

THE GREEKS HAD WORDS FOR IT

When Ulysses put a Bodypress on Ajax

WRESTLING THROUGH FORTY-FIVE CENTURIES (No. 2)

AFTER the discovery that the Sphinx had seen the Boston Crab when the ancient Egyptians wrestled beside the Nile, it did not altogether surprise "The Listener's" special investigator when he found that the Greeks, 2,000 years later, were quite accustomed to watching all-in wrestlers.

If Homer is to be believed, as well as the evidence from a dozen other sources, the Greek heroes knew as much as they needed about free-for-all tactics. They only missed twentieth century standards by their failure to discover the delights of fighting in mud, used engine-oil not being available in those days.

Even if Homer is permitted some repertorial licence such passages as this from the Iliad bring quick disillusionment to any with innocent faith in the gentility of the Heroes.

Their bones resound with blows: sides, shoulders, thighs,

Swell to each gripe, and bloody tumours rise.

This from the mild Alexander Pope. The more worldly Samuel Butler paints an even bloodier picture in his translation.

The examination of wrestling as the Sphinx saw it, as described in our last issue, was followed by a curiosity to know the Greek method. The result was a discovery that Homer had written up Ajax and Ulysses (well known figures in those days) in their memorable wrestle in the funeral games in honour of Patroclus on the thirtieth day of the Iliad. For the benefit of those husky sportsmen whose intellectual space contains a spare corner for a little erudition, it may be mentioned that the reference will be found in Book 23 of the Iliad. It follows descriptions of sacrifices, chariot coursing, and caestus (or knuckle duster) fighting. Achilles, he of the vulnerable heel, was referee.

As Homer had it:

The Giant fell supine:

Ulysses follows, on his bosom lies.

Ulysses, more cunning, had secured the first fall from Ajax, whose strength had not prevented his being most ingloriously tripped. What follows is, no doubt, merely Homer's polite description of a body press.

And then:

*Defiled with honourable dust they roll,
Still breathing strife, but unsubdued of soul;
Again they rage, again to combat rise;
When great Achilles thus divides the prize:
"Your noble vigour, O, my friends, restrain;
Nor weary out your generous strength in vain.
You have both won. Let others who excel
Now prove the prowess you have proved so well."*

Steak and eggs were then served and a good time was had, etc.

Homer, unfortunately, does not paint the whole picture. In the *lucta volutatoria*, as this

form of wrestling was called, no fouls were recognised. The upright wrestling was in line with the true classical tradition of grace and dignity. The ground wrestling matches were continued until one man admitted defeat.

This influence was to remain almost unchanged through the following centuries until the best forms of modern wrestling found their pattern in Lancashire.

The Teutonic peoples adopted it—Albrecht Durer left 119 drawings illustrating the different holds used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was a time when several painful tricks were introduced, after the style of the jiu-jitsu of Japan. In Switzerland, Russia, and Iceland, part of the fun was for one man to swing the other by his belt, specially designed and worn for the purpose. First on the ground lost. Japan's *sumo* is another form of upright wrestling, popular among three-hundred-pound heavy weights. The Indians included ground wrestling in a very scientific form which did not limit fouls. England has had no single national style.

In the Cumberland style the wrestlers strive to throw each other from a standing position. First down loses. The West Country style of Cornwall and Devon is similar, but a fall is more closely defined by an insistence that three points of shoulders and hips should touch the ground. In Lancashire the catch-as-catch-can style has ousted all others, including the so-called Graeco-Roman style popularised by the French but now very properly dying out.

Yet none of these methods, popular as they have been among their various followers, is likely to survive the latest monster come among us—modern professional wrestling. But more of that next week. . .

Inter-Provincial Rugby

Four inter-provincial Rugby matches will be relayed next week:

1YA: Auckland v. Hawke's Bay, from Eden Park on Saturday, August 12, at 3 p.m.

3YA: Canterbury v. Bush, from Lancaster Park, on Monday, August 7, at 2.30 p.m.

4YA: Otago v. Bush, from Carisbrook, on Saturday, August 12, at 3 p.m.

4YZ: Southland v. Manawatu, from Rugby Park, on Saturday, August 12, at 2.45 p.m.

The talks on Rugby will be continued:

1YA: Albert de Clifton will discuss the referee's responsibilities on Friday during Gordon Hutter's sports session at 7.45 p.m.

2YA: G. G. Aitken will suggest some improvements on Friday at 7.40 p.m.

3YA: Teddy Roberts will talk on Monday at 9.5 p.m.

2YD: F. E. Sutherland will give the referee's reactions to the player on Wednesday at 8 p.m.

4YA: Mark Nicholls will issue a post mortem on Tuesday at 8.48 p.m.

Relays of Club Rugby on Saturday, August 12, will be given from:

2YA: From Athletic Park, at 2.45 p.m.

3YL: From Lancaster Park, at 2.30 p.m.

3ZR: From Rugby Park, at 3 p.m.

Miscellany

Wrestling: 1YA and 2YA on Monday, August 7, at 9.5 p.m.

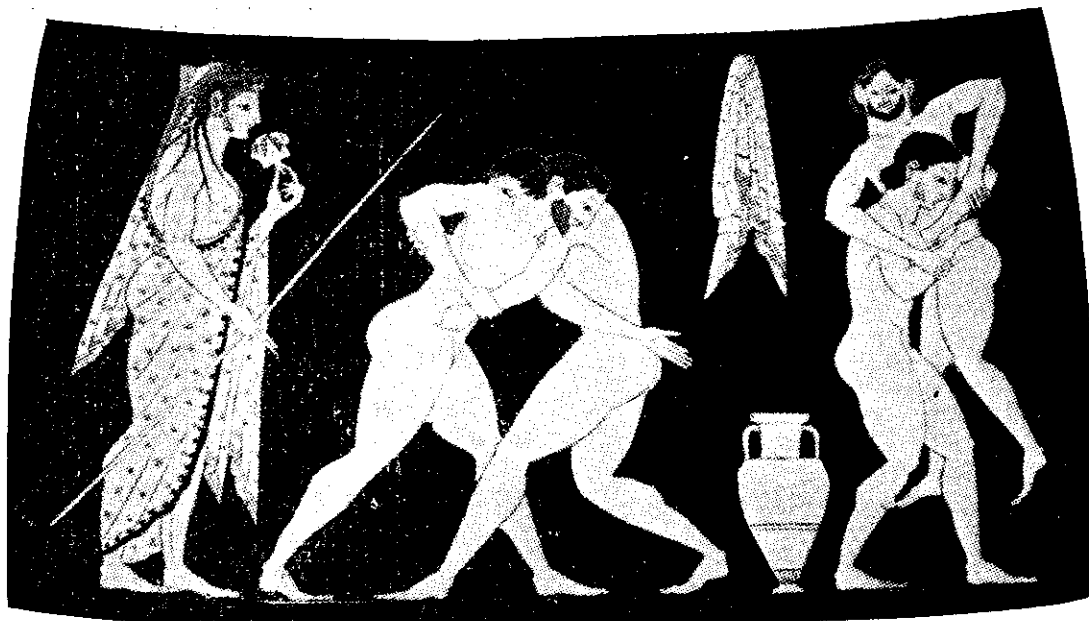
Golf: 2YD on Saturday, August 12, at 9.20 p.m., with Andy Shaw giving advice on the No. 2 iron and the spoon.

Hockey: 3ZR on Thursday, August 10, at 8.40 p.m., with Professor Jaggar Nath, Manager of the 1938 Indian hockey team, during the sports club session.

Baseball: 4YZ on Saturday, August 12, at 6.15 p.m., with Alf. Jenkins.

Basketball: 4YZ on Monday, August 7, at 8 p.m., with Miss L. Hallamore.

Boxing: 3ZR on Wednesday, August 9, at 8.40 p.m., with a reconstruction of the Fitzsimmons-Jefferies fight in San Francisco, 1902.



IT'S QUEER, but one of the wrestlers in this reproduction of an ancient vase-painting by Andocides seems to be reaching for the water-jug, while the lady stands by holding the prize for the match. The other pair are demonstrating the Grecian method of upright wrestling