

OLYMPIC UPS AND DOWNS

On Henley's famous mile - the Olympic Regatta keeps up the Wembley standard of thrills and surprises. It is here, in the most English of all Olympic settings, that Britain scores her first successes. Victory number one comes in the double sculls. Dick Burnell and Bert Bushnell take the lead early on and beat off successfully a powerful challenge from the much-fancied Danish pair.

Burnell and Bushnell finish strongly - two lengths and four seconds ahead of the Danes. After a week of athletics - in which Britons missed victories, but came second six times - it takes a cold douche to revive the winning oarsmen and make them realize that they have given Britain a first place.

To the delight of old blues lining the river bank, two more rowing titles are won by the Commonwealth. Victory in the sculls goes to Mervyn Wood - Australian policeman. His success must have inspired the British coxswainless pair, whose win brings Britain her second Gold Medal in one day. But in the eights, our crew (made up of this year's Cambridge eight and stroked by Chris Barton) must be satisfied with the familiar second place. California University gain the honours for America. As in the Regatta's most glamorous event, so in the Cycling highlight - Britain can only gain second place. World champion Reg Harris - in white vest - is beaten by a twenty-year old Italian, Mario Ghella, in the 1000 metre scratch race.

Harris, much-publicised favourite for the event proves no match for the Italian. With another chance in the tandems, perhaps he can yet gain a first place and give back to Britain a Gold Medal - awarded at Wembley on one day and taken back three days later. The disputed race is the 400 metre relay. America's team - including the world's three fastest men - are favourites. And it's at this change-over that the Olympic's first dispute arises. Dark-skinned Barney Ewell is claimed to have overstepped the mark in handing the baton over to his number two - Lou Wright. Disqualified by the Judges on the track, the Americans race on - unaware of the ruling.

Mel Patten - 200 metre winner - tears down the straight to breast the tape first and hear the bad news afterwards. The Judges revise their decision after seeing the newreel, so although Britain is at first acclaimed the winner, our team reverts to second place. And it's the same story in the marathon. Etienne Geilly - 21 year old Belgian - leads the runners into the Stadium after a killing 26 mile race. Out on his feet he moves mechanically on the last lap soon to be overtaken by the remarkably fresh Argentinian, Delfo Cabrera.

Britain's Tom Richards, running a gallant race also overtakes the Belgian, but is unable to catch the fast-moving Argentinian who, seemingly

quite unaffected, wins the Olympic's most coveted title, with Britain again in second place.

After a day of ups and downs, the most disappointing blow to the Empire comes in the 1600 metre relay. Promising at first to be the Olympic's biggest thrill (with Jamaica's brilliant quarter-milers challenging American supremacy) it turns into a tragedy. On the first lap America's Roy Cochran and Jamaica's Laing race along almost neck and neck.

At the first changeover - Bourland for America gains yards over his rival. But the Jamaican ace - Wint and McKenley - are yet to come. Arthur Wint - the long legged Olympic champion - is Jamaica's number three. With every stride, he comes closer and closer to the American. Victory seems in sight. Wint's hurt! Halfway round the track he pulls a leg muscle and drops in agony onto the grass. While he beats a tattoo of despair on the turf - America's Mel Whitfield gains a runaway victory for the U.S.A.

Poor Wint is inconsolable. As a Jamaican he's more British than the British....and he feels he's let the Empire down. But public memory will always hold him (winner of the four hundred metres) as one of the Empire's chosen few who made first place.