

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1907

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v. PLYMOUTH

Plymouth visited Kingsholm to-day with the fine record of 16 wins and only one defeat (Swansea) – and achievement which placed the Devonians in the very front rank of Rugby Union combinations.

The visitors (who made the long journey from Plymouth this morning) brought a strong side, but unfortunately Gloucester were sadly weakened, owing to the absence of Wood, Hudson, Gent, Stephens, and Johns, the back division being especially disorganised.

Frank Stout, however, assisted, and his help was very useful under the circumstances.

The weather was dull and threatening, but rain kept off, and there was a good attendance of spectators on the ground when the teams took the field at 2.50 as follows : –

Gloucester. – F. Welshman, back; C. Smith, E. Hall, G. Cook, J. Beard, three-quarter backs; W. Dix, H. Smith, half-backs; G. Vears (capt.), F. Pegler, B. Parham, D. Hollands, H. Quixley, H. Collins, R. Craddock, F. M. Stout, forwards.

Plymouth. – Eathorne, back; Conybeare, Mills, De Smidt, Bateman, three-quarter backs; Richards, Peters, half-backs; Knight, Willcocks, Wheatley, Cummings, Sandford, Edwards, Leonard, Robinson.

Referee : Mr. G. C. Redway (Midlands).

THE GAME

Plymouth won the toss, and deputed the City to kick off from the Worcester-street goal. There was a good reply to Vears' start, and play opened just inside the home half. The visitors' were penalised for an infringement at the first scrum, and Hall put in a good touch kick. Plymouth quickly worked back, and Dix, fumbling a return by Eathorne, lost his side good slice of ground.

Scrambling play followed, and then Stout headed a fine rush of the City forwards. The International gathered but was tackled, and a dangerous movement checked.

From the ensuing scrum, Dix received and passed out to H. Smith, who fed Cook. The latter shook off an opponent and handed to Hall, who raced down to Eathorne. A timely pass put C. Smith in possession, and the wing man covering the remaining distance, crossed with a fine try amidst great cheering. Welchman failed at goal, though the kick was a good one.

The drop out was less well returned, and even play followed. Plymouth worked down with a loose rush, but Welchman saved well. Ensuing play was fought out in the Gloucester half, where Stout stopped a dangerous wheel of the Plymouth forwards. An infringement by Dix caused the home side to be penalised, but Peters' shot for goal fell short.

Carrying a scrum the Gloucester forwards dribbled through, De Smidt saving by kicking to touch. Later Plymouth heeled, but Bateman missed Peters' pass, and Hall only just failed to get clear.

Both sides were working desperately hard, and there was very little in it. Eventually Gloucester shone in some loose play which took them past the centre. Plymouth saved by a lucky fly kick, the ball going to touch. A poor kick by Hall lost Gloucester ground, and failure to find touch also operated against the home side. From a cross-kick by Peters, Mills made a dash for possession, but knocked on badly with C. Smith.

Some weak tackling by Gloucester, who went altogether too high for their opponents, allowed Plymouth to get dangerous, but the citadel was saved. Dix was again penalised at the scrum, and Peters only just missed equalising the points with a good kick.

Eathorne replied to the drop-out with a capital touch-finder, but a mark by Stout enabled Gloucester to gain a few yards. C. Smith, with a good punt, tested Eathorne, who failed to gather. The visiting custodian was severely pressed, but a colleague came to his assistance and helped him out. A wild pass by Peters lost the visitors ground, and then Cook, with a clever pick up and kick to touch, stopped a dangerous movement of the Plymouth forwards.

Good work by the Devonians took play to the home end, where Mills punted to the line. Hollands gathered, but for lying on the ball he was penalised. The angle was not difficult, and Peters took a place for goal. The ball hit one of the uprights and fell over the line, where Sandford scored rather a soft try. Peters goaled, and gave the visitors a lead of two points.

Gloucester re-started, and there was a spell of centre play. A kick down by De Smidt sent to Welchman, who tried to hit off a would-be tackler but failed, and he was pulled down. Matters looked dangerous for the home side, but Plymouth failed badly in an open movement. A brilliant breakaway by Hubert Smith took the City player to midfield, where he sent a pass to Cook. The latter fumbled, and on re-gathering again lost the ball with a good opening.

From this point the City forwards got away, and Peters with a flying kick sent straight to Hall, who ran and transferred to C. Smith. The veteran made a gallant effort to cross in the corner, but was bundled to touch just outside. The interval was then called.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Plymouth 1 goal
Gloucester 1 try

Cook replied nicely to the restart. The first line-out took place in the visitors' half. Off-side by Plymouth gave Gloucester a free, and Hall's kick being fumbled by Bateman the ball went to touch on the Devonians' 25. Dix threw out wide from touch, and Cook snapping up the ball tried to burst through. He was, however, collared, but managed to hand the ball to Stout, who, with a desperate plunge got the ball safely over the line. Welchman failed at goal.

With the lead again Gloucester were greatly encouraged, and from the drop out the City attacked strongly again. Plymouth conceded a minor from a punt by Hall, but Gloucester immediately got dangerous again. Cook, picking up cleverly in the open, brought off a brilliant run and worked out a lovely opening for Beard, but the Second teamer knocked on, with a clear course and only ten yards to go.

Peters was instrumental in bringing relief for the Devonians, but "Whacker" Smith ran back, and was only stopped in the nick of time. Gloucester were now going great guns, the forwards doing grand work and overrunning their opponents. Plymouth staved off one desperate rush, but the City were not to be denied, and with an irresistible rush the ball was taken over the line, and Dix credited with a corner try. Welchman again failed to convert.

Hollands received from the drop out and made a fine opening. A series of transfers ensued, but Plymouth just managed to save. Dix, for another infringement, was penalised, and this enabled Plymouth to ease the pressure. A little later Dix was penalised again, but H. Smith marked, and Hall found touch with a beautiful kick.

Wheatley was prominent in heading [a] good rush by the Plymouth forwards, but Gloucester at once worked back. Dix, sneaking away from a scrum, cut through and passed to H. Smith, who, however, was floored when going well. Immediately after Gloucester forced a minor, the ball hitting the corner flag.

Following the drop out Beard put in a strong run, but succumbed to numbers when there looked a probable score.

A kick out brought relief to Plymouth, and then fumbling in turn by Hollands, Hall, and C. Smith allowed the Devonians to dribble to the other end. Welchman, too, was at fault close to the line, and there appeared just the chance that Plymouth would score.

A penalty against the visitors enabled the City to get out of danger, and further kicks brought the game to mid-field. There Plymouth were penalised again for off-side by Richards, and Welchman had a place kick. The shot fell short.

At the centre the Gloucester backs spread out, and there was a fine bout of passing. Cook, seeing Beard was being headed off, cut inside, but he was collared.

Plymouth, chiefly through Peters, gained relief, and eventually they reached the home 25. Richards, however, again offended, and Hall, taking the penalty, punted high. Conybeare failed to take, and the Gloucester forwards being well up, they had a glorious opening. In the loose kicking a man accidentally got off-side and a probable try was lost.

Plymouth made a little headway, but from a pass by H. Smith Cook brought off a dashing run, being collared from behind when looking all over a scorer.

Just afterwards Conybeare, in tackling Welchman, was injured, and had to retire.

Resuming, Sandford came out to three-quarter. Plymouth, from inside their own half, indulged in a passing bout, but a forward transfer checked the movement.

Gloucester immediately replied, and a lovely bit of passing between the Brothers Smith on the right saw "Whacker" burst through and over the line. The enthusiasm raised, however, turned to a groan of disappointment when it was ruled that the final pass was forward.

From the ensuing scrum Gloucester got the ball back, and Dix and the Brothers Smith handled, “Whacker” ran across, and with excellent judgment threw out wide to the left. Here Beard fielded, and with a dashing run beat Eathorne and scored the fourth try. Cook took the shot at goal, but failed.

Immediately after the restart, the end came with play in the Plymouth 25.

RESULT :

Gloucester 4 tries (12 points)
Plymouth 1 goal (5 points)

REMARKS

Gloucester’s victory must be considered the most brilliant achievement of the season. Handicapped as they were by the absence of so many of their best players, the City’s chances of putting a check to the victorious Devonians were regarded as small indeed, but there was a record to capture, and this seemed to inspire the home players with the old fighting spirit.

Whatever Plymouth’s form in previous matches, there could be no two opinions as to which was the superior side in this game. The visitors were a thoroughly beaten team in all departments, and the score in no way flattered the victors; indeed, Gloucester might easily have added a couple more tries in the second half.

The game was a particularly fast one, and contested with a keenness and vigour which made play very exciting. Gloucester went off with a rare bang, and the first try – beautifully worked out and completed – put confidence into the men.

There were occasions when over-eagerness lost both sides possible openings, but at the interval matters were fairly even.

Plymouth's try came as a surprise to the home players, but credit must be given Sandford for his smartness in seizing upon the opening. Peters' shot from the penalty appeared almost certain to cover the cross-bar, and this fact apparently put the Gloucester men off their guard as to the possibility of a try coming to the visitors.

With the wind in the second half Gloucester did not lose much time in regaining the lead. The whole team rose to the occasion in grand style, and apart from a few spasmodic bursts by the Devonians – in which they were greatly assisted by mistakes by home players – the City were veritably “all over” their opponents.

The lighter Gloucester pack controlled the scrums, and in the open they were almost irresistible at times. Three tries were scored by the City in this half, but these scores hardly did justice to the brilliant and repeated attacks of the Cherry and White Brigade.

As the game progressed and Gloucester improved their position the crowd became greatly excited, and there was a rare demonstration for the players when the game was over.

For to-day's notable triumph the whole of the Gloucester team can take credit. There was no failure, and the whole display was a great contrast to the exhibitions against Exeter and Leicester.

Forward – Plymouth's reputed strength – the home eight gave a wonderful show, and there is little doubt Frank Stout's presence had an inspiring effect.

It was like old times to see the International in the Gloucester colours, and it was a happy coincidence that he should signalise his re-appearance with the City by scoring a try.

Stout showed he has lost little of his dash and determination, and wherever the fight was thickest he was always to be found.

Hollands, Craddock, and Vears came frequently under notice for special efforts, but the whole eight were out for a big tussle and they more than realised expectations. The only slackness was in heeling, the ball now and again hanging too long in the back row of the scrum. This failure to heel smartly handicapped Dix in getting the ball away, especially with his opponent almost on top of him all the time.

Stephens' defection, owing to an injury to the thigh, necessitated the introduction of Hubert Smith at outside half, but the choice was a happy one. The old A team captain has a preference for this position, and he did some excellent work there to-day. He took all his passes well and [two or three words unreadable] varying his tactics by cutting through smartly.

Dix worked very hard, going down to the rushes in daring style, and making the best possible use of everything that came his way. He, however, was guilty of several infringements at the scrum – especially in putting the ball in – and thus caused his side to be penalised. Dix would be well advised to get rid of this failing, as it might easily lead to a match being lost.

As a pair, Dix and H. Smith were fully equal to Peters and Richards. The latter, as usual, played a fearfully off-side game; in this respect he beats any half seen at Kingsholm for a long time. Peters was at fault in giving his passes at times, but he did a lot of individual work, and kicked with nice judgment.

At three-quarter, the Plymouth players had an off day, and they were eclipsed by the home [2 or 3 words unreadable]. The City four displayed nice combination, and individually all shone at various points in the game. Hall was clever and resourceful, and played his best game since his inclusion to the premier ranks. The ex-soldier made a [word/words unreadable] beautiful runs, from which tries ought to have materialised, and he also kicked well.

“Whacker Smith wears splendidly, and the veteran [four/five column lines unreadable].

Welchman was very sound at full-back, but he got little in the way of tackling to do. Eathorne made a useful substitute for Hosking, and apart from an occasional mistake in fielding he was rarely at fault.

This was Plymouth's first defeat by an English club. Kingsholm thus continues the burial ground for cherished records.

JC