



KEVIN SKINNER
Don't cheat, he said

saying: "Oh, don't let us have this dour stuff. Give us the open football again." But you couldn't fool the selectors. They said, "We're out to win, and we're going to play the same type of football we've had before." To say the Springboks were satisfied with the tour would be silly. They were no more satisfied than we were with the All Blacks' tour of South Africa in 1949. They lost six games, which is something unheard of for a Springbok team. New Zealand lost seven in 1949—something unheard of for a New Zealand team.

What about the players—the Springboks? I've told you about Johnny Buchler, who'd played in 1949 for Transvaal against us, and there was Basie Viviers, who was never quite fit from the word go. Tommy van Vollenhoven I think was a great scoring wing three-quarter, and I was very sorry he pulled a muscle and went out. Tommy I always regarded as the supreme court jester of the team, simply because he put a couple across me, some of the best I've struck, without a smile on his face. He was one of those that night at the dinner in Christchurch. He knew the brand of cigarettes I smoked and as we sat down handed me one in a packet with the cellophane still around it. "Thank you, Tom," I said. He lit it for me, I took three puffs, and I went up in smoke. A trickster, you see—he's been to one of those trick shops. That was very funny, so he did just about the only chuckle we ever struck, put his hand in his pocket and tossed me an open packet. I had one of those and up I went again. Oh, yes, no trouble. Tommy said, "Winston, I must have my little joke, but you'd better have one of the New Zealand Rugby Union ones. Boys, pass that saucer of cigarettes up." They passed them up and I took one, and up I went in smoke again. You wouldn't think it could happen, but it did. He'd doctored the whole outfit.

Paul Johnstone we'd also met before. He'd been to Oxford; we'd played against

him in 1953. He was a peculiar fellow in that he never spoke much, not a particularly friendly type, you know, that goes around making friends. But I would say he was the most accomplished footballer they had in the team. In the last Test he was the only man carving us to pieces, and when he came in to fly-half things looked very dangerous. He could play anywhere—a grand player. Young du Preez from the Western Province looked a good boy, but bang! went his ankle in the first Test—bad luck for them. Roy Dryburgh was a good footballer whether he played at full-back, on the wing or at centre. And what a delightful man! Win, lose or draw Roy was always the same. I've heard people say to him after a game, "Oh, very sorry you lost." "Why matter," Roy would say. "That's over, let's think of the next game." Wilfred Rosenberg was another man it was a tragedy we didn't really see. I'd heard a lot from the South Africans about what a lovely player Wilfred was, but he had pulled a muscle. They tried him out in the second game at Whangarei, his muscle went again, and we didn't see him until that third Test in Canterbury, when he scored the greatest try of the whole series. When that boy flashed through, goodness gracious me, he was a grand footballer.

I've told you about Ian Kirkpatrick who played on with a cut eye—he had his moments. And another injury victim—a pulled muscle victim—was Pat Montini, who was a delightful centre or five-eighth when he was fit. Jeremy Nel, it turned out, scored more tries, I think, than the others at centre. He was a strong, willing player with a swerve of the hips that could go through for you, and an iron man with the games he played. Clive Ulyate I've mentioned, Clive who had some grand games and had played so well against the British team over on the other side. Brian Pfaff from Western Province—a very good cricketer, too—didn't strike form at all. He pulled a muscle in the early stages and knew he had no show of getting it better, so we saw little of him. "Peewee" Howe had come out as a fly-half but in my opinion was definitely a centre. And that reminds me that I promised to tell you the story of what I thought happened in the Maori match.

That day "Peewee" played as a five-eighth. No flanker even looked at him all day—truly, truly, not one did. "Peewee" had the time of his life. And when I heard their journalists and others running through this game afterwards and saying what a wonderful game "Peewee" played I was shocked. Because I had seen "Peewee" play as a five-eighth before. He wasn't very much at home when the flankers were coming at him, and he used to drop a lot of passes getting out of the road. I said to Terry McLean, "I think they're going to talk themselves into playing Peewee in the Test." Terry said, "No, they wouldn't do that." My goodness gracious they did, and you know what happened. A brilliant player as a centre, not so good as a first five-eighth. What happened? In the second spell they had to bring Paul Johnstone in to first five-eighth. I think the Maori game spoilt it for them for that last Test in that respect.

The two little half-backs, Tommy Gentles and Strydom, I wouldn't trade

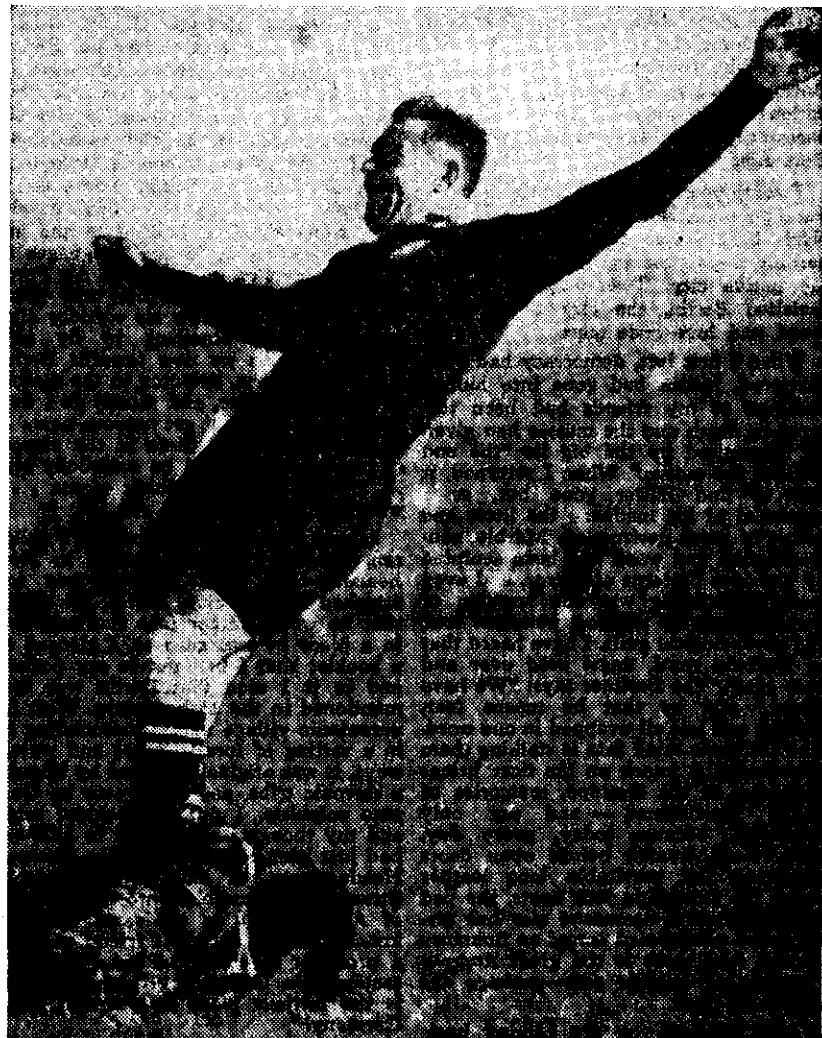
anybody for. They were a couple of champions, as Springbok halves generally are. We get into the forwards. The Number 8 they brought out was Dann Retief, the most honest, hardest, fittest player they had anywhere. He scored tries, he really loved the game of football, he gave it 100 per cent for the whole 80 minutes, and if it had gone on for two hours he'd still have been going. That's how good Retief was. Basie van Wyk was bad luck for them—they lost him with a broken leg in Australia at training. Davie Ackermann pulled a muscle and got hurt—in the open, a brilliant flanker. Butch Lochner was definitely, I'd say, their hardest tackler—he threw his hip into you mostly and was a really good player as well. Chris de Wilzem, a young fellow, was learning very quickly. He could come along later. Salty du Rand I remembered from 1949, and he was still a great player out here in 1956. Salty went in as a lock and everything else. I liked him, I admired him. Johann Claassen of course was the pick of everything. Pickard played good games sometimes, bad games at others—sometimes he looked as if he didn't have his mind on the game at all. Chris de Nysschen I remember as a tall fellow, perhaps a bit too tall and long in the leg for international football.

Mel Hanskom—he was one of the hookers—hurt his leg in Australia and played very little here. Bertus van de Merwe, another hooker, did all the hard

stuff right through, and he was a good forward too. In the front rank they had Newton Walker, whose Dad had been out here in 1921. A good player, he was tough, really tough—tougher than Bekker and tougher than Chris Koch. And he meant to be tough. There was the young fellow, Piet du Toit, only 21. He didn't get a Test—the others were just too good—but he will go places. I've told you about Jaapie Bekker and Chris Koch, what wonderful fellows they really were.

Because of the crop of injuries they had with many hard matches ahead, the Springboks were forced to call replacements from South Africa. Foreseeing the inevitable, the New Zealand Rugby Union eased things for Danie and Co. by offering to stand the cost of the extra players should they be needed. The two players, a winger and a flanker, were flown out here, Theunis Briers and Jim Starke. Of course the usual fanfare preceded their arrival, you know, how stiff they had been to miss out on the original selection and so on, but on this occasion I could well believe it. Briers was a powerful type of wing—big, strong, and he could run and he could play Rugby. If he'd been with the team from the start I could well imagine him turning out the star winger. I liked Jim Starke's play—unobtrusive, clever, with a great nose for being where the ball was. He was a "lean" type, but

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DON CLARKE IN ACTION
"No infringements near half-way" was the word that went around.