

89th Year 1960-1

Consistency was paying off for Exeter with Tony Lee now in his fourth year of captaincy. The playing record was remarkably similar to that of the previous season. Again 45 matches were played but this time one less game was won and one more drawn. The number of defeats stayed at ten. The points balance improved with 640 being registered with 303 against.

The season began with two tough fixtures both of which ended in defeat, firstly at Bristol (8-23) and two days later against the touring Lansdowne, a team containing six Irish international players (6-14). Defeat did not come again until the second Saturday in December. Following an away win at Newton Abbot (5-0), further creditable victories were obtained over the touring Esher club mid-week (9-6) and against Falmouth in Cornwall (9-0).

Three home wins against moderate local opposition followed – Devonport Services (27-0), Royal Naval College, Dartmouth (28-12) and Exmouth (20-0) - before a trip to London saw the club achieve a fine victory over Saracens (6-0). Another pair of satisfying home wins came next – Redruth (13-8) and Taunton (11-0) – and after a blank Saturday due to a county game being staged at the County Ground, the Royal Marines XV was entertained for a Wednesday afternoon encounter. The Marines did not field a full strength side and Exeter ran up their highest score yet registered since the points scoring system was adopted (74-6).

Buoyed by this success Exeter travelled to Clifton where they the team had not won in four attempts since November 1938. The team returned home having won its eleventh victory of the season so far (14-8). Two more home wins followed - Weston super Mare (6-0) and Torquay Athletic (11-0) – before the sequence of thirteen straight victories was broken by an unexpected defeat by visitors, London Hospital (5-8).

Exeter then remained unbeaten for the remainder of the calendar year achieving wins over Barnstaple, Teignmouth and Exmouth before defeating visitors Old Blues on New Year's Eve (13-3). Of the four matches played in January all were played away from home. The first of these saw the demise of Taunton whilst the last saw victory at Streatham (11-0). In between came games against local rivals Torquay Athletic and Plymouth Albion. Both were tight affairs, Torquay being victorious (17-20) whilst the game at Plymouth ended all square (11-11).

From the 21st January the club enjoyed a run of ten games without being beaten. The next success came at home against Penzance & Newlyn (8-0), a game that was followed by a draw at Weston super Mare (3-3). A Wednesday home meeting with the Royal Naval Engineering College proved to be a close run encounter (9-8) before two relatively easy encounters on the County Ground – Old Millhillians (30-0) and Guy's Hospital (19-6). Still at home Exeter found Plymouth Albion to be stiffer opposition (6-3) but a trip to The Rectory proved to be less testing with a win against Devonport Services (22-6).

The next seven games were all played at the County Ground starting with the final game of this unbeaten sequence providing probably the most meritorious win, that against Aberavon (16-8). The first defeat since the middle of January came at the hands of Bridgend (5-23) and this was followed three days later by another, this time courtesy of St. Luke's College (0-5). March ended with a drawn game with Cheltenham (14-14).

Good Friday saw Exeter defeating traditional visitors Old Cranleighans (14-3). The next witnessed what is likely to have been the highlight of Exeter's playing season – the defeat of Moseley (16-5). The Birmingham Daily Post ran the headline, "Exeter Too Good Behind the Scrum for Moseley". "In a fast and open game" ... "Exeter's superior skill behind the scrim on a greasy ground turned the scales". A try by winger Tony Marks opened the scoring but just after the interval Moseley went ahead with the conversion of an interception try. The game swung Exeter's way again with a second

Marks try to which Derek Atkins added the extra points. Centre W. Redfern, of St. Luke's College, and wing-forward J.V. Rew scored further tries for Exeter and Atkins added a second conversion (16-5).

“For the first time since the end of the last war, Leicester had to contend with a wet ground on their visit to Exeter and before the muddy pitch became virtually unplayable they had scored all their points” reported the Birmingham Daily Post. The visitors opened the scoring after fifteen minutes and soon went eleven points ahead. Just before the interval Redfern made a break that led to a try by Tony Vinnicombe. Although Exeter enjoyed much more of the ball but could add only an Atkins penalty goad to the total (6-11).

A visit to the Recreation Ground to meet Bath brought another defeat. The home team applied consistent pressure in the second half when most of the points were scored. Bath recorded the outcome as “a good win” (0-20). On this day Devon was contesting the County Championship Final against Cheshire at Blundellsands. The northern county won by five points to three. Assisting Devon were three Exeter players – scrum-half Keith Hopper, wing-forward Ted Bonner and No.8 Dick Manley.

The losing streak extended to four matches after defeat at home by Newport (6-17) and away at Redruth on the week-end tour to the Duchy (3-14). Amends were made with four victories to end the season. The second game of the Cornish tour against St. Ives was another close-run affair (5-3) but the final three games, all against local opposition were easier hurdles to overcome – Barnstaple (14-9), Sidmouth (21-6) and Paignton (56-10).