

L. M. DYKE'S SEASON

1911-12. P39, W28, L6, D5. Points 407-116.

For this season of the largest number of fixtures arranged to date, Louis M. Dyke was the appointed captain and the forward John A. Powell was the vice-captain. Dyke was a neat and classy centre threequarter who had already gained four Welsh caps. He was a popular dapper man and well known Cardiff docksman in Cardiff's then busy seaport. Powell had gained a Welsh cap against Ireland in 1906 and was later to serve as a club committee member. Two of the captain's colleagues of last season R. A. Gibbs and J. L. Williams had retired, and two forwards had left, Joe Pugsley who turned professional with Salford during times of strike and lack of work, and George Yewlett who had accepted a post in Paris and became coach (trainer as then known) to the Stade Francais Club. However, Ewan Davies joined the club, as did an Irishman J. B. Carson and both were to serve well as threequarters; quite a number of our reserve players were to win their first team spurs.

Our scoring this season was not high, many results were too close to be spectacular probably because of the determination of clubs like Pontypool and Neath for example, to lessen the distinction between themselves and "Big Three" clubs, Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. The Monmouthshire club could field a very tough pack, with the famous Jack "Ponty" Jones in the backs, whilst Neath had two Welsh caps amongst their forwards, namely Glyn Stephens and Howell Davies. Both clubs were to be well served by excellent half backs, Lloyd and Prosser of Pontypool and Shôn Evans and Brennan at Neath. Stephens gained many caps, as did his son Rees Stephens (a Welsh selector) many seasons later.

Some of the very close results were with Pontypool, 8 points to three and 0-3, Neath 3-0 and 0-3, and drawn matches with Newport 0-0 and 3-3, and Swansea 0-0 twice, were an indication of close fought contests, some were neither pleasant to play in nor to be watched. Gate receipts were down, there had been coal and railway strikes, and some of our supporters were drifting down to the "soccer" ground of Cardiff City at Ninian Park, and for the first time, there was an overall deficiency in the working of the club which totalled £274.14.8. The overall receipts totalled £3,533, ours was an expensive club to run, the upkeep of the ground alone, such as repairs on the grand stand and temporary stands and erection and dismantling of the latter etc. came to £497.

Our six defeats were at the hands of Newport, Gloucester, United Services (Portsmouth), Pontypool, Neath and Swansea and all were sustained on away grounds, and, surprisingly perhaps, the club held an unbeaten ground record for the season. Double victories were scored over Bristol, Leicester and the Barbarians, and the season was finished off with a great flourish of six successive wins over the Barbarians, Leicester, Huddersfield, Devonport Albion, Bridgend and Llanelli. The club travelled to Paris again to meet Stade Francais, a now improving French club whom we defeated by 19 points to 3, and later, at the Annual General Meeting one of the members enquired as to the cost of the trip, to the club—it was £166.19.1d.

The Blackheath club, referred to often in those days as "The club of all talents" celebrated its Fiftieth Jubilee our match with them at The Rectory Field was drawn, three points each, and in our match with Huddersfield at home on 9th April, two of their players turned out for Cardiff, namely their captain W. S. D. Craven at forward, and a wing three-quarter named Owen. Craven had the honour of scoring a try for the Blue and Blacks. On 17th April, Cardiff's match with Bridgend was the occasion of the opening of the home club's new ground at The Brewery Field; one of Bridgend's good half backs, Johnny Rogers, followed the footsteps of Clem Lewis to join the Cardiff club, and he made his debut against Gloucester on 23rd March 1912.

Our international centre threequarter "Billy" Spiller played brilliantly during the season, and was referred to in the sporting press as the player of the season, "the best centre in the country", he, together with Ewan Davies, J. Clem Lewis and W. J. Jenkins the forward, were honoured with Welsh caps. First XV club caps were awarded to Aubrey Baker, Charley Bryant, the Irishman, J. A. B. Carson, Ewan Davies, M. Griffiths, Ernie Hill, P.C. J. S. Michael and Charley Palmer. Ewan Davies with 21, Billy Spiller 15 and Charley Bryant with 12 were the top try scorers. W. J. Jenkins was appointed captain of the Reserves but soon established himself as a First XV player, Tommy Reardon was the vice-captain. The record of the Reserves was P31, W23, L6, D2, with 271 points to 75. There were 30 try scorers which was indicative of the number of players tried out; W. P. Nicholls with eight was the top one, followed by Jake Crowley and Ivor James with six each, and the Ulster man J. A. B. Carson got five. Caps were awarded to P. Callaghan, Dan Callan, D. (or W. L.) Ferrier, R. Gunn, W. J. Jenkins, W. Jennings, W. Morrish, W. P. Nicholl, H. N. Rees and Fred Spencer.