

MAC'S LAST MATCH

IN the first year of peace, 1946, this paper sadly reported that Britain's former ally, New Zealand, had unleashed on the war-weary British a small but destructive blitz. According to the cables a broadcast description of the Kiwis' match against Wales at Cardiff so affected listeners that husky former Internationals staggered from their radios in the extremity of nervous exhaustion long before the match ended.

Knowing something of the technique of NZBS commentator Winston McCarthy, *The Listener* was inclined to believe the reports. Even New Zealanders accustomed to his taut swift-ness had been known to find the excitement intolerable. The British, long used to the leisurely "over-to-you-now-old-boy" style of the BBC, must have felt for the man who sowed the wind.

Opinion in Wales was that in some subtle way this was the Kiwi revenge for a long-disputed try; one Rugby enthusiast was reported to have taken refuge in the comparative calm of a local Soccer match. Nevertheless, as we said at the time, "We are inclined to doubt the truth of the story that a listener became so excited during the commentary that he choked on an orange he was eating, and died. Oranges are not yet so plentiful in Britain that one can afford to eat them with other than undivided attention." But, doubtful or not, Winston was known in the NZBS for several months as "Killer McCarthy."

He took the title in his stride. During World War I, at the age of six, he had appeared in 387 patriotic concerts impersonating Sir Harry Lauder. The little Irishman had won, and survived, the nickname of "Scotty." By 1937, when McCarthy found his way into "the little station with the big pro-

grammes," as 2YD was then known, he had been what he describes as "knocking about" for some years. He had started farming land and had ended in a hard-rock mine two thousand feet below Westland. The knocking about also included representative Rugby for Manawatu, Bush and Wairarapa.

By 1940, three years after he entered broadcasting, *The Listener* was reporting that "Mac of 2YD will cheerfully talk about any sport ever known. If he knows nothing of it out of his great store of sporting knowledge, or can find no reference to it in his 50-year-old collection of scraps and cuttings, he is just the chap to make it up to please his audience." And the point was illustrated by reference to a 2YD series called *Scenes from the Sporting Past*. Mac and his fellow broadcaster, S. J. Hayden, decided to cap the series by giving chess players their chance. Without rehearsal, the pair sat before a microphone and gave listeners a hilarious record of a chess match between Alfred the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte.

By then a back injury had circumscribed Mac's sporting activities in the field, and he confessed to being "a nice hand at croquet." For the same reason his war service—as private, sergeant, and finally lieutenant—was largely in the Army Education and Welfare Service, where he stuck to his speciality, bringing sport, either actual or broadcast, to the servicemen. He was still in the army when he left New Zealand to describe the Kiwis' match, and to send Englishmen reeling exhausted from their radios.

Since then, Winston McCarthy has given commentaries on almost all major Rugby tours and fixtures, as well as covering the Empire Games at Vancouver and Auckland, and the Olympic Games at Melbourne. In the process he has become what one Wellington news-



WINSTON MCCARTHY, after his last appearance as a Rugby commentator, received presentations both from the N.Z. and Wellington Rugby Unions. Here L. Price, for the Wellington Union, presents him with a canteen of cutlery

paper described as a "national institution." Now he has retired from broadcasting.

His final broadcast for the NZBS was a commentary from Athletic Park, Wellington, on Saturday, April 27, on a Jubilee Cup match between Victoria College and Onslow. A final score of 19—6 (University winning) meant that listeners several times heard a refrain that has become a McCarthy characteristic—"Wait for it... Listen... It's a goal!"

At a farewell presentation after the match, accorded by the Wellington and New Zealand Rugby Unions, tributes were paid to McCarthy's remarkable memory and knowledge of the game. But the greatest tribute that could be paid, said L. V. Carmine, for the New Zealand Union, would be to say that McCarthy's broadcasts would be greatly missed not only by the Rugby public, but by people in hospitals and sick beds. He gave pleasure to all.

Replying, Winston McCarthy recalled that he had ended his broadcasts with "Cheerio, New Zealand." Now, as a broadcaster, the time had come for him to say, "Goodbye, New Zealand."



THE OLD REFRAIN

"Wait for it... Listen! ... It's a goal!"