

The Rapid and Remarkable Development of Sporting

Broadcasts

ALMOST everybody is interested in some form of sport. It has been said that the youngest New Zealander draws his first breath in an atmosphere throbbing with the vitalising tonic of clean and healthy sport, and, certainly, the lure of the open-air keeps him keenly interested in the doings on course, court, and playing field long years after he has himself ceased to be an active participator in the strenuous rivalries of the young and strong. No wonder, then, that sporting broadcasts constitute one of the most popular of the numerous services rendered to the community by the Broadcasting Company.

BROADCASTING, like all new things, has at the outset been looked upon with a certain amount of doubt and suspicion. Some of those responsible for the control of organised sport have been apprehensive as to the effect which this new service would have upon the particular sport with which they are concerned. They have been fearful lest the broadcasting of a description of races or games while they are actually in progress should prove sufficient for followers of the sport to keep them from attendance, and thus adversely affect the gate takings. Hence the difficulties which have from time to time arisen when permission has been sought to broadcast certain race and other sports meetings. Happily, however, practical experience is constantly demonstrating the fallacy of fear on this account, and proving conclusively that, far from exercising any detrimental influence, broadcasting is widening and intensifying public interest, attracting new patrons, winning back those who have grown indifferent, and consequently building up instead of breaking down the financial bulwarks of the clubs. Of this striking and encouraging fact the Broadcasting Company has had convincing testimony. In the United States, where broadcasting has an enormous vogue, they have coined a terse, pithy, and characteristic slogan—"Broadcasting never bumps—it boosts"—and of the truth of this claim New Zealand, though, comparatively speaking, new to the game, has already the proof of experience.

SPORTING broadcasts make a very wide appeal. Shoals of appreciative letters have been received from all parts of the Dominion evidencing how

widespread is the interest in each particular event, and, incidentally, how thoroughly appreciated is the action of the club, association, or society, which allows its fixtures to be relayed for the entertainment of those enthusiasts who are unable to attend, either in consequence of distance, illness, or other good and sufficient reasons.

The company's sporting broadcasts have covered racing, football, boxing, cricket, tennis, athletic sports, motor-cycle racing and swimming, all of which have been described direct from the scene of the encounter.

AN indication of the rapid development of this branch of the company's service is afforded by the fact that prior to June, 1927, approximately 175 transmission hours had been given to sport, whilst the grand total for the year ending June, 1928, indicate 574 transmission hours. An analysis of the official records discloses that the time occupied per week in sports broadcasts exceeded eleven hours. There were in all 206 relays conducted during this period. The details which follow disclose in interesting form the magnitude already attained in this branch of radio service, while at the same time showing how well the Broadcasting Company caters for its sporting public. The figures, covering the period June, 1927-28, give in the aggregate for the four stations the number of sporting fixtures broadcast and the time occupied in transmission:—

	No.	Hours.
Racing and trotting	64	303½
Rugby football	71	124½
Cricket	29	58
Tennis	6	12
Boxing	9	9
Athletics	7	14
Motor sports	1	2
Swimming	2	2
Soccer	5	8½
Rebroadcasts	12	41½
	206	574½

FROM the above, it will be seen that racing and trotting hold the lead with 303½ transmission hours for all stations, Rugby football coming next with 124½ transmission hours, and making a total of 427½ hours for these three sports. Rugby football leads in the number of attractions broadcast, 71

being recorded as against 64 for racing and trotting. In addition to these relays and rebroadcasts there have been regular sports sessions on Saturday nights at all four stations at which all the more important sports results have been broadcast, and, when occasion required, reviews of the fields before race meetings, and talks on many sports subjects. During the past twelve months a system has been organised for the prompt supply to all stations of the results of the most important field events, and these, whenever possible, are announced during the afternoon session, as well as during the evening session.

In order to carry on this service, several long relay lines have been required, the longest up to the present being the lines used on the occasion of the Ranfurly Shield matches, which were relayed from Masterton and Palmerston North and broadcast from 2YA Wellington, a distance of 90 and 95 miles respectively.

THE first sporting broadcast in New Zealand was transmitted by 3AC. This initial event, a description of the inter-club Rugby fixture—Christchurch v. Old Boys played at Lancaster Park on May 29, 1926—was in the nature of a novelty, so far as New Zealand was concerned, and was acclaimed a great success. Thus encouraged, 3AC attempted the more ambitious relay of the trotting meeting at Addington on June 3, and shortly after followed with the hockey fixtures Indian Army v. Canterbury and Indian Army v. New Zealand, which were played at Lancaster Park in June, 1926. These were the first international fixtures played on the tour of New Zealand by the Indian Army hockey team.

THE first sporting event broadcast from 3YA by the Radio Broadcasting Company was the relay of a description of the Grand National Steeplechase at Riccarton. This first transmission has become historical in Christchurch and in the annals of broadcasting in New Zealand on account of the difficulties which had to be overcome before it could be accomplished. The relay apparatus had to be placed outside the grounds, and finally a place was found about three furlongs from the judge's box. This was an old haystack, and after the apparatus had been arranged on top of it, the announcer took up his position, and, despite distance and discomfort, an excellent broadcast resulted. One difficulty on this occasion was the finding of a suitable telephone line, as Riccarton was not very well supplied with lines at that time, but this was overcome by the generous action of Mr. J. McCombe, the well-known Riccarton mentor, who placed his private phone at 3YA's disposal during the time the races were on.

A year has made a great difference in the conditions under which a sporting relay is conducted. To-day the company's official announcers are provided with comfortable seats, and every consideration is shown them by officials and patrons alike.

THE first event recorded for Wellington whilst still operating under the old call sign 2YK was the description of the All Blacks v. Wellington Rugby match, prior to their departure in 1926 on their tour of Australia. Station 2YK continued relaying sports at intervals until July, 1927, when the high-powered station in Wellington came into action. July 9 to 16, 1927, will long be remembered by the sport-loving public, being red letter days in the history of broadcasting in New Zealand. Three days of racing and two of Association football! And what made it more notable was, of course, the manner in which 2YA burst upon radio life of New Zealand. The new station made a sensational debut, which, curiously enough, was the broadcast of a sporting event—the Ranfurly Shield match, Wairarapa v. Hawke's Bay. This event adds yet another historical milestone in sporting broadcast, and must be well remembered by the many who heard it. And here let it be recorded that in these early efforts, as well as on all subsequent occasions, the Post and Telegraph Department, through the courtesy and efficiency of its officials responsible for the provision and preparation of the requisite lines, etc., has contributed in large measure to the success achieved.

SHORTLY after the opening of 1YA in August, 1926, the sporting broadcasts commenced in Auckland, and among other things relays of boxing and wrestling from the Town Hall were well received. However, the first real sport "boost" took place when the company featured the whole of the Auckland Cup carnival at Ellerslie and Epsom, and during the same week broadcast the boxing match Parker v. Thuru. From this time Auckland has never looked back in sporting broadcasts. It is worthy of note that in Auckland a Rugby Union official broadcast a description of a Soccer test match, which was played on the Rugby League ground. On this occasion three usually conflicting elements were united with mutually pleasing and satisfactory results. Mr. Meredith was the narrator of the Canadian v. New Zealand Soccer match, which was played on the Carlaw Park League ground.

SPORTING broadcasts from station 4YA, Dunedin, commenced when this station resumed operations in June, 1926, at the close of the Dunedin Exhibition. The first broadcasts of a sporting nature were the football and hockey results transmitted on Saturday afternoons. This service has steadily improved.

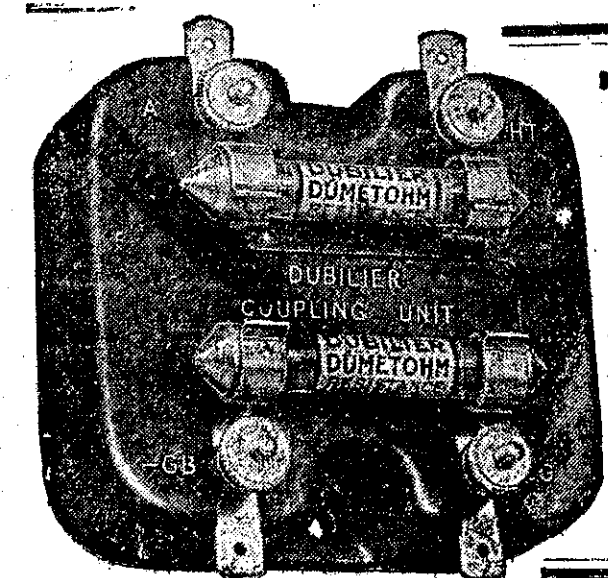
In addition to the events recorded in the above resume, the following outstanding sporting attractions were broadcast:—

Boxing contest, King Edward Barracks, Christchurch, between Charlie Purdy and the Filipino, Jamito.

Rugby.—Ranfurly Shield match, Canterbury v. Hawke's Bay, 1927.

Rugby.—Representative fixture, Canterbury v. Wellington.

Trotting.—Duke of York's meeting, Addington. During the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of York, 1927.



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