

NEWPORT BEATEN FOUR TIMES. VETERANS RE-NEW ENTENTE CORDIALE

1951-52. P46 W34, L9, D3. Points 465—235.

This season was characterised by several of the most outstanding events in the club's history, the first being the celebration of our 75th anniversary for which event an important sub-committee was appointed to organise it, comprising myself as chairman, B. H. Jenkins as secretary, Hubert Johnson, S. C. Cravos, L. M. Spence and our captain, Dr. Jack Matthews. The club was fortunate to co-opt on this committee Mr. J. B. G. Thomas the present Assistant Editor of the "Western Mail" who rendered most valuable assistance, including the editing of the souvenir programme for the occasion, and for the match which was arranged between the club and the British Isles touring team 1950 (The Lions) on 22nd September 1951.

The programme was a magnificent production of 44 pages, its covers of Blue and Black and replete with contributions from past and present Rugby men and officials of high rank from all over the world; amplified by suitable photographs and club statistics as befitted the occasion. The match itself was a magnificent one of exhilarating Rugby football and helped to make the occasion a memorable anniversary, a pleasure to players and spectators alike. The Lions won the game by one goal, one penalty goal and two tries to Cardiff's four tries—scored by Derek Murphy (2), Bleddyn Williams and Sid Judd. Judd's try was under the posts and sensationally the goal kick failed. It was Lewis Jones's kicks which won the match for the Lions. The teams were:—

BRITISH LIONS. Llanelly & Wales. M. F. Lane Ireland, N. J. Henderson Ireland, M. C. Thomas Wales and R. MacDonald Scotland. J. W. Kyle Ireland and W. B. Cleaver Wales. J. D. Robins Wales, K. D. Mullen Ireland, T. Clifford Ireland, D. J. Hayward Wales, Roy John Wales, J. E. Nelson Ireland, V. G. Roberts England and J. D. McCarthy Ireland.

CARDIFF. R. F. Trott, Haydn Morris, Bleddyn Williams, Jack Matthews and Derek Murphy. Cliff Morgan and Rex Willis. Cliff Davies, Geoff Beckingham, J. R. Phillips. W. E. Tamplin and Malcolm Collins. Peter Goodfellow, Sid Judd and C. D. Williams.

Referee: Mr. Ivor David. Touch judges: P. W. Kininmonth Scotland and L. M. Spence Cardiff.

Sir Wavell Wakefield "Wakers" (now Lord Wakefield of Kendal) kicked off and later remarked that his visit had been the most enjoyable of very many visits he had spent in Wales.

The commemoration dinner was held in Cardiff's City Hall, there were more than 350 guests, representing clubs from home and abroad, civic and leading Rugby personalities, many of Cardiff's past and present players, and the press. It was a great day for all.

For this memorable season it was indeed wise of the membership to appoint Dr. Jack Matthews as the club's captain—for a third term. Only three players of the past—or present, have captained the club three times, namely W. D. Phillips, Percy Bush and the legendary Gwyn Nicholls who holds the record for four seasons of captaincy. Jack was now the experienced leader of personality and strength, who had gained all the Rugby honours the game had to offer. He has played 180 first team matches, quite apart from the many charity and scratch in which he took part, some of which were organised by him. Uniquely in this season Cardiff had two international captains playing, himself of Wales, and Des O'Brien who was the current captain of Ireland. This honourable duplication was once before achieved, i.e. in 1922-23 when our full-back Dr Tom Wallace was a past captain of Ireland and Clem Lewis his club captain was currently captain of Wales.

In this 1951-52 season six of our 'star' players were badly injured and their match attendances were affected. Rex Willis could play in only 23 of the fixtures, Frank Trott in 14, Bleddyn Williams in 22, Cliff Morgan in 22, Haydn Morris in 29 and Alun Thomas in 23. But some of the "Rags" were developing, and amongst others, Brian Mark at scrum half was deputising for Rex Willis, and John Llewellyn for Frank Trott.

Yet despite changes from time to time, the captain guided his team well and they achieved another 'plum' performance by beating our rivals Newport once again four times in a season thus following the footsteps of Selwyn Biggs, captain of 1897-98 season, Percy Bush 1905-06, and Haydn Tanner in 1947-48. Tamplin's boot was again in successful evidence against the Usksiders. After a bad spell of three successive losses in September against Neath, Aberavon and the British Lions, and two in succession against the Wasps and South Africa in October, not another game was lost for four months when Gloucester inflicted our heaviest defeat by 14 points to nil. Aberavon and Neath gained doubles over us. Neath was able to field no less than eight players who were already or soon to become Welsh caps, namely Courtney Meredith, Roy John, Brian Sparkes—forwards, Viv Evans, Keith Maddocks, Gordon Wells, backs and also Elvet Jones another international forward who had played for Cardiff post war. Neath also had two other near capped players in John Thorley and John Huins.

One of our victories gave our skipper much pleasure. It was that over the Barbarians when he played "a stormer" without six of his leading players. His play against the British Lions with Bleddyn Williams was quite superb.

Another outstanding match was that with South Africa on 20th October, an exciting one which we should have won and very nearly did win. On the run of the play the tourists were perhaps a little fortunate, there were two incidents which had decisive effects. One relates to Jack Matthews who charged down a kick by the Springbok scrum half J. Oelofse on his line, to fall on the ball and score what he claimed to be a try. The referee ruled it was a "knock on", but under the new law for the season it was not a "knock on" if a player is in the act of charging a kick down. The score—if allowed, may well have sealed the doom of the Springboks who came strong in the very late stages and scored a very tactical try. Near Cardiff's twenty-five the Springboks heeled from a scrum, roughly midfield and J. D. Brewis kicked sharply towards the left corner flag. The position to me as the touch judge on the opposite side of the field did not appear to be dangerous, but the South African left wing J. K. Ochse had taken off like a bomb to follow up the kick and Alun Thomas had to turn and chase him. Frank Trott from a position in front of our posts could now be seen trying desperately to cut off Ochse, but he lacked speed and the South African scored the try and ensured victory for his side to the immense relief of his team and management officials. It has been stated that the hon. manager got through fifty cigarettes during the match, but he, Dr. Danie Craven and the captain Basil Kenyon acknowledged that the Springboks were a trifle lucky. Later in the season the visitors presented the club with a Springbok head as a sporting gesture to the best losers on tour.

The season's top scorers were, tries: 25 by Haydn Morris, 11 from Bleddyn Williams, nine by C. D. Williams and seven from Jack Matthews and Sid Judd. W. E. Tamplin kicked 48 goals. New 1st XV caps were J. D. Evans the prop, Mike Evans a wing, Gareth Griffiths, Arthur Hull, J. E. G. Llewellyn full-back and Brian Mark the scrum half. Sid Judd and Malcolm Collins each played in 43 games, Jack Matthews and the veteran Cliff Davies 39 each, Geoff Beckingham in 38 and C. D. Williams 36.

Athletic XV. Stan Bowes was captain again. He achieved the rare feat of playing in all "The Rags" fixtures. The record was P31, W23, L6, D2, points 344—173. This loyal character of ours who had served the club since 1937-38 led his team well, he had to shuffle through nearly 60 players in the season. Amongst them were E. L. "Ted" Horsfall of the Harlequins who had played for England against Wales in 1949, and D. G. Naylor the Warwickshire forward. Both of these players were awarded Athletic XV caps as were Vernon Hinam, D. C. (Denis) Murphy, Dudley Owen (prop), Alan Priday and D. J. Walsh.

With many changes in the team, the scoring was shared and those with the most tries were Hugh Goodfield and Denis Murphy each with seven, and J. B. Neagle and Dr. Gwyn Rowlands six each. Alan Priday was the main goal kicker with a total of 29 to his credit.

Junior XV. 20 matches were played of which 16 were won, two lost and two drawn.

In the international field Bleddyn Williams, Cliff Morgan, Rex Willis and Alun Thomas assisted Wales. Rex Willis was badly hurt in the Scottish match sustaining a fractured jaw but he refused to go off the field. Our courageous scrum half was able to take part in only one more club match during the season, against Penzance on 21st April, after much treatment at Chepstow Hospital. Cliff Morgan did not shine against South Africa (over-kicking) and he was much shadowed by the balding flank forward C. J. van Wyk. For the British Lions against South Africa at Johannesburg in 1955, Cliff Morgan was in superb form and van Wyk never saw his backside for Johannesburg dust. He darted under van Wyk's clutches to score brilliantly and set the Lions on to a sensational win by 23 points to 22. Cliff Morgan was hurt for the French match and he was replaced at half-back by our own Alun Thomas who dropped a goal in a Welsh win by nine points to three. Wales won the Triple Crown.

Entente Cordiale. In September at Nantes, the Cardiff Veterans defeated those of the Stade Nantais Club for the "Championnat du Monde". A most happy week end. Messieurs Pedron and Picherit were made honorary life members of the Cardiff Athletic Club, the official cards being handed over by the chairman Norman Riches. Miss Babs Filer celebrated her twenty-first year of service with the club. Jim Pursey our head groundsman carried out a re-draining operation to the Cardiff Arms Park. Our new clubhouse was still in the planning stage.

Regrettably, Jack Matthews and Frank Trott announced their retirements, Anno Domini was overtaking them but they were both to give the club much service in their respective administrative capacities. In the summer, the players' annual outing was celebrated at the Bradley Court Country Club, Micheldean, Gloucestershire on Sunday 25th May 1952. "A good time was had by all."