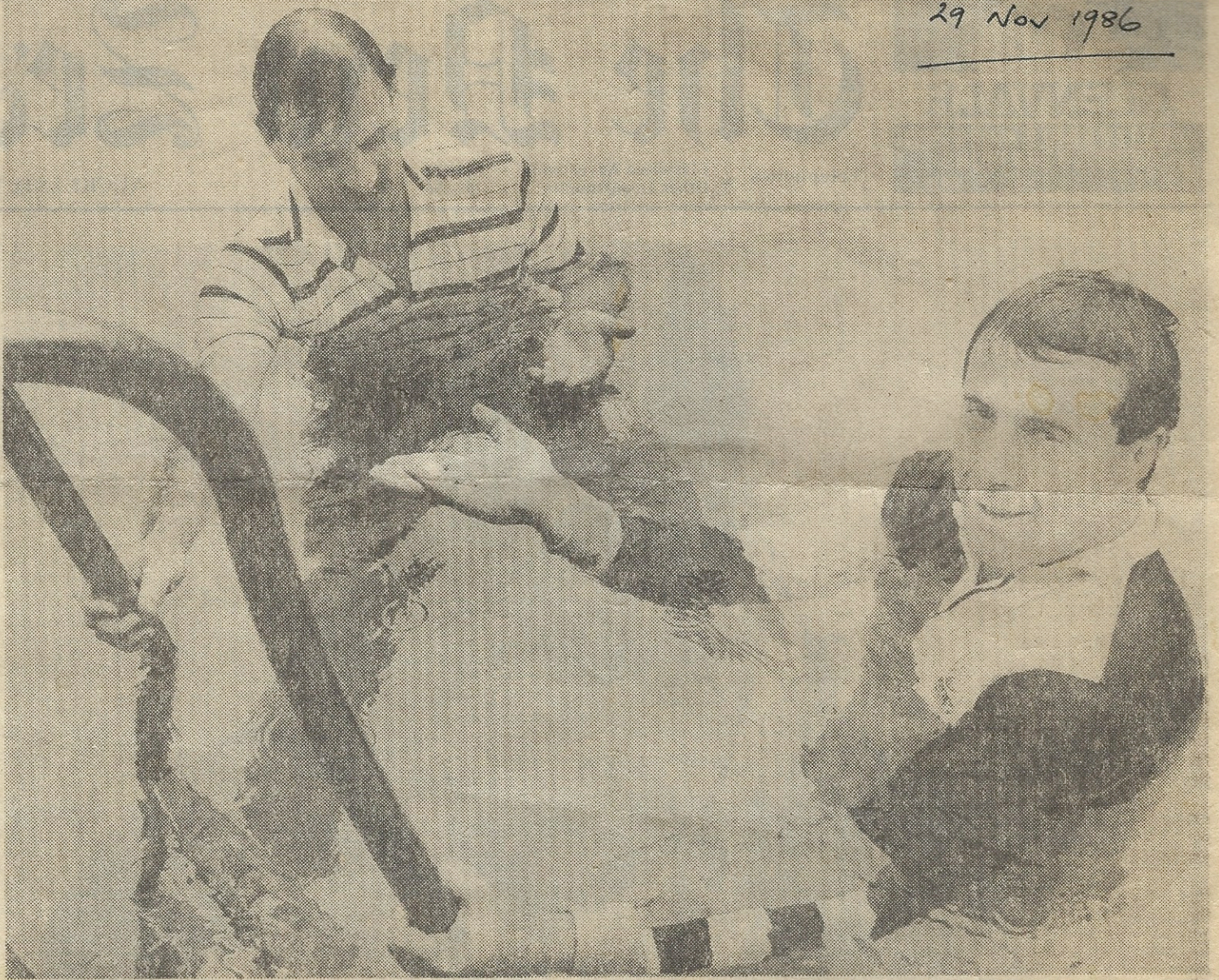# Spoofing Classics

The Underwater Spoof 1986

WORLD SPOOFERS

1983

John Gallagher (left) and Richard Riddell at the conclusion of the spoofing contest in Parnell yesterday.

Spoof in Good Hands

Some things in life rather defy explanation. The gentle sport of spoofing — in which New Zealand is a world leader — is one.

Take, for example, all those puzzled folk who watched as two fully grown, fully dressed men sat on the bottom of the White Heron Lodge swimming pool yesterday.

While underwater each extended towards the other a fist in which was clutched an indeterminate number of coins. Could this really be sport?

And all those who saw more than 50 spoofers, immaculately turned out in black tie and tails, making their way to the annual Auckland Spoofing Championships on Saturday night would have been similarly sceptical that an important Auckland sporting event was about to take place.

But sport it is. Some of the big names of other New Zealand sports are avid disciples of spoofing — like New Zealand cricketers Martin Crowe and Ian Smith and former All Blacks Brett Codlin (the present national champion) and Murray Mexted (a former world champion).

According to the chairman of the Auckland Spoofing Committee, Richard Riddell, New Zealanders have taken three of the four world spoofing championships.

Mexted won the first, Aucklander John Sargent the second, another Kiwi, Tony Stewart, the third, and the title is now held by Briton Malcolm Robertson. The defending Auckland champion was Auckland cricketer Richard Reid.

Spoof is a game where the player conceals in his hand a number of coins (with a maximum of three and a minimum of none).

Once he has secretly clenched his coins, the spoofer holds out his fist and tries to assess the total number of coins held by himself and all the other spoofers.

Thus, if there are six spoofers competing, the total number of coins will be somewhere between nought and 18. Those who correctly guess the total drop out and there are successive rounds until only one man is left.

In days of yore, spoofing had its rather dubious origin in bars and pubs where the loser — the last man — was obliged to go and buy the next round.

Nowadays, spoofing is a bit more organised. Competition etiquette requires black tie and tails and the spoofers spoof using a complicated points system that rewards those who get out early and which takes the field through preliminary rounds, repechages, quarter-finals and semi-finals.

"It is great fun," said Riddell. "There is lots of beer, lots of port and lots of laughs."

Some of those were provided by the guest speakers at the $75-a-head pre-spoof dinner on Saturday. Ian Smith, whose cricket has been hampered by back problems, discussed "back injuries and how they have affected my spoofing."

Phil Young, a touring spoofer from England here especially for the championships, spoke on "How to spoof on the other side of the world without falling off."

For the record, Smith faced Sargent in the final with Sargent winning 4-1.

And the submarine spoofers. Well, that was just a subsidiary competition where the last two contestants are required, by tradition, to spoof in the pool. Just part of the rich pageant of sport.