



Notes on Sport

SOBER OCTOBER

In Between The Seasons

IN a broadcast about Poland recently, Professor F. L. Wood mentioned the theory that climatic extremes imposed nervous strains which affected national temperaments. He compared the equable climate of England and the supposedly equable temperament of the English with the Continental climate and the mercurial disposition of the races inside Europe.

Professor Wood himself admitted that the theories were subject to argument. He would probably also agree that it would be difficult to fit New Zealand and New Zealanders into any special niche in the theory. Geographers and psychologists would find many variations to confound them between North Cape and Stewart Island.

If a rule can be applied here at all, it can be applied now, for winter is going and "summer is icumen in." We have finished with the strenuous hurly-burly of cold-weather sport; we are starting on the gentler summer games.

We have not yet imitated America in counteracting cold with central heating and heat with iced water. We more or less suffer the cold and enjoy the heat, according to the colour of our hair.

A Neutral Time

October is that pleasant in-between month, when we look back with the smugness that retrospection gives to satisfaction, and forward with the innocence that anticipation gives to things to come. We have spent our energies keeping warm. Soon we shall be wasting them getting hot. Now we are neutral.

It's a good time of the year. If there is anything more enjoyable than giving the last careful touch of grease to football boots before they are stored against the months ahead, it is throwing them to be forgotten in a corner, while broken strings are examined in the warped frames of tennis rackets (which suffered a similar fate last April), moth's meals are counted in crumpled flannels, or an old stump rubbed over the favourite cricket bat.

If we have been using nervous excitement as a barrier against cold, as the psychologists suggest, and if we intend to react in the

opposite direction while the sun climbs higher, at the moment we are psychologically safe. Behind us the deep blue sea, ahead the devil.

October is an island inhabited by sanity. To windward, over the course we covered, nothing remains but tossing waters.

The Prospect Pleases

Statistics record the voyage: so many matches won, so many lost; so many miles covered in so many minutes; so much talk broadcast in so many hours. But statistics are dead. Our wake is part of the waves.

To leeward the sea seems calm and inviting. In spite of ourselves and suspicions of our temporary sanity, we anticipate another plunge, with a vision of safer and sunnier shores beyond the horizon. All through October we hesitate. The good things gone are dead, or dying in our memories.

October persists as a reminder that April will come next year, winter will follow, and next October the colour will fade behind us again as some new sun rises to light new faces and raise new hopes, whatever games are played or wars fought meanwhile.

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Down To Facts

Quite apart from psychology, introspection, and vague figures of speech, October, 1939, is more than ever a stepping stone for sportsmen. Whether they are dead or not, the statistics of the season behind us represent cold feet. The future seems all doubt and disorder.

Clubs and their members will be worried. Organised sport may become more and more disorganised as summer comes and goes. In the long view, this will not be a bad thing. The effect will be good, even if the cause could be better chosen. For sport tends to become over-organised. Competition is a good enough thing if it makes better players. It is a bad thing if it makes better players worse behaved.

Tennis, for example, is a good excuse for week-end exercise, or an evening stretch. The faster it is played the more exhilarating the exercise. But when it is internationally organised as a spectacle it becomes only a poor excuse for mob demonstrations, exhibitions of bad manners, and petty jealousies, partly racial in character but mainly hysterical.

When it does not become hysterical it can often be silly. Competition did good work when it turned the North-South Islands Rugby match into a classic worth remembering; but the organised competition which brought 70 footballers to Wellington to play in competitive trial matches at the same time, quite failed to justify itself.

Sport should be a diversion. It can easily become a preoccupation. When it becomes a preoccupation it loses all its flavour in the bitterness of dissension and disappointment.

Now we have something of more moment to preoccupy us. And so we may be able to settle down to enjoying our games.

It would be a nice adjustment of all the extremes if England and France could play Germany and Russia at ping-pong. This seems unlikely. We can only make the best of their choice of weapons and gather rosebuds while we may.

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Roses Among The Weeds

Viewed with persistent optimism, after this fashion, the prospect does not seem so bad after all. We may be justified in scepticism — especially during this particular October—while we anticipate the dangers of navigation through the months, perhaps the years, ahead of us: but there are still straws for clutching if the ship sinks.

There will be sunshine, and blue skies. And all the other simple things everyone knows about: yachts on choppy water, beer behind the scoreboard on the village green, steaming sand, and cold showers; busy tennis courts, and mountains; canoes on rivers — bubbles in the champagne of living.

It goes flat if it's kept.

THE INQUEST

Poor old Rugby's dead, but he can't be buried yet. In the last issue of *The Listener* was reported the return of the true flavour of Rugby to jaded palates. Alas, the trials gargled it out again, almost. But not quite.

From Frank Kilby comes support for *The Listener's* idea that the Islands match gave cause for hope, whatever mess the trials made of the talent available. Kilby said he believed there was something worth building on, and that two or three more seasons would tell the tale.

He and George Aitken reviewed the matches over the air, and Kilby gave his idea of a New Zealand team.

It was:	Taylor		
A. G. Sutherland	Wesney	Morrison	
Sullivan	Crossman		
Williams	Saxton		
Ward	King	Herron	Bowman
McDonald	Lambourn	George	

He made the selection of Williams provisional, on the ground that there were four or five good men available for the back ranker position. Grace, he thought, would certainly have been given a trip overseas. It seemed that by the end of the trials' week Grace had begun to feel the effects of a heavy season and five weeks on tour.