

SCHWEPPE'S W.R.U. CHALLENGE CUP
S E M I - F I N A L



PONTYPOOL

V

CARDIFF

RODNEY PARADE

::

NEWPORT

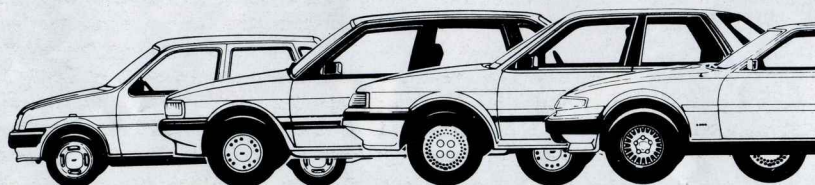
SATURDAY, 23rd MARCH, 1985

KICK-OFF 3.00 p.m.

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WELCOME TO RODNEY PARADE

by BRIAN J. JONES, CHAIRMAN, NEWPORT R.F.C.

It is a great pleasure, on behalf of everyone connected with Newport Rugby Club, to extend a very warm welcome to the Committees, Players and Supporters of both Pontypool and Cardiff Rugby Football Clubs to Rodney Parade this afternoon for what promises to be a titanic struggle in this Schweppes W.R.U. Challenge Cup semi-final. We are honoured that the Welsh Rugby Union have chosen our world-famous ground to host this game, our second semi-final which, according to the pre-match publicity, is between the two best Club sides, not only in Wales but possibly Britain and the world. (It would take a brave man to argue, on checking their respective records.)

Rodney Parade has staged many memorable matches in its long and illustrious history, but a Cup semi-final has a charisma and drama all of its own. Only eighty minutes of rugby, except if extra time is played, stands between glory and failure, and the incentive of a place in the Schweppes W.R.U. Challenge Cup Final at the National Stadium on Saturday, 27th April 1985, will ensure that the adrenalin is flowing through the veins and that there is a great deal of nail-biting, chain-smoking and clock-watching as the minutes tick away this afternoon to the final whistle.

The 'Big Freeze', which caused a major re-organisation in the Five Nations Championship, resulted in many of the players involved this afternoon having their thoughts channelled elsewhere, but it is certain that the Pontypool and Cardiff Clubs in general have had all their thoughts geared to this afternoon's game ever since their victories over Swansea and Neath respectively in the quarter finals and the draw was made. Cardiff, as Cup holders and with a galaxy of international players at their command, are having a fine season under skipper Terry Holmes, playing a style of rugby that has delighted the Arms Park faithfuls. They are determined to hold on to the Trophy but, following their heavy defeat at Pontypool Park only a fortnight ago, Coaches Roger Beard and Garry Samuels are well aware of the task that lies ahead and the motivation that is required to restore confidence. Pontypool, who won the coveted Trophy on their only appearance in the final in 1983, are once again having an outstanding season and look to have already secured the Western Mail Championship and the Whitbread Merit Table. But Coaches Ray Prosser and Ivor Taylor will motivate their team, captained by Eddie Butler, with the knowledge of the prestige and publicity that can be gained by winning 'The Cup'. Both Clubs have the experience of being losing semi-finalists as well as winners, so they will need no reminding that today is all about winners — they celebrate by drinking champagne, taking the accolades and thinking of the Final, while the losers talk of missed chances and think of next season.

Cup rugby has no respect for records or reputations; it is all about putting your game together for eighty minutes, making less mistakes than your opponents, taking your opportunities when they arise and turning your opponents' mistakes into your points. Simple enough, but players, like everyone watching, are only human and with the atmosphere generated by a near-capacity crowd being electric, it is understandable why mistakes are made. Let's hope today's result is not decided by a mistake, and wish all the players, together with referee Clive Norling and his touch judges, 'Good Luck' for a game we are certain will long be remembered.

Welcome to Rodney Parade — we hope the occasion will be a memorable one and that the quality of rugby produced will be a credit not only to the Pontypool and Cardiff Clubs but to Welsh Rugby. One thing is certain — even allowing for the dedicated, vociferous support of both Clubs 'on enemy territory', the TV cameras present will have no crowd trouble to report like we have seen on soccer grounds recently. Rugby football is all about playing the game, with the winners accepting victory with dignity and the losers defeat gracefully. Long may it continue.

THE TREBLE

by DAVID FACEY (*South Wales Argus*)

By around 4.30 p.m. this afternoon, Pontypool should know whether the glittering treble they are chasing is still within their reach.

Reigning Welsh Champions, Pontypool are bidding to make history. No team has ever won all three major domestic honours — The Schweppes Cup, The Welsh Championship and The Whitbread Merit Table. But, with the Championship and Merit Table titles already practically sewn up, today's Cup semi-final presents probably the stiffest hurdle left in their path. Whoever triumphs in today's match is certain to be installed as the hot favourites to lift the trophy. So if Pontypool win through, the odds against them pulling off that unique treble will shorten dramatically.

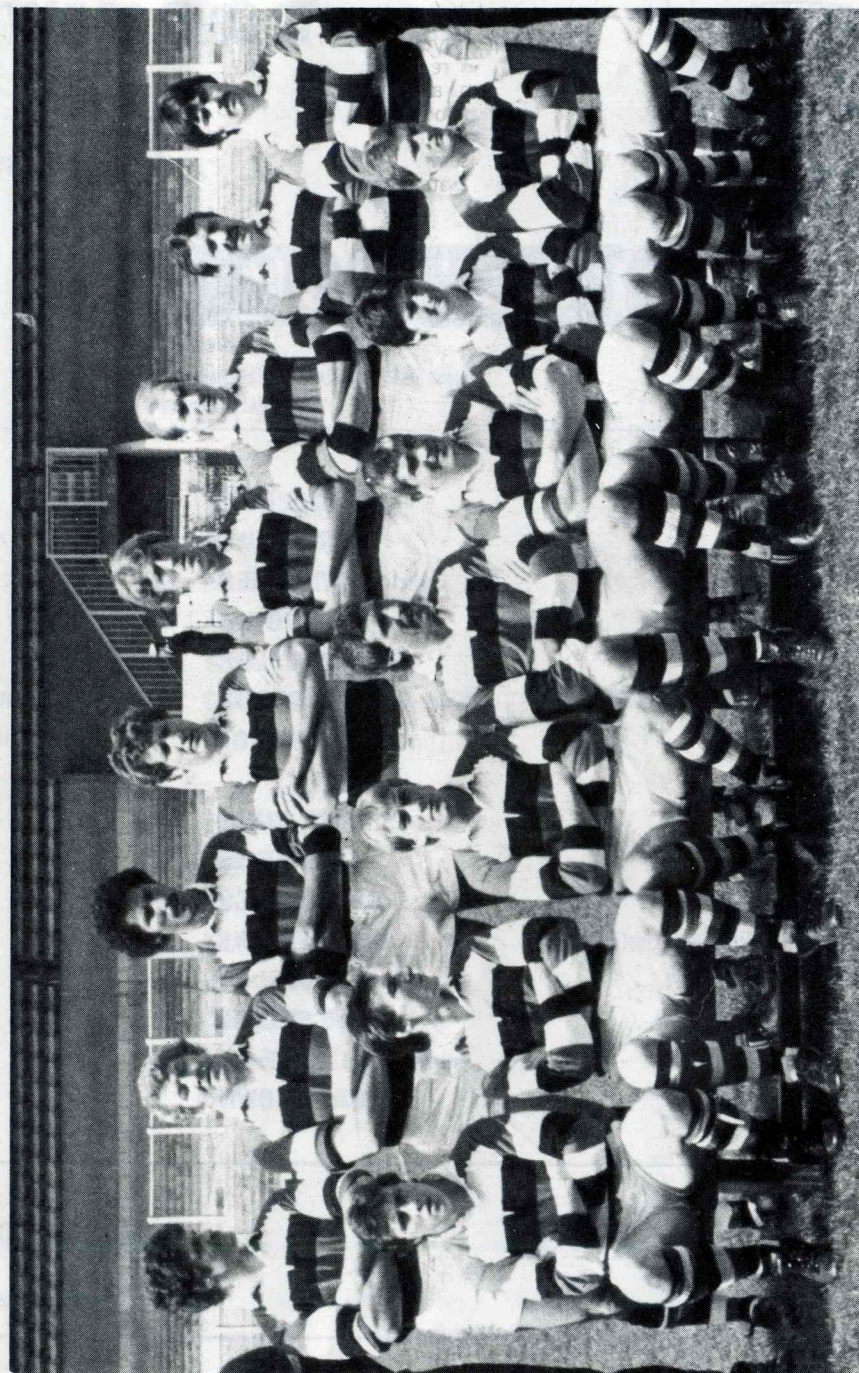
A clean sweep of the major honours has been Pontypool's big target since they finally broke their duck in the Cup with their 18-6 win over Swansea in the final two years ago. They went close last year, finishing streets ahead of everyone else in the Championships and Merit Table standings — but the Schweppes Trophy proved the stumbling block, even though they never actually lost a cup-tie! Pontypool's technical knockout in a 15-15 quarter-final draw at Stradey Park ended their hopes, as Llanelli went into the last four by scoring the only try of the game. That left the way clear for Cardiff to win the Cup for the third time — and they showed they were good value for that success with a decisive 26-6 win over Pontypool's conquerors in the semi-finals.

With Cardiff opting out of the merit table, the chances of any side completing the treble vanish whenever they win the Cup or the Championship. And since they have won the Schweppes Trophy three times in the last four years, as well as being Welsh Champions in 1981-82, the prospects of a clean sweep have not arisen too often recently. The exception, however, was in 1982-83 when Swansea and Pontypool fought out the Cup Final. Swansea went into that game having already been crowned Welsh Champions and Merit Table Winners, and were slight favourites to take the third leg of the treble. But Pontypool buried those ambitions in one of the most one-sided Cup Finals so far — and could also claim they were unlucky not to sweep the board themselves as they were runners-up to Swansea in both other major competitions.

The other near-misses have involved Llanelli and — appropriately enough in view of the venue for today's semi-final — Newport. Llanelli went close to clearing up in the 1973-74 season. They completed the Championship and Cup double, but had to accept second best to their great rivals Swansea in the Merit Table. Newport's bid to re-write the record books came in the 1976-77 campaign when they clinched their only Merit Table title to-date and also achieved their only Cup success, beating Cardiff 16-15 in a cliffhanger of a final. But they failed to show the level of consistency needed to complete the three-timer, and had to settle for a place in the Championship behind Llanelli.

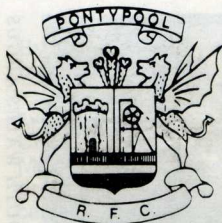
The standard of competition has improved significantly since then, bringing with it a corresponding increase in the pressure on any club who set their sights on becoming the first to achieve the treble. But their results over the last couple of seasons suggest Pontypool certainly show the right level of consistency to realise that ambition. They just need that little bit of luck that all cup-winning sides get. Their consistency is borne out by the fact that Pontypool's winning percentage in the Merit Table last year, 94.00, easily surpassed their own existing record. Their strike rate as they claimed the Championship was also extremely impressive, with their 37 wins and one draw in the forty games which counted in that competition, giving them a final average of 93.75%. That was easily the best mark recorded in recent years, although, amazingly, Pontypool are on course to improve on those totals in both competitions this year. Their wins over great rivals Neath and Cardiff in the space of six days earlier this month underlined that point — and virtually guaranteed Pontypool both titles once again.

Despite Pontypool's 24-6 victory over Cardiff at Pontypool Park two weeks ago, however, they will be taking nothing for granted today — there is simply too much at stake for that. But even if Pontypool fail to achieve that unique treble this season, in view of their current strength it would take a brave man to bet against them doing so in the very near future.



PONTYPOOL WELSH CUP WINNING SQUAD OF 1983

Courtesy of THE SOUTH WALES ARGUS



TODAY'S TEAMS



Referee:-
CLIVE NORLING
W.R.U.

PONTYPOOL

Colours:-

Jerseys: Red White and Black
Shorts: White

H/T 0-6

CARDIFF

Colours:-

Jerseys: Blue and Black
Shorts: Black

F/T 3-24

Peter LEWIS 15^R
Geoff DAVIES 14
Lyndon FAULKNER 13
Lee JONES 12
Bleddyn TAYLOR 11
Mike GOLDSWORTHY 10
David BISHOP 9

FULL BACK
RIGHT WING
CENTRE
CENTRE
LEFT WING
OUTSIDE HALF
INSIDE HALF

15 Paul REES
14 Gerald CORDLE
13 Mark RING ^{T.}
12 Alun DONOVAN
11 Adrian HADLEY
10 Gareth DAVIES ^{C.P.R.D.D.P.}
9 Terry HOLMES (Capt.)

Substitutes:

16 Adrian PARRY
17 Roger BIDGOOD
18 Shaun HANSON
19 Chris HUIISH
20 Bobby WINDSOR
21 Andy CARTER

Staff JONES 1
Steve JONES 2
Graham PRICE 3
John PERKINS 4
Kevin MOSELEY 5
Jeff SQUIRE 6
Eddie BUTLER (Capt.) 8
Mark BROWN 7

PROP
HOOKER
PROP
LOCK
LOCK
FLANKER
No. 8
FLANKER

1 Jeff WHITEFOOT
2 Alan PHILLIPS
3 Ian EIDMAN
4 Kevin EDWARDS
5 Robert NORSTER
6 Owen GOLDING
8 John SCOTT
7 Gareth ROBERTS

Substitutes:

Mike CARRINGTON 16
Steve CANNON 17
Chris COLLINS 18
Jose SOUTO 19
Robert LAKIN 20

Touch Judges:-

KEN PARFITT R.O.P. JONES

Programme Editor: BRIAN J. JONES

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THE INEVITABLE CLASH

by J. B. G. THOMAS

It seems inevitable that Pontypool and Cardiff, two of the top clubs in Wales, should meet in the later stages of the Schweppes Cup Competition, and what homeric struggles they have proved. Unfortunately, they have never clashed in the final, which is what the followers of both clubs desire.

They have met five times in the Cup, with Cardiff winning on four occasions, but today's match suggests that Pontypool will start as firm favourites. This season they drew the normal away fixture at the Arms Park and then won comfortably at Pontypool Park, which leaves Cardiff as the non-favourites and they will probably prefer it, so that Pontypool will have the added responsibility!

Pontypool followers, known as "Prosser's Army", will be in evidence today at Rodney Parade and have rightly earned the title of one of the most vociferous of Welsh rugby crowds. The cry of "Pooler, Pooler!", will encourage their players to charge into battle as if their very lives depended on it.

Cardiff realise they have another "Everest" to climb in this match but then no semi-final match is easy, and there will be hard rugby at St. Helens, where Llanelli and Bridgend are battling. It is said that the semi-finals are harder than the final, and that the winners of today's match could well become the Cup winners.

Pontypool have won the Cup once in their only final of 1983, whereas Cardiff are attempting to make their fifth final, having won the Cup on three occasions, but they will have to pull out all the stops. They are at a disadvantage for six of their leading players were in action for Wales last Saturday at the Arms Park against Ireland, and many will be in action next Saturday against France, and this means they have to produce three "peaks" on three successive Saturdays.

It is one of the faults of the Competition that the fourth round and semi-finals are sandwiched between international matches. Fortunately for Pontypool, only one of their six international forwards is engaged by Wales, while three have opted out of international match rugby. Presumably it is more fun playing for Pontypool; at least they rarely lose!

Cardiff have no worries about playing at Rodney Parade. They used to play there twice a season when they shared four fixtures with Newport, and many were dramatic occasions, especially when one of the clubs was bidding for four wins, in the last of the four. It used to fill Rodney Parade and they provided value for money for the two groups of supporters, intensely partisan, with Stanley Bowes (Ex-RN), the chairman of the Cardiff club this season, as the most partisan.

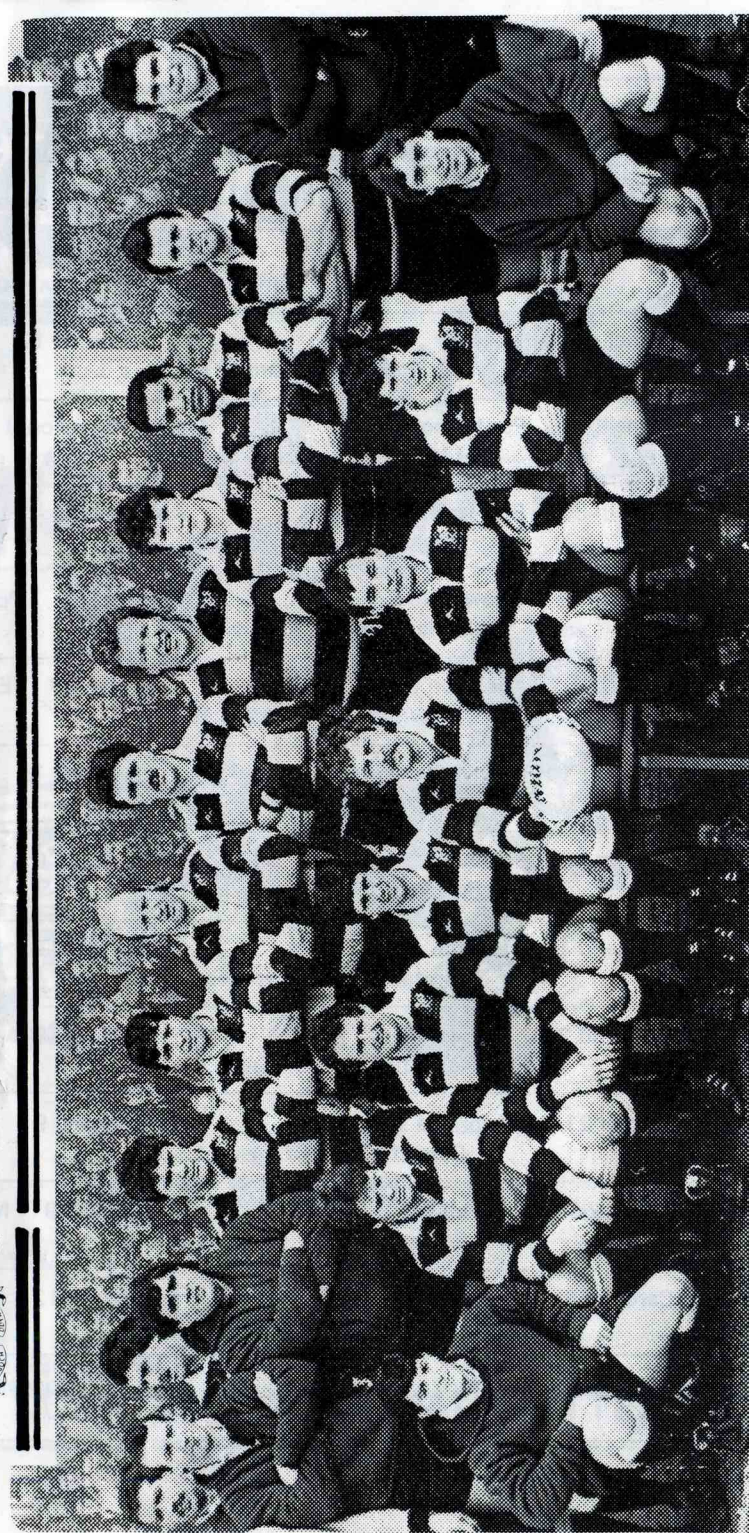
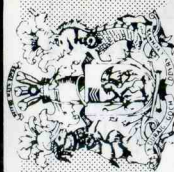
He had better give the Cardiff side a team talk in similar fashion today, in the hope that it will inspire his team. Another close friend of mine, Ray Prosser, will be instructing his team in fruity words to go out and win. If the referee should overhear all that is being said in both dressing rooms before the start, he will probably put a second whistle into his pocket, or even a third one!

Yet I do not believe it need be a dull blood and thunder, win at all costs affair, since both sides are capable of outstanding football at speed. It would be great to see them running at each other behind the wings in action. I know that almost all matches are decided by the outcome of the forward struggle and one would suggest that Pontypool may achieve the edge here. So the Cardiff pack will have to raise its game to a high pitch of strength and quality.

If they can do that and last the pace it could be the match of the tournament. They know the Pontypool pack has only been mastered twice in recent years, and both times by the Wallabies, and the fact that Cardiff defeated the last two Australian sides should give them heart. They are also thinking if Llanelli beat Pontypool in the fourth round last season (somewhat narrowly of course) there must be a chance.

I do not think there will be much in it at the end but what everyone must wish for, if naturally they want victory, is for a good game of rugby. No nonsense; fair play when kickers are taking kicks, and an understanding when players are injured. Terry Holmes will be feeling that a third time will be lucky . . . I will not be injured today!

CARDIFF R.F.C.



JOHN SCOTT AND HIS CUP WINNING SQUAD OF 1984

Courtesy of THE WESTERN MAIL

PREVIOUS W.R.U. CUP SEMI-FINAL AND FINAL RESULTS

SCHWEPPE'S W.R.U. CUP

71-72	Neath 16	Cardiff 9; Neath 15	Llanelli 13	Aberavon 7
72-73	Llanelli 6	Neath 3; Llanelli 30	Cardiff 7	Cardiff 12 Swansea 8
73-74	Llanelli 16	Pontypool 14; Llanelli 12	Aberavon 10	Cardiff 4
74-75	Llanelli 35	Bridgend 6; Llanelli 15	Aberavon 6	Pontypridd 9
75-76	Llanelli 10	Ebbw Vale 4; Llanelli 16	Swansea 4	Swansea 22 Pontypool 14
76-77	Cardiff 15	Aberavon 6; Newport 16	Cardiff 15	Newport 7 Ebbw Vale 3
77-78	Newport 10	Aberavon 6; Swansea 13	Newport 9	Swansea 18 Cardiff 13
78-79	Bridgend 18	Llanelli 13; Bridgend 18	Pontypridd 12	Pontypridd 6 Aberavon 3
79-80	Bridgend 18	Llanelli 10; Bridgend 15	Swansea 9	Swansea 23 Newport 13
80-81	Bridgend 22	Llanelli 15; Cardiff 14	Bridgend 6	Cardiff 18 Swansea 7
81-82	Cardiff 21	Newbridge 11; Cardiff 12*	Bridgend 12	Bridgend 9 Aberavon 6
82-83	Pontypool 16	Bridgend 3; Pontypool 18	Swansea 6	Swansea 19 Newbridge 6
83-84	Cardiff 26	Llanelli 6; Cardiff 24	Neath 19	Neath 12 Aberavon 3
84-85	Pontypool v Cardiff;		Bridgend v Llanelli	

* Winners on Tries Rule



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