

SPEAKING of SPORTS

By DON WATSON



The reception held recently at the Outrigger Canoe club honoring Bill Smith Jr., the world's greatest swimmer who is back home in Honolulu as a specialist in the navy, is still a topic of conversation around town. . . .

All are agreed that young Smith is entitled to all the tributes paid to him—and more, besides. . . . The only regret is that in these times it was not possible to take care of all of those who would have liked to attend. . . .

Another regret we have is that the navy does not see fit to permit Smith to take part in the AAU swimming championships to be staged here this year. . . . The reason given is that navy athletes can not participate in events where admission is charged. . . . And you can not very well put on a meet without charging admission, unless you get a cut in the taxpayers' money the same as the navy does. . . .

There are expenses to be met and the only way to cover them is by charging admission. . . .

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After Bill Smith entered the navy he was permitted to swim in the national indoor swimming championships, and you can't tell us no admission was charged there. . . . If these swimming meets were being put on for the financial benefit of some promoter it would be a different story, but if any money is made off these meets it will go right into the fund for the future promotion of swimming. . . . The people of Hawaii would like to see their own Bill Smith perform in these meets—and we are quite sure of being correct in saying that the men in the armed forces would also like to see him take part. . . . Some place along the line some brass hats should be de-decorated. . . .

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Following is a letter we received a few days ago from a navy officer, a man who earned honors as an amateur athlete himself and who is still interested in amateur sports. . . .

"My Dear Mr. Watson:

"Your swimming articles of the past few days have interested me very greatly; mainly because of the fact that I was one of those fortunate to witness the National AAU championships at the New York Athletic club a little over a year ago.

"I heartily agree with Smith's potential ability in the 100 yard free-style, as I witnessed that great race between Smith and Ford—the only things in my estimation that beat Smith was the lack of speedy muscle reflex and proper bodily coordination for this high speed event. In my opinion he wasn't properly tuned on trained for this short event. Most of Smith's distance was lost on the turns, and the lightning like turns of Ford's assured his victory; also coupled with the fact that Smith was becoming continually entangled by the guide ropes which in my opinion is a decided handicap for a large man.

"In my opinion, without any special training over the shorter distance, Smith could defeat Ford on a hundred yard straight away without too much trouble. The ropes and turns were too much for him that evening. The 220 was an entirely different story, and proved to be child's play for Smith. He did it easily. Incidentally; the only real interest I had in the meet was to see Smith and Nakama and what the rest of the boys would try and do to catch them. Hundreds of people were turned away from this meet because of lack of seating facilities, who had the same feelings that I had; the privilege of seeing two great swimmers perform.

"The best of luck to you and the gala event that is being held in Bill Smith's honor.

"Witnessed the 4½ mile road race and was greatly pleased over the civilian turnout. At a cross country meet in the states we are lucky to see anyone turn up, unless the meets are run on the eastern seaboard where more enthusiasm prevails for the sport."