



Sport

SPRING 1939:

Silly Season Fashion Notes

APART from occasional mention of a state of international tension believed to exist in Europe, the main feature of the news in overseas periodicals recently to hand is the question of braces. If *The Times* and *Punch* are still to be believed, this also is a matter of tension, and *The Manchester Guardian* puts an elastic interpretation on the problem by discussing bracers, another matter of some interest to sportsmen interested in keeping up their spirits as well as their pants.

The Times, of course, hastens to disown responsibility for the pun with which its leader-writer opened his editorial on the subject by pointing out, with proper decorum, that the Golf Correspondent, who headed his story on Braces: "Braces, or No Braces," had not become involved with a shooting party and knew better than to use the plural about that singularly British sport. Time was when foreigners "gagged" the cartoon Britisher as saying: "Life's dull; let's go out and shoot something." Now, in spite of Shakespeare, the best Britons would rather be gagged than convicted as punsters, probably since the discovery that Boswell heard Johnson say that puns are the lowest form of wit. Johnson, as a man of some girth about the middle, commanded respect, as any picture of John Bull will prove. From girth, and John Bull, it is an easy transfer to Britannia, and her torso girthed about with straps; and so back to braces.

The Importance of Braces

Braces are, definitely, of some importance in the life of a sportsman. It is manifestly impossible to be active while your ankles are impeded by flopping trousers. The use of braces avoids this most unhappy possibility. Most of us, of course, wear belts, and some wear both, although the custom has become unfashionable since a wit labelled it as pessimistic; but belts are not at the moment under consideration.

If a man wants to wear a belt, he may; but it is not long, as *The Times* recalls, since braces, for some occult and peculiarly English reason, were to be seen no more than heard. Mr. Gladstone, the *Thunderer* says, once defied all precedent by telling a lady her stays were creaking. Later, contrite, he apologised: "Madam, it was not your stays, it was my braces." But not even Mr. Gladstone could notice braces (or stays) optically, even if they intruded upon his aural sensibility. In Gladstone's day children were to be seen but not heard. With braces, the position is reversed. Once a man could hear his braces, but no one could see them. Now, they may be both seen and

heard, for we must agree with *The Times* that it has become possible to wear braces, open so that all who run may read, upon the playing field.

The Disadvantages of Braces

Not that many sportsmen do wear braces, perhaps because they emphasise too strongly the fact that none of us is ever capable of rising above likely



THE LAUGH'S ON US!

This horrid object is Major, owned by N. H. Martin, of Puyallup, Washington. Giving the photographer a "horse laugh" is one of his many tricks. What this has to do with sport we simply can't imagine

indignity. The belt is less obtrusive. It does not exaggerate the possibility of degradation. But it does restrict the working of the diaphragm. It takes a good deal of willow out of a willowy waist (or a billowy waste, as age and diet tell their tale).

Suspenders may be left off. Everyone knows that a calf must be given a free hand. No one objects to seeing socks holding only by the hairs they cover. It is sensible to leave socks to themselves. As sensible as it is to wear braces in preference to a belt. But it was not until last month that *The Times* finally made it possible to be sensible without being sensitive.

But alas, as Mr. Punch records, the Army has nearly undone the good work of *The Times*. The County of London Territorial Army and Air Force Association (*Punch* says) asked officers commanding all units to see that troops were supplied with braces. Paragraph 539, Territorial Army Regulations, 1936, is quoted to refute this unwelcome suggestion. It appears that troops are directed to report for duty complete with braces, and it is regretted that approval cannot be given for their issue, free. Evoc says:

"And long the King might whistle, For likely boys in brown, If none of us had braces, and all our bags came down."

The Use of Bracers

These are horrid thoughts, and sportsmen will not need reminding that half-mast pants on the playing field are no less fraught with danger than half-mast pants on the battlefield. The connection is established by the parable about Eton, and the Battle of Waterloo; but only the contemptible pun about braces establishes the connection between *Punch*, *The Times*, and *The Manchester Guardian*, which announces that the B.M.A. has been asked by the Football Association to hold an inquiry into the effect of gland treatment on professional footballers.

The Lancet lists some of the tricks a "sportsman" can play. Cocaine, nitro-glycerine digitalis, caffeine, are "definitely dangerous." Certain heart stimulants, ultra-violet ray treatment, various salts, and small doses of alcohol, are "less certainly harmful." Vitamin B, glucose, and oxygen, are "quite harmless."

"Superb physical condition and speed across the ground make soccer players excellent infantrymen," says *News-Review*, recording that professional football has been hard hit by war time enlistments.

We have still to be reassured. With the troops lacking braces, and the best of the infantry their bracers, can the Maginot line still look the Rhine in the face?

LATER NOTE: Our military expert informs us that *Punch* alluded only to the Territorial Army, and not to the latest battle dress; that belts are not worn by the best fighting forces, that braces are issued free, but that the army hides them under its tunic. *The Times* will be as thankful as *The Listener* that this last provision is dictated by reasons of strategy, and not because the sight might play unfavourably upon the moral fibre of the Allies, or enrage the enemy.

Fashion Note: Braces may be worn this season. They may be of any colour. No one will look.

BOXING NOTES

The veteran Les Adams, of Ashburton, has announced his retirement from the ring. Just nineteen years in boxing is his record. Jack Kelly, another southerner of long connection with the game as an amateur, has also decided to retire.

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Tom Heeney and Gene Tunney drew more than twice the money paid for admission to the Louis-Galento fight.

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Harry Greb was one of the greatest fighters of all time. He engaged in 270 contests and lost only nine.

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Jack Davis, who has been matched to meet Mayne Morton in an open-air contest shortly, is a very game fellow indeed. When he met Canadian Johnny Foster early in the present year, he was obliged to "take it" in no small measure, and after the bout Foster paid a very fine tribute to the grit of his youthful opponent.