

STORIES OF SPORTSMEN ON SERVICE:

They Still Play Games When They Can

By PERCY TAYLOR

"ONCE a sport, always a sport"—and that applies even when the sportsman is proudly wearing the Australian uniform and can play only at odd times. Apart from the pleasure they derive, there is sound common-sense in it also. Military authorities realise that, as may be gathered from the number of inter-service football competitions that have been played in recent months, and from the fact that cricket competitions are now being arranged.

Let me ramble hither and thither among the stars, telling little incidents that occur to me as their names are mentioned.

About a fortnight after the death in



THE LATE ROSS GREGORY batting for Australia in the Test match against England in Melbourne in February, 1937.

action of Pit-Off Ross Gregory, the Test, Victorian, and St Kilda cricketer, I received a letter from him. It was written on board ship en route to the Far East. "I suppose opportunities for playing cricket will be limited," he wrote, "but I would like to think that I shall be more fortunate than I was in England. Apart from a couple of games I played with Bill Edrich, the English Test player, in Scotland, I could not play. I was unable to accept Plum Warner's invitation to play at Lord's because of the fact that I was stationed in Scotland. I saw a lot of 'Gubby' Allen (captain of the last English team to tour Australia) and Percy Chapman (former captain) each time I visited London. I also played some golf in Scotland."

Message from King

Chief among the hundreds of messages of condolence received by Mr and Mrs Gregory was one from His Majesty the King. Written from Buckingham Palace, it was as follows: "The Queen and I offer you our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow. We pray that your country's gratitude for the life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation." (Signed) GEORGE R.I.

Another letter that also expresses the thoughts of many admirers of a great sportsman was from Don Bradman, the Australian Test captain. Don wrote: "My first impulse upon reading the poignant announcement of Ross's death was to do something that might soften the blow to his parents. Unfortunately, the comfort that mortals can give in such circumstances is totally inadequate. Nevertheless, I must write and say how sad and upset I am and how sincerely I mourn with you in the loss of your beloved son, my friend, and one of Australia's gallant boys. It is only a short while since Ross appeared in the first-class cricket arena, but his performances placed him very quickly among our leading stars. I cherish among my recollections the partnership he and I

enjoyed in Adelaide against the Englishmen, and it was with great regret that, the selectors just failed to include him in the Australian team for England in 1938.

"But it was not so much his cricketing ability which appealed to us as his charming, unaffected, and lovable nature. In all my career I did not meet, and never hoped to meet, a more modest or lovely character. You, his parents, should be proud to think you gave Australia such a worthy representative, who played for her in peace, and nobly fought for her in war. May God comfort you both in this dark hour, and may the inevitable victory be quickly achieved so that you will know your, and his, sacrifice was not in vain."

As far as war service is concerned no one is better known in Australia than "Bluey" Truscott, Squadron-Leader, with a DFC and bar, in recognition of his great feats against the Germans while in England. He received a great welcome when he returned to Australia, and is now in train miles away from Melbourne.



MELBOURNE FOOTBALLER, "BLUEY" TRUSCOTT, now a squadron-leader in RAAF, and awarded DFC and bar, is the centre of this group of Australians at an undisclosed operational base. With him are Flt-Lt C. N. Wawn, DFC (left), and Sqd-Ldr P. Turnbull, who has been reported missing since the picture was taken. (Dept of Information)

Recently he was given charge of a squadron, and one can be sure that he will continue to get results. He still loves football, and in letters to friends tells of several games he played recently. One of them was witnessed by Pit-Off Percy Page, secretary of the Melbourne Football Club, with which team Truscott played in the premiership grand final in 1940, just before



REPRESENTATIVE OF SEVERAL SPORTS is this group of trainees at an unarmed combat training school. From left — Bobby Brown (boxing), Harold Rixon (football), Leo Monaghan (football), Claude Hooper (Rugby), Goff Vockler (swimming), and Lionel Brodie (tennis).

going overseas. Truscott, by the way, recently met with a slight mishap. It necessitated the insertion of 8 stitches in a wound in the head, but after 8 days in hospital he is fit again.

Among a number of first-class sportsmen in a camp not many miles from Melbourne are Len Darling and Brighton Diggins. It is a real "he-man" camp, and what they teach the boys there in the way of commando tactics is just nobody's business. One

can just imagine how these 2 enjoy the life.

Diggins has the honour of having been captain-coach of Carlton when it won the 1938 premiership of the Victorian Football League. He was a star in the West when he was brought over to play with South Melbourne, and later transferred to Carlton as leader. Brighton must look back to that game with unbounded satisfaction, because, not only did he lead the team to victory, but he played one of the finest games of his career.

Brilliant Lefthander

Len Darling, who shone just as brightly in the baseball field as at cricket, was one of our most brilliant lefthanders. He played reasonably well for us in a tour of England, and his last game for Australia was in the third Test of the last tour, played in Melbourne. Most of us have vivid recollections of that game. It will be remembered that England was caught on a soft wicket and



LEN DARLING, one of our most brilliant left-handers, is training with a number of well-known sportsmen at an Army camp where commando tactics are taught.

wood-Smith took 6/22 in the first innings.

Among others in that same camp are Jim Willard and Lionel Brodie, tennis stars of NSW and Vic respectively. Jim and Bill Bayley, who later became secretary of LTAV, represented Australia in Olympic Games some years ago. Jim was one of the hardest men in the land to defeat. Lionel, one of the younger school, is a graceful and hard-hitting righthander.

Cheeriness is the keynote of a letter written by Sgt Allen Vosti, an all-round cricketer of Essendon, and a brother of the famous Essendon footballer, Jack. He is in a foreign clime, but it does not prevent the game being played. "The conditions are hardly the best," he writes, "but they guarantee no champions. When one raises his bat in true VCA style to allow the ball to pass to the keeper, and it suddenly breaks back about 3ft, and takes the leg stump, it is time to forget style and have a swing." When he wrote he was in hospital with sand-fly fever.

Harry Alexander, who played in a Test against Jardine's team, wrote from abroad to say that he had taken part in a few cricket matches. He was captain of the regimental team, but seldom bowled (he was the State fast bowler for several years).

An influential group of citizens has just completed a 3 weeks' tour of Australian battle stations. One member of the party was watching a group of officers enjoying an after-dinner game of what he called "deck tennis, with a medicine ball that weighed a ton." He was particularly impressed with the physique and agility of one of the players, and, being an ardent supporter of St Kilda Football Club, tried a little scouting for his club. "You are just the type we want at St Kilda," he said. "What about joining up with the club when you have settled the Japs?" "Why should I play with St Kilda?" was the reply. "I am a Melbourne player." It was Capt Gordon Jones, the Melbourne half-back.



BRIGHTON DIGGINS, who was captain-coach of Carlton when it won the 1938 League premiership, is now among first-class sportsmen in a "he-man" Army camp.