

BARBARIAN TOURS OVERSEAS

by Murray Reid

After staging games throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand since its inception, it was not until 1973 that the Club considered and arranged to embark on an overseas tour.

Barry Sweetman, the chairman of the Fiji Union and past Grammar and University player in Auckland, issued an invitation for the Baba's to take part in Fiji rugby's 60th Jubilee celebrations.

After the necessary approvals had been obtained the tour was planned for October and Club Captain Doug Hamilton was set the task of selecting the first touring side. In accordance with Barbarian tradition the team contained a blend of experience and youth with the additional proviso the players selected would play the brand of rugby the Club is famous for — to display the skills and play attractive football.

The team selected was: W. F. McCormick, J. S. McLachlan, G. N. Kane, M. Sayers, R. R. Jones, J. E. Morgan, E. S. McRobbie, P. H. Murdoch, B. M. Gemmell, K. M. Greene, I. A. Kirkpatrick, S. B. Conn, A. R. Leslie, K. W. Stewart, A. M. McNaughton, C. E. Meads, J. A. Callesen, M. G. Jones, B. R. Johnstone, P. H. Sloane, D. A. Syms.

An unfortunate of this selection was the forced withdrawal of prop forward John O'Connor, literally at the airport, due to a scalp infection which was diagnosed as one which could spread through the team. A disappointing event for O'Connor and one disruptive to the team as they boarded the aircraft.

The two match programme in Fiji was a little unusual with the first match being the 'test' against the Fijian XV and the second against the Junior Fijian side.

A late arrival in Fiji prevented any team training on arrival and it was not until the Friday prior to the 'test' that proper run could be attempted. There had been a brief get-together on the day of departure but insufficient to mould any sort of combination. In the absence of Doug Hamilton the coaching duties were accepted by Manager Bob Sorenson, assisted by Allen Rogers.

Because of the experience within the team a fairly concerted run soon produced a handy

looking combination.

Good conditions prevailed on the Saturday in Lautoka for the match and the Fijian XV, which had not had a particularly successful Jubilee year were anxious to finish the season with a good win.

The game provided splendid rugby from both sides with the Fijians using the counter attack as their most potent weapon. And while the match see-sawed back and forth throughout the eighty minutes there was a paucity of points due to fierce defence from either side.

While the Baabaas failed to cross the Fijian line the home side produced two good tries by Nasave Gavidi and ended the game with 11 points to the solitary penalty goal from Fergie McCormick.

A unique feature of the 'test' was the referee in control. He was in fact the Fiji R.U. secretary and his aftermatch comment, "Boy, we sure needed that one", did not help to placate a disappointed Bob Sorenson.

The second match against the Junior Fijian team resulted in a rout for the tourists, intent on a win and their experience and skills proved far too much for the young Fijians. Tries by Kirkpatrick, McLachlan, Kane, M. Jones, R. Jones and S. Conn, with added points from the boot of McCormick gave the Baabaas a 38-11 victory.

The tour ended with a most enjoyable Jubilee Dinner and the representation of a ceremonial Whale's tooth to the Club was a feature of the evening. This now takes pride of place at the Club Headquarters in Cricket Avenue.

While two wins would have been the ideal for the touring party the manner in which the games were played was an important factor and the inaugural tour was an outstanding success from both rugby and off-field fun. The team was accompanied by a band of club supporters who also enjoyed the hosts' hospitality.

A feature of note — of the non All Blacks to make the tour no fewer than nine ended up wearing the silver fern!

Whetted by this tour success the Club now had thoughts of further excursions abroad and the obvious destination was Australia.



The first Barbarian side to tour overseas. The 1973 side in Fiji.

Back row: R. G. Sorenson (manager), M. Sayers, I. A. Kirkpatrick, R. R. Jones, K. W. Stewart, H. F. McLean (founder), E. S. McRobbie, J. A. Callesen, J. Bourke (asst manager), B. R. Johnstone, O. Atkins (baggage man), M. G. Jones, C. E. Meads, A. J. McBeath, P. H. Sloane, A. Rogers.

In front: A. R. Leslie, K. M. Greene, G. N. Kane, D. A. Syms, J. E. Morgan, J. S. McLachlan, W. F. McCormick, A. M. McNaughton, B. M. Gemmell, P. H. Murdoch.

Again a celebratory year provided the opportunity to programme the next tour the club was to undertake. With the Australian Barbarians due to celebrate their 21st in 1977 negotiations were finalised for a three match tour in March of that year.

The touring team was selected by Club Captain, Murray Reid, and the party, managed by founder Ron Bush and accompanied by a group of supporters departed for Brisbane on March 18 to play Queensland, Sydney and the Australian Baabaas.

The team was: R. G. Wilson, T. G. Morrison, S. S. Wilson, P. Yates, W. M. Osborne, J. S. McLachlan, J. E. Morgan, D. L. Rollerson, M. B. Taylor, B. M. Gemmell, M. W. Donaldson, A. R. Leslie, I. A. Kirkpatrick, G. N. K. Mourie, B. G. Ashworth, A. M. Haden, F. J. Oliver, W. G. Graham, D. R. Mohi, B. R. Johnstone, J. M. O'Connor, P. H. Sloane, D. A. Syms.

Again the team was a combination of youth and experience and uniquely containing three All Black captains in Andy Leslie, Ian Kirkpatrick and Graham Mourie. It also included John O'Connor who had unfortunately missed the Fijian experience.

Queensland at Ballymore are always a tough proposition — as the opening game proved. The record of the 'Maroons' against touring sides was a formidable one and under coach Bob Templeton they were a very difficult team to defeat.

Short tours present a number of difficulties. The first is the lack of opportunity to prepare an invitation side, some of who do not even know one another let alone having played together. The second is the schedule of three hard games without the chance of an easy 'opener'. This meant the 'first' team could not be fielded in all matches and some key players must miss one of the first two games. The selection of the team to play Queensland was the most difficult choice and with the advantage of hindsight perhaps some changes would have been made.

However Queensland proved too good on the day ran out the winners by 14 to 9. For Queensland tries were scored by D. Regeling, P. Batch and M. Loane with P. McLean adding a penalty. For the tourists Mourie scored a try, Taylor a dropped goal and Wilson the conversion. The team was naturally disappointed with their start and were very aware that even a Barbarian tour is more fun if you are winning on the field.

The selection for the second game against Sydney were really keen to make amends for the mediocre start and the performance at the Concord Oval must rate as one of the Club's great matches. Kirkpatrick, a mite miffed with being

omitted from the opening game, turned in a herculian exhibition of power rugby, culminating in three tries which totally awed the large Sydney crowd. The overwhelming 33 to 12 win augered well for the 'test' against the Australian Babas on the following Saturday at the Sydney Showgrounds. Points came from tries by Kirkpatrick (3), McLachlan (2), Donaldson and Mourie. Wilson added the extra points. For Sydney A. Stewart and J. Lewis scored tries, both converted by P. Crowe.

Barbarian rugby is not based on winning at all costs, but rather showing the manner in which the game should be played for enjoyment to both players and spectators. But sport between Australians and New Zealanders always produces great rivalry and naturally this extends to our two clubs. The 'test' would be hard fought.

Perfect weather greeted the teams for the Showgrounds clash and players from both sides were very keyed up for this initial meeting between the two trans Tasman clubs.

The game was a tight affair with both teams straining to maintain some ascendancy. It was the tourists who gained the initiative with Morrison scoring a good try which he followed up with two more. These were all converted by Wilson, and with P. McLean contributing a try and two penalties the tour was capped off with a fine win, 24 to 10.

The 21st dinner celebration after the game was a grand occasion, honoured with the presence of Sir Roden Cutler V.C.

Once again uncapped players from the tour went on to achieve their ultimate rugby goal and play for New Zealand.

The return visit to New Zealand by the Australians occurred in 1979 and they triumphed in the 'test' on that occasion in a game played at Pukekohe, although they too lost their first match against the Vikings in Whangarei, contested in shocking conditions.

The scene was set for the Club to revisit Australia in 1985. The Australian national team had completed a marvelous 'grand slam' tour of the four Home Unions in the summer of 84/85 and rugby was on a high.

A three match tour was arranged for March with the itinerary of the 1977 trip being reversed with the first match in Sydney and the 'test' in Brisbane.

Club Captain Peter Murdoch kept with selection tradition and included six players under 23 years of age in the New Zealand team and with the addition of past and current internationals produced a good touring side under the management of President, Murray Reid.

The first match with Sydney was a bruising encounter and by defending stoutly in the last quarter managed to break the first match jinx and scrape home 18 to 17. Points for the Baabaas came from tries by Dalton and Sherlock with

Cooper adding two penalties and two conversions. Sydney scored three tries, by D. Facer, T. Kava and I. Williams and N. Farr-Jones kicked a penalty.

After this the team travelled to Surfers Paradise for a relaxing few days including a night game against the South Queensland XV. This was included in the itinerary as a less intense match and while the home team tried desperately to Baabaas were far too experienced and won by 34 to nil. Points were contributed by Laulau (2) Cooper, McCahill and Kirwan tries and Cooper two penalties and two conversions.

To add spice and attraction to the major fixture to be staged at Ballymore the Grand Slam team arranged a reunion of those players on that tour and they were to make up the Australian Baba team. This did not allow for the inclusion of young promising players but in the circumstances this was not a factor and the reunion was most successful. The match was also to have been Australian captain Andrew Slack's last international appearance.

The only Australian players missing from the lineup were Mark Ella and Roger Gould, Ella having been married on the Friday. Most of the Grand Slammers' were at the wedding and this could have contributed to the final result of the match.

Because of injuries to Darrah and Alan Whetton it was necessary to call on Glen Rich to travel to Brisbane as a replacement and he immediately responded to Peter Murdoch request.

The fielding of the 'Grand Slam' team made it easy for Murdoch to motivate his players and they took the field in determined mood to do well in front of the large, understandably parochial crowd.

The New Zealanders opened with rousing play

and never let up the pressure throughout, in fact leading 34-6 into the final quarter when the home side scored two tries to close the gap. Fittingly, the final try was scored by local hero, Andrew Slack.

The aftermatch dinner was a very formal affair, again addressed by the Australian Barbarian Patron, Sir Roden Cutler. The highlight of the evening for the visiting party was the toast to Barbarian rugby proposed by New Zealand founders Ron Bush and Hugh McLean who had participated in the tour as guests of the Australians. A splendid gesture by them.

And now, in our 50th Jubilee year we embark on the most ambitious tour to be attempted.

Over many years the Club has been endeavouring to arrange a match with the 'Mother' club, the U.K. Barbarians, known as The Barbarians, either in New Zealand or in the United Kingdom. For one reason or another past efforts have been plagued with difficulty and frustration.

Now, on March 14 a team made up of G. J. L. Cooper, J. J. Kirwan, C. I. Green, J. T. Stanley, B. J. McCahill, D. J. Halligan, J. N. Schuster, S. J. Bachop, D. E. Kirk, I. B. Deans, M. N. Jones, A. J. Whetton, D. A. Williams, M. R. Brewer, G. W. Whetton, M. Weedon, B. L. Anderson, S. C. McDowell, B. McGrattan, W. G. Bunn, S. B. T. Fitzpatrick, J. A. S. Buchan. (A. E. Crowley an original selection withdrew after his selection for the New Zealand Sevens and was replaced by Bruce Deans). Selected by Peter Murdoch, John Hart, Kevin Barry and Murray Reid, under the management of Kevin Barry and Peter Murdoch the team embarked on the greatest event the Club could wish for in the 50th year . . . the United Kingdom tour the club has dreamed of for years and a match with the original Barbarians.