

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1905.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL.

COUNTY CUP COMPETITION.

SEMI-FINAL TIES.

GLOUCESTER v. STROUD.

GAME SPOILED BY THE WEATHER.

CITY QUALIFY FOR THE FINAL.

The County Cup Competition was advanced another stage to-day, when Gloucester and Stroud and Cinderford and Bristol respectively contested for the honour of playing in the final. Gloucester and Cinderford were successful in the draw for choice of ground, and in the case of the Forest club especially this was undoubtedly a distinct advantage. Gloucester were generally regarded as being able to account for Stroud, but the Gothamites fully expected to put up a good contest.

For this important match at Kingsholm, Gloucester were minus the services of Gent (who was at Swansea as reserve for Wales) and Collins, but good substitutes were forthcoming in A. Hall and Quixley. Stroud fielded full strength, though Johnson was not altogether fit. This player strained the muscles of his arm last Saturday, and had had the limb in splints all week.

The three ex-Gloucester forwards (G. Smith, Purton, and Gough) appeared in the ranks of the visitors, as well as Hyam, who has assisted Gloucester in several games this season.

The weather was showery, and the heavy rains of the morning had rendered the ground in a bad condition.

There was a fair attendance of spectators present when at 3.35 the teams lined out as follows : –

GLOUCESTER.	Positions.	STROUD.
G. Romans	Backs.	F. Johnson
C. Smith	Three-quarter	Lewis Smith (capt.)
E. Hall	backs.	W. Hyam
J. Harrison	"	W. Pitt
A. Hudson	"	C. Smith
A. Hall	Half-Backs.	C. Harrington
J. Stephens	"	W. Cull
W. Johns (capt.)	Forwards.	G. H. Smith
A. Hawker	"	C. A. King
G. Vears	"	J. Gough
B. Parham	"	G. Denley
F. Pegler	"	A. Purton
G. Matthews	"	Rev. C. V. Lester
H. Quixley	"	W. Partridge
J. Jewell	"	H. Vickeridge

Referee : Mr. J. MILBURN (Bristol)

Touch Judges : Messrs. A. Lawes and B. Weaver (Bristol).

THE GAME.

Gloucester won the toss, and George Smith started for Stroud from the Worcester-street goal against a strong wind. The ball went straight to Romans, who returned well to touch near the centre. Gloucester made headway from the throw out, but the forwards lost possession, and the ball rolled out of play. Several loose scrums ended in A. Hall getting in a free kick which was missed, and Gloucester dribbled clear. Johnson failed to gather the slippery leather, and it was taken over the Stroud line, where a touchdown was conceded.

Resuming, the Stroud forwards heeled, but Pitt was smothered by E. Hall, and the visitors luckily escaped. A useful punt by L. Smith was well followed up, but "Whacker" Smith doubled his namesake and punted to touch.

A long kick by a home player took play close to the Stroud line, where Stephens, securing from a scrum, was only held a few yards outside. The Stroud forwards relieved with a splendid burst, but they were checked on the 25 line. Here Harrington picked up and punted to Romans, who returned finely, though the kick was assisted by the wind. A smart breakaway and pass by Cull gave Lewis Smith a chance on the left wing, and the visiting captain brought off a strong run, several players being handed off in capital style.

Gloucester now tried passing, but the ball was missed, and Johnson only just missed intercepting. E. Hall luckily stopped a dangerous movement, and from this point Gloucester took the ball on, Stephens finally sending the ball dead. Stroud dropped out, and play was fast and exciting.

The visitors were twice conspicuous with clever punts, and Harrison getting a kick charged down, the ball rebounded to Romans. The latter fielded cleverly with one hand and passed out to "Whacker" Smith, who kicked down, but Pitt sent back well. Play operated in the Stroud quarter, where Cull marked from a return by Romans. Stephens, however, replied nicely, and Stroud were hard pressed.

Breaking away from a line out, the City forwards dribbled down to Johnson, who failed to pick up, and Johns securing, he dropped over the line with a try. Romans converted.

Stroud re-started, and play settled just inside the Gloucester half. Profiting by some loose play by the City backs, the visiting forwards got off with a good rush until stopped by Parham. For not playing the ball the City man was penalised, and G. Smith found touch well with the resultant kick. The City front wheeled a scrum which enabled them to change the venue, but Pitt returned play with a pretty effort. The game was gradually brought out to the centre, where Hudson, receiving from A. Hall, ran strongly down touch, but he stepped over the mark, and had to come back.

The Gloucester forwards made a big rush after this, which the visitors had some difficulty in checking. On the 25, however, Hyam dribbled through beautifully and was not stopped until near the Gloucester 25. Gloucester quickly came back with a combined movement, in which Harrison and Hudson shone. The latter passed the full back, but was pulled down from behind and smothered before he could pass.

Stroud recovered from a dangerous position smartly, and they were greatly aided a little later by a wild pass by Stephens. Following this there was a lot of loose play in which Harrison came out prominently, picking up cleverly and punting well down the field.

Gloucester attacked strongly after this, and "Whacker" Smith was nearly through on the right wing. From a scrum five yards out the ball came out on the Gloucester side, and E. Hall, with splendid judgment, whipped out a wide pass to Hudson, who took the ball on the bounce and scored easily. Romans' attempt at conversion just failed.

Stroud dropped out, but play continued to go in favour of Gloucester, until Hyam, fielding from a kick, ran and punted down the field. There was a general fumbling on the part of the home men, and Lewis Smith kicked to near the line, with a clear opening. He, however, over-ran the ball, and a Gloucester man saved in the nick of time. Gloucester were hotly pressed for a brief period, but Stephens brought relief with a nice punt, which the wind took to touch at the centre.

Some big kicking followed, which kept the game pretty even, but at length a mistake by Gloucester gave Stroud another fine chance. It was not accepted, however, and "Whacker" Smith making his mark, got in a good clearance kick.

Parham, too, was prominent with a big punt, and this effort gave Gloucester a footing in the Stroud half. Gloucester rushed the game now, and Johnson was once forced to carry the ball over his line to save. For off-side play Harrington was penalised, but Romans' kick for goal was a long way out.

Purton, who received, had his kick charged, and Hyam, who gathered, was at once floored. Stroud worked out of danger, thanks to the work of Cull and Lewis Smith, the latter looking dangerous until well tackled by E. Hall. A strong run and punt by Hawker placed the Stroud lines in jeopardy, but Johnson was safe, and cleared well. Soon afterwards the interval was called.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester 1 goal 1 try
Stroud Nil

Hawker resumed with a poor kick to Pitt, who sent to Hudson. An exchange of kicks gave Stroud the advantage, the wind proving an important factor. A visitor early marked, but Harrington's kick fell short. The Gloucester forwards carrying a couple of scrums reached the centre line. The City pack heeling, a passing bout was attempted, but it broke down, and Hyam, cutting inside, kicked down to Romans, who, being closely pressed by Lewis Smith, could only just get the ball to touch in his own 25. Gloucester, wheeling well, made some dozen yards or so, but they were beaten back, and Romans had to run the ball out of bounds.

Following the drop-out Johns led his colleagues in a fine burst, which was only stopped by Johnson making his mark. Gloucester further bettered their position with another good movement, initiated by Parham, and play continued in the Stroud half. A splendid dribble by Matthews looked promising for a score, but Johnson saved in daring fashion.

Stroud were hotly pressed now, but the tackling was keen, and Gloucester could not get an opening. Gradually the visitors got out of danger, and the City tackling off-side the game was brought out to beyond the quarter line. Here Harrison, picking up in the open, feinted to pass, and went clean through, with Hudson on his left. He, however, tried to cut inside the full back and was brought down.

In a short time the ball travelled over to the other wing, where Hyam just robbed "Whacker" Smith of a try by kicking into touch. Stroud relieved temporarily, but Gloucester, not to be denied, attacked desperately with forward rushes, and the defence was sorely taxed. Stroud tackled well, but eventually from a throw out a Stroud man fumbled, and Parham dashed over with a try. Romans added the extra points.

Stroud re-started from the centre in a hailstorm, and play was close and exciting. Stephens at length opened out, but C. Smith badly fouled Hudson before he received the ball, and a penalty followed. Romans' kick was well returned, and immediately after a long kick sent the ball over the home line, and Romans touched down.

On the drop-out Stephens placed Gloucester well over the centre with a capital kick, and ensuing play was fought out in the Stroud half. The erratic wind and greasy state of the ball and ground, however, spoiled good football, and play was mostly if a scrambling nature.

Hyam checked Gloucester in a forward rush cleverly, and later on a penalty kick enabled the visitors to gain midfield. Here the home backs combined in a pretty movement, Harrison and E. Hall shining, but the marking was close. Still Gloucester continued to hold the advantage, and Harrison broke through cleverly again, only to see his pass snapped up by Lewis Smith.

The Stroud captain had to receive the attention of the Ambulance men, but was able to resume. Immediately Gloucester got the ball out, and Lewis Smith, in upsetting E. Hall, injured the latter slightly, but the game continued. The football, however, was very scrappy.

Aided by a lucky flying kick by Harrington, Stroud gained a footing near the Gloucester line but they were quickly sent out, and Hudson, after a lovely run down touch, punted over Johnson's head, and again secured possession. He was, however, brought down from behind, but a series of exchanges following, Gloucester appeared to have the line at their mercy.

Stroud warded off the threatened danger, and Lewis Smith, from a pass by Hyam, raced down in good style. Romans, however, made no mistake about bringing down his man, effecting a really fine tackle. Gloucester were all over their opponents now, and Harrison, with a beautiful run, gave the City a splendid opening, but the attack broke down. To the end the City pressed, but there was no further scoring.

RESULT :

Gloucester 2 goals, 1 try (13 points)
Stroud Nil

REMARKS.

On the whole Gloucester's 13-point victory must be regarded as satisfactory. The game was not a particularly interesting one, but under the prevailing conditions one could hardly have expected a better display.

Gloucester, in winning the toss, secured a big advantage, for it was evident after the change of ends the visitors were feeling the effects of their hard work against the wind. Forward, Stroud gave a highly creditable show for quite half the game. They were particularly smart in getting possession in the scrums, and in the first half they gave Harrington and Cull a fair number of opportunities. The Stroud backs, however, did not make much headway, and the attempts at combination were of rare occurrence.

Though Gloucester led at the interval by 8 points, the game was considered anything but safe, but after the first ten minutes of the second half all doubts disappeared.

The City forwards greatly improved on their opening show, and at times fairly overwhelmed the opposition. Both in the tight and loose the Stroud pack were well beaten, and it says much for the defence of the visiting backs that only one try was credited by Gloucester in this half.

For Gloucester, Parham, Vears, Matthews, and Johns played a dashing game, and the work of these men in the open was a marked feature. The other players forming the City pack also joined in some splendid combined rushes, whilst the whole eight tackled well. Stroud were well served by the Gloucester contingent, with King and Lester very little inferior.

At half-back Gloucester missed Gent, though Stephens and A. Hall always held the whip hand of Harrington and Cull. Stephens, who worked the scrum, was frequently handicapped by the off-side tactics of Harrington but he got the ball away creditably. Hall played the proper game in varying his tactics, but his attempts to cut up the field were not attended with success, the marking being so very close.

At three-quarter the play of Harrison and E. Hall was excellent, and the former experienced hard lines once or twice in slipping after beating several opponents. Hall was ever on the look-out to cover a colleague's mistake, and he assisted Gloucester out of one or two difficult situations. Hudson, though closely watched by C. Smith – he was once or twice tackled before he received the ball – put in some dashing runs and "Whacker" Smith performed with credit.

Hyam was clearly the outstanding figure on the visiting side, his saving and kicking being first-class. Lewis Smith did one or two good things in the first half, but got few chances afterwards.

The full-back play of both Romans and Johnson was of a high standard. The Gloucester custodian kicked the better length, but Johnson made few mistakes, and cleared his side well under severe pressure.

A STROUD VIEW.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable weather the Stroud players were accompanied by a large contingent of their supporters, who, however, were denied the satisfaction of seeing the All Whites display anything approaching that high level of efficiency which has characterised some recent matches.

Gloucester undoubtedly were the superior team, and they owe this to their greater experience, but it is open to question whether the Citizens were more than eight or ten points ahead of the Gothamites.

As a display of football, the game was very disappointing, but it must be remembered that the surroundings were not altogether favourable of a good all-round exhibition.

In the first half, play was fairly good, the Stroud forwards certainly not being one whit behind their opponents. The points scored by Gloucester were well deserved, but here again the balance of play in their favour was not such as to entitle them to say they were more than three points superior in the first half, for Stroud had hard lines on two or three occasions, especially when Lewis Smith over-ran the ball when he had the line at his mercy.

After the interval, when it was expected that with the wind in their favour Stroud would do better, the visitors, as a matter of fact, fell off considerably.

Their forwards, strange to say, were badly worsted in the battle for possession in the scrum, and the backs had to cut out their own work, or defend for all they were worth. The visitors had one good chance, early on, Gloucester being exceedingly lucky to escape.

To sum up, one might say that Gloucester's stamina was better, and in a great measure this accounted for their victory, their experience, too, being another factor in the win. Stroud's forwards did not do themselves justice, while the three-quarters were rather slow, especially the centres. Then, again, Stroud were not quite at home at stand-off half.

Johnson was responsible for some smart work at full-back, and compared favourably with Romans, who was not tried so much. The latter, however, is not so good as he was.

Hyam was hardly so clever as usual, and, unfortunately, he gave Gloucester the last score. Lewis Smith was fairly good, and Pitt and Smith, right wing, tackled well. Harrington was too eager at times, and once or twice came under the ban of the referee, though there can be no doubt that he was tricked into getting off-side more than once. Cull was nippy, but not so good as Stephens.

Forward, George Smith, Denley, Lester, and Gough were always prominent. Purton and Partridge were good scrummagers, while King gave evidence that he is on the way to recover his old-time form. Vickeridge, too, worked hard.