

From the Citizen, Saturday 2nd February 1889

GLOUCESTERSHIRE V MAORIS (NEW ZEALAND)

This match, the event par excellence of the football season at Gloucester, came off before an immense concourse of spectators, the weather being bitterly cold. Special permission had been obtained from the Corporation of the City to enclose the ground for the occasion, and accordingly the match was shut off from the view of outsiders by canvas, and the thousands who usually obtain a good view of the Gloucester matches "on the cheap", either had to pay for the entertainment in common with the more practical supporters of the club, or put up with the only alternative of missing one of the most interesting and important matches of the season, as well as the novelty of seeing a team of New Zealanders, who have gained the reputation which has been attained by the Maoris, give an exposition of the game. The mass of people who lined the ropes included a great many who had come in from the country as well as a large number from Cheltenham, Stroud and the neighbouring towns, while the grand stand would not contain all the ladies who graced the ground by their presence. Indeed, such a muster has probably not been seen in the Spa before, and it will probably be some time before such a one is seen again.

Perhaps a short summary of the performances of the Maori team will not be out of place, and will be read with interest. After a fortnight's practice and training, the team commenced their tour in a highly successful manner. Their first match against Surrey was won, and then having polished off Northampton, they continued their success by defeating an exceptionally strong team of Kent, and this ranks amongst the most creditable of their victories. Their form in that match stamped them as first-class exponents of the Rugby game, and filled the crack English clubs with consternation, but when a few days later their flying colours were lowered by the Moseley club, though the win was a decidedly lucky one, yet their reputation received a hard blow, which was rendered doubly severe, when the next match, against Burton, resulted in a very similar manner. At this period the general British football began to look upon the visitors, from whom some great things had been expected – anticipations which had been naturally strengthened by their opening performances – with a tinge of disappointment, but this has been dispelled by the consistent, and gradually improving form, which they have exhibited since, and now, having beaten many of our first-class teams, and played good stubbornly contested games with others, they have justly earned the right to be looked upon as a first-class combination, and to be placed upon a level with our great British clubs; while it has been a source of great satisfaction and pleasure to lovers of the game here, to know that our winter pastime has so spread in our colonies, that New Zealand can furnish a combination who can compete with a good measure of success with some of our best fifteens. Up to this afternoon's match the visitors had won 31, lost 13, and drawn four encounters, making a total of 48 matches played. Their principal victories have been against Ireland (International), Surrey, Kent, Somerset, and Devon Counties, Yorkshire 'A' team, North of Ireland, Midland Counties, Westmoreland County, Cumberland County, and most of the crack Northern and Welsh clubs; while they have sustained defeat at the hands of Wales (International), Yorkshire, Middlesex, Lancashire, Bradford, Cardiff, Llanelly, Swinton, Wakefield Trinity, Hull, and Castleford, besides the two teams already mentioned; and the matches drawn were with Northumberland, Trinity College, Dublin, Batley and Stockport.

When the team first arrived in this country, they relied principally upon their dribbling tactics and the strength of their forwards for success, but constantly coming into contact with, and experiencing the effectiveness of the passing game, they have adopted it, and their backs have succeeded in working themselves into a high state of efficiency at this branch of the game, and the brilliancy of their passing now equals that of their dribbling and forward play. The managers of the team endeavoured to cancel their matches in this part of the country, on the ground that they did not anticipate sufficient gate money to defray their expenses, but the local authorities refused to allow them to break off the engagements, and we think their misgivings in this direction were somewhat premature, for under the improved circumstances there was every prospect of a "gate" the like of which has not previously been heard of in Gloucester. It is curious to note that both Somerset and Devon have been "sat upon" by the Maoris during the last week or two, on each occasion the visitors crossing their opponents' line nine times. Although 25 players left New Zealand, accidents have somewhat restricted their choice of a team just now, as eight of their men are on the sick list, knocked up with various injuries received in the football field; but the fifteen chosen to do battle against Gloucestershire (some coming from Manchester for the match), were all good men and true. The general impression before the match was that it was a good thing for the visitors, who admitted the belief that the Gloucester City team would give them a better game than the county. As the result of a match on the Spa on Thursday, the turf was very much cut up, and though it could scarcely be considered in bad condition, yet, where the grass has been worn off, it was somewhat holding and sticky. The following are the teams selected: Maoris – W Warbrick, back; McCausland, W Wynyard, and F Warbrick, three-quarter backs; Keogh, Gage, and Smiler, half-backs; Ellison, Taiaroa, G Wynyard, G Williams, Rene, Maynard, Anderson, and H Lee, forwards. Gloucestershire – A F Hughes, back; T Bagwell, G W Coates, C E Brown, and R Grist, three-quarter backs; S A Ball and W George, half-backs; James Faulkner, H C Baker, E Leonard, R Edwards, H V Page, G J Witcomb, T Collins, and R C Jenkins, forwards.

A trophy on the pavilion, bearing the New Zealand Standard, and a string of flags at the entrance gate, amongst which was the National Flag of New Zealand, were provided by Mr Conway Jones free of charge. The ground was kept by a number of committee men, and a special force of police.

At 3:10 the Gloucestershire team took the field, closely followed by the dusky visitors, a ringing cheer greeting the appearance of the teams. Ellison set the ball rolling from the Beaufort end, Brown returning with a punt to the half-way, where the ball was sent into touch. Hughes returned a kick by a visitor, and F Warbrick ran over the touch line, the play still remaining at the centre, until Page removed to near the visitors' 25 by a dribble. The darkies started a round of passing but Keogh spoilt the effect by passing forward, and Ball and George gained some further ground by some quick play. The visitors were allowed a "free" for an infringement on the part of the home forwards, but Gage's kick was splendidly returned into touch half-way between the centre and 25 flag. Ball got a free kick at this position and the county had a narrow escape of scoring under the posts. The ball was, however, worked away by a mighty effort by the Maoris, and Gage securing possession passed to Keogh, who gave to W Wynyard, the last named kicking into touch near the home team's 25 flag. A free kick by Gage being well followed up by Williams, the Maoris got dangerously

near the Gloucester goal, but bad passing lost the advantage thus gained, and the ball was sent into touch. Keogh got possession from a line out near the 25 flag, but was safely held by George. The same player again getting the ball, scored after a beautiful dodging run, but McCausland failed to convert from a tolerably easy angle. After the kick out Smiler gained some ground by a couple of short runs, McCausland kicked into the Gloucester 25, where Smiler again got off but passed and Hughes taking the ball, ran through his men in fine style, and relieved his line by kicking into touch outside the 25, where the home team were allowed a free kick, George's drop kick being well returned. By some grand combined play forward the Maoris carried the ball well into the home quarters again, where Baker caused some amusement by one of his Herculean struggles, and Ball relieved with a punt into touch. Page intercepted a Maori pass, and after running a short distance passed to Ball, who got clear, but the ball was ordered back, and the game continued near the home 25, until Coates kicked well into touch near the half-way. The visitors now treated the spectators to a brilliant round of passing, some seven or eight of the team handling the ball in turn, which was followed by some kicking amongst the backs of each side, and left matters pretty much as they were. By a series of loose rushes the Maoris again pressed the home team severely, Smiler nearly getting in. A scrum was formed under the goal posts, from which the ball was worked away to the centre. A big punt by Warbrick being well followed up by Bagwell's return was prevented, and the scene of action was once more transferred to the Gloucester 25. Gloucester relieved to the 25 flag, but the visitors were awarded a "free" for hand-ball by a home man just outside the 25, but the drop at goal did not come off, and some passes amongst the home backs returned to the centre, where Collins Kicked to Warbrick, whose kick was returned over the line by Hughes, a minor resulting. After the kick out George passed to Coates, who ran and passed to Brown, the last named kicking into touch inside the Maori 25, where the battle raged fast and furious, till the Maoris, by a loose rush, followed by some passing, relieved to the centre, where a home man kicked into touch, but a free kick by the Maoris gained further ground, another incursion being made into the home territory. The county forwards rushed away and kicked to the centre, but Warbrick returned by a serviceable kick, and Brown missing the ball Williams picked up, and was grandly collared by Coates. Gloucestershire wheeling a "scrum" in fine style brought the ball away to mid-field, Ball assisting the onward movement by a judicious punt into touch. The Maoris returned to the centre, where the ball was when half-time was called, the visitors then leading with a try to a minor point.

Baker restarted, and Warbrick replied with a big kick into touch well past the half-way. Scrummages were fought out stubbornly near the centre line, and Gage kicked into touch at the 25. Keogh received a pass from Gage and with one of his feints at passing got off and running strongly and at a tremendous pace seemed certain to score, but was just hauled down on the line by Hughes and Brown. He was, however, rewarded for his effort for immediately after he got the ball again and crossed the line, scoring a try, which McCausland converted into the major point with a magnificent kick. Baker kicked off from the centre with a huge kick, which was well returned by Warbrick to the centre, and the visitors, aided by some good play by Taiaroa, got once more into the home end, where Coates got a "free", but his punt into touch did not gain much ground. Shortly afterwards McCausland took a drop at goal from outside the 25 flag, and the ball only fell short by a few yards. After the kick out the home backs dribbled down the ground, Coates and Bagwell being prominent,

and spoiling a return by Warbrick gained an advantage, which was, however, only temporary, as the ball was soon brought back to its old place. Ellison received the ball outside the 25, and ran to near the line when he was grandly tackled by Hughes, but passed. The ball, was however, kept out, and Coates, by a good run, relieved the immediate pressure, and carried the leather nearly to the half-way. Wynyard took a kick at goal, but Hughes pluckily brought the ball out, and Witcomb made a strong run down the ground. Breaking right away from one or two men who tried to stop him he got clear, and then passed to Ball, who was immediately brought to earth near the visitors' 25. The game having been returned to the centre, Ball got a "free" and Baker took a place kick at goal, but, though he put in a good kick the goal proved a little too far off. Ball picked up from a scrum, and passed out to Coates, who ran well and passed to Grist, who took the ball, and putting on top pace, dodged several opponents and got over in the corner, scoring after a maul in goal. This was the first opportunity he had had, and he was loudly cheered. Baker made a creditable shot at goal. After the kick out, Hughes was conspicuous for some good saving work, but the ball was carried into the home quarters. Baker got a free kick, but nothing was gained by it, and the visitors' forwards, by means of a combined dribble took the ball over the line, Hughes saving by touching down. The visitors continued to press for some minutes, their packing being all that could be desired, while Keogh supplemented their efforts by short bursts. Baker got away from a "scrum" and picking up the ball passed to Coates who transferred to Witcomb, he in turn handing the leather to Brown, who kicked onward, but the last pass was a forward one and the ball was ordered back accordingly. The play remained a few yards outside the home 25, until Baker got away again, but the ball was kicked back to the place where he started from. By means of a free kick Grist was instrumental in gaining some ground, and shortly afterwards the visitors' end was invaded by some sterling forward work. They were, however, equal to the occasion, and replying vigorously to this attack returned to the Gloucester 25. Williams crossed the line, but the ball was brought back on a successfully raised plea of off-side. McCausland having kicked a dead ball, the referee's whistle sounded, denoting "no-side", and leaving the Maoris the winners by one goal, one try, and two minors, to one try and one minor.

The money taken at the gate amounted to £193 odd.

The Gloucester Club contributed all of the backs - A F Hughes, T Bagwell, G W Coates, C E Brown, R Grist, S A Ball and W George – and half of the pack – H V Page, G J Witcomb, T Collins and R C Jenkins – to the County side.

Although not attributed, this match report was probably written by Bill Bailey (known as "WB", who became the Citizen's rugby correspondent in 1883.