

93rd Year 1964-5

This was another season where, without the assistance of an official club report, it has been difficult to compile an accurate seasonal record. From available sources it would appear that 41 games were played of which 24 were won and two drawn. The Playfair Rugby Football Annual commented in its review of the south-west "Exeter scored more points than any senior club except Penryn and Bristol, but gave away too many". This record was perhaps not what Barrie Carless, captain for the second season, would have wanted.

The opening fixture, once more against the touring London Welsh club, was something of a disappointment (6-23). Away wins at South Molton (19-8) and Paignton (45-3) helped gel the team together as did home wins over touring Esher (22-9) and local rivals Torquay Athletic, who had a player sent off after eighteen minutes (13-3). Two away games ended in slightly unsatisfactory fashion with a narrow defeat at the hands of Glamorgan Wanderers (3-6) and a draw at The Rectory against Devonport Services (8-8).

A wet Wednesday floodlit game at the Memorial Ground against Bristol suggested a daunting task, especially as the home club had selected three England Internationals including R.A.W. (Richard) Sharp at fly-half. Exeter had included an England international as well – Martin Underwood at centre. In the even he cried off and his place in the team was taken by a first team debutant, one R.C. (Bob) Staddon. Exeter performed excellently to lose by a single score (16-19).

Next up Redruth came to the County Ground where the home side took an early lead but Redruth fought back and led by five points at the beginning of the second half. Exeter then staged a startling revival inspired by fly-half Carless who dropped a goal and scored a try (17-11). Defeat returned in London against Saracens (3-13) and the usual close game at Weston super Mare (3-6) but a third game in a row away from home saw Clifton clearly beaten (22-0). The winning vein continued at home against Taunton (25-3) and Exmouth. This latter match was described by one correspondent as "Barrie Carless versus the Rest". The fly-half engineered many openings while the visiting backs made too many errors. Exmouth finished the game with thirteen players on the field, one of whom was virtually a passenger. The visitors were cheered off the field for their gallant efforts in adversity (35-0).

Exeter came down to earth again a week later, when visitors Penzance & Newlyn gained a narrow, hard fought victory. Keith Hopper broke an ankle during the game (5-8). At Honor Oak Park it was Exeter's turn to gain the spoils from a hard fought match against Guy's Hospital (17-13) but there was nothing between the teams when Exeter went to The Recreation Ground to face Torquay Athletic. This was a game of two halves with the home team registering all their points in the first and Exeter eleven of their fourteen in the second (14-14).

The run up to Christmas began with a close encounter at Barnstaple (6-0) and a not so close win over Teignmouth on the County Ground (16-3). At the Imperial Ground on Boxing Day, Exmouth gave a much better account of themselves than earlier in the season and proved to be no mean match for Exeter (8-0).

The next eight matches followed a win and lose sequence. Taunton won at Priory Park (6-11) and then Exeter won away against Streatham-Croydon (14-5). Disappointment came at Beacon Park when facing Plymouth Albion (6-11) but then Old Blues succumbed easily at the County ground (34-0). Another narrow result against St. Luke's went in favour of the College (3-9). At St. Ives Exeter came out on top (11-0) but on the County Ground Weston super Mare surprised Exeter to win (3-9). Remaining at home Exeter made five changes which included switching skipper Carless to scrum-half and bringing in Eddie Fisher, for his debut, at fly-half. Carless notched 15 points and John Baxter, playing at No.8, ran in from 30 yards to score a try (24-6).

Three wins in a row then followed, a sequence which was followed by three defeats. The successes came at home against London Hospital (8-0) and Plymouth Albion (6-3) and away versus Devonport Services. (17-3). Exeter then lost at home to Bridgend (8-23), St. Luke's College (11-14) and heavily at Cheltenham (0-14). Success was restored with a mid-week win at Newton Abbot (14-9) and at home against Tredegar (20-0). Meeting Bath at the Recreation Ground, Exeter was handicapped by the loss of Martin Underwood after fifteen minutes. The seven man Exeter pack often outplayed their counterparts but could not prevent the home side winning (3-11).

Easter brought a mixed bag of results. Old Cranleighans went under quite easily (22-3) but Monday visitors Moseley as usual proved to be a different kettle of fish, the visiting team winning after a keen struggle (8-18). Tuesday visitors Leicester found the Exeter pack too powerful. Both sides were weakened by the absence of regular half backs and back play suffered accordingly. Exeter was awarded a penalty try when winger Tony Vinnicombe was impeded near the line and just before the end Carless scored an individual try by making a break, kicking ahead, catching the ball and touching down (11-0).

This heartening performance was enhanced by victory at Redruth, with winger Tony Vinnicombe scoring three tries (18-3) and another great win at home over Gloucester (15-9). However, far from finishing with a flourish, Exeter went to Sidmouth for the last game of the season, and lost (6-14).