

ANTI-APARTHEID DEMONSTRATORS GREET SOUTH AFRICANS

1969-70. P43, W32, L8, D3. Points 672-379.

John O'Shea was a most popular choice as club captain, he had already gained five Welsh caps and a British Lions tour and was later to captain the Barbarians. A most uncompromising prop forward imbued with plenty of courage, he was to bear the unenviable distinction of being sent off the field in South Africa in 1968 when playing for the British Lions at Springs against Eastern Transvaal, and took 'the long walk' for striking an opponent. Five minutes before the end of Cardiff's match away with Coventry in September 1969 he was again sent off after a maul involving himself and W. J. Gittins, Coventry's scrum half for which offence he was suspended for three weeks by the Welsh Rugby Union, much to his chagrin and that of his club. He nominated John Hickey our flank forward and former youth player as vice-captain.

Two players from Cardiff Teachers Training College made their débuts, Robin Williams who could kick goals with either foot and from long distances, and John Bevan the former Ferndale Grammar Schoolboy international cap. Bevan soon made a name for himself being a strong and determined runner of more than 13 stone, a most resolute tackler who scored tries from positions on the field when tries were "not on". He was most prominent for Wales and the British Lions on two tours to New Zealand, and it was a loss to the club that this most promising young wing turned professional with the Rugby League. Stuart Watkins the former Newport and Welsh international wing also joined Cardiff and gave excellent service for several seasons.

Our form in the early months was not promising and before November we had suffered four defeats, at the hands of Bridgend, Coventry, Northampton and Oxford University. There were selection difficulties, and in the first twenty matches four inside halves and seven outside halves were tried in various permutations. The difficulties were aggravated as Maurice Richards another of our brilliant wings turned professional; Gerald Davies returned to Cambridge; and Barry John and Gareth Edwards both suffered injuries, and in actual fact were unable to play as a pair until the Cardiff-Harlequins match at Easter.

The first match of the season was played against the British Police on 30th August, Alec Finlayson was Cardiff's representative in the Police XV, and the proceeds were in aid of the Police Dependents Fund. On 10th September the Athletic played its first home match with Bristol United, it was the first occasion the new club ground (formerly the cricket ground) was used, champagne was drunk to celebrate the occasion, although the ground was not officially opened until October 1970 when the First XV engaged with the W.R.U. President's XV. In the meanwhile Sophia Gardens ground was being used a lot, by our Junior XV's and by the Cardiff Hockey Club—the Cricket Club in summer of course.

South Africa's sixth tour of the British Isles was seriously marred by anti-apartheid demonstrations at the various match centres, on and off the field. There were some demonstrators—mostly young—in Westgate Street near our Post Office, who chanted "Springboks out, Springboks out". Apart from some minor chanting in a corner of the ground, there was no interference with Cardiff's match with the South Africans, the result of which, defeat by 17 points to three was a great disappointment to the club and its supporters. Brian Mark the club chairman, in his annual report for 1969-70 wrote, "On that day the Cardiff team fell well below expectations and was soundly defeated by a superior side. It was a pathetic performance against a touring team and it was not so much the defeat but rather the manner of it that made it difficult to bear." I heartily concur. Gareth Edwards captained the Welsh XV against the Springboks, and in the last minute of the game, near the touch line at the Westgate Street end, a much muddled Gareth scored a dramatic try by diving over and slithering to enable Wales to draw at six points each. But this gallant effort was not enough to erase the stigma of Cardiff's poor and uncouth display against the tourists. At the dinner given to the two teams, Brian Mark, on the subject of apartheid and sport, quoted the words of the late President of the U.S.A., John Kennedy, which were: "There are many things which divide many nations; let us therefore cherish those things which unite us".

After the defeat by South Africa, our fortunes improved and only three matches were lost until the end of the season, Bridgend beat us 14-3, Aberavon 14-9 and the Barbarians by 30-28. The Barbarian match was a pulsating affair, and one of the most entertaining of games between the two clubs. The opposing full-backs distinguished themselves; Tony Jorden for the Barbarians kicked six goals—three conversions and three penalties, and for Cardiff Robin Williams kicked seven—two conversions, one dropped and four penalties.

Our successes were three wins and a draw with Newport, and doubles over Swansea, Pontypool, Bristol and London Welsh; there were three victories in Devon on tour, against Paignton, Exeter and Newton Abbot. In Dublin, Bective Rangers were beaten 14-9 and Howard Norris played his 400th game for the 1st XV. In May we again won the Welsh National Sevens, Tony Williams once again earning the accolade of "Player of the Sevens Tournament", his display was an example of his Sevens craft and skill for the youngsters.

P. Lyn Jones and Alec Finlayson with 13 apiece headed the try scorers, Mervyn John was next with 12, followed by Stuart Watkins and Tony Williams who each got 10. P. Lyn Jones with 33 appearances was the only new 1st XV cap. John Hickey took part in 35 matches, Mervyn John and Alec Finlayson in 32, Llyn Baxter 30, Ian Robinson 29, John O'Shea, Howard Norris and Tony Williams 25 each.

Cardiff Athletic XV's record was P32, W26, L6, Points 656-243. John Davies was re-appointed captain and the results were excellent although not so outstanding as the three previous seasons. In all he called upon no fewer than 73 players, and quite a number of our Juniors were called upon. On four occasions John Davies's "Rags" topped more than 40 points, namely over Old Iltydians 48-9, Barry 60-3, Old Iltydians 49-3 and Taibach 47-0. Nick Williams bagged four tries in the Barry match but it was the full-backs who enjoyed themselves in these matches: Ray Cheney against Barry kicked nine goals and scored a try, and eight goals against Taibach; John Uzzell kicked eight goals in the first match with the Old Iltydians, and Robin Williams eight in the second one. Ray Cheney scored 136 points in the season and John Uzzell 82.

The leading try scorers were Gabe Servini with 13, Terry Stephenson 12 and Brian Coles eleven. The captain made most appearances, in 22 games, and five new caps awarded went to Paul Barry, John H. James, Lindsay Lewis, Wyn Llewellyn and Gabe Servini.

Our Youth XV record was P31, W21, L8, D2, Points 313-186. It was the best season since 1963-64 and Steve Solman was captain. There seemed to be no doubt that the squad system and organised coaching, again centred at Whitchurch Secondary School, was the main factor in the Juniors scoring more than 500 points. No less than thirteen of them played for the Cardiff & District Youth and five of them took part in the final trial of the Welsh Youth Rugby Union.

Roger Harris played in three matches for the 1st XV and Steve McCann, Dave Morris, Roger Goodfellow, Paul Jones, Leighton Drummond and David Burke appeared on occasions for the Athletic XV. The leading try scorers were Chris Bradshaw 18, Dave Morris 17 and Roger Goodfellow 16. From mixed scores Keith Mead totalled 76 points, Henry Davies 60 and Peter Bolland 50. The Player of the Year award went to Roger Harris, and Colours—in the form of a specially designed tie—for those who had played in twenty matches or more, were awarded to Peter Bolland, Dave Morris, Peter Harry, David Francis, Leighton Drummond, Bob Lynch, Andy Woodward, Gordon Derrick, Peter Hosgood, Bobby Diamond and Paul Kerrigan. Kerrigan in his first season played in 29 matches. A good season for our Youth.

During this season, Frank Trott who had served the club as player and official for many seasons, was to have taken over the post of General Secretary to the Cardiff Athletic Club, but dogged by ill-health, decided not to accept the post after having been appointed Haydn Wilkins stepped into the breach and succeeded to the Hon. Secretary post for the Rugby Club. In the latter part of the season, we lost the services of our captain, John O'Shea as the result of a business promotion with Courage—the brewery firm, in the Cornwall area and was soon accepted as a member of Penzance-Newlyn Rugby Club. As the result of his appointment as the chairman of the club, Brian Mark gave up the honorary post of programme editor, and I compliment him on his many excellent issues of interesting Rugby matter. D. J. Hayward took over from Brian Mark.

Obituary. Archie Skym, John Llewellyn and Bill Lewis passed away. Archie Skym was Cardiff's captain in 1934-35—he "presided" over the last players' outing to Minehead. After his retirement he became a bowler of repute. When I took up the game we both played for Cardiff Athletic Bowling Club; it was a pleasure to reminisce about our past rugby times. He married a farmer's daughter of Lisvane and was buried in a small chapel in that village. Friends from near and far came to pay their last tributes. John Llewellyn, a most likeable young man served Cardiff in the period 1950-57. John (his full initials J. E. G.) will be remembered as Cardiff's gallant full-back in its glorious win over New Zealand in 1953-54. After his retirement John worked hard—and with success—to enable Taffs Well Rugby Club acquire its own ground and clubhouse and enhance its reputation. Bill Lewis will best be remembered for his work with Cardiff's Juniors and his service with the R.F.C. committee. Apart from his immediate family, his premature passing, after a long and painful illness, was a shock to all his sporting friends.

Cardiff Athletic Club. It was Mr. Ken H. George who succeeded Mr. David Grant as General Secretary. Mr. George was well known as one of the Rugby club's past members, incidentally as a past captain of the Llandaff Rugby Club. His appointment coincided with a most difficult period in the life of the Cardiff Athletic Club particularly regarding the changes of grounds affecting the C.A.C., the W.R.U. and the Rugby Club. An onerous appointment to be sure.