

A HOODOO SEASON OF INJURIES—REX WILLIS CHIEF SUFFERER

CARDIFF'S VETERANS WIN AGAIN AND ENJOY NOILLY PRAT

1952-53. P48, W37, L8, D3. Points 636-240.

W. Rex Willis was a most popular choice as captain. He nominated Sid Judd as his deputy. Rex was now in world class of scrum half backs. Many judges rated his ability higher than that of Haydn Tanner whom he had studied, and subsequently superseded. His passes were not so lengthy as Tanner's but his service from the scrum was excellent and accurate, chest high always, to enable his partner to run on to the pass at speed and gain many attacking advantages. Unselfish to a degree his individual breaks from a scrum were rare but nearly always successful for the openings which were created. He would never give a pass from a scrum from a slovenly heel or when harried by opponents, and never allowed his outside half to take a hiding; he was most successful in preventing the opposing scrum half from getting a good pass away. Rex was the personification of courage, and most probably the best scrum half of his kind in the club's long history. A grand sportsman, he was a credit to his club, gaining all the highest honours from club, country, Barbarians and the British Lions, and served the committee for some years after retirement.

In terms of injuries to senior players this was a real "hoodoo" season and Willis was to suffer most. A badly damaged shoulder in the club's August trials kept him out of action until the Wasps match on Boxing Day. At Murrayfield on 7th February against Scotland he again damaged his shoulder which injury kept him out of the two remaining Welsh international matches. A further injury befell him in April against Cheltenham and the unfortunate Rex took part in only twelve first team matches. Sid Judd ably deputised as captain and Brian Mark took up the scrum half position very well indeed and took part in twenty-five first team games. Cliff Morgan, Bleddyn Williams, Alun Thomas and others were all injured from time to time, and we had lost through retirement Frank Trott, Dr. Jack Matthews, Des O'Brien and our grand prop, the great character Cliff Davies, beloved by all whom he played with or against; a man of humble birth from Kenfig Hill, who had served the club from its war-time period and gained all of Rugby football's highest honours.

Colin Bosley, a threequarter from Newbridge, Eddie Thomas a forward from Neath (of Rhondda extraction), C. L. Davies "Cowboy", a strong running wing from Carmarthen joined us, the youngsters were developing—Gareth Griffiths, Gwyn Rowlands and David James whilst Alan Barter the Cambridge Blue and Lloyd Williams another member of the Taffs Well family made their first team debuts. Despite the injuries and the inevitable many changes the results must be considered very successful. In fact we won all the first fourteen matches, losing then to Oxford University on 1st November. The Varsity fielded no fewer than seven South Africans, namely D. Robinson (full-back), Paul Johnstone (centre), and five forwards in C. Griffith, J. Fellows-Smith, L. Bryer, W. Boyce and J. Henderson. Not at our strongest, we lost by one try to nil, failing with several penalty goal efforts. It was a 'Black November' as we lost four times, to Oxford, Northampton, Llanelli and Neath. The remaining losses were sustained against Aberavon (A), Newport (A) and Gloucester (A).

Four tours were undertaken successfully. The first was to Ireland where Old Belvedere and Young Munster at Cork were met. Young Munster included six international guest players in their team including a courtesy selection of Dr. Jack Matthews, the Irish five being Noel Henderson in the centre, Jackie Kyle and J. O'Meara half backs, Tom Clifford and Tom Reid forwards. Cliff Morgan out-shone Jackie Kyle, playing in brilliant form and Cardiff's good performance, 31 points to 17, reflected a splendid game of Rugby much enjoyed by all. "And a good time was had by all." Coventry and Leicester had already been beaten in late September. In late March Cardiff journeyed north-west to play Birkenhead Park on Thursday 26th March—we lost six points to nil, but defeated Sale on the following Saturday by 14 points to three. A three-match tour was successfully undertaken with victories over Devonport Services, St. Ives and Penzance Newlyn in the south-west.

Popular visitors were the combined Cognac/Nantes XV who were well beaten in a bright game by 36 points to 11 on Saturday 27th September. This match was preceded by one on the previous day between Cardiff's Veterans and those of Nantes for the 'Championnat du Monde', and the Noilly Prat Cup which was successfully retained by Cardiff's veterans which included amongst their elderly gentlemen, Wilfred Wooller, "Wendy" Davis, Les Spence, Harry Rees and Les Manfield. Cardiff's non-playing veteran and captain of 1905-06 Percy Bush was presented with a certificate of life membership of the Nantes Club by its president Marcel Pedron. At Easter time the Barbarians included Dr. Jack Matthews in their XV against us, but they were well beaten by 14 points to nil, and on Easter Monday the 'Quins' were also beaten by 15 points to nil, and the next day Northampton held us to a draw of six points each. We beat Newport in the first two encounters, Tamplin again being the scourge of the Black and Ambers with successful goal kicking—three penalties in the first match (9-3) and two penalties and one conversion in the second (14-0).

Seven Cardiff players represented Wales in her international matches, three gained their first caps, namely Geoff Beckingham, Gareth Griffiths and Sid Judd. Cliff Morgan and Alun Thomas played three times, Bleddyn Williams played in all four internationals and was captain thrice. Rex Willis, owing to his unfortunate injuries was able to represent Wales only against Scotland.

Our chief scorers were Haydn Morris 26 tries (five in the match against Plymouth Albion and four against the combined Cognac/Nantes XV), Dr. Gwyn Rowlands 16 in addition to kicking 16 goals, Gareth Griffiths 13 (three against Cambridge University), Cliff Morgan 13 and our two promising newcomers Colin Bosley and C. L. "Cowboy" Davies each bagged eight. 'Tamplin the Great' kicked 54 goals and scored a try against Moseley to amass a total of 128 points. Cliff Morgan, Gareth Griffiths and Alun Thomas certainly enhanced their reputations and new cap awards went to C. L. Davies, Dafydd James, Dr. Gwyn Rowlands and Eddie Thomas.

"The Rags". Stan Bowes was at the helm for the third successive season, and was playing so well that he was called upon to play for the Seniors on 25 occasions. The season's results were: P36, W26, L9, D1, points 388 to 132. Sixty-four players were called upon and Dr. Jack Matthews emerged from retirement to lead "The Rags" on six occasions during Stan's absence. There were no fewer than 36 scorers, the leading ones being Mike Evans 11 tries, T. Wynne Jones 8, Bryn Mapstone 7, Colin Hewitt 6 and W. G. McCarthy 5. Bryn Mapstone also kicked 23 goals, Alan Priday 17 and also a try. No fewer than ten players gained Athletic XV caps, they were Alun Barter, Tom Burns (son of Jim Burns of the twenties), Terry Donovan, Colin Hewitt, T. Wynne Jones, Howard Nicholls, Bryn Mapstone, John Maunder, Peter Owen and W. J. Samuel.

The Youth XV (Cardiff Juniors to be precise) continued to establish themselves and give practical evidence of becoming a nursery for the two premier fifteens, Mapstone, Lloyd Williams and Priday being cases in point. The season's record was P31, W15, L15, D1. The points were not in the Juniors' favour being 123 to 139, this was indeed to be a very rare occurrence.

The Rugby committee was increased from 12 to 15 to cope with additional work, mainly in connection with running the Youth XV. A new score board was erected at the east side of the ground. The management committee of the Cardiff Athletic Club instructed its architect to prepare plans for a new clubhouse which was very much needed—there was some £30,000 in the kitty of the building fund. A most sad note to end on was to regret the most untimely death by accident of one of our most promising young players, W. Gerard McCarthy, incurred at Brecon whilst serving in the armed forces on national service, a much mourned tragedy was this, particularly so to the sporting McCarthy family which provided five of its sons to play for Cardiff.

AT LAST—VICTORY OVER NEW ZEALAND—21st NOVEMBER 1953

BLEDDYN WILLIAMS CAPTAIN. HIS PROPHECY TO EAMONN ANDREWS

1953-54. P49, W37, L9, D3. Points 616-284.

The defeat of New Zealand at our fourth attempt overshadowed all other events of the