

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1903.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL.

RUGBY.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE v. DEVON.

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP AT KINGSHOLM.

WELL-CONTESTED GAME.

DEVON FINISH STRONGLY.

HOME COUNTY DEFEATED BY FOUR POINTS.

The contest for the championship of the South-Western group (which commenced last week at Bath with the meeting of Somerset and Cornwall) was continued at Gloucester to-day, when the representatives of Gloucestershire and Devon met to decide supremacy. This was only the third championship fixture allotted to this end of the county since 1895-6, and needless to say the match aroused exceptional interest in Gloucester and district.

Last season the rival counties met twice in the competition, a replay being ordered owing to Gloucestershire playing an unqualified man (Norman Moore), but neither side was able to claim victory. In 1901-2 Gloucestershire gained a brilliant win over the then champions by 16 points to 3, a triumph due to the splendid combination of the winners in all departments.

For to-day's game Gloucestershire had a well-balanced team, and there was a confidence amongst the home county's supporters that the side would just about win.

The Devon Selection Committee decided to dispense with the services of several prominent players (notably E. J. Vivyan and W. Spiers, of the Albion club), but the chosen fifteen was regarded as a strong combination, and one likely to carry the county's colours to victory. On both sides there were one or two players new to championship honours, but for the most part the men had all established reputations in club football.

There was some doubt about E. W. Baker turning out for Gloucestershire, but fortunately he was able to get away from Edinburgh, and this enabled the selected fifteen to take the field. The captaincy of the home county devolved on Frank Stout (one of the best leaders in the country), and C. Thomas (the old International forward) had charge of the Devon team. Owing to an injury to Fleet there was a further change in the Devon team, Vivyan appearing in place of the Torquay representative.

The weather was gloriously fine, and the ground was in grand condition for a fast, open game. The attendance was not great a quarter of an hour previous to the start, but the enclosure filled rapidly afterwards, and when the teams took the field the crowd reached some 4,000 or 5,000, amongst whom was a fair contingent of supporters of Devon. Messrs. W. S. Donne, E. T. Gurdon, and C. Pring were present representing the Rugby Union Committee. Punctually to time Thomas led the visitors in the field, followed closely by Frank Stout and the rest of the Gloucestershire team. The men lined out as follows : —

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

DEVON.

BACKS.

J. Oates (Bristol)

S. Irvin (Devon Albion)

THREE-QUARTER BACKS.

R. S. Vaughan (Bristol)

P. L. Nicholas (Exeter)

G. A. Lamond (Bristol)

E. J. Vivyan (Devon Albion)

E. W. Baker (Clifton)

T. Mills (Plymouth)

A. Lewis (Lydney)

W. Beasley (Plymouth)

HALF-BACKS.

J. Stephens (Gloucester)	F. Lee (Plymouth)
W. Vincent (Bristol)	J. Peters (Plymouth)

FORWARDS.

F. M. Stout (Richmond) (capt.)	C. Thomas (Barnstaple) (capt.)
F. Goulding (Gloucester)	S. Williams (Devon Albion)
A. Hawker (Gloucester)	R. Gilbert (Devon Albion)
B. Parham (Gloucester)	S. G. Willcocks (Devon Alb)
J. L. Mathias (Bristol)	L. Tosswill (Exeter)
T. Webb (Bristol)	A. Brock (Exeter)
E. Meyer (Bristol)	J. Evans (Devon Albion)
G. Matthews (Stroud)	A. Avery (Plymouth)

Referee : Mr. F. W. NICHOLLS (Leicester).

Touch Judges : Dr. MACARTNEY and Mr. O. F. FINCH.

THE GAME.

Devon won the toss, and Thomas deputed Gloucestershire to defend the Worcester-street goal. Stout kicked off against the sun, the ball going to Vivyan, who ran across and started a bout of passing. Mills and Beasley in turn handled, and the latter punted down the field, but an infringement stopped further advance. From the first scrum the Devon forwards heeled, but Stephens tackled Peters smartly before he could move.

A fine break-away by Thomas led to Devon reaching the home 25, but Gloucester sent them back with a useful kick by Lamond. Off-side by the visitors led to the home team gaining a good slice of ground, and play operated in the Devon 25. Stephens got the ball away cleverly to Vincent, but the latter made a feeble effort to get away, and a possible opening was lost. The Gloucestershire front got the ball nicely from successive scrums, but little ground was gained as a result of the attempts at passing. Free-kicks to either side ended in Devon finding a footing at the centre, where Mills secured from a pass and punted to Oates, who returned nicely to touch.

Passing by the Devon backs saw Mills punt across the field, but Lewis secured and kicked back to Vivyan. The latter cross-kicked in front of the home goal, but Hawker saved in daring fashion, though he was at once pulled down. Devon were now in an attacking position, but they could not get an opening. Lewis was twice prominent with clever kicks under pressure, and then for picking out of the scrum Lee was penalised. Baker took the kick and found touch well beyond the centre flag. Off-side play by Lee again got his side penalised, and with another finely-judged kick Baker found touch some 30 yards up the field.

Devon worked down by the aid of big kicks but Vincent gained a few yards by a dash down touch. Ensuing play was fought out at mid-field, where at length the Devon backs tried to open up the game. Vivyan, in trying to cut up the field, was collared by Lewis, but he managed to pass to Mills, who handed at once to Beasley. The latter punted to Oates, who returned nicely, and the centre was again the scene of operations.

There was a brief stoppage whilst a Devon player changed his attire, and on resuming Lee was at once penalised for a palpable off-side tackle of Stephens. Baker gained little ground by the kick, but immediately after there was a brilliant bit of play by the Gloucestershire backs. Stephens started the movement and Vincent and the whole of the three-quarters in turn received. Lewis had a possible chance of running round, but he preferred to cross-kick, and Devon saved. Gloucestershire carried the succeeding scrum, but Lee again got off-side, and Oates, taking a shot for goal from near the centre, landed the ball beautifully over the cross-bar amidst tremendous cheering.

Thomas re-started, Lamond replying finely to the centre. A kick up the field sent the ball to Irvin, who was tackled in trying to beat the opposing forwards. Losing the ball, the home front rank dribbled away, and in the right-hand corner Hawker and Meyer had a fine chance of scoring, but the ball was knocked on – hard lines for Gloucestershire.

From the subsequent scrum Devon relieved slightly, but the home forwards rushed back. In some loose kicking Goulding made his mark in a favourable position, but Oates this time failed to land a goal. Devon were now severely pressed, but the defence was sound. Stephens at length broke away in grand style, and was going well for the line when he was upset from behind.

A run and kick by Peters enabled Devon to clear, and there being some fault in picking up the visitors reached the home 25. The Gloucester forwards, Stout, Goulding, and Hawker leading, made a sharp dash, which took them to near mid-field. Immediately after Stout came away cleverly with the ball at his feet, but Peters dexterously picked up and made a dozen yards or so before being pushed into touch.

Heeling by the Devon forwards saw Mills feed Vivyan, but the latter failed to take the ball, and Vincent and Stephens dribbled away. Vivyan mis-kicked again, and the ball went to Irvin, who was finely tackled by Stout. A moment later Vincent whipped out a sharp pass to Lewis, who put in a high punt; but the forwards got off-side and Devon were awarded a free.

The visitors got another penalty soon afterwards, but Oates replied splendidly to the kick, though closely pressed. There was not much in it for the next five minutes, the forwards mainly monopolising the play. Lee, who was playing a fearfully off-side game, was again penalised just before the interval, Stout finding touch with his kick.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester 1 goal (p)
Devonshire Nil

Thomas re-started the game with a fine kick, which went to Oates under his goal, but the Bristol custodian gathered all right and sent to touch. From the first scrum Peters secured and passed to Beasley, who made a fine run, but when in a favourable position he sent out wide to Vivyan, who failed to gather.

Immediately the Devon backs were in possession again, and Beasley attempted to drop a goal. The ball, however, was charged down, and Vincent picking up raced away with only Irvin in front. Several colleagues were in attendance on his left, but the Gloucestershire half went the wrong way, and was tackled. The ball went loose, and a Devonian securing he punted to touch.

Devon got in a big rush subsequently, but they were stopped. Then Stephens, intercepting, got a splendid opening, but when he passed the recipient was immediately collared. Even play followed, but there was a lot of loose, scrambling play, in which judgment and resource were seriously lacking.

Smart work by Peters and Lee led to an attack on the home line, but only a minor resulted from Peters' kick over the line. Resuming, play continued to be waged in the home half, where Vivyan was prominent with a tricky bit of play. His kick was taken by Parham, who marked. The Gloucesterian punted out, but Williams in turn made his mark, and Vivyan had a shot for goal, but the ball went wide of the posts, and only a minor accrued.

Following the drop out there was a stoppage for an accident to Williams, whose knee gave some trouble. He was able to resume, and at once Stout was conspicuous with a sharp burst. From the ensuing scrum the Devon forwards heeled, but the passing gained no ground. Wheeling splendidly the home front burst away in fine style, but Irwin effected a grand save and relief kick.

Play was now hotly waged just inside the Devon half, but a free to the visitors enabled Thomas to punt down to Oates. The latter's return was charged down, and Gloucestershire's lines were in danger. Fortunately Baker was handy, and clearing two or three opponents punted to touch at the 25 line. Oates was slightly damaged when knocked over, and there was another delay. Continuing, Devon went strongly for the line, and a passing movement looked promising, but Nicholas was beautifully tackled by Lewis.

In some loose play which followed Lamond secured and sent down to Irvin, who was pushed out of play before he could reply. Gloucester wheeled in great style in the next scrum, but they lost the ball. However, in the next minute Vincent initiated a bout of passing, but Baker could not break through. Gloucestershire were now going well, and Vincent brought off a lovely run straight down the field. He was not fast enough however to clear the opposition, and was collared on the quarter line. Here the Devon forwards burst away in a bunch, and the three-quarters being beaten Oates was called upon, but he failed, and but for Lewis Devon would probably have scored. The Gloucester forwards brought relief with a grand rush to the centre where some hot work was witnessed.

Devon at length warmed to their work, and clever combination between Lee, Peters, and Beasley led to the latter sprinting down touch and punting over Oates' head. There was a race for possession, but Oates got back and saved in fine style. On the drop-out Devon got the better of the exchanges, and Gloucestershire were severely pressed. Several scrums followed right on the home line, but at length the home forwards relieved with a wheel. A Devonian, however, picked up and passed out to Vivyan, who swung out a wide transfer to Mills. The latter handed to Beasley, who, seeing he was likely to be cut off, dodged back, and with a nice kick dropped a lovely goal from a difficult angle. This gave the visitors a lead of a point, and the enthusiasm of Devon's supporters was made known by frantic cheering.

Stout re-started, but Devon, encouraged by their success, played with renewed vigour, and a dangerous movement was only checked in the nick of time by Oates. The Gloucestershire forwards played up strongly, but the visitors continued to show superiority. In the last few minutes. Devon made desperate efforts to score, and just before the end a try came as the result of a magnificent effort by Vivyan. Fielding a kick in the open, the Albion centre beat several opponents in clever fashion, and going right up to Oates passed to Thomas, who completed the movement by scoring near the posts. The goal-kick failed, but the score definitely settled all doubts as to the ultimate winners. Gloucestershire re-started, but soon afterwards the end came.

RESULT:

Devonshire 1 goal (d), 1 try (7 points)
Gloucestershire 1 goal (p) (3 points)

REMARKS.

Devon won by reason of their extra cleverness and superior staying powers; there could be no question which was the better team in the last quarter of an hour. Up to that period Gloucestershire had quite as much of the play as their opponents; in fact, had the home players taken their chances they should have been credited with more than a penalty goal.

But there was something wanting in finish at the critical moment, and Gloucestershire paid the penalty. Still, there was no disgrace in losing to a team of Devon's strength. Though not such a brilliant combination as represented the county two or three years ago, the visitors to-day were a fine side, and their play in the concluding stages of the game reached a high standard. Beasley's dropped goal was a beauty, but the brilliant effort by Vivyan which led up to the try by Thomas stood out as the tit-bit of the match. It was one of the best individual runs seen at Kingsholm this season, and was characteristic of the Albion centre.

Summing up the game, Devon deserved their victory, and the margin of points separating the teams is a fair criterion of the relative merits of the two sides. Forward, as expected, it was a grand struggle, Devon, with their extra weight, being best in the scrums, whilst Gloucestershire held the advantage in the loose. In heeling, Devon proved the smartest, and in the lines out, too, the visitors were the cleverer line, Thomas and Williams in particular doing fine work.

Frank Stout kept his men at it right to the end, and the International himself played a resolute and determined game. He was backed up in a manner distinctly creditable, all the players being genuine scrummagers. Goulding, Hawker, Mathias, and Matthews came under notice for effective work in the open, but the other men were more than useful, and fully justified their selection.

On the other side, Thomas was in grand form, and his experience and judgment were of great service to Devon. The pack was a level lot, but it was only towards the end that they showed any real superiority over the home eight. The dropped goal by Beasley appeared to put new life into the players, and from this point the visitors were clearly on top.

With regard to the rival back divisions, Gloucestershire were not tested to the extent we should have liked. The few times the ball got amongst the three-quarters some commendable passing was witnessed, and certainly the line appeared a likely lot. Lamond and Baker did useful work in the centre, but neither shone to the extent that Vivyan did on the opposing side. Vaughan brought off one or two good tackles, but otherwise he was not conspicuous.

On the day's play Lewis was the better man, and the Lydney representative has every reason to be pleased with his first display in a county championship fixture. On one occasion Lewis showed hesitancy in going for the line, but his general play was, on the whole, satisfactory. His fielding was never at fault, he kicked smartly on several occasions, and of his tackling, the manner in which he brought down Nicholas showed that he is not weak in this important department.

The Devon three-quarters did a lot of clever work, but there was a slackness at times in handling which caused some promising movements to break down. Vivyan stood out as the class player in the line, for though he made a few mistakes, he generally managed to recover himself in a miraculous way. His kicking proved of great service, and his originality in attack caused the home defence considerable trouble. Mills was resourceful, and followed the game closely.

On the respective wings, Beasley was very nippy, and proved a bit too good for Vaughan. Nicholas was sound in defence, and ran strongly when afforded the opportunity. At half-back, Stephens and Vincent were not happy at the outset, but they improved considerably as the game progressed. They worked the scrums in turn, and both showed cleverness in getting the ball away.

For the major portion of the first half the Gloucester pair were sorely hampered by the off-side tactics of Lee, who was repeatedly penalised for the most glaring offences of the rule. Otherwise the Plymouth pair displayed smart combination, and one or two tricky bits of play nearly brought about a score. Of the rival full-backs, Irvin proved superior to Oates in length of kicking, but there was not a great deal to choose between the two custodians. Both had a lot to do in defence and clearing, but neither made any serious mistakes.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE v. SOMERSET.

The Gloucestershire Selection Committee met at the Ram Hotel on Saturday evening, and chose the same team to oppose Somerset, at Weston on Saturday week, as appeared against Devon.