

Rugby club president on job for 45 years

THERE are surely few, if any, instances in Australian sport in which one man has been president of a club for 45 successive years — and not been opposed for the position in any one of them.

The late Dr Idris Morgan was able, before his passing, to look with some commendable pride on such a remarkable record.

He was the first president of the Merewether-Carlton Rugby Union Club when it was formed in 1930 until 1974 when he thought it time a younger man filled the position. He then became the club's patron.

Dr Morgan was president of the Cook's Hill Surf Club rugby union team when, in 1929, it was decided that it should amalgamate with the Cook's Hill Carlton Club. The combined clubs became Merewether-Carlton.

It was almost automatic that Dr Morgan should become the first president of the new club — and it was automatic that he should be re-elected to the position, season after season, for a total of 45 years.

Dr Morgan was, with the late Ted ('Spider') Clarke, so well and favourably known as 'Mr Carlton' for his great work for the club, probably the last foundation members of the new organisation.

Dr Morgan's interest — indeed, it could be termed dedication — in rugby union was great as might be expected of one with a name smacking so much of Wales. But, he readily confessed, he had been a 'very ordinary rugby player' when at University. But he was apparently a hockey player of considerable ability



ON REFLECTION with JACK MATHEWS

since he gained a University 'blue' for his play.

He graduated when 23 and, six months later, went overseas as the 19th battalion Medical Officer. He was on active service in 1915 when wounded so badly that he lost part of a leg. He was 'back on the job', as he explained, in less than three months.

He recalled that, on that day in France, he refereed a rugby match between military units in the morning and a soccer match during the afternoon. He knew little about soccer so applied the rules he learned during his hockey playing days, many of them being applicable to both codes of sport.

"No one complained so apparently the players were satisfied — or did not know the rules any more than I did," he once told me.

Dr Morgan often recalled that his association with Merewether-Carlton Club was among the happiest phases of his life and was a source of pride and satisfaction.

"It is an experience that has been most rewarding and one I would not have willingly missed. I've been fortunate to be associated with many grand chaps — the ordinary player and member as well as those who were outstanding club and representative team players — and there were many."

His memory roamed back through the years to those

who had been 'outstanding' members of the club and its teams.

He recalled that he had worked with three generations of a family in the club. One such instance he mentioned in our long conversation was Mr Tom Hills senior, his son Tom and Tom's son.

His reverie brought back to their great days on the field such notables as Sid Malcolm, Cyril Burke (a Carlton player in his earlier days, Jack and Tom Hills, Lin Fleming, Neil Adams, Ernie Howarth, Len McRae, Wal Steere, Ted Raisbeck, Fred Ball and many more. He had highly complimentary words for Johnny Bond, a club coach for a long period.

"Great players but, better still, great club men," he said with obvious appreciation. "Win or lose it was Carlton first, last and always with them. It was the spirit that counted and Merewether-Carlton never lacked it. It's a great club and an honour to belong to it, let alone be its president."

I can readily recall his pleasure in reliving some of the great days and in remembering great people of the past and also his decided "it is people who make a great club, not their success on the field alone." Carlton, he said, had many of them.

Dr Morgan was also a keen and active member of the Newcastle Diggers' Swim-



The late Dr Morgan

ming Club. He was one of a somewhat remarkable team of three which, many years ago, gained a place in a field of eight in a NSW Diggers' relay championship. There was 'The Doc' with his shattered leg, Don Campbell still with a bullet in his back and Bill Stoops with a bullet in his knee. Each had to cover 33 metre and the Newcastle three surprised all, but themselves, by finishing in third place. It was a notable effort.

Not only will his memory be cherished by Merewether-Carlton members, young and old, but also by many former servicemen whom he made his special care. Most of them became more than patients. As one told me "We became friends." He had so many of them.

Dr Morgan was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding personalities of his and later times. His record of 45 years as a club president without being once opposed tells its own story. It is one that may be paralleled but not surpassed for its evidence of dedication and devotion — and popularity.