

Courtesy Bryan Weaver





Courtesy Bryan Weaver

WELCOME @

WRU MESSAGE



elcome to the semi-final stage of the Konica Minolta Cup where four Principality Premiership sides will battle it out for a chance to compete for glory in the Cup Final at the Millennium Stadium on Saturday, 28 April.

Our semi-professional structure is the bridge between grassroots rugby and the professional game in Wales and the Konica Minolta Cup is a key cog in that wheel, linking community rugby with the semiprofessional game, and giving grassroots clubs a taste of top-class club rugby.

The Principality Premiership is a more vibrant and competitive competition than ever before and, along with the Konica Minolta Cup, it is proving to be a shop window for our future Wales internationals.

Only a year ago, the likes of James Hook, Alun Wyn Jones and Aled Brew played their regular rugby in the semi-professional competitions, with James Hook taking part in last year's Konica Minolta Cup Final for Neath.

Looking at the teams selected for these semi-finals, I'm sure we will be saying the same thing in a year's time about players who step up to the Regional and international stage.

Thanks to Konica Minolta for their continued support and good luck to the teams.

Pob hwyl!

Roger Lewis, WRU Group Chief Executive

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KONICA MINOLTA MESSAGE



his year's Konica Minolta Cup has made for thrilling viewing. Now we are down to the last four, cup fever is spreading and the ultimate prize of a place in the Konica Minolta Cup Final at the Millennium Stadium is within touching distance of Llandovery, Llanelli, Bridgend and Cardiff.

These four great clubs have battled their way through three highly competitive rounds to reach the semi-finals and there will be two very happy sets of players and fans at the end of the weekend. Konica Minolta are delighted to be involved in this great tournament and our representatives have received fantastic welcomes at clubs across Wales in each round. What we've learned along the way is that the magic of the cup is still very much alive and kicking.

Our best wishes go to the players and supporters of all four clubs this weekend and I'm sure we are in for two great games. There is a fantastic day out in Cardiff on Saturday, 28 April awaiting the successful teams and I look forward to meeting them there on the big day.

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Published by:



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www.programmemaster.com

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Special thanks to WRU Communications Manager Liz Jones, WRU Programme Co-ordinator Natalie Mock and Howard Evans.

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Welsh Rugby Union 2006/07 Undeb Rygbi Cymru 2006/07

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The Konica Minolta Cup is a showcase for the semi-pro game in Wales. Howard Evans anticipates two cracking games this weekend

here is a saying in cup folklore that "West is best", and in the semi-final between Llandovery and Llanelli the latter have been the main reason for that adage, having won 13 of the 35 finals. But for Llandovery, even the last four, let alone the final showdown, is uncharted territory.

In previous cup meetings, Llanelli lead 2-1, but Llandovery caused an upset last season by dismissing Llanelli 29-21 at Church Bank. And their 21-6 victory in the league last September will have done the club's confidence no harm at all.

New Zealander John Elrick has returned home, but Simon Daniel's boot has proved equally effective for the Drovers and lock Arwel Davies should be leading a side that has back-rower Jonathan Mills home from a short spell at London Welsh.

Llanelli have young talent galore. They could include Morgan Stoddart at fullback, but in truth they have pace aplenty and several of their players will be knocking on the Scarlets' door next season. Chris Rowe is the skipper at lock, but both Dan Godfrey and loan Cunningham have led the side during the campaign.

Cardiff and Bridgend both represent East Wales and have met six times in the cup, with Cardiff leading 5-1, including two finals: 14-6 in 1981, and 12-12 win on try-count the following season. Bridgend's sole success came in 1975 by 6-4 at the Arms Park.

Fly-half Craig Evans is running into top form for Cardiff and Darren Allinson is a fine prospect at scrum-half, while Jamie Roberts at fullback looks a star in the making. The pack grows stronger each week with Rhys Gill, Ross Johnston and Gareth Gravell all powerful figures.

Bridgend have signed former Wales fly-half Matthew Jones and have another good kicker in Gareth David at fullback. The squad will include Andrew "Wizz" Williams, who was in the top division when League rugby began back in September 1990.

All told, the semi-pro game in both West and East Wales has plenty to shout about, not least two great semi-finals this weekend.

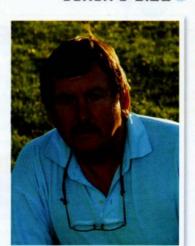
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PICTURE: HUW EVANS



Courtesy Bryan Weaver

COACH'S DIEW



Drovers retu

With a win over Llanelli earlier this season under their belts, lestyn Thomas is hoping for more of the same from his Llandovery squad this time around

aving ploughed his furrow with Llandovery since 1987, director of rugby lestyn Thomas has seen his team through good times and bad. This season is no exception; on the one hand they're involved in a relegation dogfight, and on the other they're gunning for a place in the Konica Minolta Cup Final.

Thomas believes that the club's cup form has helped their fight on both fronts. "We've been able to use the cup to gain a bit of momentum." he explains. "We're enjoying the competition and it has helped with our confidence in the league."

Aside from boosting league form, Thomas knows exactly how much getting one over on Llanelli and playing at the Millennium Stadium would mean to the Drovers faithful. "It's a great honour to be here," he says. "Llandovery have never been this far before but we're certainly not just making up the numbers, nor would we be on April 28."

Llandovery's success over the past few years has helped cement this never-say-die attitude, explains Thomas, having built his team

around a team ethos rather than star power. "We like to get maximum performances out of our lads, who aren't here for individual glory but because they want to play rugby and want to be part of the Premiership and that's fine by us," comments the Drovers' boss.

Within this cohesive unit, Thomas has particular praise for such talented youngsters as

WE'VE NEVER BEEN THIS FAR BEFORE, BUT WE'RE NOT MAKING UP THE NUMBERS

hooker Emyr Phillips and utility back Howard Thomas: "They're outstanding prospects who've been playing consistently well for us all season."

Llandovery will certainly have to be at their most united to overcome Llanelli and Thomas is well aware of the task at hand. "They're a highly competent side with a lot of form and a lot of history of doing well in this cup," he says. "They've got some good younger players who train and play full-time, but we haven't done badly against them in the past. We knocked them out of the cup last year so

this should be an enjoyable game, both a derby and a semi-final."

The team certainly had a nailbiting route to this weekend's game with comfortable wins over Nantyffyllon and Caerphilly being offset by a gripping, last-minute victory at Bedwas in the quarterfinal. "It was a tight game and Bedwas are obviously a proud club and a difficult team to beat," admits Thomas. "We did well to stay at it and get the points in injury time. It was enjoyable for us but equally disappointing for Bedwas."

Their injury-time away victory encapsulates both the agony and ecstasy the cup competitions can provide. A win over the 13-times winners this weekend would spark ecstatic scenes among the Llandovery faithful and, according to their coach, the anticipation has been building since the game was announced. "People have been looking forward to the Llanelli game because we've fared well in the past, so we'll be heading into the match full of confidence."

And what better way for lestyn Thomas to mark 20 years at the club than with his team's first final at the Millennium Stadium?

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Courtesy Bryan Weaver



LLANDOVERY ROUTE TO THE SEMI-FINALS

ROUND 5, JANUARY 27, 2007 LLANDOVERY 50-10 NANTYFFYLLON

In a comfortable victory for the Drovers, Nantyffyllon's forwards gave a good account of themselves but their backs were simply outgunned. Jon Elrick got the scoreline ticking over with an early penalty, followed by a try and conversion on the 20-minute mark, and a fine move from the home side's own 22 saw Howard Thomas touch down to widen the gap. The Division Three South West side did themselves few favours, picking up two yellow cards, and Llandovery's superior fitness levels ensured a resounding win for the hosts. Tries: Jon Elrick, Howard Thomas, Steve Covington, loan Davies (2), Dafydd Jones, Iwan Davies; Cons: Jon Elrick (6); Pen: Jon Elrick

ROUND 6, FEBRUARY 17, 2007 LLANDOVERY 37-13 CAERPHILLY

A tale of two halves, the Premiership club was rocked by the Cheesemen in the first 40 minutes, only to stamp their authority on the game in the second. Caerphilly took advantage of some sloppy opposition play to take a 6-5 lead into the interval. But Jon Elrick, playing in his last game for the club, kicked Llandovery into the lead after the break and forward momentum enabled the home side to push over for tries to Arwel Davies and Adam Yelland. Viv Jenkins touched down in injury time to cap a fine comeback. Tries: Viv Jenkins (2), Arwel Davies, Adam Yelland, Ricky Davies; Cons: Jon Elrick, Simon Daniel (2); Pens: Jon Elrick (2)

QUARTER-FINAL, MARCH 24, 2007 BEDWAS 14-21 LLANDOVERY

Two clubs looking to make it to the semis for the first time in their history, and it was the Bridge Field outfit that took the early initiative, building up a 14-6 lead. On the 56th minute, however, Bedwas hooker Ben Flower picked up a second yellow and the visitors made the most of their numerical advantage. The Drovers' pack piled on the pressure and, with one minute left on the clock and the scoreline tied, Mike Jones, loan Davies and Rob Walters combined to send lock Steve Covington over the line, and Llandovery into the last four of the competition.

Tries: Jonathan Mills, Steve Covington; Con: Simon Daniel; Pens: Simon Daniel (3)



5 HOWARD THOMAS

POSITION: Fly-half/Fullback HEIGHT: 1.80m WEIGHT: 84kg DOB: 7.9.85



4 GRUFF JONES

POSITION: Wing HEIGHT: 1.76m WEIGHT: 70kg DOB: 23.1.88



3 MIKE JONES

POSITION: Centre HEIGHT: 1.83m WEIGHT: 87kg DOB: 22.4.81



2 IOAN DAVIES

POSITION: Centre HEIGHT: 1.80m WEIGHT: 83kg DOB: 15.11.78



II VIV JENKINS

POSITION: Wing HEIGHT: 1.79m WEIGHT: 87kg DOB: 22.02.84



O SIMON DANIEL

POSITION: Fly-half HEIGHT: 1.82m WEIGHT: 102kg DOB: 12.11.77



ROB WALTERS

POSITION: Scrum-half HEIGHT: 1.81m WEIGHT: 90kg DOB: 1.3.77



GARETH BENNETT

POSITION: No 8 HEIGHT: 1.95m WEIGHT: 119kg DOB: 14.2.78

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Courtesy Bryan Weaver





Courtesy Bryan Weaver

PLAYER PROFILE

Rock steady

A builder and the bedrock of the Drovers' front row, Andrew Jones is relishing the chance to reach his first cup final



"We've never been this far before," he comments. "Personally, having been at the club so long, it's a huge incentive to get there. At my age there's not too many games like this left so I can't wait for the kick-off."

For a few moments in the previous round it didn't look like Llandovery, or Jones, would make it this far but, according to the Carmarthenshire builder, it was the Drovers' team spirit that pulled them through against Bedwas. "We never gave up," he says. "We never gave up," he says.

"They started well and I think at half time they must have thought they'd win the game, especially as they were the home team, but we stuck at it and scored the winner in the last minute."

That 21-14 win set up this weekend's mouth-watering



Prop Andrew Jones has been a talisman for the Drovers

showdown and, in the opinion of Jones, has helped kick start the Drovers' struggling league season. "We've been up for the cup and it has given us a bit of momentum," he enthuses. "Since then, we've beaten Bridgend, Maesteg and Newport in the league, so it's given us a lot of confidence."

Not something, it would seem, that the prop is in short supply of

AT MY AGE THERE AREN'T MANY GAMES LIKE THIS LEFT. I CAN'T WAIT FOR KICK-OFF

- a fact illustrated by the way he relishes the prospect of this weekend's clash. "Everyone in the Llandovery area is pleased we've drawn Llanelli because they're the team to beat due to their cup heritage," he says. "We've got a lot of respect for them and we've had some cracking games against them in the past but we've beaten them earlier in the season

and we know we can beat anyone on our day."

The familiarity between the two sides, believes Jones, should make for a close and intriguing contest. "A lot of the players know each other," he says. "They've got some guys who've played for Llandovery and we've got some lads who've had experience with them."

And if the Drovers can claim another local scalp, the tantalising prospect of appearing at the hallowed Millennium Stadium awaits. "We didn't really talk about it until the later rounds but we started thinking before the Bedwas game that we're only two victories away from the national stadium. This match is probably the best opportunity we'll ever get to reach the final."

Llanelli may be the "Cup Kings", but the man who has been the bedrock of the Llandovery pack for over a decade is more than willing to steal their crown.

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Courtesy Bryan Weaver

COACH'S DIEW



Great expectations

Llanelli have won Welsh rugby's top domestic trophy 13 times, and coach Rob Appleyard believes his young side have what it takes to make it fourteen...



or some clubs the banner of "Cup Kings" would be more of a burden than an accolade but, far from buckling under the weight of history, Llanelli assistant coach Rob Appleyard feels that his team's glorious past has only served to motivate the stars of today. "The boys get quite a big build-up for cup games with talks from former players and motivational videos," he explains. "We had Ray Gravell before our match against Newport and Phil Bennett came in before the quarter-final against Pontypridd."

The former Swansea blindside flanker is no stranger to glory in the competition himself, and in his view the presence of Llanelli legends has really galvanised the youngsters. "It makes the boys realise that they're pulling on a jersey that has been worn by some world-famous players. When the chips are down on the field they have the weight of tradition with them and that motivates them to go forward."

Appleyard is doubly familiar with many in his squad, working with them during the day in his role

as the WRU skills coach for the Scarlets Academy and then in the evening with Llanelli RFC. He feels that his dual role has been highly beneficial for all concerned. "A lot of our boys are Academy players," he says. "Most of our team are aged around 18 to 20 and if I didn't have this access to them it would be a lot more

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN THE WEIGHT OF TRADITION MOTIVATES US

difficult, given that they're young men in their first senior league. By covering them in the day and the evenings we find we can iron out any issues early on."

Among the club's talented youngsters a fair few have impressed so far in this year's tournament, with second-rower Dominic Day getting particular praise. "He's a big lump at 6ft 6in, wins a lot of line-out ball and takes up so much opposition focus it allows our other second-rower Adam Powell a lot of free reign."

With a squad as young as Llanelli's, Appleyard concedes

that, while they've strung together a good cup run, a stable league form has been harder to achieve. "Inconsistency comes from naivety and the boys not preparing properly mentally for games in terms of motivation and build-up," he explains. "Some days we haven't turned up in the league but we've been working hard to make sure that hasn't happened in this knock-out competition."

The Llanelli man sees this weekend's encounter as a clash between two sides with plenty of mutual respect and a local bond. "As a region we really want Llandovery to stay up," he admits. "But this is the cup and we have to be ruthless. Unfortunately for Llandovery they're the ones in the way at the moment."

In Appleyard's opinion, a triumph at the Millennium Stadium on the 28th would be a fitting reward for their season's efforts. "As a group they've learned so much," he says. "It would be wonderful to have something to show for it come the end of the season, to prove that the side of 2006/07 is a great team."

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Courtesy Bryan Weaver



LLANELLI ROUTE TO THE SEMI-FINALS

ROUND 5, JANUARY 27, 2007 SEVEN SISTERS 7-85 LLANELLI

Any dreams of giant-slaying were quickly dispelled as the 13-times cup champs put the Division Two West underdogs to the sword with a ruthless display, chalking up three tries without reply in the first ten minutes. Pick of the Premiership bunch were Dan Evans, who contributed 25 points, and Richard Davies, who harried the Dulais Valley outfit's defence with a scintilating show of incisive running. After a tentative start, Seven Sisters showed heart, but were simply outclassed. Tries: Richard Davies (2), Matthew Jacobs (2), Lee Williams, Craig Maloney, Ioan Cunningham, Daniel Gravell, Dominic Day, Dan Godfrey, Shaun Hopkins, Craig Hawkins, Dan Evans; Cons: Dan Evans (10)

ROUND 6, FEBRUARY 17, 2007 NEWPORT 3-17 LLANELLI

The visitors arrived at Rodney Parade with an unbeaten record in the previous four cup encounters between the two sides and determined to maintain their winning ways. The presence of Scarlets player Morgan Stoddart further signalled their intensions and though it took 29 minutes for kicker Craig Jones to break the stalemate, Llanelli ran out convincing victors, despite the Black and Ambers having their fair share of territory and possession. A confident and clinical display saw man of the match Stoddart make and take chances across the park.

Tries: Ioan Cunningham, Jonathan Edwards, Morgan Stoddart; Con: Craig Jones

QUARTER-FINAL, MARCH 25, 2007 LLANELLI 37-30 PONTYPRIDD

The opening and closing ten minutes belonged to the cup holders, but Llanelli dominated in the intervening hour with Lee Williams in particular wreaking havoc. Dai Flanagan's boot kept the visitors in the chase, but having gone into the interval 22-14 to the good, the Stradey Park side turned the screw in the second half with Daniel Evans finding the line at the corner flag and Williams scoring his second try to extend the gap to 17 points. Ponty struck back with two late tries but, kicking into the wind, failed to convert either.

Tries: Lee Williams (2), Craig Hawkins, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Jacobs, Dan Evans; Cons: Rhys Priestland (2); Pen: Rhys Priestland

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EMYR WILLIAMS POSITION: Fullback HEIGHT: 1.80m WEIGHT: 90kg DOB: 24.10.85



MATTHEW JACOBS

POSITION: Wing

HEIGHT: n/a

WEIGHT: n/a

DOB: n/a



POSITION: Centre HEIGHT: n/a WEIGHT: n/a DOB: n/a



POSITION: Centre
HEIGHT: 1.75m
WEIGHT: 86kg
DOB: 20.8.83



DANIEL GRAVELL

POSITION: Wing
HEIGHT: 1.80m
WEIGHT: 102kg
DOB: 5.9.81



POSITION: Fly-half
HEIGHT: n/a
WEIGHT: n/a
DOB: n/a



9 LEE WILLIAMS
POSITION: Scrum-half
HEIGHT: 1.70m
WEIGHT: 77kg
DOB: 27.10.86



POSITION: No 8
HEIGHT: 1.90m
WEIGHT: 110kg
DOB: 31.5.82



Courtesy Bryan Weaver





Courtesy Bryan Weaver

LLANELLI V LLANDOVERY







13 SNYMAN

12 DAVIES

11 GRAVELL

10 CRAIG JONES

9 WILLIAMS

8 GODFREY (C)

7 JONATHAN EDWARDS

6 MCCUSKER

5 DOMINIC

4 POWELL

3 PETER EDWARDS

2 CRAIG HAWKINS

1 HOPKINS



15 THOMAS

13 JONES

12 DAVIES

11 JENKINS

10 DANIEL

9 WALTERS

7 GARETH WILLIAMS

8 MILLS

5 DAVIES (C)

4 WALKER

3 ANDREW B

2 PHILLIPS

1 HOWELLS



14 JONES Onain ROWLANDS

Eifin Gumnic

REPLACEMENTS

16 PUGH

KONICA

MINOLTA CUP

17 JONES

18 COVINGTON

19 GWYNNE BONNE ?

20 JONES

21 WILLIAMS

22 ROWLANDS JONES

In the event of a tie the winners will be determined by the following criteria:

- 1. The club which has scored the greater number of tries.
- 2. The club which has scored the greater number of converted tries.
- 3. If after 1 and 2 have been applied no clear winner has emerged, extra-time of 20 minutes (10 minutes each way) will be played. If the scores are still level at the end of extra-time then points 1 and 2 will be applied again.
- 4. If the result is still a tie then a replay shall be arranged and played within 14 days.
- 5. If the result is still a tie after that then the winners will be decided by the toss of a coin

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REPLACEMENTS

17 GRAHAM JENKINS

19 CUNNINGHAM

18 ROWE

20 MATTHEW EVANS

21 DAVIES

22 COLES