

THE NORTH STAND IS DEMOLISHED. THE JUNIORS PLAY NEW YORK XV

1968-69.

Howard Norris earned a second term as captain. He nominated as his vice-captain the experienced all-rounder Tony Williams who was to do so well in the club's Sevens participation. The season saw the demolition of the north stand in connection with the overall plans of the C.A.C. and the W.R.U. As the work progressed, the site resembled a "blitzed" area of broken tangled structure, a desolate sight, nostalgic to many of our club supporters. Our players would not again hear the cheering and acclaim of the crowd from this side of the ground in future club matches.

This season saw the introduction of what was formerly known as the "Australian dispensation" which provided that when the ball was kicked directly into touch between the two twenty-five lines, it had to be brought into play from the touch line opposite the place in the field from where it had been kicked. It is now a permanent feature of the Rugby game to encourage more running with the ball and less kicking. (The rule was tried out experimentally at Northampton in 1927 in the Edgar Mobbs memorial match between the Barbarians and East Midlands. A "Times" report was not favourable to its adoption.)

September 1968 did not presage a very good season as we lost, rather unusually, four matches—to Bridgend (H), Coventry (H), Gloucester (A) and Aberavon (A), but we were beset by injuries, and in three of our matches we were reduced to fourteen men before half-time which again prompted agitation for a bye-law to provide for replacements.

The season was well advanced before our British Lions players were available. Gareth Edwards and Gary Samuel were injured, two of our leading scrum halves! Gerald Davies went up to Cambridge and played only two games for us, Barry John only 14, John O'Shea 11 through injury and business commitments, Maurice Richards 23 and Gareth Edwards only 10. Keri Jones the wing did not play at all having turned professional after his return from the Lions Tour. Lyn Baxter's Welsh tour to the Argentine, coupled with injury later, restricted his appearances to nineteen. It was a credit to good leadership that only five more matches were lost—three to Newport and once to Swansea and Coventry.

Newport, three up and one to play, arrived at the Arms Park determined to achieve their age-long ambition to defeat Cardiff four times in one season. It was a nail-biting affair, in front of our biggest gate. After fifteen minutes in the second half, the scores were nine points all, Newport really did put the pressure on, and for practically the rest of the game they were camped almost permanently inside Cardiff's twenty-five and looked as if they must win. But it was not to be, and by desperate tackling and covering, Cardiff held out to the end, thus once again thwarting Newport's efforts, they were better on the day. Our Newport friends and rivals won the Welsh Unofficial Championship, Cardiff were runners-up.

Newcomers met, and defeated, were the Scottish club Gala, Cape Town University and Glamorgan Police. The match with the Constabulary was distinguished by some fine play. Omri Jones for "the Coppers", and Barry John for Cardiff whose full-back Dennis Gethin converted eight tries. Gala, Liverpool and London Welsh were beaten at Christmas time, Barbarians and Harlequins at Easter, Gala and Watsonians on tour in Scotland, and Liverpool, Birkenhead Park and Chester, on the tour at the end of April. In the match with the Barbarians, Barry John made history by being the first player to wear a microphone during part of the game in connection with a documentary film later seen on television.

Dennis Gethin with 199 points from 80 goals and one try beat the existing club record for a full-back, exceeding the 176 of Alan Priday in 1962-63. Mervyn John also beat the try scoring record for a forward, his 13 exceeding the 12 record previously held by Les Spence and Cliff Howe. Other top try scorers were Alec Finlayson 18, Maurice Richards 13 and Tony Williams 9. New caps were awarded to Roger Beard (33 games), Alec Finlayson (29) and Mervyn John (25). Tony Williams played in 40 out of the 45 fixtures, Gethin 39, John Hickey 38, Elwyn Williams 37, Ian Robinson and Howard Norris 34, Garry Davies and Maurice Braithwaite 33, Ken Jones 24 and Maurice Richards 23.

It was a magnificent performance to win three major sevens events, and most of the credit was due to the astute and intelligent leadership of our captain, Tony Williams. The first event was the first held Harlequins Invitation Sevens (Lord Wakefield Trophy) on 4th September. We fielded practically a reserve team, four of them named Williams, Tony, Elwyn his brother, Nick and John Huw; Meirion Davies, Billy Hullin and John Hickey completed the team which beat the 'Quins' in the final by 21 points to 13. For the Welsh (Snelling) Sevens on 26th April, we had the assistance of Barry John who scored a record number of points to gain the Everson Award. A try in the dying moments by our crafty Billy Hullin against Llanelli in a tensely exciting final gave us victory by 17 points to 13. On the following Saturday the Welsh National Sevens were staged on the Cardiff Arms Park for the first time, and for this event Barry John, Billy Hullin and Nick Williams were replaced by Alec Finlayson, Brian Coles and Gary Samuel. In the final we beat Neath 11 points to three and Tony Williams earned the accolade of "Sevens player of the year".

The Athletic XV was captained by John Davies, the blonde haired forward and intelligent pack leader who had graduated to Cardiff via Cowbridge Grammar School, Aberystwyth University College, Pontypridd and London Welsh. His team had a most successful season which compared very favourably with the two previous ones. Only two matches were lost and scores of over 40 points were made against Old Illydians, Neath Athletic, Newport High School Old Boys and Cilfynydd against whom, at home, 57 points were scored in a victory notable for Terry Stephenson's seven tries which equalled the record of J. Williams of Cardiff Reserves in season 1896-97. (Seven tries were scored by P. K. Heard in a First XV match in 1878-79.) Another try scoring record was achieved—for a forward that is—Chris Jones who got 14 in the season including four in one match. Mervyn John scored 9—and the record of 13 with the 1st XV. Alec Finlayson and Barry Winter each got 7; the goal kicking was shared between Bob Bassett, John Evans, Mike Knill and David Lloyd, but none of them reached 100 points. Athletic caps were awarded to Brian Coles, Ian Harrison, Terry Stephenson, Gerry Wallace and Martin Truran, all had played occasionally for the 1st XV.

1868-69 was to be the final season of the Extras XV and our veteran Dai Hayward took over the leadership. All home matches were played at Sophia Gardens and the season's results were quite satisfactory. The best wins were 54 points to nil over the local club Canton, and 47 points to 6 over Penallta. The chief try scorers were Peter Richards 11, Robert Lloyd 9, Alun Davies 6 and Stan Thomas 5. Stan Thomas played in most of the matches, 20 of them, and the other most regular players were Peter Richards, Nigel Biggs, George Hoskins, Mike Alexander, Alun Davies, Barry Evans, Robert Geddes, Keri Thomas, Gerald Hughes and Mike Knill. 63 players in all were called upon.

After many years of faithful service to the Cardiff Juniors' administration, Duncan Brown and Bill Lewis gave way to Keith Rowlands and Alan Priday. Training was centred at Whitchurch Secondary School, but the playing results were not too spectacular as twelve matches were lost, there were two new innovations, the introduction of a Colours Award (for twenty appearances) and a "Youth player of the year Award", the recipient being Ian Griffiths. Colours were awarded to K. Mead, C. Bradshaw, G. Godfrey, R. Woodward, R. Goodfellow, S. Solomon, R. Harris, P. Jones, T. Ellis, P. David, D. Burke, Ian Griffiths and P. Barry. During the season an American Youth team, St. Francis of New York City was received. They were hosted by the Juniors and friends of the club. The Juniors made a successful tour to Orrell, Lancashire.

The results of our four teams were as follows :—

	P	W	L	D	For	Against
First XV	45	33	9	3	648	317
Athletic XV	30	27	2	1	677	184
Extras XV	24	15	8	1	351	206
Juniors XV	32	19	12	1	358	197

A proud man on Saturday 5th October was Mr. John Williams, because his band, St. Albans Military Band celebrated 50 years of playing to our Rugby followers at the Cardiff Arms Park. The band continues to please us all at club and Welsh international matches, resplendent in their scarlet uniforms, where the world famous Welsh singing is perfectly led by Mr. Williams. May he and his bandsmen continue to please us all for many more seasons to come. Although being temporarily in hospital with cartilage trouble on 5th October—it was the day of the Cardiff v. Newport match, another musically minded man, none other than Tom Holley our masseur, was celebrating his 21st year as a 'rub-a-dub' to our players, and at the annual dinner his selfless services were recognized by the presentation of a silver tankard. In many sentimental duets on train and coach with Tom, I remember few—if any at all—wrong notes of his. But there, "Massa" was the conductor! Two eminent Rugby men graced our annual dinner, Lord Wakefield of Kendal, "Wakers" of the Quins, and Major Tasker Watkins, V.C., Q.C., of Glamorgan Wanderers club, one of much wit and anecdote, but I would not relish his icy probings were I in front of him 'in the dock'.

On 12th April, Maurice Richards became the third player to score four tries in a match for Wales, the others being Willie Llewellyn, originally of Llwynypia, and R. A. Gibbs of Cardiff. On the morning of 12th April the splendidly renovated museum of ours, through the generosity of Hubert Johnson, a magnanimous gesture, was officially opened by Brigadier H. G. Glyn Hughes, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. Alas, this popular Barbarian player and President of that club is no longer with us. On 25th March Cardiff played a selected Welsh XV on the Cardiff Arms Park for the benefit of the widow and dependants of Peter Walsh, a most prominent Welsh Rugby Union referee. Sad to relate Peter had died young and prematurely.

Four of our players were honoured by selection for the 1969 Welsh tour to New Zealand, Australia and Fiji, namely Gareth Edwards (vice-captain), Barry John, Gerald Davies and Maurice Richards. The Barbarians also toured in 1969 going to South Africa and Rhodesia. Billy Hullin and John O'Shea were both chosen and each of them captained a Barbarian fifteen.