

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1925.

RUGBY REFLECTIONS.

(From W.B.'s Notebook).

Some Promising Reserves for the County.

Gloucestershire won their first match of the season over Monmouth by 9 points to 8, but the result mattered little to the county. The main object was to discover promising talent for the Championship games, and if no player of outstanding merit forced himself on the notice of the members of the Selection Committee, there were several who should unquestionably have a further trial.

Hughes, Reed and Short (Gloucester), and Prowse (Bristol) were the only members of the side with first-class club experience, and it may be mentioned these players would have been well in the running for places in the best Gloucestershire Fifteen this season had there been no preliminary county games. The form of these men on Thursday should strengthen their claims for consideration.

Of the other backs on duty, Watkins and Warner (Stroud), and Probert and Davies (Lydney) were watched closely, and on the whole the recruits performed very creditably. Warner has done excellent work for his club, and though the game against Monmouth did not afford him many opportunities in direct attack, he gave the impression of possessing qualifications for a successful wing – a safe pair of hands, plenty of dash, and a pretty sound defence. Warner is built somewhat on the light side, but he is a determined runner with a good hand-off, and that one effort of his down touch in the first half when he just failed to score displayed his worth. Fellows, on the right wing, was not so successful as the Stroud representative, but he is a player who should not be overlooked.

R. Probert, who was always doing something useful at centre, came into the limelight with a spectacular try at the finish which enabled Gloucestershire to snatch a victory on time. An intercepted pass at midfield saw Probert clear to the full back. Without checking his speed he punted over his opponent's head, re-gathered the ball on the bounce, and scored between the posts – a cleverly engineered and meritorious effort.

Davies, the full back, made a good impression at Kingsholm earlier in the season for Lydney, and another capable display was furnished by him on Thursday. There is not much to choose between Davies and Greenman, but of the two I would prefer the Lydney man, though fully recognising the strong tackling powers of Greenman. Fields, the scrum half, was none too well served by the Gloucestershire forwards, but he was hardly quick enough for his opposite number, and Watkins (Stroud) was rather handicapped in the outside position. Still the latter did good work, and is a useful player to have in reserve,

The Gloucestershire forwards, for a scratch pack, by no means did badly, especially in the open, where Prowse and Reed were particularly prominent. Dymond (Bristol), Willis (Lydney), Short (Gloucester), and Taylor (Lydney) were hard workers, but the eight were not so effective in the scrums as the opposition, the heeling especially being very slack at times. Still there was some useful material engaged, and one or two of the players will probably be heard of again.

This much can be said : the game served its purpose, and the match with Glamorgan, at Cardiff on the 15th inst., should afford the Selection Committee a further opportunity of weighing up the abilities of players in other than club fixtures. I think it will be generally agreed it is a far better test for the individual.

Like Gloucestershire, Monmouth gave trials to a number of young players, no member of the Newport team being called upon. As a side Monmouth showed superior combination, but though the visiting backs were continually handling, there was not much sting in the attacks.

Williams (Crumlin) played a fine game at full back, and of the three-quarters, Vaisey (Pontypool) and Rhodes (Blaenavon) were the strongest wing, the latter playing a very smart game. Bates (Cross Keys) showed cleverness and skill at the scrum, and better use should have been made of his service.

Of the forwards, Herrera was about the best player in the position on the field, and "Duff" Lewis, Parker and Pritchard were capable and efficient in all phases of play. The Monmouth team endeavoured to make the game as open as possible, and the forwards started a number of passing movements from the loose – a style of play foreign to Welsh club sides for some years.

A. S. Prowse, who captained the Gloucestershire team, had a remarkable experience as regards goal kicks. He converted his first try, but had the points disallowed because the ball was touched in its flight over the cross-bar. For his second try there was no goal kick taken. Kicker and placer were not in accord as to when the ball was down; the Monmouth men ran out, and the ball being left on the ground it was casually kicked away. But the third instance – and I never remember three incidents of the kind happening in one match – was even more extraordinary, and left many spectators in doubt as to the actual result of the match. "No charge" was ruled by the referee, and the ball was placed for the Bristolian. Just as he took the kick the referee blew his whistle owing to a visitor being over the mark, and another shot was ordered.

The ball was on the ground and Prowse altered its position, an infringement of the rule, which states: "A kicker and a placer must be distinct persons, except in the case of a penalty kick, and the kicker may not under any circumstances touch the ball when on the ground, even though the charge has been disallowed." The referee had his back to the kicker when the infringement took place, but he was apparently acquainted of it, for after the match it was announced that the goal had not been allowed.

Gloucestershire thus won by 3 tries (9 points) to 1 goal 1 try (8 points).

Although the attendance at the match was somewhat disappointing, the gate receipts amounted to £57, a result much better than appeared probably five minutes before the kick-off.

JC