

THE CITIZEN

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FROM "W.B.'s" NOTEBOOK

GLOUCESTER 3 Pts., CHELTENHAM 8 Pts.

Cheltenham's triumph at Kingsholm last week was one of the Town's best performances against Gloucester. Here was a team completely dominated in the scrums, kept on the defensive for long stretches, yet proved themselves capable of snapping up the only scoring chances that came their way and winning the game. A side that can accomplish this deserves reward, and I give Cheltenham full credit for their achievement.

The Town apparently recognised they would be beaten forward, and the astute George Davies laid his plans accordingly. Fry, when the occasion demanded – and this was pretty frequently – was brought out as an extra three-quarter, and despite the repeated attacks of the City in the first half the Cheltenham line was unbroken at the interval.

Gloucester's weakness at three-quarter in this half was even more pronounced than against Taylors, impossible as that might have appeared. Meadows again did everything humanly possible to make openings, but behind him the tactics employed would not (to use an expression I overheard) have "beaten a blind school team."

Gloucester missed a great opportunity of being well ahead at half-time instead of being three points down. Cheltenham gave us a striking example of how to make the best use of a scoring chance. In their first breakaway for half an hour by the aid of a high punt, the City defence was caught unprepared; a quick pick-up, a few smart exchanges and Thomas was over the line for a capital try. The goal kick failed, but Cheltenham had gained a lead which they never surrendered.

Gloucester, if only the backs had shown a semblance of the form expected, might easily have wiped off the arrears in the second half, but movements which promised well failed to materialise, and before the City had opened their account through Abbey, Cheltenham scored again. It originated from a Gloucester attack. Fry, always keen on a possible chance, snapped up a pass which Price intended for Meadows. The County forward was well in his stride and carried on from the 25 line to the centre, where Boughton was waiting. Taylor (the centre) had come up at full pace, and accepting Fry's perfect transfer had a 60 yards' run with a clear field. James, and later Spackman raced the Cheltenham player, but could make no impression and Taylor finished a fine run by scoring behind the posts. Two chances; two tries! That was how Cheltenham won. Congratulations to the opportunists.

The game provided the usual excitement attendant on what is termed a "local Derby," but at no point was the standard of play very high. I should like to have seen the Cheltenham backs behind the Gloucester forwards. There was no outstanding player in the visitors' ranks compared with Gwynne Davies, but the few occasions George Davies started passing movements the Town three-quarters showed a far better idea of combination and correct handling than the home men.

The whole line tackled with great effect, and they received effective assistance from Fry. At scrum half, Goodwin and Price were fairly well matched, though the former has not got rid of his habit of getting off side. Several penalties against him gave Boughton chances of shots for goal, but the Gloucester custodian was out of form, his best effort being the longest kick, taken from six yards inside his own half.

All Meadows' clever work as pivot for Gloucester was wasted; for Cheltenham, G. Davies displayed generalship and judgment in tactics, and to him the Town owed a great deal for their success.

The Gloucester forwards had another strenuous afternoon, and accomplished fine all-round work. The backs wanted the ball; well, Carpenter and his colleagues saw to it that their wish was gratified to the full. And the result? There is no need to repeat what occurred.

The Cheltenham pack, if outpointed, did well in the close exchanges, even when Fry was withdrawn from the scrum to help the defence. The players, as a whole, struck me as being more than a useful eight, capable of fully extending many first-class clubs.

Gloucester were best represented at three-quarter by Abbey and Spackman, and the City's one try came as the result of a nice bit of combination by the pair. At this point Abbey was playing centre, having changed places with James. The captain had another poor game, and Voyce never came under notice. Boughton could claim no advantage over Walter in any department. That little incident between the two players five minutes before the end was unfortunate.

Cheltenham have now gone two seasons without a defeat from Gloucester, and the Town are naturally proud of the record. In the last twelve fixtures Gloucester can claim six wins to four, the other two games being drawn. Here are the individual results : –

1925-6.

At Cheltenham : Gloucester won 19-5.

At Gloucester : Cheltenham won 7-6.

1926-7.

At Cheltenham : Cheltenham won 14-3.

At Gloucester : Gloucester won 10-5.

1927-8.

At Cheltenham : Gloucester won 3-0.

At Gloucester : Gloucester won 20-0.

1928-9.

At Cheltenham : Gloucester won 9-0.

At Gloucester : Gloucester won 9-3.

1929-30.

At Gloucester : Drawn 3-3.

At Cheltenham : Cheltenham won 3-0.

1930-1.

At Cheltenham : Drawn 0-0.

At Gloucester : Cheltenham won 8-3.

CHELTENHAM UTD. v. GLOUCESTER UTD.

Gloucester United's decisive victory over Cheltenham United, at Cheltenham, was some slight compensation for the downfall of the City Seniors at Kingsholm. The Gloucester Reserves were too good all round for the opposition, and won easily by 17 points to nil.

After a very moderate start Gloucester United have shown great improvement, though the frequent changes in the side have naturally affected the combination. One or two of the recruits have shown promise, but Gloucester are badly in need of the ready-made player to bring the premier team up to standard.

JC