

PRESIDENT OF U.S.A. ASSASSINATED

1963-64. P45, W33, L9, D3. Points 508—254.

Points 508 to 254—exactly two points to one. Dai Hayward was appointed for a second term of captaincy, with Howard Norris his deputy. The record turned out to be much better than those of the past few seasons, but once again we made a poor start, losing four of our first five matches. We were to face up to the Fifth All Blacks on 23rd November. But we improved greatly, forgetting the defeats by Ebbw Vale, Bridgend, London Welsh and Coventry, and lost only one game—to Oxford University, before meeting New Zealand.

We had quite a number of newcomers for this season, and they contributed towards a successful one, they were: Cliff Ashton, Welsh international half back from Aberavon; Garry Davies, hooker from Treherbert; Maurice Richards a very young centre who was to gain much Welsh fame; Mike Horgan a centre from Pontypridd; Billy Hullin the very crafty scrum half from Aberavon; Ritchie Wills a wing from Newport, and another fast wing, Byron Thomas from Tredegar, already a Welsh trialist, and a real plum, John O'Shea the under 23 prop from Newbridge. All except Garry Davies and Billy Hullin earned 1st XV caps, but Hullin gained his Athletic XV cap.

We gained double victories over Aberavon, Pontypool, Llanelli, Swansea, Gloucester and the Harlequins. It was only on 29th April a postponed date for our fourth game with Newport, that they avoided the fourth defeat by Cardiff, as they managed to effect a drawn match of 11 points each. Deservedly so, as four of their stars, David Watkins, Brian Price, Stuart Watkins and Peter Rees were members of the Welsh international party which was to tour South Africa in May 1964. Our captain did not play in the last match, as he too, was Cardiff's sole representative on the Welsh tour. It was Bridgend who lowered our colours on 15th April, beating us at home by a solitary try to nil. We lost to Neath three days later, and had we won these last two matches, Cardiff would have won the Unofficial Welsh Championship. Bridgend's victory ended our unbeaten sequence of twenty-two matches, and in that period we had three wins in a row at Easter including the Barbarians, and a successful three match tour in Devon beating Torquay, Newton Abbott and Royal Navy in turn.

Cardiff v. New Zealand. After our disastrous start in September, we won the next eleven matches out of twelve losing only to Oxford University—9 points to three. Then came the long awaited day, 23rd November, on which we met the might of New Zealand Rugby, the Fifth All Blacks captained by one of their greatest ever forwards, Wilson Whineray, whose pack also contained another world class forward, Colin Meads (Pine Tree), and at full-back the great Don Clarke one of the greatest goal kickers in world Rugby. Dai Hayward our captain had trained and drilled our team pretty hard and they intended, indeed they were confident, of emulating Bleddyn Williams' 1953-54 team that beat the All Blacks.

The visit of the New Zealanders of 1963-64 will ever be memorable. The eve of the match had been chosen to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Cardiff's victory of 1953-54, with the annual dinner in our clubhouse. Honoured guests included the honorary New Zealand manager, Frank Kilby, Ian Clarke, brother of Don Clarke, who had taken part in the Cardiff/N.Z. match of 1953-54, two of New Zealand's press men, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, Sir Thomas Macdonald, the Mayor of Christchurch, N.Z. (a Gowerton Welshman), Alderman C. A. Bence, M.R.C.S., Lord Mayor of Cardiff, the President of the W.R.U., and Lord Brecon.

Shortly before the dinner commenced came the most staggering and tragic news ever received in our own or perhaps in any other country in the world. Our clubhouse was stilled at the news that the President of the United States, Senator John F. Kennedy had been assassinated, shot through the head and neck whilst sat in a coach of a presidential cavalcade, to die in the arms of his wife Mrs. "Jackie" Kennedy, in Dallas Texas, U.S.A.

It was a subdued gathering which sat down to dinner, after the end of which, Lord Brecon then Minister of State for Welsh Affairs, spoke with feeling and sympathy, at the shock the tragedy would have throughout Britain and her Commonwealth.

The match next day proved to be a titanic struggle. Cardiff was able to field nine Welsh internationals, they were Alan Priday, Meirion Roberts, Kingsley Jones, W. J. "Billy" Thomas, C. Howard Norris, Keith Rowlands, David Hayward, and the half backs Lloyd Williams and Cliff Ashton; New Zealand fielded virtually a full Test team. The Cardiff pack played magnificently with Hayward an inspiring example of tireless play, it was certainly on top in the first half. John Billot in his history "All Blacks in Wales" wrote: "A goal kicker would have beaten the All Blacks. But Alan Priday missed four first half penalty shots, three of them from quite reasonable range. Ironically Priday had broken the club's scoring record the previous season with 176 points".

The All Blacks took the lead in the first half with a prodigious penalty goal kicked by Don Clarke from 50 yards out—one of the best kicks of his career. But our back row of Hayward, Cliff Howe and Elwyn Williams were exerting much pressure on the opposing half-backs, M. A. Herewini the Maori outside half and Chris Laidlaw at scrum, and when Herewini fumbled a pass near his own line, Cliff Howe was there to pounce and dive over for Cardiff's try that Priday converted. We led at half time, but in the second half, Herewini, as if to make amends for his first half fumble, dropped a goal from about 35 yards, to give the All Blacks the lead and exert stronger pressure on Cardiff who were beginning to tire. But there was no further scoring and a gallant Cardiff team had lost by a single point.

Perhaps our backs should have been given more chances to run with the ball. This was the view point of New Zealand's leading press man, Terry McLean who thought that Alan Priday could have turned the game in Cardiff's favour had he been more successful with kickable penalty goal efforts. But it was not to be although we had scored the only try.

In their last match in this country, the All Blacks treated an enthusiastic crowd to a splendid exhibition of Rugby when they beat the Barbarians on the Arms Park by 36 points to three, their captain Whineray scoring the final try after throwing a great dummy. New Zealand had lost only one match on the whole of the tour—to Newport on 30th October, by a splendid solitary dropped goal from the boot of John Uzzell who later joined the Cardiff Club and gave much loyal service.

I was again appointed by the W.R.U. as its Liaison Officer for matches in Wales, being resident with the Fifth All Blacks at the Seabank Hotel, Porthcawl. For their transport to and from matches and for training, two coaches were engaged from Jones (Aberbeeg) Mon., whose proprietor was Ron Jones, a leading Abertillery Rugby Club official very well known as 'Jones the Bus'. I knew him very well and had often travelled in his coaches previously. He was really an excellent driver with good reflexes for getting in and out of traffic, and he possessed a splendid alto voice which he was wont to exercise freely from the wheel. At Porthcawl, Ron usually drove the players' coach, the other being driven by one of his employees named Albert, and was used by the reserve players and officials, etc. But Neil McPhail the All Blacks' coach thought that Ron's driving was really too fast when taking the actual team to a match, to Cardiff in particular and through his manager asked that Albert should drive his team—swap drivers as it were. When I tactfully approached Ron about the matter, he was very much hurt and let me know in no uncertain terms that during the previous season he had been graded as the second best coach driver in Great Britain. "Besides", he said, "what about my pride?"

He swapped seats with Albert, but for my part I would rather travel with Ron, he had character—he put quite a lot into the game of Rugby. But who would be a liaison officer?

Top try scorers were Steve Hughes 16, Cliff Howe 12, Elwyn Williams and Ritchie Wills 10. Cliff Howe's 12 equalled that of another forward Les Spence in 1936-37, but, for the record, Les Spence also converted a try. Cliff Howe made most appearances, in 40 matches, followed by C. H. Norris 39, Lloyd Williams 38, John O'Shea 37, Graham Davies 35 and the captain 33. Alan Priday and Howard Norris were made Barbarians, and the club honoured Dai Hayward's services by presenting him with a blazer badge.

Colin Howe was also honoured with a second term of captaincy of "The Rags", and the record was the best for four seasons, the results being: P35, W24, L5, D6, with 443 points to 172. Some of the best victories were over the Wasps Vandals 24-3, Old Iltydians 28-3, Llanelli Wanderers 22-3, Mountain Ash 32-3, Barry 32-0, and Taffs Well twice by 30-3 and 33-9. Tony Williams, Ritchie Wills and Glyn Ellis each scored eight tries, Billy Hullin and Chris Jones seven. Ron Hill, the former youth fullback scored 63 points from 25 goals and one try. Athletic caps were awarded to Ron Hill, Billy Hullin, Chris Jones, Gareth Jones and Jim Mills, former youth players, the twin prop forwards from Nelson, Alun and Elfed Morgan, and H. D. Powell.

Our Junior (Youth) XV was captained by a promising forward Martin Truran, but the record was not as good as in former seasons, but with the development of Youth Rugby in Wales the opposition from more clubs was getting stronger. The results were: P26, W16, L7, D3, with points 258 to 101. The captain and Terry Stevenson gained Welsh Youth international caps, and quite a number of the team assisted Cardiff & District Youth. In seven-a-side tournaments, Martin Truran's Seven won the Cardiff & District one, and another Seven led by John Every won the Bridgend Tournament, the cup being presented by the wife of the South African Ambassador, Mrs. De Wet. Twenty-two boys formed the Junior Section and at every match twenty were ready to play.

It was decided to run a Cardiff Extras XV again—with effect from 1964-65, one of the reasons being that we were losing some very good Senior Youth players to other clubs where many of them were getting into premier or second XV teams.

In February 1964 I announced my retirement from the club, having served it as a player and administrator continuously since I made my playing début against Newport on 2nd April 1921. I had also served on the C.A.C. management committee from 1933, and as a member of the Welsh Rugby Union from 1948 and I felt that the time had come to resign from these bodies also. The work was now very exacting and I was losing weight, and although pressed strongly by the three bodies to carry on, I felt that the time had come to make way for a younger man. Les Spence became the District Representative on the Welsh Rugby Union to replace me, and in 1973-74 became the second Cardiff Club official to hold the office of President of the Welsh Rugby Union. I agreed to carry on as Official Statistician for the Cardiff Rugby Club, and remain as a vice-president of the Cardiff Athletic Club.