

the result. It would be a try. He had a sort of lopsided, deferential grin which rather gave the impression of excessive modesty. So far as I remember, he was modest, too. But when he moved in that tryscoring movement, he wore a lopsided, deferential grin which suggested that he really was sorry, he shouldn't be doing things like this to your team.

Mill did have one other recommendation. His backs scored a whale of a lot of tries. This implied quality passing after the forwards had won the ball; and quality passing means speed. Perhaps the greatest of all Welsh scrumhalves, Hayden Tanner, spelled out the perfect case when we talked.

"There are three points," he said, "about the pass by the halfback. It's length versus speed versus accuracy — and the greatest of these is speed."

No question about it, Tanner was right; which makes me cast my vote, for Mill however reluctantly — because Going of whom I saw a great deal and who was, in my opinion, unquestionably great. The tries he set up for Bryan Williams in the first and final tests of the All Blacks' tour in South Africa in 1970 were extraordinary demonstrations of genius.

#### Stead v Herewini

Naturally, though I may look as old as Methuselah — and often feel it after I've seen some of the rugby of these days where the result so often is determined by penalty goals rather than by tries — I never saw Bill Stead play at first five-eighths for the 1905 All Blacks. I did see a great deal of Mackie Herewini, a favourite of Auckland's Ranfurly Shield teams of the 1960s and who is a natural recommendation for first five of THE great Maori team.

But I can tell a story about each which establishes, positively, that Stead must have been the greater player. At the golden jubilee of the 1905 tour, the remaining players were the guests of the New Zealand Rugby Union; and as a number of us, on the afternoon before the test match the next day, drank in the bar of the Midland Hotel in Wellington, I witnessed Jimmy Hunter put his arm around Stead's shoulders. "Ah, Billy," Hunter said. "Without you, I would have been nothing". On that tour, Hunter scored 42 tries — and no player since has come within close of such a number, either by a second five-eighths, as Hunter mostly was, or any place else.

Many a year later, I drank with another immortal, Bert Cooke, in the boardroom at Eden Park after we and many thousands more had watched a match. Cooke was at least as brilliant as Hunter and probably was, in fact, more gifted. "How would you", I asked him, "have liked to play today?" Bert's answer was pointed. "Not," he said, "outside Mack Herewini".

You can gather a great deal which is significant to true Rugby from these two

remarks. Saxton made a very fine team of the Kiwis because one and all of them — and their forwards, like the recent Maoris, were deficient in ball-winning skills — hewed to his instruction that "the object of Rugby is for 14 men to give the 15th a start of half a yard". That, essentially, is Rugby — to build up combinations which produce the try-runner going like the clappers with the defence well beaten by slick and well-timed passing. I may sound like a Methuselah when I say that the fundamental fault of modern Rugby is



Wattie Barclay 1926 Captain

that this lesson has been forgotten. We applaud the Allen Hewsons because they kick millions of goals when we ought to be looking for players with the attacking skills to build up millions of tries by themselves or their teammates.

And now, having established the halfbacks — I always prefer the British idea of inside and outside halfbacks to our halfback and first five-eighths because these two, who are the fulcrum of attack, ought to be chosen as a pairing who think as one (as, for example Sid and Brian Going did well for so long) — we move to the outer backs and heap, big trouble in trying to decide who ought to play where.

#### wafted through

Because of childhood reverence which matured into the warmest regard of adult years, I can't possibly part from Jackie Blake, of the great Hawkes Bay teams, as my centre, outside centre if you prefer the British sys-

tem of four three-quarters. He was a slim and elegant runner who wafted, as did Bert Cooke, through gaps. He was also a magnificent tryscorer. In 18 Ranfurly Shield matches, he scored 22 tries — which is about the number a whole team scores these days throughout a season. In 66 first-class matches, Jackie scored 43 tries. More than that, his wings, Bert Grenside and Albert Falwasser, scored a great many, too.

But, my goodness, how about separating, for second five or inside centre, Johnnie Smith, Bill Gray, Wattie Barclay, Pat Walsh, Buff Milner (a brilliant youngster who rather lacked the confidence to develop his full potential), Dick Pelham of the 1926 team and that great favourite of modern times, Eddie Stokes? Barclay, a magnificent man, physically, mentally, spiritually if you like, could play most anywhere in the back line.

J B Smith became a legend in his lifetime. With his sleepy eyes, his hands hanging, so it seemed, somewhere down below his knees, his heavy walk like a gumbooted farmer crossing a ploughed field, he was the most unlikely-looking attacking back you could imagine. But when the ball was coming, those eyes began flashing. He took in, on the instant, the entire tactical situation — whether a break was possible, how the defence was positioned, what advantage might lie in a well-timed pass or a shrewd dummy. Instinctively, he reacted to the fundamental need. He, above all other Kiwis, was the 14th man who gave the 15th a start of half a yard.

But then, Bill Gray, before and after a frightful accident which left him with a permanent limp and partially-deformed leg, was a wonderful player, too. In fact, when Bay of Plenty at half-time were suffering one deuce of a hiding from the brilliant British Lions of 1959, Bill had a conference with himself. If I remember, he moved into first five, or changed places as he felt like it. As I remember, he turned a whipped team into a tremendous side which contributed to, I tend to think, the most exciting match I have ever seen. The Lions won, at the last gasp by 26 to 24; and if I, as a professional observer who necessarily doesn't get terribly excited by play, found myself standing on the Press bench, shouting my head off, you can bet the other 25,000 who were there were screaming from the excitement. That was Gray, a great player in his own right; and a great man, too, modest, the kind you look up to for the rest of your life.

#### great tacklers

Thoughtlessly, I omitted Bill Osborne from my list of midfield backs. Now there was a player! Had he been available for the tour to Wales, the story of defeat would have been changed. The rarest of all birds in Rugby, whichever country you are talking about, are great