

DISMAL RECORD OF CARDIFF'S "OTHER TEAM"

1929-30. P44, W30, L9, D5. Points 560-244.

This was the record of the premier team which was captained by Syd Cravos being so appointed by the members, and he nominated our scrum half Howard Poole as his vice-captain. Cravos relied upon only 49 players for his team selections, whereas Dr. T. J. Pittard was to call upon no fewer than 81 for the club's "Other Team" and it was his team's record which was to suffer from the many changes through promotion to the Premier XV, and other defections, and, in particular, his backs lacked experience and penetration.

It was quite a good season for Cravos's XV in spite of losing four games up to the end of October, all to English clubs: Bristol (A) by 11 points to 6, and three in succession to Coventry (A) 13-6, Gloucester (H) 10-9 (two goals to three tries) and Blackheath (A) 8-3. Llanelly succeeded over us three times with one drawn, conversely, we succeeded over Swansea in a similar manner and had the better of Newport with three wins out of four. We captured two notable scalps by defeating two unbeaten clubs at Christmas time, Neath (A) by 6 points to 3, and London Welsh 23 points to nil at home. From 14th December to the 27th Plymouth Albion, Neath, London Welsh, London Irish (40 points to three) and the Watsonians were all beaten. The month of April was even more profitable with successes over Penarth, Maesteg, Swansea, Barbarians ((11 points to 9), Harlequins, Coventry and Aberavon, and a drawn match with Llanelly to end the season.

Tommy Stone had become very popular with all clubs for his cleverness and daring at half-back and from the full-back position, and converted most of the club goals. He, and Norman Fender who were original players with our Rugby ex-schoolboys team, were making a name for themselves. Graham Jones was top scorer with 18 tries, 15 came from Ronnie Boon, 13 from John Roberts and 11 from B. R. Turnbull. Harry Bowcott and Boon each helped themselves to 3 tries against London Irish on Boxing Day, and Tommy Stone converted five tries. Tommy Stone 41, and Syd Cravos 40, made the most appearances and no fewer than seven players took part in more than 30 matches. New caps for this XV were awarded to H. M. Bowcott, Vaughan Griffiths, Harold Jones a former Neath player, Archie Skym and Phil Thomas, all forwards except Bowcott. We were helped by having no less than twelve Glamorgan County Police players on our books, they were nearly all forwards. For our match with Blackheath at home on 22nd March, Ivor Jones, one of Llanelly's greatest ever forwards expressed a wish to play in a Blue and Black jersey for Cardiff. He was duly selected and there was a little disappointment when, it appears, he felt he had to be loyal to his own club and turn out against Swansea.

To lead a club XV from the front row of the pack, particularly with inexperienced backs behind you is not a very good tactical choice. But such was captain Pittard's unenviable task, consequently his team was to suffer the worst playing record of any team in the club's history; 1929-30 is the only season in which any of our teams scored less points than our opponents. The results make very dismal reading, and were damaging to the club's prestige. They presaged the end of the two First XV's experiment, and at a special meeting held on 28th March 1930, members of the management committee of the Athletic Club being present, it was decided that, with effect from 1931-32 the club would run one Cardiff team, and one styled Cardiff Athletic, the latter outfit being known as "The Rags" to this day.

The top scorer in Pittard's low scoring team was Cliff Mills a wing threequarter who notched up 12, including four in one match against Cinderford. Young Mills was the son of the late Jack Mills of Canton who for very many years devoted himself to the interest of the Cardiff & District Rugby Union, a father-figure indeed, and connected with the Cardiff Rugby Club in his later years. Nine players qualified for caps with the Second (1st) XV, namely, Ken Harries, Stan B. Hughes, V. Marshall, Cliff Mills, V. R. Osmond, P.C. Edgar Price, Goff Retter, H. Watkins and Dai Westacott, son of an illustrious father of the same name, also a forward, seasons 1903/04-1909/10.

During the season the club received an invitation from the French Rugby Federation (F.F.R.) to play its probable international team in France, the French "B" team of today. The invitation was accepted and the match took place at Toulouse the following season, on New Year's Day 1931. The minutes also record several other items of interest: Jack Powell (no relation to our past players of the same name) offered his services free to the club as masseur which were accepted and he became a very conscientious servant of the club until his death shortly after the end of World War II. The club's annual dinner took place on the 28th December in the Grand Hotel and the visiting Llanelly team and officials were our guests. In the real need for economy a system of voluntary stewarding around the ground was instituted and functioned well under a sub-committee, R. A. Cornish, D. E. Davies and Vic Scott and the club was saved more than £300 in this first season. The programme editor was complimented.

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	Maesteg	(H) L 0—14
Dec. 11—Abertillery	(H) L 6—8	Llanelly	(A) L 3—6
Mar. 12—Llanelly	(H) L 7—8	Maesteg	(A) L 7—22
Apr. 20—Northampton	(H) L 6—18	Ebbw Vale	(A) L 13—22
Apr. 23—Swansea	(H) L 10—13	Pill Harriers	(A) L 5—8

1927–28

Oct. 22.—Penarth	(H) W 6—3	Blackheath	(A) L 7—16
Nov. 19—Utd. Services	(A) D 0—0	Neath	(H) D 3—3
Feb. 11—London Welsh	(H) L 3—12	Llanelly	(A) L 9—15
Mar. 31—Llanelly	(H) L 3—6	Maesteg	(A) L 3—8
Apr. 9—Harlequins	(H) L 11—19	Torquay	(A) L 3—16

1928–29

Oct. 20—Blackheath	(A) L 10—14	Pontypool	(H) L 4—5
Dec. 8—Llanelly	(A) L 13—14	London Welsh	(H) L 10—14
Feb. 9—Llanelly	(H) W 19—3	Cross Keys	(H) L 3—9
Mar. 9—Plymouth Alb.	(A) L 6—12	Northampton	(H) L 8—11
Apr. 20—Skewen	(H) W 25—8	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	Maesteg	(A) L 0—11
Oct. 18—Gloucester	(A) L 10—17	Abertillery	(H) L 3—11
Feb. 14—Gloucester	(H) L 4—6	Abertillery	(A) L 0—14
Mar. 28—Llanelly	(A) L 6—10	Cross Keys	(H) L 6—12
Apr. 11—Swansea	(A) L 5—8	Blaina	(H) L 3—6