

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1921.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE QUALIFY FOR SEMI-FINAL.

Champions in Irresistible Form.

Cornishmen Plucky, but Outclassed in Speed and Cleverness.

Having successfully disposed of Devon and Somerset in the South-Western Group, Gloucestershire had only to escape defeat from Cornwall to again qualify for the semi-final. That this task was generally considered within their powers possibly accounted for the absence of that exceptionally keen interest which characterised the two matches played at Kingsholm last season, when the gate receipts totalled £850 against Surrey, and £1,041 in the final against Leicestershire. Application for the reserved seats was especially slow, and this morning practically half the grand stand had not been booked.

Gloucestershire made two changes from the side which beat Somerset at Bristol – Stanley Cook displacing F. Webb at centre three-quarter, and J. S. Tucker appearing in place of his club-mate (A. T. Hore) forward. There had been doubt during the week as to the fitness of one or two of the players, but all finally accepted, and the Champions therefore turned out at full strength.

Cornwall (who had been beaten by Somerset and had drawn with Devon) only had to make one change in their selection. Martin (outside half) dropped out, and the vacancy was filled by H. Ham (originally chosen on the wing), the latter's position being given to another Redruth player in Holman. Redruth and Camborne between them supplied eleven players to the team, and this made for combination and understanding. Owing to the Navy v. Devon County match, the Service players qualified for Cornwall (Gilbert, Hoar, and Gardner) were not available, but the substitutes were regarded as pretty useful.

The Cornishmen were well beaten on the occasion of their last visit to Kingsholm two seasons ago, but before the war the county recorded several meritorious victories on the famous enclosure.

Form pointed to another Gloucestershire success this afternoon, but the visitors were fully expected to make a good fight, especially forward.

Beautiful spring-like weather prevailed, and the ground was in fine condition. The attendance a quarter of an hour before the start was about 6,000, but crowds of visitors were still filing into the field, and though the stands and enclosure were not packed the "gate" under the circumstances was satisfactory.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

BACK : R. C. W. Pickles (Bristol).

THREE-QUARTERS : T. Spoor, L. J. Corbett (Bristol), Stanley Cook (Gloucester and Cambridge), and H. Feltham (Bristol).

HALF-BACKS : W. Dix and T. Millington (Gloucester).

FORWARDS : Major Roderick, A. Hall, F. Ayliffe (Gloucester), P. F. Williams (Bristol), J. F. Lawson (Gloucester), G. Holford (captain), A. T. Voyce (Gloucester), and J. S. Tucker (Bristol).

CORNWALL.

BACK : E. Wills (Camborne).

THREE-QUARTERS : A. Gregor (Redruth), C. Paul (Camborne School of Mines), L. Hammer (Camborne), and E. Holman (Redruth).

HALF-BACKS : A. Gibson (Hayle) and H. Ham (Redruth).

FORWARDS : W. H. Taylor (Guy's Hospital), J. Campbell (Paignton), A. C. Groves (Redruth), W. Biddick, T. Harvey, J. Boase, and R. H. Selwood (Camborne), and W. Peake (Newlyn).

Referee : Mr. R. Fear (Somerset County).

The Game.

The kick off did not take place till 2.45, at which the crowd must have reached 10,000.

Gloucestershire lost the toss, and Holford sent the game going from the Worcester-street goal. There was no reply, and opening play was contested at the centre. Gibson was penalised early on for off-side, and with his kick Pickles sent some 20 yards up the field, the return going almost straight to touch. From a long line out Hall opened out, and the ball being smartly handled Spoors received. The left wing put in a short punt and again secured possession, but he was immediately tackled.

Play was confined to the Cornish half, where Millington gathered a difficult pass beautifully and served Corbett. The latter handed to Cook, who giving the "dummy" cut through and yielded to Feltham. The Bristolian dodged finely, and finished up a lovely movement by scoring a try within four minutes of the start. Pickles failed at goal, though the kick was a good one.

Resuming, Tucker failed to gather the ball on the ground, and the Cornish forwards being well up they broke away with a dangerous rush. The visitors were effectually checked, and Millington, with a nice punt to touch, gained relief. A high return was well taken by Corbett, who found touch with a nice kick beyond the 25 line.

From this point the Gloucestershire backs passed nicely, Cook punting ahead and allowing Feltham to secure the ball. The right wing, however, was collared, and though he managed to let the ball go nothing resulted.

Ensuing play was fast and keen, the Cornishmen performing very well in the scrums. Gibson was plying on Dix very closely, but the City scrum half cleverly fed Millington with his foot, and the latter opened out to Corbett. The centre, however, was tackled, and the movement was checked. Cornwall worked down to the home quarter, but good kicking sent them back, and centre play followed.

Here Dix initiated a delightful movement in which all the backs took part. Cook finally sent to Feltham, who ran splendidly, but being hampered he passed inside to Cook. The latter missed, but Voyce, as usual, was up, and picking up the ball off the ground, dashed over and behind the posts with a fine try. Millington took the easy place and landed a goal, and Gloucestershire were eight points up – a capital start.

Cornwall restarted, and Cook was immediately prominent with some elusive runs which pleased the crowd immensely. Pickles, too, shone in some fine touch-kicking, and, later, the Bristol full-back came up and took part in a fine round of passing, which the Cornishmen only just managed to check. The Gloucestershire forwards, rushing well, went to the line where a minor was conceded. Following the drop-out Cook came into the picture with another superb run and pass to Corbett. The latter dashed ahead, but his transfer to Spoons went astray, and Ham gathering he passed to Hammer, who raced away half the length of the field down touch and scored a great try in the corner, amidst hearty applause. No goal resulted.

Continuing, both teams made the game delightfully open, and some fine play was witnessed. The Gloucestershire backs indulged in some more clever handling, and Spoons was sent away in fine style. Wells, however, effected a good tackle 15 yards outside. Cornwall put in some good all-round work, but Millington and Cook ran back, Voyce missing a pass with a good opening and several colleagues with him. A free against Gibson for off-side enabled Gloucestershire to make 20 yards or so, but a penalty against Dix saw Cornwall quickly recover, and a spell of keen forward play followed. Paul, snapping up a Gloucestershire pass, cut straight up the centre and secured a fine opening, but a knock-on spoiled a certain try. Gloucestershire relieved cleverly, and some clever exchanges gave Spoons possession. Dashing away the left wing reached Wills, when he passed inside to Voyce. The latter could not hold the ball, however, though Corbett came up and recovered, being stopped just outside. Being in a good position the home forwards rushed in a body for the line, the result of which was a try to Roderick. Millington missed the goal points.

Cornwall restarted, Lawson making his mark from the kick-off. The home backs shone in another clever bout of passing, but Corbett passed wildly and Spors had no chance. Then the ball came to the left, where Feltham made a gallant effort to clear Wills, but was unsuccessful. The ball getting loose, a Cornishman picked up and ran and punted to the centre – a lucky clearance.

Judicious kicking brought Cornwall to the home half, where some scrambling play ensued, ending in Lawson dribbling clear. Voyce was with him, but the International just failed to gather. Voyce and Millington were temporarily laid out in quick succession, but they were able to resume.

Gloucestershire attacked resolutely, and after the forwards had just failed to cross, there was some neat handling which nearly beat the defence. Cornwall got out of danger by the aid of a penalty, but the Champions at once broke away down touch to the line, Dix narrowly missing a try.

Following the drop-out Hall put in a dashing run and pass to Voyce, who made further headway in fine style. With the line in view, however, the next transfer was not accepted, and a possible scoring chance was lost. From the next scrum Gibson was penalised for off-side, and Pickles with a neat kick landed a goal, making the scoring 14–3 in favour of Gloucestershire.

Brilliant back play by the home county gave considerable trouble to the defenders, but for the most the Cornish tackling was sound. Cook was well collared once when he looked likely to clear, and then Dix and Millington, working the short side of the scrum, were nearly over.

After some sharp scrummages near the line Dix gathered, and beating Gibson and Ham cleverly crossed with a glorious try, which Pickles failed to convert. On the resumption Cornwall gained a footing in the home 25, but Pickles changed the venue by the aid of a penalty, and then the interval arrived.

HALF-TIME :
GLO'STERSHIRE 2 goals (1p), 3 tries
CORNWALL 1 try

Gloucestershire had played champion football in the first half, and the delightful open character of the play had pleased the spectators. Boase restarted for Cornwall with a kick which did not pass the ten yards mark, and a scrum followed at the centre. For off-side forward work the visitors were penalised, and then ensued an exchange of kicks which ended favourably for Gloucestershire.

Opening out nicely the home backs passed neatly, but Spoons failed to take from Corbett. Then a similar thing occurred on the opposite wing, where Feltham missed after Cook had made a good opening. After this Gloucestershire had a couple of good chances of scoring. Feltham, after being tackled, let the ball go, but the combination was at fault with practically an open goal.

Cornwall were being overplayed just now in the scrums, and the backs, to smother the passing, resorted to tactics which sailed dangerously near to off-side. Gibson eventually intercepted, and punted to beyond half-way. Hall was continually prominent with good work, and Gloucestershire soon changed to venue of play.

Lawson, fielding an opponent's kick, ran down and punted to the line, where Wills was collared. He passed to Hammer, who ran and punted out to Ayliffe. The latter came back and started passing, but though the ball went through several pairs of hands nothing resulted. Twice in quick succession Gloucestershire nearly scored, but something went wrong at the critical moment.

The game continued fast and open, but there was not that finish to the movement of the home backs as in the first half. Stanley Cook at length worked out a splendid opening for Feltham, who ran straight and well, but succumbed to a splendid tackle by Wills. By a strong forward rush Cornwall eased the pressure, but Pickles was very safe and clean in his work at full back.

Two penalties fell to the Cornishmen in the home half, but the shots at goal were not rewarded with tangible points. On the second occasion Cook ran the ball out, and there was a fine passing run, ending in the movement being checked at the centre. Voyce and Feltham started Gloucestershire on the move, and after some clever work there appeared to be a good opening for Spoor, but the latter could not clear Gregor. However, Gloucestershire continued on the aggressive, and following some pretty combination Feltham crossed in the right corner. No goal resulted.

From the restart Gloucestershire went right away with a passing bout, but Spoor was again brought down. In the next minute Gloucestershire were nearly over in a body, a visitor being tackled in possession. In some loose play Corbett whipped out a wide pass to Feltham, who gathered. Pickles was well up, and taking a transfer neatly the full back raced for the corner and scored amidst great cheering. Millington failed at goal.

Gloucestershire continued to give the ball air, starting passing at every conceivable opportunity. Voyce showed up with a great run for some 40 yards, and then passed to Lawson, who in turn handed to Ayliffe, who finished up by running over behind the posts. Millington was again unsuccessful with the goal kick.

The tally now was 26 points to 3 in favour of Gloucestershire. The Champions were now all over their opponents, the visitors being out-classed and out-manœuvred. A brilliant passing run, in which the backs and forwards took part, completely nonplussed the opposition, and ended in Lawson scoring the eighth try behind the posts. This time Pickles was entrusted with the place kick and added the extra points.

Cornwall, despite the heavy score against them, came up pluckily, and for a few minutes they held their own. But their stay was only temporary, and Gloucestershire breaking away beautifully and handling perfectly ran through the defence and Voyce crossed. The goal kick failed.

Gloucestershire kept up a hot attack to the end, and several times crossed their opponents' lines, but the referee ruled for forward passes, and there was no further addition to the score.

RESULT :

GLO'STERSHIRE ... 3 goals (1p) 7 tries (34 points)
CORNWALL 1 try (3 points)

Remarks.

It was a spectator's game to-day, and the brilliant tactics of the Champions sent the crowd home delighted. The Cornishmen never gave up, though obviously outplayed by a combination superior in all the finer points of the game. At the start the visitors flattered with one or two dashes, but the pace, cleverness, and superb combination of the home County eventually wore them down, and for three-parts of the game play was very one-sided.

In all Gloucestershire pierced the defence on nine occasions; these were legitimate tries, but there must have been as many more occasions when the line was crossed, but a trifling infringement lost the point. Yet despite this heavy scoring, there was some fine tackling on the part of Cornwall, especially Wills, at full back, who brought down Spoons and Feltham again and again when all seemed lost.

Time at disposal does not permit of looking up the records as to previous heavy scores, but I should think Gloucestershire notched their best aggregate in championship football to-day. Last season Somerset were beaten by 3 goals (1d) 2 tries (20 points) to nil; Surrey by 3 goals 2 tries (21 points) to 1 try; and Leicestershire by 5 goals 4 tries (31 points) to 1 dropped goal (4 points).

Some critics write about the Gloucestershire team containing too many old stagers; well, the veterans, if they can be so termed, set up a pace this afternoon that many younger players could not improve upon. The forwards were in very aggressive mood, and the style of play adopted provided thrills innumerable.

In the scrums Holford managed to gain possession repeatedly, and the captain all round set up a high standard of play that was admirably followed. At times the forwards ran and passed like three-quarters, and on one occasion the ball went through ten pairs of hands before the final crossing was made. It was an object lesson to the younger element present, and if we could get a succession of spectacular games there would be no cause to lament the falling off in gate receipts. In throwing the ball about to such an extent the Gloucester[sic] men took risks, and now and again an intercepted pass gave opponents an opening. But only once did Cornwall profit, and one solitary try appeared to the credit of the visitors.

The home forwards worked finely together, and no change will be required for the meeting with Surrey unless casualties occur or the men unaccountably lose their form. The eight were good enough for anything. Individually all shone at intervals, but Voyce, perhaps, was more often in the eye. The International was never far from the ball, and was always up to take a pass in any movement, and his anticipation and enterprise were alike remarkable. Ayliffe, Roderick, and Lawson were continually in evidence, and here let me congratulate the first named on being on the reserves for next week's International trial.

Mr. John Daniell was present at the match, and I have no doubt the old English captain put some good marks to the credit of Ayliffe this afternoon. Hall worked like a Trojan, his strong bursts, ready marking and out-of-touch play being great features. Tucker and Williams were frequently in the picture for smart play, and fitted in splendidly with their Gloucester colleagues.

At half-back the Champions were adequately served by Dix and Millington, who combined in the most approved manner. Dix was opposed to a worrier in Gibson, who was often on the wrong side of the scrum, but the Gloucestrian got the ball away cleverly, even under the greatest handicap, and he slipped away neatly on his own on several occasions. His try was an eye-opener to the opposition, and "Father's" smile was delightful to see.

Millington, I thought, touched his best form. His handling of Dix's transfers was well-nigh perfect, and he served his three-quarters with splendid judgment. The Gloucester pair certainly did their share in the notable triumph.

The inclusion of Stanley Cook in the home third line made for improvement all round. The Cambridge Blue has never failed us at Kingsholm and to-day again he was in brilliant form, especially in attack. Quick in his stride, he was past the defence like a flash, gave the "dummy" in most approve style, and fed Feltham splendidly.

Corbett, though not in the best of health, shared honours with Cook, and his work had the hallmark of class. The two wings – Spoor and Feltham – were frequently prominent with dashing runs, and though the former failed to score he was quite as brilliant as his colleague. The Gloucestershire men had the pace of their opponents all the way, and as a quartette in combination and resource there was no comparison between the two sets.

Pickles fully sustained his reputation as a full back, and why he did not get the preference over Morton for the South is hard to understand. The Bristolian had an easy time at various periods, and besides the occasion when he came up and scored from a pass by Feltham, he joined in several other attacks. Good length kicking and safe fielding marked the display of Pickles all the way through.

Wills, the Cornwall custodian, had a trying afternoon, and could not be held responsible for the heavy scoring against his side. He often had two or three facing him besides the man with the ball, and to stop tries under such conditions was impossible.

Cornwall were best served behind by Gregor, Ham, and Hammer, all of whom did a lot of good tackling. Gibson was useful at the scrum, and of the forwards Taylor, Boase, Harvey and Biddick were distinguished in the loose rushes.

But as a side the visitors were over-whelmed, and the score by no means exaggerated Gloucestershire's immense superiority.

Next week : Gloucester v. Cheltenham, at Kingsholm; England v. The South, at Bristol.

W.B.

JC