, Gent was conspicuous with some pretty footwork, but Lydney were holding their own splendidly.

The visiting backs tried passing, but C. Smith upset Miles in fine style. Lydney were beaten back, but they came again, and neat combination tested the home defence. The position was saved, and Gloucester worked out to more favourable quarters.

The Lydney forwards used their feet with effect, but Gent stopped them cleverly. Near the centre line Gent opened out, and the whole of the Gloucester backs handled. Bloxsome, the last to receive, got well away down the touch-line, and re-passed to Hudson, who went over the line, but a forward transfer was given. Mistakes by Gloucester enabled Lydney to clear, and a long kick went past Wood and to touch in the home 25.

Gloucester worked out a few yards, but the Lydney forwards heeling Ellaway passed out. A transfer, however, was snapped up by C. Smith, who ran and handed to Hudson. There was only Hill to beat, and the Gloucesterian evaded him but stumbled and fell. The ball, however, rolled clear, and Parham gathering forced himself over with a try. Wood added the extra points.

Lydney re-started, but there was only a poor return. Vears eventually led a fine rush of the City pack, and the Lydney backs were beaten. Another score looked promising, but the visitors saved just outside.

By neat footwork Lydney cleared from this dangerous position, and in turn attacked strongly. The Gloucester defence was severely taxed, and Holder saved right on the line. A smart bit of work by Stephens eased the pressure, and then Ellaway was disabled and had to retire to the touch-line.

Jones came out as scrum worker, and Lydney at once worked to the home lines. Jones got the ball out to Powell on the right wing, but he was held up. Next a Gloucester player got his kick charged down, and only a wonderful save by C. Smith stopped a try. Smith damaged his wrist in this effort but was able to resume.

Gloucester continued to be hotly pressed, and their lines narrowly escaped once or twice. Eventually, Gent brought the much-needed relief, and then in the home 25 a round of passing left the ball with F. Smith. The Gloucester wing ran splendidly to Hill and then punted, and there was an open goal, but some Lydney men got back and saved. Loose play by Gloucester enabled Powell to clear to the centre, where operations were being contested at the interval.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester 1 goal
Lydney Nil

Lydney (who again had the assistance of Ellaway) re-started, and the first item of interest was a smart effort by F. Smith, who followed up his kick and prevented a return. Gloucester further improved their position, but Hill made his mark under pressure. From a line-out Holder took the ball splendidly, and with a superb burst went clean through the opposition and scored near the posts. Wood converted, giving Gloucester a ten points' lead.

There was no response to the re-start, and play settled just inside the home half. The Gloucester backs were given possession, and F. Smith punted down to Powell, who returned nicely. Some good kicking by Wood was applauded, but the ground gained was recovered by the Lydney forwards, who were good in the loose. A kick by Stephens gave Gloucester an advantage, but they lost it, and Lydney gained a position on the City 25 line. From this point Huzzey had a drop at goal, but it was a poor attempt, a minor resulting.

Pegler followed up the drop-out, and robbed an opponent, finally kicking to touch. In subsequent play the Lydney forwards beat the home men for possession, and heeled smartly. The visiting halves tried to work out openings, but Miles twice held on too long and was tackled. A loose rush by Lydney looked dangerous, until Hudson gathered and sent to touch. Lydney, however, kept on the aggressive, and in a scramble Vears was injured, and had to be carried off.

Resuming, the visitors maintained the pressure, until a big punt by Wood sent the ball to Hill. The latter misfielded, but recovered and kicked straight to touch. Gloucester, thanks to good work by Holder, improved their position, and some close play followed inside the Lydney half. The visitors opened out, but the passing broke down without much ground being gained.

Gloucester retaliated, and the ball came right across to Bloxsome. Powell, however, managed to touch the Gloucester player's heel and bring him down. In some loose play which followed a Lydney man punted over Wood's head. The City full-back, however, got back, and dodging a couple of opponents got in a fine kick.

Wood distinguished himself with another mighty punt which transferred play to the Lydney end. Vears now returned amidst cheers, and the game continued to be keenly contested. Pegler was prominent with a neat bit of work, and then in the loose a Gloucester player fielded, and threw out to C. Smith. The latter yielded at once to Hudson, who raced over with the third try. The charge was disallowed, and Wood landed a fine goal.

On the resumption Gloucester showed up with some fine work, and after one pretty combined effort, in which the Smiths inter-passed cleverly, Frank dashed in between a couple of opponents and apparently got the ball down over the line. The referee, however, ruled that he was tackled outside, and ordered a scrum five yards out. Heeling smartly, Stephens set his third line in motion, and only a forward transfer prevented a certain score.

Gloucester were going strongly now, and were having most of the game. Lydney, however, stuck pluckily to their task, and eventually reached the centre. Holder was to the fore with a strong effort, but he passed forward after clearing a couple of men. Gloucester, however, were not to be denied, and following a splendid round of passing Hudson dashed over with a fine try, which Wood converted.

Gloucester continued to hold the upper hand to the finish, but there was no further scoring.

RESULT :

Gloucester 4 goals (20 points)
Lydney Nil

REMARKS

Gloucester came out in the end with a handsome victory, but the score of 20 points to nil was very flattering to the winners. Lydney, though greatly handicapped by the absence of Meek and Wild – two of the best players in the team – put up a really plucky fight, and for three parts of the game may be said to have fairly held their own in actual play.

The City let themselves go in the last quarter of an hour, and during this period the defence was repeatedly tested. To the credit of the visitors they held out splendidly against the opposition; had they wavered in the slightest degree there is little doubt Gloucester's score would have been appreciably augmented.

For a cup-tie the game was an interesting one, and though keen and desperately fought out was pleasantly contested. The injuries to Ellaway and Vears were apparently the result of accidents, and fortunately both players were able to return to the field and finish out the game. In the first half Lydney held their own splendidly, and at times they attacked hotly. Gloucester were by no means at their best in the earlier stages of the game; the forwards failed to make much headway, whilst the backs mulled pretty frequently. There was a distinct improvement after the change of ends, and some very pretty bouts of passing were witnessed. Gloucester notched three tries in the second half, and with more finish and judgment in passing one or two other scores might easily have been added.

Lydney were best served by their forwards, who were at their best in loose footwork and keen following up. The pack never relaxed their efforts, and they finished strongly. G. L. Jones was prominent in all the principal movements, and a young forward who distinguished himself was Sleeman, a promising recruit to the ranks. Nelmes, Wilcox, and Downing were also hard workers.

The Gloucester eight were dashing at intervals, and conspicuous amongst the players were Holder, Johns, Vears, and Pegler. The home men were good in the lines-out and loose, but the packing in the scrums was ragged occasionally, and the heeling too slow. At half-back Gent did a great amount of work, and he got the ball away very smartly at times. Some of his transfers were erratic, but Stephens gathered the ball from the most awkward positions in remarkable fashion. The outside half was very quick in opening out, and he did splendidly with the exception of a tendency to get the ball in the air too much when passing out. This cramped the movements of the third line, and gave the opposition time to get up and spoil the passing.

Ellaway and J. Miles[*sic*] performed very creditably for Lydney, and should train into a useful couple. The scrum worker had a tendency to get off-side, and this was his chief fault. Miles displayed a good knowledge of what is required of a stand-off half, and once he cut through very prettily.

The Gloucester three-quarter line was seen to advantage in the second half, and it was here the City held a big pull. In the centre Hudson and "Whacker" Smith played good football, the former's strong dashes always being a source of danger to his opponents, whilst Smith did some effective work both in attack and defence. On the wings, Frank Smith and Bloxsome contributed one or two nice runs, and were unlucky in not scoring.

For Lydney, Austin Lewis rendered his side admirable service in the centre, and he received efficient aid from his colleagues. The quartette were seldom dangerous in attack, but with a little luck they might have had a try in the first half.

Wood again gave a very fine exhibition at full-back for Gloucester, kicking with great length, and never being at fault in fielding or gathering the ball. Hill, who deputised for Meek for the visitors, came out creditably all things considered. It was a big test for a Second teamer, and if he failed occasionally the mistakes were excusable under the circumstances.

THE SEMI-FINAL

As a result of to-day's matches the following teams will meet in the semi-final, to be played on March 9th : –

Gloucester v. Bristol; at Kingsholm.
Cinderford v. Stroud; at Cinderford.