

From The Citizen, Saturday 14th March 1931:

TO-DAY'S GREAT CONTEST AT KINGSHOLM

MAKE IT SEVEN!

GLO'STERSHIRE'S BATTLE CRY

FOR CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

By "W B"

"Make it Seven." That was Gloucestershire's battle cry to-day for their great struggle with Warwickshire for the County Championship of 1931. Yorkshire alone can claim more triumphs in the competition than the Westerners, and with six victories to their credit since 1910 Gloucestershire were close on the heels of their Northern rivals. To-day is the fourth final contested at Kingsholm: of the previous contests two were won (Yorkshire and Leicestershire, both by handsome margins), and one lost (Co Durham). Interesting particulars concerning these earlier struggles – and several of the games furnished brilliant exhibitions of the handling game – will be found in another page of the Football "Citizen" and there is no need to go further into detail.

Glorious Victories

In after-war Rugby, Gloucestershire have more or less dominated the County Championship, and those three glorious victories of 1920, 1921 and 1922 had no equal since the nineties, when Yorkshire carried off honours five years in succession. Warwickshire reached the final this season for the first time in the county's history, and it was fully recognised the Midlanders were worthy challengers. The visitors had given proof of their fighting strength against strong opposition, and their notable victory over Lancashire (last year's finalists), in the semi-final at Coventry encouraged great hope that the side had a real chance of victory at Kingsholm. But there was full confidence in the Gloucestershire team, if only the players would pull out their best.

Advantage of Combination

Warwick with eleven Coventry players in the ranks, had the advantage of club combination, but Gloucestershire were not inexperienced in this direction, for ten of the side carried the County to victory last season.

Forward the contest was expected to furnish one of the keenest struggles in recent years, and supremacy here would go a long way to settle the issue.

Gloucestershire were strengthened by the return of J S Tucker, Joe Davies, and R N Williams to the pack, and followers of the home county looked to more liveliness from the forwards than was shown against Hampshire.

Danger for Gloucestershire

Behind the scrum there was scoring ability on both sides if attacks were allowed to develop. The duel at half-back promised to be interesting, especially if W Thomas could successfully collaborate with his partner.

Gascoigne and Lole are recognised amongst the best club pairs in the country, and it was here Gloucestershire could expect danger.

The home three-quarters would sadly disappoint if they failed to hold the opposition in any department, and Boughton (selected as reserve for England) had a fine chance of adding to his reputation in a match which was regarded as little short of International class.

What of the prospects? Gloucestershire held an advantage in playing at Kingsholm, and with the team keyed up to the great occasion, and an equal share of any luck that was going, the odds were slightly in favour of the home county by a small margin.

Tremendous Interest in the Game

With the majority of local and district fixtures cancelled, and interest in the game scattered over a wide area, the accommodation of the City Club's enclosure was expected to be tested as never before.

Kingsholm has been greatly improved since the visits of the All Blacks, and when over 14,000 spectators crowded into the ground when Newport lost their unbeaten record to Gloucester in a memorable match.

This attendance was likely to be exceeded this afternoon, with the big influx from the West and the Midlands. Several special excursions were run from Coventry and intermediate stations, and these brought some 7,000 enthusiasts.

As many came by road from a wide area, and Gloucester and district contributed thousands to swell the attendance. The stand and reserved accommodation inside the rails was over-applied for, and in regard to gate receipts a new record was almost certain to be established.

After a gloriously fine morning the weather turned dull towards one o'clock and there were rain showers later, but nothing serious. The playing pitch, which had received a good deal of attention, was in perfect condition; indeed the ground never looked better – a tribute to the work put in by the staff under the direction of Mr Arthur Hudson.

THE TEAMS

Rivals at Full Strength

During the week rumours persisted in up till this morning, were current that Tucker, Burland and Carter would not be available for Gloucestershire, but the reports proved unfounded, and the home team, as well as the chosen of Warwick, turned out as selected. Tom Coulson had been down with the "flu" during the week, but had sufficiently recovered to lead the visitors.

Gloucestershire

Back: H Boughton (Gloucester)

Three-quarters: K Dowling (Bristol), M A McCanlis (Gloucester), D Burland (Bristol), and C A Osborne (Cheltenham)

Half-backs: C Carter (Bristol) and W Thomas (Lydney)

Forwards: J S Tucker (capt) (Bristol). F Wadley, A Carpenter (Gloucester), R N Williams (St Bart's Hospital), P G Lambert (Bristol), L E Saxby (Gloucester), K Salmon (Cross Keys), and J Davies (Gloucester)

Warwick

Back: H J Davies (Rugby)

Three-quarters: S H Bonham, G Harriman, T P Mayo (Coventry), and H E W Smith (Rugby)

Half-backs: W E Lole and A Gascoigne (Coventry)

Forwards: T Coulson, F Ford, A J Rowley, R S Roberts, H Wheatley, A Walker (Coventry), P E Dunkley (Harlequins), and N C Marr (Rugby)

Referee: Mr H Holmes (Durham)

Half an hour before the kick-off the enclosure was well filled, but crowds were still entering the ground, and appeals to the spectators to pack in close were willingly responded to.

From The Citizen, Monday 16th March 1931:

GLO' STERSHIRE'S SEVENTH CHAMPIONSHIP

HOME COUNTY LUCKY TO WIN

Gloucestershire won the County Championship for the seventh time on Saturday, when they defeated Warwick at Kingsholm by 2 goals (10 points) to 1 goal (p) 2 tries (9 points). McCanlis and Saxby (Gloucester) scored the tries for the Champions, and Boughton (Gloucester) converted. The attendance was 17,000 which is easily a record for the ground.

Warwick Shows Better Football

Gloucestershire were outplayed for nearly three parts of the game, and were rather lucky winners. The Warwickshire forwards commanded the ball for a long period in the scrums, and the backs, especially in the first half, displayed brilliant combination, speed and resource. The visitors were two tries up at the interval, and seemed to have the game well in hand. Gloucestershire, however, made a splendid recovery, and the two tries scored were well worked out. The concluding stages were fiercely contested, but the home county's defence, always a feature held out, and Warwick's only points in the second half came from a penalty goal.

The Gloucestershire forwards played keen football, but they were beaten for the most part by a more dashing and clever set. Gascoigne and Lole were seen to great advantage at half-back, and they connected splendidly with the three-quarter line. Carter and McCanlis did best for Gloucestershire. The rival full-backs – Boughton and H Davies – both accomplished a lot of good work.

President's Distinction

Mr J H Tratt, the veteran President of the County Union, has celebrated his two years of office with successive wins in the Championship, and thus equals the record of Mr J Millburn (Bristol), who was President when Gloucestershire secured honours in 1921 and 1922.

PRESS COMMENTS

A Great Scrum Half

I am not sure that Gloucestershire were not lucky to win. Warwickshire were certainly as good as their opponents, and only the luck of the game gave victory to the home county. I liked the nippiness and dash of the losers, especially in the first half when they got their two tries, and even after that, when Gloucestershire took up the running, Warwickshire stuck to their opponents splendidly.

A Gascoigne, their scrum half was magnificent, and on this form there can be few scrum half-backs in the country better than the Coventry player. R S Roberts, the hooker, was another who did well, and in the first half in particular beat Sam Tucker repeatedly for the ball. S H Bonham and P E Dunkley were two others I liked in this capital side. Gloucestershire deserve great credit for their excellent recovery but their forwards were disappointing. Behind the scrum C B Carter was good, though I have seen him do better, even with as few chances. The best outside, I thought, was M A McCanlis, who was practically responsible for both his side's tries. H Boughton was steady in all he did. It was a delightful game to watch, and was played in the best spirit. – D R Gent "Sunday Times".

Gloucestershire Not The Better Team

Gloucestershire won the title for the seventh time, but they were not the better team. Warwickshire were quicker to think and act, had their opponents floundering in the first half, and made them look slow and clumsy. The Western side improved in the second half, however, and lasting the longer, more than saved the game.

Warwickshire's tight work was delightful. Their forwards, well together, pressed the solid-looking Gloucestershire pack. Roberts, the youthful leader, frequently scored off Sam Tucker in the fights for possession, and Ford, Walker and Dunkley were always conspicuous. The home forwards were always disappointing, though stamina helping, they had the last word. Gascoigne, of Warwickshire, shone as the most brilliant back on the field – quick, clever and elusive – and on Saturday's form one of the best scrum halves whom I have seen this season. – Elmo "Daily Express".

Gascoigne's Fine Work

No final in recent years has produced so intense a struggle and so high standard of play. The big surprise of this entertaining contest came from the struggle at half-back, where Gascoigne overshadowed Carter to such an extent that it was not until the last twenty minutes that the Gloucestershire backs received a reasonable service of the ball. Gloucestershire owed their victory almost entirely to their greater ability to last out the tremendous pace. When Warwickshire showed signs of tiring Burland and McCanlis played in the form that won them international honours, and made gaps in the opposing defence by the sheer power and determination of their runs. Both full-

backs played with distinction, and Davies fielded the ball with extraordinary accuracy, though he did not kick quite so good a length as Boughton. – “Morning Post”.

Thrilling Rugby

It was truly a great final, in which I personally saw the best county game I have ever witnessed. It was thrilling, had a fair abundance of good Rugby, and the result was in doubt to the end. The presence of 11 Coventry players in the Midland side produced the better team work. Gascoigne and Lole, for instance, were more together than Carter and Thomas. Gascoigne had a really excellent match, and I doubt whether there is a better scrum half in England. For two-thirds of the game he outplayed Carter. The Gloucestershire centres, McCanlis and Burland, were good in parts. McCanlis did some fine strong running, one such run being the prelude to the winning score. Thomas was not a great deal in the picture, but it was his opening which brought the first score which vitalised the side. There was some magnificent forward play in the first half. Roberts outshone Tucker at hooking, only to find the position reversed afterwards. Ford was in wonderful form, and had splendid support from Coulson, Walker and Rowley, but the whole eight were good. For Gloucester none did better in the open than Salmon, but Williams, Saxby and Davies led some devastating rushes. – Clem Lewis “News Chronicle.

Home County Disappointing Forward

Gloucestershire’s weak point was forward. Even J S Tucker was less adaptable than usual, and as a hooker he was frequently beaten by R S Roberts. The half-backs, partly because they were not given so many chances, did not compare well with the rival pair. McCanlis was the star of the winning side’s three-quarters, and H J Boughton, kept very busy at times, was cool, and accurate. Warwickshire’s full-back, H J Davis, kicked and fielded well, and got down to the ball in fine form. The Coventry “three”, T P Mayo, G Harriman, and SH Bonham – his kicking apart – supplied much of the life to the line, and Gascoigne had a splendid day. – H J Henley, “Daily Mail”.