

K. C. GANDAR DOWER

Kenneth Cecil Gandar Dower was born on August 21, 1908; but though many would call the man they now know under that name, a prodigy, it was as a matter of fact no infant prodigy that fent at quite an early age to Windlesham House School, near Brighton, where none the less he attained a certain proficiency at Soccer (it was in the family, for his brother Ronnie played for Oxford and England) and was what he describes as "real bad" at cricket: all the same he got into the XI's for both.

But as shyness has always been part of his make-up we may well believe that at an even earlier age his governess was reduced, in order to keep her charge amused, to throwing a tennis ball about the room while the child (surely the father of the man) showed astonishing powers of retrieving it from under chairs and behind cupboards, powers that have stood him in good stead afterwards.

To Harrow then Dower, K.C.G. as he was then known, went in September, 1922, where he gained both athletic and scholastic distinctions, although the athletic ones gave no real suggestion of his future eminence at so many games and the scholastic ones perhaps promised more than was afterwards fulfilled.

At all events he reached the Harrow Soccer XI and the Fives pair, of which he was captain in 1927, and also (he tells us) the school Boxing VI. At Cricket he was twelfth man ("or the equivalent") for two years, though there is little doubt that he ought to have been in the XI in 1926. But that is an athletic record is often surpassed by schoolboys who never get near a Varsity team of any kind. So that no one could have prophesied a career so varied in its athletic distinctions. Dower (as we must still call him) won a leaving scholarship for History and halved the Rothschild scholarship, voted to be the best monitor. He was elected to a scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took up residence in October, 1927.

His athletic record there has been the subject of so many articles, notes, not to say comments, that it will be well for us to dwell on it as briefly as possible. (It is really not possible). He was Captain of Lawn Tennis and gained a half-blue for billiards; these games we must leave aside. He was Captain of the Eton Fives team and of the Squash Rackets team, and he played Tennis for one year and Rugby Fives for three years. At Eton Fives he had no superior for a time and at Rugby Fives as a singles player he was original and really good; his opponent in one Varsity match was heard to remark, "I give up; it's no good playing against a kangaroo." As a doubles player he was less effective, as his partner could never quite know where he would be, and he never played often enough for anyone to form a complete understanding: usually the partner stood at the back of the court on the right and took the ball whenever it came to him, but sometimes it came down the left-hand wall—and that was that.

At Squash Rackets, besides his invaluable services as player, he gave great help to the University and was partly instrumental in securing a half-blue for the University team, which recognition of rank prevented the University match becoming an afternoon entertainment for the captain's friends, to which it had at one time shown a tendency. At Tennis he has, as usual, a peculiar style of his own; the usual criticism of it is that it is effective but not Tennis; he shows an unholy glee in producing it before veteran and orthodox players—at all events he won in both singles and doubles against Oxford and played none too badly in the Amateur Championship at Queen's Club last season, although rather foolishly flying backwards and forwards between London and Bournemouth in between the rounds. Gandar Dower did not play many other games at Cambridge (much), perhaps because he had to spend most of the rest of

his time on work and things; he got an honours degree in History, though with not such a good class as was expected of him: but no one can do everything and he edited the *Granta*, was on the committee of the Pitt Club and spoke frequently at the Union; among other things he supported a motion that a double first was better than a double blue, which was inconsistent with his career; perhaps, like Wolfe's wish to have written Gray's *Elegy* rather than to have taken Quebec, he would have had things the other way round; but he can console himself by the thought that he can only just have missed getting both, surely the right answer to the difficulty.

He did not (owing to work and things) have time for rackets at Cambridge really, but he competed in the Amateur Championship last season: in the singles he met C. S. Crawley and in the first game caused the onlookers to wish he would be content with his other games and not waste his money and other people's time—words which had to be eaten, so to speak, in view of the excellent way in which he played when that game was over. In the doubles he and J. M. F. Lightly did well to extend a



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good Oxford pair.

With G. R. McConnell he won this year the Kinnaird Cup—the Amateur Championship of Eton Fives, but this he had done before, though it was not then the Amateur Championship. Last year also he won the Rugby Fives Singles Championship. In the Squash Rackets Championship he has come near winning, but always W. D. Macpherson and Captain V. A. Cazalet have stood in the way; in 1928 Macpherson beat him early in the competition; in 1929 Cazalet beat him 3—1 in the semi-final; in 1930 he made his best bid for the championship when Cazalet beat him by three games to two in the final, after an epic struggle. Last year he was beaten earlier on, this time by three games to two by Macpherson, who subsequently beat Cazalet and lost to Amr Bey in the final. (Gandar Dower, be it said in passing, is such a tremendously fair player of this game that he handicaps himself unduly in allowing his opponent a proper sight of the ball.)

But we must not forget his cricket: at Cambridge he gained a Crusader, and made some fifty runs in the Freshmen's match, with which is connected the story about jumping over fences from the adjoining Lawn Tennis tournament, also at Fenner's. One of the years he was up, had the Secretary been Captain, he might even have played at Lord's; the reason he did not can surely only be that the Captain would not give him a fortnight off for Wimbledon. Others, however, may think differently. He plays cricket (when he does play) mostly for the Frogs and sometimes for The Jesters: he bats right-handed, bowls left-handed rather better and catches usually with both hands, though sometimes rather suddenly with his left hand somewhere behind him.

It would not be fitting to conclude this account of one of the most versatile ball-game players of all time without pointing out that he has competed in the Championships of Tennis, Rackets, Squash Rackets, Eton Fives, Rugby Fives and Lawn Tennis, and also flown in the King's Cup Air Race (though NOT as his own pilot). It remains but to say what is often disbelieved—that Gandar Dower has other interests besides sport. They say he has shown few signs of them since he left Cambridge, but then how could he have the time? They are there somewhere, however, and one day the unbelievers will get a surprise. We hope and are (fairly) confident that it will be a welcome one.

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