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Sporting & Dramatic
REVIEW
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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1907.

THE STANDING START.

Those who remember the old days of the flag start and the many vexatious delays and uneven despatches that used to occur so constantly, will readily admit the great improvement the starting barrier has brought about. With such an able man as Mr. O'Connor at the lever we are left with very little room for complaint; but even he must have his patience exhausted by some of the unruly brigade; the result being that occasionally one sees a horse getting a flying start and another left at the post. Going back no farther than the Takapuna meeting Mr. O'Connor had frequently great difficulty in getting his fields away on even terms owing to the horses crowding in together and general misbehaviour when lined up. There are two remedies for this which might well be tried to see whether any improvement could be effected. One of these is to give the starter an assistant to line up the horses, by which method many opportunities of an even despatch now lost would be acquired. The other method suggested is that of the walking start, which finds favour with many. Several English writers strongly uphold this system. For instance, the English scribe "Augur," of the London "Sporting Life," is a bitter opponent of the present system of starting horses from a stand. He has nothing to say against the starting gate, so long as the horse has not to stand with its nose to the tapes before they can start. In support of his attack against the standing start system, the writer went to the trouble of compiling a list of the horses that during the last season in England were left at the post, or whose chance of winning was lost by getting badly away. His list showed 278 names as recorded in the "Racing Calendar." Going through the newspaper reports his figures were increased to 384 horses which during the season had not got a fair start. "Augur's" opinion is "that one of the greatest causes of the trouble is the moving tapes which the horses see just as they are called upon to jump off, and this accounts in most cases for the whipping round, which is nowadays so frequently chronicled. It is a well-known fact that horses are very timid of anything to which they are not accustomed which is moving, and will shy at the sight of a moving rope or leaf or piece of paper, and this nervousness accounts for the many 'hooded' horses seen out nowadays, when 'blinding shutters' worked on a string by the jockey have to be brought into requisition to prevent the horse seeing the dreaded instrument. There is, however, more than this to account for the aversion which so many animals nowadays contract for the starting-gate, and I feel convinced that the attempt to start 'from a stand,' as ordered by the Jockey Club stewards, is responsible for much of the trouble. High-mettled racers cannot be brought to a line and made to stand still with strange companions in the same manner that a troop of trained troopers' horses can be manoeuvred, and long ere this a trial should have been given to some other methods—one that has been frequently suggested being that of a walk-up start to a point a few yards from the barrier. It seems most extraordinary why there should be such an objection on the part of the ruling body to try some more satisfactory means of starting, for it cannot be contended that a method that permits of over 300 unfair starts is at all an equitable or desirable arrangement. And yet, although in the course of the season one hears complaints on all hands, owners do not bring the matter forward, and so we go on year after year, and valuable horses are ruined, and in many cases

badly kicked." A writer in "Bailey's Magazine" also attacks the standing start. It is when we come to write of the starting question and of jockeyship that we may fairly call for reform (he writes). You have only to attentively watch one of the present standing starts, where a dozen or more horses are bunched in front of the tape, and you will hear and see what you wish never to hear and see again—horses lashing out at one another, jockeys cursing; and little wonder, for their limbs, and those of their horses, are in danger; while sitting as they now do on their horses' necks, with their knees almost up to their chins, they are at the mercy of their mounts. Consequently, the moment the tape flies up they crash into one another, and many a good horse is knocked out of his stride before the race is fairly begun, and even then the jockeys, or rather the majority of them, fail to keep their horses straight, and swerving is now the rule instead of the exception. How can it be otherwise with the present style of racing, where the whip is the only means that such monkeys on sticks can use, or the spur can only wound the flap of the saddle? There seems a good deal in the arguments brought forward, and it might be well for the ruling powers to consider whether the walking start should not be given a trial. If it proved a success it could be maintained. If such was not the case we could easily revert to the present method with the addition of an assistant for the starter.

NOTES.

(By "The Judge.")

The Middy, who carried a ton of commission money, ran in bandages at Takapuna, and after his preliminary could scarcely keep on his feet.

Mr. D. J. Lynch, who sold Freemount, is in treaty to purchase Autahi from Mr. J. W. Russell, the well-known Vulcan Lane hotel proprietor.

The weights for the Papakura annual meeting came out punctually to time, and Mr. W. Edwards seems to have pleased most of the owners.

Mr. W. J. Lynch has disposed of his Freedom gelding Freemount, who has been purchased by Mr. Deeble, the Thames sportsman. One hundred guineas was paid for the useful looking brown.

Mr. Geo. Hyde, the Grey street boniface, has purchased a colt by Soult—Joan of Arc. The son of Soult is to be added to the list.

Rumour has it that the North Shore sportsman, Mr. E. W. Alison, threw in for a good win over the late T.J.C. Meeting. He is said to have picked the winning double each day, which paid £25, £273 10/, and £144 16/ respectively, besides supporting the winners of the T.J.C. and Summer Handicaps.

By public advice received from Sydney both Apologue and Kilderkin are on the improve, and will be shortly put into active training.

Hautapu was looked upon as an absolute "moral" for the Waiwera Hurdles at Takapuna, and so it proved, for the little son of Mitiora was rever seriously asked to extend himself. On paper Soultfish might have leaten him, but Mr. McHugh's gelding was a bit sore and could not gallop.

Blackford has Black and Go'd better now than the gelding ever was before. Despite the welter weight of 9st 10lb, he made hacks of the field in the Borough Handicap, finishing quite three lengths ahead of Hikua. It would pay to send Black and Gold to Australia, where the dry air would suit him.

Wauchope was made a warm favourite for the Marine Handicap at Takapuna on Saturday, and the good thing duly came off, the son of Freedom winning easily from Messrs. Duder's filly Lira. By the way, I notice the race-books invariably spell this filly's name Leira, which, of course, is incorrect. She is a daughter of Anna, and an anna is an Indian coin worth about one penny. The name Lira, therefore, is a suitable one, as a lira is an Italian coin worth about 9½d.

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RACING CALENDAR.

NEW ZEALAND.

FIXTURES.—1907.

- February 7 and 8—Gisborne R. C.
- February 7 and 8—Maniototo J.C.
- February 7 and 8—Canterbury J.C.
- February 9—Papakura R.C.
- February 13 and 14—Egmont R.C.
- February 14 and 15—Poverty Bay T.C.
- February 16, 20, 23—Otahuhu Trotting Club
- February 20, 21, and 23—Dunedin J.C.
- February 20 and 21—Woodville J.C.
- February 26 and 27—Rotorua J.C.
- February 27 and 28—Taranaki J.C.
- March 2—South Auckland R.C.
- March 5—Akaroa County R.C.
- March 6 and 7—Dannevirke J.C.
- March 8 and 9—Wanganui J.C.
- March 9—Waihi J.C.
- March 13 and 14—Napier Park R.C.
- March 15 and 16—Tologa Bay J.C.
- March 16 and 18—Ohinemuri J.C.
- March 18—Opunake R.C.
- March 18 and 19—Greyouth J.C.
- March 18 and 19—Horowhenua Haek R.C.
- March 20 and 21—Southland R.C.
- March 20—Waipawa County R.C.
- March 21—Waimate R.C.
- March 21 and 22—Masterton R.C.
- March 21 and 24—Thames J.C.
- March 22 and 23—Westport J.C.
- March 30 and April 1—Wairarapa R.C.
- April 1, 2 and 6—Auckland R.C.

NOMINATIONS.

- February 8—South Auckland R.C.
- February 22—A.R.C. (special events)
- February 22—Ohinemuri J.C.
- March 11—Patea R.C.
- March 15—Auckland R.C.

HANDICAPS.

- February 8—Poverty Bay T.C.
- February 15—Taranaki J.C.
- February 15—South Auckland R.C.
- February 16—Wanganui J.C. (special events)
- February 23—Wanganui J.C.
- March 5—Ohinemuri J.C.
- March 11—A.R.C. (special events)
- March 18—Patea R.C.
- March 19—Auckland R.C.

ACCEPTANCES.

- February 9—Poverty Bay T.C.
- February 22—Taranaki J.C.
- February 22—South Auckland R.C.
- March 1—Wanganui J.C.
- March 8—Ohinemuri J.C.
- March 15—A.R.C. (special events)
- March 22—Auckland R.C.
- March 25—Patea R.C.

REMINDERS TO OWNERS.

All nominations for the South Auckland Racing Club's annual meeting will close with Mr. R. J. Gwynne, the secretary, at Hamilton, or with Mr. H. B. Massey, Auckland, at 9 p.m. on Friday, February 8.

Nominations for the Easter Handicap, Brighton Hurdles, St. George's Handicap, Autumn Handicap, and Autumn Steeplechase to be run at the Autumn Meeting of the Auckland Racing Club close with Mr. Hartland, the secretary, on February 22, at 9 p.m.

Acceptances for the Easter Handicap Brighton Hurdles and Autumn Steeplechase are due on March 15, on which date general entries for the A.R.C. Autumn Meeting are also due.

Nominations for all events to be decided at the annual meeting of the Patea Racing Club (other than local events) close with Mr. R. W. Hamerton, the secretary, on Monday, March 11, at 8 p.m.

Nominations for all events to be decided at the annual meeting of the Ohinemuri J.C. close with Mr. H. Poland, secretary, Paeroa, on Friday, February 22, at 9 p.m.

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