

Australia in Sports

by Eddie Kann (Sydney-Australia)

We publish below some important extracts from an article which appeared in the magazine "International Council on Health, Physical Education and Recreation - Asian Journal".

Australia is a sports-loving nation with many men and women who have achieved fame and glory in international competition in many branches of athletic activity.

For the past 20 years, Australian players dominated world tennis, having won the Davis Cup emblematic of world supremacy, on 15 occasions since 1949, despite the continual loss of star performers to the professional ranks.

Australians also excel at squash, Mrs. Heather MCKAY having been the world's best woman player since 1962.

As Heather BLUNDELL, she first won the British amateur title, symbol of world supremacy in 1962 and, after eight wins will defend it again this year.

Australia has won the only two men's world championships (individual and teams) decided in 1967 and 1969, Geoff HUNT winning both individual titles. He was only 17 when he first won the Australian title in 1965.

The attention of the boxing world also has been focused strongly on Australia, which last year boasted for the first

time two world champions - featherweight Johnny FAMECHON and bantamweight Lionel ROSE.

Aboriginal Lionel ROSE gave Australian boxing a terrific lift with his defeat of Japan's Fighting HARADA to win the world bantamweight championship in Tokyo in 1968, followed by his two successful bouts in defence of the title.

Australia ranks as number two swimming nation in the world. Few people in Australia are unable to swim, thanks to the kindly climate which draws young and old out of doors, 12,446 miles of coastline liberally endowed with magnificent beaches, and plenty of public and private pools.

Much of the swimming is purely recreational but the country has 150,000 competitive swimmers spurred on by the deeds of Australia's Olympic representatives.

Australia has been represented in swimming at all Olympic Games in the present century.

Starting with Fred LANE in 1900 at Paris, the swimmers have won more gold medals than any other sporting group from Australia.

Dawn FRASER, women's 100 metres free-style champion at three successive Olympic Games in 1956, 1960 and 1964, holds the record for most Olympic medals won by an Australian - eight, only four short of the record for any Games competitor.



Dawn FRASER

Sir Frank BEAUREPAIRE swam at four Olympiads, in 1908, 1912, 1920 and 1924, a span of 16 years.

The stirring performances also of Fanny DURACK, Cec HEALY, Harold HARDWICK, Boy CHARLTON, Dick EVE, Claire DENNIS, Jon HENRICKS, Murray ROSE, David THIELE, John DEVITT, John KONRADS, Michael WENDEN, Karen MORAS and others, provide further incentive and inspiration for young Australian swimmers to strive for Olympic honours. (1)

In athletics, women have been winning more Olympic gold medals for Australia than the men. Marjorie JACKSON, Shirley STRICKLAND, Betty CUTHBERT and Maureen CAIRD, sprinters and hurdlers, collected eight "golds" from 1952 to 1968.

In this period, Herb ELLIOT won a gold at Rome in 1960 for the 1,500 metres and Ralph DOU-

(1) This article was written before the recent achievement of the Australian swimmer, Shane GOULD.

BELL for the 800 metres at Mexico in 1968.

Australia's first Olympic Champion was E.H. (Edwin) FLACK, who won the 800 metres and 1,500 metres at Athens in 1896.

Distance runner Ron CLARK, who established 17 world records but never won an Olympic title, kept Australia's name well to the fore-front in athletics in recent years.

John LANDY and Herb ELLIOT also did much to publicise Australian athletics with their running of the mile inside four minutes.

Australian endurance running



Ron CLARK

gained distinction after World War II. The two fastest marathons have been credited to Victorian Derek CLAYTON after he covered the 26 miles 385 yards in 2 hours, 8 minutes 33.6 seconds, at Antwerp, Belgium, in May 1969. Irish-born CLAYTON clocked the previous world's best time in Japan of 2 hours, 9 minutes, 36.4 seconds.

Australia, the bulk of whose

population lives along the coastline, is naturally an aquatic nation.

Boats of all classes, some of them Australia's own designs and inventions, engage weekly in a wide variety of sailing and yachting events in the summer. Craft ranging from Flying Ants, Moths and Gnats to ocean-going yachts, provide spectacular contests, especially in the picturesque setting of Sydney Harbour

The Australia Day Regatta in all States, some of which attract 500 yachts, are Australia's largest regattas. The first Australia Day Regatta was held in Sydney on January 26th, 1828. Since 1837, this regatta has been staged annually.

In 1962 Australia became the fourth nation in 111 years to challenge for the America's Cup, the most prized international yachting trophy.

Australia, with GRETEL as the challenger, enjoyed a moment of triumph as the first country in 28 years to win a heat in the America's Cup against the United States.

Since Australia entered Olympic Games yachting in 1948, she has won a gold, a bronze and a silver medal.

Bill NORTHAM, at 59, made history as the oldest competitor to win an Olympic Games gold medal when he skippered BARRENJOEY to victory in the 5.5 metre class at Tokyo in 1964.

In sculling, Australians have been pre-eminent. Edward TRICKETT, Bill BEACH, Henry SEARLE and George TOWNS were among the early Australian scullers who held the world title.

BEACH retired undefeated after seven championship races from 1884 to 1887 to set a record. Major GOODSELL beat fellow Australian James PADDON in the world sculling championship on the Parramatta River in 1926 before emigrating to America.

Evans PADDON regained the title on the Parramatta in 1948 only to have it taken from him by George COOK.

H.R. ("Bobby") PEARCE, a member of a famous Australian sporting family, who made Canada his home, won Australia's first two Olympic gold medals for sculling in 1928 at Amsterdam and in 1932 at Los Angeles. Probably the fastest sculler ever seen, PEARCE also remained undefeated when he turned professional. PEARCE, Merv WOOD, Olympic gold-medallist in 1948, Stuart MCKENZIE and Tasmanian Cec McVILLY are four Australians to win the coveted Diamond Sculls at the Royal Henley Regatta in England.

MCKENZIE won the Diamond Sculls from 1957 to 1962, inclusive, when he resigned as undisputed world amateur sculling champion.

Australia has given to sport some of the greatest cricketers in the world, headed by batsmen Vic TRUMPER, Sir Donald BRADMAN



Robert PEARCE

and Charlie MACARTNEY, demon bowler Fred SPOFFORTH, allrounder George GIFFEN, down to the giants of the post-War era such as Bill O'REILLY, Stan McCABE, Neil HARVEY, Alan DAVIDSON, Keith MILLER, Ray LINDWALL, Arthur MORRIS, Richie BENAUD, Bobby SIMPSON, Bill LAWRY, Doug WALTERS and Ian CHAPPELL.

The major football played in the Australian winter is Australian Rules, which attracts crowds of more than 100,000 to the Melbourne Cricket Ground to watch the club semi-finals and final, and grand final.

The professional Rugby League code makes the biggest appeal in New South Wales and Queensland, followed by soccer and Rugby Union.

Australia won the last Rugby League World Cup series in 1968 against Great Britain, France and New Zealand.

Australian soccer has come under powerful immigrant influence with leading teams containing a big proportion of players of British and European extraction.

Australia entered the international soccer in 1922 when an Australian team toured New Zealand.

New Zealand, Chinese, Canadian, Czechoslovakian, English (amateur and professional), Indian, South African and Yugoslavian teams had visited Australia before the 1950s. Visits by overseas teams now number two or more yearly.

Australia is reputed to be a nation of gamblers. Horse racing, trotting and dog racing provide the main outlet for this urge to "take a punt".

The first horses arrived in Australia with Governor Phillip in 1788, and the first race meetings took place at Parramatta and in Sydney's Hyde Park in 1810.

For many years, race meetings have been a weekly feature in all capital and major cities, towns and country centres throughout Australia.

Biggest participant sports in Australia, apart from fishing, are golf and lawn bowls. Golfers - men and women from their teens into their 80s - and bowlers in the same category (no age limit), crowd the fairways and greens throughout the year.

Field hockey in Australia has made great advance. In 1935 a visiting Indian Army team beat Australia 12-1 in a "Test".

In 1968 in Mexico, Australia beat India (the title holders) in the Olympic Games hockey semi-final, but lost to Pakistan 1-2 in the final.

Australia finished fifth in the 1956 Olympic Games, sixth in 1960 and won her first hockey medal, a bronze, for third placing to India and Pakistan at Tokyo in 1964.

In the 1968 Australian Olympic medal winning team were three PEARCE brothers from Western Australia.

Australia also has moved up into the world's top four in women's hockey.

Surf board riding and water skiing have increased greatly in popularity. The number of board riders has now topped 100,000.

Australia also has a world champion water skier, Brian COCKBURN, who won the world tricks championship at Copenhagen, Denmark in 1969.

Motor racing, in which Australian Jack BRABHAM has taken world honours, has one of the biggest followings in Australian sport.

Australia emerged as a basketball nation at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Basketball has the richest Australian ama-

teur sporting bodies with stadiums exceeding \$2,000,000 in value. Australia will send a men's team to the World Championships in Yugoslavia in 1970.

Australia first competed in World Archery Championships in 1965 and will send men and women's representatives to Munich in 1972 when archery will be restored to the Olympic Games' programme after a lapse of 52 years.

Snow sports are also well organised and have an extensive following in Australia. New South Wales and Victoria are the major snow sports States.

F. K.

