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FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "Referee."

The rugby football season opened on Saturday, May 1, under the best conditions. Two senior games were set down for 3 p.m. on Rugby Park, and the weather and the playing areas were of the best, the turf having lost its brickiness and taken on a springiness, that helped forwards and backs to fall without grazes and to run without button trouble. The S.R.F.U. has but to help its ground in the state it was on Saturday and fast play must result.

First, all matches are to be begun on scheduled time; second, all senior games must be played the full time, 45 minute spells; third, players must be of only one week-day football club, Wednesday or Saturday.

There can be no question as to the wisdom by the executive in insisting on the first and second rules for club contests. The laxity shown by teams with regard to the first has been long a scandal in Southland, and that through little fault of the governing body, which has always instructed its officials to have players out in the field right on time. But it would be well if the S.R.F.U. made its rule actually operative. Read this: On Saturday a referee's whistle was heard in the dressing shed on Rugby Park at 3 p.m., prompt to advertised time; but the teams kicked off after 3.10 p.m. What is the executive going to do about it? Old players strolled—aye, strolled—in after the 3 p.m. whistle. Now, if the law-makers will think, "There's no law without a sanction," the remedy suggests itself. The "Digger" suggestion is: That referees be instructed to whistle teams to the field five minutes before the appointed time, and that the ball be kicked off at that appointed time. Any team or teams not on the field then to lose the match, and to be fined by the S.R.F.U., the fines to be used for referees' travelling expenses. When the committee insisted on full time for senior games, it did much towards helping training enthusiasts to stir up slackers. There has been too much of the "Oh! make it thirties." Representative games will be considerably improved from the spectator point of view, not to mention the honour of the province.

The third matter; players not to take part in the two competitions, Galbraith Shield and Sports Protection League's Banner game. There is much to be said on one side and something on the other. Those favouring last year's wide-method rule saw that many good players will not get the practice they did last year; they even say that some players will not put on a jersey under the new condition. Against the former contention the other side asserts that the two-game man was never remarkable for his attendance at practices, the result being the wretched football of 1919 in town. The latter assertion, that some men will not play, is best disposed of by letting them not play. Such a spirit may be commendable in a mere club's supporter, but it is hard to believe that a true rugbyite has it. The majority of the S.R.F.U. may rest assured that the bulk of football-public opinion is with them. Clubs can now have an esprit de corps, secretaries will not be running after Tom, Dick, or Harry, to play for them, but will get their players from financial club members, more young fellows will play football, too, and the province and the Dominion will benefit more than if a certain player or ten could swagger out Saturday and Wednesday, ruining his place game on one or other of the days.

SPORTS PROTECTION BANNER. N
Banks and Law 24 v. Bluff 11.

Bluff went out in many coloured attired and hot favourites for the 1920 banner, but the B. and L. had too many guns. Dykes, Stead, St. George, Gilmour, proving fast, too clever for their heavier opponents. The game did not open up with any promise of good play, though the brightness of the winning backs was noteworthy all through. The first score came from under Bluff's goal posts, St. George cutting on to the crowded side to pass badly to Dykes who dribbled over and scored. This 3-nil was soon added to at the end of a scramble, Bluff not going down too well to foot-work, and 6-0 showed against Port. A period of give and take saw Bluff booting high and following, with B. and L. backs doing one another's work instead of backing up; so the full being raw at the game turned the wrong way to fall on the ball and Bluff ended up with 6-5, after throwing away a try by a very bad pass. The first spell ended without further scoring.

B. and L. attacked early but failed to penetrate Rep. Rudd rallying his big forwards like a man, but, although the sea-side vanguard got their backs into position and gave them ball, the high slow

transfers spoilt any chance they might have had of scoring, and tired their forwards and themselves for no result, Gilmour flashing through them when they were displaying only one line of defence in front of the full—9-5. Bluff came back in retributive attack and a very fine movement was ruined by the centre's rotten pass. Disgusted forwards refused defence and St. George scampered through the one-line defence. Dykes goaled, 14-5.

Mighty was the rage of Rudd and Co. Like a rainbow swarm they attacked a weak wing-three, and from a corner kick failed to make the try better, 18-8. The quicksilver backs of B. and L. were everywhere, and the misplaced Bluff rear-guard were everywhere but the right place, so Gilmour ran in and put the ball down between the posts and somebody added the two, 19-8. Bluff came up cheery if unsmiling, and the forwards got the wing rattled at the corner, 19-11. What a game! B. and L. had got most of their score by selfishness and lack of organised opposition, but they made one brilliant movement from Dykes, Stead, St. George to Prain, and the gallant youngster scored between the posts to permit half Dykes to bring Bank's and Law's score up to 24 and to leave Bluff at 11. And that finished the scoring.

UNION 13 v. PUBLIC SERVICE 6.

The first spell of this game was not interesting. Public Service were using three emergencies, and, as two of them were in the backs, their passing broke down dreadfully, the result being that the Dalgliesh brothers had to carry the backs on their shoulders, the younger one's feed not going past the first five who must have decided that the forward at second and the imported centre were there only hope to stop rushes.

P.S. began with some good transfer work, but lack of knowledge of position and wretched passing stopped scoring and let the Union forwards in among backs whose defence—except that of the Dalgliesh pair—was sadly out-at-elbows. The first-five lost a good try through cutting in to the thick and losing his forward-back. Union seemed to be short of a run and of backs, and appeared to be ready to take the count any old time, but they belied appearance as the results show. Scotty Baird was played about centre, and the strangeness of the position he made evident, though his taking and kicking were good for a first game. Crockroft, of South African fame, wasn't getting into it, and D. Stewart's anticipations were not being realised. The football was not of a high standard, in fact it was low grade. The post script backs kicked for the line like machines, or threw the ball away from the out-of-position next man, or got tossed about by the big Union forwards into whom they ran with monotonous heroism. Union played some good scrum tricks, the front row and the wing forward making things lively, and getting off with them. It looked as if neither side could score, but Fortune, pre-war Otago rep. placed a goal for P.S., and a play-empty first spell ended, Public Service, 3; Union, 0.

Union's weight in the forwards didn't seem to have had much effect on P.S., and a smart attack by the forwards let the Dalglieshes give wing Fortune a pass, and with some of his old fire, Geoff made a 3. P.S. 6, Union 0. Union began to get lively in the forwards, their backs may be disregarded—their forwards did so—from this on except for Baird's huge line punts. Their first bustling effort was checked by a clever save of Fortune who picked up splendidly from the forwards' toes, and found the line. But Union came at it again and again, and behind the related pair low tackling had not received an introduction though certain amenities of the social side were much favoured, for instance, the neck grip and the evading side-step were very popular. Stewart revelled in the license of the time, and finished what Crockroft began, forwards swarming over weak defence until at the end of a scramble it was found that a Union man was the top of the earth-ball sandwich, 6-3. Union backs were disgruntled; they passed fiercely and not badly, and Stapsely scored. The ball went between the posts and P.S. were two down the score read, Union 8, P.S. 6. Crockroft had played himself into form, and his forwards were romping over the Service whose backs had something too sore to tackle with. McDonald, P.S., neglected wing, made desperate lone-hand endeavours to get a move on, but he had no feed and no luck. One of his dashes was fine. At the end of it his side was in the background, Union's forward weight had told its tale, and the rattled P.S. saw Fortune misjudge a bounce from one of Scotty Baird's high-fliers and the Union wing-three got it, and when the goal-kicker had had his shot Union were 13 and Public Service were 6. The two forty-fives and the Union forwards, and the other things allowed Union to win a game with their forwards on a dry ground. Think of it!

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