

CLIFF MORGAN JOINS BECTIVE RANGERS. 'QUINS' v. CARDIFF FLOODLIGHT

1954-55. P48, W38, L5, D5. Points 676-243.

This was quite a remarkable season, marred only by the untimely illness of our captain Sid Judd which restricted his appearances to 24 matches. Later the illness was to prove fatal, causing his death by leukaemia in the full flower of his manhood. Before his breakdown he was a most experienced forward already holding ten Welsh caps, and a candidate for the forthcoming Lions tour to South Africa 1955. He was strong, aggressive, a good reader of the game and a most useful goal kicker. In fact he was the type who asserted his qualities by his energetic example. Sid nominated Rex Willis to be his vice-captain.

We had lost Alun Thomas who decided to join Llanelly and Cliff Morgan who took up an appointment in Dublin and joined Bective Rangers club with whom he really enjoyed his Rugby. Cliff was popular and in the course of his stay, Bective became known in Dublin circles as 'Morgan's Rangers'; he was pleased to captain an International XV, more than half of them British Lions, to play Bective on its 75th anniversary in 1956. Colin Bosley left us and so did John R. Phillips our popular forward who I seem to remember became a Benedick and joined Newport. But there was much good talent to contend for first team places, particularly amongst the backs. At half back there was Rex Willis; Lloyd Williams and Colin Hewett both of whom could play in either half back position, there was Brian Mark and the versatile and devastating side-stepper Ken Richards. At three-quarter we were also strong being able to chose from Gareth Griffiths, Haydn Morris, Bleddyn Williams, Gordon Wells, Howard Nicholls, Derek Murphy, Dr. Gwyn Rowlands and the Old Illydian Peter Nyhan.

We made a great start and were unbeaten for the first 22 matches, then, on an unlucky day (13th December) we lost our ground record in defeat by Cambridge University—11 points to three, a jolting the Varsity had similarly inflicted upon us in December 1948. Moseley also beat us—9 points to 8—on the final trial date. Newport beat us at home in March by 11 points to six. Birkenhead Park also succeeded by nine points to eight whilst we were on tour to play them, and Halifax whom we beat two days later by 27 points to nine. The Barbarians beat us at Easter time, only just, by six points to three and they included seven selected 1955 British Lions in their team. Amongst our many victories perhaps those over Bristol (38-3) and Aberavon (32-11) were most notable.

Our top try scorers were Derek Murphy 26, Gordon Wells 17, Haydn Morris 15, Bleddyn Williams 14, Gareth Griffiths 10, Howard Nicholls, Dr. Gwyn Rowlands and Ken Richards each got eight, and our captain Sid Judd scored seven and kicked 23 goals. The other chief goal kickers were John Llewellyn who put over 24, Ken Richards kicked 17 and Gwyn Rowlands after his return from Australia as a ship's M.O. also kicked 17. Gwyn Rowlands kicked four goals and scored two tries—sixteen points out of Cardiff's 22 points to 13 win over Coventry in April. Honours: Colin Howe, Alan Priday, Ken Richards, J. H. Thomas and Gordon Wells were awarded club caps.

Of the 48 of the First XV fixtures Malcolm Collins played in 44, Beckingham in 42, J. D. Evans 42 and Eddie Thomas 41. In the international field eight of our players assisted Wales, Bleddyn Williams (captain), Gordon Wells (first cap), Cliff Morgan (four times whilst with Bective Rangers), Sid Judd, Gareth Griffiths, C. D. Williams (first cap) and Haydn Morris. For the British Lions tour to South Africa four of our players were chosen, namely Cliff Morgan, Haydn Morris, Alun Thomas—but now with Llanelly, and Gareth Griffiths who flew out as a replacement. I was honoured with the hon. secretaryship of the Lions in South Africa, and there saw Cliff Morgan produce his best Rugby football of his career. Rex Willis was invited to tour, but for domestic reasons was unable to accept, he was favourite to become the tour captain.

Sadly for all Rugby lovers, Bleddyn Williams announced his decision to retire at the end of the season. He had served the club truly and well since 1938-39. He added lustre to the game itself, his praises have been well and truly sung, I will add this, that, in about nearly two hundred matches when I was privileged to watch him I do not remember one incident in which he was involved in any form of misconduct on the field. On 1st May 1954 for the last match of the season against Llanelly at home, Bleddyn was made captain. At the end of the match the crowd rushed on to the field and shouldered him off in honour. It was the last, but not the least, of his many honours on the Cardiff Arms Park. St. Albans Military Band were present to add their tribute, it was to play "The end of a perfect day."

The Athletic XV was captained by Peter Goodfellow, our popular and enthusiastic forward and the results were the best since the end of the war. They were: P33, W28, L4, D1, points 521 to 118. Similar to the First XV, "The Rags" had got as far as the 11th December without defeat when they met Pencoed at home and lost by eight points to three. It was the day of the first Welsh trial and Peter was called upon to captain the First XV to play the Harlequins in London with at least six of the club's leading players absent. Peter successfully led the team to victory by two tries and a penalty goal to one try. "The Rags" went off with a bang. Up to the end of November they had scored no less than 339 points, but later in the season six matches were cancelled, with an effect on the number of points scored. Resolven were hammered by eight goals, four tries to nil, Alan Priday kicking eight goals and scoring one try.

The top try scorers were C. L. Davies 18, R. T. Parsons 15, Gareth Griffiths and Peter Nyhan eight each, John Dodd, Derek Murphy and J. H. Thomas seven each, Ken Richards six, Alan Priday and Lloyd Williams five each. Alan Priday was chief goal kicker with 58 goals scoring in all a total of 137 points. New caps were awarded to John Crothers, J. Otto Jones, T. J. McCarthy, Peter Nyhan, R. J. Parsons and A. J. Rosser. With fewer matches played, Terry Donovan the "Rags" hooker played in 27 of them.

Alan Jones was the captain of the Cardiff Juniors—the Youth XV which achieved its best record since its formation. The results were P27, W23, L2, D2, points 442-52. J. Cowley was awarded his Welsh Youth international cap and Les Jones was the keen hon. secretary and general factotum.

Seven a side. Cardiff entered the Newport organised Welsh (Snelling) tournament on 30th April 1955. It was a young Seven that we entered and only Gordon Wells and Gareth Griffiths had 'sevens' experience which they had acquired at St. Luke's College. We won the tournament beating Pontypridd, Aberavon, Newbridge and in the final, Newport by eight points to three. At the Cardiff Arms Park in a club fixture, Cardiff beat Old Belvedere by 21 points to 11.

Floodlight exhibition match. Cardiff accepted an invitation from the Harlequins to play them in a floodlight match at White City on 12th October. It was the first floodlight match staged in the south of England. The "Quins" won by one goal, one penalty goal to one try and one penalty goal, they scored their try in the last minute and the whistle blew for 'no side' after their successful conversion. The match led to the innovation of floodlight Rugby to the clubs.

Dr. Jack Matthews our chairman organised representative teams to play the Treorchy, Cardiff High School Old Boys and the Penarth clubs in connection with their anniversary celebrations. On the club's return from the Cornish tour it stopped at Weston-super-Mare and played a Somerset County team in connection with the opening of Weston's new stand and pavilion on 20th April. Cardiff played well in an exhibition manner and won by 30 points to five, and the president of the Rugby Football Union spoke in appreciative terms of the Cardiff Rugby Club, when he formally opened the grand stand.

On the home front the Cardiff Athletic Club reported that another £2,000 had been allocated to the building reserve, and at long last the plans for our new clubhouse were approved by the management committee. Negotiations were also going on with the W.R.U. in connection with an extension to the south stand. The head groundsman Jim Pursey, resigned and Des Glover one of our former players was appointed to succeed him.

In April 1955 a players' meeting was held. Its agenda included the items of nomination for first team captain and for committee for 1955-56. Such meetings have continued but I have never been partisan to them as any nomination for captain made by a member of the club or by the committee would not be accepted by the nominee unless he had been nominated by the players, some young and inexperienced, who also enjoy the privilege of a reduced membership fee. I write this frankly from experience.

Obituary. The passing away of past players always invokes the sympathy of those who knew them, but 'Father Time' takes his inevitable toll, yet we must not forget to try and mention always those of the past who helped to make our club great; Percy Bush the club's best outside half up to World War I, left this world. One of the greatest of line-out forwards 'Billy' Neil 1898-1909 died. And so did our club medical officer Dr. Tom Wallace, he gave the club service as player, administrator and medical officer from 1919-20.