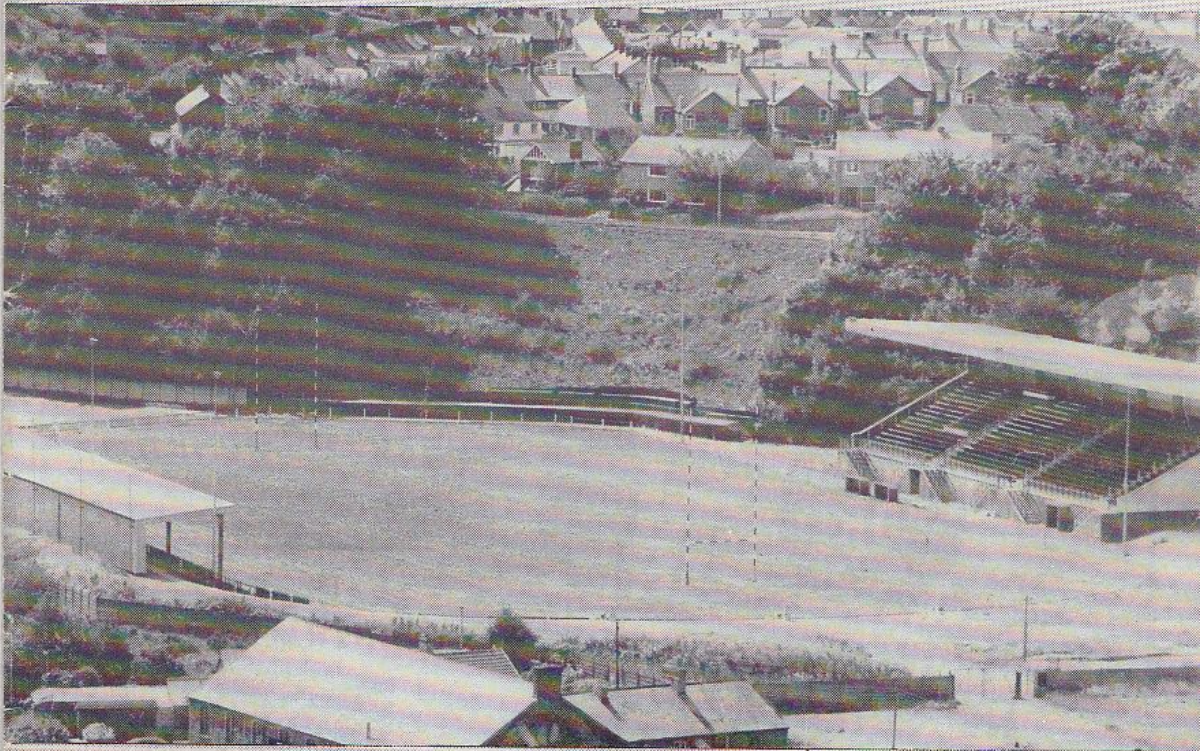


PONTYPRIDD

VERSUS

GLOUCESTER

ON SATURDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 1984
AT SARDIS ROAD, PONTYPRIDD KICK OFF 3.00p.m.



No 528

PONTYPRIDD
RUGBY
FOOTBALL
CLUB

Programme 20p

Pontypridd

15	IAN WALSH (Capt.)	FULL BACK
14	ANDY CARTWRIGHT	RIGHT WING
13	STEVE SMITH	RIGHT CENTRE
12	MARK DAVIES	LEFT CENTRE
11	ROSS CHILLCOTT	LEFT WING
10	RODDY CRANE	OUTSIDE HALF
9	TIM WILLIAMS	SCRUM HALF
1	ALAN EDWARDS	PROP
2	ANDY WITTS	HOKER
3	NEIL WILDING	PROP
4	KERRY WILLIAMS	LOCK
5	STEVE DUKE	LOCK
6	GARY JONES	FLANKER
7	ROBERT BENNETT	FLANKER
8	CARL GROVES	No.8

Replacements:

16 Mike Oliver, 17 Wayne Davies

Gloucester

TIM SMITH	15
DEREK MORGAN	14
RICHARD MOGG	13
PAUL TAYLOR	12
ANDY RICHARDS	11
MIKE EVANS	10
MARCUS HANNAFORD	9
GORDON SARGENT*	1
STEVE MILLS*	2
MALCOLM PREEDY*	3
STEVE BOYLE*	4
JOHN BRAIN	5
JOHN GADD	6
MIKD LONGSTAFF	7
MIKE TEAGUE	8

Replacements:

Steve Parsloe, Kevin White

Referee: Mr. A. W. BEVAN

International*

Rod's Chit Chat

BORDER DAYS

There is nothing more natural I suppose, than the age-old rivalry that exists between Welshmen and the men of Gloucester on the Rugby Field. After all, in the long years when the history of these islands was being fashioned, a great deal of the Gloucester folk's time must have been used up in repulsing the rapacious Welsh raiders, ever ready for a bit of rape and pillage in lush countryside beyond the Severn. And I daresay there was more than the element of tit-for-tat involved, with the sturdy English yeomanry more than ready to launch a few punitive expeditions of their own. They were heady days, if a little uncertain, but the accumulated experiences of centuries have left their mark in the shape of a wary admiration of each side for the wiles of the other. Happily, the days when we would launch a few dozen arrows at each other on sight are long past, but can it be that the old folk-memories persist, ingrained forever in the game of Rugby that seems so peculiarly adapted to the temper of the Welsh and Gloucester men? This surely is why Gloucester rugby unlike so much of the rugby of our English friends, has always sought battle with the Welsh. I do not have the relevant statistics to hand, but I am sure that our visitors will tonight confirm that Gloucesters fixture list contains more games against Welsh opposition than any other club in the length and breadth of England. Sportsmen to the core, as our own visits to Kingsholm have proved to us, Gloucester men yet, like ourselves, do not play the game simply and solely for fun. The idea is to win, playing hard and fairly and entirely within the rule, and this attitude has always struck a ready chord over here, on this side of the river. Nothing prompts respect more than the knowledge that an accidental blow to a Gloucester ear or nose will provoke, not a sorrowful stare, but instant and terrible retribution. This similarity of outlook and tradition is what makes Gloucester such welcome visitors wherever they travel and particularly here in Pontypridd, where we always try to emulate the welcome we get at this most hospitable of Clubs. A win over these lads is never easy earned, and today will go a long way to show to us whether our new-found cautious optimism is based on a firm foundation or on shifting sand.

THE HILLS LAID LOW

These are early days in the Welsh Rugby scene of course, but a few recent results involving 'first-class' and 'second-class' clubs have opened a few eye-lids. As I write these notes, I see that Blaina have beaten their old rivals Ebbw Vale, and at

the latter's ground too! In the Schweppes Cup, a trio of Clubs in Cross Keys, Penarth, and Glamorgan Wanderers, all acknowledged to be in the upper echelon, have taken fearsome troubles against the so-called lesser fry. In our own case, we need very much less than elephantine memories to recall defeats by Cilfynydd and Ynysybwl, as well as a clutch of close calls. Regular readers of this column will recall that this is a favourite hobby-horse of mine, and I - and I suspect a great many of you - take a sort of gleeful and impish joy when we see one of the bigger names take a tumble, provided always that its not ourselves, of course - we are not quite as virtuous as that! But there is a more serious side to this whole question. Perhaps twenty years ago, such occurrences were extremely rare. 'First-Class' is, and always was a self styled appellation, but the fact remained that there was a distinct difference in the overall standard of play. The advent of coaching has all but eliminated this 'class-jump', and nowadays it hardly rates a headline when Aberavon go down to a local outfit. The worry is whether this represents a levelling upwards or downwards? In the undoubted evening-out of playing abilities, are we tending to lose the quality of excellence that leads on to brilliant and individualistic natural teams? Do we require an undoubted elite to ensure international quality? Or can it be achieved from a plateau of more or less uniform ability? The answer is not plain to see, and won't be plain, I suppose, for a long time to come. Yet this is the undoubted future shape of the game in Wales, and we must make what we can of it.

CRY HAVOC?

Of course in any case, whatever the general excellence of the great majority of Welsh sides, there always has been a self-inflicted 'elite' in Welsh Rugby - one of the features of the game which I abhor, as I have made plain in these notes over the years. It is all a matter of history and tradition, no bad things in themselves, yet of a restrictive influence when allowed to stand in the way of all progress. I feel it will be a distinctive step forward when a Penygraig player is picked for Wales, rather than a possibly inferior player from, say Cardiff. I only pick at this old sore of mine because I note that such exalted names as J.P.R. Williams and Graham Price are now having their say at what they see as inherited faults and injustices in the system. I hope that Welsh Rugby will not be squeamish, but will accept these criticisms as being heartfelt and well meaning.

R.T.