

# THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1912

## FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v SWANSEA

CITY'S SPLENDID FIGHT

Gloucester gave Swansea a splendid game on Saturday, and on the play the City team did not deserve to lose by a margin of six points. Territorially, Gloucester had quite, if not more, of the play than Swansea, and just a shade of luck might easily have given the visitors their first victory at St. Helens.

The All Whites held an eight points' lead at the interval, but the score flattered the Welshmen. Their first try was certainly a brilliant score, but the referee missed an infringement in the movement which led up to Hayward scoring behind the posts. However, Gloucester were not demoralised by these reverses; on the contrary, they took charge of the game completely for twenty minutes in the second half.

The Swansea forwards could not hold the City men, and led by Johns the visitors made repeated assaults. Reward came in Hayes scoring between the posts for L. Hamblin to convert, and the City were only three points in arrears.

For the next ten minutes it was all Gloucester, and Swansea had some narrow escapes. Willie Hall missed dropping a goal by inches, the wind taking the ball just outside the upright; whilst several strong attacks failed for lack of finish.

Twice Dix worked the short side of the scrum, and passed to Staunton, but the ball went a little too wide for the wing man to accept.

Gloucester, however, maintained their advantage until a terrific storm of rain swept the field right in the faces of the City players. The visitors battled heroically against the elements, but they finally had to yield their position, and another opportunity of getting on terms did not come their way.

In the closing stages Swansea, helped by the wind and rain at their backs, pressed, and a mistake by Cook sent the ball over his line. The ball appeared to hang over touch-in-goal, and the Gloucester linesman (Mr. W. Rasbach) asserted Holbrook, in scooping for the ball, actually put his foot on the line in-goal. He, however, grounded the ball inside, and the Swansea captain claimed a try. The referee was thirty or forty yards away, and one would have thought, under the circumstances, he would have accepted the linesman's ruling, but he over-ruled Mr. Rasbach (though the latter pointed out a mark on the line made by Holbrook) and gave a try. Thus Swansea had an additional three points to their winning margin by the aid of a very fluky and at the same time doubtful score. Apart from this incident the game, though desperately keen, was a pleasant one, and played in the best spirit possible.

The feature of the game was the fine play of the Gloucester forwards. They have never done better in Wales, and the Swansea crowd were loud in their praise of the City men's performance. The All Whites heeled cleaner, but this was the only department in which they displayed superiority. In the loose the visitors were splendid, the men getting away in a body and dribbling in fine style.

The line-out work, too, was very effective, and the tackling close and sure. Standing out prominently in all phases of play was Johns, who reproduced his very best form. Hayes, Holford, and Smart, perhaps, came most under notice of the others, but all played well.

Dix and Hall were up against the Welsh International pair at half-back; but the Gloucester players gave little away. It was a keen contest at the scrum, and if Owen beat Dix occasionally, the latter in turn got the better of the Swansea captain. Hall played very soundly, screw-kicking with great judgment.

Trew led up to Swansea's first try with a beautiful effort, but otherwise he was not over-prominent. Neither set of three-quarters did much. The Gloucester threes did not make much headway when they did get the ball, and Washbourne scarcely got a pass all through the game. Holbrook was Swansea's most successful three-quarter, but there were occasions when the old Bristol player did too much running across the field. At full back Cook worthily sustained his reputation, being very safe in fielding and gathering. There was every excuse for that fatal mis-kick at the end, for the ball was very treacherous and the wind was a further handicap.

The team were comfortably "housed" at the Royal Hotel, Swansea, for the week-end, and there was every prospect of a pleasant holiday. Vears and Holford had to return home Saturday night, and Johns had a telegram to proceed to Falmouth; so three changes forward had to be made for the match with Neath to-day.

#### WELSH COMMENTS

In some notes on the game, "Pendragon" ("Daily Leader," Swansea) remarks : – There were periods when it looked very much as though Swansea were going to be beaten. The most of the time[*sic*] Gloucester held a distinct advantage in the scrummage, and also in the rushes. But, speaking generally, their back play was poor. They had more opportunities of opening out the game than did Swansea. But while Dix and Hall worked well enough together, the three-quarters handled too mechanically to hope for success, their passing usually going straight across the field instead of onwards.

Save for one mistake, which gave Swansea a try, Cook, the Gloucester full back, was always reliable. It was unfortunate for his side that he should have mis-kicked, and by so doing have enabled Holbrook to place the issue beyond doubt. In spite of the protest which the Gloucester touch judge made, there is no reason for doubting the legality of the score. The turf was soft, and the referee satisfied himself from the footmarks that the Swansea wing had not infringed the touch-line.

It has already been shown that the Gloucester forwards were the best part of the team. The veteran English international, Johns, is still a power, judging by the inspiration which he lent to the rushes.

It was a game remarkable for the number of penalties which were given. The referee watched for legs-up in the scrummage, and did not hesitate about penalising when penalties were called for. There must have been close on twenty free-kicks given in the course of the game.

The heavy rain during the last quarter of an hour handicapped Gloucester more than it did Swansea, because they had it in their faces. Still, it was bad enough for both.

Quite the outstanding feature of Gloucester's visit to St. Helen's was the surprising manner in which their forwards completely out-classed the home forwards in the matter of gaining possession of the oval. Scarcely once in ten did the All Whites pack heel, and there was absolutely no excuse for the remarkably poor exhibition, for the forwards were thoroughly well represented.

The 'Cestrian eight, led splendidly by Johns, besides doing so excellently in the tight, dribbled in irresistible fashion, and if their backs had been equal to appreciating a chance when proffered, Swansea would have had cause to mourn another defeat. Owing entirely to the superiority behind, the All Whites got home by three tries, gained chiefly through opportunism. – "Western Mail" (Cardiff).

It was a game of very mediocre quality. It at first looked like being a pretty affair, but when Swansea got the lead they rested on it. On the other hand, Gloucester showed great determination throughout, but they lacked speed, polish, and understanding behind, with the result that it was left to their pack to do most of the attacking.

It was a game of very peculiar mood, and in the later stages a torrential and continual downpour of rain killed all interest in the game, making it a question of finishing the game as soon as possible.

Of the Gloucester men, Vears, Holford, and Hayes were the most outstanding, and their halves, Dix and Hall, whilst not the equal of the Swansea pair, did much to try and get the three-quarters going in concerted manner. – "South Wales Daily News" (Cardiff).

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