

WALLY INGRAM HAS THE FACTS

2ZB's Sports Commentator

WHEN Fenske won the "Mile of the Century" from Cunningham and Rideout in 1939, all America was surprised, and all New Zealand, too, except Wally Ingram.

Even in Wisconsin, Fenske's home town, they did not think the local boy would win.

But Ingram picked the winner, and picked Cunningham for second place. The thought Wooderson would come third, although Wooderson was the world's favourite. Wooderson may have come into a place and given Ingram the hat trick, but that was the race in which the infamous "incident" occurred.

The biggest listening audiences ever surprised by one of these "long-shot" pickings, was surely the audience Ingram had from 2YA in 1934.

It was the night of the selection of the All Black team, and everyone in the country was tuned in to hear the choice. Ingram came on the air at 7.40 p.m. with a sports talk. He discussed the forthcoming "Mile of the Century," between Bonny Lovelock and Glen Cunningham. Cunningham was favoured. He had just established the then record of 4 mins. 6½ secs. for the mile. Ingram predicted that Lovelock would win and that the time would not be better than 4 mins. 10 secs. Lovelock did win, and the time was 4 mins. 11½ secs.

How He Does It

How does 2ZB's sports expert come so close with his prophecies?

For years Wally Ingram has been watching track and field statistics. He ran for eleven years himself, with enough success and plenty of enjoyment, in the Poverty Bay district. And he has been keeping what has become a great library of information.

He watches runners, and watches results and times. He had enough information before Fenske won in 1939 to know that Fenske was putting up good times and that he reached the peak of his form just at that time in the season. He had the same information about Cunningham, and knew how Wooderson was shaping.

From facts, and facts only, he predicted the result with wonderful accuracy, and astonished American sports writers who had their information on the spot. Copies of his discussion of these facts before the event were sent to America and were received, especially

in Wisconsin, with no small surprise that a critic so many thousands of miles away should prove more accurate than men there.

At Home

Ingram keeps up the same up-to-the-minute knowledge of world and local track and field events, although these days there is not so much to follow, and information is harder to come by.

In New Zealand, where he can see the men in action, he uses his knowledge to even better effect. He was one of the few who recognised the potentialities of Wade, the Auckland runner.

He says, when he is watching a race, that he does not worry too much about who is coming first. He notes the winner, and watches the next few men coming into the tape. These men, he has found, are the coming champions, and it pays him to watch them coming. Wade was one example.

Paradox

Although Wally Ingram claims that his own participation in sport has been for enjoyment only, he has been in his time a very fit man.

He admits a paradox. He spends his time now persuading athletes to specialise more, and not take on too much at once. He is busy these days telling those theories to promising secondary schoolboys. And yet, when he was running, between 1920 and 1931, Ingram won all races between 75 yards and five miles.

He would do a five-mile run and come in to play hockey in his home town, Gisborne.

He held the Poverty Bay Championships over the 440 yards, the mile, and the three-mile. In the mile and three-mile events he established provincial records which were only broken by Randolph Rose and Phil. Francis, the Welsh international.

He has represented Poverty Bay (against Wellington) in the half-mile. He played soccer (senior grade), hockey (senior), and cricket (for enjoyment only).

He was a member of the Olympic Surf Life Saving Club in Gisborne as No. 3 (resuscitator) on the line, and he remembers one summer during which, on every Sunday except one, a fatal accident occurred at Waikanae—every one of them at a time when he was not on the beach. He cites this as a coincidence, and not as an example of lack of co-operation between Providence and himself.

He grew up in the town that produced Tom Heeney, and has always been interested in boxing. He trained Lyn Robertson, and looked after Syd North when the Australian came over to meet Tommy Donovan and Cyril Hearne.

Administrator

In the administrative side of sport he has been equally busy. In fact, at one time he had so much on his hands he had to give up everything. He was for five years on the Council of the N.Z. Amateur Athletic Association, for two years on the Council of the Amateur Cycling Association, and one year on



S. P. Andrew photograph
WALLY INGRAM
He surprised the Americans

the British Empire and Olympic Games Association. He has worked for the Athletic Football Club.

It was in 1931, when he was with the N.Z.A.A.A., that he suggested that D. Leslie should go away to the Olympics as a starter. The move was successful, and Ingram now carries with him, on a watch fob, the first bullet fired at the games in 1932. Leslie gave it to him by way of appreciation.

Track Methods

He has many theories about track technique, and mention of Leslie's starting reminded him of a new idea in starting positions which he is endeavouring to perfect. He won't let us publish the details yet, but he hopes for success. There is nothing in the rules, he claims, to make it illegal; but the rules say that the starter is in charge of the runners when they are on the track, and he has yet to persuade Wellington's Number One Starter to pass his method. He has been discussing it with American experts, with whom he keeps closely in touch.

His methods have had considerable success; but perhaps the most interesting, if not the most notable, was one successful year at Gisborne. He trained two runners and four cyclists. He was himself running at the time. The seven of them took every trophy offered by the club, and Ingram himself claimed an unusual success by winning, two years in succession, the club's points prize.

Journalism

All his life has been devoted to sport. His first days in journalism were spent with a small weekly, the "Te Rau Press." From Gisborne (where he first saw the light in 1904), he came to Wellington in 1926 to work for the "N.Z. Sportsman." In 1934 he transferred to "Sporting Life" as track and fields editor, and in 1937 added boxing and wrestling to his cares. In 1938 and 1939, fans will remember his "Guide to Wrestling."

He talks weekly now from 2ZB at 9.30 a.m. on Sundays, and announces sports results. Last year he gave the commentaries on the New Zealand Centennial Championships, through the NBS relay from Basin Reserve. Microphones have become as familiar to him as stop-watches and starting guns (his wrist watch, always worn, is a stop watch), and his voice is almost as familiar to listeners as his subject is to Wally Ingram.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(Continued from Page 4)

BIBLICAL DRAMAS

Sir,—I should like to pay a small tribute to the Children's Nativity Play broadcast on Sunday, December 8, from 4YA by Mr. A. K. Smith and the Hanover Street Baptist Young Worshippers' League. This performance was the fourth in a series of Biblical dramas acted by these children—dramas which are arousing interest all over the country.

The Nativity Play was a skilful reconstruction of the moving story of Christ's birth, and the author made the most of the facts and succeeded in capturing the historical atmosphere of the period. The children are to be congratulated on their performance which must have been an inspiration to adults too, who were fortunate enough to be listening in. A beautiful interpretation of the joyful message of Christmas!

—R. WILSON (Oamaru).

NUMEROLOGY

Sir,—I was most interested in Hitler's numerology, as disclosed by your contributor "Thid." I would like to point out that if we include the forename Adolf to the total, it amounts to 1088. Now, add five points for each of the capital letters and the grand total, or totalitarian total, is 1098. A moment's consideration will reveal that the sum of these digits is 18—which is three times six, or 666! It is interesting to note that Stalin (less the Josef Visarionovitch D'Jugashvili bit) fails to ring the bell by a mere three pips. Our own Mr. Fraser, who is apparently a degree or two better, is a good five-spot off the Fuhrer's total, but the Hon. Bob, on the other hand, gets as close as 664. I have now covered close on three foolscap sheets with figures and I am still going strong. Readers who have tried it will agree that for sheer enjoyment it makes tiddley-winks a back number and Bridge a bore. Try it on your enemies, try it on your friends—above all, try it on yourself, for if you happen to be carrying the Mark of the Beast around with you, even your best friends won't tell you.

—"TRUTH SEEKER" (Auckland).

VERBAL FLY-FISHING

Sir,—Could an absolute outsider—a neutral, so to speak—have the impertinence to butt in upon this little war between "Thid" and "John Doe"? Strictly speaking, my remarks are addressed to "Winchester" (Auckland), with regard to his letter in this week's *Listener*. It recalls to mind a remark I heard recently that there was "no worse snob than the literary one." Fancy a company of people daring to class themselves as "cultured company" who would hardly tolerate a man who could not scan a Greek or Latin verse at sight. Millions to-day cannot scan an English verse at sight, or at any time, and yet are cultured. Admittedly it must have been very thrilling in the House of Commons during debates to have quotations from classics flying "back and forth across the House like machine-gun bullets in May." What a pity one of the "gentlemen of classical education" with

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