

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1907

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v. CHELTENHAM

The meeting of these local rivals at Cheltenham – the first of three fixtures arranged this season – aroused the keenest interest, and with ideal weather conditions there was every prospect of a big crowd attending at the Recreation Ground.

Cheltenham were unbeaten at home, and after their recent victories over Stroud and Bristol, followed by the close fight made at Coventry last week, the club's supporters had great hopes in the ability of the Town to give Gloucester a very close game.

The City had the better record with six wins and two defeats, as against four victories and three defeats, but in these local contests past form has proved altogether unreliable.

Additional interest was centred in the match by reason of the first appearance against Gloucester of G. Romans and A. Hall, old City players.

Gloucester did not lack support, for a very big crowd of enthusiasts accompanied the team, the G.W.R. special trains being packed.

There was one change in the selected fifteen, Gordon Vears, the City captain, standing down, and Pegler taking his place.

It was five minutes late when the teams entered the field, the players meeting with a hearty reception.

Gloucester. – A. E. Wood, back; C. Smith, G. Cooke, E. Hall, A. Hudson, three-quarter backs; D. R. Gent, J. Stephens, half-backs; F. Pegler, W. Johns, B. Parham, D. Hollands, H. Quixley, H. Collins, R. Craddock, G. Matthews, forwards.

Cheltenham: – B. Davy, back; G. Marsden, B. A. Bowers, G. Romans, C. Clifford, three-quarter backs; A. Goddard, A. Hall, half-backs; G. T. Unwin (capt.), W. N. Unwin, W. H. Williams, C. S. Barnett, D. B. Dewfall, G. N. Tinson, F. Fry, H. Evans, forwards.

Referee : Mr. A. J. Lawes (Bristol).

THE GAME

Johns captained Gloucester, and losing the toss he kicked off amidst great excitement. The ball went to Fry, who punted to Johns. The latter ran across and started passing, Hudson kicking to touch. From some loose play in the centre, Cheltenham gained ground, but they were pulled up.

Heeling from a scrum Goddard fed Hall, who initiated a nice bout of passing. Bowers ran down prettily and handed to Marsden, who, being hemmed in, re-passed inside to Romans. The old Gloucesterian took the ball beautifully, and running hard scored a fine try within a minute of the start. Romans added the extra points, the success being greeted with tremendous enthusiasm.

Gloucester re-started, and early the City backs indulged in some smart exchanges. Cook threw out to Hudson, who ran hard, but was tackled by Davy a dozen yards outside. Cheltenham dribbled out of danger, the home forwards keeping the ball well at their feet.

Parham brought off a good clearance, but Clifford sent back, and exciting play followed at mid-field. Hall was in fault in taking a pass from Goddard, and Gloucester made a few yards. Then from a kick by Smith A. Hall marked, but there was a good return.

The Town forwards were doing best in the scrum, and heeling well, but little advantage accrued. By good work Gloucester reached their opponents' 25, where the City backs handled. Cook's pass, however, went astray, and Clifford relieved.

Ensuing play was fought out in the Cheltenham half, where Gloucester had a free, but Wood's shot for goal was a poor one. In some loose play Cook kicked down to Romans, and Hudson running up charged over his opponent. Cheltenham appealed for a foul, and the referee awarded a penalty, Romans putting in a grand touch-finder well inside the Gloucester half. Working well together, the Cheltenham forwards made a dash for the line, and Williams was only stopped in the nick of time by Wood.

Stephens brought Gloucester the necessary relief with a timely punt to touch, but Cheltenham quickly rushed back. Goddard and Hall worked the blind side of the scrum cleverly, but Marsden missed his pass, and Wood securing, the latter kicked to mid-field. Gent fed Stephens nicely from a scrum and the outside half punted high. Several Gloucester men raced for possession, but the ball bounced the wrong way, and Gloucester missed a glorious opening.

After this there was some scrambling play ending in the Town pressing Wood, but the City custodian held his own well. Gloucester tried hard to get going but the play was faulty.

A silly pass by Smith when tackled was snapped up by Romans, who nearly put a colleague in. A kick by G. Unwin went over the City line, but Wood kicked out pluckily, and Cook repeated the performance a minute later.

A fine tackle by Hudson stopped a combined movement by Cheltenham, and Johns following up keenly took play to the centre. A punt down to Wood saw the Gloucester custodian get his kick charged down, and the City were very hard pressed.

Cheltenham made desperate efforts to add to their score, and the visitors had a terribly anxious time. In the home 25 A. Hall opened out, but Marsden could not get round and his pass back inside was not taken. C. Smith was knocked out in a scramble, but was able to resume.

Immediately Gloucester got possession from passing. E. Hall ran down and cross-kicked, but Cheltenham saved. Parham picked up in the loose and passed out, but the defence was sound. The City backs were put in possession nicely by Gent and Stephens, and Cook brought off a clever run but fell victim to numbers. A good kick by Romans took Cheltenham to the centre, where the visitors tried handling. Sharp passing sent the ball to Smith who dashed off down touch, but Davy tackled well. Soon after the interval was sounded.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Cheltenham 1 goal
Gloucester Nil

G. Unwin re-started, Wood putting in a big return to Bowers, who sent almost straight to touch. Gloucester heeled from the first scrum, but ground was lost by the passing attempt. A strong burst by Goddard put the City on the defence, but Stephens broke away and fed E. Hall, who sent on to Hudson. The International cleared Clifford and made off down touch at a big pace. Marsden, however, got across and brought him down in fine style.

Immediately after Stephens worked out another opening, and Cook and Smith were well placed. The chance of scoring, however, was missed. Cook, picking up, cross-kicked, but the ball went wide. Clifford receiving ran and tried to kick, but collided with Hudson and had to retire to the touch-line.

Fry came out at three-quarter, and on resuming Cheltenham rushed to the City 25. Here, from a flying kick by Cook, Hudson fielded and secured a clear field with the exception of Davy. The International hesitated, however, and was brought down. The ball got loose, and the Gloucester forwards picked up and kicked, but only a minor resulted.

Wood returned finely to the drop-out, and Gloucester attacked strongly. Cook ran over smartly, but was called back for a forward transfer. Gloucester now played up desperately and Stephens was nearly through. Not to be denied, the City redoubled their efforts, and following some smart work Cook crossed with a clever try. Wood converted with a grand kick and placed the teams level.

Cheltenham re-started, but Wood put them on their defence with a grand touch-finder. The Town lines narrowly escaped on two occasions, and for the next few minutes Gloucester were all over their opponents. Clifford had resumed some few minutes, but Fry was still kept outside the scrum. This gave Gloucester an advantage in the scrum which the City were not slow to utilise. Gent feeding Stephens the latter cut through beautifully and passed to Matthews. The forward ran straight and then threw out a wide pass to Hudson, who took the ball nicely and ran over with a fine try. Wood converted and Gloucester took the lead by five points.

Re-starting, A. Hall put Cheltenham in a favourable position with a nice punt to touch. Hollands was playing at three-quarter for Gloucester with Smith, who was limping badly. He subsequently retired.

Stephens with a smart bit of play enabled Gent to change the venue, and the Town were again outplayed. The City forwards put in one fine rush, but the final kick was too hard and only a minor resulted. Wood had hard lines with a shot for goal from near the centre, the ball hitting the upright and rebounding into play.

The Cheltonians kicked out, and Wood gathering, he only just failed with a drop at goal. Barnett following up the drop-out tackled Wood, and the Town gained a footing in the Gloucester end. From a pass by Gent, Stephens broke through and sent a sharp pass to Hudson, who dashed off in great style. Being partly tackled, Hudson transferred to Johns, who raced to Davy, and then passed to Quixley for the latter to complete the try – a very fine movement. Wood again converted, and made the game safe.

The last few minutes were hotly contested, but all in favour of Gloucester, but there was no further scoring.

RESULT :

Gloucester 3 goals (15 points)

Cheltenham 1 goal (5 points)

REMARKS

The great fight is over, and to the City deservedly went the honours of a fast and desperately keen game. To the credit of Cheltenham, it should be said the Town played a plucky game throughout, and a defeat by ten points was no disgrace. The game opened in sensational style, and Gloucester were constantly caught napping in the opening stages.

Cheltenham's early success had an important bearing on subsequent play, and up to the interval the Town had the better of the exchanges. The City players tried hard to get going, but there was something lacking forward, and for the most part the visiting pack were a beaten eight.

With the change of ends Gloucester showed a vast improvement, and once the City drew level they never looked back. On the other hand, Cheltenham deteriorated, and except on rare occasions the Town were beaten to a standstill. All the tries scored were very smart efforts, and two of the City points came from movements which originated in their own half.

Comparing the rival teams, honours were fairly even forward taking the play throughout. In our opinion it was a mistaken policy on the part of the town captain to keep Fry outside after Clifford returned, for it was from this point the Gloucester front took the game well in hand.

The battle waged hotly all through, and there was some desperately keen tackling. Once or twice the players showed a little feeling, but all things considered there was not much to complain about.

Cheltenham possess a really good set of forwards, and it was apparent the men were out for a big fight to-day. They rather overworked themselves in the first half, and condition told in favour of the City in the closing stages.

For Cheltenham, Williams, Barnett, and Dewfall were untiring, and the Brothers Unwin shone in loose and open play. When the Gloucester men fairly found their feet they were great in all phases of play. Johns was a fine leader, and was always where the fight was thickest. Quick to break up from the scrum the City vice-captain followed up with great keenness, and he did a tremendous amount of tackling. Matthews, Parham, Collins, and Hollands were ever conspicuous for smart work, and the latter shaped extremely well at three-quarter when "Whacker" Smith retired.

With the Cheltenham forwards doing better in the scrums in the first half, Goddard and Hall had a number of opportunities of opening out, but apart from the initial success, when Romans scored, the movements did not materialise.

When the game veered round in Gloucester's favour, Goddard was continually off-side, and one or two Town forwards also attempted a lot of spoiling. A. Hall was one of the most useful members of the home side, for though he was too closely watched to do much in the way of making openings, his judicious kicks were of great service. For Gloucester, Gent and Stephens showed cleverness and resource. The former had done better all-round work, but Stephens has rarely been seen to more advantage.

Through Cheltenham Glasses"

After the sensational score at the start, in which the home three-quarters showed the most excellent skill and determination, the Citizens made strenuous and repeated efforts to get level, but found Cheltenham as sturdy in defence as they were strong in attack.

In the early stages, Davy, Clifford, and Hall were prominent in defence of the old citadel, and the Unwins, Romans, and Bowers were swift and alert for any offensive opening. The game ruled fairly even, a desperate struggle between the rival packs being the outstanding feature.

More than once over-keenness spoiled the Garden Towners' chance, but such a state of affairs was inevitable when two such ancient and powerful rivals encountered each other. They had a great chance once when Wood kicked out instead of touching down, but in the end that also had to be added to the unavoidable tale of lost opportunities.

Goddard was in fine form, and the home pair compared more than favourably with the little International and his club confrere on the other side.

Not until well into the second half were the visiting backs able to show anything in the nature of the combination expected from players of their calibre. Once or twice they attempted to get going, but always the Red and Black brigade were too much for them.

Play was fast and exciting all the time. Davy, who played a good game, defended well, but lacked his usual range of kicking, in which respect he was overshadowed by Wood, the county custodian, through whose coolness and skill Gloucester weathered many a threatening moment.

Marsden's pace and trickiness on the wing were often of use, and this player more than once held up Hudson in grand style. He missed a good chance of scoring, however. Romans played well against his old club, and the same remark applies to Hall.

When Cook and Wood put the Citizens level excitement ruled high. Their success lent the visitors new vigour, and their next score was a magnificent piece of work. Davy was not to blame with a host of opponents to reckon with.

Cheltenham were soon aggressive again, with “Cherry” Clifford, Romans, W. N. Unwin, Goddard, and Williams prominent, but the pendulum was swinging Gloucester's way. Wood’s attempt to goal from a mark at the centre was so glorious an effort as to compel cheers from all the spectators irrespective of partisanship, and Quixley’s try was the result of fine work.

Towards the end of the second half Cheltenham fell off, and even Davy did not show up so well as he had done. However, they had done very well, and had had a full share of a very hard fought contest.

It was their superiority in the rear division that gave the City their victory, coupled with the great asset they have in Wood, whose marvellous kicking time after time resulted in advantage to the ‘Cestrians.

Cheltenham forward were capital, and everyone in the pack is deserving of congratulation. It was, however, in the opinion of most, a mistake to have taken Fry out. Previously the homesters had got the ball, and the Gloucester backs were kept more or less idle, but after the alteration the leather went their way, with the inevitable result.

Good in attack and defence as well,
Letting no chance go by,
Oft you can hear the cheering swell
Under excitement high.
Cunning and quick in the game they play,
Ever alert and keen,
So they may clear the City’s way
To victory o’er the green.
Every one a good sportsman and true –
Red and White, here’s a cheer for you.

P. O. E. TICUS.

GLOUCESTER A v. SOUTH END

These teams met at Kingsholm before a very small attendance, the majority of the home supporters apparently having gone to Cheltenham. A late start was made.

The teams were : –

Gloucester. – F. Welshman, back; F. Bloxsome, C. Cook, W. Hall, and H. Smith, three-quarter backs; F. Arthur (capt.) and W. Dix, half-backs; J. Wyburn, A. Purton, W. Bailey, K. Griffiths, W. Blackford, W. Taylor, W. Holford, and T. Guy, forwards.

South End. – O. Stephens, back; Harry Smith, S. Lucas, G. Collingbourne, and W. Moody, three-quarter backs; J. Norman and A. Bagwell, half-backs; H. Bird, T. Spiers, A. Underwood, H. Wixey, F. Drinkwater, H. Lane, W. Baldwin, and E. Stinchcombe, forwards.

South End, who had several changes in their team, started. Cook got the best of a long exchange of kicks, and Gloucester obtained a footing in the visitors' 25. Two or three attempts at passing were nipped in the bud; then Gloucester claimed a free for a very bad foul of Arthur by Bagwell, but not much advantage was gained.

The Gloucester halves were not very happy in their passing, and several good opportunities for opening out the game went a-begging. Both sides were penalised in turn. Harry Smith received from a long kick by Cook, but quietly kicked the ball into Bloxsome's hands, the latter with no one to beat simply strolling in behind the posts – the softest try ever scored on Kingsholm. Welshman goaled.

Cook worked out a beautiful opening, but Hubert Smith knocked on at the critical moment with the line at his mercy. Gloucester were now pressing hard, and in a forward rush Blackford was credited with a try behind the posts, but there was no goal.

Gloucester kept up the pressure and from pretty passing Bloxsome again ran over easily. Purton goaled with a good kick. Give and take play followed till the interval.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester A 2 goals, 1 try
South End Nil

Shortly after resuming Hall scored in the corner after a capital run, but there was no goal.

Gloucester were now clearly showing their superiority, and kept the visitors pretty busy defending. Dix dodged over cleverly from the base of the scrum, and Purton goaled.

Some pretty passing gave Hubert Smith the ball in the visitors' quarter. He made off at top speed, and beating the back pointless and handing off another opponent, scored a brilliant try behind the post. Purton goaled.

Play in the gathering gloom was of a scrappy nature, but Gloucester did most of the attacking. The ball came out to the Gloucester three-quarters, but Cook was collared. He, however, flung out to Bloxsome on the wing, and the latter dropped a good goal. Gloucester maintained their advantage to the end, but there was no further scoring.

RESULT :
Gloucester A ... 5 goals (1d), 2 tries (30 pts)
South End Nil

REMARKS

The latter stages of the game were quite "in the dark" owing to the lateness of the start. South End, though plucky, were outclassed at all points, and the game calls for no comment.