LIAISON WITH THE FIFTH SPRINGBOKS—NASTY INCIDENTS

CARDIFF ARMS PARK FLOODED—RUGBY FOOTBALL AT NINIAN PARK

1960–61. P43, W30, L8, D5. Points 498—240.

This was to be quite an eventful season. Lloyd Williams now a seasoned international half back was our appointed captain. He nominated the sterling forward Kingsley Jones

to be his vice-captain. Jones, together with Meirion Roberts gained their first Welsh caps against South Africa in December. Practically all of last season's players were available and two newcomers who joined the club were C. H. A. (Cyril) Davies from Llanelli and D. Brian Davies from Swansea: the former unfortunately suffered a severe knee injury playing for Wales against England on 21st January, the latter had a somewhat chequered period with the club. The record was an improvement on the two previous seasons. Enthusiasm was high, we were looking forward to meeting the South Africans on 29th October. They were unbeaten and so was Cardiff. The match proved to be a disappointment to everybody.

Although our scoring power was not high, we had many good club successes, three wins and a draw with Newport, doubles over Llanelli, Gloucester, Harlequins and London Welsh, we scored three wins on the Cornish tour. One of our best wins was that over Oxford (A) as we defeated the Dark Blues by 16 points to 14 when eight of our players were engaged in the first Welsh trial at Swansea. The captain was hurt in the match with London Welsh on 17th December and was absent until the Aberavon match on 11th February. It was an unlucky resumption for him as we lost by 12 points to six. Our other defeats were inflicted by The South Africans, Wasps, Ebbw Vale and Bristol (A) successively, and Swansea, the Barbarians and Bridgend at home.

On 29th October came the match against the Fifth Springboks, one that will be remembered for a long time. Was Lloyd Williams' team to bring victory as his brother Bleddyn's had done against the All Blacks of 1953–54? It was not to be. Tension had mounted gradually, much publicity had been given—to the power of the Springboks' pack, the excellent form of Cardiff and its unbeaten record. On the previous evening the tourists had watched Newport subdue Llanelli under floodlights at Stradey Park, they were impressed with the performance of Newport's pack. What was the strength of Cardiff's whose team was rated the best in Wales? Few who watched could have foreseen the manner in which the game was to be played, the Springboks forwards played fiercely and relentlessly to maintain possession, but not long after the start, D. J. Hayward was crocked. To make matters desperate for Cardiff, Tommy McCarthy at stand-off half-back was swung off his feet as he almost made a break, he damaged his collar bone and was off the field after thirty-five minutes.

With Dai Hayward almost a passenger and McCarthy off the field, Cardiff faced a very grim task in the second half, but played most gallantly and continued to attack by running with the ball when possession could be gained. Conversely, the Springboks were prone to kick and even earned slow handclaps from the crowd. But our handicap was too much for a gallant thirteen and South Africa ran out winners by two goals—one from a penalty try awarded by Gwynne Walters the referee, and one penalty goal to nil. It was not a popular victory. The South Africans were accused of rough play, but they complained bitterly to me about unfair press reports which had gone to South Africa.

The match with South Africa coincided with my second term as chairman of the Cardiff club, and with my first assignment from the W.R.U. as liaison officer to these fifth Springboks under the managership of Ferdie Bergh and Boy Louw (both former Springbok tourists to Britain) at their H.Q. at the Seabank Hotel, Porthcawl.

To say that I was much involved there as a result of the incidents in the match would be putting the matter very mildly. The teams were:—

CARDIFF—Alan Priday. Gordon Wells, H. M. Roberts, Cyril Davies, Ray Glastonbury, Lloyd Williams (capt.) and T. J. McCarthy. Kingsley Jones, W. J. Thomas, C. T. Howe, D. E. J. Harris, W. G. Davies, D. J. Hayward, Howard Norris and E. Williams.

SOUTH AFRICA—L. G. Wilson. M. J. G. Antelme, J. L. Gainsford, A. I. Kirkpatrick and F. Roux; C. Nimb and R. J. Lockyear, S. P. Kuhn, G. F. Malan, P. S. du Toit, J. T. Claassen, A. S. Malan (capt.), H. J. Pelser, G. H. Von Zyl and D. J. Hopwood. Referee: D. Gwynne Walters. Touch Judge: (Cardiff) Gwynne Porter.

The Flood. On Saturday 3rd December the Springboks came to the Cardiff Arms Park again, to play Wales. This was a really rainy season but on this particular day there was a howling gale of wind and rain relentless in its fury which turned the ground into a veritable quagmire, making it completely impossible to play normal Rugby. But the match was played in the morass and South Africa won by a penalty goal to nil scored in the first half with a gale behind them. The next day, Sunday 4th December the River Taff burst its banks. It overflowed the bank near the club's bowling green and in a few hours the whole area of Cardiff Arms Park was under three to four feet of water. Rescue operations to try and recover records and equipment from the club offices, etc., were promptly undertaken by David Grant the general secretary of the Cardiff Athletic Club and his ground staff, together with Miss Babs Filer our chief stewardess and Miss Anne Davies of the office staff. Thigh boots were the necessary order, but the two ladies certainly looked incongruous in them and their " piggy back rides " gave cause for much ' leg pulling ' and banter.

The Springboks returned to the Cardiff Arms Park on 4th February for the third time to play the Barbarians in the last match of their tour in Britain. In a splendid encounter before an enthusiastic crowd the Barbarians won by two tries to nil scored by H. J. Morgan and W. G. D. Morgan. It was the only defeat suffered by the Springboks on tour. It was also marked by a most devastating tackle by Swansea's full-back, Haydn Mainwaring, on South Africa's captain Avril Malan who had broken away from a line out and was in full flight. Malan was badly shaken by this heavy shoulder-on tackle, a fair one about which he did not complain. It necessitated a visit to hospital in the evening for damaged ribs. Malan was shouldered off the field by Brian Jones, Mainwaring and Ronnie Dawson the captain, and in the evening was made an honorary Barbarian. Ferdie Bergh the Springboks' manager handed over the Springbok head to Brigadier H. L. Glyn Hughes, the Barbarians' President. South Africa had played in three contrasting matches on the Cardiff Arms Park on a tour which will be talked about for many a long day to come.

The leading club scorers were Gordon Wells 21 tries, Ray Glastonbury 11, Cyril Davies and Tommy McCarthy eight each. Alan Priday totalled 152 points with 56 goals and five tries. Our two newcomers Cyril Davies and D. Brian Davies earned their 1st XV caps, and D. J. Hayward with 40 appearances played in most matches, closely followed by Alan Priday 39 and Colin Howe 38. Lloyd Williams captained Wales against France, and our other Welsh caps this season were Cyril Davies, Dan Harris, Kingsley Jones, Meirion Roberts, Alan Priday and W. J. ' Billy ' Thomas our hooker. Roberts was in the ' Baa-baas ' team v. Springboks.

Harry Morgan was captain of the Athletic XV which had quite a good season, the record being P32, W24, L6, D2, with points 395 to 139. There was much bad weather in November and December which caused a couple of successive cancellations and may have upset the rhythm of " The Rags " and accounted for three of the losses in succession, to Pontypool United, Bristol United and Llandaff. Peter Nyhan with eight tries and John Rees with seven were the top try scorers. Alan Drew the former Cardiff H.S.O.Boys full-back totted up 119 points from 45 goals and six tries. Athletic XV caps went to George Davey a good forward from Llandaff, Alan Drew, John Hickey, Leo Karseras, John Selway and A. D. " Tony " Williams. Three of Tony's brothers were playing for Cardiff this season, Elwyn, Lloyd and Cenydd.

Les Hewer a Llanbradach boy was the Juniors XV captain and he led them to another most successful season by winning 20 matches out of 23, losing only one and drawing two. This youth combination scored no fewer than 507 points to 51. Four played for the Welsh Youth, Les Hewer, Ian Jewell, Colin Prescott and B. Harris. Once again the youth team won the Cardiff & District Youth " Sevens ".

The floodlight match with Bristol was arranged to be played at Cardiff City Association Football ground at Ninian Park. It was twice postponed owing to the continuing inclement weather, but finally played there on 14th March 1961 where " soccer " supporters were to see Cardiff Rugby Club lose to Bristol's by one goal, three tries, 14 points to two goals, one try, one dropped goal and one penalty goal, 19 points. A most cordial atmosphere prevailed between the three football organisations and a special programme contained

articles by Cardiff's Rugby and " Soccer " Clubs chairmen D. E. Davies and Ron Beecher, under the title of " Rugby Football At Ninian Park ".

Legal action was taken by the Cardiff Athletic Club to secure the strip of land of the Cardiff Arms Park fronting Cowbridge Road to Cardiff Bridge. It contained a cluster of splendid old trees and part of it had been used by the club for many years for the deposit of grass cuttings, etc., and minor storage. The Marquess of Bute had never developed this strip of land like the strip now occupied by the Westgate Street flats, and the Western Ground Rents Ltd. which had acquired lands from the Marquis issued the Cardiff Athletic Club a writ claiming the strip of land in question. The legal action was lost and so were the amenities of this shady tree-lined strip at the cricket end of the ground and behind the bowling green. Passers by on the Cowbridge Road often rested on the low castellated like wall in the shade of the trees. The site is now occupied by the City Centre Hotel, a few trees remain.

The impact of television was now a serious concern of the gate taking clubs, Welsh and English, which had now begun to be seriously affected by very poor gates when Rugby matches were televised on the same day. The subject was seriously debated at the A.G.M. of the W.R.U., delegates of senior clubs reporting that gates of only £25 and even less were taken when there was a clash of a match with the media of TV. When I made my debut for Cardiff against Newport in April 1921 there was a crowd of 35,000 to watch—and incidentally see Cardiff win by 19 points to nil. A record crowd of 48,000 watched Cardiff v. Newport in February 1951. Our new club ground at the Cardiff Arms Park with its two stands was planned to hold some 15,000 spectators, and on only a couple of occasions has there been a gate of over 10,000, the average for a club match being somewhat half of that total. Such is the price of progress, of the media which today forms part of every home in the land and has become what we might describe as a necessity to the people of most parts of the civilised world.

The annual dinners of the Rugby club were now to be held, and rightly so, in our clubhouse. In January we sent congratulations to Dr. Jack Matthews about whom I and others have written, Dr. Jack had become a Justice of the Peace for the City of Cardiff. As a past captain of the club and chairman too, I know well that he can quite adequately deal with any law-breakers—even if they were Rugby players. On leaving Wales with his Springboks Ferdie Bergh the manager wrote me saying " Quite frankly, I don't know who has the worst lot in this world, a Rugby Football team manager or a liaison officer." It was hard work. In this season I was re-appointed chairman of the Cardiff Rugby Club, whilst being a member of the management committee of the Cardiff Athletic Club and of the Welsh Rugby Union, I undertook the work as the Rugby programme editor and at the same time continued to maintain all of the official records. On top of all this I was pressed by the W.R.U. to undertake the job of Welsh liaison officer to the South African tourists which entailed my staying with them at the Seabank Hotel, Porthcawl, which was their headquarters for all their matches in Wales. They treated me very kindly and were very courteous to me; the aftermath of the Cardiff match required tactful, and factual handling.