

"THE RAGS" CAPTURE THE LIMELIGHT

GARETH EDWARDS' RECORDS

1973-74.

The results, including W.R.U. cup matches were P53, W40, L11, D2. Points 1,186—511. Garry Davies the captain joined the club in 1963-64, and subsequently took over the hooking from W. J. "Billy" Thomas. A native of Treherbert, he joined the Civil Service after leaving school becoming a customs officer of the Inland Revenue and for a time was posted to London Airport. He assisted London Welsh and has played many times for the Civil Service R.F.U. in its representative matches. Popular with club and colleagues, Garry gained his first fifteen cap in 1964-65 and had played in more than 200 matches for the 1st XV prior to his year of captaincy, his vice-captain was Alec Finlayson.

Amongst the newcomers were Paul Evans, the P.T. instructor from the Newport Club, an established centre, three most promising forwards in Mark McJennett—son of Ian McJennett who assisted Cardiff during the post war seasons, Trevor Worgan and Alun Phillips from the Llanharan and Pyle Youth teams, and perhaps the find of the season, the scrum half Brynmor Williams who was to show ability of international class.

Cardiff started off the season with a real bang, defeating our French visitors from Cognac by 56 points to nil. Another big win was registered over the Australian team, the Northern Suburbs of Sydney by 44 points to six, a good win, but a sad day for the club as Ian Robinson was "sent off". Newport, having a bad season, suffered three defeats at our hands, one of them at home under floodlights by 38 points to 14. There were big wins over Bristol 30 points to 3, Pontypridd 34-6, Coventry with a strong team by 36-13 and the Harlequins 33-10. An exciting win by 24 points to 23 at Swansea gave much pleasure to both clubs after some great running Rugby. On the morning of the Wales/Scotland international the Heriots Club were beaten 35-9. There were however, two matches which gave the club most satisfaction. On the morning of the England/Wales international, London Welsh were thrashed by 34 points to four through some great attacking Rugby. The Welsh were without John Dawes and Gerald Davies on duty for Wales, but they still turned out six internationals, Jim Shanklin, Keith Hughes, Jeff Young, T. G. Evans, Mike Roberts and John Taylor. Cardiff were without Gareth Edwards and Ian Robinson on duty at Twickenham.

There was the victory over Bridgend (A) by 21 points to 18, it was in the third round of the W.R.U. Challenge Cup. It was a cracker of a game, Cardiff starting off with a bang, scoring two excellent tries—one involving a run of 75 yards in which six players handled. But Bridgend struck back with three penalty goals from Ian Lewis, then a try and conversion, then a dropped goal which put them into the lead at half time by 18 points to 8. Cardiff pulled back in the second half. P. L. Jones scored a very good try, which was followed by a brilliant solo one from Paul Evans, which, converted by Keith James equalled the scoring. At this stage there was only one side in it, and from a quick heel on the Bridgend twenty-five the ball was fed to Keith James who dropped the goal—suffering a late tackle—to give Cardiff victory by 21 points to 18 shortly before no-side. A great win this.

Bridgend however beat us twice in the season. At home we played a weak team as half the normal side were on duty for East Wales against Australia at Newport, but after being 10 points down at half time, our "reserves" rallied strongly and when an excellent movement brought a try for Wayne Lewis to give Cardiff the lead in the last minute, we thought the Bridgend "jinx" was beaten. But not so. From the drop out, Cardiff was penalised at the Maul which followed. A penalty was awarded to Bridgend and it was S. Fenwick's penalty which gave them victory and restored their "jinx". The final whistle blew immediately. Once more we had lost to Bridgend in the very closing stages—this time by 13 points to 11.

Llanelli also defeated Cardiff twice. At Stradey by 26 points to nil in November, and at home by 16 points to four in February. Up to this point in the meetings between our two clubs, Llanelli had never scored more than 20 points against the Blue & Blacks. In the match at Stradey we suffered a couple of injuries, but did not play well enough to contain the better Llanelli team. In Cardiff's programme notes for the home match, Dai Hayward our programme editor recalls receiving Christmas cards from some of his Llanelli friends. The frontispiece showed the scoreboard after the November match: Caerdydd 0, Llanelli 26, and below this, the cryptic words, "The scoreboard tells the story". Naturally, Dai Hayward felt the publishers were gloating somewhat, and mentioned the fact to his good friend R. H. Williams the former Llanelli and British Lions forward who understands West Wales folk, who explained so tactfully, that there was really no sense of exultant gloating at all "but a compliment to Cardiff, an example of what it means to other clubs who succeed in beating them".

In the W.R.U. Cup, Cardiff met Aberavon at Bridgend in the semi-final but played disappointingly and were beaten by a better and more lively team on the day, by nine points to four. We flattered to deceive in the W.R.U. National Sevens in May as we ran up an 18 points lead over Bridgend, whose Seven fought back magnificently in the second half. After Cardiff had the game sewn up as it were, Bridgend, almost on their own line, fastened on a loose ball and ran it out practically the whole length of the field to win in extra time by 22 points to 18. Cardiff's promising new young forward Trevor Worgan was named as the Player of the Tournament.

The leading scorers were Alec Finlayson 31 tries (four in the match against Newport in November under floodlights), P. Lyn Jones 21, Paul Evans 15, Brynmor Williams our "third scrum half" 13, Mervyn John and Roger Lane, rival scoring forwards, 11 and 12 respectively. Our promising stand-off half Keith James ran up 135 points from five tries and 46 goals, including ten dropped, and John Davies the full-back 108 from three tries and 37 goals. Paul Evans, John Luff, Barry Nelves and Brynmor Williams were honoured with 1st XV caps. In the international field Alec Finlayson and Ian Robinson gained their first Welsh caps, they had already played for East Wales against Japan, as did Gary Samuel, Mike Knill and Mervyn John.

But it was Gareth Edwards who added further honours to himself and his club, in the international field. He gained his 36th consecutive Welsh cap, surpassing the 35 gained by Swansea's immortal scrum-half R. M. "Dicky" Owen—1901-12. Already the youngest ever captain of his country, he led Wales for the 16th time against England at Twickenham in March. Only Arthur Gould of Newport 1889-97, 18 times, exceeds Gareth's captaincy record, and only Newport's flying wing, Ken Jones with 47, 1947-57, exceeds Gareth's total international appearances. Gareth, the greatest of all scrum halves, followed three other great Cardiff inside halves of post-war seasons, Haydn Tanner (earliest caps with Swansea) 1935-49, 25 caps, Rex Willis 1950-55 with 21 and Lloyd Williams 1957-62, 11 caps. In the summer of 1974, Gareth was vice-captain of the most successful and unbeaten British Lions team, which toured South Africa. It was his third Lions tour.

The record of the Athletic XV was: P35, W30, L5. Points 1,106—273. It was Tony Williams's second term as captain, a splendid season in which Tony's leadership played a major part. In no less than twelve matches his team scored 40 points and over. The first of these was the massacre of Llanelli Wanderers by Cardiff's record score of 96 points to three. The full results of these twelve matches were:—

Date		Opponents	CG	T	FOR			Pts	AGAINST				Pts
					DG	PG	CG		T	DG	PG		
Nov. 24.—	H	Llanelli Wanderers	12	6	—	—	96	—	—	—	1	3	
Dec. 29.—	S.G.	Chepstow	6	10	—	—	76	1	—	—	—	6	
Dec. 22.—	A	Cardiff H.S.O.B.	4	9	—	—	60	—	—	—	1	3	
Nov. 3.—	H	Llantwit Major	6	5	—	—	56	—	—	—	—	0	
April 24.—	A	St. Joseph's	6	5	—	—	56	—	—	—	1	3	
Jan. 19.—	S.G.	Pontyclun	5	6	—	—	54	1	1	—	1	13	
Jan. 26.—	S.G.	Aberavon Quins	6	4	—	—	52	—	—	—	—	0	
March 9.—	S.G.	Cardiff T.C. 2nd	3	8	—	—	50	1	1	—	—	10	
Sept. 15.—	H	Coventry Extra 1sts	6	2	—	—	44	—	—	—	1	3	
Oct. 27.—	H	Newport H.S.O.B.	6	2	—	—	44	—	—	—	1	3	
Feb. 23.—	A	Llanelli Wanderers	3	5	—	1	41	—	—	—	1	3	
April 13.—	A	Ebbw Vale Athletic	4	4	—	—	40	—	2	—	1	11	
Totals			67	66	—	1	669	3	4	—	8	58	

The above table shows an incredibly high rate of scoring probably unequalled anywhere by comparable club standards. The number of tries, 113, averaged eleven per match, the points nearly 57. One victory which gave more satisfaction than others higher up the points scale was the 44-3 win over Coventry Extra 1sts who, at home in 1972-73, thrashed "The Rags" by 42 points to three. In 1972-73, when 40 points or more were scored in eleven matches, the points totalled 663 to 104 and tries 119 to 11. Never have I had to record such fantastic scoring in the club's official records as those of the past two seasons. It must be remembered, however, that from 1971-72 the try value was increased to four points. But these high scores surely indicate that Cardiff's traditional attacking standards were followed, a tribute to the leadership of Tony Williams who must rank as one of the very best of all Cardiff Athletic XV captains. The five defeats were from the strongest of clubs, Senghennydd 9-6, Pontypool Utd. (twice) 7-3 and 7-6, Bristol Utd. 9-6 and Swansea Athletic 17-6.

After fifteen seasons of dedicated service and 328 1st XV matches to his credit, Tony, like his brother Elwyn, decided to sever his links with Cardiff and join his village club, Taffs Well, before finally hanging up his boots. Tony's retirement ended a great era of the Williams family as one or more of the brothers played for Cardiff in every season since the first of them, Gwyn, made his début in 1935-36. A link however is maintained as Lloyd, chairman of the club this season, still serves on the Rugby committee. Tony's service will long be remembered gratefully by the Cardiff Rugby Club and its statistician "Massa" Dan.

Brian "Smokey" Coles scored most tries, 20, Steve McCann 17, Mark McJennett and Gary Samuel 12 each and Tony Williams who played in 32 out of the 35 matches bagged eleven. Dave Barry got 110 points from four tries and 39 goals and Leighton Davies 97 from nine tries and 27 goals.

Five most promising youngsters were awarded Athletic XV caps, namely, David Barry out-half, and five forwards who must have made a lot of "good ball" for the captain, Paul Kerrigan, John Manfield, Mark McJennett, Alun Phillips the hooker and Trevor Worgan who missed a first team cap by only one match in his first season.

Cardiff Juniors. The captain was Paul Simmonds and the record: P26, W20, L6. Points 721—248. This was another excellent season for our Youth XV now established as one of the best sides in the country. Fourteen of them played for the Cardiff & District Youth Union. The full-back captain Paul Simmonds, vice-captain and flanker Tony Brahim and Terry Holmes the scrum half gained Welsh Youth international caps. Excellent victories were recorded over Llanelli Youth—W.Y.R.U. cup winners—by 17-11, the strong Leicester Colts 13-10, British Army Cadets 17-11 and the astonishing win over Swansea's Youth by no less than 72-11. The Juniors "A" team won the C. & D.R.U. Sevens, and its "B" side the Losers' Plate. To wind up a good season there was a tour to Cork, a most enjoyable one, and it was reported that the behaviour of the Juniors "was a credit to the club".

The 31 tries and 18 goals by the tall centre Meurig Owen brought him 165 points, a fine performance. Steve O'Donohue totted up 109 points and Terry Hill 72, and those who made most appearances were W. Marshall 22, S. Lewis and O'Donohue 21 each.

A few items of club interest are worth recalling. Roy Bish resigned his honorary coaching job, he considered that the coach should be a selector. Wilfred Wooller was barred from entry by one of the gatemen to the Cardiff/Cambridge University match on 20th October, he had left his press ticket at home. A steering committee in connection with Cardiff's Centenary was set up under the chairmanship of Les Spence. The committee decided to give up fixtures with the Province d'Auvergne, drastic defeats at the hands of this French Selection on Armistice days through sending un-representative fifteens, had sullied the club's reputation. The last fixture in November resulted in a drawn match of ten points each. A blanket and bucket collection on our ground resulted in the club sending a donation to the St. Albans Rugby Club whose ill-fated team were victims of the terrible air disaster at Paris.

In the summer, three past players, Presidents of the Welsh Rugby Union, together with Newport's Vernon Parfitt the eminent Welsh and international referee, made up a W.R.U. Presidents' bowling rink against the Welsh Bowling Association's Presidents—and held their own. The veteran players, in order of seniority were Danny Davies, Harry Bowcott and Les Spence.