

Romance of Australian Road Cycle Racing in Famous "Warrnambool"



IN LIMELIGHT IN "GIPPSLAND"—F. Barrat (president of L.V.F.), W. Cornish (winner), Norman Lloyd (fastest time), and W. Maddock (president, A.F.C.C.).

Very many riders are using the well-known Sturmev-Archer close-ratio gear which received its most valuable advertisement when the English cyclist, Syd Ferris, who is a strong adherent of the Sturmev-Archer, broke Hubert Opperman's Land's End-John o' Groats and 1000 miles records. Last year Cyril Boxall, who won the Barret Glass Grand Prix ("over the mountains"), of 160 miles, the most strenuous road race in Australia, attributed his success, in great degree, to the fact that his machine was equipped with this variable gear attachment. Keith Webb also used a Sturmev-Archer in the Gippsland "100," in which he finished first and made fastest time.

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HECTIC HISTORY OF THE EARLY DAYS

Rival Trade Houses Made It "All In" Affair 40 Years Ago

PHIL O'SHEA OR OPPERMAN GREATEST RIDER?

(By H. O. BALFE)

MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO, ROAD CYCLE RACING, AS IT IS KNOWN TO-DAY, HAD ITS GENESIS IN THE UNION OF THE EARLY "SAFETY" BICYCLES AND MR. DUNLOP'S PNEUMATIC TYRE. A LUSTY INFANT IT WAS, EVEN IN THOSE FAR-OFF TIMES. AN INFANT THAT DIDN'T BOTHER TO HANG ABOUT THE HOUSE, BUT TOOK TO THE ROAD RIGHT AWAY.

AND, looking around for an adequate outlet for its abundant energies, certain good folk of the day decided that the infant should make its start in life in the most auspicious circumstances.

So Warrnambool to Melbourne road race came into being. It was over the 165 miles of this now famous thoroughfare that a sport, destined to become one of the greatest in Australia, cut its baby teeth.

IN the years that have elapsed, the infant has grown into virile manhood. There is no cycle race in Australia that attracts greater public interest or is a keener spur to the ambitions of all road riders than is the "Warrnambool."

In the list of Australia's greatest sporting events, the Warrnambool to Melbourne road race occupies a place of outstanding prominence. It is as famous in its sphere, as the Melbourne Cup, cricket test matches between England and Australia, the Stawell Gift, and Davis Cup.

There are scores of riders who know they have little or no chance of getting "in the money." But they should worry! They can say they have competed in the "Warrnambool," and if they are able to sport one of the much-prized medals awarded to those who cover the course within a certain time, so much the better.

Road cycling was attracting so much interest in Melbourne, away back in 1895, that, in that year, the firm of Scott and Morton, bicycle agents, of Melbourne, decided to "cash in" on it. They caused a stir by announcing that they would sponsor a race from Warrnambool to Melbourne, a distance of 165 miles.

"It can't be done," said the sceptics. But it was.

There were 24 starters in that first race, and the winner turned up in a New Zealander, Andy Calder.

A LITTLE-KNOWN fact, by the way, is that the "Warrnambool" of 1895 was the first race contested in Australia on the group handicap system. Competitors were grouped in three classes and there was an interval of an hour between each class.

"Lot Of Intriguing Over The Race"

THERE was another "first and fastest" in 1897; successful rider on this occasion was W. C. Jackson.

This was the first year in which the "Warrnambool" was contested on present handicap lines. Jackson won from the 15 minutes mark, and covered the distance in 8.51.5.

The daily Press of the period waxed caustic over the conduct of the

"Warrnambool" of 1898, the year in which it was taken over by the Humber Cycle Co. In decidedly outspoken reports, it was declared that there was a "lot of intriguing" over the race, and that "trade influence was apparent."

One report averred that "greatly to the disgust of the wire-pullers, a rank outsider won in a field of 54."

The outsider happened to be W. Collins, whose handicap was 26 minutes. It was alleged at the time that rival trade houses had relayed of men and machines all along the road, and that "change-overs" were frequent. As far as the trade was concerned in those days, the "Warrnambool" was an all-in affair.

THERE was a break in the sequence of races between 1898 and 1901, and in the year just-mentioned, the Dunlop Rubber Company took charge, and has ever since promoted the race or assisted in its promotion ever since.

Another break occurred between 1911 and 1922. The tremendous crowds that used to assemble at the finish, near the Haymarket, on the Sydney road, caused the police department to become restive, and so Dunlop called a halt.



MAN BEHIND THE GUN.—Mr. P. Dungey, secretary and handicapper, L.V.F.

Then came the war, and hundreds of cyclists went overseas.

The Dunlop company revived the race in 1922, and carried it on until 1927, when it was replaced, for one year only, by the Dunlop Grand Prix, which took competitors on a "Tour de France" model race around Victoria. There was no "Warrnambool" in 1928, but since then there has been only one break, that of 1934, when the "Centenary 1000" was conducted.

ACTIVE promotion of the race was discontinued by the Dunlop Rubber Company in 1935, in which year the organizing was taken over by the League of Victorian Wheelmen, the Dunlop company providing funds and supplying

the major prizes, including the "Dunlop Cup" for first rider to finish.

The race has since been referred to as the "Dunlop Cup," but to old-timers, and to the great majority of cyclists, it is still the "Warrnambool."

Famous Names On Scroll Of Fame

INSEPARABLY associated with the Warrnambool to Melbourne road race are many famous names. Who more illustrious is there to recall, for instance, than Phil O'Shea, of New Zealand, and Hubert Opperman, of Victoria, each of whom has three fastest times to his credit; Jack Arnst, who burst a dam by his pronouncement by winning the race from scratch in a field of 100 starters after conceding handicaps up to two hours; I. R. ("Snowy") Miniro, whose record, for the "time," 7.21.27, stood for some years; Tom Larcombe, one of the "best ever" of the representatives of N.S.W.; "Fatty" Lamb, who now holds the record, 8.21.18; and Wal Styr ("Sticky") Stuart.

Incidentally, the New Zealanders deserve a paragraph to themselves. There have been very few representatives of the Dominion who were not thoroughly worthy. A Ralston was the first to carry the black singlet and silver fern into prominence by making fastest time in 1901. Ralston, by the way, was an uncle of "Alby" Ralston, who was riding in Australia in recent years.

Jack Arnst followed in 1903. He was the first to maintain a speed of over 20 miles an hour for more than 100 miles. H. McIntosh, who got the "time" in 1906, was another very good one, and so was Peter Hill, who came over with Phil O'Shea in 1922, and won from the 25min. mark.

That was a great year for New Zealand, 1922, with Hill winning, and O'Shea making fastest time.

OPPERMAN OR O'SHEA? There has always been a difference of opinion as to who was the better rider of the two, Phil O'Shea or Hubert Opperman.

If times can be accepted as a criterion, Opperman must be adjudged the better, for whereas those of O'Shea were 8.8.44, 8.59.8, and 7.51.1, Opperman's were 7.55.27, 7.36.10, and 8.7.10.

Conditions have to be taken into consideration, of course, and it is true that, in this respect, Opperman had somewhat better fortune than the New Zealander. But that could not be said wholly to account for the very considerable differences in time.

This year, the 250, or more, riders who race from Warrnambool to Melbourne will travel 165 miles of the finest road imaginable. From the start to the turn-off to the Ballarat road at Albin, every inch is either bitumen or concrete. The eight miles of hick road still is rough.

With a tail wind, all records may be broken. It takes a real rider to win the "Warrnambool," and a champion to collect the time honors.

Who will be the victor from the interior of South Australia, a clerk from Melbourne, a mechanic from Sydney. But he'll be a bike-rider—and then some.

WINNER MAY COME FROM MIDDLE-MARKERS

Moritz v. Lloyd For Distance Title

INTEREST in the Warrnambool to Melbourne road race for fastest time honors and the National long-distance cycling championship will be increased by the rivalry between two of the greatest riders in the Commonwealth—Bill Moritz, of South Australia, and Norman Lloyd, of Victoria.

It seems certain that one or the other will take the championship. "Warrnambool," a scrutiny of the handicaps strengthens belief that the winner of the "Warrnambool," and with it the Dunlop Cup, will come from one of the big bunches on marks from 30 to 39 minutes.

BILL MORITZ is the 100 miles road champion of Australia. He secured that title when some weeks ago he flashed over the 100 miles mark in the Healding "Midland Tour" less than a length ahead of Lloyd, and then went on to take first place in the completed race, Lloyd again chasing him home.

The previous year those honors—the championship and first place—were won by Lloyd. Norman Lloyd has made fastest time in both the Barret Glass Grand Prix (160 miles) and the Tour of Gippsland (150 miles), in neither of which Moritz finished.

Moritz has "set" himself for time honors in the "Warrnambool." He is keen to win two major road championships in one season—a feat never previously accomplished.

That is why Moritz did not persevere in either the Barret Glass Grand Prix or the recent Goulburn-Sydney. He declares that he embarked on those races merely to brighten himself up and not to risk out. Brake trouble caused his withdrawal from the Tour of Gippsland last Saturday—his third retirement in succession.

There are no hills on the "Warrnambool" course—none to speak of, at any rate—and the road surface, with the exception of 8 miles from the turn off past Werribee to the back stretch leading to the finish on the Ballarat Road at Albin, is unsurpassed.

"ALMOST A TRACK CYCLE RACE"

It has been freely stated among riders that this year's "Warrnambool" will be almost a track race. What influence, therefore, will this have on the contest for time honors? Moritz con-

siders he is a better rider on the track than on the road, and his admirers claim that conditions in the "Warrnambool" will be to his liking. But the

Moritz Has His Say

"DO you think," said Bill Moritz to me on Saturday last, "that you could write a paragraph to say that I'm not at all worried about what people say or think because I haven't finished the course in my last three races?"

"Why not," I replied.

"Well, then," quoth William, "will you please say that there is no significance to any of the retirements. I just did as I thought fit in the Barret Glass Grand Prix and the Goulburn-Sydney. You know I could have gone on in the Grand Prix had I wanted to, and Jack Christison will tell you how I was going in the Goulburn when I decided to pull out."

"In the Tour of Gippsland to-day, I had brake trouble on the hills, and was seriously interfered with when Bill Wood crashed, and lost so much time that I couldn't see the force of 'putting myself to try and pick it up.' 'I'm after the time' and the national championship in the 'Warrnambool.' I've made no secret of that fact. Everything else has been incidental. 'So, let people talk. I'm quite satisfied.'"

abilities of Lloyd on the track must not be discounted. He has some fine performances to his credit, notably the Victorian 50 kilometre championship in 1936.

In assessing possibilities for the "time" and long-distance championship honors, the chances of Alan Angus, who won the championship last year, Deane Toseland, the brilliant South Australian who has been breaking records in his own State lately, Keith Thurgood, also of South Australia, who is a noted performer on both track and road, and Clinton Beasley must be considered. It will be Thurgood's first appearance on the road in Victoria.

REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND

Lloyd Thomas, who will represent New Zealand, and will be making his first appearance in a "Warrnambool," has been riding himself into form and may be a hard man to beat if he is with the bunch in the last couple of miles. He took third fastest time in the Tour of Gippsland, though he finished nearly 5 minutes behind Lloyd and Angus. Bill Wood, the former Englishman, who is a member of the Oadleigh Club, will have to have luck if he is to pace it with the "stars" of the scratch bunch at the finish.

Former N.S.W. amateur, Jack Christison, who made fastest time in this year's Goulburn-Sydney, started in the "Warrnambool" last year for the first time, and off 15 minutes finished in 27th place. He will be thoroughly tested this year, but it may be taken for granted that he will be a worthy representative of the senior States. Incidentally, the number of men on scratch, 9, is the smallest for years.



In Money "First Up"

Ian McPherson, 17-year-old rider, got third money in the "Gippsland" on Saturday. He is a son of the 1908 Austral winner.

NO fewer than 333 riders have been allotted marks by the V.A.C.U. handicapper, Mr. C. J. Gray. The field will be whittled down a good deal by last-minute withdrawals, but it is anticipated that there will be at least 300 starters.

On scratch, Mr. Gray has placed

the Wheeler brothers, Chris, and Lindsay, Bill Doggett, Fred. Hines, Wal Stirling, Jimmy Kerr, Fred. Liddy, and Wally Mitchell. This is a promotion for Wally, who last Saturday week made fastest time in the Healing Peninsula Tour.

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