

BELFASTWALES TAKE RUGBY CROWN FROM IRELAND80 DIE IN WORLD'S WORST AIR CRASH (Super)

40,000 jam the Ravenhill ground at Belfast for the rugby decider of the season - Ireland against Wales. Off to a jocular start are 24 hours that were to bring Wales triumph and tragedy. Winners of the triple crown for the past two years, Ireland - attacking the goal to your left - throw in all they know to show that their form this season has been assessed all wrong. Not till the second half do Wales gain the upper hand. Then, in a masterful exhibition, their brilliant pack sets off a new golden era for Welsh rugby. Jack Matthews gathers a loose ball - sends it out to Ken Jones and the Olympic sprinter does the rest.

With Wales now three points nearer to winning the international championship, the match turns into one of the toughest, fiercest rugby battles Belfast has ever seen.

A penalty goal gives Ireland a deserved equaliser and puts the issue once again in doubt. With only a minute left, Thomas dashes through for the try that brings back to Wales, after 39 years, Rugby's most coveted honour. Barely 24 hours later, a joyful Wales is thrown into mourning. Disaster strikes in the heart of the valleys - at Sigginston. A Tudor V - Britain's largest airliner - crashes. 80 people die in the worst disaster in aviation history. Faithful supporters of Wales, they had seen their team triumph. In the leisure hours they had so richly earned, they found their death - less than 300 yards from their destination. Still intact was the plane's tail unit and, out of it, miraculously almost uninjured stepped two men, the lone survivors.

Sympathy is all too slender when faced with tragedy such as this. But, in this, her hour of mourning, Wales' grief is shared by the nation.