

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 1908

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTERS RALLY AT CARDIFF

A remarkable rally by Gloucester in the concluding stages of the game at Cardiff on Saturday enabled the City to emerge from the contest with only an eight points' defeat against them – a very creditable performance, all things considered. Though deprived of the services of their International wing three-quarters (Gibbs and Williams), Cardiff were in the happy position of being able to call on two excellent substitutes in Gwyn Nicholls and Idris Thomas.

The veteran International has played little serious football this season, but he always keeps fit in case of emergency, and on Saturday this popular Cardiff idol displayed form almost equal to his best. He had a hand in two or three of the tries scored, and his dropped goal with the left foot from the 25 yards line was a beautiful effort. Nicholls' defence, too, was of great service to his side, and his presence in the team undoubtedly had a good deal to do with the success of Cardiff.

Of Idris Thomas, who was only playing his second game for the premiers, it may be said the Welsh Metropolitans have secured a very valuable recruit. Fast, and possessing plenty of dash, he did all that was required of him, and neither Gibbs nor Williams could have scored better tries than he did on Saturday.

Cardiff were in an exceptionally lively mood in the first half. The ball was given plenty of air – both from the scrum and line-outs – and the attacks were so persistent that the City looked to be in for a heavy defeat. Fortunately the visitors' defence held up well, and the scoring was confined to three tries and a dropped goal. Gloucester had one or two openings, Frank Smith missing a glorious chance in the first few minutes.

A bad pass by Bush was taken advantage of by the Gloucesterian, who kicked through and had the line at his mercy. In trying to pick up, however, Smith knocked on, and the opportunity was lost. Cardiff scored again in the second half through Gabe – a magnificent try – but from this point the game underwent a change. Gloucester improved considerably, and a fine movement initiated by Hudson ought to have yielded a certain try, but the final transfer was ruled forward, with Berry running over under the posts. The City, however, kept pegging away, and some smart work by Gent led to Hudson crossing after a desperate burst for the corner.

Bush was injured in falling with Hudson, and later Gabe retired with a twisted knee. The former came back, but for the remainder of the game the advantage rested with Gloucester. The home forwards fell away, and the City finishing strongly, worried their opponents considerably. Gloucester missed a nice opening on the left wing, but a few minutes later Stephens opened out, and Hudson scored his second try with another splendid dash. Welshman kicked a lovely goal and put Gloucester eight points up.

There was just a chance of the City pulling the game round, and there was great excitement when Hollands just missed a try by the merest shave. To the end the City attacked, but no further success rewarded their efforts, and the final whistle came as a welcome relief to the Welshmen.

The Gloucester forwards were badly beaten for three-parts of the game, but they finished much stronger than the opposing pack. In the scrums the City men could not get a sight of the ball, and in the lines-out they were almost equally as badly off. Neill, Casey, Pugsley, and Powell were in great form for Cardiff, and they ran and passed like three-quarters at times.

For Gloucester, Vears set his men a good example in following up, and Berry, Johns, Holford, and Hollands were very prominent in the open.

At half-back, Randall Davies proved a clever scrum half, but Bush, though occasionally in evidence, was erratic, and gave out some bad passes. Gent, when he did get a chance, got through some effective work, and Hall did as well as could be expected.

At three-quarter Hudson showed his worth to the side, and it was a pity the City backs could not get the ball a little more. Stephens put in some good defensive work, and Cook and Frank Smith proved a serviceable left wing. The Cardiff third line was a strong and fast one. Nicholls and Idris Thomas have already been referred to, and Gabe and R. C. Thomas both sustained their reputations.

Winfield, at full-back, was hardly up to form, and on the day's play Welshman was his superior. The Gloucester custodian got in some beautiful touch kicks, especially in the second half, and his tackling was of the best.

WELSH PRESS COMMENTS

From the spectacular point of view (remarks "Forward" in the "Evening Express"), the game was disappointing, and the character of the play suggested that staleness which is part and parcel of the end of a season's strenuous campaign. Cardiff played well in the first half with the sun and a lusty breeze behind them, and put the issue beyond doubt by scoring thirteen points, but in the second half they fell off considerably, and allowed their defence to be beaten twice.

In no match this season have the Cardiff forwards shown greater skill in heeling out the ball, and, considering the number of opportunities given them, the home backs ought to have scored many more tries. They were unfortunate, however, in being crocked, Percy Bush being so badly damaged that he was of little service to his side in the second half, while Gabe had to retire twenty minutes before the end. These two misfortunes made a world of difference to the attacking powers of the blue and blacks, and were almost wholly accountable for the two tries scored by Hudson on the right wing.*

Hudson proved by his play that he is a player of International class, and on his form this season is undoubtedly the best wing three-quarter in England. Gwyn Nicholls made a welcome re-appearance in the team, and, though not quite so brilliant as he used to be in attack, his defence was as sound as ever, and his play, on the whole, confirmed the impression that his retirement from the game was premature.

The one striking success in the Cardiff back division was Idris Thomas, the recruit left wing, who proved himself a player of the right stamp by his determination in going for the line and scoring a couple of tries which would have done credit to Teddy Morgan at his best. Thomas is built on the right lines, and will make a real class player with proper coaching and experience.

The Gloucester forwards played their characteristic bustling game in the open, but were beaten badly in the scrums. There were occasions when they heeled out to Gent, but they were very rare, and the midget English International had a very indifferent partner at outside half. He took the ball with a safe enough pair of hands, but his passes to his three-quarters were wrongly timed and badly given, with the result that every passing movement attempted by the 'Cestrians broke down in its very inception. With the exception of Hudson and Gent the visiting backs were a very ordinary lot, and one missed the veteran "Whacker" Smith with his auburn locks and his fearless dash, in seizing every opportunity with a do or die determination.

[* "Forward" is in error here. Cardiff had a full team on the field when Hudson scored his first try, Bush being knocked out in trying to stop the International. – Football Editor.]

Cardiff were so overwhelmingly superior up to the time that Bush and Gabe were injured that it is only reasonable to suppose (says the "South Wales Daily News") that had those players escaped injury the defeat of the 'Cestrians would have been heavier than it was. Although Gibbs and Johnny Williams were absent from the three-quarter line, a "string" consisting of Gabe, Nicholls, Ralph Thomas, and Idris Thomas performed splendidly.

They were well served by Randell Davies and Bush, and most of the passing movements were worthy of Cardiff at their best. Gwyn Nicholls played up to his great reputation. In addition to dropping a brilliant goal he ran, passed, and kicked with his old-time skill, whilst his defence was as sound as ever.

Gabe was also in tip-top form, the try he gained being a real beauty. Ralph Thomas was, if anything, better than usual and did many smart bits of work individually, as well as combining with the other "threes."

But the surprise of the match was Idris Thomas, the Reserve wing three-quarter. The determined way in which he went for the line when he gained his two tries, refusing to be tackled unless absolutely held, and the pace he displayed were eye-openers to those who had not seen him perform previously. Evidently the recruit is of the right stamp for a wing three-quarter, and his display to-day was full of promise for the future.

The Cardiff scrummagers were far more skilful than the Gloucester eight up to the time of the injuries to the players mentioned, and gave their backs many opportunities to display fine passing movements. Individually, Casey, Pugsley, and Neill were brilliant, while the reserve, Pike, also did well. Winfield's kicking and saving play all through were of a high order.

On the Gloucester side the forwards were more vigorous than scientific. The outstanding players were Gent, Hudson, and Smith, each of whom did many smart things, whilst at full-back Welshman did extremely well.

For the most part the game was most interesting to watch, thanks chiefly to the fine display of the Cardiff backs, but the injuries to Bush and Gabe, and the consequent re-organisation of the back division, gave Gloucester an advantage in the latter stages of the game that they were extremely fortunate to secure.

Gloucester made a good impression with their dashing forwards and reliable backs (remarks the "Athletic News."). The forwards were beaten only in heeling, and the backs lacked only the capacity for rapid transferring of the ball, so necessary in present attacking methods. The stars of the side were Gent, Hudson, and Welshman, and of the last-named it need only be said that the International Wood will never be missed so long as he is available.

The weakness of the Cardiff side in the second half was due to the neglect of scrummaging of such showy forwards as Casey, Powell, and Northmore. Neill was easily the best forward on the field, while Pugsley closely followed him. Bush was not in his best humour, but the three-quarter backs were all good, as also was Winfield.

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