

THE CITIZEN

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1902

FOOTBALL

GLOUCESTER v. CARDIFF

Gloucester's performance at Cardiff on Wednesday, in running the famous Welsh Metropolitans to a goal, stands out as one of the best achievements of the City team this season. So splendidly did Gloucester acquit themselves in the first half that it was recognised that the Cardiff ground record was in danger of being broken, but the home team managed to avert this disaster.

The try was scored by "Wax" Williams and converted by Winfield, but the point was not altogether satisfactory to the visitors. Gloucester also allege that Collett was deprived of a try in the first half owing to a mistake by the referee. On the day's play Gloucester were certainly unlucky to lose; their efforts at least deserved a drawn game.

The "South Wales Daily News," in some comments on the game, says : —

Cardiff had an extremely anxious 80 minutes on the Park yesterday afternoon. Indeed, all through the first half it seemed almost a certainty that the ground record would be smudged. The home forwards at this stage were badly worsted, and the visitors' backs, a very sound set of players, were given frequent opportunities.

In the second moiety, however, the Welsh Metropolitan forwards pulled themselves together, and the first five minutes after the re-start saw Gloucester's defences being tested severely. The home backs were now given several chances, and bearing in mind the stubbornness of the defence they made good use of them on the whole.

Then when the end was within sight the Cardiff quartette attacked brilliantly, and thanks to clever head-work by Biggs and "Wax" Williams the Gloucester defence was pierced amid loud cheers. Gloucester played pluckily after this, but the Welsh Metropolitans kept them well in check, and won on merit one of the most keenly contested matches of the season.

"Cardiff supporters had to wait an uncomfortably long time for their opportunity to shout (remarks 'Forward' in the 'Western Mail'), and there were but few on the ground who had not made up their minds that the game was going to end in a pointless draw.

It was the first time for me to see the citizens perform this season, and I don't know that a better compliment can be paid them than by saying that they gave the Welsh champions one of the hardest games of the season, and one of the most exciting. If they had scored in the first half they would have had only what they deserved, for up to the interval they held a distinct advantage in playing a more solid and robust game than Cardiff.

What they lacked was the ability to seize their opportunity at the psychological moment, and in this branch of football art they learn a valuable lesson from the manner in which Cardiff's only try was scored. It was a brilliant piece of combined play on the part of 'Wax' Williams and Cecil Biggs, the latter showing rare judgment in punting high across the field when he had Romans to negotiate, and by so doing giving 'Wax' Williams, who was backing him up, the chance he so effectively utilised. As a reward for their persistence, and their dogged attack in the second half, Cardiff truly deserved that try and the victory which it gave them.

There were innumerable mistakes made by the backs, especially in fielding the ball and taking their passes, and on a few occasions it was the nearest thing in the world that the citizens did not profit by these errors. Still, the last link in the defence proved to be the strongest. Someone seemed to turn up from somewhere to do the needful, and in this fact we have a big part of the explanation why Gloucester failed to score, coupled, of course, with their lack of cleverness and finesse."

"While Gloucester brought down their ultra-best team, Cardiff had to battle it out without such capable players as D. L. Bowen – whose place as leader of the pack is seldom adequately filled – A. F. Harding, and J. Brown, and those who know this triumvirate will not accuse me of belittling their substitutes when I say that they were missed.

We had a grand exhibition of full-back play by Winfield and Romans, whose magnificent kicking was one of the bright features of the play. Strand Jones witnessed the game as a spectator, and it would have been worth while speculating a penny for his thoughts in regard to the display of the two custodians.

The Gloucester forwards played their customary hard, gruelling game, and Goddard and Hall proved themselves rather better than Carde and Wyndham Jones. W. Jones and Collett were the most conspicuous of the three-quarters. Among the Cardiff forwards Kirby was always the most prominent, and there is not the least doubt that he is a valuable acquisition to the Cardiff pack.

The game was fast and exciting all through, and only marred by the waste of time caused by the forwards having their legs-up continually in the scrum and preventing the ball being thrown in and scrimmaged properly. I shall be glad to see the old rule of penalising a side for 'legs up' being reverted to."

JC