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on to me to put more vigour and initiative into my play. I was the heaviest man in the team, and he would point out what the lighter forwards did and then what I did, and make me feel ashamed. If he thought I was lousy, that meant I was in for a roasting at the next team talk.

"He says you're to mark Jackie Hore on Saturday," grinned Bob. "You've got to dominate him."

"I can easy fix Jackie," I said. "I bumped into him one game last season and he fell over. Fell right over from just a little bump. He's a softie."

"Yes? Who was it broke your nose?"

"Aw, that was just his knee. Everybody's got hard knees." I struggled into my shirt.

"Listen! Listen!" Mac was yelling above the din. After the uproar, the silence sounded immense.

"Well, boys," said the coach, "you know you're for it now. It's either you or the Southern for this season's champions, and next Saturday you'll have the honour of playing off with them. It's up to every one of you to keep fit. It's going to be a long, hard game, and I know I can rely on you boys to go on the field fit. I know Buck will leave the beer alone to-night."

"What," roared Buck, "why do you think I go tearing round there for 90 minutes if it's not to get a thirst?"

"I knew you wouldn't mind," said the coach, "especially after they presented you with that try."

"Another one," said Buck in mock resignation. "Another one. The best forward on the ground, and I get nothing



but abuse. I'll chuck the game and take on ping-pong."

"Well, boys, I'll see you on Wednesday at practice. I want you all out early. Will they all be out, Mac?"

"Anyone who can't?" said Mac. No answer.

"O.K. then. Good-night, boys. Anyone coming my way?"

THEY all began drifting off. Mac waited for Bob and me. The Southern match was just a nice distance ahead. I could get a thrill out of thinking of it, but no nervousness yet. I felt good.

"Well, Mac," I said, "how does the skipper feel about our chances? Our great public would like to know. Would you care to make a statement?" We often did these cross-talk acts

"I think I may say with all due modesty that we are quietly confident," said Mac. "Tell our public that the same spirit of healthy rivalry that has spurred on our predecessors will again be found animating the bosoms of this year's team. Tell them that the game of Rugby fosters the team spirit, and is the basis of our democracy. Tell them to play up and play the game. Tell them to go to hell!"

I was dumping my togs in the bag as the caretaker put his head round the door. "You boys ready? I'm waiting to lock up."

We went out with him. "Think you can hold the Southern?" he asked. He called them "Southeren."

"We'll give them a good go for it," said Mac. He was our spokesman on occasions like these.

"They've got a fine team. You'll need all your luck to beat them, those forwards of theirs—man!"

"We're going to play 15 backs and run them off the paddock," said Bob.

"Are you now? Ay? Well, I'll be watching you, but I'll no say which side I'll be barracking for. Good-night." He locked the gate after us.

IT was quite dark now, and all the street lights were on. The air was keen and frosty. We went up under the railway bridge, and stood in front of the lighted shops waiting for a tram. I was beginning to feel cold and stiff and tired now that the excitement was over.

"You know," I said, "football would be a good game if we could just play it on a Saturday."

"Come up to date, boy," said Bob. "This is Saturday. You remember yesterday? Well, that was Friday. To-day we've just beaten Kaikorai."

"I bet he carries a calendar," grinned Mac to me.

"No, fair go," said Bob, seriously. "It's just general knowledge."

"I mean it," I said. "It would be good if we could just play it on a Saturday. I've just been thinking, here we are, just after slogging through one hard game, and before we're off the ground even, everyone wants to play next week's game with us. Why can't they give us a spell?"

"I suppose they're greedy," said Mac. "They just get over one sensation and they're greedy for the next. They don't like having nothing to look forward to."

"Hero-worship, too," said Bob. "They like to air their views in front of the well-known Varsity skipper. It makes them feel big. Or perhaps they think we don't bother about much else, we just live for football."

"We will be for the next week," I said. "We'll be playing Southern all week, and by the time Saturday comes, we'll be so nervous we can't eat. It's one hell of a caper in a way. I'll be glad when the season's over and I can relax."

"Did you get any knocks?"  
"No worse than usual. The knee's pretty sore."

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