

CARDIFF RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Chairman's Report for season 1996-97

Significant signings were made during the closed season and there was much anticipation as David Young, Robert Howley, Lee Jarvis, Gwyn Jones, Jason Hewlett, Ian Jones, Lee Jones, Delme Williams and Paul Young were added to our squad of players.

Our visit to Leicester to play in a pre-season tournament proved to be very costly in terms of injuries to our front row. Losing Lyndon Mustoe with a hand injury that required surgery was a major set back for the difficult start to this National League and as a result we lost the first three games, Swansea 23pts — 49pts, Pontypridd 14pts — 24pts and Llanelli 12pts — 30 pts at the Arms Park.

The Anglo-Welsh matches proved to be disappointing affairs with most clubs fielding weakened teams. Two matches only were played before the tournament was disbanded — Harlequins and Sale.

We embarked on our European Cup trail on 13th November with Wasps away at Loftus Road. Our win at Wasps 24pts — 26pts was to be one of the highlights of the season and will be remembered for Robert Howley's try and Jonathan Davies's drop goal to seal the match. The win was made even sweeter when Wasps eventually ended up as Courage League Champions.

Our win against Munster 48pts — 18pts was sufficient to qualify us for the quarter finals even though we lost to Toulouse 36pts — 20pts in the pool. Victory over Bath at the Arms Park 22pts — 19pts was a magnificent achievement made memorable by Nigel Walker's solo try and the unique atmosphere generated by our supporters.

Unfortunately, we had to travel to Brive for the Semi-Final which proved to be quite an experience. Delays caused by icebound runways, diversions and heavy snow hampered our preparation and it was a miracle that the match was played at all. I pay tribute to all the supporters who travelled to Brive and I am sure they all have their own personal memories and experiences of the journey. We inevitably lost 26pts — 13pts in a game where the referee sent a player off for persistent infringements.

Our progression in the National League was proving quite difficult and our form on occasions was disappointing. Compulsory daily training for our International Squad players with the WRU and commitments to the club were taking its toll and our key players looked tired and overworked. It became a source of some concern that we might not finish in the top four in the National League and would therefore fail to qualify for the European Cup Competition.

The newly formed Cardiff Rugby Football Club Board decided to

appoint Alec Evans as Rugby Director from the 1st April and this seemed to spur the whole squad. I wish Alec well during his second term of office at the club.

Senior coach Terry Holmes and his fellow coaches Anthony Faulkner, Steve Williams, Gwynne Griffiths and Steve Davies are to be congratulated on their excellent work throughout the season and for steering the team to 4th place in the League reaching the Semi Final of the European Cup and winning the SWALEC Cup. Well Done!

History was made on 26th April when we won the SWALEC Cup against Swansea 33pts — 26pts in the final match to be played on the National Stadium. It was a superb team effort which augurs well for the future. It was particularly pleasing to see that Hemi Taylor had recovered from injury to receive the Cup as a most worthy captain.

During the season the following players were selected for international duty. Simon Hill, Derwyn Jones, Andrew Lewis, Emyr Lewis, Lyndon Mustoe, Hemi Taylor, Jonathan Humphreys (Capt), Leigh Davies, Jonathan Davies, Justin Thomas, Gwyn Jones, Robert Howley and David Young. Well done boys!

The selection of Robert Howley and David Young for the British Lions Tour to South Africa merits special praise and we are proud of their achievements.

First XV Caps were awarded to Phil Booth, Jonathan Davies, Leigh Davies, Jason Hewlett, Robert Howley, Lee Jarvis, Gareth Jones, Lee Jones, Jamie Ringer, Justin Thomas and Paul Young.

Steve Ford's ambition was eventually fulfilled when he broke Bleddyn Williams' try scoring record for the club, scoring 19 tries this season to reach a total of 194 tries to surpass Bleddyn's 185 tries which has stood since 1954. Congratulations Steve.

Lee Jarvis in his first season with the club scored a total of 408 points in 20 appearances which overtook the record held by Gareth Davies of 383 points in 34 appearances in season 1983/84. I am sure that Lee has a great future and we wish him well.

Results on the field can only be achieved through the efforts of many people off the field and my special thanks go to the Rugby Committee of Terry Charles, John Nelson, Peter Manning, Ian Eidman, Malcolm Childs, Peter Goodfellow, Robert Newman, Jim O'Donnell, Mervyn John, Ian Robinson, Tony Williams, Robert Lakin and Steve Blackmore. Unfortunately we lost the services of Steve Cannon during the season and his sterling work on the committee and his dedication to the Junior Blue and Blacks will surely be missed.

Our Youth Committee of Jim O'Donnell (Chairman), Mike Ryan,

Neil O'Donnell, Billy Woods, Colin Davies and Weldon Davies together with their coaching staff Howard Stone, David Williams, Andy Moore and Les Goode deserves special praise for their commitment and hard work with the U16, U17 and U19 teams. Your work is very much appreciated.

I also thank the Management Committee of the Cardiff Athletic Club under the Presidency of Haydn Wilkins and Chairmanship of C. D. Williams and the Vice-Presidents for their guidance and loyal support throughout the season.

Medical care this year has been of the highest standard and praise must be given to Jane Parker (Physiotherapist) and her supporting team of Jonathan Evans, Brian Hughes and Chris Towers.

Our most loyal team of Doctors — Jim Naysmith, Keith Young, Hugh Evans, Richard Evans, Prof. John Williams; Surgeons — Brian Rees, John Fairclough and Roger Evans; Optician — Frank Malloney (SpecSavers) and Dentist — Geoff Price are a credit to their professions and we thank them most sincerely for their support. Unfortunately Geoff Price missed some of the season due to illness and we wish him a speedy recovery to full health.

To Gareth Davies our Chief Executive and his Office Staff — Nathan, Jackie, Vicky, Julie, Cathy and Debbie, I am indeed deeply indebted and I thank them for their dedication, loyalty and hard work.

Bryan Walker and his staff have once again kept the ground in remarkable condition and must be congratulated for their hard work and presentation. Thank you Mike, Royston, Ray and Chris.

Running the Commercial Department is never easy and Tina and Chris Tew continue to give excellent service to all our customers. It is pleasing that the Club continues to attract new sponsorship every year.

For the provision and service of excellent food and drink and the creation of a wonderful rugby atmosphere, I thank Jeff Ellerman (slimmer of the year), wife Betty, son Darren and supporting staff.

I pay tribute to our band of loyal supporters under the Chairmanship of Ken Jones and his committee for their support throughout the season particularly at European Cup venues where their vocal presence was very much appreciated.

The Lottery continues to bring in much needed income and hard work and dedication is required to make it viable. Fortunately we have Ken Jones, wife Kath and Roger Williams who have this in abundance and we thank them for their services.

Our souvenir shop has had a record breaking year which is largely due to Shirley Withers' efforts. Many thanks Shirley.

Home matches would not be the same without our excellent match programme, edited so expertly by Duncan Gardiner. Duncan we applaud you for your contribution.

Pre-Match Musical entertainment was once again provided by South Glamorgan Youth Band, led by Mr. Roger Morgan. The musical arrangements continue to be enjoyed by all. Many thanks.

Special thanks must go to the following sponsors who provide much needed income and support to the club.

McDonalds for their involvement with the Schools Development Programme.

Jewsons for the financial assistance to enable us to attract key players to the club, notably Robert Howley and David Young.

Nike for their kit sponsorship and financial support.

Welsh Brewers and Brains Brewery for their continued support and further extension of sponsorship.

Renault for their very attractive and generous sponsorship of cars.

Canon for photocopiers, fax and office machinery.

Metropolitan Club for use of their Leisure facilities.

We welcome Thorn Security, Heath Insurance Company and Fisher Insurance Company as new Hospitality Suite holders and thank all our present suite holders for their continued support. The Business Club continues to flourish thanks to the loyal support of their members.

Unfortunately, our Lucent Technologies sponsorship has expired and we thank them for their invaluable sponsorship of European Matches over recent years.

To all other sponsors, advertisers and corporate clients who very generously support the club throughout the year, we thank you most sincerely.

Cardiff Rugby Football Club Ltd, eventually started trading on 1st February under the Chairmanship of our Patron Peter Thomas who has been an inspiration to us all. The board has also recognised the value of voluntary labour and has ensured that the present Cardiff RFC Committee has an important role to play in the future structure of the club through representation on the Rugby Board.

In conclusion may I wish the New Company every success for the future and thank you all for the support you have given to the club during the season.

Diolch Yn Fawr
JOHN EVANS