

# THE FOOTBALL WORLD.

Fine weather prevailed on Saturday for the Auckland Rugby Union's championship matches, which were played at Alexandra Park in the presence of some 2000 spectators. The City-College Rifles match occupied pride of place on No. 1 ground, and was considered a foregone conclusion for the former team, which had the advantage of weight and experience. The result, however, was the surprise of the season, the game ending in a draw, each side notching three points. This means that City and Marist Bros. are now running level for the championship, and should both teams emerge victorious from their respective engagements on Saturday, unusual interest will be centred in their second meeting on the following Saturday. On No. 2 ground Marist Bros. and Ponsonby disputed honours, victory going to the former team by 12 points to 3. Ponsonby opened in promising style, and it appeared as though they were going to conquer the Marists, but once the latter settled down to their work properly they had the blue and blacks practically at their mercy. The Parnell-University match on No. 4 ground occasioned a good deal of interest, their last meeting having resulted in a draw—six points each—and, after a keenly-contested game, the former fifteen secured winning laurels by 6 points to nil.

Few, if any of the onlookers, who attended the City-College Rifles match entertained hopes of witnessing so fine and closely-contested a game as the meeting of these two teams was productive of. As an exhibition of clean, hard football, interspersed with unending flashes of brilliancy and exciting incidents, it was by far the best match played at the Park this season. College Rifles' surprising form came as an eye-opener to the average Rugby enthusiast, it being the first appearance of last year's junior championship winners on No. 1 ground. To have played a drawn game with the leading team of Auckland is an honour that College Rifles may well feel proud of, particularly in view of this being their first season in the senior ranks. The College Rifles team is made up of members, many of whom have been playing together for several years, and in the event of the club retaining the services of these players there is little doubt they will become the leading team in Auckland in the not far distant future. Since their opening match in the senior grade, when they were defeated by Parnell by 14 points to 3, College Rifles have shown marked improvement in each succeeding match, and, whilst admitting that City were not seen at their best on Saturday, the play of the College team was superior to the work of the other senior fifteens, who, however, have a big pull over College Rifles in the matter of weight.

When City and College Rifles lined out, the disparity in the weight of the two teams was at once noticeable, and the onlookers resigned themselves to the belief that they were about to witness the light College team put up a hopeless fight against overwhelming odds. A few minutes' play, however, sufficed to dispel this almost universal contention, the determined and confident manner in which they set to work against their heavier rivals changing the outlook. City recognised early in the game

that they were up against a stiff proposition, and not at any part of the game did they attempt to take matters leisurely. The Cityites put just as much vim into their work as if opposed to a Ponsonby or Marist Bros. team, but the celerity of the College Rifles continually flabbergasted the City men, who were able to get to a certain point and no further. Whereas, it was expected the College forwards would be unable to withstand the vigorous tactics of the heavy City pack, the former team by sheer grit and fast, heady play kept the Cityites busily employed, and whenever the City forwards did perchance break through the first line of defence the smart College backs met them unflinchingly and invariably removed the danger.

College Rifles' success in making a draw of their game against City may be attributed to their fearless tackling, fast following up of the forwards, and the spoiling tactics of their backs. The tackling was very fine, indeed, the College players simply bowling their opponents over like ninepins. Frequently when City assailed the Rifles' citadel, try after try was averted through the almost infallible nature of the College defence. The College forwards were never guilty of not following up, and in this respect they accomplished no end of good work, repeatedly smothering the City backs—a profitable operation in which they were ably assisted by their rearguard. They were nearly always three or four of the College Rifles' forwards in a body who, as the result of fast following up, were able to get right among the City backs before the latter parted with the leather often rendering the City defence of no avail. The College forwards were much nippier than the City pack, who frequently were at a loss to cope with the agile movements of their lighter rivals. The same remark applies to the backs, the City rearguard appearing slow and incoherent in comparison with the alert and cohesive College back division. The City backs were safe and with one or two exceptions showed good form individually, but they did not combine well, and would have been all the better off for a general smartening up all round. There was an absence of resourcefulness on their part, H. Thomas being the only member to play with any initiative.

The College Rifles backs are a brilliant set, and one calculated to give any opposing team a good afternoon's leg exercise. Combination is their chief qualification, and against City they were able to demonstrate the great value of concerted attack. Their passing runs were executed with machine-like precision, the unerring instinct of each of the College backs in keeping in the position in which he is most wanted during these attacking movements being largely responsible for the success of this division. Being fast and decidedly nippy, the College backs were able to render timely aid on the defence, and even when one of her number was tackled before he could put his boot to the ball there was a fellow back handy to cover up his mistake. It was in this way that College Rifles succeeded in counteracting the Cityites' efforts, and staving off what was thought generally to be certain defeat.

Had the scrummaging been more satisfactory City would certainly have shown to better advantage against the College Rifles. Time after time the scrum resolved itself into nothing less than a scramble, and during the whole of the game the ball did not come out cleanly on more than three or four occasions. The City hookers generally managed to secure the leather, but it hung fire, there being something faulty about the scrum formation of the Cityites or the heeling-out methods of the other members of the City pack. The consequence was that the City backs, who had counted upon securing the ball from the scrum fairly often, were faced with a handicap they did not for one moment anticipate, and were thus prevented from keeping the ball away

from the College backs to the extent they would otherwise have done. City did not derive any advantage in the scrum at all, as the majority of occasions on which they secured the ball from this source were after the pack had practically broken up, the result being College Rifles were round on their backs with alacrity. Many of the scrums slewed sideways, both teams taking pot luck of securing the ball, and generally the more nippy College player profited by the scumbly nature of the scrums.

Assisted by a fairly strong breeze in the first quarter the Cityites were the aggressors, but College Rifles made the game fast, and the red and blacks were met with stubborn resistance, although College were compelled to force on a couple of occasions. The City forwards broke away several times and matters looked dangerous for the College team, but their backs were equal to all that came their way, sound tackling checking the advance of the Cityites. The College backs caused City considerable anxiety when Webb set them in motion, but the defensive tactics employed by the red and blacks were very solid, and the quarter ended without score. The second quarter was all in favour of the College Rifles, but over-eagerness in the forwards lost several good chances. The College backs shaped in great style,



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throwing the ball about with precision, and the excitement of the onlookers was at high tension several times when the Rifles went dangerously close to scoring as the result of their cleverly organised attack. However, half-time came without either side having scored.

The third spell was contested at a great pace, the Cityites playing harder than ever, but the tricky College back division collared in praiseworthy fashion, and the game was a thrilling one to watch. Finally a City forward rush carried the ball over, and Trezise was awarded a try. Moffit made a fruitless attempt at goal. City 3. College Rifles nil. The end of the quarter sounded a few minutes later.

The final spell saw College Rifles not in any way discouraged by City's advantage, and they returned to their task with redoubled energy. Webb, taking a mark, Ifwerson was entrusted with the kick, and amid the wildest excitement he piloted the ball over the cross-bar, thus equalising the score. City exerted themselves to their utmost to get in the lead, but the College players were now putting up a great tussle, their tackling during the remainder of the game being equal to anything yet seen in Auckland. With both sides battling hard to turn the issue in their favour, the game was of a highly exciting character, but though City had the best of it in the closing stages they were unable to score, the match ending: City 3, College Rifles 3.

S. Magee, the City wing forward, played a serviceable game despite that he had a tough proposition to contend with in Nesbit. City's crack forward, Bruce, was associated with the major-

ity of the rushes organised by his side, and his inclusion in this year's Auckland team seems a certainty. Trezise showed good form, as did also Collett, who frequently shone in the open play.

Thomas, at half, was solid on defence, but was not seen to advantage in attack. He was handicapped to some extent by not receiving the ball cleanly from the scrum, and on several occasions either Nesbitt or Webb were upon him before he was able to set his backs going. Thomas' greatest fault was an inclination to go on his own too much, and a number of times he met trouble early. His best work was in picking the ball up during a forward scramble, and finding the line with short kicks.

H. Thomas, at five-eighths, whose propensities for making openings have been demonstrated in the matches he has played this season, was not allowed to get far when he obtained possession of the leather, the fast College forwards being down on him repeatedly. Nevertheless, Thomas played well under the circumstances, though not brilliantly, handling the ball smartly and with much accuracy.

Barclay was weak as second five-eighths, being much too slow in getting rid of the ball, the College forwards smothering him many times through his failure in this direction. His passing is also open to improvement.

Stewart, at centre three-quarter, was very safe in taking the ball, and though he rendered City invaluable service, he would have improved on his play a good deal had he executed his work smarter. Once or twice he took unnecessary risks by his failure to part with the leather at an opportune moment, the result being he was pinned to earth by the College players. His kicking left nothing to cavil at, and he only needs a little more nippiness in his work to strike the reps.

Keating, on the wing three-quarter, was a big disappointment, and his failure on occasions to cope with the work that came his way plainly showed that he was not up to senior form. Not once did his play savour of brilliancy, while he was responsible for several weak-hearted attempts when heavily pressed on the defence, his line-kicking in particular lacking in power.

Fitzgerald played a sound game on the wing three-quarter. His taking of the ball was extremely neat, and altogether he appeared perfectly at home in his new position. He kicked with judgment, while this sure tackling was a strong feature of his play.

Moffit's display at full-back was not free from mistakes, but his good work more than counterbalanced the errors he committed. Once or twice his misfielding looked dangerous for City, but on one occasion he retrieved his error in this respect by cleverly extricating his side when matters appeared the reverse of promising.

Of the College Rifles forwards none played better than Nesbitt, on the wing. This resourceful player was responsible for a sterling game, being a rover of the right type. He was a constant thorn in the side of the City backs, while he made openings for his fellow players in the most approved style. He was the best tackler on the field, his services in this department being indispensable.

Sellars, Pountney and Walker worked like Trojans in the College forwards, the trio accomplishing excellent work by their fast following up and spoiling tactics.

Cliff. Webb, at half-back, played a really fine game, his work, which was always of a heady nature, being characterised by smartness and precision. In attack he completely overshadowed his vis-a-vis by his clever methods, while his plucky defence in the face of the vigorous onslaughts of the City forwards and his judicious line-kicking were strong points in his play.



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