

THE CITIZEN

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1901

FOOTBALL NOTES

GLOUCESTER v. NORTHAMPTON

The result of Gloucester's first out match must be considered satisfactory, though we are afraid there were some amongst the City Club's supporters who anticipated a more decisive victory.

Three times over the line against Northampton, and on the latter's ground, however, represents no easy accomplishment, and certainly Gloucester had to work desperately hard for their points on Saturday.

Up to half-time, the City team, though leading by a try to nil, had had none the best of the game, in fact, they were called upon to do considerably more defending than the East Midlanders.

Northampton again did splendidly on the re-start, but after about five minutes' play Gloucester began to "feel their feet" as it were. The home team, too, began to show signs of collapse, and Gloucester improving wonderfully forward, the City backs were afforded the opportunities they had been waiting for.

Twice in quick succession the Northampton defence was pierced – both movements which led up to the score were beautiful bits of work – but they were extremely lucky to get off so lightly.

Spiers crossed after some exceedingly smart play, but he was had back for some infringement – a forward transfer apparently, though it must have been a very close thing; whilst Watkins lost a fine chance through holding too long. "Whacker" Smith also had one or two dashes for the line, which were only stopped a few yards outside.

In the last five minutes Northampton made strenuous efforts to effect a score, but their attack only served to bring out the superb defence of Romans and Co., who are to be congratulated on emerging from such a tight game with a clean sheet. Northampton expect to do well at home this season, and we shall be surprised if any club accomplishes a better performance than Gloucester did on Saturday. Last year, Swansea only won at Northampton by 1 goal 1 try to nil, and Devon Albion by 2 tries to 1 goal !

Saturday's game served to show that the runaway victories which Gloucester experienced in the two opening fixtures did the men no good, especially the forwards. Until the second half was well in progress, the City eight were well beaten. Occasionally they showed up with some dashing work in the loose, but in the tight scrums they did badly. There was no system in packing, with the result that little heeling could be done; whilst the men were several times pushed off the ball. Now with a pack whose average weight (tested at Birmingham on Saturday) is over 12 stone, this ought not to be, and it was clear some players were not doing their fair share. It is a difficult matter, where no palpable winging is done, to detect shirkers, but there are means of finding them out.

The City forwards picked up a lot half-way through the second portion, and gave us a glimpse of their true form. They heeled out and screwed the scrums in capital style, and exhibited a dash which was altogether lacking in the first half. The improvement made all the difference in the character of the game, which was now relieved with brilliant bits of back play, which called forth the applause of the spectators. Had the Gloucester forwards started as well, the score against Northampton would probably have been more than doubled.

Of the Gloucester front rank, C. Hall (and not Miller, as stated in Saturday's remarks owing to a telegraphic error) did some fine saving, whilst of his colleagues, Miller, Oswell, and Click came under special notice. The latter put in a lot of sound, honest work, and it cannot be said of him that he shirks the scrimmage in order to gain prominence in the open.

During this week the City forwards might well indulge in a little practice in touch-line work. They were very uncertain in taking the ball on Saturday, and frequently allowed their opponents to make ground.

The Gloucester back division were not seen to such advantage as in the previous games this season, simply because they did not get the work to do. However, sufficient was seen of them to show that, as a combination, they were far in advance of their opponents.

At half-back Goddard and G. Hall completely outplayed H. Kingston and West, and the Northampton captain was one of the first to admit it.

A better example of the complete understanding existing between the Gloucester half-backs could not have been given than when Goddard scored. It was a clever, yet simple move, but one that has never yet failed to come off.

The Gloucester third line was fully up to standard, and this is saying a lot. It was rarely they failed to make ground when once set properly in motion. Cook's try was the outcome of his characteristic feint and cut inside, and was a beauty.

Smith made several strong dashes, and kept a sharp look-out on W. Kingston, and Stephens and Clutterbuck did all that they were asked satisfactorily.

Romans was not seen at his best in the first half, but toward the end of the game he did some remarkably good things, and quite sustained his reputation.

Leigh helped his side wonderfully with his splendidly-judged kicks, but he was fortunate perhaps in always having plenty of time to get in his return. When pressed he was not seen to such advantage, and his defence was not particularly strong, judging by the easy way he was beaten by Goddard and Cook.

Northampton played a strong forward game – rather above their form – and if the backs had supported their efforts, the result might have been different. Their halves had a crude idea of passing out, whilst the three-quarters kicked at every conceivable opportunity.

Simmonds is not the player he was by a long way, and on Saturday he was inferior to L. Atterbury, who played with plenty of dash.

W. Kingston made one decent run, but he spoiled the effort by a wild pass, which went yards into touch. Patrick kicked well, but he did not exert himself seriously.

The "*Northampton Chronicle*" says : – 'The game, which was hotly contested from start to finish, was in certain respects disappointing, there being an almost entire absence of that brilliant combined back play which has won each side a deservedly high reputation.

'Northampton were distinctly unlucky to be beaten by nine points to nil, as they had nearly all the game in the first half. Even the Gloucester supporters admitted that the referee made a mistake in not allowing the claim of forward for the pass from which Cook scored Gloucester's opening try. This adverse decision could not but have had a somewhat dis-spiriting effect on the Saints, who, however, continued to play a determined game to the finish, and were never going stronger than in the last five minutes.

'The forwards were well matched, and both sets worked hard. C. Hall, the International, Miller (for whom the start was delayed, he having been carried by mistake to the County Ground), and Click were the pick of the Gloucester men.

'At half, Northampton had much the better of the exchanges in the first half, and H. E. Kingston got in some very clever touch kicks. West rendered him fine support. In the second half, however, G. Hall and Goddard got in some pretty work, the latter scoring smartly.

'The Gloucester three-quarters showed the better combination, and the scoring honours went to the right wing, J. Cook and C. Smith, who were wonderfully alert.

'The finest display of the day was undoubtedly that of Leigh at full back for Northampton. He played a champion game throughout the first and for nearly the whole of the second half. Romans, who had suffered by comparison with Leigh in the earlier stages, did some capital work towards the finish, one of his saves being very fine.'

JC