

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER 30, 1901

FOOTBALL

SOUTH-WESTERN GROUP

SOMERSET v. GLOUCESTERSHIRE

On Saturday last Somerset and Gloucestershire tried conclusions at Weston-super-Mare, the game being witnessed by nearly 5,000 spectators. The Somerset team were drawn from close upon a dozen clubs; but, on the opposing side, Gloucester City supplied twelve of the players, the remaining three being from Bristol. Fine weather favoured the match, and the turf was in good order.

Gloucestershire started the game, and Gamlin returned with a short kick to touch, but immediately the Somerset forwards went ahead with a rush, and they had the better of two or three scrums.

The match largely resolved itself into a trial of strength between the two packs of forwards, and Somerset asserted superiority in the tight scrums, but their opponents did a shade better in the loose.

Each side in turn attacked, and then play ruled tolerably even, until faulty passing between Stephens and Cook led to the Gloucestershire lines being invaded. G. Hall brought relief, and raced to midfield before he was overhauled by Gamlin.

Then a good pass was given Goddard by C. Smith, but he handled the ball badly, and when it got loose, Forrest got well down the ground, and Gloucestershire got hard pressed. Scrums were contested on the twenty-five line, and eventually a pass back was given Peters, but he missed it badly, and Somerset lost position.

The second half was for a quarter of an hour or so much like the earlier play. There were rushes and counter rushes, but behind the scrum, play was not up to a high standard, and comparatively little passing was indulged in. C. Smith was the only three-quarter on the Gloucestershire side who did anything noteworthy, and Gamlin and Forrest were the pick of the Somerset three-quarters.

The last-named pair got away together from midfield and travelled as far as their opponents quarter-line before their career was checked; and there Gamlin was conceded a free kick from an offside infringement. The shot he made at goal was inoperative, because of a premature charge by Gloucestershire; a second aim was similarly over-ruled, but with the third, Winters landed a penalty goal.

Gloucestershire responded with a brilliant rally, the whole team doing well, and, with forward rushes, the Somerset defence was sorely tested. Twice the home team got out of difficulties, but just on the call of time Sweet and Courtney got over from a scrum on the line, and the last-named scored a try. Romans failed with the goal-kick, taken from a difficult angle.

Final : – Somerset, one penalty goal (3 points); Gloucestershire, one try (3 points).

The Gloucestershire players were : – G. Romans (Gloucester) (back); C. Smith, J. Cook, Lewis Smith, and Stephens (three-quarters); G. Hall and R. Goddard (Gloucester) (half-backs); C. Hall (capt.), C. E. Miller, J. Lewis, A. H. Click, and J. Westbury (Gloucester), J. L. Matthias, J. Sweet, and M. Courtney (Bristol) (forwards).

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

The play was of the usual keen character, Somerset keeping up their reputation for those dangerous rushes which in the past have proved so disastrous to Gloucestershire.

Everyone thought, says the "Bristol Times and Mirror," the encounter would be a trial of the respective merits of a dashing forward game and clever three-quarter play on the Welsh method. The Somerset men were expected to be the exponents of the former system, while the other side were to show how the passing game was the scoring one. On the afternoon's play the Somerset method came out best, and had not the Gloucester pack followed their opponents example, defeat would have been administered to the visitors.

It cannot be said that opportunities were not offered for the passing game. In the tight scrums the men heeled out splendidly to Hall and Goddard, who, with a pair of weak halves, had no difficulty in getting the ball to their three-quarters. Only on one occasion did the leather really get to the wing, and then Lewis Smith, after beating Sturt, muddled in trying to kick past Bell. That was early in the game, and a score then would have altered matters. After that, all the three-quarters were dropping their passes, especially the centres.

We have already alluded to the failure of the Gloucestershire three-quarters in attack, though in their favour it should be said they all tackled keenly, and Cook in the last minute showed one of his tricky runs, beating man after man with his swerve.

"Whacker" Smith especially knocked on his passes, and Stephens also was at fault in this respect. On the wing Lewis Smith was uneven, doing well at times, and at others failing badly. Goddard was the better of the halves, Hall being several times penalised for infringements.

Probably the best forward on the field was C. Hall, the old International. He was well-supported by Matthias, Lewis, Westbury, Sweet, and Courtney, and in the last minute the three latter went over the line together, and Courtney scored. The kick of Romans was a very good effort, as it was from a difficult angle. One point which told in favour of the visiting pack was their better condition, as was shown in the concluding stages of the game.

The "Bristol Daily Press" says : – "Hall and Goddard were given innumerable chances of opening out under the best of conditions, but if the half-back play was not at fault, the three-quarters bungled, and from first to last there was only one round of passing that was above second-rate club-form."

Gloucestershire have appealed to the Rugby Committee against Somerset's penalty goal on the point of law, and the question will be decided by the Committee on the morning of the North v. South match at Manchester on December 14.

JC