

WHO WAS THE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR?

Last Season's Performances (Continued From Last Week)

WEICHART opened his pole-vaulting season in New Zealand by casually jumping 11 feet 6 inches at a Taranaki meeting. Four years previously, in the American Olympic Trials he had cleared 14 feet 2 inches, a jump which was not good enough to displace Sexton and Meadows from the team. These two held the world record of 14 feet 11 inches.

Weichart was, however, in a class by himself in New Zealand. At the national championships, later, he unsuccessfully attempted to displace the Australian E. J. Winter's N.Z. record of 12 feet 3 inches. He jumped in a bad light on the first day and was worried by the wind on the second. Two weeks later, back in Taranaki, Weichart jumped 12 feet 4½ inches. There is at present no advice that this jump has been recognised as a record.

The best pole-vault performance by a New Zealander is J. H. Opie's 1937 jump of 11ft. 5½in. Barraclough was the 1939 champion with a jump of 11ft. Stretched by Weichart, Barraclough jumped 11ft. 1in. at this year's championships.

During the same meeting at which Weichart made his debut, B. H. Birt-whistle, formerly of Auckland, created a new Taranaki three-mile record of 15 34 4.5.

Boot's Performances

Boot had only four major runs in public. At Masterton he covered his mile in the relay-record attempt in 4 18½. At the national championships he ran only in the 880, and failed by nearly two seconds to equal his own best New Zealand performance. His time for the race was 1 55 2.5, against his best time in N.Z. of 1 53 4.5. He had done better in the Wellington Provincial Championships, with 1 54 3.5. In the circumstances, his half-mile race at the National Championships was a fine performance, but he had neither the track conditions nor the opposition which could have made it better. In the Centennial Mile he beat Wade and Matthews with a time of 4 15 4.5, a magnificent performance on heavy ground in the rain. Wade and Matthews were only a second or two behind him.

W. A. Pullar, veteran of many meetings (and as many different events), did not have a very satisfactory season. In his main work-out before the record attempt at Masterton, the Wellington Provincial championships, he won the mile in 4 25. At Masterton his time was 4 21 1.5. At the National Championships his time was 4 18 1.5. Perhaps the best individual performances over the mile next to Boot's in the mud at the Basin Reserve were Allen's, Matthews's and Boot's at Masterton. They were 4 19 2.5, 4 18, and 4 18½, unpaced.

"Most Extraordinary Time"

Most extraordinary time in all the miles run during the season was Pullar's final lap time in the National Championship. He covered the last quarter in 58 6-10. This enabled him to beat his performance in the same race in 1939 by 1 4-5 secs., but it was due mainly to the fact that he and Dickison had loafed over the first three laps. When they entered the final quarter they had already taken 3 19 3-5 for the course. Dickison came at Pullar and forced him into a burst for the finish to win by a yard.

Although it is not fair to take this unusual lap time out of such a slow race, it gives an excuse for an interesting comparison with the lap times in some of the world's best mile races.

The best last-lap time put up by one of the five great milers of the last 17

letics was centred around the distance runners, there were other performances worth mention. Only a few can be included here. C. A. Halliday, from South Canterbury, won the Canterbury junior 120 and 220 hurdles in good style. His time for the 220 hurdles was 27 3-5, which beat the existing New Zealand junior record by 2-5 secs. The senior record is Sharpley's 24 4-5 in 1939. Sharpley's time of 25 dead in the National Senior championships was the best ever recorded at a national meeting held in Wellington. Times in Canterbury's senior meeting were not especially notable. In the sprints, Knight's 10 2-5 for the 100 was typical, and over distance Matthews's 4 26 1-5 and 15 19 3-5 for the mile and three miles gave some indication of the standard.

Auckland athletes were, if anything, a grade lower. Their mile, in which Wade just headed a comparative newcomer in Potter, took 4 27 4-5. Mansill covered the 100 in 10 2-5. Miss M. Mitchell, of Dargaville, in the women's events, threw the javelin 120ft. 1in., which was 1ft. 5in. farther than the old record held by Miss R. Higgins, of Canada. The Wellington meeting was enlivened by Boot's fine 880 in 1 54 3-5. Sharpley, in the 120 yards hurdles, finished eight yards ahead of Patience, whose time for the event (Sharpley not being eligible) was given as 16 1-5. Sharpley must therefore have been travelling exceptionally fast, and without opposition.

Juniors in the Limelight

In all provinces, junior athletes were coming into the limelight. Otago's junior and women's events, for example, produced K. J. Morgan, who broke the N.Z. junior discus record and shot put record. Miss A. Craig beat the women's national record for the discus.

Dickison was the outstanding athlete of Otago's senior championships.

Down under, athletics are stronger even than usual. The home of great marathon runners and hammer throwers is producing athletes in all events. Without the competition of Allen, Dickison still managed to cut the mile time from Pullar's 1936 provincial record by 7 3-5 seconds to 4 31 4-5. It says much for Pullar's virtuosity when he was running in Dunedin that another record of his was broken by the hurdler, Ramsay, who won the N.Z. championship, 440 hurdles in 58 secs., three seconds outside A. T. Anderson's New Zealand record. Ramsay, in Otago, won the 440 hurdles in 57 4-5 secs. In the javelin throw V. Newall beat his own record by 5 3½ with a throw of 172 11½ against the wind.

If Boot and Sharpley were the athletes of the year, Otago was the province of the year, and it is certain, whatever doubt there may be in those other claims, that the South Island had the better of the season, despite Wellington's shield win on its own ground.

Others Worth Mentioning

Although most prospective and retrospective interest in the season's ath-



V. P. BOOT

years, excluding those Americans who have been running this year indoors in such phenomenally fast times, was Lovelock's. In 1933 he made his record of 4 7 6-10 and his time for the last lap was 58 9-10 secs. Pullar had the doubtful distinction of beating this time by saving his energies over the first three laps. However, allowing for the fact that the times are not strictly comparable, Pullar's time may be included in an attempt to assess the human possibility of the legendary four-minute mile.

The best first quarter we have on record is 58 6-10, put up by Nurmi in 1923 and Wooderson in 1937. (In 1938 Cunningham did it in 58 5-10, indoors). The best second lap is Lovelock's 62 2-10 in 1933, and the best third lap 61 8-10, by Cunningham in 1934. These, added to Pullar's phenomenal 58.6, still leave the time for the best imaginary mile more than the four minute total. They make the imaginary time of 4 1 2-10.



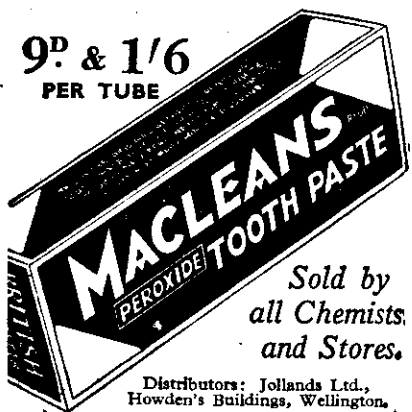
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