

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE

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DID YOU
KNOW?DECIDING POLITICAL DIFFERENCES
ON THE RUGBY PITCH

WITH a general election looming, it may be timely to recall a rugby match played in the early days of the Gloucester club between the adherents of the two main political parties of the day.

Towards the end of the 1885-86 season, a match was played at the Spa (this being before the acquisition of Kingsholm) on a Saturday afternoon between Conservative and Liberal members of the Gloucester Club. The game drew a large crowd and partisan support was vociferous throughout.

Indeed the Gloucester Chronicle reported, "...the excitement being such as is seldom witnessed at the Spa; the betting at the commencement of hostilities was in favour of the Conservatives to the extent of 6 to 2."

Hubert Boughton led the "Blues" and T. G. Smith the "Yellows." The Chronicle continued:

"At about twenty minutes to four o'clock Smith kicked off from the Beaufort end, the "ballot" ball falling into the hands of Dere, who returned it to the centre of the field, where some slight scrimmaging took place." The Liberals had a try disallowed, but "still hung" round the polling-booth of their opponents, where H. V. Jones got the ball and passed to Coates, who made a splendid run in and scored a try, and Jones, taking the place-kick, placed a goal. Starr, following up, crawled into the polling-booth and recorded a second vote in favour



Boughton & Smith

of the Liberals; the shot for goal was a failure."

"These reverses fairly aroused the spirits of the Tories, and for a time they played up with great determination, but they did not exhibit the same amount of dash and combination as their Radical friends. When the whistle sounded for the close of the poll the Liberals had a majority of one goal and three tries to one try."

The match was played for charity and a cheque for £18 11s 10d was handed over to the Mayor. He decided that the funds of the poor-box were rather low at 26s, so disposed of £5 there. He gave another £5 to the Charity Organisation Society, and the balance to the Soup Kitchen.

FIRST SUNDAY MATCH
The first Gloucester match

played at Kingsholm on a Sunday was against arch-rivals Bristol, on 3rd February 1974. Gloucester won 7-3 with Stuart Dix scoring the only try. The game was reported in The Times under the headline "10,000 watch first Sunday match".

WHEN REPLACEMENTS WERE A NOVEL INNOVATION

The match programme for Gloucester v St. Luke's College on 13th November 1974 informed the Kingsholm faithful that:

"Under the new law regarding replacements both sides this evening will have players standing - or, rather, sitting by, to take the place of any colleagues who may be genuinely injured. It should be emphasised that the extension of this law applies only



to county championship matches and the Rugby Union knock-out competition games - from the first round only. Further, only two replacements are permitted for either side; moreover, a player may be replaced only when, in the opinion of a medical practitioner, he is so injured that he should not continue playing in the match. It may sound a little autocratic, but it ensures there is none of this soccer nonsense whereby a manager can send on a substitute at any time because he doesn't like the way a player is performing."

HOW TO START A SEASON

On 15th September 1900, Gloucester started the season with a home win against Clifton by 66-0, with George Clutterbuck scoring 6 tries, a record number of tries in one match for Gloucester: he was supported by "Whacker" Smith scoring 2 tries, and "Jummer" Stephens (grandfather of current club president Eric Stephens) one, out of a total try count of 16.

In the return match at Clifton on 9th February 1901, Gloucester triumphed by 64-3, with Clutterbuck collecting a further 3 tries; this was matched by J Lewis out of a total try count of 14.

Clutterbuck's record did not last long. The following season, Clifton again travelled to Kingsholm for the first match on 21st September 1901. This time they were humbled 74-0, a score which beat all previous Gloucester records, as did the individual try scoring feat of "Whacker" Smith with 8 out of a total of 18 tries. Clutterbuck played in this match, but the fickle finger of fate failed to



Clutterbuck



Romans

give him a single try.

In the return match on January 11th 1902, Gloucester prevailed by

a paltry 20-3, scoring 6 tries; the glut was over. George Romans did the kicking in all 4 matches, and helped himself to 31 conversions.

WHO GETS MEAT FOR TEA?

The provision of hearty food both for the players and the spectators seems to be a recurring theme over the years. In 1929, cartoonist "TEEK" was amused by the change which came over Gloucester fans at the start of the rugby season.

The Club also had a commitment to provide teas for the players, and at the start of the 1947/48 season a Mr. Outridge made an offer to cater each Saturday during the season. His charge would be £7/10/- for 55 persons for a Meat Tea, and £5 for a Plain Tea with cakes and sandwiches. The committee decided to accept the offer of £5 teas, and only on exceptional occasions, at the discretion of the committee, to give the £7/10/- meal.

Apparently Cardiff was regarded as an exceptional case, since the Meat Tea was first offered after the match with them on 11th October 1947. It must have gone down well, because Leicester were also awarded a "full meat tea" three weeks later. By 15th November, the full tea was also to be provided after United matches.

By December the teas were so popular that the tea room was becoming overcrowded, and players who came in late went short – and close supervision was introduced on persons entering without tickets.

