

BRIDGEND.

The sensation this week has been the determined stand taken by the committee against the request of the Cardiff Club for the transfer of Stanley Williams. Bridgend has lost heavily the last couple of seasons through the "poaching" of big organisations like Cardiff, and the committee feel that unless a strong stand is made against this sort of thing it will be impossible for the smaller clubs to get anything like good teams. Bridgend has been struggling along with difficulty for years, and now with the added financial responsibility of the purchase of the old grand stand of the Cardiff Club it is more than ever necessary that the club shall retain their good players in order to draw decent "gates." And yet if players are anxious to go to better clubs it seems difficult to know where to draw the line. It is one thing to refuse a transfer, but it is quite another thing to make the player play for the club that refuses it.

BRIDGEND.

Stanley Williams was the hero of the Swansea match and it is evident that his form this year is better than ever. Williams is one of the strongest wing three-quarters who have ever turned out for Bridgend. He has very high speed, and when under weight takes a great deal of stopping, as he is powerfully built, and uses his strength in his dash for the line. It is rumoured that one or two first-class clubs are anxious to secure him as a recruit for their three-quarter line, and probably Bridgend will soon lose him, as they seem to lose all their best players, unfortunately.

The Swansea team, however, played a bright, open game, and "played very light" on their opponents. It was breezy football, almost like a game of "touch." The visitors, outplayed though they were, showed the utmost good temper, and that they were popular with the crowd was shown by the hearty and spontaneous applause which greeted the efforts of their hero of the afternoon, Stanley Williams.

At Swansea Stanley Williams was practically unknown, but there was a general impression, after his great individual efforts, that he would be an acquisition to any team. There are not many three-quarters, even in the leading Welsh teams, who would have made such plucky and determined runs as Williams did in the first half. He was "on his own," and he knew it, but he never looked back and never sought for a friendly hand behind to pass the ball to. He crossed away from Bancroft, leaving him "some points on the starboard bow," and sailed across triumphant. It was one sprint with one steady object. One could not help thinking that even some of the opposing three-quarters would have thrown away the ball at midway. Indeed, one did throw away a certain try whilst sailing without opposition for the goal-line later on. Sticking to the ball is sometimes a mark both of courage and skill.

BRIDGEND.

The refusal of the Bridgend Club to grant the transfer of Stanley Williams to Cardiff is still the great bone of contention not only in Bridgend but throughout football circles in Mid-Glamorgan. Those who have been most in touch with the difficulties of the club, the hard struggle to get together a decent team, and to try and lessen the deficiency in the funds, the heavy responsibility undertaken by the erection of a grand stand, these sympathise with the efforts of the committee to try and check the gravitation of the best players to bigger organisations.

But there is also a strong feeling in favour of Stanley Williams, which is particularly pronounced at Maesteg and in the Ogmore and Garw Valleys. It is pointed out that if the smaller clubs surrounding Bridgend were to adopt the same attitude successfully it would mean that Bridgend would at present be without almost half its players.

Big and Small Clubs.

A great deal of discussion has taken place during the week on the action of the Cardiff Club in declining to play men belonging to smaller clubs outside the area controlled by the Cardiff and District Union. It is by action on these lines that a great deal can be done to save the smaller clubs from decay. How bitterly the second-class clubs have felt the constant poaching of their best players in the past was demonstrated by the furious opposition to the transfer of Stanley Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff last season. There were members of the Welsh Union at that time who were prepared to resist to the bitter end the application of Williams to be allowed to play for the Welsh Metropolitans, but, of course, the wind was taken out of their sails by the actual removal of Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff, for he could not be refused permission to play for the club in the town in which he resided.

TRANSFER REFUSAL.

CASE OF STANLEY WILLIAMS.

Bridgend Man Speaks Out

At a meeting of the General Committee of the Welsh Rugby Union last night at Cardiff (Dr. Rocyn Jones presiding) the chief business was the application of the Cardiff Club for the transfer of Stanley Williams, of Bridgend.

After hearing the parties, the committee declined to sanction the transfer.

The official report of the matter, as supplied to our representative, was as follows:—

Stanley Williams' Transfer.—The following resolution was unanimously passed, in the absence of the Bridgend and Cardiff Clubs' representatives:

That as the committee are not absolutely convinced of the bona fide character of the application for the transfer of Stanley Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff, we cannot sanction the same.

No explanation as to why the committee had come to the decision not to sanction the transfer was forthcoming.

Mr Stanley Williams is filling a responsible position in an office in Cardiff. He was interviewed by an "Echo" representative this morning, and freely and frankly stated all he knew in connection with the Cardiff Club's application for his transfer. He spoke without bitterness, but evidently laboured under a sense of injustice.

Replying to questions, he said he had played for Bridgend for about three years, having entered the team at the age of 19. He worked with his father, who has a printing and stationery business at Bridgend. Being desirous of getting into a first-class club, he made written application to the Cardiff Committee some weeks ago for a place in the reserve team, and, in reply, received a telegram from the secretary (Mr C. S. Arthur) asking him to apply to the Bridgend Club for his transfer. He did so, and after the committee of the Bridgend Club had considered the matter, he met Mr T. D. Schofield, the secretary—who is also a member of the Welsh Union Committee—and Mr Schofield told him his application had been refused.

"What was said in the conversation between you?" asked our representative.

"Oh, he said something about there being some back-door business about it."

"What did you say?"—"I denied any back-door business."

"And then?"—"He said: 'We are going to make a case of this. You won't play for a month.' I asked him why I would not be able to play for a month, and he replied: 'It will take a month to make the necessary inquiries.' This rather nettled me, and we had a few words, and since then I have not played for Bridgend."

"Has there ever been a suggestion made that you are not an amateur?"—"Never, why (with warmth) I never put the Bridgend Club to any expense, not even for a pair of boot-laces."

"It is a fact, is it not, that you played for Mr Spiller's team against Llwynypia in a mid-week match?"—"Yes, I heard of the match, and telephoned through to ask if Mr Spiller was short, and if so I would like to play. The reply came back that they would be glad if I would give them a hand, and I did so."

"And on your return to Cardiff, you stayed in the city for a couple of days?"—"Yes, I stayed with friends of mine."

"Had the Cardiff Committee or Mr Spiller anything to do with your staying here?"—

Nothing whatever. I took the opportunity to visit my friends, and they gave me an invitation to spend a few days with them."

"Now, Mr Williams. What happened at the Welsh Union Committee meeting last night?"—"Well, I attended the meeting at the request of Mr Arthur, the secretary of the Cardiff Club, with Mr Rees and Mr Spiller, and they asked me certain questions, which I answered. I did not know beforehand what questions I was going to be asked. I may say, in that connection, that Mr Rees and Mr Spiller were evidently in the same position. On the other hand, Mr Schofield had the Bridgend Club's case written out, and I noticed one peculiar thing, that a member of the committee was prompting him in questions that he addressed—why, I can only imagine."

Asked as to what he intended to do in the matter, Mr Williams replied that he was at a loss to know what to do. "I regard it as a hardship," he added, "that I am precluded from playing, which is what the resolution of the committee amounts to. Surely, as an amateur, I am entitled to play for any club that cares to accept my services. And if there is a player in South Wales who is more purely an amateur than I am—well, all I can say is I don't know him."

WELSH UNION & STANLEY WILLIAMS CASE.

Unfair Reflection on Cardiff Club and Player.

The refusal of the Welsh Football Union to grant the transfer of Stanley Williams from the Bridgend to the Cardiff Club because "the committee are not convinced of the bona fide character of the application" raises a point of vital importance to amateurism. The position is that the decision of the Union represents the player, and a member or members of the Cardiff Committee as being guilty of some mean conspiracy and matters cannot be allowed to remain where they are. It is true that the Welsh Union decision cannot be appealed against to another body except public opinion, but the reflection upon the honour of the player and the Cardiff Committee assuredly will not be taken lying down, and if I mistake not the character of the men responsible for running the Cardiff Club, they will leave nothing undone to alter the view of the Union as to the player and themselves—to bring forward such evidence as must convince that the application was a straightforward one. At present the player must play for Bridgend and no other club. He is either guilty of offending the laws of amateurism or he is not; and so with the Cardiff Committee.

The Union does not disclose the exact offence. No charge except by inference is made against player or club by the controlling body, and no proper opportunity was afforded by the Union to the defendants—the player and the Cardiff Club—for but any evidence offered on behalf of the Bridgend Club. The procedure at the inquiry is that generally followed by the Union. Questions are addressed to witnesses who do not hear the whole of the evidence given against them, and naturally in such circumstances advocacy becomes a ruling factor. Sufficient time has elapsed for the presentation in writing of the Bridgend Club case. This should have been furnished to the defendants for their reply, and witnesses should not have been subject to the possible embarrassment of not knowing what charge they had to answer, and should have been given every facility for cross-examining their accusers.

Stanley Williams may have erred in judgment in not acquainting the Bridgend Club of his intention to leave if his application to Cardiff was accepted, and the Cardiff Club might have suggested to him that it would have been a sporting action for him to have done so. Had ordinary courtesy been shown I have little doubt that this hubbub over the transfer would not have arisen. Still, the Union laws are not transgressed by this discourtesy which I feel sure was unintentional on the part of club and player.

This is the connection of the Cardiff Club with Williams as I know it. On September 2nd their secretary received a letter from him asking for a game in the trial match. He was not selected because of a decision by the committee to limit the trial to local players. Possibly at that time Williams was not regarded as a flier, and certainly many similar applications were refused. On October 4th another letter is received, and in this Williams sought a game with the Reserves. In the interval he had come into some prominence, and he was chosen for the Reserves. Cardiff at that time wanted wing players, and of course had he played well for the Reserves his place in the premier side would have been secure. One day he had visited Cardiff and seen Sergt. Spiller in the training pavilion. He had also written to the Cardiff captain offering to play in Mithan's scratch team at Llwynypia, and his offer was accepted. There were reasons why Williams desired to play for Cardiff quite apart from the natural desire of a player to join a club where he would be given more scope. He was negotiating for a public appointment in the town, which he now holds. Now if there could

be shown that any influence was used for the Cardiff Committee to secure for him that appointment in consideration of his deserting the Bridgend Club and playing for Cardiff, I could understand the objection by Bridgend against "poaching."

It is an act of professionalism

to ask or rely upon a promise, direct or implied . . . to receive any employment or advancement, any establishment in business.

Neither the Cardiff captain nor any member of the committee was aware of Williams's efforts to come to Cardiff, and when his transfer was applied for it was under the impression that he would remain a Bridgend resident.

It would appear that a majority of the Union have been swayed by sentiment for the smaller clubs, and have forgotten that they have but to administer existing laws. The movement for restricting the area from which clubs can draw players—touched upon by me the other day—is likely to gain converts, but it is a ticklish subject, and may work disadvantageously to the smaller clubs as well as proving of little service to the present big organisations by the difficulty of forming artificial boundaries which will make the chances equitable. The area system has been in use for many years in Australia, but there they carried it to ridiculous extreme, a player in one ward being forbidden to assist a club in any other ward of the same town. Over legislation is killing—even if it has not killed—amateurism in Australia, and its effects here will be equally pernicious.

Now as to the Union's power. It is absolute. Section C of Rule 4 of the Professional and Transfer Laws says:—

In the case of an unsanctioned transfer the Welsh Football Union Committee may (without inquiry) forbid the transferring player to join or play for the club to which he proposes to transfer his membership, and in such case they shall at once hold an inquiry when it shall be incumbent upon the player and the club to fully satisfy the Union Committee as to the bona fide character of the transfer.

Failing a satisfactory explanation, the Welsh Union Committee may either—

- (1) Decline to sanction the transfer.
- (2) Suspend the club or player, or both ; or
- (3) Declare the player a professional and suspend the club.

With these wide powers the Union can say—"We have conducted our inquiry in our own way and will not reopen the case. Williams cannot play for Cardiff, but can for Bridgend. We are prepared to consider any application from Williams to join any other club but Cardiff."

Maintenance of that attitude would be consistent with other rulings of the governing body, but it would be grossly unfair to player and club. If the club has broken any of the laws it should suffer a punishment mete for its crime (which should be disclosed), and if the player has done so, either with or without connivance from the club, no one would contend that he should go unpunished. But here is an amateur against whom no act of professionalism is alleged by the Union who is prevented from exercising his option, and a club is forbidden from enlisting his voluntary offered services on vague allegations. It is a queer ruling, and I hope a common sense view will prevail should the Cardiff Club do its duty in requesting the Union to re-open the inquiry. No self-respecting man can remain on the Cardiff Committee until the stigma is removed, and the committee owes a duty to the player as well as to themselves.

RUGBY SURPRISE

STAN. WILLIAMS' DECISION

A Cardiff Resident.

At a meeting of the Welsh Rugby Union Committee in Cardiff last evening (Dr. Rocyn Jones presiding), the transfer of Stanley Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff was refused.

The man of the moment in Welsh Rugby football is, undoubtedly, Stanley Williams, the ex-Bridgend three-quarter (writes "Pen-dragon"). The term "ex-Bridgend three-quarter" is used because Stanley Williams has definitely made up his mind that if he cannot play for Cardiff he will certainly not play for Bridgend.

It will probably be as great a surprise to the members of the Welsh Rugby Union as well as to the general public to learn that Williams is now employed in Cardiff. He is, in fact, an official in the Glamorgan National Health Insurance Office, in the "Western Mail" Chambers, St. Mary-street.

In an interview this afternoon he frankly stated that he desired to play for Cardiff, because it would give him a better opportunity of accomplishing his athletic aspirations, by which he meant that some day or other he hoped to play for Wales.

In discussing his relations with the Bridgend club it was obvious that Mr. Williams felt that he had been unjustly treated.

Asked how the whole bother had arisen, he said that at the beginning of the season he wrote to the Cardiff secretary (Mr. C. S. Arthur) asking if he could be given a place in the Reserves' team. In response to his application he received a telegram advising him to apply to the Bridgend committee for his transfer. He did this and subsequently met Mr. T. D. Schofield, who told him that his application had been refused.

"What passed in the discussion between you and Mr. Schofield?" Mr. Williams was asked.

"Oh! Mr. Schofield said something about backdoor business, and I denied that there had been any backdoor business about it. He followed this up by saying, 'We are going to make a case of this. You won't play for a month.'"

"THIS ANGERED ME"

"I asked him what he meant by this, and he said, 'It will take a month to make the necessary inquiries.' This rather angered me, and some words passed between us. Since then I have not played for Bridgend."

Speaking of his relations with the Bridgend club Mr. Williams said he had never put the club to the expense of even a pair of bootlaces.

"Did you not earlier in the season play for Mr. W. Spiller's team against Llwynypia?"

"Yes; I heard of the match, and telephoned to Spiller to ask him if he could give me a game. I had an affirmative reply, and played in the match."

"Will you be good enough to state what happened at the meeting of the Welsh Union last night?"

"Certainly, I will. At the request of Mr. C. S. Arthur I attended the meeting in company with Mr. Sidney Rees and Mr. Spiller. The members of the Union asked me a number of questions, which I answered. No intimation was given me beforehand as to the nature of these questions, and Messrs. Rees and Spiller were in the same position. On the other hand, I was surprised to notice that Mr. Schofield had the Bridgend club's case prepared in writing, and it also interested me to see another member constantly prompt him with questions. Why this was done I can only imagine."

Discussing his amateur status, Mr. Williams said: "I regard it as a hardship that I am not allowed to play for any club I wish to play for. 'Surely, as an amateur,' he added, 'I am entitled to do this. It seems to be an absurd position.'"

Mr. Williams is an ex-Taunton College boy, and has played for Bridgend for three seasons. He is very fast; in fact, is what is known as a 10½sec. man. Though only about 5ft. 6in. in height, William is very sturdily built, and in his football-kit weighs just over 11st.

It is not improbable that to-morrow he will be found playing for one of the principal Cardiff local clubs.

STANLEY WILLIAMS

PROTEST BY CARDIFF CLUB

Demand for Re-opening

No time has been lost by the Cardiff Football Club in entering their protest against the action of the Welsh Football Union Committee in refusing to sanction the transfer of Stanley Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff. At their weekly meeting on Monday evening (writes "Forward") the Cardiff Committee passed the following resolution:—

That this committee protests against the decision of the Welsh Rugby Union in regard to the transfer of Stanley Williams, and calls upon the said body to immediately re-open the question. The committee also consider that if any charges are to be made against the Cardiff Committee or against Stanley Williams the nature of such charges should be made known as a matter of justice to both parties.

The next step in the unfortunate business will be that taken at a special meeting of the Welsh Union Committee, to be held at Cardiff on Thursday evening, when the resolution of the Cardiff Club will be submitted for consideration. It will then be for the Welsh Union to decide whether they will accede to the request of the Cardiff Club to re-open the question, and one cannot imagine on what ground the Union committee can refuse such a request.

They have, obviously, placed themselves in an illogical and impossible position by contravening their own rules, and to save their credit as fair and intelligent legislators they must, of necessity, revoke last Thursday's resolution. In coming to the decision they did they were clearly swayed by sentiment, and they made the egregious blunder of interpreting the transfer laws not as they are, but as they (the committee) would like them to be. There are other laws beside those relating to the transfer of amateur football players which many of us would like to see altered, and one can imagine, for instance, just a few people in this country at the present time who would like to see stamp-licking of daffodilian stamps being made illegal. The whole thing in a nutshell is that no charge of professionalism has been made against either the Cardiff Club or against Stanley Williams, and in the absence of such charge Williams, whose amateurism is, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion, enjoys the privilege and right of playing for any club of his own choice. Cardiff happens to be that club, and there you are.

A RUGBY MYSTERY

TRANSFER FARCE

WELSH UNION'S OBJECTION

Intolerable Position

By FORWARD.

Things have come to a strange pass in Rugby football in Wales when an amateur has ceased to be a free agent and is no longer at liberty to decide for himself which club he will play for. That is the whole meaning of the resolution passed by the Welsh Union Committee at their meeting in Cardiff on Thursday evening. They declined to grant the transfer of Stanley Williams from Bridgend to Cardiff, and the only reason they gave for their refusal was that they were not satisfied with the bona-fide character of Williams's application.

If this implies or means anything at all, it is that either Stanley Williams or the Cardiff Club were suspected of some kind of transgression of the transfer laws. And the Union committee if in any doubt, as they evidently were, of the bona-fide character of the application ought to have gone a good deal further than refusing to grant Williams's transfer. By refusing it on the slender pretence which they made in their illuminating official report the Union committee have created a most dangerous precedent. What has been made applicable to Stanley Williams will have to apply to all future applications of players for transfers.

WHAT PUZZLES ME

I am assuming, of course, that the Union will be consistent, and that they will be impartial in their treatment of all players whatever clubs they may belong to. What puzzles me is this—Clem. Lewis and Johnny Rogers were both allowed to leave Bridgend to play for Cardiff without a breath of protest. In fact, the Penybont Club felt it an honour that Cardiff should have come to them for players. Why they have changed their attitude so suddenly by opposing the transfer of Stanley Williams is a mystery. There is no suggestion that Williams is not the purest of amateurs in the best sense of the word, and it may surprise some of the members of the Union committee to know that Stanley Williams is employed in an office in Cardiff, and is a resident in the city.

Apart from all other considerations, it is more convenient for him to play for Cardiff than for Bridgend, but, according to the Welsh Union, he must play for Bridgend or not play at all. If this is amateurism up-to-date, the sooner it is changed into professionalism the better. One feels tempted to use strong language in a matter where the action of the Union committee is not wholly harsh and unjust but absolutely illogical. According to their own transfer laws, the Union committee have no right whatever to refuse the application of Stanley Williams, except on the ground that he had broken one of those laws or that the Cardiff Club was at fault in holding out to him some undue or illegal inducement.

THE SMALLER CLUBS

If the committee were suspicious of either player or club being guilty of the slightest offence against either the spirit or letter of the transfer laws, then they ought to have made the fullest inquiry into the facts, and penalised either club or player or both. One cannot approve entirely of the action of the Cardiff Club for going outside of the city for players, but that is not the point, for, as I have already stated, Stanley Williams lives in Cardiff and earns his livelihood there. The smaller clubs, I am ready to agree, ought to be protected from the depredations of the bigger clubs, but that can only be done under a system of professionalism.

The essential point of the whole thing is that, so long as a player is an amateur, so long does he enjoy the privilege of playing for any club of his own choice. It is not inconceivable that the most brilliant player of the day would prefer playing for a local club to playing in first-class football for the reason that he could get more sport and enjoyment by playing for the smaller club than in playing the more strenuous and more serious class of football. As an instance of this, one need only mention the name of L. R. Roose, the prince of goalkeepers, in Association football. Roose does not hesitate to confess that he gets more fun out of playing for small clubs than he does in the first division matches of the English League. And the English Association, which is rather a more powerful body than the Welsh Union, have not dared yet to prevent Roose or any other amateur player playing for any club he likes.

SOUL OF AMATEURISM

Freedom of action is the very soul of amateurism, and I maintain that once a player is deprived of that freedom he ceases to be an amateur. Stanley Williams has now been placed in this position—that if he does not play for Bridgend he cannot play at all, because the Union committee, to be consistent, cannot grant his transfer to any other club. Why, I should like to know, have the committee differentiated between Stanley Williams and Willie Bowen, of Abertillery, who played for Cardiff last Saturday without a transfer? It may be said that the Abertillery Club raised no objection, but that is not enough. The Union committee's ostensible desire is to protect the smaller clubs, and if they are sincere in that desire they ought not to stand upon the mere formality of a club's objection. Then, again, the case of J. B. James, who left Pontypool and played for Newport against Swansea without a transfer.

Why Bridgend should have gone so far as to stand in the way of Stanley Williams playing for Cardiff is altogether beyond my understanding, knowing as I do that their representative on the Welsh Union encouraged the transfer of Clem Lewis and Johnny Rogers from Bridgend to Cardiff. Personally, I hope that the Cardiff Club will not take this rebuff lying down, but, in duty to themselves as a club and to Stanley Williams, they will take the earliest opportunity

of bringing the matter before the Welsh Union again with the clear and emphatic demand for a full explanation of the reasons why they refused the transfer of Williams.

People who are inclined to sympathise with Bridgend must not forget that many, if not most, of the Bridgend players are drafted from smaller clubs in the Llynvi and Ogmore Valleys, and, on the principle that charity begins at home, they ought not to have objected to the transfer of Stanley Williams, especially in view of the fact that, to all intents and purposes, he is a Cardiff man for the time being.

JUST A WHISPER

I heard it whispered after the meeting that the committee had been influenced in their decision by the fact that Stanley Williams, after playing for Spiller's team against Llwynypia, a little time ago, spent a few days in Cardiff before returning home to Bridgend, and they connected this with the suspicion, which was absolutely devoid of any significance whatever, that some inducement had been held out to Williams to play for Cardiff. As a matter of fact, Spiller did not come into contact with Williams at all for one single moment during his sojourn in the city, and, so far as I can gather, not a single representative of the Cardiff Club happened to meet him. But, even assuming that every member of the Cardiff Club Committee had asked Williams to play in the blue and black jersey, that would have been no breach of the transfer laws. They have a perfect right to ask any player to assist the club.

I cannot understand why Mr. W. M. Douglas, as the representative of the Cardiff Club on the Union, should have retired from the committee-room when the subject of Williams's transfer was under discussion. One would imagine that it was the very time when he ought to have been in the room to defend his club against any suggestion of impropriety. Neither can I understand why Mr. T. D. Schofield should have absented himself at the same time, and I shall be disappointed if the Cardiff Club, at any rate, do not demand an explanation from their representative. I cannot help thinking that the whole business is most unfortunate, as it opens out a new and most unpromising aspect of amateur football, and the rights and privileges of those who participate in the game. Something will have to be done to bring about a revision of Thursday's resolution, for the position which it has created is not only illogical, but intolerable.