

French Rugby is Good

NEW ZEALAND should have no illusions about the quality of the Rugby now being played in France. "Make no mistake about it, the French players are good, and if France sends a team to this country in the near future, as it is hoped she will, we will see the game played as it should be played, at its very best." Winston McCarthy, who was the NZBS representative on the All Black tour, gave this opinion to *The Listener* just after the team's arrival in Auckland recently.

"The idea many people seem to have of flustered, excitable temperamental Gallic players must be thrown out," said Mr. McCarthy. "A good French side now takes a power of beating. The players enjoy the game, they're happy at it, and they have a spectacular style. Their handling and tackling has to be seen to be believed. On this occasion their tackling was easily the most devastating of the tour—quite legitimate, but really hard play. Their forwards were big men, fast and intelligent. Never again should France be left at the end of an All Black tour. This time our boys were relaxed, at the close of a strenuous series of games, but even if they had been in peak form when they met France, the result could have gone either way. French Rugby today is something totally different from the play New Zealand had to deal with on the 1924 tour. France this year should come very close to winning the international championships."

Broadcasting arrangements for this tour were much better than they were for the Kiwis tour, Mr. McCarthy said. "This time I was able to arrange for land-lines from the sports grounds to studios to be kept open a little longer, so that I could complete my work for New Zealand on the spot instead of having to go to the nearest studio—three to four hours' travel away in some cases. I found all the BBC people friendly and very co-operative. If there was any difficulty to be ironed out, one just telephoned the officer concerned, arranged

to meet him, and the problem would soon be settled.

"Until this tour the BBC outside sports commentators had been using a lip microphone, one which has to be held close to the mouth. I didn't like it, and I asked the BBC engineers if they could arrange some sort of harness which would allow me to keep my hands free. They went to immense pains, even sending to New Zealand for recordings which demonstrated the effects of using both types. The new open type microphone is much easier on the commentator, and I believe the BBC has adopted it for general use in sports broadcasting.

"I think there has been a change, too, in the method followed by BBC commentators. They're still not really quick-fire talkers although they have speeded up considerably. When last I worked with the BBC men they were inclined to give more description of the surroundings than of the actual game. Now they certainly do give a running description of the game, but some commentators still have a trick of missing a lot of the play because of an urge to tell the listeners some of the life history of every man who gets the ball. But listeners don't want to hear a player's past record—they want to know what he is doing.

"Another interesting point about most of the commentators was their tendency to allow their own point of view too much of an airing. A Welsh commentator describing a game between England and Wales would seldom leave listeners in any doubt about his sympathies. Only a few minutes to go and Wales is still ahead. Oh, if only Wales can hold that lead. If only they can hold their ground just a few more minutes. . . . That sort of thing. If the commentator happened to come from England, it would be the other way round."

The Listener asked about the standard of Rugby in Scotland and Wales.

"Scottish Rugby has been going through a very bad period, and from the international match point of view Wales too is tending to get into a rather unhappy position," said Mr. McCarthy. "Scotland has had fourteen international losses in a row. But I don't think the

qualities which cannot be specified exactly—convenience, safety, appearance, and so on. In every respect except one, the stove is greatly superior. The one exception is appearance. Stoves are neat but they're not attractive. They are meant to be tucked away in some inconspicuous corner of the house, to act as a heater and not as a focus for social gatherings.

In the last three years I've been in contact with hundreds of householders, who have replaced their open fire by a slow combustion stove. In all except three cases, they have expressed complete satisfaction with the change, and only regret that they hadn't made it earlier. Of the three exceptions, one was due to improper installation, another to a faulty stove, and the third I didn't have a chance to examine, so I can't say what the trouble was there. But it's safe to say, that when a stove is operating properly, there is no question of its superiority to our conventional open fire. So there's the position. If you're prepared to exchange the company of your open fire for an economical, more convenient, and safer method of heating—then you can't do better than install a slow combustion stove. Think it over, before it's too late to do anything this year.



ALL BLACKS RETURN

Winston McCarthy, who represented the NZBS on the tour, could think of only one way to solve the souvenir sombrero problem—wear it. A photograph taken on the team's arrival at Whenuapai, Auckland

fault lies with Rugby players individually. Selection is faulty, and constant destructive criticism from the Rugby public tends to make good men leave the game. We met players individually as good as you'd find anywhere, and I think Rugby in Scotland will come back into its own, in time.

"In Wales the best players are not finding their way into the representative sides—again a fault of the method of selection. But, through its clubs, Wales is stronger in Rugby than anywhere else in the world. The players are there all right, but it seems that the tendency is to neglect players in the minor clubs, many of whom are first class, in favour of the more fashionable clubs such as Cardiff (one of the greatest club teams in the world), Newport, Llanelli, Swansea, Neath and Aberavon. These clubs at present do not meet such teams as Abertillery, Pontypool, Cross Keys, Maesteg, Ebbw Vale, and Bridgend, although there is a move afoot to end this situation. If it can be achieved Welsh international play will profit immensely.

"The Welshman in the street is the most astute judge of Rugby I have ever met. Almost everyone in Wales seems to be able to discuss the game with real intelligence, and without prejudice towards his own club. The Welsh Rugby follower recognises the faults of his favourite team as well as its good points. He is not nearly so one-eyed as the average New Zealander who is often blind to many faults. I believe this sort of awareness of weakness, when it does exist, is the best guarantee that that weakness will be overcome."

Mr. McCarthy was asked about the value of air travel for touring teams.

"A vote just before we landed showed eighteen of thirty players in favour of, and twelve against air travel," said Mr. McCarthy. "But I feel that the experience of this tour shows a case for a sea trip outward, and air travel home. Players have no chance to settle down and get to know each other on the way over by air. There is just one hectic rush, from the trial games in New Zealand to the first overseas game, with no chance to relax, and the team takes longer to get into proper form when it does arrive. I would favour leaving earlier, travel by boat, then start the season in England on an equal footing with local clubs. But when the tour is over, fly by all means. The sooner everyone gets back home the better.

"That hat? Oh, yes, that's a souvenir sombrero from British Columbia, autographed by the British Columbia team and by the All Blacks. There was only one answer to the problem of how to get it safely off the aircraft at Whenuapai—wear it. So I did."

Still More Mysteries

IN 1828 a mysterious figure was seen in the captain's cabin of the ship *Vestris*, bound for New Brunswick. The figure vanished, leaving the words "Steer North-west" written on a slate. Against his better judgment the ship's master followed the instructions, and was able to rescue a number of shipwrecked mariners. One of them bore a startling resemblance to the man seen aboard.

Dramatisations of this and other stories which have never been explained are to be broadcast by 2ZB at 7.45 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning April 7, entitled *Question Mark*.

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inevitable that the householder who experiences the warmth and comfort such a heater can give, will have it going 24 hours a day. In this way the calculated fuel saving is lost. Over a winter your fuel bills will be smaller but not much smaller than they were before. But—and this is the important thing—next spring you will remember a house that was warm right through the winter, both day and night, and not just for a few brief hours in the evening.

I promised earlier to say something of the cost of installing a stove. It's difficult to give exact values, but as a working rule you can use this example. A stove and the necessary flue pipe can be put into a new house for a little less than the cost of an open fire and the attendant chimney. In a house which already has an open fire, the stove can be fitted to use the existing chimney. The cost of the stove becomes a straight capital charge which may be recovered by lower fuel bills in the future, although I think this unlikely. However, you will have the benefit of a far superior heating arrangement.

Although I've covered as fully as possible the measurable advantages of the stove as compared with the open fire, there still remain those intangible