

# THE FOOTBALL WORLD.

(BY "SCRUTATOR.")

Auckland went dangerously near losing the Ranfurly Shield on Saturday—nearer, in fact, than ever before. Wanganui came with a good reputation, but it was generally thought, in view of the strong forward combination put into the field by Auckland, that the visitors would have little or no hope of a victory. Interest, however, was nevertheless, very keen, and the biggest football crowd of the season assembled to witness the battle for possession of the Shield.

It is not often that Rugby enthusiasts have the opportunity of seeing such a galaxy of players as assembled to participate in the Auckland-Wanganui match. H. Abbott, of "All Black" fame, Hughie Absolum, an old Auckland Suburbs player, and Peter Ward, who used to don the guernsey for Grafton, renewed their acquaintance with Northern football, and were supported by others whose reputations had preceded them.

The Auckland team was about the strongest that could have been put into the field. George Tyler again made his appearance; Opai Asher, for many years the idol of the crowd, was resurrected, and amongst others were such players as C. Seeling, A. Francis, G. Gillett, H. Kiernan, W. Cunningham, and G. Nicholson. Of these, Francis was the only man who went South with the recent Auckland touring team.

The weather was gloriously fine, and the ground was in excellent order, though perhaps a trifle heavy. Auckland won the toss, and kicked off with the sun and wind behind them. The home team began badly, the offside tactics of a couple of the forwards giving Wanganui innumerable advantages. Within the first five minutes of starting, Auckland had been penalised no less than six times. From the sound of the whistle both teams settled down to make the game a hard and strenuous one. A series of great forward rushes carried play into Wanganui's territory, where Nicholson, who had been figuring prominently in the loose work, missed an almost certain chance by failing to pass to Asher on the wing, after he had broken through the ruck. Instead he flung the ball back into the centre of the field, and lost what would otherwise have been practically a sure try.

In the first half there were occasional flashes of brilliant play, and the Wanganui backs worked several passing rushes which were simply a treat to witness. Could the visiting forwards have got the ball out to the threequarter-line more often, certain it is that there would have been a different complexion on the result. Whenever they got under way, the Wanganui backs simply swooped down the field, passing with that rare precise judgment which counts for so much in the true passing game. The most creditable piece of work to be recorded in the whole game was when Dowe, following up Nicholson's fatal pass, wriggled his way free, and commenced a passing rush down the field in which Ward, Muell and Absolum participated. Fortunately Miller, the Auckland fullback, is as safe as a house, and Absolum's career was brought to an abrupt end by the deadly little North Shore tackler.

After 20 minutes' very even play, the home team secured an advantage in Wanganui's 25. From some close play Kiernan managed to get the ball out to Gillett, and he in turn passed to Asher. The hero of many a past fight got the chance he had impatiently been waiting for, and streaking along the line, easily outpaced Southcombe, the Wanganui fullback, and scored. Magee's effort to convert was without avail. The visitors again tried to open the game up, and flung the ball about beautifully, but Auckland forwards managed to concentrate play in Wanganui territory, and George Tyler, playing the game of his life, broke through and passed to Hall, who scored. Francis endeavoured to convert, but the ball fell short of the cross-bar. The first spell ended with the score: Auckland, 6; Wanganui, 0.

On resuming, Auckland played against the wind, with a strong sun in their eyes. Magee unfortunately received one or two severe knocks in the first half, and was unable to come on again in the second spell, Bater taking his place at five-eighth. The luck of both teams seemed to be right out in the matter of scoring. Hitchings and Absolum went within an ace of getting over the line, but Miller saved by a pure chance, but it was not long before a forward rush by the Wanganui men resulted in a try being obtained by Carroll, which was converted by Hitchings. Shortly after Nicholson and Tyler worked a forward rush into Wanganui's 25, and Herring securing possession, made a dive for the line. He managed to get over but unfortunately dropped the ball. Line scrums followed, and for ten minutes Auckland had the visitors in hot water, while the excitement of the crowd worked to fever height. Several chances were lost, and Kiernan was at fault in trying too often to dart around the scrum and wriggle through—a ruse that only stands working once.

Absolum relieved the tension at last by boosting the leather well up the field, and then following up smartly. The Wanganuites then assumed the aggressive, and attacked persistently. A big effort to score was crowned with success, Carroll notching a really clever try. Hitchings converted from a difficult angle, amidst intense excitement. With only a point dividing the scores, both teams settled down to a game that was both fast and strenuous. Urged on by the plaudits of the crowd, the home team endeavoured to increase their majority, while Wanganui, seeing the coveted Shield within their reach, tried just as hard to snatch a victory. The play which followed was hard, and full of interesting incident, but though there were several close shaves, no further points were scored. Auckland had an extremely narrow escape, being penalised right in front of their own goal, but Hitchings failed to land the ball over the bar, and there was a merciful deliverance, the game ending: Auckland, 6; Wanganui, 5.

Of the home team, the forward combination was perfect. George Tyler was induced to forego his resolution not to play again, and the old warrior was easily amongst the best of them, the way he broke through the opposition time after time being a treat to witness. Seeling was hardly up to his usual form, but for "Broncho" to play anything but solid football would be impossible. Nicholson was responsible for a deal of dashing and brilliant work, and in the loose rushes he shone out brilliantly, being ably supported in this respect by Herring and Francis. Cunningham as lock was simply Cunningham, and Grafton McGuire's weight added to that of the leviathan made the pack as formidable as a brick wall. Hall nullifies much of his best work by penalising his team for offside play. Hayward completed a rattling forward division.

There is something wrong with the Auckland backs this season. Perhaps we have devoted too much attention to the forward phase of the game, with the result that back play has deteriorated. In the position of half, Kiernan is right in his element. Bob Magee, as five-eighth, was playing up to form, but had to go off at the conclusion of the first spell, and Bater, who took his place, though solid enough, did not give the display he is capable of. The threequarter-line was only ordinary. In the first half they had a chance or two, but in the second spell were right out of it, and with the sun in their eyes messed up any opportunities which came their way. Miller as fullback, was the redeeming feature, and his tackling, handling of the ball, and kicking were all meritorious.

Wanganui must assuredly return well pleased with themselves. Their defeat was a very narrow one. Skipped by Hughie Absolum, they are a solid and formidable combination. The forwards were all toilers, and Anderson, Carroll, Jones, Dustin and Sueter

shone out in some brilliant play. Dowe, as half-back, was quick and heady, while the five-eighth and three-quarter-line was perfect. Hitchings is an exceptionally fine player, and quite took the fancy of the crowd, while Ward has lost none of his old-time dash and versatility. Abbott, Muell and Absolum worked with that clever, clock-work precision which counts for so much. The few occasions when they were able to get under way were the only really pretty pieces of work in the match, and their passing showed rare judgment. Southcombe was the weakest link in the mechanism of the backs, and his uncertainty in handling the ball was in marked contrast to the coolness of the Auckland fullback. Wanganui returned defeated, but certainly not disgraced.

## NEWS AND NOTES.

It is rather a pity that Mr. D. Galaher, sole selector of the Auckland reps., has not seen fit to give Harrison, the Northern Wairoa three-quarter, a place in the back division of the team to meet Taranaki on Saturday.

Asher received an ovation on again making his appearance before an Auckland football crowd last Saturday. His try was a reminder of the old days. "Opai" is a player who chafes for work, and in Saturday's game was very often nearer the scrum than he should have been, hoping the ball would come his way.

This season eleven out of the Ponsonby fifteen get their rep. caps. These are: Cunningham, Nicholson, Francis, Hall, McDonald, Gillett, Dunning, Wilson, Murray, Dillamore and Bater.

Though selected to play against Taranaki next Saturday, Cunningham assures me he has played his last game, and that he has definitely decided to give Rugby best. "Cunny" has been playing for 12 years now, and during the "All Black" English tour played in 28 out of the 36 matches which eventuated.

"Scobie" McKenzie, one of the cleverest threequarters Auckland has known, left for Wellington on Monday, whither he has been transferred. Prior to his departure he was presented with a gold albert by Grafton club-mates, a travelling bag by admirers, and a set of pipes by fellow-employees in the railway service.

H. Kiernan was the recipient of a presentation from members of the Grafton Club last Saturday, as a token of the general esteem in which he is held. Kiernan stated that he hoped next season to again participate in Auckland football.

Taranaki is sending a very strong team to meet Auckland next Saturday, as follows:—Fullback, Hardgrave; threequarters, C. Sheehan, D. Cameron, F. Kivell; five-eighths, Hunter and Mynott; halfback, Colman; wing-forward, T. Sheehan; forwards, Whittington, B. Kivell, Elmslie, Crowley, O'Sullivan, Storey, Goodwin.

The following team will represent Auckland in the match against Taranaki:—Fullback, Miller; threequarters, Hogan, Murray, Asher; five-eighths, Magee and Bater; halfback, Kiernan; wing-forward, Gillett; forwards, Tyler, Herring, Francis, J. Maguire (Grafton), Nicholson, Seeling and Hall.

## F O O T B A L L

SATURDAY NEXT, SEPTEMBER 21.

AT ALEXANDRA PARK, EPSOM.

TARANAKI V. AUCKLAND.

KICK-OFF AT 3 P.M. SHARP.

ADMISSION to Ground, 1s; Grandstand, 1s.

C. V. LANGSFORD,  
Sec. A.R.U.

## WELLINGTON CHATTER.

My Wellington correspondent writes:—

The result of the Auckland-Wanganui match for the Ranfurly Shield last Saturday was received with mixed feelings in Wellington. There are many old Aucklanders here who are terribly down-hearted because of the showing of the recent touring team in the South, and they rejoiced exceedingly that the Shield was still to remain in Auckland although the match was only won by the narrow margin of one point. Others had come to the conclusion that the Ranfurly Shield was going to take unto itself wings on this occasion, and if such a happening had occurred they would have rejoiced exceedingly.

I cannot remember when Wellington defeated Canterbury last at the Lancaster Park, so that I was not surprised when the wire came through last Saturday night announcing a win for the Southern union by 9 points to 6. And as in all the other games we have no excuses to make, for the present full strength of Wellington took the field against Canterbury, although Wallace, Roberts and Mitchinson only arrived in the Cathedral City on the morning of the match.

The only occasion on which the Wellington representative team won the three matches of its Southern tour—v. Canterbury, Southland, and Otago—was in 1897. Jack Pagni, now mine host of the British Hotel in your city, puts that result down as one of his greatest achievements, for he was the manager of the party. They left Wellington with no flaring of trumpets, for a defeat in every match was expected, but they returned home amid the plaudits of their fellow citizens and were entertained at dinner by the Rugby Union. Besides winning all their matches the 1897 team made a name for itself that will never die in the South,—to wit, the Wellington "butchers."

Amongst the Athletic players in the inter-club match last Saturday were the brothers Hales—Tom and Bill. The former is the representative fullback who has been retiring for the last five years, and who is best remembered in Auckland for the fine game he put up against your representatives in 1900. Both learnt their football in the long-ago in Auckland. Bill will probably be remembered by old players when I say that he was a member of the Remuera team that used to play against the Oxford, Britania, Imperial, Native Rose under a Rugby Union outside the Auckland Rugby Union about 1885. And he still plays occasionally when his club team is short.

At the Wanganui Hospital on Saturday week James Shore, one of the finest forwards of his day, joined the great majority. He learnt his football in Wanganui, and in the course of time came to Petone, where he distinguished himself by his dashing play and won his way into the Wellington representative team.

While living at Petone Shore was arrested on suspicion of having murdered an old couple—Mr. and Mrs. Jones—who had been foully done to death. The sensational developments in connection with that affair, viz., the establishment of Shore's innocence and the arrest and punishment of the actual murderer, are matters of history. Although he had his faults, Shore was a hard-working man possessed of great physical strength, and news of his untimely death, at the age of 39 years, was heard with much regret by his friends in Wellington and Petone.

Clem Green, the halfback of the Wellington representative team on its Southern tour, wore long pants for the first time the night the team left. He is only a boy, hence he came in for a lot of chaff over being "britched."

For Children's Hacking Cough at night Woods' Great Peppermint Cure 1s 6d and 2s 6d.