

WELSH RUGBY UNION SENDS CARDIFF PLAYER HOME

1923-24. P43, W24, L14, D5. Points 473-297.

Idris Richards the forward was rather portly, but his weight was always valuable to his pack. He possessed all the qualities of leadership on and off the field, with a stentorian voice to boot, a most popular leader indeed. Idris "The Bank" (Midland), gained three Welsh caps and later, on a transfer to Merthyr, he still put more into the game by serving as an administrator and chairman of Merthyr R.F.C., after having served Cardiff so well with 259 matches to his credit. Tom "Codger" Johnson was Richards' choice as vice-captain.

As the points for might indicate, we had no spectacular successes, and the end of the season proved very disappointing as we lost four out of the last five matches, and our Newport rivals, after our first drawn game with them at home, triumphed over us three times. It was a season of many personnel changes, retirements and transfers eliminated Dai Llewellyn, Dr. Tom Wallace, Sid Hinam, Jack Prosser, Phil Rowlands and Tom Vaughan—all forwards except for Tom Wallace. The replacements merged into the team were B. O. "Ossie" Male, full-back from Cross Keys, Daph Davies a centre and W. J. "Bobby" Delahay inside-half from Bridgend, Giraldu Rees, a wing from Maesteg, W. J. Ould a police officer formerly stationed at Aberavon, one of the early wing forwards, P.C. Frank Stevens, and Wally Palmer a local forward product, all of whom were to gain Cardiff first XV caps this season.

The top try scorers were Tom "Codger" Johnson, 20 and two dropped goals, Arthur Cornish, 16 and two dropped goals, myself 14 and four dropped goals. Cornish and Johnson each scored four tries in one match against Welsh University Colleges and Blackheath respectively. Two guest players also scored for Cardiff, one was E. D. G. "Ernie" Hammett the Newport back who gained seven caps for England, he converted a try for us in our match against United Services (A) in March; the other was the Leicester full-back L. C. Sambrook who played as a deputy for B. O. Male at Headingley on the 18th February, Male having broken his nose at Leicester two days previously. Male was often ragged about his nose fracture by his colleagues, who would aver that Male had exclaimed that "my beauty is spoilt".

But "Ossie" Male was to be involved in a much more sensational event, it happened this way: on 8th March 1924 Male had played a faultless game for Wales against Ireland at the Cardiff Arms Park and was chosen later to play against France on 27th March in Paris; in the meanwhile he played for Cardiff at Liverpool against Birkenhead Park, the French match was to take place on the Thursday following. Male joined the Welsh Union party at Newport on the first part of the journey to Paddington, it was not long after the train had left that he was called out of his compartment by David Rocyn-Jones (later to become honoured, and be a president of the W.R.U.) who informed him that a disciplinary committee had met and had decided that as he had broken the Union's bye-law which stipulated that a player should not take part in any match within six days of the international match for which he had been selected, he must leave the party—which he did at Paddington to return home. The club was also censured, and the committee put some searching questions to Mr. Ifor Thomas, its representative on the W.R.U., who was with the W.R.U. party on the train. It was a very sad occurrence for Ossie Male, who, just previously—on 8th March 1924 had played so well in the presence of the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, the Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald and the Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. H. Thomas and a capacity crowd against Ireland and on the Cardiff Arms Park. He had to wait until 1927 before receiving his next Welsh cap.

In this season, on 1st November 1923 to be precise, was celebrated the centenary of Rugby football by a match between England and Wales against Ireland and Scotland. Cardiff was honoured by the selection of R. A. Cornish and Tom Johnson, it took place at Rugby School Close. Behind the legendary English pair of half-backs C. A. Kershaw and W. J. A. Davies of the United Services our players did well, Johnson scoring a try and dropping a goal, and it was from a splendid break by Arthur Cornish that W. W. Wakefield (now Lord Wakefield) then a great forward with the Leicester club was able to notch a try. Readers may well be content that Cardiff had played an important part in the development of this greatest of all winter games by its introduction of the four threequarter system in 1883-84.

After our match with the Barbarians at Easter time—we lost 18-23—Arthur Cornish and I received invitations to join the British Lions' tour to South Africa in 1924, but both of us were destined to be unable to go owing to our respective employment, Arthur Cornish a schoolmaster and myself a temporary civil servant. Things are different today. W. E. Cornish, Arthur's brother, was appointed captain of the Reserve XV although in the event he played most of his time with the First XV. The results were P32, W20, L9, D3 with 289 points to 142. No players' match record appears to have been maintained, but there were 25 players amongst the scorers, chief amongst them being the brothers Percy and Willie Rayer with ten and eight tries respectively, Arthur Ions a forward got nine, and A. Hobbs and H. Stitchbury five each. A third member of the Cornish family, George, also scored two tries.

During the season, the condition of the cinder track underneath the old north stand was questioned, the Glamorgan County Cricket Club were given permission to use our spacious gymnasium for indoor practice, W. H. Marshall the caterer was granted rights to serve refreshments round the ground for £20, the club's annual dinner was fixed for Boxing Night, there were approximately thirty applications for help, charities, use of the ground, etc., Idris Richards the captain had played 41 of the 43 matches and the match between Cardiff and New Zealand was arranged for 22nd November 1924, the terms being 60% of the receipts for the tourists and 40% shared between the club and the Welsh Union.