

## MAORI PIONEER TEAM

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The Maori Pioneer football team arrived by the Arahura this morning from Napier, and play on Saturday against a team representing Poverty Bay. Captain J. H. Hall is in charge of the team, and is manager also. They played a match at Napier on Saturday last, and won by 25 points to 10. The members comprise no less than six decorated men, one of whom, Capt. Vercoe, has a double decoration—the D.S.M. and D.S.O. The other decorated men include Rogers, Rotoatara, Barclay (2), and Gardiner. All are returned men with a lengthy period of service to their credit, and comprise: Captain J. H. Hall (capt.), Captain Vercoe, Lieutenants J. Ormond, Barclay, Ahana, Apanui, Jacob, G. Gardiner, Wilkinson, Rotoatara, Amohangaha, and Rogers, Sergeants Carroll, Barclay, Mopu, Teurupu, and Rogers, Corporals Edwards, Hingston, Pirihi, and Private Hingston.

In conversation with a reporter Captain Hall said he desired to say a word in acknowledgement of the hospitality extended them by the people throughout their six weeks' tour of the Dominion. All were 1914-15 men, returned soldiers, and practically all of them were non-drinkers. This team played in Egypt, Europe, and England. In Egypt seven matches were played, and one was lost to a Wellington team. In Europe the team won 17 matches and lost none, even defeating the famous Welsh Guards' team. In England seven matches were played, and only one was lost, and that was to a small club called Ellanly, when the Pioneer team put in a relieving team, which was of a weaker nature. While in England the Pioneers defeated the Royal Navy Division men, considered to be the best team in England at the time.

Referring to the New Zealand tour, he said they were defeated by Otago, Christchurch, and Auckland, but defeated Invercargill, Palmerston North, Napier, and Hawke's Bay, and drew with Wellington.

"This team is not on tour as a football team only," he said, "one of our ambitions is to elevate the sport and increase the interest of the game to the

ambitions is to elevate the sport and increase the interest of the game to the public. For that reason we are the only team to abolish the wing forward and play him as a roving back, which tends to keep play in the paddock the whole time. The team has endeavored to and has obtained a reputation for clean, swift play, without brutality."

The New Zealand tour, he added, was arranged on the trip back. When they left England the matter was discussed of establishing a Maori football club in Hawke's Bay. Several meetings were held on the transport. It was decided ultimately to get as much money as possible together, and to arrange for the team to travel on their privilege passes for this purpose.

"Maoris have never had a fair chance in New Zealand football matches," he said; "it is nobody's fault, but I think that by forming a club in Hawke's Bay under the auspices of the New Zealand Rugby Union, and affiliating, by depositing a fairly large sum in their funds a Maori team could be raised each year, and recommendations of players would be received from various Rugby Unions throughout the Dominion. The team met together on May 14th, and played the first match on the 17th, when they defeated Napier by 9 to 6.

"The Maori is the keenest player in the world," added Captain Hall. In 1911 I saw the North Island team play the South at Wellington, when all the backs were Maoris, and all scored tries. The Gisborne players were Kaipara and Ryland."

Sir James Carroll's nephew, Sergeant Carroll, is secretary to the team, and Lieutenant Ormond treasurer, while Captain Hall is chairman.

Captain Pitt wired Captain Hall and was successful in arranging for the team to visit Gisborne, although to do this the Wairarapa visit had to be cut out.

The average weight per member is 13 stone, and most of the players are about 6 feet in height. They are touring as returned soldiers, and not as footballers of pre-war days. The ambition of the team is to elevate the sport in the eyes of the general public by excluding brutality, and by continuous and consistent play.

Captain Hall and Captain Vercoe are both veteran players, and represented Auckland for nine years.

Arrangements have been made to suitably receive the team. This morning they were the guests of Sir James and Lady Carroll, and were introduced to local natives, and later entertained at luncheon.

To-night a concert and reception is to be held in the Soldiers' Club, when all soldier members and lady friends are invited.

This is the last match to be played on tour, the members proceeding to Tolaga Bay by steamer on Thursday next to attend the unveiling ceremony to the late Lieutenants Kohere and Kaa, who were killed in action. The members then return to their respective homes.

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### SOLDIERS' CLUB RECEPTION

A concert and dance was held in the Soldiers' Club last night to welcome the members of the Pioneer football team. There was a large attendance of the public. The President of the club (Colonel W. H. Fletcher), presided while Sir James Carroll, the Mayor (Mr Wildish), and Captain Vercoe and Captain J. H. Hall (heads of the team) were also on the stage.

In opening the proceedings the chairman referred to the pleasure it gave him to meet his old friend Captain Vercoe, with whom he became acquainted on Gallipoli. On behalf of the members of the club he said the pakeha comrades extended the team a hearty welcome to Gisborne. The speaker said that his first experience of the Maori Battalion was on the Peninsula, when some of them were attached to the Wellington

Division under his command. The boys were splendid in behaviour, and made a name for themselves with their pakeha comrades. He (the speaker) also saw the splendid work done by the Pioneers in France—particularly in the big communication trench near Flers. The work there was a model of efficiency. (Applause).

In reply, Captain Vercoe, D.C.M., D.S.O., thanked the chairman for his remarks of welcome. The members of the team appreciated the feelings of the people towards them right throughout the tour. The members above all felt proud that, this being the completion of the tour, they had established a reputation for clean, healthy play without brutality, and for good behaviour. One of the objects of the tour was to elevate the sport of football, and he felt satisfied this had been done in a manner which did credit to the team as a whole. Judging from the efforts to entertain the team since their arrival by steamer in the morning he felt that when the boys left for their respective homes they would all have a feeling of warm regard for the Gisborne people.

The Mayor (Mr G. Wildish) also spoke on the splendid reputation earned by the team, and endorsed the remarks of the chairman in his words of welcome.

A musical programme was rendered during the evening, items being given by Miss McKinley; Mesdames Wildish and W. Pitt; and Messrs T. Watson, Wallace Stewart, W. A. Smith and P. Briasco. Items were also rendered by some of the members of the team, including Sergeant Hemi Carroll, Lieut. Jacobson, Lieut. Hingston, Urupu, Kerekere, and Miss Rurn.

After a supper was served out, dancing was indulged in until 11.30 p.m., exhibitions being given of the "Fox Trot" and "Macsená Waltz" by the members of the team who have learned it abroad. The singing of the National Anthem concluded the function.

### TO-DAY'S ARRANGEMENTS.

To-day the members of the team were taken for a drive in the country, in cars supplied by citizens. To-night a dance is to be held in the Assembly Hall.