

THE FOOTBALL WORLD.

(BY "SCRUTATOR.")

Auckland went mightily near losing the Ranfurly Shield last Saturday. 'Tis many a long day since such a weak rep. team essayed to uphold the laurels of the Northern Province as that which took the field against Hawke's Bay. With Smith, Kiernan, Gillett, R. Wynyard, Seeling, Trevarthen, G. Tyler, W. Tyler, Francis and Cunningsham out of the team, it was anything but the redoubtable combination of previous years.

It was a crowd of thorough Rugby enthusiasts which assembled at Alexandra Park on Saturday to witness the match between Auckland and Hawke's Bay. The game was very keenly contested—too keenly, in fact, for the peace of mind of the big crowd, and for the greater part of the match they were in suspense. When, however, towards the end, Auckland's victory became assured, they gave way to suppressed feeling, and the stand became a seething mass of excitement.

The visitors had by far the stronger team, and the heavier. From the outset, it was patent that Auckland was going to have a rough time of it. The display in the first half was simply shocking. The Hawke's Bay men ran over the Aucklanders, and for at least two-thirds of the time had them on the defensive. The home team seemed altogether at a loss as regards combination. The backs gave an exhibition that could only be classed as a parody on football. Fumbling, for which there was no excuse, occurred again and again, and there was not a redeeming feature. Likewise the forwards failed to shine out with any semblance of brilliance.

It was simply pure good luck that Hawke's Bay did not register a point in the first half. Early in the game the referee penalised Auckland right in front of their own goal. Walshe took an easy kick, but failed to put the ball over the cross-bar. Time and again the visitors invaded their opponents' 25, but though they tried hard, failed to notch a score. One or two apparently certain tries were lost through bad passing. Auckland was playing with a strong wind, almost amounting to a gale, behind them. Yet they were entirely kept on the defensive for the first 30 minutes. Towards the end of the first spell, they rallied somewhat, and the forwards began to show out more forcibly in loose play. Carrying the game to a neutral zone, the defenders of the shield managed to hold their own there, and then relieved the tension by assuming the aggressive. W. Wynyard and Magee carried the ball into Hawke's Bay territory, and then the forwards took it up. Hayward and McDonald headed a nice forward rush, and Hayward, securing the leather within a few yards of the line, ploughed his way through the thick of his opponents, scoring a meritorious try. Magee made a good attempt to convert from a difficult angle.

Though Auckland had the advantage of three points when play was resumed after the spell, supporters of the home team were inclined to consider their prospects in rather a gloomy light. All the honours of the first half were with the visitors, and on resuming they had the sun and wind behind them. Magee reorganised his pack in the second spell, putting City Maguire into the front rank. The change was unquestionably a wise one, and had a good deal to do with subsequent developments. Confident of their own abilities, the visitors attacked smartly, and immediately had Auckland in trouble. All the Auckland backs were out of position, and Miller essayed to take the ball from a kick by McIntyre. Failing to get underneath it in time, he fumbled, and McIntyre, following on, had a clear run along the line, enabling him to score. Tomlin failed to convert.

With the score even, there was no end of excitement. Hawke's Bay barrackers—and there were a few—were wildly confident of victory. Had the Auckland team continued to play as wretchedly to the end as they had

up to the time of Hawke's Bay's score, it is certain that Northern-Bayers would have to-day been bewailing the loss of the shield. Fortunately, however, a miraculous change seemed to be worked. The home team rallied in a manner that was out of all comparison to their previous play. The backs retrieved themselves, and effected some brilliant rushes. Again and again they tackled their opponents' stronghold. W. Wynyard, who had shone out above all the other backs right through the game, got in with a brilliant run. When tackled, he passed to Twiname, who in turn transferred to Dillamore, and amidst the greatest excitement another try was scored. A few minutes later, Hall got hold of the leather, and with a lovely run, dashed over the line.

From this out the game was fast and furious. Hawke's Bay tried hard to equalise matters, but Auckland was just as keen, and the last 20 minutes of the game was a revelation. Magee, who skippered the home team, and Walshe, who captained the visitors, both received injuries which necessitated their taking up positions as full-backs to their respective teams. In the last ten minutes Wynyard was responsible for a very fine score. From the line-out he got possession, and passed to Murray, who, when tackled, passed back to Wynyard, and the score was added to by a neat try. Shortly after the bell rang, and the home team retained possession of the shield by 12 points to 3.

As before remarked, the exhibition in the first half by the Auckland team was beyond understanding. Miller, as fullback, was the only player whose form was not disappointing, and it was due to his cool, heady, defensive work that Hawke's Bay played a scoreless first half. In the second spell the Auckland backs retrieved themselves. Murray was the pick of a very poor threequarter-line. Magee was suffering from an injured shoulder, received at the Thames the previous Saturday, and his work at five-eighths, though safe, was not as brilliant as usual. W. Wynyard played the game of his life, and was responsible for a deal of brilliant work. Kiernan's place behind the scrum was taken by Ladner, but his play was mediocre in the extreme. Of the forwards, Hayward Kinder, Hall and Grafton Maguire were the most solid. Hayward's work throughout was deserving of the greatest praise, and in the open he was simply a tower of strength to the Auckland team.

Of the visitors it was not an easy matter to sort out any player except McIntyre for individual mention. Hawke's Bay has certainly a stronger representative team this season than any previous year and went very near wresting the coveted Ranfurly Shield from Auckland's possession. Walshe and Tomlin, as five-eighths, played dashing games, while Payne was a model half-back. McCarthy and Strufflers were more than a match for the opposing hookers in the first half, though matters were equalised somewhat in the second spell. Caulton and Scullion were perhaps the smartest in the loose of a very fine lot of forwards.

As a curtain-raiser to the big match on Saturday, Auckland B's met a rep. team sent down by the Franklin Union. The visitors began by making things very lively in Auckland's 25, and within ten minutes of the game's commencement had worked the ball by a forward rush over the home team's line, D. Blake notching the try. The visitors' first advantage was their last, for the blue and whites had it all their own way in subsequent play. Wilson, by a decent run, carried the leather into Franklin's 25, and from a scrum on the line Farrant repeated his performance of the previous Saturday by taking the ball from the opposing team, thus equalising the score.

For a while play centred about a neutral zone. Then Farrant secured from some line-out play, and after a

tricky run passed to Hogan, who swerved through the opposition, and though he collided heavily with a goal-post, succeeded in planting the ball over the line. Within a few moments, Hogan had scored his second try. Wilson, with his usual pace, got clear away from the field, and with only the fullback to beat, passed to Hogan at the right moment, with the result that another three points were added to the score.

The teams did not leave the field, but simply changed ends for the second spell. Play was not of a very interesting nature, and the only try scored was placed to the credit of Pople, who darted across from a convenient line out. Wilson converted, and the game resulted: Auckland B's, 14; Franklin, 3.

Auckland secured a triple victory on Saturday, the junior reps. visiting Waiuku and downing the local union by 8 points to 6. Rough weather was encountered by the juniors on their trip down the Manukau, and on arrival at Waiuku many of them did not feel much like football. In the first half Hardwick scored for the juniors, and in the second spell Bater got over the line in a good position, and Paul converted. Towards the end of the game the home team showed to the better advantage, and Bennett and Bright both scored. No further scores were added, however, and the game resulted in a win for the visitors by 8 points to 6.

For the juniors, all the backs played splendidly, while of the forwards Wright, Baker, Fricker, Vosper and Shaw were the best. Of the Waiuku team, Bennett, Herrold, Middleton, Brockless and Mellisop played good games. In the evening the visitors were banqueted at Molloy's hotel, when toasts proposed by Messrs. Barriball, Rossiter, Herrold, Hardwick and Molloy were duly honoured, and a very enjoyable time spent. The team returned to Auckland on Sunday.

NEWS AND NOTES.

Who is Mr. Hopkins?

Taylor, an old Grafton player, was a member of the Franklin team which visited Auckland on Saturday.

Exit Todd, R. Wynyard, Mackrell, Rowe, Trevarthen, and W. Tyler from New Zealand football.

A big crowd assembled to wish the professionals "Good-bye" on Monday, when they left by the Victoria. As the boat left the tee, "Toddy's" call for "Three cheers for good old Auckland" was intermingled with the strains of "We Parted on the Shore," played by the ship's bugler.

George Smith, W. Wynyard and Dunning expect to leave for Sydney on Monday next, to join the professional team. Wynyard is a clever five-eighths, and has skippered the North Shore team for several seasons past, while Dunning is a fine Ponsonby hooker. The reason of their inclusion is that several of the "All Blacks" who were expected to remain in Sydney and join the professionals, failed to do so.

The N.Z. Rugby Union has the right to appoint the referee in all challenge matches for the Ranfurly Shield. A Mr. Hopkins, of New Plymouth, was their selection for the Hawke's Bay match on Saturday. The appointment wasn't a happy one. The gentleman in question is very fond of the whistle—so fond, in fact, that one wasn't enough to last him through the game. They certainly play different football in Mr. Hopkins' country to what we do in the North.

It is asserted that one of the trickiest backs in Auckland refuses to go South with the touring team unless he receives compensation equivalent to the amount he would lose while away from his work. The fact that the player in question was absent from last Saturday's team lends colour to the report.

On the strength of Saturday's display by the Auckland reps., the selector must have been somewhat perplexed, such was the inconsistency of form shown. It is rather a pity, after his fine performance in Auckland the previous Saturday, that Harrison, the Northern Wairoa three-quarter, was not given a chance.

How is the Auckland team going to fare on its Southern tour this month? This is a question which has more than one Rugby enthusiast by the wool. With the exception of Bob Magee, and perhaps two others, there are no first-class backs in Auckland this season. Likewise the forwards have been greatly weakened; the retirement of Tyler and Seeling is a big blow, while the professionals have carried off three of the best. The opportunity has been provided of filling the ranks with younger players, but the promotion of Miller, Kinder, Hall and McDonald seems to have exhausted resources. Just how the team which goes South is going to prosper is a question of moment, for it is indisputable that the combination is not as strong as that of previous years.

The display of the Auckland reps. in the match against Hawke's Bay last Saturday must have been very much like a repetition of what took place in Sydney in the first "All Black" match. Until within the last 20 minutes of the game, Hawke's Bay had all the best of it. Then in the closing stages Auckland made a wonderful rally, and after defending for close on 60 out of the 90 minutes, turned the tables and fairly romped over their opponents.

"Shylock" writes as follows:—"Does the Rugby Union already feel the pinch of professional opposition, that they have decided on retrenchment, or is it really that their munificence in encouraging players has been such this year that they find it essential to dispense with a band, as an expense beyond their means? Hitherto it has been customary, on auspicious occasions, such as a Ranfurly Shield match, to add to the enjoyment of proceedings with a little band music. What's the reason of the sudden change this year?"

The sole selector to the Auckland Rugby Union (Mr D. Gallaher) has chosen the following players to represent Auckland in the tour South as far as Invercargill:—Backs: Miller, Murray, Twiname, Dillamore, R. Magee, Stuckey, Farrant, Hogan, Ladner (of Auckland) Snowling (Thames), and Coote (Waikato). Forwards: McDonald, Gillett, Maguire (2) (City and Grafton), Nicholson, Seeling, Francis, Hall, Cunningham, Kinder, MacCormick, Williams (of Auckland), and Hayward (Thames). Emergencies: Backs—Wilson, Woodward (Auckland) and Newdick (Thames). Forwards—Pople, Walsh, Hooper, and Smith (Thames). The team will probably leave Auckland next Tuesday.

At the Auckland Opera House a series of biograph pictures, showing the "All Blacks" in their first match against New South Wales, is creating no end of interest. Some of the snapshots are really good.

At the time of writing it is expected that the Goldfields will pay a return visit to Auckland next Saturday.

A match in which considerable interest is centred is that between the Ponsonby and Newton fourths, for premiership honours, which eventuate on Saturday.

It is gratifying to find that Rugby is making such splendid strides in Australia. The final test match on Saturday, which was really a third contest between the waratahs and silver ferns, brings us no nearer a solution as to which team is the superior. In the first match New Zealand was victorious by 9 to 3, and the win was generally accounted a lucky one. In the second contest the New South Welshmen had the best of it by 14 points to nil. The third combat last Saturday resulted in a drawn game. Controversy is therefore no nearer a settlement.