

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1909

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v. SWANSEA

MUD AND SLUSH AT KINGSHOLM

CITY DRAW WITH THE WELSHMEN

All doubt as to whether this important match would be played was soon settled early on Saturday morning, a rapid thaw being followed by heavy rain and sleet. The Gloucester Committee had arranged with a staff of men to clear the Kingsholm ground of the snow remaining, and work was found for over 50 of the unemployed for several hours.

The rain and snow which fell after the ground had been cleared rendered the playing space in a sloppy state, especially in front of the grandstand, and the conditions generally were most unfavourable.

These adverse circumstances naturally had an effect on the attendance, but it was something to bring the game off at all seeing the severe weather experienced during the week.

Rain fell incessantly for several hours before the advertised time of the kick-off, and this fact no doubt kept many intending spectators away.

There were two changes in the Gloucester team, Stephens (owing to the continued ill-health of his wife) and Wyburn standing down for Hubert Smith and Hollands. Toft was absent from the Swansea ranks, but otherwise the Welshmen were at full strength.

Mr. G. C. Rodway (Midlands), the official referee, failed to put in an appearance, and at the request of the Swansea team Mr. G. F. Dere (Gloucester) took charge of the game.

The teams were as follows : –

Gloucester. – C. Cook, back; F. Smith, W. Hall, T. Elliott, L. Vears, three-quarter backs; D. R. Gent, H. Smith, half-backs; G. Vears (capt.), W. Johns. H. Berry, B. Parham, G. Holford, G. Griffiths, S. Hayward, D. Hollands, forwards.

Swansea. – J. Bancroft,* back; B. Lewis, W. Trew,* (capt.), P. Hopkins,* P. Shefford, three-quarter backs; R. M. Owen,* R. Jones,* half-backs; D. J. Thomas,* G. Hayward,* L. Morgan,* H. Hunt, E. Morgan, D. Davies, Ben Davies, I. Williams, forwards.

* Internationals

THE GAME

Swansea won the toss, and Vears started for Gloucester, Bancroft putting in a return to touch inside his own half. Quite early in the game the players found the ground very treacherous, and to retain a proper foothold was a matter of difficulty.

Gloucester were penalised for off-side, and Bancroft kicking into the open Cook failed to find touch with the heavy ball, which was gathered by an opponent. There was a good opening, but a forward pass stopped the movement. Gloucester worked out of danger, and then a fine dribble by Hollands gave the Welshmen a lot of trouble.

Swansea kicked out, but the ball getting loose L. Vears picked up and dashed down the wing, being stopped by Bancroft. Gloucester rushed very close after this, and Bancroft was forced to kick out of play.

A scrum followed five yards from the goal line, and the City nearly scored. A loose rush by the Swansea front brought them to mid-field, where Parham effected a good save. From a line out Berry got in a fine burst, and putting the ball down the Gloucester forwards rushed away in fine style. Again Bancroft saved by kicking to touch luckily.

Working desperately the City carried play right to the line, where Holford picked up and tried his utmost to cross. The Gloucesterian was, however, held up.

Swansea brought relief by the aid of Bancroft, and then by loose kicking Cook was forced [one or two words unreadable] being brought down by three Swansea forwards.

Here Berry led the City forwards in a brilliant dribble, the ball being controlled marvellously on the heavy ground. Before the movement was checked the Swansea 25 was visited. The All Whites cleared from a dangerous situation, but the Gloucester forwards, who were playing a grand game, rushed back in fine style. Swansea experienced difficulty in warding off a severe attack, and once their lines narrowly escaped.

By the aid of a flying kick the Welshmen reached the centre, where Hall stopped a dangerous burst of the visiting forwards. Heeling by the Gloucester pack saw Gent feed H. Smith, who gave to Elliott, but the latter dropped the ball.

A minute later Gent beat Owen cleverly at the scrum, and cross-kicking Hollands fielded smartly. With a neat feint the forward beat several Swansea men, but when looking likely to make a good opening he lost the ball – hard lines.

Some loose play ended in L. Vears kicking right across the field, where F. Smith tackled Trew. The latter, however, managed to let the ball go, and Lewis dribbled to Cook, who kicked to touch at the centre.

Hot forward play followed, and then a penalty was given against Swansea for off-side. Cook's kick was mulled by a visitor, but Lewis managed to turn the ball to touch with a couple of Gloucester men close up. Play was wholly confined to the forwards, the backs finding it impossible to handle the greasy ball.

Swansea made an incursion into the home half, where Owen opened out. Lewis, however, was finely tackled by F. Smith, and losing the ball Hall came through with the ball at his feet. Jones, however, saved cleverly.

Some subsequent play in the mud caused great amusement to the spectators, but not so to the players, who were plastered from head to foot. Gloucester heeled, but Hopkins snapped up a pass and ran down, the home end being visited before he was checked. Hollands eventually saved well when the visitors looked dangerous. From a scrum five yards out Owen tried to get the ball away, but he was tackled by Gent and H. Smith, and the latter cleared to the 25 flag. Half-time was then called.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester Nil
Swansea Nil

Swansea resumed, and early on the Gloucester forwards were prominent with a big rush, which Bancroft stopped by turning the ball to touch. Loose forward play ended in the ball being kicked across to F. Smith who sent past Lewis and to Bancroft. The latter, however, gathered the ball beautifully, and got in a capital kick.

By good all-round forward play Gloucester worked down again, and Lewis and Bancroft in turn had their kicks charged down. There appeared a splendid chance of a score, but at the critical moment Trew took a flying kick and sent the ball out of play. From the ensuing scrum Gent opened out, and H. Smith and Elliott in turn handled. The soldier made a strong effort to cross, but succumbed to numbers. The ball got loose and was taken over the line, several men falling on it. There was a loud shout, indicating Gloucester had scored, but only a minor was given.

Cook replied to the drop-out well, and later Elliott brought off another strong burst, which gave Swansea trouble. The ball next went across to the left, where Gloucester were pulled up for an infringement. Gloucester continued to have the better of the game, and Swansea were pressed in their 25.

The Welshmen tried passing, but it broke down, and L. Vears was just a second too late in fielding a flying kick by a visitor with an open goal. Swansea, with a good forward burst, came out of danger, and mid-field was the scene of operations.

There was a spell of play in the mud, ending in Owen kicking to touch at the Gloucester 25. The Welshmen tried hard to break through, but their passing broke down, and Elliott, taking advantage, kicked down the field. The ball was returned to the City 25, where Cook let the ball go through his legs. It looked all over a score, but Hollands got back and touched down.

Following the drop-out Gloucester paid a visit to the Swansea quarter, but a long dribble by Hopkins completely changed the venue, and the City were closely pressed. Owen tried to work the blind side of the scrum in conjunction with Shefford, but the latter missed the pass. Off-side by Swansea on two occasions saved the Gloucester lines. To the end Swansea had rather the better of the exchanges, but no score was effected.

RESULT :

Gloucester	Nil
Swansea	Nil

REMARKS

The game (!) calls for little comment. The result was the best termination that could have been obtained, for on such a ground it was impossible to play accurate football. The City team, nevertheless, are to be congratulated in doing so well.

The forwards especially revelled in the conditions, and for three-parts of the time they held the whip hand of their opponents. Several scoring chances came Gloucester's way in each half, and it was a bit of luck that enabled Bancroft to stave off disaster on two occasions.

Of the City front Berry stood out conspicuously – he was about the best forward on the field. The ex-soldier put in two or three telling dribbles, one effort especially being very fine. Johns, too, was in rare form, and Hollands and Vears came under notice. Ivor Morgan, Hunt, and Hayward were most prominent for Swansea.

The respective back divisions had an unthankful office, and any mistakes made were easily excusable. The Gloucester men did exceptionally well, all things considered, and for Swansea Trew and Hopkins were the pick. Bancroft and Cook both gave good displays.

JC