

No. 149-DR. JOHN MEADE of Bulgaden

BY SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH.

LIMERICK athletes were hitting the high spots at every southern sports meeting around the dying years of the last century. A group had travelled to Cork, as was their custom, for the annual Queen's College Sports on May 10th 1890—a meeting which opened what was an eventful season for Limerickmen, despite the fact that a few of the best of the early G.A.A. days had remained in America, following the Gaelic "invasion" of 1888.

The Shannonside group were not too pleased at having captured prizes in only two events at the Queen's College meeting—W. J. Ryan, of Hospital, proving second best in the two miles walk, and Thady McMahon, of the City Club taking the honours in the furlong. But the gloom was relieved somewhat when it was discovered that the student of powerful physique, who had given such a great display against the crack sprinters of Munster, to take third prize on his first outing, was also a Limerick lad—John Meade of Bulgaden, then studying medicine in Cork.

He was the makings of a champion sprinter without a shadow of doubt—a beautiful and graceful style, coupled with fine build and power-packed limbs. The pity was that his concentration on study restricted his training opportunities during his best years, and a fast "fall into flesh" caused a premature retirement from an arena he gave every promise of conquering.

SPECIAL STUDY OF TRAINING.

Always keenly interested in athletics, he made a special study of training methods, which knowledge he passed on in after years as a contribution to the greatness of Limerick in that arena where so many sons of Sarsfield's County shone with such brilliance. Much of his advice is as useful to-day as it proved fifty years ago, and in recalling his memory we may still profit from much of what he told the great lads of the past, who won such honour and glory for Limerick in a period when athletic fame was not easily gained in Ireland.

Whilst still in his teens, John Meade competed at the 1891 annual meeting of the old Limerick Amateur Athletic and Bicycle Club, a gathering that usually attracted all the "cracks" to the Markets Field. And he created something like a sensation when beating some fancied candidates to win the 440 yards flat event, his "victims" including David Costelloe, who, a few weeks later, at Nenagh, won the 440 yards flat championship of Munster, also taking firsts in the high and long jumps and a second prize in the hundred.

The Bulgaden lad also had a go in the hurdles at Limerick, this occasion filling second place to Costelloe, who beat him on the tape almost.

TRIUMPHS OVER OPPOSITION.

Limerick men swept nearly all the prizes, despite the opposition, at that attractiv meeting. M. A. O'Callaghan took the laurels in the hundred, with L. R. Switzer second; Thady McMahon won the furlong and later the one mile Munster title—J. Guinea being second in the former and M. O'Callaghan in the mile. Willie Rea took All-Ireland laurels at putting the 42 lbs., with O'Brien of Broadford in second place. P. J. Kenna scored a cycling double—over three and five miles—closely challenged by William B. Smith, whilst the two miles race was won by Blakeney Gubbins, in a great finish with D. O'Connell.

Exactly 12 months later, John Meade was again at the Markets Field for another L.A.A. and B.C. Sports, but on this occasion lack of training was very evident and all he could secure was a second in the "hundred," following a hard struggle with E. A. Eakins, to whom he was conceding 3½ yards.

On August 1st, 1892, he journeyed to Clonmel and brought away four prizes—winning both 220 yards events, scratch and handicap and filling second place in the hundred, and again in the hurdles.

His studies kept him away from the track long enough to give avordupois an innings, and flying limbs were no longer able to carry the growing weight with the speed that outdistanced many ones in earlier days. His interest in the track, however, never flagged and the advice he formulated for proficiency at the various events is as useful to-day as when he wrote it:

ADVICE FOR TRAINING.

Here is what he advised: Dieting during training is totally unnecessary—athletes can have what food they are used to, but too much should not be taken. No training should be undertaken for two hours after any heavy meal.

Training a little and often is the golden rule. The popular daily routine for short distance men, at intervals is ten seconds running, an equal time skipping, well on the toes; dashes of twenty-five yards all out, and an equal distance to ease up; followed by fifteen yards easy and the same at full speed. The full distance plus a few yards to ensure a full burst at the finish, should only be indulged in once a week. The same system applies in regard to the 220 yards running.

Learn the art of sprinting first in the natural style which suits the runner, and from which best results are obtained. To run straight, on the toes, keeping the feet as near the ground as possible, are the first essentials—running from side to side; raising knees or heels too high is waste of time and energy.

Balance is also of first rate importance. Inclining forward, head in line with body, ensures balance and keeps runners on their toes, vigorous use of the arms, slightly bent, hands firmly clenched, also help.

The importance of correct start and finish must be stressed. Errors here often mean losing of a race. Most runners start left foot in front, but if the right is more comfortable it should be used.

SOME FURTHER HINTS.

After digging in and finding most comfortable balance, practice starting in bursts of ten yards until as near perfection as possible has been achieved. During the course of a race it is disastrous to look behind. Loss of balance and action may result. The big effort should come in the last ten yards in a closely run race.

Method of finish, where inches may decide, is of utmost importance. Head thrust forward with body in line at a seventy-five degrees angle is the correct order.

Not everybody agrees that boys should run quarter or half mile races. Those in charge of boys should watch their physical fitness and knowledge of running.

A course of training tells everything. In sprinting the object is to run the race in the best style in the fastest possible time. Running quarter and half mile races require more than this. To know how to run the race comes first—running a quarter all out is out of the question.

It can be divided into three phases. Sprint at the start for about a quarter of the distance, and a take easy, followed by a sprint of about sixty yards to the finish. The stride should be such as to entail best effort. Arms hanging loosely, body erect, balance on ball of foot. For the final sprint clench fists, bend the arms, and assume the style as in the hundred dash.

The principle of running the half mile is almost identical. Training for these races must be approached cautiously. Plenty of 100 and 200 running practice is necessary. The full quarter or half should not be attempted more than once a week.

Best means of training are to run half, then three-quarter miles at easy pace; combine trots with dashes for speed. Runners should adapt style and pace to suit best. Also to study opponents, and correctly gauge speed and limitations in same, plus stamina.

THREE IMPORTANT FACTORS.

Three important factors combine to make for success in high

and long jumping: approach run, take, landing. For high jumping the take off line varies according to the height of the jumper. Three feet from the bar is the average distance. Here is placed the toe of the jumping foot. Four good running strides are taken, usually at an angle of forty-five degrees from either end of the bar. A check mark is made at this point and from which four to six walking paces may be taken. The jumper then has his starting point, from which the approach run is practised.

Begin the run with easy springy strides until the jumping foot, left or right, hits the check mark. Then four swift running strides until the same foot hits the take-off line. Left leg is kicked as high as possible and in crossing the bar the body should be as near as possible.

Style and method can be improved by the jumper setting the bar at a height easy to clear. Once or twice a week is sufficient for the jumper to make his maximum effort.

The approach run for long jumping should be regulated sufficiently for the jumper to work up full speed. One-third of the run should be taken in easy, springy strides, the rest at top speed. Practice is essential for the jumping foot to hit the take off board.

When jumping, the body should be inclined forward at an angle of 75 degrees. Straighten the jumping leg, the other being allowed to hang loosely. Swing the arms forward and upwards to lift the body.

Speed to the take-off and jumping high will make for distance. When the highest point of the jump is reached and the fall starts, the jumping leg is thrust forward.

Both legs are shot out from the hips. Before the landing both arms should be in line behind the body. As the feet brakes the pit surface the arms should be brought up again to ensure balance and prevent falling back, thereby losing distance.

Practice "taking off" at top speed. Leg and arm action in the course of the jump and in making perfect landings, is absolutely essential before success can be achieved.

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