

BLIZZARD DEPRIVES TOMMY STONE OF WELSH CAP

1936-37. P44, W36, L7, D1. Points 553-173.

This was the season of Cardiff's recovery to equal some of her past glories, it was the most successful season since the end of the war. L. M. Spence was captain and he nominated Tommy Stone as vice-captain. Most of the previous season's players were available. Newcomers who joined the club were T. Lyn Williams, a versatile centre/outside half from Cardiff High School, W. Glyn Morgan a neat and diminutive scrum half from Penygraig, another member of the Turnbull family, Adrian, also a scrum half, and the two experienced international players C. W. "Cliff" Jones, at outside half and Wilfred Wooller the young but powerful-striding centre, a prodigious kicker of all goals. As a pair, the latter two made their debuts at the Cardiff Arms Park against Neath on 28th November, a match we won by 18 points to nil.

Down from Cambridge University, Cliff Jones was to study law, whilst Wooller had secured an appointment at Cardiff Docks. They had an inspiring influence on the rest of the team, their presence had an impact on gates at home and away. Of these two players, Jack Davis of the Newport "Argus" in his history of the Newport Club 1875-1960, wrote:

"... It is appropriate here to pay tribute to the effect this pair of great players had on Newport. Newport's Rugby had become to be dull, and support was dwindling, but the box office allure of Jones and Wooller boosted Newport's finances just when this was necessary. Their first visit to Newport drew a crowd of 13,000, the biggest for many years, and right up to the war Newport had reason to be thankful for the visits of those two personalities who have done so much for the game in so many ways."

Such generous praise needs no further adornment from me as the performances of the team as a whole was quite remarkable, and consistently good, particularly when regard is taken of the fact that Cliff Jones fractured his collar bone in the match with Swansea away on 28th November and did not play again during the season, and that Wooller through injuries and international calls was available for only 21 matches. Les Spence, one of the best back row forwards who failed to gain a Welsh cap, who led his team so well in 39 matches, can reflect with pride upon their achievements. The Swansea club was beaten four times, Newport and Pontypool three times, Neath, Coventry and Plymouth Albion each twice, a successful Midland tour by beating Coventry and Northampton, and a successful Cornish tour with a treble of wins over Plymouth Albion, Falmouth and Penzance. At Easter time we dominated the Barbarians with a win by 16 points to three.

The margin of defeat in the seven matches lost was very close in every case, Bridgend (H) by 4 points to 3, Gloucester (A) 13 points to 9 (one try, one drop, and two penalty goals to three tries), Llanelly 8 points to 6 (one goal, one try to two tries), Bristol (A) 5 points to 3, Newport (H) 8 points to 3 (two dropped goals to one try), Blackheath (A) 5 points to 4, and Llanelly (H) by 5 points to 3. It was understandable that the players' achievements should be recognized by the award to them of blazers by the club.

Wooller, Harry Rees and Eddie Watkins were Cardiff's representatives in the three internationals. Wooller's partner on his right wing was W. H. "Bill" Clement of Llanelly who was to become a British Lion to South Africa in 1938, and the secretary of the Welsh Rugby Union after his playing days. But three players, Tommy Stone and Horace Edwards of Cardiff, and Charlie J. Anderson a forward from Maesteg, were to suffer a cruel blow in the matter of a Welsh cap. V. G. G. Jenkins full-back, Claude Davey centre, and Trevor Williams of Cross Keys had been chosen for the Welsh team against Ireland for 13th March but had to withdraw owing to injuries and they were replaced by the Cardiff and Maesteg players in the order named here. Alas, on the way to Belfast, the Welsh party ran into such a severe blizzard that the match was not played and it had to be re-arranged for 3rd April. The Welsh selectors decided to adhere to their original selection for it, and the unfortunate Stone, Edwards and Anderson never played for Wales. Tommy Stone, disappointed in many ways turned professional and joined the Barrow club. He was one of Cardiff's most loyal players, having played for the ex-schoolboys' teams in the early twenties, then on to Cardiff's senior teams, and for the First XV alone played no less than 317 times.

Arthur Bassett headed the try scorers with 22, Wooller scored 15, the captain Les Spence at forward got 12, Horace Edwards 8, Gwyn Porter six and five each came from Cliff Jones, Gwyn Lewis, T. J. Roberts, Gwyn Williams and Ronnie Boon. Tommy Stone kicked 35 goals. New caps were awarded to Selby Davies, E. Gwyn Lewis a fast wing and a Merthyr boy, W. Glyn Morgan, Lyn Williams and the new maestro himself, Wilfred Wooller.

The Athletic XV record was P33, W25, L6, D2, with 448 points to 179. Its captain was G. V. Wynne Jones, and he was now leading a team composed of experienced players and newcomers who displayed much good form and team spirit as to achieve the best record of any Reserve team since the war. The captain, nicknamed "Geevers" by Syd Cravos, was taken ill at Easter time and was in hospital for a long time. Fortunately for his record, he had an experienced leader to fall back on, and it was Viv Osmond who acted as captain for the remainder of the season. "Geevers" and those of his players still with us can look back—and probably do—on their plum achievement of the season, that of beating our oldest rivals Newport United in all the four matches of the season. It was indeed a very healthy season in "The Nursery".

The wing E. Gwyn Jones notched the most tries 22, followed by Gwyn Porter with 13, Ken Jones got six and a dropped goal, and six was also scored by F. L. Templeman, but "Geevers" the captain scored most points with nine tries, two dropped goals, one penalty goal and twenty-five conversions. Athletic caps were awarded to Emrys Carter, P. J. Hopkins, Evan "Ianto" Jones, Ken I. Jones, J. Kelleher, Roy Roberts, F. L. Templeman and Adrian Turnbull. Viv Osmond's 30 was the highest number of appearances for "The Rags".

A Past v. Present match was played on 28th April in aid of the Cardiff Royal Infirmary whose always depleted coffers were augmented by some £200. Old players like to reminisce about the old times, and timers, and so I give the teams, which were:—

PAST—Roy Gabe Jones; Joe Daley, D. E. Davies, Graham Jones and R. A. Cornish; H. M. Bowcott and W. J. Delahay; Ivor Thomas, Bob Barrell, Percy Bunce, Jim Burns, D. E. J. Hughes, E. "Ted" Spillane, Dai Westacott and H. Johnson. Score: 20 points.

PRESENT—D. Brown; Arthur Bassett, T. J. Roberts, H. O. Edwards and Gwyn Porter; Cliff Jones and W. G. Morgan; Ray Bale, J. Kelleher, Harry Rees, L. M. Spence, Roy Roberts, Gwyn Williams, Eddie Watkins and P.C. Ivor Heatley. Score: 36 points.

The old 'uns' were fagged out before the end. Cliff Jones ran and dodged us all over the field, I believe he thought it was an international match!

As a footnote to our Barbarian victory, an Irish international who took part in the match expressed the view that "No club should be allowed to have such a good club side as Cardiff".