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FURTHER TRENDS IN SUBSIDIZED ATHLETICS

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Speaking antithetically of Mark Antony's famous funeral oration, permit me to say that "I came to praise football, not to bury it."

Athletics in the American colleges are paradoxical. They are the most severely criticized activity of college life, and they are the most loved. They are the most rational channel into which to direct the energies of youth, and they are, when improperly administered, the most dangerous and diseased. They are the most vulnerable activity of the American college life, and they are one of the most vital. Perhaps it is because we love them that we ill-treat and punish them. The inherent Anglo-Saxon love of conquest and combat in the sports and games endangers the very object of its love. College students view athletics as an end in themselves. College professors steeped in habits of mind-training and hard work see them largely as misspent effort. Herein are the two extremes in over-evaluation - youth in an over-evaluation of athletics, and middle age in an over-evaluation of academic training. These two extremes are still far apart. The problem of the modern administrator is to find a middle ground.

Thirty-five years ago, when intercollegiate football was on trial because of physical dangers to the participants, the late Theodore Roosevelt, ex-President of the United States, saved the game for the good that he thought it possessed. Today, with the game on trial again, this time because of alleged moral and spiritual dangers, there is need of another great leader to point the way ahead. The game should be lifted up and out of its distortions into its truer plane of inspiration and effectiveness in college life. In reality there is little of serious

issue with athletics in the colleges themselves. The disease starts from without - among the men whose interest is misguided. But also conflicting purposes arise in the mind of youth regarding school and college. Many coaches hold up to the boy the glory of conquest on the athletic field as the most important activity of college life rather than the all important thing of acquiring durable satisfactions in the classroom.

The intelligent athlete will not sell his academic birthright for a mess of pottage (the pay-off). This athlete will protect his forthright freedom the same as the American voter protects his ballot. But naturally the boy desires to compete in games of combat and contact. The game of football as a morale builder and as a builder of men perhaps has no equal. Above the door of the gymnasium at the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., are these words of Major Koehler, cut in stone:

"Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that upon other fields in other years are borne the fruits of victory."

Football would never die, but would continue to thrive, were it not for the football followers of Brutus who have stabbed the sport to near death. These pseudo-friends of football are the gamblers, the subsidizers, the proselytors, and the "pollyannas" who state that "football at the present is enjoying sound health and is becoming more of an amateur sport all the time".

I stated last winter that subsidized football and basketball had but ten years to live. I revised this estimate downward somewhat this fall, depending on the part that we play in this second World War which we are now in. Replying to my long-time friend, Major John L. Griffith, Commissioner of the Big Ten, may I say that I base my deductions on the

following fast developing facts set up for the period of our National Defense Emergency. Living costs will be at least 25% higher sometime in 1942, and at least 50% higher in 1943. The Federal income tax payments of the people drawing salaries from \$2,000.00 to \$7,000.00 will be more than trebled. Taxes are rising faster than corporation earnings, which means that the proportion available for dividends to stockholders is shrinking. Profits during war will narrow further. Congress will be asked to vote the draft age reduction to eighteen years of age when the time is ripe. The signal has already been sounded by General Hershey. It is an open secret in Washington military circles that there are plans for an American Expeditionary Force when American bombers and fighter planes can be manufactured in sufficient quantities to control the air and to protect the convoys from Nazi submarines.

Therefore, may I repeat that taxes and living costs will be so excessively high that big time athletes who are not then in the service will not be carried on the state's payroll the year round, during the time while they are attending college as well as on the state's highway department during the summer vacation. State legislators will not be giving free legislative scholarships to big time athletes granting them free tuition at the state universities. In some of our state universities at the present time this practice is followed, but it does not exist in Kansas. But the State of Kansas is also a happy hunting ground for the athletic head-hunters from the Big Ten, the Southwest and Pacific Coast conferences. Coaches and athletic officials, or their emissaries, of some schools of each of these conferences annually pay profitable visits to Kansas and make away with much of our choice high school athletic material.

Corporations will not be financially able to make good-will donations to these athletic slush funds, nor will fraternities and sororities be willing to feed an extra athletic mouth for the glory of good old Sivash! Father and mother will not be able to foot the bills. The vital business of whipping Hitler will be paramount to our over-indulgence of glorified publicity and financial display, neither of which are worthy lessons for youth to learn. Participation in athletics for the masses will be emphasized. Our gate receipts will fall off and of necessity there will be a consequent diminution in the numbers of our highpriced college coaching staffs now holding jobs.

The so-called illegal athletic scholarship carries many scars far beyond the academic halls.

Great throngs jam our football stadia each Saturday afternoon in the fall. Great crowds stimulate unusual interest and excitement. Some followers back their athletic favorites by placing bets to show their questionable loyalty. Many times more than double the money that is bet on horse races in this country is gambled on football games each year in the United States. The professional gambling racketeers' "take" on football parlays which they put out each Saturday afternoon is nearly 40%, leaving the easily hood-winked public the suckers' share. While this situation is not the fault of the colleges, nevertheless the filthy hand of the racketeer has not edified these intercollegiate games which were once academic.

The losing coach of the college team is the object of a vicious attack by the "yelpers" who have lost their money. Yet when these gamblers win a bet of course they put their money into their own pockets. Gambling on games makes for instability and ill-feeling against the coaches.

A high school or college teacher desires security and good will the same as does the manual laborer. A teacher of young men desires security, an athletic coach desires security, but there can be no security under the present plan with subsidized football and basketball because the followers of subsidized athletics demand a sure-fire winner every time. So-called athletic boosters pay their subsidized money into a secret fund to insure this. Every coach in the same conference cannot win the championship for his team. Winning a championship is very uncertain. And when successive losses accumulate, then the emotional frenzy of the disappointed athletic booster demands a change in the coaching personnel.

Five years is considered a long-term contract in football or basketball coaching. But five years is a short while in a lifetime of coaching. The mortality table shows that three years is the average tenure of a coach before changing positions. The present hypercritical subsidizing of college athletes works against the security of a coach's longer tenure.

Cy Sherman, sports writer and newspaper man at Lincoln, Nebraska, in his sports column, "Brass Tacks", says: "The founders of football and all college sports, for that matter, gave thought only to the idea that athletics should be conducted strictly on a basis of pure amateurism, but corrupting influences unquestionably have been permitted to intrude their sly presence, thus to make a mockery of the amateur pretense. . . . How then can a tangible plan be worked out to save the gridiron game from the fate which certain individuals have foreseen? The problem is one which this column passes to the heads of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the body which has the means and methods in its

hands, but in the past - more's the pity - it has failed, either through insipidity or cowardice, to use!"

Certainly from as stalwart an enthusiast for football as is Cy Sherman this is unmistakably an open confession that he and all other insiders know the mockery that is now being practiced under the guise of character building in a major sport - especially when big time proselytors and subsidisers work.

When a gardener trims excess branches from a grapevine he does it to improve the fruit. By lopping off many of the football barmocles, football could be saved. And so could basketball, for that matter. But the way it is going at the present time causes people to wonder whether the men who make money out of football will permit it to be saved.

Another observation is worth while; namely, the future crop of coaches in both football and basketball who will of necessity come from a group of men who are outstanding in the sport from the angle of technical skill. This is their college laboratory work to show that they are experts. These men, by and large, are some of the athletes who are receiving either their board, room, tuition, books, and so forth, or a large part of that, and some are men who positively leave school with a larger bank account than they entered with. How in the world can many of these future questionable builders of character challenge a boy to enroll in the university except by the same and only method they know - that is the pay check.

The undergraduate newspaper council of New York University, an organisation composed of editors and sports editors of the four university papers, recently called on the school authorities to subsidise the New York University football team. The request printed on the front pages of the four newspapers expressed the view that subsidisation is generally

accept today.

The students at the University of Chicago recently asked the authorities to permit them to adopt the Chicago Bears, professional football team, as their team and to make arrangements with the professional management so that they might be admitted to the Bears home games on an athletic activity fee basis. The Chicago students wanted to cheer for a winner.

Last week the University Daily Kansan sports editor, Clint Kanaga, came out for subsidization of Kansas athletics, especially football.

The petition of the New York University students offered three policies: (1) The abolishment of football as an intercollegiate sport; (2) The arranging of a schedule to fit the ability of the players; and (3) Open subsidization. The first two propositions were considered untenable by the students as the students did not want football abolished, and the University authorities admitted their inability to arrange a suitable schedule to fit the ability of the players. Thus, they concluded subsidization was the only alternative.

It seems that the student bodies of schools with losing teams are in favor of subsidization, feeling that most of the successful big time teams are adequately subsidized. It is an open secret.

When certain Pacific Coast athletes were declared ineligible by Commissioner Atherton these same students entered another university not in the Pacific Coast Conference.

I certainly have no objection to a boy receiving a subsidy for playing, because that thing is happening in a great many of our American universities at the present time, but on a sub-rosa basis. But when colleges resort to subsidization they have moved to outright pro-

professionalism, and the spirit of the colleges will be identical with that of the New York Yankees or the Brooklyn Dodgers, and the players are apt to be booed for mistakes as are the professionals. The cheers and the hero worship will go only to those super-athletes, as to Joe DiMaggio who outdoes everybody else. But upon this question we should ponder before deciding to make such a step.

It would be far healthier for our athletics if we could come out in the open and say to the public that definitely we are subsidizing these athletes. The richer schools or the schools with wealthier alumni would raise the ante and the same situation that obtains now would obtain in the future.

Unless inflexible laws for college conferences, with sharp, biting teeth in them, are enacted, the laws would be broken in this case the same as they have been in the present and the past. Subsidization could be adequately enforced by the colleges employing a super-cesar, or a high commissioner of athletics for the United States, to serve all conferences, with vested authority in him the same as is granted Judge Landis in professional baseball. This high commissioner would have absolute authority to discharge any coach, to declare ineligible any player, or to prescribe certain rules of conduct for any athletic board, or even go so far as to demand the removal of certain members of any college athletic board. Each conference would agree on the price to pay their athletes. Only member schools subscribing to such a plan would be eligible to belong to such a conference. And only conferences subscribing to this arrangement would permit their schools to schedule games with schools belonging. No games could be scheduled with any non-members in the United States. Of course, non-members could play with non-members.

For all practical purposes now many intercollegiate conferences could be divided into a "big pocketbook league" and a "small pocketbook League". The "big pocketbook league" members are generally the championship winners, and the "small pocketbook league" members are the consolation winners.

This high commissioner would have authority to remove any commissioner of any conference who did not enforce the law. Of necessity this high commissioner would be a man the type of Judge Landis. The Black Sox scandal imperiled the reputation and confidence of professional baseball. By wise administration and fearless action Judge Landis has again rebuilt confidence in the game. A great and fearless character in this high office could again stabilize this magnificent sport of football and again create a confidence in America's greatest college game.