

## TWO MATCHES WITH THE MAORIS

1926-27. P47, W29, L13, D5. Points 666—418.

I had been nominated by the committee for a second term as captain but withdrew in favour of my last season's vice-captain, W. J. "Bobby" Delahay. As the latter's vice-captain I was able to assist with records and administration, including the issue of selection cards, he being resident in Bridgend. Bobby was a very tricky, adventurous and unorthodox scrum half, versatile enough to have been selected for Wales in the centre, with Windsor Lewis and W. C. Powell at half-back. He was an "Artful Dodger" whose similar characteristics were so often shown by W. Onllwyn Brace, the Oxford Blue and Welsh international of the late "fifties".

For 1926-27 the committee decided to run two First Fifteens and to dispense with the second string known as Cardiff Reserves. The experiment failed for several reasons and is dealt with more fully in a separate chapter. In the initial seasons, only one captain was appointed, which meant that an acting captain had to be appointed for one of the teams from match to match; opposing clubs became apprehensive as to "which fifteen" would be their opponents; match records were kept in one total for the results of both teams (I have separated them in this history); there was much administrative confusion and argument, criticism from clubs grew; and members and the press joined in. The committee ended the experiment after five seasons, and, for 1931-32 reverted to the normal one First Fifteen, and one Reserve Fifteen which was designated Cardiff Athletic, which is the title of our second team of today.

The results, as segregated above were quite satisfactory, and 1926-27 saw the intake of some young players who were to make their names with the club, they were H. M. Bowcott, the John and Bill Roberts brothers from Cardiff High School, Frank Williams from Brecon College, Lew Williams from Treorchy, a wing threequarter, Bob Barrell and Percy Bunce (the latter from Risca). Alas, Tom Johnson, our 1924-25 captain left us, somewhat disgruntled, and assisted Penarth for some time. Trevor Lee an excellent full-back from the Glamorgan Police also transferred to Penarth, but not before he had established a goal kicking record for the first team which exists today. It occurred in the match with the Cardiff & District Rugby Union on 8th September 1926 when he converted twelve goals and kicked one penalty goal, thirteen goals out of fourteen kicks—the fourteenth hit an upright. His feat enabled Cardiff to defeat the Cardiff & District R.U. by 66 points to ten.

By direct negotiation, two matches were played against the visiting Maoris from New Zealand whose captain was W. Barclay, an Auckland five-eighth. Alas the two games were lost, the first on 6th November by 18 points to eight in which I got a try, and the second, a closer result, on the 28th December by five points to three. The Maoris overcame the very muddy conditions which prevailed in the first match, but were hard put to escape defeat in the second for which the tourists were guaranteed a minimum sum of £275.

Swansea and Llanelli each defeated us three times, the 'Scarlets' captained by the Welsh international forward Ivor Jones with the legendary Albert Jenkins at centre, and the Maoris twice, accounted for eight of our defeats. A strong Easter programme contributed towards our four losses in the last five games. The Barbarians were beaten and so too were the Harlequins—containing "the greatest forward in the world" W. W. Wakefield, now Lord Wakefield, and Bradford, but we lost to Northampton on the Easter Wednesday having to play many crocks. Our best results were the doubles over Gloucester—captained by Tom Voyce one of England's greatest forwards, and Bristol, and of course the three wins out of the four holiday matches. Our top scorers were Arthur Cornish with 22 tries, Lew Williams 17 and myself 12. Ossie Male kicked seven goals in the opening match with Bridgend. Bobby Delahay played in most matches, 41, followed by the forward W. Watkins with 40. Those who qualified for the First (1st) XV caps were Bob Barrell, Percy Bunce, B. R. Turnbull, Walter Watkins, P.C. Arthur Williams and Lew Williams.

The record of the Second (First) Fifteen, often referred to, and sarcastically, as the "other team" was as follows: P34, W17, L14, D3. Points 310—296. The threequarters A. V. Harding, Dai Davies and P.C. J. H. John each scored seven tries, and B. O. Male and Arthur Williams the club full-backs were the top goal kickers. The following names are those of players who played in more than a total of fifteen matches with both teams which would have qualified them for Second (1st) XV caps. Trevor Arnott, Tom Burns, Syd Cravos, Albert Cundy, Dai Davies, Vic Griffiths, J. Horrocks, Fred Porter and Jack Ryan. Four sets of brothers played for the club, the brothers Burns, Lee, Turnbull and Williams. The minutes indicate that there was need for strict economy, the captain's travelling was covered by a quarterly rail ticket.



In September 1925, the late L. C. Watters, General Secretary of Cardiff Athletic Club at a meeting of the Rugby committee made a suggestion that they should run two First Fifteens instead of one First Team and one Reserve Team. His views were prompted by the needs of finance resulting from the purchase of the Cardiff Arms Park, and the likelihood of first class players being available, particularly amongst the backs.

Committee opinion was very much divided, but after several meetings it was finally decided by a bare majority of seven votes to six to adopt his suggestion with effect from season 1926–27. The experiment was to last for five seasons.

To help the committee make up their minds, the opinion of clubs was obtained and some of those in the top flight had misgivings, but most of those in the lower bracket regarded the scheme as a good one, as, in their case, it meant having *Cardiff* on their fixture lists instead of *Cardiff Reserves*.

Fixture cards printed showed the matches for each team, for the given Saturdays in one consecutive form. 78 matches were arranged for the season 1926–27. Actually 81 were played.

For each season of the experiment a captain and vice-captain were appointed in the accustomed manner, the former by the members and the latter by the committee following the recommendations of the captain, but the experiment caused much administrative confusion with selections of the teams, match records including those players, and for cap purposes, and even the description of the teams selected.

When some experience had been gained with running two First Fifteens, the committee found it necessary to have a player to specifically captain Cardiff's "Other Team", consequently captains were appointed, namely Syd Cravos, Dr. T. J. Pittard and Goff Retter for the seasons 1928–29, 1929–30 and 1930–31 respectively.

The term "Other Side" had come into regular use both inside the committee, and with clubs and the public. There was much ire in selection from time to time as to the "best team" to play against any given opposition, and top class clubs complained at receiving Cardiff's second team, or its "Other Team", according to mood, thereby deceiving their members and supporters. The Leicester, Aberavon and Northampton clubs were cases in point.

Leicester complained that Cardiff sent its "Other team" to play them on 10th November 1928, when, on the same Saturday date Cardiff played Newport at the Cardiff Arms Park, including in that side both the captain B. O. Male and the vice-captain Kevin Turnbull. The Leicester v. Cardiff match was rather unfortunate as both the Cardiff captain, Syd Cravos and Donald Macarthur another forward were ordered off the field for what was described in Cardiff circles as "trivial complaints".

Leicester's complaint may have been tinged with a measure of 'sour grapes'. They won the home match by only 8 points to 5, whilst at Cardiff Arms Park, Newport were beaten by 12 points to 6. On the return fixture at Cardiff Arms Park on 16th March 1929 Leicester were beaten by 8 points to 5 (the same score they had inflicted on Cardiff in November 1928) and Cardiff beat Gloucester at Kingsholm by 10 points to 5 on the same Saturday. Regrettably however, fixtures were broken off between the Leicester and Cardiff clubs and not resumed until 1945–46.

Northampton complained that for our match on their ground 12th January 1929, Cardiff had "fielded a weak, inexperienced, and unrepresentative side" and they would have to cancel the 1929–30 fixture. Cardiff had suffered defeat, heavily, by 29 points to nil, but on the Arms Park on the same day Cardiff succeeded in beating Swansea by five points to three. Happily in this case, Northampton apologised to Cardiff and fixtures were not broken off.

Aberavon's complaint was that for their match with us on 24th November 1928 "Cardiff's best side was not being sent to Aberavon", and in this case the Cardiff committee hurriedly decided "that B. O. Male's side should be sent to Aberavon instead of playing Guys Hospital on the Cardiff Arms Park."

Cardiff's second First Fifteen (the "Other Side") fared disastrously in the 1929–30 season winning only five matches out of 27, with three drawn. It had now become evident to the Rugby committee that the two First Fifteens experiment was not a success, and it was decided that with effect from season 1931–32 the club would revert to running one First Fifteen and one Reserves Fifteen the latter to be called Cardiff Athletic Fifteen which Syd Cravos dubbed as "The Rags".

In the last season of the experiment, Cardiff's "Other Team" won only 12 out of 29 matches.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF FIXTURE CLASHES

### DURING SEASONS 1926/27—1930/31

#### 1926–27

|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Oct. 23—Blackheath  | (A) L 3—5   |
| Dec. 11—Abertillery | (H) L 6—8   |
| Mar. 12—Llanelly    | (H) L 7—8   |
| Apr. 20—Northampton | (H) L 6—18  |
| Apr. 23—Swansea     | (H) L 10—13 |

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Maesteg       | (H) L 0—14  |
| Llanelly      | (A) L 3—6   |
| Maesteg       | (A) L 7—22  |
| Ebbw Vale     | (A) L 13—22 |
| Pill Harriers | (A) L 5—8   |

#### 1927–28

|                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Oct. 22.—Penarth      | (H) W 6—3   |
| Nov. 19—Utd. Services | (A) D 0—0   |
| Feb. 11—London Welsh  | (H) L 3—12  |
| Mar. 31—Llanelly      | (H) L 3—6   |
| Apr. 9—Harlequins     | (H) L 11—19 |

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Blackheath | (A) L 7—16 |
| Neath      | (H) D 3—3  |
| Llanelly   | (A) L 9—15 |
| Maesteg    | (A) L 3—8  |
| Torquay    | (A) L 3—16 |

#### 1928–29

|                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Oct. 20—Blackheath   | (A) L 10—14 |
| Dec. 8—Llanelly      | (A) L 13—14 |
| Feb. 9—Llanelly      | (H) W 19—3  |
| Mar. 9—Plymouth Alb. | (A) L 6—12  |
| Apr. 20—Skewen       | (H) W 25—8  |

|              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Pontypool    | (H) L 4—5   |
| London Welsh | (H) L 10—14 |
| Cross Keys   | (H) L 3—9   |
| Northampton  | (H) L 8—11  |
| Maesteg      | (A) L 5—23  |

1929–30. The Second First Fifteen (the "Other Side") had the most disastrous record in the club's history winning only five matches out of 27 with three drawn. From January 1930 until the end of the season not one solitary match was won, and losses were sustained successively against Bristol United, Cinderford, Edgware, Briton Ferry, Pontypridd, Skewen, Maesteg, Abertillery, Pill Harriers, Stroud, Treorchy, Bedford and Cheltenham, most of these against second class opposition.

#### 1930–31

|                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Sep. 13—Bristol    | (H) L 14—28 |
| Oct. 18—Gloucester | (A) L 10—17 |
| Feb. 14—Gloucester | (H) L 4—6   |
| Mar. 28—Llanelly   | (A) L 6—10  |
| Apr. 11—Swansea    | (A) L 5—8   |

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| Maesteg     | (A) L 0—11 |
| Abertillery | (H) L 3—11 |
| Abertillery | (A) L 0—14 |
| Cross Keys  | (H) L 6—12 |
| Blaina      | (H) L 3—6  |