

RUGBY FOOTBALL.

The First Inter-Provincial

ULSTER'S TRIUMPH OVER MUNSTER.

The series of inter-provincial games for the season were inaugurated yesterday in Dublin, Ulster defeating Munster at the Irish Rugby Union headquarters, Lansdowne Road. The weather was bitterly cold, and a strong breeze blew down the field from the city end. In spite of the rain of the previous night the playing pitch was in good condition, though showing signs of wear in parts. The Ulster team, the greater portion of which only reached Dublin an hour and a half before the kick-off, turned out with only one change from the original selection, Steele (Trinity and Dungannon) appearing in place of H. W. Stephenson (United Services), while on the Munster fifteen Barry (Cork Constitution) stood down owing to an injured shoulder, and O'Malley (London Irish and Dolphin) came on at scrum half. The Southern fifteen, attired in red, were first out, Ulster, clad in white, appearing a few minutes later.

Dr. De Courcy Wheeler had charge of the following teams:—Ulster—W. E. Crawford (Lansdowne and Malone); J. T. L. Steele (Dublin University and Dungannon), G. V. Stephenson (Queen's University), F. Jackson (North of Ireland), R. M'Clenahan (Instonians); J. R. Wheeler (Queen's University), J. B. Gardiner (North of Ireland); I. D. Brennan (Lansdowne and Instonians), W. F. Browne (Sandhurst and North of Ireland), D. Cunningham (North of Ireland), T. A. McClelland (Queen's University), B. A. T. MacFarland (North of Ireland and Derry), S. M'Vicker (North of Ireland), H. M'Vicker (Edinburgh University and Ballymoney), J. K. S. Thompson (Dublin University and Dungannon).

Munster—D. O'Connell (Cork Constitution); J. Favier (Cork Constitution), D. B. Sullivan (London Irish and Dolphin), J. Murphy-O'Connor (University College, Cork), J. W. Wellwood (Dolphin); D. W. Hamilton (University College, Cork), C. J. S. O'Malley (London Irish); M. J. Bradley (Dolphin), J. O'Mahony (Dolphin), T. O'Sullivan (Dolphin), I. Popham (Cork Constitution), D. Daly (Cork Constitution), J. Cunningham (Cork Constitution), M. Leahy (University College, Cork).

Stephenson opened for Ulster, his kick being fielded by Wellwood, who drove down the field, Wheeler replying to touch. The Munster forwards obtained possession from the first scrum, but O'Malley's pass to Hamilton was too fast, and M'Farland nipped in, the Ulster forwards dribbling over half-way. Three minutes from the start Gardiner opened out to Wheeler who cut through before passing to Stephenson. The Queen's centre made ground in a clever run and sent Steele over near the corner. Stephenson's kick passed wide of the left upright. On the restart, M'Farland and S. M'Vicker led a forward rush, the ball eventually going back to Stephenson, who sent into touch at the Munster 25. Here Munster were penalised, but Crawford's kick fell short. Crawford marked a long kick from D. B. Sullivan, and his shot to touch sent Ulster again attacking. Murphy-O'Connor hauled M'Clenahan down when the Instonian raced away, and the Munster forwards, with O'Mahony and Bradley in the van, worked back to the Ulster 25, where a free checked further progress. Crawford and Stephenson stopped successive invasions, and then Gardiner, picking up, transferred to H. M'Vicker, who gave to Stephenson, for the latter to find touch. Thompson and McClelland carried play back over half-way, where from the base of the scrum Gardiner sent a smart pass to Wheeler. The latter made ground before sending Jackson away, the North centre eventually giving M'Clenahan a chance. The Ulster wing put in a good run, but his attempt to kick ahead was spoiled by the breeze, and the ball went into touch, Stephenson, who had come up on the outside, just failing to gather. With play near the centre Gardiner broke away, and passing, in which Thompson, Browne, and M'Farland figured, terminated in M'Clenahan scoring on the left. M'Farland's kick at goal failed. On the resumption Munster came away with great dash, and Jackson was hurt stopping the rush, and went off with a damaged eye. M'Farland came out of the pack to left-centre. A great chance came to the Southerners when Murphy-O'Connor obtained possession near the Ulster line, but he held on too long, and Steele brought him down, M'Clenahan picking up and running to half-way before being grassed by Favier. Jackson reappeared with plaster over his eyebrow, but the Munster forwards were making use of the breeze, and continued to harass the Ulster defence. Wheeler at length eased the pressure and, cutting through in great style, ran to the Munster 25, where he kicked past O'Connell, who, however, was able to touch down. McClelland fielded the drop-out, but O'Connor gathered the return, and passing by the Southern backs brought Crawford into action, the Ulster full-back punting down field. Favier obtained possession, and his kick found touch at the Ulster 25. From the line-out, Bradley, Daly, and Browne came away, and the last-named scored. Daly's kick failed. Half-time—Ulster, 2 tries (6 pts.); Munster, 1 try (3 pts.).

Munster re-started and M'Farland gathered, but his kick was taken by D. B. Sullivan, who got touch at mid-field. M'Farland and Jackson broke away, O'Connell picked up and, running across, got a useful touch. A splendid passing movement by the Ulster backs was broken up by Favier, who hauled Jackson down, but Thompson led the Ulster forwards back to the Munster "25." Popham and Browne broke away from a line-out, but Stephenson went down and checked them, and Wheeler, from a free, made ground with his punt to the verge. The Queen's half dropped two passes in succession, but no advantage accrued to Munster, and Gardiner prevented O'Malley opening up when the Southern forwards heeled quickly. The Munster pack came away, and a series of scrum-mages near the Ulster line were fiercely contested. Ulster were penalised, but Daly's kick was marked by M'Farland, Favier taking his reply and finding touch. Stephenson made a great run and, though brought down, managed to get the ball away to Jackson, whose pass to M'Clenahan was short. S. M'Vicker nipped in and saved, but Bradley checked him. Steele received a slight injury but quickly resumed, and the Northern backs made ground by quick passing till O'Connell relieved. Browne, Thompson, H. M'Vicker, and McClelland were prominent in a loose rush which brought play to the Munster line, but the Southern centres defended well, Wellwood eventually removing the danger. S. M'Vicker and M'Farland quickly returned, the latter kicking ahead for O'Malley to clear his lines. A forward pass from Stephenson to Jackson spoiled a nice bout by the Northern backs, but in the next minute an in-pass from the North centre went abegging. O'Malley, Sullivan, and Hamilton came down, and Crawford finding himself hard pressed kicked dead. The referee, holding that Munster might have scored, awarded a penalty, and O'Connell made the scores level. Ulster came away on the left, but a pass from M'Clenahan to Stephenson went astray, and O'Connell temporarily relieved. The respite was of brief duration, and passing by Wheeler and Jackson enabled M'Clenahan to utilise his speed, the Instonian, after crossing the line, running in and grounding behind the posts. From an easy position M'Farland had no difficulty in adding the extra points. Raids by the Southerners were repulsed, and Gardiner, making use of the blind side, served Wheeler, the ball going by way of Stephenson to Jackson, who was forced over the touch line. A few minutes later a penalty was awarded the Northerners, and M'Farland piloted the ball between the uprights. Gardiner twice cut through in splendid style and almost wriggled his way over, and towards the close McClelland and Stephenson were held up near the line. Result:—

Ulster—2 goals (1 penalty) 2 tries (14 pts.).

Munster—1 penalty goal 1 try (5 pts.).

NOTES ON THE GAME.

Much was expected from the Munster forwards, but although they played with characteristic dash, which had the effect of preventing the Ulster backs from operating freely, they were not such a powerful force as had been anticipated. They often obtained possession in the scrums, and in the loose they dribbled in dashing style, but they lacked finishing power, and many promising efforts fizzled out before the determined defence of the Ulstermen. Obviously their plan of campaign was devised to frustrate the skill of the Ulster backs and to ensure as few opportunities as possible for open play. To a certain extent it succeeded, and the game was mainly of a forward nature with its corresponding monotony for the onlookers, who, however, appeared quite satisfied with the quality of the football served up. The Ulster forwards did not fail, and every member of the pack played his part well, though at times slow in breaking up. Their handling was superior to that of the Munster eight, who preferred to carry the ball along at their feet. The back division of the Ulster team did not get properly going, but their passing was much surer and better timed than that of their opponents. The tackling on both sides was very keen.

At full back O'Connell was very useful for Munster, and Crawford did nearly everything that was required of him, though he did not always get length with his kicks to touch. Stephenson and M'Clenahan were the best of the Ulster three-quarters, but it was not a game in which the members of that division had many opportunities of displaying their capabilities. Gardiner justified his selection as scrum half, and if Wheeler dropped some passes he did many clever things. O'Malley, who came into the Munster team as scrum half at the last moment, was very much on the alert, but many of his passes were thrown at lightning speed, and often lacked direction. There was no better forward on either side than MacFarland, and he had splendid support from Thompson, Browne, and McClelland. The rest of the Munster pack were Bradley, O'Sullivan, Browne, and Daly.

PROVINCIAL TOWNS AND JUNIOR CUP.

Northern Branch, I.R.U.

A meeting of the Junior Committee of the Junior Committee of the I.R.U. was held at the