

CARDIFF RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR SEASON 1987-88

On being re-elected Chairman this year, I realise that I am an honoured Member of Cardiff R.F.C. Committeemen who have had 'two bites of the cherry'.

Last season's Schweppes Cup victory was still a vivid memory as was our success in the last two months of the season, yet they had not hidden a few lingering doubts — could this team, that had been together for so long and had achieved so much, launch yet another successful campaign or would the tide turn against us and our 'Old war horse' find a season containing too many battles for the adrenalin to flow continuously for victory?

We had lost the flair, ingenuity and adventure of our International Centre, Mark Ring, to Pontypool with our other 'Six World weary heroes' making a staggered return. Did we possess the players, prepared with the confidence skill and ability, to continue our success?

The season started with a visit to two Centenary Celebrating sides, Taffs Well and Bristol. Both sides were defeated but a sign of what lay ahead was that both victories were very scrappy affairs. Some of our deficiencies were soon noticed when we were held to a 6-6 draw at Glamorgan Wanderers and then cut down to size 35-6 by a very mobile Neath team who registered their first win in Cardiff for 15 years. We had no excuse as this was probably our strongest available side. Our dismal form continued with a home draw with Maesteg and losing to Coventry after leading early in the second half. A good result at Pontypridd but, once again, we allowed Aberavon to snatch victory after leading justifiably 12-3 with only two minutes of injury time left. With no mid-week game at the end of September, we were happy to see the month close — when did we last experience a September without a home victory?

The trend continued in October with early defeats at the hand of old rivals, Newport and Bridgend. A short revival winning 14-7 at Northampton followed by a heavy defeat in atrocious conditions at Pontypool. Three consecutive wins followed against Cambridge University, centenary celebrating Caerphilly and away to the Harlequins. However, we lost our 101 year home record against Moseley with a 14-10 defeat; a defeat that saw three of our international players walk off injured — Malcolm Dacey at his debut, Alan Phillips, playing his 400th game and Gareth Roberts.

I will remember November, not for the defeats at Leicester or

against Oxford University but for that unique celebration occasion when H.R.H. Prince Edward became the first member of the Royal Family to watch a match at our Cardiff Arms Park. The game celebrated 100 years of Frank Hancock and brewing in Cardiff and we defeated a Rest of World XV 17-13.

A good home victory against Ebbw Vale set us up for the beginning of yet another Schweppes Cup campaign away to Ystradgynlais. It was a pleasant return for me as I had captained Cardiff on our previous Cup visit there in 1974 and once again we were victorious. Our return to form was short lived with a resounding defeat 41-6 at Stradey Park. Without our injured skipper, Bob Norster, we produced two good wins over Newbridge and Swansea and in the latter game our newcomer Ray Giles indicated why he is such a close rival to Robert Jones.

Victory over London Welsh and we were away again in the Cup at Aberavon Quins. A comfortable victory although all rugby followers must be disappointed to witness the taunts that popular Gerald Cordle has to endure.

No festive spirit on Boxing Day against Pontypridd when both teams fought a very dour struggle in atrocious conditions while two days later, Bridgend once again highlighted our weaknesses with a heavy defeat.

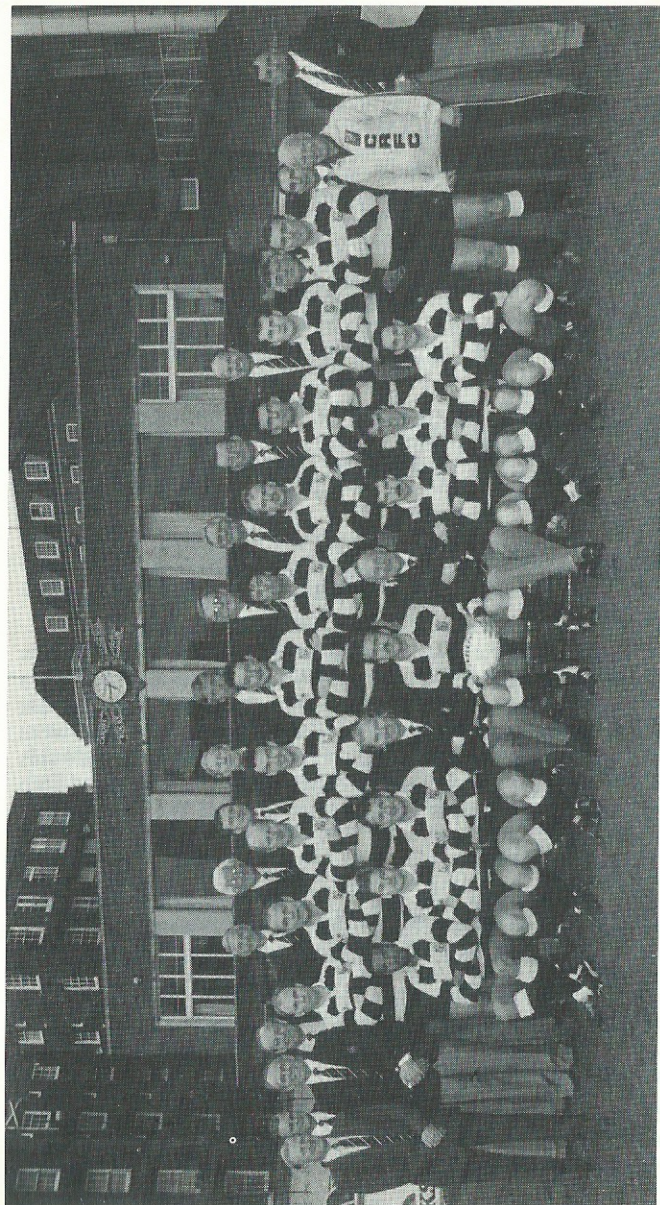
A good start to 1988 with victories over Bath, Aberavon and Ebbw Vale, a fine preparation for our Cup visit to Newport. With a postponement because of a waterlogged pitch, we had the unusual experience of knowing our Quarter Final opponents if we were successful — Pontypool, Wales' most improved consistent side this year. We overcame a poor Newport side to continue our good Cup sequence and followed with wins against London Welsh, Newport and South Wales Police.

And so to Pontypool and the Cup — with over 60% possession and territorial advantage, we failed to score a try and lost 9-6 on kicks. Our long Cup run of the 80's is over — perhaps we can now look to the future with a constructive selection policy with long term ambitions.

Still carrying a Cup hangover, we lost to Bristol and a third defeat in a season by Pontypool. Apart from the expected victory over Penarth, with defeats at Nottingham and Newport, we were glad to see the end of March.

A return to winning ways over our traditional Easter visitors, the Barbarians 32-27 and Swansea 18-13 but once again we were given a rugby lesson by Schweppes Cup finalists Neath. Our remaining

CARDIFF RUGBY CLUB (FIRST XV)



Back Row:

B. Mark, W. H. Wilkins, G. Davies, J. D. Nelson, T. Charles, J. E. Davies, P. T. Goodfellow, C. T. Howe, A. D. Williams.

Middle Row:

G. Trearne (Coach), P. Nyhan, C. D. Williams, Lloyd Williams, S. Crandon, S. Blackmore, R. Lakin, H. Stone, M. Rowley, M. Parry, G. Roberts, T. Crothers, A. Hadley, M. Norris, J. Whitefoot, J. Evans, R. Ayres (Trainer), R. Beard (Coach)

Front Row:

G. Cordle, M. Rayer, A. Phillips, Mervyn John (Chairman), R. Norster (Captain), A. J. Priday (Hon. Sec.), A. Donovan, G. John, R. Giles.

fixtures had more than a hint of that 'end of season' feeling yet we achieved three successes against Rosslyn Park, Barry and Nottingham.

A poor season, especially by our high standards. My commiserations go to Bob Norster whose own form and efforts during the season have been unrivalled. His total commitment on and off the field has been an example to others, while he has eagerly tackled his Captaincy duties. I am sure the experience of leading this great Club on and off the field will benefit him immensely in the near future.

Our congratulations to Bob on his International Honour as Vice Captain and to our other representative, Adrian Hadley who, together, played a major part in the victorious Triple Crown for Wales. We all wish Bob a successful return to New Zealand and hope he enjoys an injury free tour. I must pay tribute to Alan Phillips who has now joined that select few who have played more than 400 first team games for Cardiff while I doubt whether his 150 tries will ever be surpassed by a forward, let alone a hooker. I also wish our Vice Captain Alun Donovan an enjoyable retirement from the field of play and thank him for the excellent service he has given us as a most talented centre and versatile performer. We may also have seen the last game played by our popular Englishman, John Scott, who has decided to seek a place on the Committee. His contribution to our success, especially in the 80's, has been immense and his inimitable brand of leadership on the field will long be remembered.

With this list of retirements, one is certain to ask whether we are coming to the end of an era. In the case of my next tribute, Roger Beard, we definitely are. Our Coach for the past eight years, he has been synonymous with all the success that we have achieved. His firm control and authority has been respected by all, while his experience and understanding of the rigours of our game has made him one of the outstanding Club Coaches of this decade. His success at Cardiff came at a time when Welsh fortunes were failing – why our governing body did not recognise his talents still remains a mystery. Very few people are aware of the commitment required from the Club Coaches. It is a job that takes its toll of both time and nervous energy and requires complete dedication. Roger has epitomised these qualities and his partner Gwilym Trearne is another who is dedicated to our cause. Roger has now become a Committeeman and we are pleased that we will continue to use his considerable experience in a more administrative capacity.

CARDIFF 1st XV SEASON 1987/88: Robert Norster (Captain)

FULL PLAYING RECORD (Excluding New Zealand Tour):

Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	For	Against
47	27	17	3	1056	718

W.R.U. CUP:

1st Round v. Ystradgynlais (A)	W	12-9
2nd Round v. Aber'n Quins (A)	W	36-0
3rd Round v. Newport (A)	W	26-13
4th Round v. Pontypool (A)	L	6-9

INTERNATIONAL HONOURS:

WORLD CUP:

R. Norster	— I. CAN. E
J. Whitefoot	— I. Can
M. Ring	— I. TONGA. AUS.
A. Phillips	— CAN. E. AUS.
S. Blackmore	— TONGA. CAN. AUS.
A. Hadley	— I. TONGA. CAN. E. N. Z. AUS
G. Roberts	— CAN. E. N.Z. AUS.

HOME INTERNATIONALS:

R. Norster	— U.S.A. E. I. S. F.
A. Hadley	— U.S.A. E. I. S. F.
M. Rayer	— Wales B

1ST XV CAPS:

S. Crandon; R. Giles; M. Rowley

HIGHEST POINT SCORERS:

G. John	161 points
M. Rayer	140 points

HIGHEST TRY SCORERS:

G. Cordle	31
R. Cardus	15
A. Hadley	12

HIGHEST NUMBER OF APPEARANCES

G. Cordle	42
M. Rayer	34
A. Phillips	30
A. Donovan	30

My personal thanks go to all Committeemen who have supported me loyally and wholeheartedly throughout the season. On a very sad note, I pay a special tribute to Stanley Bowes, a most devoted Cardiff servant, who died in March. He will be greatly missed by everyone connected with the game of rugby. His love for all things Blue and Black was matched by a sometimes comical loathing of all things Black and Amber. He lived and worked for Cardiff right up to the end and no more fitting final duty could have been than as Chairman of our Youth accompanying them to Bath.

Two Committeemen who will not be seeking re-election are Haydn Wilkins and Lloyd Williams. With 35 and 20 years service respectively on the Committee, these knowledgeable competent colleagues will be greatly missed. Haydn will not be far away as he will continue to assist the Rugby Section in his dual role as Chairman of the Athletic Club and shortly as Trustee. While I am sure that the Rugby Section will be able to harness Lloyd's attributes for Cardiff when needed. I wish to thank them both for the tremendous amount of time they have devoted in their long careers on and off the field.

My gratitude to Alun Priday, our Honorary Secretary, for the tremendous amount of work which he carries on behind the scenes. Also to probably the most active Committeemen, our Selectors, C.D. Williams, John Nelson and John Evans, who perform a thankless task. To Brian Mark as Fixture Secretary and Peter Nyhan for his programme notes which are a joy to read.

May I also take this opportunity to thank Alf Heffell and his office staff, David Picton and the bar staff and Albert Francis and his groundsmen. A special mention for Albert who has not only maintained our Ground as one of the finest we play upon but has also worked overtime to establish our Lottery which has been an instant success. In this vein, also, my thanks to Ken Jones and Kath, Ken Jarrett and Lorna and Brian Bennett for the assistance given to the setting up of the Lottery. We still possess the most loyal dignified Supporters that any Club could have. To the Club's Doctors, Physios. and Masseurs, for their advice and treatment; to Ted and Nancy for their devotion to our shop, together with all the Club Members who, in one way or another, have remained loyal in a difficult year.

I finish my year saddened by a continuous stream of blinkered media reports, often inaccurate, from one source where the individual concerned wishes to discredit this Great Club in whatever way he can through his press poetic licence. I know that the genuine Cardiff Member is aware that the Club has been and always will be, greater than any individual and I finally pay tribute to those Cardiff Rugby people who have given their full support to me and the Club and have made my term in office so enjoyable and memorable.

NEW ZEALAND TOUR

MAY/JUNE 1988

It was indeed a great honour to manage the Cardiff R.F.C. Tour Party on their visit to New Zealand, the first Welsh Club side ever to visit that Country. After a very mediocre season, with a number of players unavailable for various reason and our Captain, Robert Norster, on tour with Wales, it was with some trepidation that we set out to match our talents against teams from the strongest rugby country in the world.

Although it was our intention to play only Club sides, we soon realised on our arrival, that the world famous name of Cardiff R.F.C. had suggested to our hosts that they should strengthen their sides. It was not therefore surprising to see named in the selected sides, current All Black Captain, Wayne Shelford, plus other All Blacks, Murray Mexted, Hika Reid, Allan Hewson, Michael Speight, Mark Findlay, Scott Crichton and Brian McGratten.

With our National side struggling and losing their early games, we helped to restore Welsh pride with our victory over a Northcote Birkenhead Centennial XV, 19 points to 10 at Auckland. We then lost narrowly in Rotorua, 32 points to 28, to a Wasps XV which comprised of Bay of Plenty provincial players. An excellent performance when you consider that this Province finished fourth in their First Division last year behind Auckland, Canterbury and Wellington and we had been losing 32-4 just after half time. Our final victory at Athletic Park Wellington over a Wellington Centurians XV, 41 points to 32 was a most satisfying finale against a strong side captained by Murray Mexted.

The whole squad must be congratulated for their tremendous spirit and determination to do well throughout and maintained a consistent form. Our top try scorer was Gerald Cordle, with seven touchdowns, playing his first game just 30 hours after arriving in New Zealand.

A most enjoyable three weeks where not only did we endure the rigours of All Black rugby but also found time to visit Auckland, Rotorua and its world famous Thermal Springs, Hamilton, Wellington, Los Angeles, while finally relaxing for two days at Waikiki Beach, Honolulu.

MERVYN JOHN, Chairman, Cardiff Rugby Football Club.

CARDIFF ATHLETIC XV

SEASON 1987/88

Captain: Chris Webber

With the appointment of Chris Webber as Captain of the 'Rags', we had a person whose attributes included his versatility behind the scrum as centre, outside half, full back and wing and a very experienced campaigner for ourselves and previously Newport.

All these characteristics were needed in a season which although an improvement on last season, needed to harness the service of over 70 players.

Over 30 points were scored on 15 occasions and our most notable victories were the 77-4 defeat of Coventry Extras, 65-16 against Swansea Athletic and 42-16 over Llanharan and we all remember the Cup feats of Llanharan during the season.

Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	For	Against
41	26	13	2	1098	567

ATHLETIC XV CAPS:

R. Bilton; S. Crothers; E. Greenslade; P. John; R. Jones; C. Hutchings; C. Conway; M. Edwards; A. Martin; C. Norman.

HIGHEST NUMBER OF APPEARANCES:

S. Crothers - 26; C. Webber - 26

HIGHEST TRY SCORERS:

R. Jones - 16; A. Glasson - 15; C. Norman - 14

HIGHEST POINTS SCORER:

D. Evans - 117; C. Webber - 114

MERVYN JOHN, Chairman, Cardiff Rugby Football Club.

YOUTH REPORT

SEASON 1987/88

There was a fine start to the season with eight consecutive wins in September. Notable scores were 20-6 at Bristol, 32-16 at Leicester, 44-16 at Taffs Well, 56-3 against Liverpool St. Helens at Cardiff Arms Park and 52-10 against Bedford; at this stage I honestly thought that there was going to be a second invincible season for Cardiff Youth.

Of the remaining 23 matches however, we lost ten of them and some quite heavily. Taffs Well had their own back in April, winning 42-4, North Colts won 31-0 and Pontypridd were successful 23-3.