

= Thomas Ellison =

Thomas Rangiwahia Ellison , also known as Tom Ellison or Tamati Erihana (c . 1867 ? 2 October 1904) was a New Zealand rugby union player and lawyer . He led the first New Zealand representative rugby team organised by the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) on their 1893 tour of Australia . Ellison also played in the 1888 ? 89 New Zealand Native football team on their epic 107 @-@ match tour , scoring 113 points , and 43 tries with the side .

Born in Otakou , Otago Heads , Ellison was educated at Te Aute College , where he was introduced to rugby . After moving to Wellington , Ellison played for the Ponke Football Club , and was selected to play for Wellington province . He was recruited into Joe Warbrick 's privately organised Native football team in 1888 , and continued to play for both Ponke and Wellington on his return from that tour . In 1892 , he started to refine and popularise the wing @-@ forward system of play , which was a vital element of New Zealand rugby 's success until 1932 . At the first NZRFU annual general meeting in 1893 , he proposed that the playing colours of the New Zealand side should be predominantly black with a silver fern ? a playing strip that would give the team their famous name of All Blacks . He retired from playing rugby after captaining the 1893 New Zealand side to New South Wales and Queensland , but continued in the sport as a coach and administrator . Ellison was the author of a coaching manual , The Art of Rugby Football , published in 1902 .

As well as being one of the first M?ori admitted to the bar , practising as a solicitor , and later as a barrister , Ellison also stood unsuccessfully for the Southern Maori parliamentary seat several times . After contracting tuberculosis in 1904 , he was briefly institutionalised before dying later that year .

= = Early life = =

Thomas Rangiwahia Ellison was born in Otakou at Otago Heads , to Raniera Taheke Ellison and Nani Weller , sometime between 1866 and 1868 . He was named after his paternal grandfather , and his middle name , Rangiwahia , was given in honour of his great @-@ uncle . Ellison was M?ori : of Ng?i Tahu and K?ti Mamoe tribal heritage through his mother , and of Te ?ti Awa heritage through his father . Introduced to rugby at the age of around 14 by his cousins at Otakou , Ellison later wrote of his first game :

... we were all there for a game , and immediately started on that poor , unprotected ball (which , by the way , consisted of the bladder only) . What our main object was I cannot say , but mine was to see more of that ball , and to know more about football , and , before the game was over , which did not last long , I did see more of the ball , as I ripped it in the first scrum ; but my other object remained unsatisfied .

After completing his education at Otakou Native School , Ellison was awarded a scholarship in 1882 to attend the famous M?ori secondary school Te Aute College in the Hawke 's Bay . He started playing organised rugby there , and during his final two years played in the school team that won the Hawke 's Bay senior club championship . Later in life Ellison claimed that at Te Aute he learned , " nearly all I ever knew of forward play " .

After moving to Wellington , Ellison joined the Ponke Football Club in 1885 . The Ponke team played junior club rugby at the time , but were promoted to the senior competition after winning all their matches that year . Following their promotion the side won the Wellington club championship each year from 1886 to 1889 . Ellison was selected to play for the Wellington provincial team in 1885 , and continued to be selected for Wellington until 1892 . He eventually earned 23 caps ? a large number for the time . Initially Ellison played as a forward or on the wing , but later played half @-@ back .

= = New Zealand Native football team = =

In early 1888 Joe Warbrick attempted to organise a private party of M?ori players to tour Great Britain ? later known as the New Zealand Native football team . A cousin of Ellison 's , Jack Taiaroa , who had toured with the New Zealand team that travelled to New South Wales in 1884 , helped

Warbrick recruit players for his proposed tour . It was most likely because of Tairaroa that Ellison was persuaded to join Warbrick 's Natives team . Warbrick eventually assembled a side that included both M?ori and non @-@ M?ori New Zealand @-@ born players , and several players born overseas . The final team consisted of 26 players , and toured New Zealand before departing to Melbourne . They then toured Great Britain , Australia , and finally New Zealand again ? the trip lasted 14 months . Ellison played mostly as a forward throughout the tour , and played at least 83 of the team 's 107 matches ; including a minimum of 58 in Britain .

Ellison played all of the Natives ' three internationals ? against Ireland , Wales , and England . The Ireland match was the first international of the tour , two months after their arrival in the British Isles . The fixture was played at Lansdowne Road , Dublin , on 1 December 1888 , with Ellison in the forwards . Ireland led 3 ? 0 at half @-@ time , but the Natives improved considerably in the second @-@ half , scoring four tries . The third try scored was by Ellison after a counter @-@ attack by George Williams . The try was not converted , but the strong finish from the New Zealanders gave the team a 13 ? 4 victory . The Irish press were surprised by the loss and strongly criticised their team , but Ireland went on to defeat Wales later that season . The match against Wales was later that month , 22 December , in Swansea . Again Ellison played in the forwards , and the Natives dominated for significant periods of the match . Ellison made several strong runs , and at one point crossed the try @-@ line only to be carried back into play . They failed to score , however , and Wales were victorious 5 ? 0 (one conversion and two tries to nil) .

One of the most notable events of the Natives ' tour occurred during the match against England at Blackheath . Owing to a dispute over the formation of the International Rugby Football Board , England had not played an international in nearly two years . This contributed to at least twelve of their team lacking international experience ? however many of their players were from strong club and county sides . The match was notable for a dispute between the New Zealanders and the match referee ? Rowland Hill . Early in the second half Ellison attempted to tackle the English player Andrew Stoddart , and in the process managed to rip his shorts off . The Natives ' players promptly formed a circle around Stoddart to allow him to replace his clothing without being exposed to the gazes of the crowd . While this was happening one of the English players , Frank Evershed , picked up the ball and scored a try . The New Zealanders protested , believing that play had stopped after claiming Stoddart had called " dead ball " . Hill awarded the try however , causing several of the Native players to leave the field in protest . The aggrieved players were eventually persuaded to return , but not before Hill had restarted play . Ellison was very critical of Hill ; particularly because Hill was also Secretary of England 's Rugby Football Union . Writing after the tour , Ellison said of the incident : " gross as these errors were , they were insignificant when compared with another that Mr Hill committed at the outset of the game , viz , refereeing at all in that game " .

The team was generally very well received outside London , and especially in north , where rugby was dominated by the working @-@ class . Reaction to the team in the south , where the public school establishment controlled the game , was less positive , and the sportsmanship of the team was criticised . Despite this , Ellison clearly enjoyed the experience of touring with the team , and in 1902 he wrote ? " I shall never forget the trip , notwithstanding the extremely heavy programme of fixtures we had to go through . Perhaps the most delightful part of our experiences was tasted not so much on the field of play as off it " .

Thomas Eyton , one of the promoters of the tour , said of Ellison 's contribution ? " His knowledge of the finer points of the game , his weight , strength and activity rendered his services invaluable . " Ellison participated in most of the Natives ' matches , scoring 113 points , and 43 tries on tour ; this included 23 tries in Britain and Ireland , four in New South Wales , five in Queensland , and ten in New Zealand .

= = Wing @-@ forward = =

After completion of the tour , Ellison continued to play for Ponake and Wellington . While playing with his club , Ellison implemented the use of a wing @-@ forward and seven @-@ man scrum positional system . It is not known exactly who invented the position of wing @-@ forward , but

Ellison claimed in *The Art of Rugby Football* that he had developed it ; historian Greg Ryan claims the position was developed in northern England , and that Ellison only refined it after discovering it during the Natives ' tour . The distinctive feature of wing @-@ forward play was their role of feeding the ball into the scrum , and subsequently holding onto one of the hookers while the ball progressed through the scrum to the half @-@ back . With the wing @-@ forward bound to the side of the scrum , the opposing half @-@ back would then have to manoeuvre past them to tackle the player with the ball ; this would increase the amount of time the half @-@ back would have in possession of the ball before their opposite could tackle them . Ellison claimed that he devised the position while playing for Poneke after he " ... found it impossible for the smartest of referees to detect and amply penalize off @-@ side interferences of opponents bent on spoiling my passes ... " .

Regardless of the origins of the position , Ellison was instrumental in promoting its adoption throughout New Zealand . Although it is unclear whether the wing @-@ forward was used during the 1893 tour of Australia , by the time of the All Blacks ' first Test match , played during their 1903 Australian tour , the position was engrained within the New Zealand style of play . The use of a wing @-@ forward provoked controversy both in New Zealand , and later in the British Isles after the All Blacks toured there in 1905 ; wing @-@ forwards were often accused of off @-@ side obstruction of the opposition half @-@ back . According to Ellison however , if the position was implemented properly , then there would be no cause for complaint . The wing @-@ forward continued as a vital component of New Zealand rugby until long @-@ standing complaints from the unions of the Home Nations resulted in the position being outlawed by the International Rugby Football Board in 1932 .

= = Later rugby career = =

In 1892 , the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU ? later renamed New Zealand Rugby Union) was formed by the majority of New Zealand 's provincial rugby unions . Ellison was a Wellington provincial administrator , and in 1893 at the inaugural NZRFU annual general meeting proposed the playing strip for the first officially sanctioned New Zealand side ? black cap , black jersey with white fern , white knickerbockers and black stockings . The white knickerbockers were eventually replaced with black shorts , and the uniform itself was based upon that worn by the Native team Ellison had toured with . The black uniform inspired the moniker All Blacks ? a name which has been adopted by the New Zealand national team since their 1905 ? 06 Northern Hemisphere tour .

The first NZRFU sanctioned New Zealand team was formed to tour New South Wales and Queensland in 1893 , and Ellison was selected as their captain . Three other members of the New Zealand Natives ' team were also selected for the side . Ellison played seven matches on the tour , including matches against New South Wales and Queensland . The team won ten of their eleven matches ? the one loss being to New South Wales in Sydney . In addition to scoring two tries , Ellison kicked six conversions and a goal from a mark to give him 23 points for the tour ? the second highest of any player . The tour was the end of his participation in the sport as a player .

Ellison 's complete playing record comprised 117 matches , 68 of which were first @-@ class games . He scored a total of 160 career points , including 51 tries . Ellison continued involvement with rugby as a provincial administrator , provincial referee , and manager . As an administrator , he proposed that players be financially compensated for wages missed while on long tours ; this was in 1898 ? nearly a century before rugby relinquished its amateur status . This proposal applied specifically to tours that travelled outside New Zealand ; writing at the time regarding the amateur regulations , Ellison said " I think that these laws were never intended to apply to extended tours abroad . " In 1902 he published *The Art of Rugby Football* , a coaching manual on rugby that also included accounts of his experiences as a player . According to journalist Hayden Meikle the book was one of rugby 's " pioneering texts " , while Greg Ryan wrote that the book " remains a classic work on early rugby strategy . "

= = Professional and personal life = =

Outside of his involvement in rugby , Ellison was a lawyer , and was one of the first Māori admitted to the bar . He practised as an interpreter for the Land Courts and as a solicitor ; later , he worked as a barrister in the practices of Brandon & Hislop in Wellington . Ellison was also involved in politics , and stood unsuccessfully for the Southern Maori parliamentary seat several times against Tame Parata , as well as working for government consideration of Ngāi Tahu land claims . He married Ethel May Howell , a daughter of John Howell , on 22 March 1899 ; the couple had three children , only one of whom survived infancy , daughter Hinemura who died in 1989 . In 1904 Ellison was struck down with tuberculosis , and was admitted to Porirua Lunatic Asylum before dying on 2 October that same year . Ellison was buried in Otakou , Otago Heads , following the original plan of a burial at Karori . Representatives of Ellison 's parents intercepted the body in Porirua , and his wife and Public Trustee then agreed for him to be buried at Otakou . There his gravestone reads " One of the greatest rugby footballers New Zealand ever possessed " .

Ellison 's influence on New Zealand rugby is such that Māori researcher Malcolm Mulholland stated he was " arguably the player who contributed the most to New Zealand rugby " . In 1916 , when discussing the question of the greatest player New Zealand had produced , the pseudonymous " Touchline " wrote : " I am prepared to say that the late T. R. Ellison ... was the greatest of them all . " He went on to say :

When occasion demanded , T R. Ellison could take a place among the backs ? half or three @-@ quarter ? and was a fine coach . He could not only plan out great , deep , wily , and pretty schemes , but personally carry them through to triumphant execution . He could take his place in the front of a scrummage , and hook the ball with the best of them ; his tremendous strength enabled him to burst through a pack , and then , when he was clear of the wreckage , and was well in the open , he was a perfect demon .

Ellison has been inducted into the Māori Sports Hall of Fame , and in 2005 was listed as one of New Zealand 's Top 100 History Makers . The New Zealand Native Football team was inducted into the International Rugby Board Hall of Fame in 2008 , the first side awarded the honour .

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