

# BARBARIANS CLUB AND SCHOOL MATCHES

*by Bob Graham*

The pursuit of the Clubs' principal aim "to promote and encourage young players" led naturally and logically into participation with Secondary Schools teams.

This association started in 1953 with a game against Pukekohe High School at the instigation of the late Mr Dan Bryant the then Headmaster — himself an incredible enthusiast for the game. The value of this association became obvious to the club and the schools and the bonds have strengthened over the years to the present time. The emphasis has changed somewhat over the years from a basis of playing to show "how you do things by playing well" to working much more closely with the School team in a coaching, encouragement and instructional way. The emphasis today is essentially on coaching, development of skills and techniques, encouraging backs to use space etc. The coaching is on an individual basis during the game — props talking to props, locks assisting with lineout techniques etc., followed by positional discussions at intervals and general discussion by our team forward and back leaders.

Barbarians team selection is most important to have players willing and able to impart the knowledge they have gained. Over the years the Club is most thankful for the many top players who have given their time so willingly on a Wednesday afternoon to take part in these games. To have a current All Black and former "greats" playing is an important part of the overall value to the School.

The cup of tea "after" provided by the School or parents has been a convivial meeting place for boys and coaches for a further discussion.

It is not uncommon for some Barbarian players to return home at a late hour following these games!!

Over the years from 1953 regular associations have been developed with most schools and seven to eight games are played each year. Auckland School representative teams have been hosted by

the Club to Rotorua and Tauranga to play their Bay of Plenty counterparts — return games have been held in Auckland. Many schoolboys have visited our Clubrooms and enjoyed the rugby atmosphere there. The Club has played "warm up" games for Auckland and New Zealand teams prior to their tournament or tours.

The Club enjoys an excellent relationship with the Secondary Schools Rugby Board and with the Auckland Rugby Union and its Promotions Committee.

Memorable close encounters with St Stephens School led to sudden unavailability of some players for that game who generally made a remarkable recovery to be available again the following week. Some of the high balls were allowed to bounce by a fullback who was suddenly delayed by a need to retie boot laces.

A youthful G. S. Thorne is said to have opened the scoring for Grammar in consecutive years by two superb tries absolutely on merit. At Grammar there was real pleasure in seeing Barry Thomas, Murray Reid and Wilson Whineray playing together with their sons in the School team.

Hiwi Tauroa (Headmaster) played fullback against his School at Wesley and was not seen anywhere near a winger who scored in the corner. There was some discussion while the conversion was being taken.

Some players have experienced embarrassment in coaching players at half time when the School team is points ahead at that time!

Club members are encouraged to attend these games to make the occasion more memorable — we would welcome greater participation by our "oldies".

Our association with the Schools is one that we value greatly and we have a real wish to continue and develop this in any way that will assist schools in promoting the skill and enjoyment of playing rugby.