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N.Z. RUGBY AS GOOD AS EVER

Winston McCarthy Talks About the Tour

AFTER four months under the South African sun the 1949 Rugby All Blacks came back to New Zealand with a healthy tan, and a lively appreciation of the Springbok way of football. New Zealand scored 230 points against 146, playing 24 matches for 14 wins, seven losses and three draws. Some hard things have been said by critics at home who expected the team to carry on the old traditions and sweep all before it, and there have even been suggestions that all is not as well as it could be in the State of New Zealand Rugby. But Winston McCarthy, NZBS radio commentator, who accompanied the team on its tour, had some comforting things to say in an interview with *The Listener*, and after all, the onlooker sees most of the game.



"FOR the umpteenth time, it was a grand trip"—
Winston McCarthy

"I don't agree that New Zealand Rugby is on the down grade; its standard has not dropped," he said. "When talking about standards one must make a comparison with somebody or something else, and in this case the comparison is with the teams we have just been playing. We lost the four Tests, in each case by a small margin, but my impression, after seeing the play, and from my experience of Rugby here throughout the years, is that the quality of play is no worse today than it has ever been. You'll always find someone ready to say 'Things are not what they were, you know.' But don't spoil my record. Ask me first what everybody else has asked—'How did I enjoy the trip?'—so that I can say for the umpteenth time, 'It was a grand trip.'"

What impression, asked *The Listener*, was uppermost in his mind, now that he had had a day or two to settle down?

"Leaving out football for the moment, I suppose the most impressive thing was the magnificent reception given to the New Zealanders by the South Africans," said Mr. McCarthy. "From the time the party landed till the end of the last game and the wonderful farewell at the wharf at Capetown, we were treated with remarkable hospitality. The boys were invited to private homes. Private citizens offered their cars and used taxis themselves.

Hot Weather, Hard Grounds

"Over there we could well understand New Zealand being disappointed at its team's losses—a record for any New Zealand touring side. But those people who preferred to turn the radio on to the cricket and drop the Rugby out entirely had no idea of the difficulties which the 1949 All Blacks faced. At no

stage of the tour did the players go on to the field in a temperature of less than 75 degrees in the shade; and that's heat which would put to shame many a summer's day in New Zealand. Then the ground was as hard as rock. The South Africans were used to it, but practically in every place the field was watered for several days before the match. Such conditions occur in New Zealand only perhaps in an October game at the tail end of the season."

"How did the 1949 team compare with the team of 1928?"

Only Two Easy Matches

"The 1949 players struck only two easy matches. Usually, on such a tour, one hard game is followed by a more easy one which gives the top players a spell. Except for the games at Oudtshoorn and Aliwal North, every match was a potential Test. It should be understood here that in practically no matches did New Zealand's opponents use their backs as an attacking unit. The backs stood in an almost straight line, whether they had the loose-head or not. When New Zealand got the ball, each back was confronted with an opponent standing right over him, whereas when South Africans got possession from the scrum, they were too shallow to attack; consequently they kicked."

"Much has been said about differences in the referees' interpretation of the rules."

"Naturally; I was amazed. So were the New Zealanders; so, too, were even the South Africans themselves in some

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 28, 1949.