

PHIL TRESIDDER AUSTRALIA'S REPRESENTATIVE

1957-58. P47, W32, L7, D8. Points 483-214.

Eddie Thomas the versatile back-row forward was appointed captain and he nominated Cliff Morgan as his vice-captain, and so we had two Rhondda boys at the helm. Eddie, a Pentre grammar schoolboy had already been schooled in the arts of forward play with the Neath club and he joined Cardiff in 1952. He proved to be an excellent leader and the season's record was excellent by modern standards and he led his team to win the Welsh unofficial championship. Eddie decided to hang up his boots at the end of the season and he was appointed to the Rugby committee for 1958-59.

As was the case in 1956-57 we made another fine start losing only two matches up to the end of December, Cambridge University (A) on 29th October again took the Cardiff scalp by beating us by 10 points to six. The following Saturday we beat Oxford University at home by 11 points to eight. We played three former Blues against them in Alan Barter and Roddy Evans of Cambridge and C. D. Williams of Oxford.

Eight are an unusually high number of drawn matches, this number being equalled only twice before, those of 1949-50 and 1959-60. Those of the current season were Ebbw Vale (A) 3-3, Newport (H) 3-3, Bective Rangers (A) 9-9, Rosslyn Park (A) 8-8, Newport (A) 3-3, Coventry (A) 3-3, Neath (A) 3-3 and Bridgend (A) 5-5. Room for conjecture here!

Our losses were sustained against London Welsh (A) 8-6, Newport (H) 14-6, Llanelli (A) 8-3, St. Ives on the Cornish tour surprise this 6-3, Pontypool (H) 14-8—another surprise, and Gloucester (A) 3-0. The match we lost to Newport by 14-8 coincided unfortunately with the Ireland v. Wales international in Dublin. Six of our players were taking part, namely Alan Friday—his first cap, Howard Nicholls—his first cap, Cliff Morgan, Lloyd Williams, J. D. Evans—his first cap and W. R. (Roddy) Evans; Newport's representatives were Malcolm Thomas and Bryn Meredith.

Apart from our club match successes, our greatest triumph was our third victory over Australia on 14th December by 14 points to 11. Once again Cardiff truly rose to the great occasion, producing the Blue and Black magic in attack and all the necessary courage in defence, and in an incident-packed game Gordon Wells produced two brilliant tries. Dave Phillips of the "Football Echo" wrote of the match, "This was the classic game we had all hoped. Cardiff's superior strategy once again confounded the enthusiasm and virility of this young Australian XV". But the greatest independent testimony came from the official press correspondent with the Australian team, Phil Tresidder of the "Sydney Daily Telegraph", who wrote, "We fell to the world's best R.U. club" and that "It would be churlish indeed, for any Australian supporter to suggest that Cardiff did not thoroughly deserve victory in this splendid match". He had accompanied the Australian tourists of 1947 as did the popular Nick Shehadie, now perhaps a veteran and joyful scorer of a try in the match.

Civic hospitality was given by the city council under its Lord Mayor, J. H. Morgan, himself a well known sports writer. The council has always welcomed important Rugby football bodies to our city, a feature much appreciated by its senior Rugby club.

Following the usual opening match with the Cardiff & District R.U. we welcomed a very strong French combination from Auvergne and Limousin, during a brief tour to South Wales, organised by Monsieur Lucien Picquet from Auvergne, who, with Monsieur Lescombes of Limousin, headed a strong team including internationals Jean Colombier and Andre Domenech one of the toughest of French international forwards. Domenech was no stranger to Cardiff and he received a splendid ovation when he scored a try against us in the match which was full of incident. Four days later we met Group Captain Walker's XV, a selection brimful with internationals, we were very closely pressed to win by six points to three.

At Easter time we returned to a winning vein after our disastrous defeats of 1956-57 and Barbarians, Harlequins and Northampton were defeated in turn. The Cornish tour followed and for administrative convenience air travel was invoked.

During this arduous season of 47 matches we also played the Harlequins and Bristol in floodlit matches—both were drawn, with the former by five points each and the latter 9-9. Two unofficial matches were played with the Combined Services on 4th December—we won by 13 points to 8, and the R.A.F. on 25th February, losing this by five points to three. A missionary type of match was played at Gelligaled Park, Ystrad Rhondda on 16th September, it was to inaugurate the first occasion the Borough of Rhondda had fielded a representative Valley XV. The sixth of these extra matches took place on Monday 21st April between Cardiff and a Mid-District Rugby Union XV at Ynysangharad Park, Pontypool and the entire proceeds were in aid of the dependants of the late P.C. J. Michael Fitzgerald of the Glamorgan County Police who had assisted Cardiff Athletic in seasons 1955-56 and 1956-57, and previously for Ystrad and Bargoed Rugby Clubs. He had met an untimely death at an early age. John Maunder, one of our most promising forwards who had gained an Athletic XV cap in 1952-53 died after fighting against illness following a tragic accident at his work.

First team scorers: Howard Nicholls 20, Gordon Wells 14, Glyn John 13 and Ken Thomas nine obtained most tries. Alun Friday with 49 goals and two tries gained 128 points. Club caps were awarded to D. J. Hayward, Kingsley Jones, Ken Thomas and Cenydd Williams. It was Colin Howe with 41 who made most appearances. W. Roddy Evans, Alun Friday, J. D. Evans and Howard Nicholls gained their first international caps—Roddy Evans was superb in his line-out work in the series in which Cliff Morgan, Lloyd Williams and Gordon Wells also took part.

Alas Cliff Morgan, Geoff Beckingham, Rex Willis and Eddie Thomas announced their retirements. As to Cliff Morgan, it was to my great regret that he would not let me nominate him for one supreme honour he does not now possess—that of being captain of the Cardiff Rugby Club.

Peter Nyhan was captain of the Athletic XV and he made a good job of it. Out of 33 matches only three were lost—to Newport United, twice, and once to Bristol United, three were drawn and the rest won. The points scored—548 to 147 indicates that the emphasis was on attacking play. One hapless club, Christchurch in Hampshire were the chief victims, being defeated by no less than 72 points to 5—twelve goals, four tries to one goal, 5 points. R. J. Parsons bagged five tries in the match and George Spear our popular full-back from Cilfynydd kicked all the twelve goals. Other notable victories were gained over Pontnewydd 44-6, Wasps Vandals 32-0 and Cardiff Medicals 32-3. Derek Murphy got the highest number of tries—13 and Ray Glastonbury the wing bagged 11. George Spear kicked 46 goals, scored one try, for a total of 107 points.

New caps were awarded to V. Davies, G. T. Ellis, Ray Glastonbury, Cliff Howe, George Spear and Peter Thomas (R.A.F.). The most appearances were put in by Ray Glastonbury 25, Cliff Howe 22, Peter Thomas and G. T. Ellis 21, George Spear 21 and 10 games with the 1st XV, Derek Murphy 15 and 10 with the 1st XV.

The Junior XV. Elwyn Williams, another member of the famous Taffs Well family was the Youth captain. Time was to show that he made a great contribution to the senior fifteens. The Juniors had quite a good season although only 18 games out of 29 fixtures could be played owing to so many high demands for players by the Cardiff & District Youth Rugby Union, which, at the end of the season reached the final of the Crawshay Cup competition in which no fewer than twelve of our juniors took part. Three of our players represented the Welsh Youth, namely Elwyn Williams, J. Regan and T. McCarthy, and for the fourth time in succession the juniors were the winners of the Cardiff & District Youth Rugby Union "Sevens". Another good year in the nursery. The club again made donations to junior Rugby in Cardiff which totalled £480. One of the oldest members of our club Augustus Hayes, a vice-president of the Athletic Club, passed away. Old timers will remember him as a cheery personality who was such a regular attender at all annual meetings of the Rugby club for many years.