

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1907

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTERSHIRE v. DEVON

CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH AT CHELTENHAM

For the first time in the history of the Town Club Cheltenham were honoured with a county championship fixture, and the match naturally aroused great interest in the locality.

Of late years Gloucestershire have fared badly at the hands and feet of Devon, for of the last 17 matches played between the counties they have only been successful on two occasions, viz., in 1891, at Gloucester, and ten years later at Bristol.

It was hoped a third victory would be recorded to-day, and on paper the chances of the home team certainly appeared rosy.

Only one change was made in the selected Gloucestershire team, F. T. Boucher (Clifton) taking the place of Burgham (Cinderford).

But Devon were not so fortunate, refusals being received from such well-known players as the Brothers E. W. and G. D. Roberts, Jago (Internationals), Lieut. Moir, and Lillicrap.

To fill these vacancies the Plymouth ranks were largely drawn upon, and altogether eight players from this club featured in the side.

The final constitution of the teams was as follows : –

Gloucestershire: – A. Wood (Gloucester); A. Hudson (Gloucester), M. Neale (Bristol), V. Eberle (Clifton), A. Lewis (Lydney); D. R. Gent (Gloucester), F. Niblett (Cinderford); W. Johns (Gloucester), D. Hollands (Gloucester), J. L. Mathias (Bristol), W. E. Meyer (Bristol), A. Teague (Cinderford), F. T. Boucher (Clifton), J. Nelmes (Lydney), W. Stinchcombe (Lydney).

Devon: – C. Hoskings (Plymouth); W. Hyam (Plymouth), T. Mills (Plymouth), A. Gibbs (R.N.C. Dartmouth), T. Conybeare (Plymouth); A. Carlisle (R.N.C. Dartmouth), J. Peters (Plymouth); S. McSaunders [not given], J. Wilcocks (Plymouth), T. S. Kelly (Exeter), J. Cummings (Plymouth), A. E. Hughes (Plymouth), A. L. Darby (R.N.C. Dartmouth), R. Gilbert (R.N.C. Dartmouth), E. Ley (London Devonians).

Referee : Mr. A. L. Sloper (London).

The weather in Cheltenham turned out bright and fine, and the anticipation of a big attendance was fully borne out.

Some doubt had been expressed as to the qualification of W. H. Williams, the Cheltenham forward, who resides at Worcester.

Messrs. C. A. Crane and W. S. Donne (Rugby Union representatives) were present at the match, and their opinion being sought, it was decided that Williams was not qualified, and he accordingly stood down. Fortunately the home county had a reserve in attendance in W. Stinchcombe (Lydney).

There was a further change in the Devon team, E. Ley (London Devonians) taking the place of W. A. Mills (Devon Albion).

At the time fixed for the kick-off there was a capital crowd round the enclosure, and visitors were still arriving.

THE GAME

Shortly after three o'clock Devon started with a short kick, and the visiting forwards getting up sent to Nelmes, who punted to touch. A fine rush by the Gloucestershire forwards made headway, Peters checking by dropping on the ball. A loose kick by a Devon forward sent the ball to Neale, who with a clever screw punt, found touch grandly.

Devon replied with a lucky flying kick, and ensuing play was fought out at midfield. Here Gloucestershire heeled, but the passing broke down at Neale. A bad pass out from the scrum by Gent lost Gloucestershire ground, but Niblett saved; and later Neale accomplished a good bit of work.

Niblett fumbling a pass from Gent on his 25 let Devon go very close, the home lines narrowly escaping. From a scrum five yards out the visitors heeled, and Carlisle getting held passed to Peters, who scored in the corner. The same player failed at goal.

Gloucestershire dropped out, and at once took the game to mid-field. Devon, with fine work in the line-out, got back, and subsequent play was fought out in the Gloucester half. Gloucester heeling, Gent started Niblett on the move, but Eberle fumbled his pass badly, and Devon nearly got through again. A kick down by Hudson was well followed up by the International, who floored Hoskings in fine style.

The Devon forwards broke away with a superb burst, and the home defence was sorely tried. Hyam, replying to a kick, sent to Wood, who slipped and allowed the ball to go past him. The City custodian, however, recovered splendidly, and got in his kick with the Devon forwards on top of him. Then from a big punt by Hoskings, Gloucester were forced right on their line, a minor subsequently resulting.

On the drop out, Devon showed up strongly, a brilliant bout of passing being heartily applauded. Hyam cross-kicked from the left wing, and his forwards gaining possession, they seemed almost certain to score. A knock-on, however, spoiled the chance.

Devon continued to have all the game, but at length the home forwards, following up well, reached the Devon half. The visitors soon changed the venue, Wood stopping a dangerous movement. A grand rush by the Gloucester forwards, in which Johns was a shining light, gained some thirty yards, Hoskings being brought down well.

Following this came a nice round of passing by the home backs, but it ended on the 25 line. Here Gent got the ball out nicely, and Niblett feeding Lewis, the latter cut through beautifully, but succumbed to numbers in front of the goal. Gloucester now attacked strongly, but the defence was sound. For off-side Gloucestershire were penalised, and Hyam punted to Lewis. The latter mis-fielded, but recovered, and with a brilliant kick dropped a lovely goal amidst great enthusiasm.

Devon resumed, and early on the home forwards brought off a great rush, which took a lot of stopping. Encouraged by their success the Gloucestershire forwards were prominent again with some fine footwork, which took them into their opponents' 25. Offside by Carlisle gave Gloucester a penalty, but Wood failed with his shot at goal. Hyam kicked out, but Wood returned in fine style, and Gloucester again were placed in a good position.

Devon, taking advantage of some loose play by the home backs, started passing, but it broke down. The Gloucestershire forwards showed up with some grand work, and following good all-round play Hoskings was beaten. The ball was taken on, and Boucher gathering nicely went over with a good try. Wood converted with a lovely shot.

Resuming, Devon at once got an opening, and following neat exchanges between the forwards, Gilbert was credited with a corner try, though to all appearances Wood threw him well into touch-in-goal. The place kick by Peters failed.

Gloucestershire re-started, and even play was witnessed at mid-field. Devon showed up with some good passing, and Mills ran well. Later, Conybeare, after combination with Peters, put his side well down, but Wood marked splendidly.

The Gloucester forwards subsequently did well in the loose. Wood again distinguished himself when sorely pressed. Half-time was then called.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucestershire 2 goals (1d)
Devon 2 tries

Gloucestershire restarted, and a great rush by the home forwards took them right to the Devon line. A mistake by Niblett let the visitors out, and passing resulted, the centre being reached. A visitor cross-kicked, but Hudson ran back, and, beating Hyam, got in a fine punt. Racing up, Hudson tackled Hoskings amidst great cheering.

In some loose play Neale gathered neatly and passed to Eberle, who fed Lewis for the Lydney player to run round behind the posts with a fine try. Wood converted and gave Gloucestershire a lead of 8 points.

Devon resumed, Mathias replying with a flying kick to Hyam, who sent to touch. Gloucestershire played up strongly in subsequent play which was fast and exciting.

Clever work by Gent put the home backs in motion, but Eberle missed his transfer. Devon dribbled away, but Wood sent them back with a grand kick.

A strong run by Hudson gave Gloucester an advantage, and the home county followed this up with a lovely passing bout. Lewis, being hemmed in on the wing, cross-kicked, and the ball going over the line, Johns got up and touched down a try. Wood's kick for goal struck the upright.

On the re-start, the Gloucestershire backs indulged in some exchanges, but the passing went astray. Devon profited by the mistake, and gained a footing in the home half. Gloucester worked out, but twice bad passes by Niblett lost ground.

For an infringement the home side were penalised, but Peters could do nothing better than kick dead. Gent was warmly cheered for a couple of daring saves at the feet of the Devon forwards. But this did not prevent the visitors getting dangerous. The Devon forwards were strong and clever in the lines out, and they gave the homesters considerable anxiety, Wood being at fault in fielding. He recovered, but was penalised for lying on the ball. This was right in front of goal, and Peters had no difficulty in gaining three points for his side.

On the resumption some vigorous football was witnessed, and excitement was kept at high pitch. With a fine kick, Wood placed Gloucester close to the Devon line, and from a cross-kick by Lewis the homesters nearly scored. After this, Hudson, from a pass by Neale, had a dash for the line, and Hoskings effected a grand tackle.

The game travelled up and down field at a great pace, and Devon only just failed to add to their score. Then came a wonderful effort by Hudson, who got off at the centre and punted down the field. Hoskings failed to gather, and the ball being dribbled over, Hudson scored grandly, Wood kicking the goal.

Devon resumed, and the game continued to be fought out at a terrific pace. The home backs took part in a lovely bout of passing, and Neale only just failed to beat the defence. Immediately after Gent opened out nicely, and Eberle cut out a splendid opening for Lewis. The Cliftonian's pass, however, was a bad one, and Lewis failed to take the ball with a certain try in view.

Devon, though well behind in points, never relaxed their efforts. A mistake in passing by Gloucester let the visitors in, and after good work by Hyam, Gilbert ran over behind the posts. Peters converted.

Nothing further resulted, and a magnificent game ended.

RESULT :

Gloucester	4 goals (1 d), 1 try (22 pts.)
Devon	2 goals (1 p), 2 tries (14 pts.)

REMARKS

Bravo Gloucestershire! After a long interval success has at last come against Devon, and after a game which, for prolific scoring and excitement, will be remembered as one of the best ever witnessed in the history of the county championship.

Before the match the prospect of the home county were discussed with a good deal of confidence, but no one anticipated the scoring would reach such dimensions. For the first ten minutes Gloucestershire were a disorganised force, and at this early stage it looked a really soft thing for Devon. But that first try obtained by the Dumplings put the Gloucestershire men on their mettle, and a wonderful change came over the game.

It was a terrific fight forward, and the pace throughout was very hot. The Gloucestershire eight were the lighter set by a good bit, but the men contested every inch of ground, and stuck to their formidable opponents with a tenacity and determination which won for them the highest praise.

Devon were magnificent in the lines-out and open, but in the scrums the battle was even. The home players wheeled at times with great effect, dribbled well, and kept good control over the ball. In this department no one was more prominent than Johns, with Nelmes, Boucher, and Meyer not far behind. Mathias proved an efficient leader, and he did one or two smart things in the open.

The tackling on both sides was deadly to a degree, and once a man was collared there was no mistake in putting him down. For Devon, Kelly, Gilbert, Willcocks, and Hughes were always noticeable, and the standard of Devon forward play was well maintained.

There was a rare struggle at half-back. With about equal chances Gent had the better of Carlisle at the scrum, despite the latter's off-side play. The Gloucestrian displayed sterling pluck in going down to the rushes of the visitors, and it was marvellous how he escaped injury now and again.

The combination of the Gloucester halves, however, was not particularly effective. Niblett, especially in the first half, was faulty in taking his passes, and he also gave his transfers too low. He improved later, and there was clearly a better understanding between the couple after the change of ends. Niblett did some good tackling and kicking, but it cannot be said the Cinderford captain played up to his club reputation. No doubt the absence of his clubmate had something to do with his non-success. Behind the Devon forwards, Carlisle was a hard worker, and Peters accomplished some clever bits of play.

The advantage at three-quarter rested with Gloucestershire, whose line did magnificent work at times. There were occasions, however, when promising movements broke down owing to faulty handling. Both the centres – Neale and Eberle – made mistakes in passing, the Cliftonian missing one golden opportunity of putting Lewis in unopposed. Neale's defence was very good, and in the second he made one or two fine runs.

The wing men – Hudson and Lewis – were in splendid form, both in attack and defence. Dash, resolution, and cleverness were frequently displayed, and it was mainly from these two men that Devon had most to fear. The visiting outsides were good and bad in turn. The combination was not happy, and they were not any too successful individually. Of the four Hyam was certainly the pick though the veteran Mills was often in evidence.