

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1909

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v. CHELTENHAM

COUNTY LEAGUE COMPETITION

A STRENUOUS CONTEST

CITY'S THIRD VICTORY OVER THE TOWN

Despite Cheltenham's lowly position in the league table the visit of Gloucester to the Recreation Ground proved a big attraction, and with lovely weather prevailing, the attendance proved the best of the season.

The teams had met twice previously – once in the League and the other a friendly – both games ending in favour of Gloucester – at Kingsholm by 16 points to 3, and at Cheltenham by 13 points to 8.

The City were again strong favourites for to-day's contest, though Cheltenham were expected to put up their usual good fight.

Gloucester. – C. Cook, back; F. Smith, W. Hall, F. Welshman, H. Smith, three-quarter backs; D. R. Gent, J. Stephens, half-backs; G. Vears (capt.), W. Johns, H. Berry, B. Parham, G. Griffiths, G. Holford, J. Wyburn, R. Craddock, forwards.

Cheltenham. – F. Hillenbrand, back; H. Cook, B. Davy, L. Hayward, H. Beck, three-quarter backs; F. Arthur, G. Bowen, half-backs; G. T. Unwin (capt.), W. N. Unwin, W. H. Williams, C. Bennett, W. D. Ward, T. Clarke, F. Hopkins, F. Fry, forwards.

Referee : Mr. W. Smith, Bridgwater.

THE GAME

Several hundred Gloucester enthusiasts accompanied the City team, and the Town supporters also turned up strongly. Amongst those present were Viscount Duncannon (the Conservative candidate for Cheltenham), Mr. J. T. Agg-Gardner (Mayor), Col. Rogers, Captain Peake, and others.

There were no changes in the advertised teams. The ground was in splendid condition, and everything was favourable with the exception of a strong wind, which blew across the field.

Cheltenham won the toss, and Vears kicked off for Gloucester. There was no response, and play opened in the Town half. From a line-out, G. T. Unwin secured, but he was robbed of possession and, Griffiths picking up, sent out a sharp pass to Stephens. Hall and F. Smith handled in turn, but the wing man was grassed outside the 25 line. A good rush by the City forwards looked promising, but Cheltenham eventually effectively checked them.

Gent and Stephens opened, but F. Smith slipped in trying to cut through. The Gloucesterian essayed a pass, but Davy intercepted and kicked to Cook, who returned to touch. Gloucester were penalised for off-side, but the kick availed little, and centre play followed.

A fine loose rush by the Gloucester front was pluckily stopped by Hayward, but the game was now well inside the Town half. Here Stephens got away cleverly, and passed to Welshman, but the latter missed badly. Hayward gathered and ran clear, but was nicely legged by Cook. Then a foolish kick by Bennett sent the ball over the Gloucester line, and Hall touched down.

On the drop-out Cheltenham were awarded a free, but a good return was effected. Gloucester worked out some twenty yards, but Fry responded with a strong run and pass to Hopkins. The latter's pass, however, was muddled, and Smith kicked through and passed Hillenbrand.

The Gloucester three-quarter raced after the ball, but was fouled, and the Town saved. Both sides were in turn penalised for infringements, the referee being very strict.

Cook was prominent with some good kicking, which gave Gloucester an advantage. Then a mistake by Hillenbrand let the City into their opponents' 25. Parham opened out from a line, and Stephens kicked across, but Hayward was there first and relieved splendidly.

Cheltenham, by vigorous forward play, worked to midfield, where Gent started the City backs going. The ball went right across to Hubert Smith, who re-passed to Welshman. The latter dashed through, and then handed to Griffiths, but the final transfer to Berry was ruled forward.

Gloucester, however, were soon on the attack again. Bowen, fumbling at the scrum, Stephens came along and gathered on the run. A neat pass to Welshman saw the centre break through to Hillenbrand, when a timely pass to Smith gave the latter a good try. C. Cook failed at goal.

Resuming, operations were contested in the Town half, but play was lacking in the finer points. Good work by Cheltenham in the loose gave them a footing in the visitors' half where some hot play was witnessed. In their own 25 the Gloucester backs started passing. Hubert Smith kicked to the right wing, where Hillenbrand only saved in the nick of time from Frank Smith.

In the next minute Arthur failed to take a wild pass from Bowen, and Gent dribbled cleverly to the Town custodian, who dropped on the ball. Johns came up and robbed Hillenbrand, and there was a fine opening. Something, however, went wrong at the critical moment.

For off-side by Fry, Gloucester were awarded a free kick in a favourable position, but Cooke's shot for goal went just wide of the upright.

Subsequent play was very scrambling, but in favour of Gloucester. Still the Town forwards were playing a strong bustling game, being especially good in the loose. Fry once dribbled through, but was called back for an infringement. A penalty to Gloucester brought the City to the centre, but they were quickly forced back.

Johns, with a strong burst, regained the ground, but Hayward, with a splendid effort, ran through the City defence and found touch close to the Gloucester line. Cheltenham struggled hard for a score, but C. Cook, with a smart dash, cleared in fine style.

From another kick Hillenbrand took a drop at goal, but failed, and F. Smith receiving, he ran out and punted to the centre. A free to Cheltenham saw Ward have a place at goal, but the ball fell short, and Welshman kicked out. Cheltenham pressed hotly to the interval, but failed to pierce the defence.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester 1 try
Cheltenham Nil

Ward re-started for Cheltenham. Cook replied with a beautiful touch-finder inside the Town half. Ward was conspicuous with some good work for Cheltenham, but in a kicking duel Cook had the better of his opponents.

There was little back play, but at length Gent and Stephens opened out. Welshman, however, bowled the ball along the ground to Hubert Smith, and it rolled into touch. Johns, with a fine individual effort, let Gloucester up, but Hillenbrand saved pluckily.

A smart movement by the Gloucester backs was stopped by a forward transfer. Then a free to Cheltenham enabled them to secure a more favourable position. The Town forwards next broke away, but Welshman picked up the ball from their feet and shaking off a couple of opponents, found touch a dozen yards from the home line – a fine effort.

Inside their 25 Cheltenham were penalised for off-side by Bowen, and Cook, with a lovely kick, landed a goal, giving Gloucester a six points' lead.

Cheltenham resumed, and by desperate forward work they had the better of play in the next five minutes. One or two desperate rushes were stalled off, but Gloucester were hotly pressed. Near the City line the visitors were penalised, and from an easy position G. T. Unwin easily landed a goal.

Vears resumed, and Gloucester at once visited their opponents' half. Wyburn and Berry made headway from a line out, and then Cheltenham conceded a minor from a kick over the line by Hubert Smith. Subsequent play was wholly confined to the forwards, but was of a scrambling nature.

Gloucester occasionally heeled, but the backs made little ground, the handling being very poor. By useful kicking Gloucester secured a favourable position in the Cheltenham 25. From a line-out Griffiths gathered beautifully, and running up to Hillenbrand passed to Berry, who romped over with a grand try. Cook converted with a beautiful kick.

Cheltenham resumed, Griffiths making a poor return. For some infringement Gloucester were penalised. No charge being allowed G. T. Unwin placed another goal.

Five points now only divided the teams, and the game was continued with renewed vigour. Griffiths was badly charged over by Hayward and laid out, but was able to resume. Berry, with a fine burst from a line out, was only stopped just in time. Then the Gloucester forwards handled smartly and a try appeared certain. Parham, however, stumbled and fell when within a couple of yards of the mark.

Gloucester lost another possible chance through Welshman failing to gather a pass, and then Cheltenham came away, Fry punting to Cook. The latter, however, got in a fine return.

The City now began to let the ball out, and a fine bout of passing looked certain for a try. Hall ran through beautifully to the full-back, but F. Smith missed the pass with an open goal.

Reckless play in the open spoiled another opening for the City, and immediately after Welshman fumbled a pass from Stephens, with Hubert Smith well placed. Gloucester had the better of the exchanges to the end, but failed to add to their score.

RESULT :

Gloucester 2 goals (1 p) 1 try (11 pts.)
Cheltenham 2 goals (p) (6 pts.)

REMARKS

Another strenuous and stoutly contested game, but at no point could it be termed a brilliant display of football. For the most part the forwards monopolised the play, and here the fight waged furiously. Cheltenham concentrated their efforts in this one department, and taking the game through the Town pack came out of a stiff struggle with honours.

In the scrums Gloucester could not gain any advantage, and it was only at rare intervals that the ball was heeled with any degree of smartness. In loose footwork, too, Cheltenham fully held their own, and it was only in open movements that Gloucester secured any advantage. The tackling was terrific at times, and players on both sides had some nasty tumbles.

Gloucester had the satisfaction of piercing Cheltenham's defence on two occasions without response, but the City's advantage in try-getting should not have stopped with two cross overs.

In the second half Gloucester had chances to double their score, but weakness in handling or failure to make the best of opportunities spoiled some lovely openings. Of the two penalty goals credited to Cheltenham much might be written, for the infringements for which the penalties were given were unknown to a large portion of the spectators.

It was two gift points for the Town, for both place-kicks were right in front of goal. This was the first time Mr. Jones had officiated in a club match in this district, but we are afraid the Gloucester crowd were by no means enamoured with his conduct of the game.

Coming to individual forward play, on the Gloucester side no player was more distinguished than Griffiths, who was frequently conspicuous for smart work. Berry and Johns were also greatly to the fore, and Wyburn showed up well in the lines out.

For Cheltenham, Ward – a well-built forward – was a tower of strength, and Williams, Clarke, Hopkins, and G. T. Unwin were a strong quartette in all phases of play.

Outside the scrum Gloucester did all the passing witnessed during the game. Gent and Stephens, though by no means well served, combined effectively, and had a big pull over Arthur and Bowen, though the latter played pluckily. He, however, displayed little in the way of opening out, and the few passes he sent out were badly judged.

The City three-quarters occasionally ran and passed prettily, but there were times when the movements broke down in aggravating fashion, chiefly owing to faulty handling. Welshman on the whole shaped creditably, and he showed splendid dash when he put Hubert Smith over with the first try. Welshman also kicked nicely at times, and did some good stopping.

Hall was clever when opportunity arose, and one lovely effort of his ought to have yielded a try for Frank Smith, but the centre passed behind his wing man. The two Smiths held their own with the opposition, but we should have liked to have seen them have the ball oftener.

Hayward stood out as the best of the Cheltenham line, but the work on the Town side was all individual, and nothing like a decent round of passing was attempted.

At full-back C. Cook gave an almost perfect display for Gloucester, and for him the match was a great success. He overshadowed Hillenbrand in every department, but the young Cheltonian must be credited with some plucky saves in the face of severe pressure.

Cheltenham were rather pleased in getting out of the contest with a five points' defeat, but for this performance the Town owed a lot to those two penalty goals.

JC