

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1904.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL.

GLOUCESTER v. CHELTENHAM.

LOCAL RIVALS MEET ON THE TOWN GROUND.

A KEEN AND CLOSE GAME.

CHELTENHAM WIN BY A TRY.

One of the marked features in Rugby football in Gloucestershire during the past three years has been the advance made by Cheltenham. Not so very long ago Gloucester regarded the fixtures with Cheltenham with indifference, and the City were able, even with ten or a dozen men away assisting the county, to defeat the Town representatives. But Cheltenham have come rapidly to the front, and last season they had the great distinction of lowering the colours of both Gloucester and Bristol.

With this knowledge the Gloucester Club steered clear of the county fixtures this year, it being recognised that a representative team would be required to cope with Captain Unwin and his colleagues.

Unfortunately Gloucester were unable to take advantage of the new arrangement, for in addition to the loss of Goulding, the City were unable to command the services of A. Hawker, J. Stephens, and G. Romans. The captain's defection came late in the week, and was due to a family bereavement. Romans' place was filled by W. Hyam, formerly of Stroud, who has this season been playing centre three-quarter for Gloucester A.

It was stated Hyam had played full-back for Stroud in several matches, but, as far as Gloucester were concerned, he was an untried man in the position. For the other vacancies, Robinson again appeared at half, whilst Quixley and Purton substituted Goulding and Hawker.

Cheltenham, who were very keen on their chances, had full strength out; indeed, for the position of right wing three-quarter a choice had to be made from four players – Fry, Marsden, Hayward, and Drew. The selection fell on Lieut. Marsden, who has done good work for the United Services this season.

This match naturally aroused the greatest possible interest in the neighbouring towns, and with the weather conditions extremely favourable, a very large attendance was assured. A good crowd of supporters accompanied the City team, but anything but a sanguine view was taken about the result of the match. General opinion favoured a very close game, with Cheltenham slight favourites.

The following were the teams :

GLOUCESTER.	Positions.	CHELTHENHAM.
W. Hyam	Backs.	F. Davey
T. Leonard	Three-quarter	Lieut. A. Marsden
C. Smith	backs.	F. H. B. Champain
J. Harrison	"	G. T. Cotterell
A. Hudson	"	C. Clifford
D. R. Gent	Half-Backs.	G. T. Unwin (capt.)
C. H. Robinson	"	A. Goddard
B. Parham	Forwards.	F. Jacob
F. Pegler	"	L. Cook
G. Vears	"	W. N. Unwin
F. Westbury	"	C. Bennett
G. Matthews	"	A. Ford
A. Purton	"	H. Pike
H. Quixley	"	G. Cossens
W. Johns	"	? . Tidmarsh

Referee : Mr. H. Crawley.

The ground was in grand condition, and everything favoured a fast, open game. "Whacker" Smith captained the visiting team in the absence of Romans. Owing to the late arrival of some of the Cheltenham players the kick-off was delayed ten minutes. Even then Champain had not appeared, and the game was started in his absence.

Gloucester won the toss and Jacob kicked off, Champain making his appearance directly afterwards. Hyam replied to the start with a good punt, and play opened at the centre. A free to Gloucester gained the City some 20 yards, and the first scrum took place in the Town half. Goddard received and fed Unwin, but Harrison stopped the movement with a good tackle.

A minute later the City forwards obtained and Gent sent to Robinson, who fumbled, and ground was lost. Some hot forward work followed in midfield, but the Town backs getting off Cottrell tried to get through, but Smith effected a fine tackle. Robinson again made a miss of a pass from Gent, but an infringement checked an onward rush of the home forwards.

A penalty to the City gave the visitors a good slice of ground, and Gent found touch with a lovely punt close to the Town line. For picking out of the scrum, Gent got his side penalised, and Cheltenham sent to the centre flag. Here the Gloucester forwards handled, and Gent started a bout of passing. Harrison slipped Cottrell nicely and sent to Hudson, who made a grand dash down the touch-line. He was, however, collared a few yards from the line amid excitement.

Cheltenham rushed out to the 25 line, where play hovered for a few minutes. Then a high punt was well followed, but Davey saved with a couple of Gloucester forwards on top. A previous infringement, however, had taken place, and a scrum was ordered five yards out.

A lucky kick by Cheltenham gained them relief, but the Gloucester forwards got back with a good rush. Gloucester continued to play a resolute game, and operations were confined to the Town end. Goddard got in a lucky punt, under difficulties, but Hyam returned splendidly to touch. Then from a punt over the line by Hudson, Davey conceded a minor. Champain dropped out, Purton replying well. A burst by W. Unwin carried the Cheltonians beyond the centre, where "Whacker" Smith threw him into touch.

Smart work by Gent gave Gloucester an advantage, but the Gloucesterian was deliberately fouled by Goddard, who was penalised. The kick, however, availed little, as some of the City men got off-side when Harrison kicked. Hyam, fielding a big kick by Marsden, put in a grand return, which was fumbled, and Gloucester had a good opening. Davey, however, saved though he had to kick straight to touch.

Gloucester were now in an attacking position, and Gent tried hard to beat the defence. G. Unwin, however, smothered him when looking dangerous. A moment later Gent broke away and threw out a wide pass to Hudson, who had no chance to get round. He cut inside and took a drop at goal with his left foot, but the ball went wide of the posts.

Following the drop-out Cheltenham played up strongly, and Champain with a smart dash was nearly through. From the next scrum Cheltenham were put into possession, and Marsden and Bennett were only pulled down close to the line. The latter was winded in the tackle, and there was a brief delay.

Resuming a man short, Cheltenham maintained the attack, and Champain forced a minor as a result of a fruitless drop at goal. Marsden received the drop-out, but he was upset by Vears, Matthews, and Quixley almost immediately.

Bennett now resumed amid applause, but had to retire again. Gloucester forwards carrying a scrum dribbled well, but Champain gathered the ball from their feet and sent to touch nicely. Gloucester got back again, but ground was lost in attempting to open out the game.

Play was hotly contested in the Cheltenham half, but there was not much in it. The Town gradually changed the venue, and just before the interval hotly attacked, but without result.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester Nil
Cheltenham Nil

Parham started the second half, G. Unwin replying to midfield. The Gloucester men hesitated to go for the ball, and the Town forwards got up and secured possession. Johns, however, saved smartly. From some loose play Purton picked up and passed to Hudson, who transferred back inside, but the forward was thrown to touch. Hyam, in waiting for the bounce of the ball from a long kick, lost the leather in his 25, and "Whacker" Smith was only just in time to save a dangerous move. Cheltenham went very close after this, Champain being held up on the line, and pushed back into play. The Gloucester forwards rushed a few yards, but Cottrell made a clever mark. His drop at goal, however, missed its mark, although it was a good attempt.

Following the drop-out, there was some scrambling play, in which Champain shone, near the centre. The Cheltenham forwards, though a man short, were doing well in the scrums, and heeled several times. The tackling of the Gloucester backs was very fine. Near midfield Gent cross-kicked to Hudson, who gathered admirably on the ground, and made a fine attempt to score. He beat Champain, but was hauled down right on the line.

Gloucester made desperate efforts to score, but the backs lacked finish, and little judgment was shown. Cheltenham got out of danger as the result of mistakes by Gloucester, and midfield was again the centre of operations. Gent twice slipped away cleverly, but Harrison slipped and fell in trying to get away. A dashing burst by the City forwards looked promising until Cotterell dived down at their feet and brought off a daring save. From the subsequent scrum Gent broke away, and the Gloucester backs handled cleverly, but Hudson was bored too near touch.

Play was now confined to the Cheltenham half, but a bad pass by Gent was missed, and Champain securing, he found touch well inside the Gloucester half. Cheltenham worked still closer, but the City relieved. Bad fielding, however, let Cheltenham in again, and the Gloucester lines narrowly escaped. Eventually, from a kick over the line a minor was conceded.

After the kick-off Cheltenham returned to the attack with vigour, and for the next five minutes were all over the visitors. Repeated attacks were made, and eventually Pike crossed from a pass by Goddard, amidst a hurricane of cheering. Jacob failed at goal.

Gloucester re-started, but Cheltenham, flushed by their success, immediately got back to the City line. Champain made two desperate dashes, but was held up. Gloucester worked out with a passing run, but the movement was checked on the 25 line. The City backs, however, got on the move again, but forwards passes spoiled promising efforts. For about five minutes Gloucester had the better of the exchanges, but the Cheltenham defence prevailed.

RESULT :

Cheltenham 1 try (3 points)
Gloucester Nil

REMARKS.

Few matches in Cheltenham have occasioned so much excitement, and the triumph of the Town was naturally hailed with the greatest enthusiasm. With such keen rivals, the game was hardly expected to produce a high-class exhibition of football, and so it turned out to be the case. Vigorous it certainly was, and no quarter was given on either side, but there were few incidents in the game that could be termed brilliant.

Taking the run of play, there was absolutely little in it, and a three points' victory for Cheltenham about represented the merits of the team. Gloucester had their chances in the first half, but again the City representatives failed badly when it came to scoring. To Cheltenham every credit is due for their splendid fight in the second half against odds.

In a game of such a close character the withdrawal of one man from the pack was a severe handicap, but the Town played up with increased energy when under this disadvantage.

For the most part the Cheltenham seven more than held their own in the scrums, and they heeled with greater efficiency than the opposing eight. In the loose there was not much to choose between the packs. Neither side displayed any considerable cleverness, and there was a lot of indiscriminate kicking and loose rushing.

Cheltenham were good in the lines out, and led by Jacob and W. Unwin they followed up well and tackled keenly. Pike was another player distinguished in the open, but the whole pack worked with determination and force.

On the Gloucester side, Vears, Johns, Matthews, Purton, and Parham were conspicuous, but there was an absence of cohesion when the ball became loose. At half, Goddard and G. Unwin were more effective than the Gloucester pair, though there was nothing particularly smart accomplished. Gent put in a tremendous amount of work, and frequently got away with the ball, but at times he showed poor judgment in passing, and on several occasions he ran back with no earthly chance for the three-quarters to get moving. Robinson was again a source of weakness, and the sooner Stephens returns the better.

In the three-quarter line, Champain stood out easily from amongst his colleagues. His sharp dashes were a source of constant worry to the Gloucester defence, and how he was kept out two or three times was a mystery. His coolness and judgment, too, when things were going awkwardly for his side were marked features of a display which had the hall-mark of "class" stamped all the way through.

Cottrell proved a useful partner to the Old Cheltonian, but neither of the Town wing men (Clifford and Marsden) was unduly prominent. Marsden, of whom great things were expected, showed a nice pace, but on to-day's form he is anything but a flier.

For Gloucester, Hudson was the most useful, the right winger playing with rare dash. He made two fine efforts to score, and certainly deserved success if he did not achieve it. The combination of the line was poor, and the passing too slow to be effective.

"Whacker" Smith did yeoman service in the tackling department, but he was faulty in giving his transfers. Harrison was closely marked by Champain, and had few chances to shine, and Leonard was not overburdened with work.

On the whole Hyam came through a severe ordeal at full-back very creditably. His only serious mistake was waiting for the ball to drop, a mistake which nearly ended in disaster on one occasion. Hyam kicked a good length, and generally was in advance of Davey, on the opposite side.

THE CHELTENHAM POINT OF VIEW.

Our Cheltenham representative who witnessed the game writes : —

The Cheltenham crowd were fearful lest Champain should be prevented, by reason of his earlier game with the College, from turning out, until Gloucester had had time to profit by his absence. Fortunately, however, although the start was made without the Old Cheltonian, 10 minutes late, he arrived soon after the ball was kicked off, being hailed with applause.

As was to be expected the pace was fast and keen to the last degree. In the opening half one had to be very discerning indeed to be able to say that either Cheltenham or Gloucester held anything like an advantage. Gloucester for the first quarter of an hour pressed more continuously, but this was soon changed, and if anything Cheltenham attacked with the more sting.

The Gloucester forwards pushed better and rushed more effectively, but the Cheltenham backs played a good game and passed much better than those of the visitors, with the single exception of Gent, who was not properly supported at half. The difference in the packs may be ascribed in some measure to the fact that Bennett was early hurt, and had to retire, and again to the frequent withdrawal of W. N. Unwin from the front line to three-quarter, when Gloucester were on the line.

It cannot be said to be a good policy, for this afternoon there were at times only six forwards. In the later stages some very deadly rushes were made by the City front rank, and they made determined efforts to pierce the Cheltenham defence, several times nearly succeeding.

The match was too fiercely contested to be scientific, but it was full of incident. Champain was the best three-quarter on the field. Marsden was fast, but bungled too often in taking the ball. Cottrell played an excellent game, and Clifford backed up his efforts well. Goddard cleverly worked the scrum, and with Unwin at half seemed more effective than the City pair, but had Gent had a better partner the tale might have been different.

Near the approach of time, as the result of heavy pressure by Cheltenham, Pike broke away for the line and won the match for Cheltenham with a beautiful try, and on the whole this try was an accurate interpretation of the play. With an extra five minutes Gloucester would certainly [have] equalised.