

SPORT

by

S. V. McEwen

ALTHOUGH the standard of athletics in New Zealand at the present time is not high in all branches, the mile talent has never been stronger.

Had the elements in Wellington been less turbulent a few days ago, we would have seen a new record established for the mile and the holder would have been the Canterbury champion, V. P. Boot, whose parents gave him the euphonious name of Vernon, but whose athletic friends address him as Pat.

Boot we know to be a runner in the world class, for he distinguished himself against the Empire's best at the Sydney Games last autumn, but we were not so sure that he was a good tactician.

On this occasion he was opposed by Gerald Backhouse, of Victoria; William A. Pullar, recently removed from Dunedin to Masterton; and three others on a short limit, but not taken seriously.

The three on the front mark soon ran themselves into the ground, and it was left to Pullar to set such a gruelling pace that Boot, who won the event, established the exceptional time of 4min. 14 3-5sec.

Had conditions been calm I am quite certain that Boot would have made a new national record for the mile and probably reduced the existing mark by a couple of seconds.

Second Best Mile

THE merit of the performance lies in the fact that it was

the second fastest mile ever run in New Zealand.

I was an official at an athletic gathering held in Masterton 12 years ago, when the massive and lion-hearted farmer Randolph Rose annihilated the smart American miler, Lloyd Hahn, reducing the then 12-year-old record of the American, J. A. Power, established on the same track in 1914.

There was a vast difference in the conditions prevailing the day Rose made his record and at the Basin Reserve, when Boot went within one second of making new figures.

The Masterton Park Oval is one of the fastest running tracks in the Dominion and is set in the heart of a reserve beautifully sheltered from the wind by a thick belt of trees.

The Basin Reserve, as most people know, has no shelter whatever and, in spite of the many good times established there by high-class athletes, it is easily five seconds to the mile slower than Masterton. In addition, Boot Pullar and Backhouse had to contend with one of those occasional zephyrs which have encouraged Aucklanders to refer to our fair capital as Windy Wellington.

Different Types

BACKHOUSE is a slender youth built on a streamline design, and was not so well equipped physically for the occasion as either of his Dominion opponents. Pullar is a

nuggety type, while Boot is taller, is much more muscular, and his body is better covered. Consequently the boisterous conditions affected him less for he is a much stronger runner.

Boot was content to lie in the wake of Pullar and Backhouse, then come along with an overpowering run half a lap from home and quickly place the issue beyond doubt. It was one of the finest efforts I have seen in my time.

The Canterbury man swept along with such an easy gait that I could scarcely believe the official time when it was announced. It was effortless running.

A furlong from home, Backhouse was already in distress, but Pullar was still going well and the two New Zealanders left the Australian to it.

Backhouse was the first to acknowledge the merit of Boot's performance, and his only regret was that he himself was incapable of carrying the winner along in the final furlong and forcing him to a new record.

A Stylist

TED BEST, who is accompanying Backhouse on his New Zealand tour, did not have such a strenuous time. Sprint class in Wellington is not what it used to be, and Best outclassed his opponents in both the 100 yards and 220 yards invitation scratch races.

Best is one of the finest stylists I have seen. He runs with great determination, but with economy of effort, and he retains his style when placing himself under pressure. He has not had as much experience as Backhouse, but competition against the world's best is sure to do a lot for him.

There is another side to these two Victorian boys, which will make their tour live long in the memories of all with whom they came in contact.

They were tendered an informal morning-tea party by the State when they arrived in Wellington.

In thanking the Government for the warmth of its welcome, both Best and Backhouse delivered themselves of the best speeches I have ever heard from the lips of visiting sportsmen.

Each is a thinker, and they both realise that there is a mental and cultural side to athletics as well as the physical side through which they demonstrate their athletic talent. They spoke with a charm and obvious sincerity that was a pleasure to listen to. Right throughout their tour they have created a splendid impression, and I am sure the work they have done during their short stay will serve as an inspiration to the rising generation of athletes.

Fitness Week

IN the course of a few weeks every citizen of New Zealand will be invited to take part in National Fitness Week for which a comprehensive

Sport On The Air

SPORTING events which will be heard on the air during the coming week—

Of paramount importance to followers of racing will be the running commentary from 2YA, on Monday, January 23, on the third day of the Wellington Racing Club's summer meeting.

"To-morrow's Trots at Forbury Park" is the title of a talk to be given by Mr. R. McKenzie from 4YA at 7.25 p.m., Wednesday. On Friday, at 7.30 p.m., Mr. McKenzie will again sum up prospects for Forbury Park trotting.

On Thursday afternoon, January 26, 4YA will be broadcasting a running commentary on the racing at the Forbury Park Trotting Club's meeting.

A talk of interest to cricketers will be given from 1YA at 7.30 p.m. by C. S. Dempster, New Zealand test cricketer, and captain of the Leicestershire County Eleven.

Followers of cricket in Otago should tune into a cricket review by Mr. O'Shea. From 4YA at 7.45 p.m., Friday, January 27.

Sportsmen will be well catered for on Saturday, January 28. 1YA, during the afternoon, will relay a running commentary from Ellerslie on the Auckland Racing Club's meeting, sports results will be heard at 4 p.m., and at 10 p.m., there will be a sports summary. 2YA will feature the usual results at 3 p.m. and a sports summary at 10 p.m.; 3YA will give sports results between 3.30 and 4.30 p.m. and a summary at 10 p.m.; 4YA will broadcast commentaries on the trotting at Forbury Park, sports results at 3.30 and a summary at 10 p.m. The commercial stations will broadcast the usual features, including baseball commentary from 2ZB.

schedule of events is being organised throughout the Dominion under the direction of the Department of Internal Affairs.

In Wellington last week, the Under-Secretary of the Department, Mr. J. W. Heenan, entertained newspapermen at afternoon tea and outlined the preparations and solicited the support of the newspapers.

While the controlling body is doing everything it can to make a success of this scheme, it will depend largely upon the district committees and the people themselves whether it goes over well or flops.

Whatever imperfections there may be in the organisation of the initial campaign which has been hurriedly prepared, the people themselves can lay good foundations for the future by helping as far as they can in all the functions arranged for their respective districts next month.

★ This is not some new-found tropical bird of exotic plumage, but a photographic analysis of a golf stroke made by the former world champion, Bobby Jones. Taken with the multiple-flash camera, it will convey to golfers the perfection of Jones's swing which made him practically unbeatable in his day for the swing is the foundation of the game.

