

Sport in the Grammar School

By

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Rugby

From the days of Dr. Idris Jones, Watkin Thomas, Elvet Jones, Bill Clement and even earlier, R.T. Gabe, rugby was the dominant sport of the Grammar School. Despite the difficulties of the war years, rugby maintained its high standards. Facilities were primitive compared with today, and after-game washing was carried out in small hand basins with cold water. Fixtures were limited, the greatest distance being travelled was to Cardigan. Inter-school rivalry remained very much as before, especially the clashes with great rivals such as Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Carmarthen: Gowerton and Neath Grammar Schools being eagerly anticipated by all and sundry. Messers Harding Rolfe, Jack Morriss, Jack Davies, Joseph Lloyd and Leslie Sutherns were in charge at that time.

Of particular note during the war years was the winning of the Welsh A.T.C Cup in 1944 at Bridgend. The whole School journeyed by special train in support of the School Squadron (556 Squadron) team.

The team that day consisted of Jimmy Bearne, Roy Huggett, Owen Jones (Capt.), H. Raymond Williams, Ernest Morris, Eric Edmunds, Harry Evans, Raymond Williams, "Robbie" Williams, Cliff Williams, Benny Hancock, Ken Bowen, "Dick" Thornton Davies, John Lovering and Alan Phillips.

Following this, Glyn Price, Geoffrey Tucker and Harry Thomas were awarded their Welsh Secondary School "caps" and went on to become Wales A.T.C. internationals together with Dai Guest Rees, Wyndham Simmons and Reg Davies. The first A.T.C. International was played at Stradey Park against Scotland, where Harry Thomas kicked two "impossible" penalties from inside his own half.

The next significant milestone in the School sporting history was the installation of two showers behind the Physics Laboratory in the "Green Cabin". Luxury indeed!

During the war, a London School – Brockley Grammar School – were evacuated to Llanelli and shared the School's facilities. This led to tremendous rivalry on the rugby field with "Y Cymry yn erbyn y Saeson".

During the fifties and later, greater emphasis was laid on the development of junior sides, particularly at under 15 level. The School was always well represented in the Llanelli and District Under 15 side which played on an inter-town and district basis. The development of these sides, as well as the senior sides was due in no small measure to members of staff and particularly the P.E. Staff.

The staff who kept the sporting tradition going throughout the war years were followed in the fifties by Mr. Hywel Thomas, Mr. Kerry Davies, Mr. Gordon Price, Mr. Harry Thomas, Mr. Wynne Oliver and Mr. Goronwy Owen as full time P. E. Teachers. These were AIDED BY SUCH PEOPLE AS Mr. Tom Popwell Jones, Mr. Jack Thomas, Mr. Len Llewellyn, Mr. Dennis Thorne, Mr. Raymond Thomas, Mr. Huw Dunn Jenkins, Mr. Ellis Griffiths and Mr. Tony Harris who served on the Llanelli Schoolboys Committee.

Since 1950, fourteen boys gained International honours at under-15 level and twenty one at under-19 level. Many of these furthered their careers with first-class clubs, whilst several such as Terry Price (who played for Llanelli Vs. New Zealand whilst still at School) , Denis "cyncoed" Thomas, Hefin Jenkins, Philip May and Alun Davies were players who "stepped up" from the first XV into the Llanelli Senior side.

Alun Prosser-Harries, Keith Hughes and Steven Warlow were post-war Cambridge "Blues".

Raymond Williams, Brian Davies, Keith Hughes, Barry Llewellyn and Clive Rees were capped for Wales at Senior Level. Terry Price and Clive Rees became British Lions, the former touring New Zealand and the latter South Africa.

During the sixties School rugby gained such a reputation, particularly due to its successful run in the "sevens" at Roehampton and Oxford that its fixture list became SECOND TO NONE. Millfield, great "sevens" rivals, played at the school annually on a home and away basis- so did St. Edwards College, Liverpool, then coached by that ex-secondary schools cap and old boy, Mr. John Brian Thomas. School played St Mary's Hospital (thanks to Dr. Iorwrth Evans), St. Nicholas, Middlesex and Belmont Abbey, Herford. Touring sides invariably included Llanelli G.S in their itinerary.

The School has been able to maintain its strong fixture list until the present time (1977), although the halcyon days of the sixties are in the past. Intensive coaching is now common in all rugby playing schools and many of the present opponents are large comprehensive schools.

The end of the Llanelli Grammar School was marked by a fortnight's rugby tour of Ontario and Quebec, Canada. At the end of a season, when a record number of points had been scored and Martin Gravelle even exceeded Terry Price's individual points total, twenty five boys, captained by Gareth Thomas and accompanied by the P. E. Staff and Mr. Meirion Rees made this memorable trip. School won three games, Ottawa, Brantford and Hamilton and drew with Montreal. The tour was organised by an old boy, Dr. Don Mills and many old pupils e.g. Dr. Gwyn Jones and Dr. Colin Raymond Jones opened their homes and gave the party a Welsh welcome and provided overwhelming hospitality.

Soccer

Soccer was introduced to the School in the mid-sixties because of the number of boys playing for outside clubs. Mr. John Davies was the first master in charge, with Mr. Keith Walters doing much of the refereeing. Soccer has always co-existed amicably with rugby in the School, many boys playing both codes as the occasion demanded. Mr. David Bell showed keen interest, encouraging many of the boys to play for Llanelli Schools. F.A. He was assisted by Mr. Allan White (who came to see School play at Ottawa) and over recent years, soccer

has been in the capable hands of Messers Meyrick Richards, Keith Davies, Dennis Phillips and Roger Peckham.

The first boy to be “capped” was Roger Davies (also a regular member of the 1st rugby team) and he was followed by Robert Jones, Gareth Jones, Leighton Townsend and Terence Boyle who subsequently played professionally for Spurs

2016 Update – Wyndham Evans another old boy played football professionally as a right back. After playing as an amateur with Stoke City, Wyndham turned professional with Swansea City in February 1971 making 389 appearances in the Football league for them over two spells. While at Swansea Wyndham competed in all four divisions of the football league.

Another old boy, lifelong friend of Wyndham Evans and a Swansea City professional football player is Denley Morgan who as a versatile left-back held a regular first-team slot at Swansea City during the closing weeks of their 1971-72 campaign. Initially with hometown Llanelli he was initially a part-time professional at the Vetch field and was given his league debut in Swansea’s 2-0 victory at home to Exeter City in May 1969. He made 14 League appearances before returning to Llanelli in July 1972 and starred as they twice won the Welsh League Premier Division.

Cricket

As far as sport in school is concerned, cricket has always been a poor relation to such sports as rugby and soccer. The reasons for this are, in the main, the lack of proper and adequate playing surfaces, the cost of the equipment as well as the fact that summer term is usually a short one and a very important one as far as school examinations are concerned.

During the war years and 50’s the main emphasis as far as school cricket was concerned, was to field a first XI. School wickets were inadequately prepared and often dangerous. An artificial concrete wicket was laid on the playing field near “ school cricket was concerned, was to field a first XI. School wickets were inadequately prepared and often dangerous. An artificial concrete wicket was laid on the playing field near “Yr ysgol as y Bryn” and this, at least, ensured a true playing surface. School cricket was very much in the hands of Mr. Harry Hampton and Mr Alun Thomas in those early post war years. The sterling work of Mr. Alun Thomas was rewarded in 1950 with Hugh Davies being selected to play for the Welsh Secondary Schools Cricket team, and later taking up the game professionally with Glamorgan following a pre war schoolboy- the illustrious Haydn Davies who was Glamorgan’s wicket keeper for many years.

As with rugby, the Schools’ junior cricket became more established in later years, particularly in the 60’s and many promising cricketers emerged, none more than Alun Lewis from Dafen, who gained a Welsh Secondary Schools cap. Mr Sam Alford had by this time taken charge of school cricket and later became a Welsh Schools’ selector. Mr. John Rees then took over and was enthusiastically supported by Mr. Wyn Hughes and Mr. Meirion Rees. It was in the late 60’s that a Llanelli Schools’ Under 15 cricket side was formed to

compete for the Western Mail Shield on an inter-town knock-out basis. The Llanelli side won the shield in the first year that they entered and young players such as Gareth Lewis and Robert Green emerged as Welsh Under 15 caps, to be followed in quick succession by Wayne Thomas and Ian Lewis.

The Schools' First XI flourished during the 70's owing to the talents that developed in Junior Cricket. School first XI matches were usually low scoring affairs, but with the laying of a modern type artificial wicket, it became the exception rather than the rule for low scoring matches to be played. In the 1975 season, Maesteg Comprehensive School scored 196 all out, with School replying with a score of 200 for 6 to win the match.

Boys such as Ieuan Griffiths, Wayne Thomas, Martin Gravelle, Mark Williams and John Rees progressed to play for the Welsh Secondary Schools' team. In the 1976 and 1977 seasons, Martin Gravelle captained the national team and was in particular fine for in 1976, scoring two outstandingly fine centuries, against Millfield and England. He followed this up with a further century for Glamorgan 2nd XI. In the England "test" match, Martin Gravelle and Mark Williams were involved in the first ever Welsh Opening Stand of over 100 runs as well as being the first Welsh Openers to have scored 50 runs or more in each innings.

The final accolade for Martin Gravelle as a schoolboy cricketer came in the Schools' final season when he was chosen to open the batting for England against Australia in the two test matches.

Athletics

The renowned Athletics standard of the School was established by Mr. Tom Jones, the first fully qualified P.E. Master appointed to the School. He also promoted the gymnastics, and from his first team, Peter Thorpe, John O. Rees and Ken Chin, who were also members of the Llanelli Y.M.C.A, were selected for the Welsh Team which attended the 1949 Lingiad in Sweden.

In those days, support for the School Athletics team was tremendous and School dominated the Carmarthenshire Athletics Championships.

The first big championship meeting, was held at Barry when the School was invited to compete in the Glamorgan A.A.A. championships and a team of a dozen boys travelled to Barry in "Davies y Celfi's" lorry seated on benches from the dining hall.

Outstanding athletes of this era were Vivian Griffiths, Neville Jones (A.A.A. Junior 100 yds Champion) Hugh Longhurst (Welsh 880 yds Champion) and Ernest Bibbs (440 yds Champion).

Since those days, two boys represented Wales at the Empire Games in Cardiff whilst still in School. These were sprinter Wyn Oliver and shot-putter John Davies. Terry Davies excelled as a long-jumper.

Brian Davies was another sprinter, Barry Llewellyn, Terry Price and Hefin Jenkins were outstanding throwers of the shot, javelin and hammer respectively. Clive Rees won the “double” in Colwyn Bay, winning both the 100 and 200 meters.

In recent years, Steven Perks dominated the sprints and Neil Thomas high-jumped throughout his School career, last year competing in America for a combined Oxford and Cambridge team.

Cross Country

Cross country running was organised for at least a decade by Mr Dafydd Smith who eventually handed over to Dr. Keith Davies. Together they provided opportunities for such boys as Stephen Rolfe, Carl Davies and Dylan Jones, all of whom gained their International vest.

Badminton

Badminton is an ever popular sport organised for years by Mr. Maelgyen Thomas . The highlight was always the game against the staff – which eventually ceased because the boys were too good.

Tennis

Tennis is probably the most popular summer sport and School could do with double the number of courts. Mr. Dennis Thorne took charge for years and handed over to Mr. Alun Williams. School has had prizes for the last four years for playing the greatest number of games in the Nestles Lawn Tennis Championships.

Gymnastics.

Gymnastics still flourish, teams from School regularly competing and winning the Carmarthenshire Gymnastics competition. School has gymnastics displays once a year and has had many outstanding performers such as Picton Jones, now a Welsh Gymnastic Coach, Paul King, David Harries and Paul Trincas.

Since the middle sixties, the School sporting programme has had a somewhat wider aspect. Skiing parties have been abroad since 1964 and are very popular. The School also has its “fleet” of canoes which are used annually on the River Teifi, at Burry Port Harbour and for Canoe surfing at Llangennith. Three sailing dinghies were also made in School and used for many a memorable summer camp at Saundersfoot.

Parties of boys have also been taken to Snowdonia for mountain walking and abseiling practices. There are so many activities in School these days, and just not enough time to fit them all in.

Fives

This game became very popular during the Easter Term in 1900 and continued to be so until the early thirties.