

Winston McCarthy Sums Up

Extracts from three talks recently broadcast in
"Sports Digest"

YOU know, we all did so much look forward to the tour of the Springboks, didn't we? Apart from smarting under the seven defeats of 1949, we had come to the stage where we felt that the time had come for us to decide whether or not it was worth our while to keep on following the game—remembering, of course, the defeat we suffered at Auckland last year in the final Test with the Australians. And then, all keyed up for the tour, we suffered a terrific panic. Were we good enough? We couldn't be. The Springboks were invincible. . .

And so it was with beating hearts that we sat and waited for the opening stanza—the match with Waikato. I doubt if we realise even now just what New Zealand owes to Waikato and the tactics adopted that day. For generations it has been accepted that South Africa was the be-all and end-all in forward play. And yet on that day a provincial team—one that had struggled for years to be accepted as a first-class province, and on finally succeeding, had defied the rest of New Zealand in defence of the Ranfurly Shield—decided to do the almost impossible: take the Springboks on in the forwards.

Waikato kicked off, and as Pickard stood out by the left touchline to take the ball not one, but eight Waikato forwards, took him, ball and all. The ball was rucked, Bullock kicked ahead, Buchler slipped in going for the ball. Again the whole Waikato eight were on the ball. A quick heel, Ponty Reid on the blind side, and winger McDonald was over in the corner for a try within the minute of the kick-off. From then on there was nothing the Springbok

pack could do against the Waikato forwards. It seemed as if they were bewildered—and I honestly think they were. Desperately they flung the ball around from set play, prying the defence here, prying it there. But the moment the ball hit the ground they were again faced with that menacing Waikato pack. The writing was on the wall even then, though few if any of us knew it then. . . It wasn't until after some half-dozen matches that it finally dawned on me that the Springboks had lost their greatest art, one in which they were word-perfect for years, the art they had taught the world—control of the game forward.

How could this have come about in such a Rugby stronghold? In 1949 the battles between the Springbok and All Black forwards were titanic. Seven years later the Springboks were astonished at the vigour displayed by New Zealand forwards—such a change in seven years. . . In 1949 practically each of the four Tests was a grim, dour affair. The gigantic packs clashed and clashed again, but from the spectators' point of view it was not inspiring Rugby. After the All Blacks had left South Africa there were murmurings,



REID LIFTS IT OVER THEIR HEADS

"Open Rugby by all means, but not at the expense of sound Rugby"

and the murmurings grew louder until they reached the ears of those in authority. There were two men in the Western Province who controlled the destiny of the Rugby teams in Capetown and Stellenbosch . . . men who had distinguished themselves as Springboks. Both of them were backs, and both had tasted the delights of open Rugby in the tour of New Zealand in 1937. They were a medical man, Dr. Louis Babrow, and a Doctor of Anthropology from Stellenbosch, Danie Craven.

Even though these two great players knew the value of controlling the game forward, they hankered for the spectacular. So it was that in 1950 at the end of the season the two Universities played an exhibition match, with nothing at stake, against a side from the other Capetown clubs. The order was to toss the ball around. Both sides did so, with the result that the spectators went home drugged to satiation with the exhilarating spectacle. "This is what we want," they said. "Give us more of it." The next year a Springbok team went to the British Isles. Only in Wales did they strike packs who could foot it against the best of the Springbok tradition. And then came that match against Scotland, when the Scots were humiliated by a 44 to nil defeat . . . of the nine tries scored seven were by the forwards. After subduing the Scottish pack the Springboks ran riot and did as they pleased, the forwards running with the backs, and so on. In the five Internationals played on that tour 21 tries were scored—14 of them by the forwards, seven only by the backs. The writing was on the wall.

The next season an Australian team visited South Africa. Australia has never gone in for sustained forward play, and that suited the emancipated Springbok forwards down to the ground.

The first Test went to the fast-moving backs of Australia, but there it ended. There was still sufficient old-fashioned forward play left among the Springboks to get an initial advantage before opening out. Last season the British Isles team was in South Africa. Despite the write-ups about the grand forward play, I am inclined to take the view shown in the films of that tour. There was little or no rucking, and Springbok forwards and backs romped around all over the field. It was most spectacular, but there was a definite air of unsoundness about it all. And so the Springboks went on to Australia this season before coming to us. Again little rucking, again a lack of robust forward play. "You will beat New Zealand," they were told. And in that Springbok team were only three forwards who had been brought up under the South African rigid rule of "scrum, scrum, scrum"—Chris Koch, Jaapie Bekker and Salty du Rand. The others were mainly made up of brilliant handlers and runners. Why should they expect the play to be any different here from what it was in other countries?

And then came the shock of these eight Waikato forwards going in as one man. The shock reverberated throughout the Rugby world and was echoed and re-echoed in almost every match from then on. And as if that were not sufficient, the Waikato backs played to a set plan . . . to keep the ball behind the Springbok forwards. . . Not satisfied with that, Don Clarke at fullback turned on a most immaculate display. He fielded, kicked and tackled like a veteran, despite his 22 years. But one kick of his meant much towards the winning of that game . . . his early attempt at a penalty when he placed the ball on his own 10-yard mark. Later in the

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tion of one of these committees will give an idea of the others. This (a South Island committee) has as members a retired sheepfarmer, an archeologist, university lecturer, editor, architect, engineer, a Maori expert, and a deputy of the Commissioner of Lands.

An example of detailed investigation by one member of a Regional Committee is the listing, with comprehensive notes on location history and condition, of fifteen odd pas, six mission sites and churches, five battle sites, seventeen redoubts and various graves—all in one small district of the North Island.

DETAIL of mud-and-supplejack construction from an old hut in the Otaki district

