

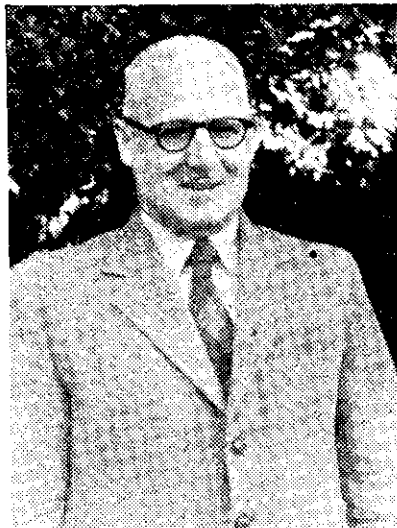
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**MARK COMBER**, who conducts the weekly Sports Review at Station 2XP New Plymouth (7.15 p.m. Fridays) and the Sports Results Session (7.15 p.m. Saturdays) has



MARK COMBER

been a sporting man since his school-days. His greatest interest has been in athletics and he has vivid recollections of his association with such famous sportsmen as the miler Randolph Rose, the cyclists Henry and Tom Oakley, and the athletes George Sullivan and Stuart Black. Mark Comber still declares that no personal triumph gave him greater satisfaction than when his protégé Stuart Black won the National 440 yards title in 1932 in record time. Boxing, Rugby, cricket and wrestling are other sports which have had his interest and support. On joining the group of enthusiasts responsible for running the old Station 2YB, Mark Comber conducted the mid-week and Saturday evening sports sessions. Now he has a record of more than 35 years of sporting activity.

**G. A. SOUTHEN** (Napier): (1) The initials NBC stand for National Broadcasting Company. (2) Yes, the retirement of 87-years-old Arturo Toscanini was announced a week or so ago. Toscanini has been conductor of the NBC Symphony Orchestra for 17 years. (3) I have not been able to find an answer to your question about Mario Lanza.

**WITH** Kirsten Flagstad, Helen Traubel and Lauritz Melchior departed from the Metropolitan, Wagnerian opera has gone into one of its periodic U.S. declines. Meanwhile, Wagner fans keep their ears peeled for heroic-voiced artists to build up the schedule again. The latest hopeful, according to *Time*, is Margaret Harshaw, aged 41, strong enough to brandish a spear handily and with enough stamina to last out a four-hour opera. She arrived at the Met. in 1942 as a contralto, but eventually became a full-fledged soprano. Not long ago she played the helmeted goddess Brunnhilde in *Die Walkure*. "What was wonderful," said Olin Downes, of the *New York Times*, "was the depth and subtlety of her scene with Wotan and the sweeping drama of the ensuing passage with Siegmund." Robert Bagar, of

# Open Microphone.

the *World-Telegram and Sun*, said: "The lady did herself—as well as Wagner—proud. . . She sprang about with something like approaching the graceful."

A CORRESPONDENT living in Motueka asks for information about the English tenor Richard Lewis.

Lewis was born in Manchester in 1914 and as a youth sang in church choirs, at festivals and for the BBC.

When his voice broke he went to work as a clerk and for four years didn't sing a note; all his spare time went into studying harmony and counterpoint. Later when his voice settled he won a scholarship and gold medal. After some study under Norman Allin, the famous English bass, Lewis signed on with ENSA and toured military camps and outposts. Next he joined the Carl Rosa Opera Company and stayed with them until he was called up for the Armed Forces. He was invited to sing with the Brussels Philharmonic Society, but was sent to Norway a few days before the performance was due. However, Norway had its compensations, for he sang with the Oslo Philharmonic in Benjamin Britten's *Les Illuminations*. His commanding officer gave him leave to visit Belgium, where he sang in Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Magnificat*. When he was demobilised in 1946 he was immediately engaged to tour Norway, where he gave 22 concerts.

On the more personal side, Richard Lewis married, in 1943, a smart young Waaf named Mary Lingard, daughter of Joseph Lingard, Professor of the Flute at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Lewis is a fairly heavy tenor, although scarcely of Wagnerian weight. But for the benefit of tenors who might be downcast about their high notes, he points out that he can reach a top C with ease—through constant practising. He is a good tennis player, a sculptor, and painter.

I can't tell the correspondent when Lewis is likely to be heard in solo work; that is a matter for the programme organisers.

**"A YOUNG VIOLIN STUDENT"** (Mokotua, Invercargill) says he would be grateful for information about Hans Wessely and Niccolò Paganini.

There's not much I can tell him about Wessely except what Oscar Thompson has to say, and that is short. Wessely

**TWO VIOLINISTS** was born in Vienna in 1862 and died at Innsbruck in 1926. After studying at the Vienna Conservatory under J. M. Grun he made his debut in Vienna in 1883. Then he toured Europe and appeared in England at the Crystal Palace in 1888. In 1889 he became a professor at the Royal Academy of Music. He published *A Practical Guide to Violin Playing* and a *Comprehensive Scale Manual*.

Paganini was born in Genoa and died at Nice in 1840, aged 58. His father—an amateur—taught him and ruled him with a rod of iron. At 13 he made his first tour, after which he concentrated on composing difficult pieces for his instrument. He left the atmosphere of severe discipline at his home and stayed away for some years. So fond was he of gambling that his greatly-prized

Guarnerius he owed to a French merchant who lent it to him for a concert when he had pawned his own fiddle to meet card debts. After hearing him play the merchant insisted on his keeping it, as he felt he could never presume to play it again. Paganini so carefully guarded his technical secrets that he published only a few of his compositions.

Sorry, no illustrations are available.

**EVERY** evening, all over New Zealand, people listen to the 9 o'clock News. The principal reader is Ernest Le Grove (pictured below), whose voice has been heard from all the YA and YZ stations on four nights a week for the last twelve years. Long experience as an actor and producer has fitted him well for this job, although in no sense

is it a theatrical one, NINE O'CLOCK NEWS delivered soberly, unemotionally and factually.

"It must not be coloured by any voice inflexions that might arise from personal feeling or perhaps excitement," he told me the other day. "And, while you're reading the News you have no politics." The reader is not, as quite a few people seem to think, in any way responsible for the construction or content of the News. But he has an opportunity of studying it before he goes on the air. Therefore, he generally knows beforehand what he is going to read. However, when an urgent news flash comes in it is placed before the reader, who includes it immediately after the item then being dealt with.

"One of the main concerns of a news reader is with the pronunciation of the names of people and places," Mr. Le Grove said. "During the last war Polish and Russian names kept cropping up. I found that they fell into a sort of pattern and after some experience I managed fairly well. In fact, a woman who had been a governess in Russia asked me how long it was since I'd been there." All this sort of thing creates a certain amount of tension for which there must be relief. It came one night to Mr. Le Grove at a critical moment. He was afflicted with an uncontrollable desire to cough. "I jabbed my finger in the direction of the 'off' button," he said, "and let go a terrific and satisfying blast. But I had pressed

