

EVERYBODY PLAYING AT PENN STATE

New York Periodical Publishes Interesting Article by Noted Football Coach

(NOPE)—The following article is reprinted from a recent number of "Outing" (New York), and should prove of special interest to all who are interested in Penn State's athletic development. Its author, Sol Metzger, is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and was captain of the varsity eleven during his senior year. He is well known as a coach and writer on football. Among the teams which he developed are those of his Alma Mater, the University of West Virginia, and Washington and Jefferson. During the war he was director of athletics at Camp Dix and has always been a strenuous advocate of the ideas being developed at Penn State.

EVERYBODY PLAYING AT PENN STATE

By Sol Metzger

During the war we heard a great deal about mass athletics, but no one seemed to have a definite idea about them. True, our training camps carried on sport to a greater degree than it had ever been so intensively followed in America, but the college and university followed the same program. The varied views of commanding officers, the differing personalities of athletic officers, the sometimes unfortunate misunderstanding between "Commission" men and athletic representatives of the various welfare organizations—a tangle which never was wholly untangled—permitted no broad, definite program. At the same time an effort was made to launch mass athletics in our various colleges which had Student Army Training Corps. That idea died a natural death with the armistice, and just as it was hatched as a result the war developed nothing much along mass sport lines through official channels.

But one institution did get results. Almost half a dozen years ago Ray Smith, then Graduate Manager of Athletics at the Pennsylvania State College, told me that they had in mind a plan at State for instructing, what he termed, "educational athletes." Briefly Penn State was then trying to get at a solution of the one big evil in our intercollegiate athletic system—the neglect of the student who most needs sport. Penn State, really situated for such a venture, never got far beyond the idea.

Last fall, Hugo Bezdek, best known as manager of the Pittsburgh National League Baseball Club, became head of the Department of Physical Training and Athletics at Penn State. Bezdek is a graduate of the University of Chicago, an athletic product of A. A. Sling in both football and baseball. He first coached college teams at Arkansas and from there jumped to the University of Oregon. He broke into the national athletic limelight a few winters back when his well-footed eleven downed Bob Fowlwell's Pennsylvania gridiron hopes at Pasadena on New Year's Day.

Bezdek faced no discouraging a situation at State College as any college athletic coach—and I use "coach" purposely here—ever faced. Not a member of the '16 and '17 varsity football teams were back. These boys had answered the higher call of country as did so many young collegians. Football prospects at this institution, long noted for its winning teams, were gloomy. Such was the situation in other sports as well. Not only that, but Bezdek had without the services of Dick Harlow, graduate football coach and Lewis, instructor and trainer extraordinary. Both men had won commissions. There was no all if he failed.

Worse still was the S. A. T. C. situation. State, a land grant college, had military training as a staple line, but the S. A. T. C. was now—and worse. The only good thing I ever heard about the S. A. T. C. in many trips to various colleges was that it was abandoned. Still, State had it as lots of us had the "flu."

Ninety-nine college coaches I know out of a hundred would have met the situation confronting Bezdek last fall

with columns of allies, invented and read a propaganda preparing alumni and well-wishers for the worst was in order. If ever such subtle publicity is in order. But Bezdek is the odd coach of the hundred. He had ideas—big and broad. He has courage, initiative, action, and most direct way of doing things. Bezdek is the sort of a man who would ask you for that five "spot" he loaned you last week if you happened to be over-seeing—and he would get it. Bezdek went to visit State in two months' time. Although his football eleven was smothered and smashed, although it was crushed and brushed aside, when he left State last spring for the Pirates training camp he had the satisfaction of hearing more ringing tributes about his work there than "Big Bill" Hollenback ever heard in the heyday of his most victorious football coaching career at that institution.

All this cheering of Bezdek by State men is due to the fact that he did the most remarkable piece of work there last fall in sport that has ever been accomplished by any college or university in the country. Within a month after his debut, he had established a system of mass athletics that has proven practicable and workable through the siege of S. A. T. C. and ordinary college life. All this he did while the rest of the college world dreamed and talked and fought about it within their own sacred cloisters.

There were 1800 male undergraduates at State last fall. Bezdek had 1500 of them playing competitive games every other day. There were football teams, basketball games, track and tennis teams, and a long list of other athletic teams going in for competition with joy and pep. State here they went and over the sport-for-all idea. Students, alumni, trustees, and faculty are sold on the proposition. State is in the game for keeps.

But before dealing with the future let me tell you just how Bezdek worked it out. Everyone gives him full credit and reports to the contrary which appeared in the press last fall were in error on this point. "I know that it ought to be done," Bezdek told me, "but I had not planned in detail. It didn't seem possible to get under way until the S. A. T. C. received word early in the fall that all members of the S. A. T. C. were to have an hour a day of recreational activities. I acted at once. The next day the entire S. A. T. C. reported to me on the field."

What to do with them was the big problem. Recently solved it for me. Immediately I sorted the men according to their preferences, the football aspirants in one group, those who preferred baseball in another and so on. Next I found out what men in each group knew how to play that game. These fellows were made play leaders and put to work immediately.

"We had 1500 of the 1800 students in various games last fall. Our aim was to have them play only American sports, but always in a competitive way. The object was to give each student a working knowledge of every game in the American curriculum of play. One of the main reasons why college graduates fail to keep up an active interest in sport is because they have hitherto lacked a knowledge of such of our sports as a man can get most enjoyment out of at various times in his life. That is why we include and boost tennis and golf."

"Our plan is to cover the whole field of sport for each four-year student. In what other attractive way is the college-bred Yankee to be not only fit but kept so?" There is no other answer to the question, Bezdek has a far-sighted plan in operation. He has purposely omitted calisthenics, the "physical torture" of the average college man, from his curriculum and filled it with the spice of competition. That is why State knows it will carry on.

Last fall Bezdek used the various

units of the S. A. T. C. for competitive purposes. Leagues in football, basketball, basketball, track sports, cross-country, tennis, volleyball, tennis, push ball, boxing, and wrestling were playing out their schedules until the switch in time forced all indoors. As a climax to the outdoor season a Hippodrome Field Day was held Saturday afternoon, Nov. 2. Contests in all of the above events were started simultaneously, where practicable, and 500 students completed.

Indeed the problem was one of space. Mass boxing and wrestling went along fine. Incidentally State won the intercollegiate wrestling championship. Thirty-eight teams played in several basketball leagues, six games a day being run off. This spring a 250 game schedule of baseball between forty teams was a marked feature.

During the winter and spring there was no S. A. T. C. and consequently no compulsion about the plan. The volunteer system has proven a surprise. The basketball league of forty teams completed its schedule without the compulsion of a game and baseball has been just as successful. As I am writing this a forty-two team tennis tournament is in progress. In addition the usual inter-college competition is fostered in all sports.

One is inclined to draw the conclusion, perhaps previously formed, that Penn State is only able to feature sport for all in the future because of the expense of varsity athletics. He who so thinks is quite wrong. Indeed, the remarkable part of its whole plan consists of the fact that Bezdek has hit the nail on the head by using his mass athletics as a breeding ground for varsity material. Last fall no less than six varsity football players were developed on the intra-mural field and this spring, when a varsity catcher was lacking, the intra-mural league produced the needed man.

All of which leads to the future. Is the scheme going to be practical? And what plans are on foot to make it so? are two pertinent questions. The first can be dealt with in a few lines. Let me quote Sol M. Fleming, the present graduate manager of Penn State's athletic association.

"A proposal recently made to our Board of Trustees to provide five hours a week in the college curriculum for physical education in which college credit would be granted was favorably acted upon."

As to the future. State is building a 100-acre play-field that should be completed when this article appears. We are informed quite casually that it will accommodate 2500 students at one time, that it will contain a 9-hole golf course, 32 gridirons, 40 tennis courts, 4 soccer fields, 5 baseball diamonds, 10 basketball courts, 2 hockey rinks, 6 volleyball courts, and a half mile cinder track.

But the big problem in the northern institution is a place for winter play. So enthusiastic are State alumni, who are building the field, that one of them, whose name cannot be given, is presenting the college with a monster play pavilion, 100x100 feet, as a memorial to the sons of this institution who gave their lives in the World War. This will contain a dirt running track, 100-yard straight-away, swimming pool, and various spaces for playing basket ball, baseball (indoor regulation kind, as well), football in bad weather and for other games as well.

A wing will house lockers and showers and the two-story effect at the front will contain the various offices needed for running such a gigantic athletic plant. The trustees have accepted this gift and they expect it to be built this summer.

Again Penn State has upset the dope. The vast majority of us have been laboring under the illusion that the attainment of an institution will "come across" in an athletic sense only for winning teams, that they are at the back of all the newswriting in intercollegiate sport. State has proven that this is not so. The possibilities arising from this charming piece of fact are beyond reckoning. One can dream wonderful dreams for the future of our colleges now that we give this belief the lie.

In addition to the 100-acre play-field State has long possessed a 60-acre athletic field, known as Beaver Field, where its varsity teams cavort and work out, not to mention a training house where the various varsity men live, and a gymnasium. But the gymnasium has a small place in an institution of learning if the Bezdek idea of sport for all spreads. It will pass into the discard as one of those unnecessary and cumbersome things that grow up in the dark ages.

State's sport for all program is the biggest athletic fact that grew out of the World War. It gives every promise of becoming known as the most overwhelming athletic victory yet won by a college. Phillips Andover Academy,

which Manager Hart expects to schedule with Eastern Colleges. The game with the Brown and White served to show that the line has the necessary punch to score goals, while the backfield was strong enough to ward off the dangerous offensives started by Lehigh in the first period. Consequently some surprises will be in store for Penn State's future opponents in the kicking game.

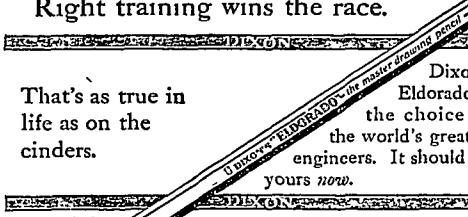
Manager Grube, of the Sophomore team, is getting his men in condition for the "scraps" with the Freshmen, to take place some time in December and unless the Freshmen produce some "dark horse" the "Sophos" will redeem their showing of last year when they were defeated by the '21 men.

For the first time since Uncle Sam established his family the World War caused him to send all of his best blood to the family physician. The result was a thirty-three per cent rejection. Has Bezdek offered the remedy for that condition? That we may well ask.

SCITDULE BEING ARRANGED FOR FALL SOCCER MEETS

After their easy victory over Lehigh, the soccer team has been taking practices rather easily, however, daily practice has been held during the past week in preparation for the games.

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