

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1902.

GLOUCESTER v. STROUD.

—

THE CITY WIN A POOR GAME.

The first match this season between Stroud and Gloucester was productive of no little interest.

It will be remembered that the first encounter between the teams at Stroud last year, when Gloucester were weakly represented, ended in a rather lucky win for Gloucester by a dropped goal and a penalty goal to a dropped goal. In the second game, however, Gloucester won comfortably by 44 points to nil.

For the match this afternoon Gloucester had nine men away, six playing for the county and three on the sick list; so that a close game was anticipated.

Stroud had the misfortune to be without F. W. Harrison, who fell off his bicycle on Friday and wrenched his knee. F. Bassett, of the A team, filled the vacancy.

An experimental re-arrangement of the All Whites' three-quarter line was tried, Beard changing from the right wing to the left to allow Sid Blanch to resume his old position, and W. Cull, who acts generally at half-back – standing back – was placed in the centre.

There was not a large attendance when the teams turned out as follows : –

GLOUCESTER.	Positions.	STROUD.
H. Barlow	Backs.	B. Blanch (capt.)
L. Vears	Three-quarter	Sid Blanch
G. F. Collett	Backs.	W. Cull
F. Rooke	"	T. Cull
C. Smith	"	W. A. Beard
A. Goddard	Half-backs	A. Brown
F. Keys	"	W. Daniells
F. Oswell (capt.)	Forwards	H. Chew
F. Pyart	"	F. Bassett
G. Vears	"	W. J. Kibblewhite
T. Spires	"	George Matthews
A. Parton	"	C. W. Dobson
G. H. Smith	"	W. J. Matthews
W. Pegler	"	H. Smith
W. Essex	"	S. Warner

Referee : Mr. G. F. Dere (Gloucester).

THE GAME.

Stroud kicked off, defending the Worcester-street goal, and a weak return was made to the centre. By useful forward work the visitors rushed to within the home 25, but from a line out the home men came away well, and the ball getting loose, Vears dribbled nicely down the touch-line. B. Blanch saved and a Stroud forward put in a good dribble in return. He beat Barlow entirely, but Vears ran back and saved.

Play was still in the home 25, the Stroud forwards repeatedly gaining ground by short rushes. A series of scrums took place close to the 25 flag, but eventually a dribbling rush by the Gloucester men, with "Whacker" Smith at the head, transferred the game to neutral territory.

Stroud had a free, and Benney Blanch put in a fine long kick, which Barlow just failed to return. Stroud in turn were penalised, and Collett sent the game to half-way with a lovely touch-finder. T. Cull received possession, and made ground, but he was bored into touch.

Stroud tried passing, but not with much success, and Rooke gained ground with a good punt. Goddard made a nice opening, and passed to Rooke, the latter handing to Collett, who, however, just failed to take the pass. T. Cull put in a clever kick under difficulties, but Gloucester rushed the ball up to the Stroud quarter, where Gloucester were penalised.

Blanch's kick was returned to him, and he put in a feeble reply to touch, and Gloucester pressed seriously for the first time. Stroud worked out, and Collett made a great attempt at a drop goal, the ball striking the upright. It came back among the forwards, but over-anxiety spoilt their efforts, and Stroud worked out. Beard received from Brown, and dodging through the Gloucester three-quarters cleverly raced to Barlow, on approaching which player he punted, but the ball was sent to touch by a Gloucester forward.

Centre play followed, and some tight scrummaging work was seen, the Stroud men getting the ball back better than the City team. Gloucester were awarded a free for Brown putting the ball in unfairly, and Collett narrowly missed a goal with a grand long shot, Stroud touching down.

"Whacker" received from the drop-out and passed among the forwards but a forward transfer spoilt an excellent opening. Essex passed back to Collett from a line out, and the latter put Rooke quickly on the move. The latter player punted to B. Blanch, who could not clear. From the ensuing line-out the Gloucester forwards made great dash and Pyart was credited with a corner try, which Collett just failed to majorise.

The City team soon obtained a footing in the Stroud 25 again and Benny Blanch was twice called upon, but his kicks lacked length. Collett kept the visitors on the defensive with a touch kick close to the line.

The ball came out to Rooke from the line-out, but instead of passing he made a feeble attempt to drop a goal. Play was still well in the Stroud half, but when the Gothamites had worked to the centre they were penalised for off-side.

Just prior to half-time Collett put in a pretty run up the field and passed to Vears. The last named made a god attempt to pass back in again, but the Old Cantab failed to gather the return.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester.....1 try
Stroud.....Nil

On re-starting, Matthews returned Oswell's kick-off, but Collett sent into touch well over the quarter mark, and the City attacked. Keys got away nicely from a scrum and made a bolt for the line, but being confronted by Blanch, he essayed a pass inside, which was taken by an opponent.

Blanch extricated his side from difficulties a moment after and sent play up the field. Barlow made the feeblest possible attempt to save, and Stroud were nearly over, W. Cull showing up very well.

A moment after Stroud had a good opportunity again, but Beard's attempt at a drop goal was a poor one. Stroud were now having much much [*sic*] the best of matters and showed some clever outside work. W. Cull put in a splendid run, and quite beat Barlow, but Collett and "Whacker" Smith got back and collared him — a narrow escape for the City lines. In some tight work on the Gloucester 25, Sid Blanch was put "*hors de combat*" for a moment, but he resumed amidst encouraging applause.

A good bout of passing by the Stroud three-quarters gave Beard a chance, but Collett collared him beautifully. Immediately after Goddard and "Whacker" Smith, with two forwards, went away with the ball between them and reached the line, but they were fetched back for an infringement, and Blanch kicked to Barlow, who put in a good return.

Sid Blanch kicked up to Rooke, who put in a strong return, which, however, struck W. Cull in the chest and bounded quite 15 yards in the direction of the goal. Cull made a great attempt to get up to the ball and score, but Barlow just managed to save.

An exchange of kicks between Barlow and B. Blanch left play in neutral ground, but Stroud, by capital forward work, gained footing in the City 25. Oswell dribbled away nicely, and Stroud, with a mark-kick, sent back again to the centre.

The game had degenerated into something a little better than a scramble, and very little football was seen. T. Cull in putting in a return was charge down and temporarily laid out. Brown came round the scrum and took the ball from under Keys' nose, but eventually by the aid of some good kicks Gloucester attacked again and a hot fight ensued in the far corner.

Scrum after scrum followed, but eventually Vears got the ball out and passing ensued. Rooke, however, held too long and was promptly floored by Sid Blanch, and the ball was kicked to touch.

In a forward rush a moment after the Stroud line escaped by inches only, and Sid Blanch was hurt in stopping the onslaught. From the next scrum the ball came out to "Whacker" Smith, and he literally forged his way through the opposition, twisting and twirling like a top in his efforts to wrench himself free from his opponents. He managed to get out of their grasp and scored a well-deserved try. Collett's kick went wide.

"Whacker" received the drop-out and ran half through the Stroud team before he passed to Oswell, but the movement got no further. Stroud came away with the ball at their feet, but L. Vears gathered nicely and kicked to touch. W. Cull, who had taken his place at half, gained some ground by a clever kick. Sid Blanch claimed a mark, but "Whacker" Smith received and not much ground was gained.

W. Cull again got away nicely up the touch-line, but Keys sent the game back. An exchange of kicks between T. Cull and Barlow left the game at the centre. Stroud broke up the next scrum cleverly, but G. H. Smith got possession, and running strongly gained a lot of ground.

Immediately after "Whacker" Smith got hold of the ball, and making straight for the line reached Benny Blanch. He then passed back inside, and transferred to a forward, who in turn handed to Rooke, and the latter put the finishing touch to a capital effort by grounding over the line. L. Vears took the kick and landed a good goal.

There was little of interest in the last two minutes.

RESULT :

Gloucester....1 goal, 2 tries (11 points)
Stroud.....Nil.

REMARKS.

The game was scrambling, uninteresting, and, as an exhibition of football, poor in the extreme.

There was hardly a difference of eleven points between the two teams on the day's play, as Stroud were distinctly unlucky not to have scored on more than one occasion. In fact, for a few moments at one period in the second half they worked as if they were going to put on a nice little score, but the necessary finesse in the attack was lacking, and the Gloucester lines escaped. But, however poor the display of the City team in the game, it must be said the two tries in the last half were thoroughly deserved.

Forward, Gloucester had slightly the best of matters, but the telling rushes of the Stroud men were difficult to stop. Oswell and G. H. Smith showed most prominently in the packs and in the loose work.

At half-back Brown continually hoodwinked the Gloucester pair, who were slow in getting the ball away.

Of the home three-quarters Collett did a great amount of saving work, and his kicking was always long and well judged.

"Whacker" Smith was pretty closely attended to by the opposition, but he managed to do a lot of useful work beside his distinctly clever try.

The experiment of playing the Brothers Cull in the centre for Stroud was certainly a success, both showing up prominently.

B. Blanch was safe at back, and compared most favourably with Barlow, who was not up to 1st XV. form.

JC