

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 1933

GLO'STER'S NOTABLE WIN AT NEWPORT

SUCCESS AFTER 50 YEARS

SKILL AND TEAM WORK BEAT THE WELSHMEN

FROM W.B.'s NOTEBOOK

Gloucester made history last week when they defeated Newport at Newport for the first time in 50 years! It was a notable occasion and emphasised the City's performances away from home as compared with last season, when the only victory recorded was at Stroud.

In addition to Newport, wins have been secured this season over Stroud, Moseley, Northampton and Cheltenham; honours shared with Oxford University and Lydney; and three games lost by narrow margins – Leicester (3–6), Bath (0–3), and Llanelly (0–4).

This is a very fine record, and the team fully deserve all the congratulations showered on them on their latest achievement. Newport were beaten by 10 points to 6, but Gloucester's superiority was more pronounced than the scoring suggests. In actual play – skill, combination and team work – there was no comparison between the sides.

The actual date of Gloucester's last victory at Newport was January 6, 1883. This was the City Club's invincible year, but the number of matches played was only 14.

In the first match Newport played a draw at the Spa, and for the return fixture "each club got together its very best team, either being equally determined to add another to its long unbroken list of victories." (I am quoting from a report of the game in the "Gloucester Journal").

EIGHT INTERNATIONALS

Newport included no less than eight of the team chosen to represent Wales against Scotland, but Gloucester had their bona-fide town team, the same that had played in all the matches and had so well exemplified the great advantage of playing constantly together.

By arrangement the sides had agreed to play 16 a-side "but at half-time it was found Newport had unfortunately only 15 men, so that by their own fault they played one man less than their opponents."

The clubs were evidently not governed by such strict regulations as enforced by the Rugby Union to-day.

LIQUID MUD

The Newport ground at that period had a bad reputation for the report states that "from the kick-off the ball fell with a dull thud into the six or eight inches of wholesome (?) liquid mud which covered the ground in lieu of the mossy turf upon which football is supposed to be played."

Despite the conditions, however, the play was of the finest description. Gloucester scored tries through George Coates and H. J. Boughton, one of which was converted by H. V. Jones, and Newport were beaten at home for the second season in succession, for the previous year Gloucester had triumphed by 1 goal 2 tries to 1 goal.

But the City Club has had to wait half a century before recording their next triumph !

GLOUCESTER'S EARLY PROWESS

It is interesting to recall this memorable match of 50 years ago as indicating Gloucester's prowess in the rugby world of those days.

I saw the majority of the City players under J. F. Brown's captaincy engaged at the Spa, and they formed a brilliant combination. Gloucester, at that period, played seven men behind the scrum, as to-day, but the formation was slightly different – three three-quarters and three half-backs instead of the four-two as at present.

The Newport side beaten in 1883 included some famous players who gained International distinction – A. J. Gould, R. Gould, G. F. Harding, W. F. Evans, C. H. Newman, T. Harding, H. S. Lyne, T. J. S. Clapp and F. Purdon. Arthur Gould figured in 27 matches for Wales, and is still regarded by some as the greatest centre three-quarter of all time.

FOR REFERENCE

For the benefit of those of my readers who are keen on keeping records for reference, I append the names of the two victorious Gloucester teams of 1883 and 1933 respectively : –

JAN. 6, 1883

Gloucester 1 goal 1 try;

Newport nil

Gloucester : H. J. Berry; G. Coates, H. E. Taylor and H. J. Boughton; H. V. Jones, W. A. Boughton and J. F. Brown (capt.); G. J. Dewey, P. B. Cooke, W. Brown, H. B. Sloman, H. Moffatt, W. Brimmell, J. W. Bayley, W. H. Fream, and T. G. Smith.

JAN. 14, 1933

Gloucester 2 goals (10 points);

Newport 2 tries (6 points)

Gloucester : D. M. Parker; W. V. Sheppard, F. Edwards, J. C. Brooks and R. Hook; C. Fifield and Don Meadows; F. Wadley (capt.), A. D. Carpenter, R. Comley, R. Morris, Ken Smith, P. Hordern, F. Ford, and T. Hiam.

SATURDAY'S GAME

And now for a few reflections on Saturday's game. Without unduly flattering the City team, I rank the display at Newport one of the best exhibitions of football a Gloucester side has given on Welsh soil for many years. The Newport club is having a worrying time, and the team is only a shadow of former combinations; but this should not detract from the merit of Gloucester's performance.

Occasionally I have seen the City rise to the occasion – they have done so at Cardiff – but it was the delightful way the players opened up the play, and the varied tactics employed that so impressed me on Saturday. All the clever combined movements witnessed in this game came from Gloucester, and forwards, as well as backs, joined in the attacks. The keenness, backing up, and positioning, were excellent, and interspersed with the concerted efforts were some thrilling solo runs. The Newport backs were beaten again and again in midfield, and but for the splendid tackling of Everson, the score against the Welshmen would have been doubled.

EXCELLENT TEAM WORK

Gloucester's team work was a distinct feature, and the skill and judgment of individuals excelled anything accomplished in any previous match this season. In the latter respect, Brooks and Meadows stood out prominently, the former being particularly elusive. It was a fine break through by Brooks that led up to the first try, and he scored the second himself, following one of the prettiest bits of inter-passing seen during the afternoon.

Meadows had a hand in this movement, and all through he played brainy football. Brooks also showed up strongly in defence, and all-round he had a splendid match. Reports sent to the London papers from Newport mixed up Brooks and Edwards, and the young recruit, in consequence, obtained an exceptionally good Press. Edwards, none the less, shaped creditably in his first serious test in Wales, and the experience gained should help him appreciably.

HOOK'S BEST

The Gloucester wings – Sheppard and Hook – performed admirably, and were far more efficient in every respect than their opposites. Both ran with determination, and only Everson's deadly marking stopped them from scoring on two occasions.

Hook played his best game for the seniors. He was on his toes all the time, tackled well, and did some of the longest punting seen in the match. His goal-kicking, too, came in useful. On this form, Hook is worth his place in the side at any time, but with Tanner and McKay available at right wing, he will have to wait for his opportunities.

FIFIELD'S ENTERPRISE

Newport had to make a late change at scrum-half, but E. J. Parfitt proved no match for Fifield, who was on top throughout. Fifield was assiduous in his service of the ball to Meadows, and tried a few reverse passes which came off and deceived the opposition. He also went through on his own occasionally, and with a bit of luck Gloucester might have added a try or two. This was a new Fifield, and the enterprise and initiative displayed reacted to the benefit of the side.

NEWPORT'S WEAKNESS

Newport had no backs of distinction outside Everson, who saved his side repeatedly. The centres marked badly and disclosed little ability in attack; while the wings were very moderate. Watkins was a newcomer at outside half, but he had few opportunities owing to the poor service he received.

Ralph's injury has completely upset the Newport back division, and it was the weakest I have ever seen representing the club. Forward, the Welshmen were dangerous in the loose, but it was of the kick and rush order, and little skill was exhibited.

HORDERN'S RETURN

The Gloucester eight, on the other hand, were splendidly together, and gave a dashing display. Hordern's return made a vast difference, and the showing all round was greatly in advance of the previous week. In the scrums the City held a big advantage, and the ball came back readily to Fifield. In footwork the visitors showed better ball control, and there was a gratifying improvement in out-of-touch play. I would not care to individualise.

Congratulations, however, are due to Fred Wadley on having the distinction of leading the team to victory and achieving the ambition which had escaped his predecessors in office for so many years.

Derek Parker, at full-back for Gloucester, had a comparatively easy time, for he was only occasionally under pressure. As a result he did not come into the picture as often as Everson, but he was never at fault, and served his side creditably.

MEMORIES RECALLED

I have received the following interesting letter from Mr. Harry Bennett, Cheltenham : –

Dear Old Friend, –

I cannot write "W.B.," because we were friends long years before you adopted your pen-name, and it is a pleasure – to me at any rate – to know that that friendship has existed down to the present time.

The fact that the Gloucester team on Saturday last, after an interval of 50 years (50 years and one week to be exact) defeated Newport afforded me the greatest satisfaction, for although for over 38 years circumstances have partially separated me from my native city and the old Football club, yet I always rejoice at Gloucester's victories over *all* opponents, except one, Cheltenham, with whose varying fortunes I have so long been identified.

What memories the mention of Gloucester's victory over the Usksiders 50 years ago recalls! Last week's performance at once sent me searching among my old Gloucester records, and I enclose for your inspection my member's card for season 1882-3. You will see it is fully marked up with the unbeaten record, both for City and County, and I do not expect there are many such cards in existence.

"FAMOUS VICTORY"

I was not a witness of that famous victory on January 6, 1883, but I well remember the occasion and the enthusiasm it created. Dear old Harry Taylor, whom I met at Leominster some little time back, and "Georgie" Coates, two of our three-quarters, often referred to the game, and were rather proud of the fact that the Newport spectators were so incensed at Gloucester daring to go there and win that they threatened to throw some of the City players over the bridge into the river, and that they actually had to run for it to escape this terrible fate!

LOCAL PLAYERS

Gloucester were just at that period profiting from those interesting games between the XV. and the Twenty Colts of the City, which were then annual, and which even to-day would probably do the old club good by unearthing fine talent.

H. V. Jones (Hornets), G. Coates (Red Cross), H. E. Taylor (Rangers), Ben Sloman (Rangers), Harry Fream (Hornets) were all products of the local clubs, and well do I remember the hard-fought games which I (and your brother Charlie) had against each of them when we were bold Artillerymen.

Tom Bagwell and "Cocker" Jackson came on the scene soon afterwards, and I only mention these names to show what great players the City found among the locals.

A. J. GOULD'S BRILLIANCE

Newport's full-back in the great match was A. J. Gould, a mere boy then, who subsequently became the "Prince of Wales," and certainly the finest centre three-quarter I have ever seen. His speed was electric, his side-step bewildering, his handling perfect, and his drop-kicking such as one rarely sees nowadays. Curiously enough, I believe it was at Kingsholm that this brilliant player closed his career with the famous "Mustard and Blacking" team.

BRAVO, GLOUCESTER !

Of course, the great majority of the Gloucester players of that day have departed to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns," but those who are still with us and read of last Saturday's great deed must have felt the blood in their old veins tingle, as it did in mine.

Bravo, Gloucester! And again Bravo!! And so, dear "W.B." – no, dear friend – my heartiest greetings to you and all the City boys, with whom I have spent so many happy days.

P.S. – If the Gloucester Club have not a card of their only unbeaten season, I shall be happy in presenting them with mine, so that it may be framed and hung in the Committee Room.

BOUGHTON'S VALUE

"R.C." writes : Without Boughton, Gloucester United would most certainly have lost their record on Saturday. It was his kicking that won the game. Both his penalty goals were well-judged kicks, and he was unlucky in failing to secure a third. Not only his penalty goals, but his safe hands and sure tackle were the mainstay of the United when things looked dangerous. Then again, when his side were attacking, he was still in the picture, and on one occasion ran on the wing with Boyce, to throw in a reverse pass, which the latter did not accept.

DISAPPOINTING THREE-QUARTERS

The Gloucester three-quarter line was disappointing. For once in a while they came up against a side who knew the first principle of defence. Newport were up to meet their men very quickly when Gloucester heeled, in fact, in the closing stages they spoiled themselves by getting off-side. The home threes, however, did not seem to understand that the only way to meet the Newport defence was to pass quickly. Instead of this, the centres tried to break through on their own, and more often than not were brought down in possession.

It was not as if they had no chances. A chance was thrown away in the first few minutes, when Orpin missed a pass. Boyce, who came in for Hook, played a good game, and got in one or two useful runs. Gloucester had enough of the play to have scored three or four tries, but it was not until the last few minutes that the Newport line was crossed – by Etheridge, wide out on the left.

ANOTHER VOYCE

With the exception of Boughton, the best man behind the Gloucester scrum was Voyce. He worked like a trojan throughout, and it was not his fault that his side did not score more than one try. The forwards were at their best in the tight scrums, and heeled pretty consistently, against a sturdier and heavier looking pack. Several times the Newport forwards became dangerous in the loose and it was left to Boughton to stop them. Welshman was always well in the front of the loose rushes, and Dash, Clift and Etheridge did useful work in the loose.