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SPORT

FAILURE AT MASTERTON BUT NO DISGRACE

*Mile Runners Made
Fine First Attempt*

THE failure of Masterton's milers to crack the Indiana University team's three-year-old time for the world four mile relay was not a failure of which they need be ashamed. They could have done better. That they did no worse was sufficient tribute to the development of distance running in New Zealand over the last decade.

After the race, critics were still saying Wade should have been in the team, or Dickie. The ignorant were even citing recent times set by these two runners in competitive championship events. Quite apart from the fact that the record attempt was almost purely a private arrangement between the four men concerned and the Masterton Club, and that no outsider had any right whatever to criticise the make-up of the team, anyone who used specific times to make comparisons took a very big risk. No doubt Wade and Dickie are first-class milers, or have the makings of first-class milers. No doubt this, and no doubt that.

The plain fact of the matter was that these four men were attempting something entirely new and more than usually enterprising in New Zealand athletics. For comparisons there was no basis whatever. Let any critic compare Pullar, Allen, Matthews, and Boot, with any other miler met in open competition; that is reasonable comment. But to make comparisons in connection with a record attempt on a relay time, for which there was no local precedent, or in which there was not the remotest relationship to competitive racing, was cavilling and pinpricking.

No Easy Task

For a first attempt, the four runners performed remarkably well. They ran very close to schedules planned beforehand, although one or two of them were supposed to lack fine judgment of pace. Concurrently with the main attempt, the Masterton Club had arranged a secondary attempt for a team which was intended to give the first string something to run after. In practice, this did not work, and almost from the first lap of the first mile the men had to run round an empty track.

This is not easy, it should be stated, in case there remains anyone who still believes it possible to run a mile solo as fast as a mile can be run in company with pacemakers. In the competition of a race, a man might easily break 4.10 and fail on an open track to break 4.20.

Pullar, running first, can be forgiven for spoiling his reputation as a sound judge of lap times. He was not in perfect form, and made an error of two seconds

in his estimates. This told the tale when Boot came to cover the last mile. Given the most difficult task of all, Pullar made the sort of job of it to be expected from a sportsman of his calibre. Over the last lap, after the strain of racing three laps against times which must have seemed inexorably against him, he stuck out the fourth, determined not to give up making every possible effort until Allen stretched back for the baton.

The Laps

Where Pullar had tailed to run his first lap in 62 seconds, greatly to his own chagrin, Allen succeeded, and followed with laps of 65 1/5, 65 3/5, 66 2/5. Matthews, the three-miler of the quartet, ran quite the best mile of the day. Matthews beat Allen's first lap time with 61 3/5, followed with 65 2/5, and covered his last half-mile in two laps of 66 and 65 each. Boot looked worried when he heard the lap-keeper call the minutes as he started away from Matthews. He was worried enough to fly round the first lap in 60 seconds dead. This was a necessary tactic, but it told as he ran lonely over the last three laps. For his second he timed 65, for his third 68, and for his last, 65 1/2.

There has been some confusion over the times. Standing very close to Pullar, the starter made his only mis-start of a day of perfect starts. Pullar, probably nervous, went away on the click of the trigger, and had to come back.

How the Times were Kept

Later, the following official times were received from W. M. Sellars, secretary of the Masterton Amateur Athletic Club:

Four watches, each checked to an accuracy of one-fifth of a second in 20 minutes, and checked, and re-checked again, were used to time the aggregate. Through the false start, one was not accepted. The other three registered 17 mins. 18 4/5 secs., 17.18 2/5, and 17.15 4/5. The slowest time had to be accepted, giving the official aggregate for the whole relay as 17.18 4/5, which was 2 3/5 secs. outside the world record.

Two other watches were used to keep the runners informed of their lap times. They had also been carefully checked. They gave an aggregate of 17.17 1/10. The lap times were, in full:

Pullar	64	65	66	66 1/2
Allen	62 1/2	65 1/2	65 3/5	66 3/5
Matthews	61 1/2	65 1/2	66	65
Boot	60	65	68	65 1/2

This makes the mile times:

Pullar	-	-	-	4.21 1/2
Allen	-	-	-	4.19 3/5
Matthews	-	-	-	4.18
Boot	-	-	-	4.18 1/2

As this is going to press, attempts are being made to arrange another relay to attack the same record.

Boot Still in the Running

Meanwhile, it is likely that Boots' announced retirement may not take immediate effect. He had been concerned about his training duties with the military forces, but has now made a satisfactory arrangement.

BOXING NOTES

HARRIS failed in his big try to steal Joe Louis's title, but "Two Ton" Tony has broadcast the news that for the time being he is concentrating on "Junior," whom he hopes will one day take "Papa's" place as a big noise both in and out of the ring.

* * *

Back in the kangaroo country, Harry Summers, the light-weight who performed so well in many parts of New Zealand, is now looking for a chance to meet Joe Hall. The latter also fought in the Dominion about six years ago.

* * *

Of Carnera it is stated that he is now a very domesticated fellow and unlike most other one-time champions, is quite satisfied that his fighting days are all over. With a fine wife, some capital, and among his own people in Italy, he is said to be quite contented.

* * *

The Dunedin boxer Stan Jenkin is to meet Vic Caltaux during March, in the open air stadium at Hutt. In 20 amateur bouts he lost only four, and in 25 professional contests he has had the same number of defeats.

* * *

The bout between Fred Henneberry and Ron Richards for the Empire title did not take place according to schedule because Henneberry had leg trouble. There is little doubt that it will take place sooner or later.

* * *

Back from the States, Maurice Strickland looked well when he landed from the Mariposa in Auckland recently. Somewhat tired of roaming, the big Maorilander is likely to remain in the Dominion, where he expects to go into business. Whether he will engage in contests will depend on what opportunities are offering.

* * *

In Christchurch, Fred Parker, one time middle-weight champion of the Dominion, is now in business. Fred stepped off with the right foot when he hung up the gloves.

* * *

Many boxers and their money are easily parted, but Ambrose Palmer, ex-heavy-weight champion of Australia, was one who saw to it that his hard-earned money did not float into thin air. He drives a fine car, owns a nice home and other property, and is generally enjoying the fruits of his fighting career.

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According to a letter received, boxing was one of the main diversions on board the ships carrying the 1st Echelon. Championships in the various classes were staged, and it is said that new material caused some upsets.

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The ex-light-weight champion of Queensland, Merv. Willis, is eager to try conclusions with Caltaux or Jenkin. He is now a welter-weight. The Australian is a well-known figure in the Auckland gym, where he is keeping himself ready for any eventualities.