

porters and, most particularly, upon the Welsh as a nation will be extraordinary. The Welsh, I am quite sure, will **treasure** the Maoris.

From a Rugby point of view, the Maoris face a tough tour in an itinerary which reads: October 23, versus Cardiff; October 27, versus Maesteg at Maesteg; October 30, versus Swansea at St Helen's, Swansea; November 3, versus Monmouthshire at Rodney Parade, Newport; November 6, versus Llanelli at Stradey Park, Llanelli; November 9, versus Aberavon at Aberavon; November 13, versus Wales XV at Cardiff; November 17, versus President's XV at Barcelona; November 20, versus Spanish XV, at Madrid.

Holding-club

Cardiff has its own club ground which runs behind the National Stadium and which has accommodation for about 15,000 spectators. The club is traditionally strong and in recent years has had the valuable services of Terry Holmes at halfback and Gareth Davies at first five-eighths, two players of a fine quality though not quite of the class, individually or in combination of Gareth Edwards and Barry John ten years ago. The Cardiff Athletic Club at one end of the ground is, so to speak, the holding-club of various activities, including Rugby, and is particularly memorable for a Rugby museum of superb quality. The two bars, upstairs and downstairs, are famous meeting-places because the club and the ground are as close to the city centre as the Britomart car park in Auckland and the old GPO, now torn down, in Wellington. Consequently, at lunch-hour, Bleddyn Williams, Barry John, Jackie Matthews and many more famous Welsh players are likely to drop in a pint and a drink and, best of all, a chat — the Welsh are wonderfully glib at the last.

Maesteg is easily remembered. Its club symbol is the figure 7 four times repeated, one alongside the other. I wish I could remember the origin of the symbol. But I can easily remember one or two other items about the club. When the All Blacks toured in 1953 the club president was Enoch Rees. A kindly man who later became president of Wales and who was a member of the International Board when it held a meeting at Wairakei during the 1959 Lions' tour, Enoch may have been the only president in Rugby history to have written and had published a number of novels. A Maesteg player of character was Chico Hopkins, of the '71 Lions. You may remember that he replaced Gareth Edwards after a few minutes of the first test at Carisbrook, to my mind with such effect that he was a winning factor in the game. In despair that he couldn't beat Edwards for a place in the Welsh team, Chico turned to League for £8000. In no time at all, this cheery lad, the life of any party, had lost all his spark of humour. He didn't make the

grade in League and, the last I heard, had never quite recovered his old joy in life.

Swansea, known as the "All Whites", play on the St Helen's ground which is also used by the Glamorganshire team in English county cricket and which was where the 1924 All Blacks "repaid" the non-try by Bob Deans in 1905 by beating Wales by 19 to nil, George Nepia being outstanding. It's a long, oval-shaped ground, not easy to adjust to in such matters as kicking for touch, and the spectators will make the Maoris feel at home because they are pretty one-eyed. At Rodney Parade in Newport, where the Monmouthshire team are to be tackled, the touchlines on each side are within a few feet of the spectators and players have to walk a long way from the dressing-rooms to get to the pitch. It's a primitive sort of place for a big city, this Rodney Parade, but locals think it's great because it was here that Wilson Whineray's team were beaten, 3 to 0, in 1963. Most critics tended to blame Earle Kirton, first time out in All Black uniform and not very happy, either; but I prefer to remember that, later, Don Clarke was told by coach Neil McPhail that if he didn't watch out, he'd be installed in the Wednesday team, replaced by Mackie Herewini. Don kept missing touch — and you don't do that, in Wales — or anywhere.

Top form

Carwyn James may have something to do with coaching the Llanelli team, in which case the Maoris will have to be at the top of their form — no coach in my experience has better read the weaknesses of an opposing side than he. This is the club they call the "Scarlets" and both it and the ground, Stradey, are steeped in the game. A chap, Bernard, who toured New Zealand as a supporter of 1977 Lions has a house bang-opposite the halfway line of Stradey. He will tell you that if Llanelli get beaten, he, Bernard, doesn't speak to anyone, not even his dog, on the Sunday and the Monday. By about Tuesday, his lips are starting to move and on Wednesday he may even say "thank you", when his wife hands him his meal. But it's not until about Thursday that he is ready to resume a normal part in life — and, underneath, he will still be sore about that defeat. This is the real Llanelli supporter — one-eyed as can be but, boy, is he steeped in, does he love his Rugby and his club!

Aberavon won't be quite what it used to be because it lies close by the Abbey steelworks, about the largest in Europe, and unemployment, not least in the steel industry, is now so severe in Wales that a big proportion of the male workforce won't have employment. In such a depressing situation, it's not easy for anyone to feel joyous; but I have no doubt Aberavon people will do their best by the Maoris.

Flat-stick

Now to the big one, back at Cardiff. They'll call it A Wales or Welsh XV but, take it from me, it will be Wales, full strength, and flat-stick to win. A hard team to beat, in that case; but if the Maoris can play as against the Springboks in Napier last year, I would give them an even-money chance to win. That was **the** game of the tour last year; and, putting aside all discussion on whether the Boks' final pot went over for the 12-all draw, I would say that if Eddie Dunn had moved the ball to his threequarters three times in the last 15 or 20 minutes, the Maoris would have won, quite decisively. If I have had a disappointment about Maori Rugby in the years since the Second World War, it's been that their teams too often have tried to play like Pakeha sides, all science and too little of the old flair of the great pre-war days of George Nepia, Jimmy Mill, George Smith, Tori Reid, Dick Pelham and so on. There was flair against the Boks and there would have been more if Eddie had passed instead of kicked. Even so, I feel confident the Maoris will be right there, at the death-knock of what could be one of the great games.

Was it Jim Maniapoto who caused the Spanish to invite the Maoris to tour to Barcelona and one of the most beautiful of the world's cities, Madrid? At the Golden Oldies tournament in Long Beach, California, last year, Jim kept turning out for the Spanish team from Madrid as well as for the Bay of Plenty Wasps. The Spaniards thought he was wonderful; and though Jim's Spanish wasn't the hottest, he seemed to communicate with them with ease. They had a few things to offer, those oldies from the plains of Spain, mostly in the way of flair; and I'll be thinking they'll be chucking old-time Maori Rugby at the Maoris of 1982. Which ought to mean great fun for the Maoris who, in my experience, have only played Pakeha-style Rugby because they were told to by Pakehas; and who, with Waka Nathan and Percy Erceg as leaders, are more than likely to head straight back into real Maori-style Rugby from the moment they get together.

Maori teams are outstanding to travel with. They are well disciplined. They love their Rugby, and always do they have humour, fun. They get along like houses on fire with their hosts. Their team-spirit is tremendous. You can see the fire in their eyes as they do the haka and from it you know that their warrior-spirit is aroused, in the words of Rewi Maniapoto they will fight on forever and ever.

Unless I win a Golden Kiwi, there's not much chance, at the moment, that I will be in Wales and Spain with Waka's team. This is going to be my toughest break in long years of writing about Rugby. It's going to mean I will miss out on the greatest tour ever.