

NUTS NOTES

Vol 12 No 2 Editor: A Huxtable 78 Toynbee Road LONDON SW20 8SR Summer 1974

EDITORIAL

The attendance at the AGM on 13 July was, frankly, pathetic. To quote Bob Phillips (NUTS Notes, Vol 11 No 3) on the 1973 AGM: "... as an annual meeting of what is popularly reckoned to be a lively, adventurous, intelligent group of 70 or so souls, it was a complete non-starter." For whatever reason(s) - and none was communicated to the Hon Secretary - Bob wasn't at the 1974 AGM! Whilst it is obviously difficult to pick a venue, and more so a time, for the AGM that will ensure maximum attendance, one cannot be happy that only 11 (including 5 members of the Committee) out of an effective total of 64 turned up. What is perhaps just as disturbing is that only 18 other members tendered their apologies for absence, of whom only two (both from Scotland, incidentally) cast proxy votes in connexion with the proposed alterations to Rules. These Rule changes (notified to members in circular letter dated 1 July 1974) were both passed, incidentally.

For the benefit of members who were not at the meeting, the Chairman's address is reproduced below.

In the Hon Secretary's annual report the following amendments should be made:

- "9 Administration and National Team Selection
- line 1 amend "five" to read "six"
- line 3 add "Duncan McKechnie (Recorder),"

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS PRESENTED TO 1974 AGM OF THE NUTS

The last year has been an eventful one in the life of the NUTS, the most significant move being the production of our own annual containing all the national performance lists in a single volume. This is something we have always wanted but it has been achieved only by making other sacrifices. The annual has had a unique position among statistical publications, in that it was the first to have an index - in fact few national annuals even now have followed our lead. Personally, I remain convinced that the index is a vital part of our work, and I am most unhappy that we have had to split our efforts over two volumes this year. This resulted from our agreement with the BAAB, and you may like to be reminded of the reasons for this particular decision.

It has been erroneously suggested that the UK Athletics Annual is completely independent of the BAAB, but this is rather a long way from the truth; although we were able to please ourselves regarding the contents, we are highly dependent financially on the Board, and will continue to be as long as we wish to produce books of the quality of our annual (unless, of course, we can drum up some rather generous sponsors). As detailed by Andrew in his report, the economic facts of the situation are quite simple - the UKAA cost us £300 and our funds permitted us to outlay only about a third of this without making ourselves bankrupt, so our arrangement with the Board was a financial necessity. In addition, we must not overlook our moral obligation to the Board, and in particular to our President, Harold Abrahams. Thanks to the deep personal interest taken in our work by HMA, the NUTS has gained great prestige and influence in the relatively short time since we began operating in 1958. The support given to us by the Board, principally in publishing the British Athletics annuals for 15 years, has been too readily taken for granted in some quarters, and I would like to affirm our appreciation for this past help.

Having said this, it must be realised that there are several areas of disagreement between ourselves and the Board, not least of which is this policy of splitting what we regard as "THE annual" into two parts. The activities of the NUTS are directed towards producing annually the following information:

- 1) National performance lists for all standard age-groups
- 2) Indexes of listed athletes
- 3) All Time lists
- 4) Record lists
- 5) International Match and Championship results

In addition there are many who would like statistical summaries and non-statistical articles concerning the season under review; these are items it would be nice to include, if somebody were prepared to do the spade-work. The Board, however, wish to produce a handbook that excludes all performance lists; hence the current situation.

As I recall the arguments, one of the deciding factors causing the Board to reach this decision was the cost of producing "British Athletics", yet a logical appraisal of the figures shows that there is no financial advantage to be gained in kicking out the performance lists. If we assume that the Board Handbook also cost about £300, the combined cost of the two books was £600. The Board's effective outlay, however, was £500 (i.e. £300 to the printer and £200 to the NUTS), while the net amount paid by us was £100. It would have been possible to produce a combined book, containing all the material in the two separate volumes, for no more than the overall cost of £600, and the NUTS could have paid the Board the difference of £100 for the right to include the additional material that we feel is necessary. We hope that such an arrangement will be possible next time.

I have dwelt at length on this subject because the annual is the most significant feature of our work. Other important activities have been summarised by Andrew in his report, so I have no need to enumerate these here. However, I must touch briefly on the difficult problem of membership. Last year's AGM was held in Edinburgh partly because it was felt that an event such as the European Cup Final, being held in the UK for the first time, should have attracted a reasonable proportion of our membership (after all, we are supposed to be a group of people with an unusually keen interest in athletics!). Unfortunately, only 18 out of a total strength 72 (i.e. 25%) put in an appearance. Even worse, almost 50% of the members neither attended nor bothered to send apologies for absence, which is scarcely a satisfactory situation. In committee we are frequently discussing what we can do about members who contribute nothing practical towards the work of the organisation, and it could be that changes to the Rules for membership will have to be made soon.

To end on a somewhat brighter note, may I express my thanks on behalf of the NUTS to those members who have continued to work with great diligence - all the individual list compilers, our colleagues in the SATS, junior specialists Alan Lindop, Peter Martin and Tony Miller, Liz Sissons (whose work on the women's lists fortunately does not diminish her voracious appetite for typing), Peter Matthews and Stan Greenberg (who keep the pot boiling throughout the season), David Dallman and Tim Lynch-Staunton (who are devilling away quietly at the All Time lists), our other Committee members for their support during the year, and of course Andrew Huxtable for his invaluable secretarial labours.

MISCELLANY

- Ø April saw the publication of Peter Lovesey's fifth work of crime fiction, "Invitation to a Dynamite Party" (Macmillan, £1.95). Of particular interest to members is an amusing account of a hammer competition at Lillie Bridge in 1884. It will be published in paperback by Penguin, and the US rights have been sold already.
- Ø NUTS ties: blue terylene with NUTS motif in white. 80p (including postage) from Peter Hopkins, 22 Valerie Close, ST ALBANS, Herts, AL1 5JD.
- Ø Congratulations to: Colin Shields, who is now a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, having successfully completed a thesis on indoor sports centres; to Mike and Carol Strange on the birth on 2 April of Fiona Louise (6 lb 7 oz/2.92 kg); to Peter Moss and Janette Pye on their marriage on 2 August.

FIFTY YEARS ON!! by Harold M Abrahams

On 4 July 1974 I received with great pleasure the following telegram:

++ NUTS MEMBERS SEND BEST WISHES ON OCCASION OF 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR
OG 100M VICTORY AND LOOK FORWARD TO READING YOUR ACCOUNT IN NUTS NOTES++

Since I cannot possibly refuse Andrew's request here goes. I turn the clock back five decades to July 1924, and when I have dealt with my efforts in the Olympics, I hope it may be of interest to say something about my training and racing before the Games.

Great Britain's Athletic Team consisted of 19 officials, 71 competitors and 9 "trainers etc" (six of the latter were described as "trainers" and three as "masseurs"). A B George (brother of the great W G) was "Hon Team Manager" and Philip Baker (who had competed in both the 1912 and 1920 Games, winning a silver medal in the latter) was Team Captain. Of the 71 competitors (in 1924 each country could enter up to four competitors per event with no qualifying standards) no less than 19 were from the Achilles Club - happy days!

We travelled over to France by the longest sea-route: Newhaven-Dieppe, allegedly because the Gare St Lazare in Paris was the nearest station to the "Hôtel Moderne" where we were billeted! Actually funds were rather more limited than they are these days, and understandably the cheapest route was chosen. We had a ghastly crossing: "Sea rough and a risk of thunderstorms". I spent the journey keeping my lunch down and spirits up by singing Gilbert and Sullivan with Malcolm Nokes, entirely disregarding the possible effect on my fellow athletes. I still have a very clear picture of Douglas Lowe, immaculately dressed (as ever), lying prostrate on the deck. Less than a week later he was Olympic 800m champion.

The hotel at which we stayed was in the Place de la République, one of the busiest centres of Paris. My room was on a corner and the high-pitched motor horns were not exactly conducive to sleep before the competitions.

My coach, dear old Sam Mussabini, was not persona grata with the AAA and I only saw him once in Paris before the 100m, for he kept well clear of the Officials.

The heats of the 100m - there were 17 of them to cope with 82 competitors - took place at 3.30 on the afternoon of Sunday 6 July. My three fellow UK competitors all got through theirs and in each case in 11.0. I was in heat 14 along with E W ("Slip") Carr from Australia (his son with the same initials was Commonwealth 440y winner in 1950. I won in 11.0 but did not feel at all happy. In the two hours or so before the second round, I talked with Philip Baker who suggested that I had not limbered up enough. I was in the fourth of six heats in the second round, with the first two in each to go through to the semi-finals.

The first three heats of that round won by Murchison and Bowman (both USA) and Coaffee (Canada) were run in 10 $\frac{4}{5}$. I ran very much better against Hester (Canada) and was delighted with the time 10 $\frac{3}{5}$, which equalled the Olympic record. The last two heats were each won in 10 $\frac{4}{5}$, by Paddock and Scholz (both USA). Lance Royle and Walter Rangeley fell by the wayside, but Nichol got through to the semi-finals.

While happy with my effort, I was far too experienced not to take too much notice of the fact that I was, on paper, 1/5 faster than the other runners. As the timing in those days was to 1/5, one realised that a runner might be a small fraction over 10 $\frac{3}{5}$ or just short of 10 $\frac{4}{5}$, a difference of 2 yards and yet be given the same time. Indeed our timekeepers used 1/100 watches and if the watch showed 10.41 or 10.59 it would still be given as 10 $\frac{3}{5}$.

We had hardly any information about foreign athletes in the 1920s (most, if not all, of the NUTS were yet to appear on this globe!). Scholz, Paddock and Murchison I had seen run in Antwerp in 1920 - all had reached the 100m final, so I knew all about them and I had the greatest respect for their

abilities. And now with less than 24 hours to go, I realised that I was not out of their class and had a chance of victory. Though really I didn't think all that about it.

The first semi-final was at 3.00. Scholz won in 10 $\frac{4}{5}$ with Arthur Porritt second, just ahead of Murchison. There were two false starts. I had limbered up a lot, most carefully dug my holes (no starting blocks in those days) and carefully measured where my first stride was to come. I was in lane 4 between Carr (on my right) and Coaffee. Bowman and Paddock were in lanes 1 and 2. There was one false start and then we got down for the second time. The starter was Dr Moir from Manchester, who along with Freddie Hulford had started the AAA Championships. He was a very good starter indeed, but in Paris I think a little overawed with the occasion - and who would not be? Anyway, "À vos marques" he said. Then "Prêt". Out of the corner of my right eye I saw Carr move. Bang! I was certain there would be a recall, but there wasn't, and I found myself and in much less time than it takes to read about it, I was running perhaps a couple of yards behind my five opponents. "Don't panic", said a small voice inside me. "Keep your form and those arms well down." Gradually the gap closed and I dropped down for the tape. I thought I felt it break. But experience told me that very often you can feel the tape and yet not have won.

I walked almost despairingly back to the start. Had I won? Had I even qualified? At last, after what seemed hours, the French loudspeaker: "Allo! Allo! Le cent mètres, deuxième demi-finale. Premier, Quatre cents dix-neuf." 419 - my number! What a relief! And then the time: "Dix, trois cinquièmes. Record Olympique égalisé." Somehow I knew at that moment that come what may I would win the final, scheduled to take place at 6.00 that very afternoon.

Perhaps what Philip Noel-Baker once wrote about that semi-final may be legitimately quoted: "To a sprinter, an Olympic final is the supreme moment of his athletic life. In all human probability, it comes to him but once. To a sprinter's friends, a semi-final is even more exciting, in the strain it imposes on their emotions and their nerves. If their man goes through, he joins the immortal ranks of the first six finalists in the Olympic Games. If he fails, his name may be forgotten, and he himself may feel the sharp, though temporary, bitterness of defeat.

I was sitting near the start of the semi-finals of the 100 metres in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924. I had no doubt that Harold Abrahams would go through. He had been recording magnificent times in England; he had equalled the Olympic record in his preliminary run; I was sharing his bedroom in our Paris hotel, and I knew at first hand the intensive training, with its minute attention to every detail, which he had done. I had seen, and I had tried to help with his psychological preparation. As he himself says, no wise man will venture a firm prediction on Olympic victories. In my heart of hearts I had little doubt that Harold would win. But nonetheless I felt a growing, urgent tension as he and his five opponents stripped and went down to their marks. My instinct was not mistaken. What really happened, only Harold - and perhaps the starter - can say; but certain it is that he was "left" - "left" by a yard and a half - a yard and a half that might have been two yards. Who could give so great a start to sprinters good enough to reach the semi-final? The next 10 seconds showed. For Harold, once he left his mark, showed no sign of panic; he held his form, perhaps more gloriously than in the final itself; he overhauled the other runners, and won in the time which was then recoded as 10 $\frac{3}{5}$ seconds. But if you want his real time, you must deduct that yard and a half - or perhaps 2 yards - from 10 $\frac{3}{5}$; and how near that brings him to the Olympic Records of today." (Written in 1948)

The final was scheduled for 6.00 pm. In fact it was run at five minutes past seven. No false start this time. I have read accounts which suggest that I was fourth at half distance, but after the first twenty yards or so, my own recollection was that I was in the lead and felt myself gaining inches, or at any rate centimetres, with every stride, and I did not "dive" for the tape until I was within a couple of strides. Said "The Times" correspondent, who was not exactly one of my "fans", "Abrahams again ran a fine race and was the

first to reach the tape, but could do no more than equal for the third time the Olympic record of 10 $\frac{3}{5}$ sec. Scholz was second and Porritt 3rd." Next day he made amends by the kind writing: "Abrahams is beyond question the outstanding figure among the athletes of all nations. His performance in equaling the Olympic Record three successive times in as many heats of the 100 metres has struck the French public imagination and the press generally is generous in its admiration of him."

Next day came the 200m. In my heat I beat Paddock in 22 $\frac{1}{5}$ and in the second round another American B M Norton in 22.0. On the following day in the semi-final, I just managed to reach the final behind Scholz and G L Hill (USA). I had felt very tired and my trainer "Sam" Mussabini suggested that I had gone off a little too fast. Consequently I decided to start rather more slowly in the final, with the result that I lost whatever chance I had in the first 50 yards. When we entered the straight I was well down and I finished a very very bad sixth.

I have always regretted that I did not run better in that 200m. Naturally the reaction after the 100m was to be expected, and by the end of the week my form had returned and I think I ran well in the relay. I still believe that I was better over 200m than 100m. If only I could run that 200m again!

I hope it will interest members if I give a short account of training and competition in the 1920s. I trained three days a week - only two when I had a competition on the Saturday. I spent many hours perfecting starting, and am proud to record that during the whole of my athletic career, I never once caused a false start. In 1923, after the Oxford and Cambridge Sports in March, when I ran in the 100y and 440y and long jumped, my next competition was on 16 June, when I won the 100y, 220y and long jump in the Midland Counties. A week later I won three events - 100y, 220y and long jump - in the first English Closed Championships. On 7 June I ran 75y in a handicap and took part in a 4 x 440y relay. The AAA Championships were on 6/7 July. I won my heat in the 220y in 22.4 and was well beaten by Eric Liddell in the second round which Eric won in 21.6. It was said that Nichol and I had run in the same time in the second round and I was called upon to run against him for the third place in a three man final. I declined. Next day I failed to reach the final of the 100y, but managed to long jump over 23 ft/7.01 with each of my six jumps, winning with 23-8 $\frac{3}{4}$ (7.23), much to my sadness failing to beat the Championship best performance by less than an inch. My final appearance that year was against Harvard and Yale at Wembley Stadium, where I ran a straight 220y in 21.6.

My first race in 1924 was on 3 May, also at Wembley, where I beat Nichol by two yards in the 100y. On 10 May I won the Middlesex 100y and long jump. On 17 May I ran for Achilles against the Services and also long jumped. On 24 May I won three events in the Midland Counties. A week later I won the 100y and long jump (23-9 $\frac{3}{4}$ (7.26)) at the Kinnaird trophy. At Woolwich on 7 June I won the 100y "with a slight following wind" in 9.6. There were no wind gauges. When the timekeepers told me of the time, I asked how far Nichol was behind and was told "1 yard." I therefore queried the time and no application was ever made for a "record". As far as I remember in those days a sprinter was expected to ask for his record to be accepted.

I did not race between 7 June and 21 June - the second day of the AAA Championships. I was - in fact - very stale, though I managed to win the 100y in 9.9 and the long jump with a miserable 22-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ (6.87). I did not train again for over a week, and had recovered my form by the time we left for Paris.

Judged by modern ideas, I trained far too infrequently, and did not compete nearly enough. But I often wonder whether I could, possibly stand the strain of modern training and competition. Fortunately I was never faced with that problem.

(Members will be interested to know that Harold is the author of "Athletic Games and Contests" in the 15th edition of "Encyclopaedia Britannica". Ed.)

NUTS RECORDS

3000mSt: 8:53.6 Steve Mitchell (2) 6 Jun 74 Loughborough
400mH: 71.1 Liz Sissons (1) 28 Apr 74 Ewell

WHO IS THE GREATEST SPECTATOR IN THE NUTS?

The following amendments should be made to the list appearing in the last issue (p.3):

200m	19.83	Tommie Smith (USA)	Mexico City	16.10.68
400m	43.86	Lee Evans (USA)	Mexico City	18.10.68
SP	22.021	George Woods (USA)	Inglewood, Cal.	8. 2.74
4x100mR	38.23	USA	Mexico City	20.10.68

Women

400m	50.97	Marilyn Neufville (Jam)	Edinburgh	23. 7.70
LJ	6.84	Heide Rosendahl (GFR)	Turin	3. 9.70

These amendments give Neil Allen the highest score of 38.

"SCOTTISH ATHLETICS YEARBOOK 1974" has been/is being sent to all 1973 NUTS list compilers but all members should be interested in buying a copy (35p post free from Jeff Carter, 20 Harrison Gardens, EDINBURGH EH11 1SQ).

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS: NUTS members going to Rome for the EC are invited to contact Andrew Huxtable; he will be with the "AW"/4S tour and is staying at Hotel San Remo, Via M D'Azeglio 36. Hopefully one or more formal get-togethers can be organised.

FILMS ON SPORT Returning to one of my favourite topics, I was very pleased to learn that Tom McNab hopes to organise at least one screening of "College" (Buster Keaton 1927, see NUTS Notes, Vol 6 No 4). Further details will be published in "AW".

Sometime ago I bought a copy of a Council for Cultural Co-operation (Council of Europe) publication "Catalogue of Films on Sport". Among those listed is one of Tom McNab's favourites "Les Rendez-vous de l'été" (Summer meetings) directed by Jacques Ertaud shot in 1964 on 16mm Eastmancolor, running time 54 mins French/English commentary. This film can be hired from Service du Cinéma, Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, 14 Cromwell Place, LONDON SW7 2JR.

Also listed in the catalogue under international competitions are the following:

OLYMPIA 52 (France) 16mm b/w sound 200 mins. This must surely be the elusive movie shot by Chris Marker?
CHAMPIONNATS D'EUROPE 1954 (France) 16mm b/w sound 54 mins
RENDEZ-VOUS A MELBOURNE 1956 (France) 16mm colour sound 85 mins
MELBOURNE 1956 (Federal Republic of Germany) 16mm b/w sound 38 mins
JEUX UNIVERSITAIRES 1957 (France) 16mm b/w sound 45 mins
PREMIERS JEUX DE L'AMITIE, LES (France) 16mm b/w sound 27 mins
COMMONWEALTH GAMES 1958 (UK) 16mm b/w sound 27 mins
LA GRANDE OLIMPIADE (Italy) 16mm colour sound 140 mins
PIERRE DE COUBERTIN, LA RENOVATION DES JEUX OLYMPIQUES (France) 16mm b/w sound 26 mins

On 28 May I heard Michael Samuelson lecture at the NFT on behalf of the BKSTS (British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society) on the subject of sports filming. As Managing Director of Samuelson Film Service he was the Technical and photographic Director of "Goal!" (1966 World Cup), "The Olympics in Mexico" (1968), and "Visions of Eight" (1972).