



Notes on Sport

## WHO WAS THE BEST FULL-BACK?

*Mark Nicholls Has A Tactful Answer*

IT'S an old game picking the best World Rugby fifteen, but it seemed at times during Mark Nicholls's first talk about his preferences as if he might have a new answer to the first question, "Who was the best full-back?"

He obviously liked W. E. Crawford, who played for Ireland against the All Blacks in 1924, and will be remembered by two New Zealanders particularly well: Gus Hart and Jim Parker, whom he brought down with tackles now written into Rugby history.

"He was the only full-back who played as well as Nepia. It is, in fact, a question whether he was not a shade the better," said Nicholls.

And the speaker obviously liked the Springbok, Morkel, who played in his ninth year of first-class Rugby in 1921. Crawford was 33 years of age when he played against New Zealand, and Morkel was 32. Nicholls suggested that all really great players retained their ability over a long period.

Others listed were Kingston and Dave Lindsay (All Blacks), Johnson (Wales), Brough and Bassett (England), Ross (Australia), Tindill, Morkell, and Brand (South Africa).

Nicholls said he thought Brand's kicking superior to that of any other full-back. He ranked Brand with Morkel as the two best full-backs ever to visit New Zealand.

About Nepia he had more to say, but nothing so illustrative of Nepia's ability as this story of play in the Dunedin test against England:

From play on New Zealand's goal line, Nepia found touch at halfway. From the line-out he was given a penalty kick and found touch two yards short of England's goal line. With a wet and heavy ball he had covered the length of the field with two kicks. Nicholls believed that others might have been more consistently accurate, but Nepia's kicking covered such great distances that no return could hope to make up the ground he gained.

Who was the best full-back?

Nicholls was tactful, and not so revolutionary after all.

"If I were an Irishman it would be Crawford. If I were a South African it would be Morkel. But since I am a New Zealander, I say it is Nepia."



GEORGE NEPIA

### Andy Shaw On Putting: Points To Remember

PUTTING, says Andy Shaw, is the most important end of a game of golf—and the most nerve-racking end. Most people (he said in his fourth and final talk to golfing tyros on August 26 from 2YD) can get on to the green. But not many can be sure when they get there that the ball will willingly answer their prayers that it should drop into the hole.

There are all shapes and sizes of putters, and no standard stance or grip for their use. Some fundamental rules, however, can be followed.

The blade should always be square to the hole—it is a common fault to turn it with the back and forward swing—and the stance should be comfortable, restricted only to the extent that the blade must always follow the same line as the ball is intended to

travel. The length of the putt depends mainly on the length of the swing, but too long a swing will tend to destroy control. The varying shapes and sizes of greens should be remembered. Without actually getting down on all fours it will pay any golfer to get back behind the ball and see what contours it will have to follow on its journey to the hole.

Shaw believes that the putter should be swung, but the method has the disadvantage that the blade may be turned in the process or the putt stabbed, giving the ball backspin instead of the essential top-spin. The pendulum method—swinging the club from the wrists only—overcomes this trouble, for the club can be brought evenly up to hit the ball halfway up, giving it the over-spin which carries it straight and true over all minor obstacles.

To correct a tendency in himself to leave his right hand out of the picture, Shaw changed from the ordinary grip to one in which the forefinger of the left hand overlaps the little finger of the right. This brings the right hand into play.

As with every club (he had omitted to emphasise this point before) it is essential in putting to keep the head still. "It's no good looking up to see where the ball goes before you hit it. You should actually see the club's blade strike the ball."

A final point for putters: keep the blade close to the ground throughout the stroke to eliminate all risk of back-spin; and remember this slogan: "Don't look, but listen for it dropping in."

A summary of the four talks:

*Keep the feet about as far apart as the shoulders.*

*Keep the right hand on top of the club.*

*Start the back swing with the hips and let the left arm follow in behind.*

*Keep your eye glued to the ball even after it has been hit.*

*With the spoon, hit the ball off the left heel.*

*With the iron, use the safe three-quarter swing and hit the ball from between the feet.*

*The closer you get to the green the closer your feet should come in, the further advanced should your right foot be, the nearer the ball should be to your right foot, and the shorter should be your grip on the club.*

### Rugby Tours

Listeners should check with our Daventry programmes for the timing of items about the Australian Rugby team in England; and with the centre page chart for the outstanding home provincial matches during the coming week.