

## 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 Many judges rated his ability higher than that of Haydn Tanner whom he had studied, and subsequently superseded.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.

Collin 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, Llanelly 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

season. In Great Britain the touring All Blacks captained by Bob Stuart suffered only one other defeat, to Wales, by 13 points to 8. Swansea had gallantly held them to a draw of six points each, and Ulster also at five points all. Prior to the match with Cardiff, the New Zealanders had beaten Llanelli on the previous Tuesday by 17 points to three, their captain sustained a leg wound and was unable to play against Cardiff. Bleddyn Williams, the greatest centre threequarter of his time, of world-wide Rugby experience was appointed club captain; Sid Judd pack leader was again appointed vice-captain.

Bleddyn had long planned tactics to defeat the All Blacks, he had gained much knowledge from his tour to New Zealand in 1950 with the British Lions. Simply, it was to "run at 'em", make their pack run about the field and tire them. To his own forwards he said, "give me two-fifths possession of the ball and we'll win". He had a grand XV to lead although his own pack was much lighter than that of the All Blacks, but he also knew that the atmosphere of the Cardiff Arms Park was worth a couple of points to the home team, and could be unsettling for a while to the visitors. A day or two before the match the well-known broadcaster Eamonn Andrews visited the club for some 'copy'! We took him from the old clubhouse bar under the north stand to one of our committee rooms. Pointing out a blank space on one of the walls (having been asked our chances for the match) Bleddyn said to Andrews "That is where we are going to hang a photograph of the Cardiff team that beat the All Blacks". It was a most confident prophecy, the victorious Cardiff players celebrate the occasion annually.

The great day came. The All Blacks duly performed "The Haka" much to the enjoyment of a 50,000 crowd, greatly partisan no doubt and eager to spur on the Blue and Black jerseyed men. The gates were closed. Cliff Morgan kicked off towards the Westgate Street end. Could we get enough good ball, could our pack hold the heavier All Blacks? The conditions were perfect, and to give readers some impression of the game itself, I now give the relevant extracts from the club's annual report for 1953-54.

The teams were:—

CARDIFF—J. E. G. Llewellyn, G. Rowlands, Alun Thomas, Bleddyn Williams and Gareth Griffiths; Rex Willis and Cliff Morgan; Stan Bowes, G. Beckingham, J. D. Evans, M. Collins, Eddie Thomas, C. D. Williams, Sid Judd and J. D. Nelson.

NEW ZEALAND—R. W. H. Scott; E. G. Elsom, J. T. Fitzgerald, R. A. Jarden and D. D. Wilson. L. S. Haig (capt.) and V. D. Bevan; H. L. White, R. O. Hunt, K. L. Skinner, W. H. Clark, G. N. Dalzell, R. A. White, D. O. Oliver and W. A. McCaw. Referee: V. S. Llewellyn.

All the scoring was done in the first half, Cardiff scored first. Cliff Morgan received the ball from Rex Willis, put in a short punt ahead, raced up and caught the ball on the rebound from one of the defenders. He passed it to Alun Thomas, who, after making some ground passed it to Gwyn Rowlands who cross-kicked towards the posts. Sid Judd, dashing up at full speed caught the ball and crashed over for a try underneath a group of All Black defenders. Gwyn Rowlands converted. The try was followed by a magnificent penalty goal from R. A. Jarden, from a range of 45 yards. With the score at five points to three in Cardiff's favour, the Cardiff pack was going great guns against its heavier opponents and our side doing the pressing, the excitement was intense. It reached fever heat when after another excellent pass from Rex Willis to Cliff Morgan, the ball reached Bleddyn Williams who put in a perfect short punt. The ball was gathered by Alun Thomas who raced up to Bob Scott the full-back before giving a long pass to Gwyn Rowlands who ran thirty yards and scored in the corner. The kick for goal failed. There was no more scoring and Cardiff were worthy winners by eight points to three, thus completing a wonderful record of having defeated all three commonwealth countries—South Africa 1906-07, Australia in 1908 and 1947, and now New Zealand in 1953.

Dave Phillips in the "South Wales Echo" wrote "For 80 minutes we saw the traditional skill and fire of what has rightly been termed 'The greatest Rugby Club in the World', countered by the all action enthusiasm of a determined All Black side who tried everything in their power to whittle down Cardiff's half-time lead of five points in a storming grand-stand finish."

J. B. G. Thomas in the "Western Mail" wrote, "What a game it was! How magnificent the players performed. The blood raced through their veins as they bent to their tasks in attack and defence. The voice was raised to cheer as Bleddyn Williams and his fellows split open the New Zealand's defence like a destroyer's bow ripping through the flimsy hull of a crippled submarine. The Rugby triumph which had eluded Cardiff since 1905 was achieved in a match full of excitement and glory accompanying a great sporting occasion."

Then from a leading article in the "Western Mail" on Monday 23rd November 1953, we take this extract: "We do not think that the passing of the years will ever dim for us the gleam and glory of the historic encounter at the Cardiff Arms Park on Saturday, or tarnish the memory of Cliff Morgan's darting and swooping across the turf and skimming past every obstacle like a swift at play. There was greatness in that clash of bone and sinew wherein the impenetrable object that was the Cardiff pack successfully withstood the supposedly irresistible force of the New Zealand 'terrible eight'".

The Cardiff team had played magnificently and towards the end of the game appeared stronger and fresher than their opponents. Out of the profits of programme sales the club donated the sum of £250 to the Welsh Youth Junior Union as the latter had lost a good gate through the cancellation of its match with Munster.

The season's results were very good. We had lost W. E. Tamplin, but Sid Judd was now an excellent pack leader and vice-captain. Sid Judd, Gareth Griffiths, Rex Willis and Cliff Morgan each played three times against New Zealand, for their club, Wales and the Barbarians. The vice-captain also scored a try for Cardiff and Wales against New Zealand. Gwyn Rowlands, Alun Thomas and the captain also played for Wales, and it speaks well of our reserve strength to record that against Swansea on Wednesday 7th April we had no less than ten of our players involved in the following Saturday's international match with France, as players and reserves. Yet we succeeded in beating Swansea 13-10. Our best successes were over Newport—three wins and one drawn game; all three Easter time matches were won as were the three on the Cornish tour the following week end. Surprisingly amongst our defeats were those at the hands of Combined Services (H) by 18 points to 9, Northampton (A) 22-9, Old Belvedere and Bective Rangers in Ireland on tour in February 9-3 and 21-8, and to Cheltenham in a mid-week match by 12 points to six. But there was a splendid flourish towards the end of the season and only one match of the last nineteen was lost.

Bleddyn Williams with 17 was top try scorer, Gwyn Rowlands got 16 and kicked 33 goals to amass a total of 127 points, Sid Judd 10 tries, Cliff Morgan 9, and seven each by Colin Bosley and Derek Murphy. Club caps were awarded to Colin Hewitt, Glyn Morgan, Howard Nicholls and D. J. Walsh. Stan Bowes had been appointed captain of the Athletic XV, but his form was such that he commanded a place in the First XV to the extent of 36 first team matches, a fine performance by this alleged veteran. Peter Goodfellow succeeded him and the record of the "Rags" was P35, W26, L6, D3, points 531 to 161. Peter made a good job of his captaincy and was to go further in this field. He called upon 68 players, and those who scored most tries were Derek Murphy 10, Colin Hewitt and Bryn Mapstone 9 each, J. M. Griffiths—brother to Gareth, and Howard Nicholls 7 each. John Dodd, Mike Evans and J. H. Thomas were amongst the rest of the scorers with five each. Alan Friday was the leading kicker with 38 goals, Bryn Mapstone was also successful with 22. Six new Athletic XV caps were awarded: to Colin Bosley, John Dodd, J. M. Fitzgerald, E. Forster, Colin Howe and Lloyd Williams.

Our Youth XV (Cardiff Juniors) played 28 matches, won 18 and lost 8 and drew two, with points 221 to 95. The Juniors were now beginning to feed the two senior fifteens.

Television was widening its field. Coverage of Rugby football was now becoming a matter of much concern to the Home Unions. The Welsh Rugby Union issued a circular to all of its clubs to ascertain their views. The majority of Welsh clubs were in favour of television, but not all the senior ones. Our own club was in favour. The gates of the senior clubs were to suffer as seasons passed but television had come to stay and entice countless thousands of Rugby sportsmen away from the playing fields. The late Lloyd Lewis, sports writer and broadcaster was much in favour of TV and after an annual general meeting of the W.R.U. we had a conversation together. His ideas were not finalised but one of them suggested that a fabulous payment might be made to the Home Rugby Unions

to cover the gate losses of clubs, provided that the media could exercise some form of control over club fixtures. Pigs can now fly, and we have landed men on the moon.

The Cardiff Rugby Supporters Club (president Percy F. Bush and G. B. Jones, hon. secretary) held an annual dinner in the Royal Hotel. The players who had triumphed over the All Blacks, club officials and the press were invited to a happy function. Amongst those who spoke at the gathering were Rhys Gabe of 1905 fame and Billy Cleaver. On the menu card was printed "Cardiff's victory over the All Blacks was and will ever remain one of the finest games of all time."

#### SID JUDD STRUCK BY ILLNESS IN A GREAT SEASON

##### CLIFF MORGAN JOINS BECTIVE RANGERS. 'QUINS' v. CARDIFF FLOODLIGHT

1954-55. P48, W38, L5, D5. Points 676-243.

This was quite a remarkable season, marred only by the untimely illness of our captain Sid Judd which restricted his appearances to 24 matches. Later the illness was to prove fatal, causing his death by leukaemia in the full flower of his manhood. Before his breakdown he was a most experienced forward already holding ten Welsh caps, and a candidate for the forthcoming Lions tour to South Africa 1955. He was strong, aggressive, a good reader of the game and a most useful goal kicker. In fact he was the type who asserted his qualities by his energetic example. Sid nominated Rex Willis to be his vice-captain.

We had lost Alun Thomas who decided to join Llanelly and Cliff Morgan who took up an appointment in Dublin and joined Bective Rangers club with whom he really enjoyed his Rugby. Cliff was popular and in the course of his stay, Bective became known in Dublin circles as 'Morgan's Rangers'; he was pleased to captain an International XV, more than half of them British Lions, to play Bective on its 75th anniversary in 1956. Colin Bosley left us and so did John R. Phillips our popular forward who I seem to remember became a Benedick and joined Newport. But there was much good talent to contend for first team places, particularly amongst the backs. At half back there was Rex Willis; Lloyd Williams and Colin Hewett both of whom could play in either half back position, there was Brian Mark and the versatile and devastating side-stepper Ken Richards. At three-quarter we were also strong being able to choose from Gareth Griffiths, Haydn Morris, Bleddyn Williams, Gordon Wells, Howard Nicholls, Derek Murphy, Dr. Gwyn Rowlands and the Old Illydian Peter Nyhan.

We made a great start and were unbeaten for the first 22 matches, then, on an unlucky day (13th December) we lost our ground record in defeat by Cambridge University—11 points to three, a jolting the Varsity had similarly inflicted upon us in December 1948. Moseley also beat us—9 points to 8—on the final trial date. Newport beat us at home in March by 11 points to six. Birkenhead Park also succeeded by nine points to eight whilst we were on tour to play them, and Halifax whom we beat two days later by 27 points to nine. The Barbarians beat us at Easter time, only just, by six points to three and they included seven selected 1955 British Lions in their team. Amongst our many victories perhaps those over Bristol (38-3) and Aberavon (32-11) were most notable.

Our top try scorers were Derek Murphy 26, Gordon Wells 17, Haydn Morris 15, Bleddyn Williams 14, Gareth Griffiths 10, Howard Nicholls, Dr. Gwyn Rowlands and Ken Richards each got eight, and our captain Sid Judd scored seven and kicked 23 goals. The other chief goal kickers were John Llewellyn who put over 24, Ken Richards kicked 17 and Gwyn Rowlands after his return from Australia as a ship's M.O. also kicked 17. Gwyn Rowlands kicked four goals and scored two tries—sixteen points out of Cardiff's 22 points to 13 win over Coventry in April. Honours: Colin Howe, Alan Priday, Ken Richards, J. H. Thomas and Gordon Wells were awarded club caps.

Of the 48 of the First XV fixtures Malcolm Collins played in 44, Beckingham in 42, J. D. Evans 42 and Eddie Thomas 41. In the international field eight of our players assisted Wales, Bleddyn Williams (captain), Gordon Wells (first cap), Cliff Morgan (four times whilst with Bective Rangers), Sid Judd, Gareth Griffiths, C. D. Williams (first cap) and Haydn Morris. For the British Lions tour to South Africa four of our players were chosen, namely Cliff Morgan, Haydn Morris, Alun Thomas—but now with Llanelly, and Gareth

Griffiths who flew out as a replacement. I was honoured with the hon. secretaryship of the Lions in South Africa, and there saw Cliff Morgan produce his best Rugby football of his career. Rex Willis was invited to tour, but for domestic reasons was unable to accept, he was favourite to become the tour captain.

Sadly for all Rugby lovers, Bleddyn Williams announced his decision to retire at the end of the season. He had served the club truly and well since 1938-39. He added lustre to the game itself, his praises have been well and truly sung, I will add this, that, in about nearly two hundred matches when I was privileged to watch him I do not remember one incident in which he was involved in any form of misconduct on the field. On 1st May 1954 for the last match of the season against Llanelly at home, Bleddyn was made captain. At the end of the match the crowd rushed on to the field and shouldered him off in honour. It was the last, but not the least, of his many honours on the Cardiff Arms Park. St. Albans Military Band were present to add their tribute, it was to play "The end of a perfect day."

The Athletic XV was captained by Peter Goodfellow, our popular and enthusiastic forward and the results were the best since the end of the war. They were: P33, W28, L4, D1, points 521 to 118. Similar to the First XV, "The Rags" had got as far as the 11th December without defeat when they met Pencoed at home and lost by eight points to three. It was the day of the first Welsh trial and Peter was called upon to captain the First XV to play the Harlequins in London with at least six of the club's leading players absent. Peter successfully led the team to victory by two tries and a penalty goal to one try. "The Rags" went off with a bang. Up to the end of November they had scored no less than 339 points, but later in the season six matches were cancelled, with an effect on the number of points scored. Resolves were hammered by eight goals, four tries to nil, Alan Priday kicking eight goals and scoring one try.

The top try scorers were C. L. Davies 18, R. T. Parsons 15, Gareth Griffiths and Peter Nyhan eight each, John Dodd, Derek Murphy and J. H. Thomas seven each, Ken Richards six, Alan Priday and Lloyd Williams five each. Alan Priday was chief goal kicker with 58 goals scoring in all a total of 137 points. New caps were awarded to John Crothers, J. Otto Jones, T. J. McCarthy, Peter Nyhan, R. J. Parsons and A. J. Rosser. With fewer matches played, Terry Donovan the "Rags" hooker played in 27 of them.

Alan Jones was the captain of the Cardiff Juniors—the Youth XV which achieved its best record since its formation. The results were P27, W23, L2, D2, points 442-52. J. Cowley was awarded his Welsh Youth international cap and Les Jones was the keen hon. secretary and general factotum.

Seven a side. Cardiff entered the Newport organised Welsh (Snelling) tournament on 30th April 1955. It was a young Seven that we entered and only Gordon Wells and Gareth Griffiths had 'sevens' experience which they had acquired at St. Luke's College. We won the tournament beating Pontypridd, Aberavon, Newbridge and in the final, Newport by eight points to three. At the Cardiff Arms Park in a club fixture, Cardiff beat Old Belvedere by 21 points to 11.

Floodlight exhibition match. Cardiff accepted an invitation from the Harlequins to play them in a floodlight match at White City on 12th October. It was the first floodlight match staged in the south of England. The "Quins" won by one goal, one penalty goal to one try and one penalty goal, they scored their try in the last minute and the whistle blew for 'no side' after their successful conversion. The match led to the innovation of floodlight Rugby to the clubs.

Dr. Jack Matthews our chairman organised representative teams to play the Treorchy, Cardiff High School Old Boys and the Penarth clubs in connection with their anniversary celebrations. On the club's return from the Cornish tour it stopped at Weston-super-Mare and played a Somerset County team in connection with the opening of Weston's new stand and pavilion on 20th April. Cardiff played well in an exhibition manner and won by 30 points to five, and the president of the Rugby Football Union spoke in appreciative terms of the Cardiff Rugby Club, when he formally opened the grand stand.

On the home front the Cardiff Athletic Club reported that another £2,000 had been allocated to the building reserve, and at long last the plans for our new clubhouse were approved by the management committee. Negotiations were also going on with the W.R.U.