Sports - And One Thing or Another

By Frank Mann Harris

Just what is it that brings out the record-breaking crowds to any sports event. Is it the expectation of seeing a close, well-played contest — an "exhibition of skill and science" as the boxing and wrestling boys phrase it? Or is it the thrill of being among those present when something unusual, something that will make the big headlines, is taking place?

* * *

A combination of both would possibly be the most nearly correct answer, because in any big crowd there are bound to be both the real sports lovers and the thrill-seekers. But any experienced sports promoter will tell you tha the latter outnumber the former by so much that there's no real comparison.

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They're the folks who cheerfully fork over five or ten times the box-office price for tickets to a World's Series ball game or Stanley Cup hockey match—even although they know right well that what goes on ir these "classics" is, as a rule, dull and wearisome compared to what is seen during the regular season. They're the ones who pack the tracks to suffocation point for the running of a King's Plate or Kentucky Derby — brought there by ballyhoo, and not through any real liking for horses or horse-racing.

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So when some sixty thousand people—59,661 to be exact—turned out for a track and field meet recently, you may be certain most of them were expecting to see something sensational. They were. A couple of weeks earlier Mel Patton, by running 100 yards in 9.3 seconds, had broken a record that many shrewd observers thought might never be topped. And now Patton was going to try and do the same to the 100 meter mark.

They got their thrill and sensation O.K.—and a terrific roar went up when it was announced that Patton had clipped the 100-meter mark by almost a full second. But a lot of them, a few moments later, were wishing they hadn't put so much strain on their lungs when it was discovered that—due to an error of the man who laid out the course—Patton had travelled only 99 yards 5 inches—or almost 10 full yards short of 100 meters.

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The fuss that was made over this unfortunate error has rather taken the spotlight away from Patton's wonderful feat in making that new 100 yard mark. The 100 yard dash has always been one of the real glamour events of track and field—and whenever it's mentioned names like those of Jesse Owens, Frank Wyckoff, Bobby Kerr, our own Percy Williams and many others are bound to come to mind. Yet the man who many consider to have been the greatest speedster of them all is almost forgotten.

* * *

He was Jack Donaldson, a long-legged speed-ball out of Australia, who ran as a professional during most of his career. Thirty-eight years ago, running in South Africa, he was clocked at 9 and three-eighths seconds for the hundred yards—(they used eighths instead of tenths in those days)—and that is a mere three-fortieths of a second lower than Patton's mark. What is more, when he did it Donaldson had his opponent so well beaten that he eased up all through the last 25 yards or so. There's no doubt he could have gone even faster—and there are plenty of those who should know about these things who honestly believe that, with the advantage of the better-constructed, springier sprinting track of nowadays, Jack Donaldson might very well have run the hundred in 9 seconds flat.

It was in a match race with Reggie Walker right after the latter had won the 100 meters at the Olympic Games in London, that Donaldson made his record. It is said that something like two million dollars was bet on the result, and the South Africans, who had backed their Reggie as though he was already home-free, took a terrible financial lacing.

* * *

Some of Donaldson's other almost incredible feats were recently recalled by one of his most ardent admirers. He ran the 130 yards—a favorite distance for professionals—in 12 seconds flat! He was timed by the official clocker for the Australian Jockey Club who, when he saw the figure on his stop-watch, at once said that the distance must be short, so incredible was the figure. So they measured it with a steel tape—the kind that doesn't stretch—and it was found to be 2 yards 2 inches MORE THAN the correct distance.

* * *

Donaldson seldom ran the quarter mile—but when he did he covered the 440 yards in 47 seconds flat years before any one else ever did. Coaxed into representing his Regiment in a four mile run during World War One he came in first by almost half a mile. Six feet tall, and with a phenomenal stride of nine feet, Donaldson was really something—and those who contend that there never was anything to equal him, before or since, have plenty of weight behind their argument.

Laying Cornerstone for New House of Commons—A new House of Commons will rise in London from the remains of the old building bombed during the war. Col. Clifton Brown, speaker of the House of Commons, lays the cornerstone for the new structure. Among those present is Winston Churchill, extreme left.

What Goes On In The World

By Norman Blair

South Africa

Seventy-eight years of age, and of mixed Dutch and French ancestry, Jan Christian Smuts has long been known throughout South Africa as "the old boss". In the Boer War, 1899-1902, he fought against the British. Later on he held many portfolios — including those of Minister of Defense and of the Interior — in the new British Dominion, the Union of South Africa.

During the last two years of World War One he was a member of the British War Cabinet, and was a leading figure in post-war settlements. He helped write the League of Nations Covenant, then returned to Africa to become the Union's Premier from 1919 to 1924.

At the outbreak of World War Two, Smuts got the Premiership again, and put his country on the side of Britain in the struggle with Hitler. His Government ruled over a population of between 11 and 12 million. Less than a quarter of these are of white European descent. The balance are mostly of the native Bantu races.

In the South African parliament until quite recently, General Smuts' united party has had a lower house majority of about 25 seats. But late this May "the old boss" ran into an unexpected snag. In the critical general election for a new House of Assembly the opposition Nationalist party and its allies won a clear majority. Smuts himself lost the Standerton constituency which he had represented in Parliament for 24 years.

The day after the voting Smuts' comment was — "These things do happen. There it is — there it is." Then he resigned his post as Premier.

Japan

After Japan's defeat in the war the Emperor resigned all his religious claims to supremacy. Voices are now being raised — although still with a measure caution — that he should acknowledge his responsibility for the course of events, and step down from his throne.

But, strangely enough, those same liberal voices are being joined by those of others whose devotion to the ancient system has never been even shaken. These figure it something as follows — if Hirohito abdicates he would doubtless be succeeded by the 14-year-old Crown Prince, who cannot in any way be blamed for the disasters of war. Thus the Imperial institution would be continued and fortified. But the best hope for a really liberal Japan would be for the fossilized Imperial institution to disappear completely — and that very possibility is now being discussed in influential Nipponese circles.

Finland

Finnish Conservatives, aided and abetted by Social Democrats and Liberals, apparently started something they were unable to finish. When, to everybody's surprise, they voted Leino, the Communist Interior Minister out of office, the upshot is that Leino's wife has been taken into the Government. And she — Herta Kussinen — is an even higher-ranking Communist than her husband.

So impartial observers regard the whole thing as a victory for The Reds, in spite of the fact that in Finnish official circles it is termed a compromise.

One factor is now plain. It is that the Kremlin now has a direct line into the Finnish Government in the person of Mrs Leino. Talented daughter of the President of the Finnish Karelian Soviet Republic, who is also a member of the Soviet Supreme Council, she frequently visits Moscow to consult her father on Finnish affairs.

The Middle East

A common bond of enmity to the new State of Israel has drawn all the Arab states together in one cause — something that has not been achieved since the Turkish Empire broke up some thirty years ago. How long this can last nobody can say, but the fact is that they have put aside long-standing disagreements to face the present crisis together.

Another part of the Middle East picture is the role the Communists are playing. There is a widespread conviction throughout Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Palestine that the Russians are making political capital of the situation.

For one thing, it is said that Russia is backing the Palestine partition plan in order to get a better foothold in the Middle East, partly by winning the friendship of Isreal. At the same time the Soviets are believed to be fomenting strikes and disturbances in Arab countries with the aim of dividing the attention of the several Arab Governments, so that they would have less strength to expend on the Palestine fight, and also less with which to handle internal difficulties.

But Russia may not have counted on the fact that all Arab countries are by nature anti-communist. Arabs are keenly conscious of the anti-religious aspects of communism, and do not appear to be at all impressed by recent Russian changes toward religion.

Germany

Soviet propagandists in Germany are adding new vigor to their propaganda drive based on the theme of "German unity" — and the universal appeal of such a theme cannot be discounted. It may even out-weigh, for a while at least, the strong anti-Soviet feeling which has prevailed in Western Germany since the war's end.

The Russians have coupled this slogan of German unity with accusations that the Western Powers are dismembering the country; and they insist that this "dismemberment" is only a preliminary to the use of Western Germany as an arsenal of war and as a springboard for an eventual attack on the Soviets, in which case Germany would be the battleground. This touches the fears that every German has for the future.

Some of the propaganda tales that are being spread — and believed — seem fantastic to us. A German in Hamburg is told that in United States zone German girls are forced to clean the boots of American troops. Germans in Nuremburg are informed, quite seriously, that in Dusseldorf the British are quartering Indian troops on the German population. In Cologne the tale is spread that "in the Russian zone" anyone who worked on a farm or in a factory gets all the gasoline he needs. "It is only the profiteers and Jews who do not receive gas rations!"

It is hard to believe that any thinking people could be duped by such stuff. But it must be remembered that Germans of today are people whose moral fibre and intellectual integrity has been weakened by over 15 years of fascism and war. In such mental soil even the crudest propaganda can take root.

The British Way

Discrimination against holders of religious, political, and other beliefs is repugnant to those who hold fast to the British way of life. "This is a free country" is no catchphrase; it is written more indelibly into the most deeply cherished creed of the ordinary people of Britain than ever Calais was on Mary Tudor's heart. Centuries of civil strife and the blood of many martyrs have won the right to think, to say, and to do what conscience dictates.

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