

# Editorial Comment

## GAMBLERS MOVE IN ON COLLEGE SPORT

From Saturday Evening Post: The Post does not often poke its editorial nose into the conduct of inter-collegiate athletics because, by and large, the controversies that rage over campus sports are of something less than earth-shattering importance. We are moved to comment now only because it seems to us that a good guy with a good idea has taken a kicking around from people who, in their own interests, ought to know better. The man is Dr. Forrest C. ("Phog") Allen, head basketball coach at the University of Kansas; his idea, that basketball, which has become a big business, is also becoming a dirty business.

Specifically, as you may recall, Doctor Allen charged several weeks ago:

1. That gamblers have become a threat to college athletics;

2. That Vadal Peterson, Utah University coach, shut the door in the face of a gambler who came to his hotel room in New York last spring and asked how much it would cost to have Utah lose to Dartmouth in the finals of the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball tournament;

3. That professional gamblers have already caused two boys to "throw" college basketball games;

4. That a "scandal that would stink to high heaven" is in the making.

What happened when this story, filed by Sam Smith, of the United Press, hit the sports pages was astonishing. Dozens of college basketball coaches and directors of athletics hastened to give the lie to the Allen charges. In one way or another, they accused him of (a) lack of faith in American youth, and (b) seeing things under the bed.

Simultaneously, Ned Irish, who rose from relative obscurity as a sports-writer to the acting presidency of Madison Square Garden on the strength of his flair for basketball promotion, was doing his best to make Phog look like the heel of the month. According to Irish, the Garden employs so many cops that a gambler can't get closer to the playing court than Times Square and, if he could, the players and coaches are such sterling characters that a gambler would be wasting his time. The result of all this sugar-coated double-talk was that Phog Allen's charges disappeared from the sports pages within a week, simply because sports editors tired of printing rebuttals that sounded like quotations from a high-school principal's commencement address. And Phog, after shooting the works on his first announcement, did not have enough additional libel-proof information to keep his one-man crusade alive.

Perhaps there is no reason for exhuming the story now, but we think there is. Amateur athletics have lost much of their luster in the last ten years. We have learned to sneer at "tennis bums" and "golf-course insurance men"; we have learned to accept the overt professionalization of college football players. Indeed, we have come so far that the very word "amateur" now means "tyro" or "beginner" rather than a person who does something just because he likes to do it.

Somehow we feel that Phog Allen, sentimentalist and pop-off guy that he is, had something like that in mind when he cut loose with his barrage against Garden gambling. He must also have been thinking of the millions that change hands each Saturday on college football pools, where the professional gamblers are now brazen enough to get their information from the players themselves and from undergraduates working on campus newspapers. He must have been thinking of the fact that in Miami this last fall, extra police were assigned to quell gamblers working high school football games. And he must have been thinking of the millions of kids who want to play ball, either at the Garden or at Goose Crick Corners Gym, whether the odds are 6-5, 100-1 or even money, give or take three points.

No matter what the Allen episode proved, it did suggest to a lot of people that their estimate of college athletics ought to be revised again—and downward. And it did make a lot of good cash customers wonder why professional baseball, under the late Judge Landis, has been able to deal with its problems more forthrightly, and to police itself more effectively, than have intercollegiate sports under the loose political associations which seem to divide their time evenly between cherishing the ivy and counting the house.

Another Garden basketball season is now in full swing. For the sake of a lot of kids who enjoy a trip to New York, and for the sake of American sports, we hope that Doctor Allen's prediction of another and bigger gambling "scandal" will prove false. In the meantime, it would seem only routine good sense for college associations to learn to meet their problems head on and not merely to hush up the critics.