

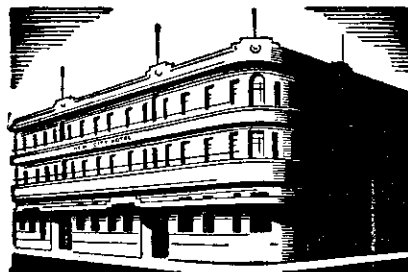


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Notes On Sport

Comment On A Commentator

"WHANG" McKENZIE OF DUNEDIN

WHEN a radio personality has a nickname forced on him by his listeners, then he is a radio personality. Such a one is "Whang" or Robert McKenzie, sports commentator for 4YA. As the leading commentator on outdoor events in Otago, he is known throughout the Dominion for his work in sporting review talks, commentaries on sporting events, and as leader of the South Dunedin community sing.

Mr. McKenzie is a Dunedin man, and was born in South Dunedin, a hotbed of football enthusiasm. He became contaminated, and for a few years was a prominent player for Alhambra. He played on the wing, and was a speedy full-back. His football career ended early, however, when he received an injury to his shoulder. But he didn't desert the football field. He soon earned a reputation as a fair referee, and not so many referees, in the public eye, earn that adjective. He refereed several representative fixtures in the South Island, and he controlled the game, South Africa v. Southland, at Invercargill, during the Springboks' tour of 1921. He established a New Zealand record by acting as secretary to the Referees' Association for 20 years.

Nervous at First

The first time he was called upon to broadcast a senior Rugby fixture for 4YA, nine years ago, he was not at all sure of himself before the "mike." His keen interest in the game, however, soon disposed of his nervousness, and almost before he knew it he was rattling off the action in that inimitable way of his which seems to take in every possible movement. His thorough knowledge of the game enables him to deliver a commentary as an authority, and his unflinching accuracy in naming players, no matter where they may be at the moment, remains a constant source of wonder to many people. Unless a race meeting has been staged, "Whang" has for nine years broadcast every Saturday there has been football played, frequently covering two matches in the one afternoon.

His Nickname

It was through his football broadcasts that the nickname "Whang" came into being. It seemed to him a most expressive word to indicate the contact of boot with ball, so whenever a place kick was about to be made he ejaculated "Whang" as the kicker made contact. The word caught on, became a catchword. Became more, in fact; it became Mr. McKenzie's second and more familiar name. He says himself: "I am so frequently called 'Whang,' sometimes I forget my real name."

Thought He Was Chinese!

When four years ago the South Dunedin Businessmen's Association decided to run during the winter a weekly community sing in the Mayfair Theatre, on behalf of orphanages in the southern end of the city, or in the interests of

other deserving causes in the same locality, they asked Mr. McKenzie to be the leader. "Whang" decided to cash in on the popularity of the expression he had originated, and instead of cheerios sent out calls known as "whangs." In publicity matter for the sing he is invariably called "Whang" McKenzie. The frequent use of his name in this way over 4YA has led innumerable people to believe the sing has been conducted by a Chinaman! More than once donations were sent in for "The Chinaman's Sing" in South Dunedin.

Mr. McKenzie made a success as leader of the sing just as he made a success of all his broadcasting. His breezy personality is admirably suited to the work. Largely due to his unrelenting efforts the South Dunedin sing has raised considerable sums of money for charitable and patriotic purposes. His services are in great demand. He has visited many outside centres. On the last Thursday in August of this year, he went to Wyndham, a small town in Southland, to hold a sing to raise money for the Southland aeroplane fund. He hoped he might get £75 or £100. Instead the sing realised the staggering total of £775, a record for any similar Southland appeal, a record for "Whang," and a fine piece of work for Wyndham.

After football and community singing his most frequent appearances before the microphone are at race meetings. Before meetings in Otago he gives the "possibles," and he broadcasts all Forbury Park and Wingatui trots or gallops.

In addition to Rugby and racing he has broadcast commentaries on Soccer matches, hockey, athletics, cycling,

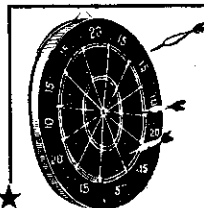


"WHANG" McKENZIE

cricket, hockey, bowls, and on one occasion did a quickstep contest.

"The greatest thrill of my life, however," he says, "was being in front of the microphones and loud speakers at Wingatui on Children's Day during the Dunedin Centennial celebrations in February. That was an experience I shall never forget." Everyone who saw the thousands of children having the day of their lives will know how he felt.

"Whang" has a brother who was once prominent in New Zealand affairs. He is C. J. McKenzie, who was engineer-in-chief for the Public Works from 1932-36.



THE ANCIENT GAME OF DARTS

AMONG the accounts arriving daily of the indifference and good-humour of the English under the Nazi air raids, it is not surprising to find the game of darts surviving the Luftwaffe as sturdily as the game of bowls survived the Armada.

The average Englishman feels as lonely without his dart board and attendant projectiles as a Chinese coolie without his chopsticks.

War pictures recently arrived from England have shown many a touching scene of allegiance to the old pastime—including one Hogarthian view of rustics playing darts outside a pub when German raiders had practically demolished the interior of the place.

The great mass of toiling Anglo-Saxons have always spurned the complicated life. Most Englishmen have an ordered routine—the office, tea at home and an hour or two with the wife and kids, then "the local." Here the dart board is solemnly suspended in the bar,

and the darts laid reverently by, ready for the sacred rites to begin.

Darts history is long and venerable, its origin obscured in the mists of antiquity. It may have begun when humanity found it necessary to devise some system of deciding who should pay for the next round of mead. It was strongly in vogue in the days when Robin Hood played Will Scarlet a swift one-o-one on the clouts at Nottingham Fair.

There are no doubt some who will question the tradition of skill and utility in the game. Yet how many a Crusader with Richard must have given a cry of frank delight as an arrow pinned a Saracen neatly in the fifty! Tradition enough!

As for its utility: what about that happy play on words when the Tired Business Man 'phones home to say he has been detained by a board meeting. Does his gentle spouse ever guess the exact nature of the board involved?

—DARTIMEUS