

CARDIFF'S BIGGEST DEFEAT—WE ARE HUMILIATED IN FRANCE

1970-71. P44, W29, L10, D5. Points 699—429.

The appointed captain was John Hickey who had joined the club in 1963-64 after playing in Junior football with Llandaff Youth and the Cardiff & District Union Club, Canton. He was a back row forward of much aggression, about 6 ft. 2 ins. and weighing more than 14 stone. His cover defence was excellent and he never shirked going down to the ball. John had already 170 first team games to his credit, and his nominee as vice-captain, Gareth Edwards needs no introduction here.

The most notable events of the season, historic in the annals of the club, and the Cardiff Arms Park, were the official openings of the Welsh Rugby Unions national ground and Cardiff's new club ground, on what, readers will now remember, was formerly the ground of the Cardiff Cricket Club. The W.R.U. event was celebrated with a match between the R.F.U. President's (W. C. "Bill" Ramsay) team and the Wales team on 17th October. The club event was celebrated with a match between Cardiff and the Welsh Rugby Union President's (Ken Harris, hon. treasurer) XV. The Cardiff Teachers Training College laid on a trampoline display by the students and a bevy of attractive females dressed in jerseys of Blue and Black were selling programmes, the date was Saturday 31st October 1970.

Prior to the kick-off by Cardiff's Lord Mayor, Alderman T. E. Merrell's seventeen of our past captains were introduced on to the field by Bleddyn Williams, their names in order of 'seniority' were D. E. Davies, Tom Lewis, Tommy Stone, L. M. Spence, W. Wooller, Dr. Jack Matthews, Bleddyn Williams, W. E. Tamplin, Rex Willis, Malcolm Collins, Peter Goodfellow, Eddie Thomas, Lloyd Williams, D. J. Hayward, Meirion Roberts, Keith Rowlands, C. Howard Norris and John O'Shea. For the record Cardiff beat the W.R.U. President's XV by 17 points to eight. Robin Williams kicking five goals — netting 14 of our points and received the press accolade of 'Prince of Place Kickers'. The opposition included the internationals Tom Keirnan of Ireland, W. Lauder of Scotland, Ian Hall, R. 'Chico' Hopkins and W. Raybould of Wales, as well as the then uncapped players, J. J. Williams then of Bridgend, Alan Martin of Aberavon, Terry Cobner of Pontypool and Tommy David then of Pontypridd. The celebration dinner (and dance) which took place at the Park Hotel was a most happy occasion and the proceedings animated. At the top table I was loudly hailed from the floor by Dr. Jack Matthews, W. E. Tamplin and other 'oldies' to render "Are you from Dixie". I complied, and was afforded police protection by Sergeant Ian Holl of the South Wales Constabulary who had played for the President's XV.

As to the season's results, there was rather an indifferent start, the club losing six and drawing three matches by the end of November. Of the defeats, I quote the remarks of mine in the annual report of the C.A.C.—"But the most bitter cross to bear was the defeat in France at the hands of Provence D'Auvergne on 11th November by 41 points to six, the biggest defeat in our history. I am sure that, with the knowledge of our strong fixture lists in mind and calls on the players, our committee will in future investigate the strength of the opposition before sending teams to France to play representative, provincial and other very strong French combinations and so avoid damage to our reputation". For the French match, played at Clermont Ferrand, we lacked the services of Barry John, Gary Samuel, Gareth Edwards, Alec Finlayson, Lyn Baxter and Gerald Wallace, we were run dizzy!

After the 1st December however, there was an improvement and only three more matches were lost, but 429 points scored against us indicated defence weaknesses and the value of the try was still at three points. One of the best performances was the win by 14 points to 12 at home against Coventry with a weakened team, our threequarter line and about half the pack having been injured. Barry John's boot won Cardiff's home game with Llanelli, his four drop goals in the match (the club record) for 12 points topping Llanelli's nine. He appeared to shape up to attempt a fifth from quite a favourable position, but changed his mind, and passed the ball out. Cambridge University gave us a hiding by 22 points to six and it was Gerald Davies's five tries which shattered Cardiff's defences. Against Newport in February Barry John and Edwards contributed 14 points out of Cardiff's 17 points to nine win. It was our young full-back David Hoyle who got Cardiff's try, and John Anthony kicked Newport's three penalty goals. We scored eight tries in our win over St. Lukes, Exeter by 30 points to eight.

The season's top scorers were: tries, P. Lyn Jones 15, Neil Williams and Roger Lane 13, John Bevan 10 in eleven matches. Roger Lane's 13 equalled the record of Mervyn John for forwards. Barry John's mixed bag brought him 114 points which included 9 dropped goals. Young David Hoyle's scoring brought him 83 points in 19 matches. New caps were awarded to Neil Collins, Meirion Davies, Gareth Edwards, Mike Knill, Roger Lane, Gary Samuel and Gerald Wallace. Ian Robinson made 43 appearances, our captain John Hickey 36 in spite of missing the last five games through injury, he played with great endeavour. Wales won the Triple Crown and Grand Slam and three of Cardiff's players who participated were John Bevan, Barry John and Gareth Edwards, and these, together with Gerald Davies chosen from London Welsh also toured with the British Lions to New Zealand and Australia.

The Athletic XV was again captained by John Davies and the record was P31, W22, L6, D3, Points 541—254. It was a record similar to last season except that the points scored were less. John Davies was injured in "The Rags" match with Bridgend Sports on 6th February and Howard Norris took over the captaincy until the end of the season. Owing to his injury in the first team opening match with South Wales Police, Norris had to wait another season before breaking the 1st XV players' match record. But he played in fifteen "Rags" games. The top try scorers were Neil Collins 11, Nick Williams 10, Stuart Watkins 8, P. Lyn Jones 7 and J. H. James, D. Ken Jones, Ian Lewis and John Regan each scored five. In his debut against Gloucester Utd., Rhys Williams, son of BBC's Alun Williams dropped two goals.

Elwyn Williams who had already played in more than 300 matches with the 1st XV took part in 21 matches for the Athletic XV. In "The Rags" final match of the season with Barry, the club coach filled the breach, and a forward—the now well known international hooker of today—Robert Windsor, played in five matches for the Athletic and four in the 1st XV. Cardiff's loss and Pontypool's gain. Amongst six Youth players who assisted "The Rags" was Martin Pengilly and in the premiers' last match of the season he scored 11 points from the full-back position in his debut. Athletic XV caps were won by Peter Davies, David Hoyle, Ian Lewis, John Regan and Stuart Watkins. Two big wins were achieved over Barry 52-0 and Cwmgrawch 41-3. In the Barry match John Uzzell kicked eight goals and P. Lyn Jones and Nick Williams each had the rare distinction of scoring six tries in a match, the former against Cwmgrawch and the latter against Llanelli Wanderers. The Athletic XV played a French team on 28th December, Stade Clermontoise. It was almost a last minute arrangement as the French team had been let down, very late, by another Welsh club. It was a close thing for the Athletic, a win by 11 points to nine.

Cardiff Juniors XV. Captain Steve McCann. P26, W23, L3, D0. Points 624—86. This was a magnificent season with the captain showing some delightful running as a centre scoring many tries and setting good attacking example. The three defeats were at the hands of very good Youth fifteens, a Bristol combination, Pontypool and Llanelli Youth. Four of our Juniors gained international honours, Steve McCann, Roger Harris, Martin Pengilly and David Morris. Steve captained Wales as well as the Cardiff & District Youth R.U. which called upon no fewer than twelve of Cardiff's players. The Juniors finished off a great season by winning the Bridgend & District, and Cardiff & District 'Sevens', they enjoyed a successful Devon tour. David Morris with 25 was top try scorer and scored 126 points in all, Martin Pengilly scored 109.

Colours were awarded to Steve McCann, Martin Pengilly, P. McCarthy, S. Grey, J. Pittard, R. McPherson and A. Brahim. The 'Player of the Year' was Bobby Diamond.

The annual report of the C.A.C. gave due praise to our medical and masseur officials, namely Doctors J. H. Naysmith, K. Young, A. Williams and H. Evans and the masseurs/attendants Tom Holley, Keith Harse, W. Davies and Don Reed. The praise given was always well merited.

Lord Chalfont was the guest speaker at the club's annual dinner, a most fluent one who knew more about Rugby than most of those present realised. Our Rugby programmes were sold at 2½p per copy. At the end of the season remedial work was necessary in the south stand area. John Davies announced his retirement.