

THE CITIZEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1905.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL.

GLOUCESTER v. CHELTENHAM.

THE RETURN MATCH.

KEEN RIVALS AT KINGSHOLM.

The return match between Gloucester and Cheltenham, at Kingsholm, was an attractive fixture for the opening of the City Club's holiday programme.

In a long list of engagements between the two teams Cheltenham had only twice been successful, the Town winning at home in 1903-4 by 8 points to 3, and again the following season (also at Cheltenham) by one try to nil.

This year the teams played a drawn game of 3 points each on the Town Ground, after a very poor display. Gloucester had heaps of chances to run up a big score, but the backs could do nothing right in passing, and the City hardly deserved to divide the honours.

Cheltenham have shown considerable improvement since their feeble exhibition in October, and their great fight against the New Zealanders encouraged their supporters for to-day's struggle.

The records of the teams prior to to-day's contest were : —

		Points.					
		P.	W.	L.	D.	For.	Agst.
Gloucester	...	15	9	4	2	193	87
Cheltenham	...	14	11	2	1	128	30

Three of Gloucester's defeats were by very narrow margins, viz., Swansea (try to nil), London Welsh (goal to nil), and Torquay (dropped goal to nil). The City were badly beaten by New Zealand (44 points to nil), but there were adverse circumstances which considerably handicapped Gloucester on that occasion. Cheltenham had only sustained one club defeat – to Coventry by 11 points to 3 – and among their victories were Exeter, Lydney, Moseley (2), Bath, Clifton, and Llanelly.

With the exception of Wood, still on the injured list, Gloucester were at full strength, but Cheltenham lacked the services of Davey, Clifford, Bedell-Sivright, and Jacob. Cottrell played full-back, and in place of Clifford the visitors were fortunate in securing the services of Lieut. du Boulay, late of Blackheath.

The match attracted a large crowd of spectators, including a goodly contingent from Cheltenham. The ground was in splendid condition for a fast, open game.

The rivals took the field at 2.50 as follows : –

GLOUCESTER.	Positions.	CHELTENHAM.
G. Romans	Backs.	G. T. Unwin
C. Smith	Three-quarter	L. W. Hayward
E. Hall	backs.	F. H. B. Champain
J. Harrison	"	G. T. Cottrell
A. Hudson	"	Lieut. Du Boulay
D. R. Gent	Half-Backs.	A. Goddard
J. Stephens	"	R. P. Burn
W. Johns (capt.)	"	H. Manley
B. Parham	Forwards.	H. Pike
A. Hawker	"	L. Cooke
G. Matthews	"	C. Bennett
G. Vears	"	G. Cossens
F. Pegler	"	F. Goulding
J. Jewell	"	W. N. Unwin
H. Collins	"	P. Beard

Referee : A. J. Lawes (Bristol).

THE GAME.

Cheltenham won the toss, and Hawker started the game, the ball going to Burn. An exchange of kicks ended in G. Unwin finding touch just inside his own half. Gloucester got the ball from the first scrum, and Stephens, with a flying kick, sent nicely to touch. The same player made further ground, and Unwin was well tackled at the 25 flag. Clever play by the City forwards looked promising, but Cottrell intercepted and punted out to Romans, who was pulled down at the centre.

Play was very exciting, and Harrison securing from Stephens, he kicked to Unwin, who found touch with a poor kick. Gloucester attacked, but Harrison was collared by Champain, and the ball getting loose, the Town forwards dribbled through. Gent, however, picked up beautifully and dodged nicely, but his pass was knocked on when there was a promising opening.

Clever footwork by the Cheltenham forwards relieved the pressure, and Burn further improved matters with a lovely kick to touch. A free to Cheltenham saw Champain gain a good slice of ground, but the home forwards quickly regained with a nice burst. Breaking through a scrum, the City forwards got in a fine rush and Cheltenham were hard pressed. The situation, however, was saved on the 25 line. Then from a pass by Goddard, Champain punted to beyond the centre line.

Gloucester worked back, but a penalty against the City enabled Champain to find touch well inside the home half with a grand punt. Gent with a tricky kick sent to Unwin, whose return Romans replied to with interest, and the game was again in the Town end. Cheltenham relieved with fine kicks, but the Gloucester forwards, Parham and Matthews in the van, rushed back to Unwin, who was forced to touch.

From a high punt by Romans, Goulding marked, and the ex-Gloucestrian found touch about a dozen yards ahead. Cheltenham heeled from the subsequent scrum, but Hudson spoiled Goddard's pass to Champain and nearly got clear.

Play was in the Town 25, where a kick out was taken by Romans. The City custodian, with excellent judgment, raced across the ground and started a bout of passing. Harrison ran down cleverly, and passing to Hall, the latter yielded at the right moment to Smith, who dashed over in the corner with a grand try amidst tremendous enthusiasm. Romans' shot for goal, a fine one, failed.

Cheltenham dropped out, and almost immediately Pegler was prominent with a splendid break-away from a line-out. His pass, however, went forward on the quarter line. Cheltenham made ground with a loose rush, but near the centre Gent started a bout of passing, Harrison kicking to Hayward, who was forced to touch. Heeling well, the Gloucester backs were again set in motion, but Boulay knocked on Harrison's pass when there was a good opening for Smith. Play continued in the Town half, where some clever work was done by Hall. On the 25 line Burn was penalised for palpable off-side play. Romans took the kick at goal, and with a brilliant shot added three points to Gloucester's score.

Goulding resumed, and Hawker receiving, the forward started a bout of passing. Smith ran well and transferred to Parham, but the defence proved too strong. Cottrell and G. Unwin now exchanged places, but Gloucester were having all the game.

Romans and Goddard had an exchange of kicks, which left the game near midfield. Here Stephens broke away from a pass by Gent, and slipping a couple of opponents, transferred wide to Hall. The centre worked his way right down cleverly, and passing to Hudson, the wing man burst over with another capital try. Romans failed at goal.

On the drop-out Gloucester returned to the attack, and a City forward marked nicely in a line-out. A high punt was put in, which was missed by Champain, and the visiting defence was almost beaten again. Ensuing play was all in favour of Gloucester, and from a neat movement initiated by Gent, Gloucester ought to have scored again. Hall, however, tried to cut inside, and was collared.

Soon after Romans forced a minor with a kick over the line. Champain caught the home men napping in dropping out, and he found touch near the Gloucester 25 with his kick. Gent, however, lined out sharply to Romans, who got in a fine touch-finder nearly half the length of the field. Cheltenham worked out of danger, but then came a lovely passing movement by the City backs, ending in Harrison beating Champain cheaply and scoring a lovely try. Romans failed at goal.

The drop-out was well returned, and for a few minutes play was even. The Gloucester forwards, however, soon came away, and Unwin (who had again gone full-back) had some difficulty in saving.

Profiting by some loose play by Gloucester, the Town gained a footing in the home half, but Stephens relieved cleverly. Harrison, getting his kick charged down, let the visitors in, but Gent saved in glorious style. Then a kick out went to Boulay, who dropped for goal, but his kick was charged down, and Gloucester cleared to beyond midfield.

HALF-TIME SCORE :

Gloucester	1 goal (p) 3 tries
Cheltenham	Nil

Cheltenham resumed, and opening play was fought out just inside the Gloucester half. The City early got away, and Harrison put in a beautiful run, but a pass forward checked a pretty movement. The Cheltenham backs responded with some neat exchanges, and Hayward punted to the home 25. Gloucester quickly worked out, and G. Unwin fumbling, the City had a fine chance, but it was not accepted.

Near the Cheltenham line the City forwards heeled, but Hall held too long and was smothered. Cheltenham relieved luckily, and Champain intercepting, ran down to Romans, but Hayward was smothered directly he received. Gloucester returned with interest, and a kick by Stephens was well followed up by Hudson. Unwin punted straight to Parham, who tried to open out, but was prevented.

Immediately after the City backs combined in a clever movement, but Hall failed to send to Smith at the right moment. Cheltenham got out of danger by the aid of punts by Burns, but Gloucester were soon on the aggressive again, and Matthews was only just stopped on the line.

Some hot work followed in the Cheltenham 25, but the defence was stronger than in the earlier stages of the game. There was a couple of delays owing to players being knocked out, but both were able to resume.

Following a drop-out, Harrison got in a tricky run and kick, but Goddard replied well, and little advantage accrued. A well-judged kick by Hall placed Gloucester in a good position, and from passing Hudson had a dash, but he was well collared. The ball, however, got loose, and Gloucester were nearly over. A scrum ensued five yards out, and the Gloucester forwards tried to rush the ball over, but they lost it, and a Cheltonian kicked out to Harrison, who marked in a good position. Romans' kick was charged down, and nothing resulted.

Marks fell to either side in quick succession, and a minor was credited to Gloucester. Subsequent play was confined to the Town half, but the players appeared to feel the effects of their arduous work. Near midfield Gent got the ball out beautifully, and Stephens, Hall, Smith, Harrison, and Hudson handled with splendid effect, but the wing man could not get round. He, however, managed to pass to Harrison, who returned to Hudson, for the latter to race round behind the posts. Romans converted.

Cheltenham restarted, but the Gloucester backs were soon in possession again, and with a lovely combined effort Smith scored nicely. The place-kick failed.

Harrison received the drop-out, and he caused great amusement by the manner in which he tricked the visiting defence. He finished up by punting to Cottrell, who kicked to Stephens. The latter took the ball nicely and burst away, but he was given in touch – hard lines.

Gloucester continued to play brilliant football, and Cheltenham were a thoroughly beaten side. The City forwards twice move off in fine style with passing runs, but wild transfers spoiled the movements.

Cheltenham got out with a flying kick, but Romans, on receiving, ran round, and Harrison and Hudson did some neat work down touch. Gathering in the loose Champain made a good run and kick, and the Gloucester 25 was visited for the first time in this half. Operations were quickly transferred to beyond the centre, and Hall, with a couple of beautiful kicks, placed Gloucester close up. Gent whipped the ball out smartly to Stephens, but the latter's pass was dropped by Hall.

A minute later Hudson had a great dash for the corner, but was held up, and then in quick succession Gloucester missed scoring on two or three occasions. Five minutes to time Smith sustained an injury to the ankle and had to retire. His absence, however, made little difference, for Gloucester pressed right to the end. Just on time Hudson, from a pass by Harrison, went strongly for the line and appeared to have scored. The referee ruled, however, that he was tackled outside.

RESULT :

Gloucester	2 goals (1p) 4 tries (20 points)
Cheltenham	Nil

REMARKS.

Cheltenham came and saw, but, instead of conquering, the Town representatives experienced such a drubbing as they have not met with in club games for many a long day.

"Hopelessly outclassed in every department" is the only verdict that can be expressed on to-day's game, so far as Cheltenham are concerned, and if the 20 points which Gloucester won by had been augmented by another ten it would not have over-estimated the immense superiority of the City team.

Both individually and as a combination the visitors were not in the same street with Gloucester, who, put on their mettle by the tall talk of the wonderful play of their opponents, came out with one of their very best displays.

The members of the County Selection Committee, who have been charged with overlooking the best players for County matches, turned up in force to see some of the talent they have passed over. What their opinions were after seeing to-day's game can be imagined. They certainly have no reason to blame themselves for any action they took in the selection of the teams to meet Devon and Somerset.

That there are some useful players in the Town team may be taken for granted, but, judging the men's form on the contest this afternoon, we saw no Cheltenham player who would have strengthened the County fifteen in any single department. This is diverting somewhat from comments on to-day's game, but the remarks are fully justified after the criticism which the County Selection Committee have been subjected to in some quarters.

The Gloucester team meant business to-day, and the whole fifteen are to be congratulated on a fine performance. Cheltenham undoubtedly suffered somewhat by the absence of several prominent players, but Gloucester were similarly handicapped in the first match at Cheltenham, when, owing to various causes, Romans, C. Smith, Johns, Wood, and G. Vears were absentees.

But whatever side the Town Club had placed in the field to-day we honestly believe the result would not have been affected. From the start Gloucester played a dashing game, and the first ten minutes settled the pretensions of Cheltenham.

Trained to perfection, the City forwards were in splendid trim, and their fine work paved the way to triumph which followed. Except on rare occasions the City eight held the mastery in the scrums, and in the open they were always on the ball, using their feet to advantage, and putting in some nice passing movements.

Their tackling and following up, too, left nothing to be desired, whilst the line-out work of Parham, Collins, Jewell, and Vears was very effective. Johns, Matthews, Hawker, and Pegler were to the fore in all attacking movements, and altogether the pack was too good for the Town.

With the City forwards doing so well in the scrums Gent was plied with opportunities, which the International utilised to the full. He was hampered now and again by the off-side tactics of Burn and Goddard, but it was rarely he failed to get the ball away.

Stephens was in a delightful mood, and Gloucester's great success behind the scrum was in a large measure due to the judicious feeding of the outside half. Stephens gathered all sorts of passes with perfect accuracy, and he was quick to note the weak spot in his opponents' defence.

At three-quarter Gloucester fairly made rings round the Town third line, and thoroughly confirmed our contention last week that, given equal chances, there is not a smarter club combination in the county. The men handled the ball in capital style, the passing was well-timed, and there was no mistaking their intentions when on the move.

Harrison frequently made an exhibition of Champain and the other Cheltenham defenders, and his try was a very pretty effort. Hall, too, showed splendid resource, though twice in the second half he held on a bit too long before parting. On the respective wings Hudson and Smith fully sustained their reputations, and both players thoroughly deserved the tries they obtained. It was unfortunate that Smith got injured just before the end, and it is probable the accident will keep him out of the other holiday games.

Romans was in his best form at full-back, kicking a fine length and being as safe as the proverbial Bank of England in fielding. The movement which resulted in the first try being scored was initiated by the City custodian, and was beautifully carried out.

Of the Cheltenham team it must be confessed the side was disappointing. Even with Jacob and Sivright out of the front, we expected a better show from the forwards, especially after their display against New Zealand. But the visitors were never allowed to settle down, and the City pack rushed them all over the field at times.

Goulding was one of the hardest worked men in the team, and Pike, Bennett, and Manley were prominent occasionally. The game was too fast for some of the players, and there were few attempts to get back and help the outsides in tackling.

At half, Goddard and Burn did some useful kicking, but they could not be compared with Gent and Stephens, whose combination was a big feature of an exceptionally keen and interesting match. The Town three-quarters were afforded few chances to shine, and none of the players were up to form. Champain was the more distinguished, and his fine kicking frequently came in useful. The Old Cheltonian did a lot of tackling, but Harrison beat him fairly and squarely on several occasions.

Cottrell divided his attentions between centre three-quarter and full-back, and this changing of positions did not tend to improve his play. G. T. Unwin was very feeble at times, and was of no great service to his side either as custodian or in the three-quarter line.

The result gave great satisfaction to the supporters of the City Club, and there was a demonstration as the players retired to the dressing-rooms.

GLOUCESTER A. v. CHELTENHAM A.

The Second strings met on the Cheltenham Athletic Ground. Gloucester A had a good side out. Cheltenham played in white. Cheltenham started, and got into the visitors' half. Working down near the line, the homesters were momentarily dangerous. They were beaten back, but re-attacked, and made the Gloucester 25 the scene of operations.

The Garden Towners so far had the best of the argument, giving the defence an anxious time. Seabourne opened the homesters' account with a good dropped goal. Soon after the re-start Hughes scored for the Citizens. The attempt to convert failed.

Seabourne failed to gather, and the visiting three-quarters got off in style, but lost a fine chance through a forward pass. From neutral territory Gloucester got on the home line, and H. Smith scored. Hayward's attempt at conversion hit the posts, but failed. The Citizens kept up the pressure, but made no further score.

HALF-TIME SCORE :
Gloucester A 2 tries
Cheltenham A 1 goal (d)

Resuming, play went to mid-field. The Garden Towners' front line took the ball into the visitors' 25. Then Gloucester ran the length of the field, and H. Smith scored behind the posts. Hayward majorised.

From neutral ground Cheltenham attacked, but failed to score. Another rush by the visitors saw them on the line, but off-side play lost them a fine chance. Good combination among the Citizens' three-quarter line ended with A. Hall securing another try, which Hayward converted.

A good rush by Cheltenham to the Gloucester 25 was now seen. Gloucester relieved, however, and scored through Hughes, and Hayward again goaled.

From a scramble near the goal-posts Hayward crossed the line, and converted his try.

RESULT :
Gloucester A 4 goals, 2 tries (26 points)
Cheltenham A 1 goal (d), (4 points)