

# Sport SPOTLIGHT

By  
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## BASKETBALL'S BIG BOOST?

Back in 1924 a young man named Ken Loeffler was quite an athlete on the Penn State campus. He was a baseball star and captain of the basketball team. Then he left the Nittany Vale, played a little professional basketball, and finally embarked on a coaching career which has reached a successful pinnacle at LaSalle College.

As basketball coach at the school he has guided his teams to 92 victories in the past four seasons while losing only 20 games and last year the Explorers were ranked sixth in the nation.

Loeffler loves the game he teaches. It's natural that he should since he butters his bread a little thicker every time his teams add another win to his record. Recently he chose to exploit his feelings in an article published in "The Saturday Evening Post," entitled "I Say Basketball's Our Best Game." The idea was fine, for, basketball is a great American sport, and it was natural that such an outstanding coach would choose to give the game any boost he could.

But instead of pointing out basketball's many good points, he directed absurd criticisms to the rest of the nation's popular sports. He called football crude—a game for muscle bound giants. According to him, playing golf is just like going for a walk. He called tennis a "snob delight," and he cut loose a verbal barrage on baseball that was nothing short of ridiculous.

"I've handled baseball teams, and football teams too," he wrote. "I've boxed and wrestled. I've taught tennis and coached lacrosse. The other sports can be fun, but the truth is the other sports are elementary compared to basketball. None involves the speed and intricacy of tactics. None demands such fast moving, fast thinking, and all-around athletic skill."

In most cases Loeffler was correct here, but when he called baseball a mere "leisurely series of events" that require almost no physical exertion, and no managerial brains, he spoke like a man with a tin head.

Basketball is a great sport. It embraces some qualities that no other sport can touch. But why should one of its outstanding champions, in attempting to give it a boost, knock America's most popular sporting institution? It didn't help basketball's popularity one bit.

So baseball is slow, Mr. Loeffler? Do you call the doubleplay, the hit-and-run, the squeeze bunt, the double and triple steal slow? Did you ever see a player whip around base and stretch a line-drive a single into a double with a diving, headlong slide into second base? Action like this can hardly be called slow.

Baseball requires no managerial brains? The baseball manager must know the strengths and weaknesses of every pitcher, fielder, and hitter that his team will face. He must know this much or more about his own players if he is to win games. He must know how to handle his players off the field. He must know when a pitcher is "right." He must be able to pick out batting flaws a player might have, and be able to correct them. He is a specialist.

According to Loeffler, "the pitcher throws the ball, and if the batter hits it, a fielder goes after it and then perhaps throws it to another man." It looks easy on paper—at least the way Loeffler describes it.

First of all, the batter is facing a pitcher who can throw the ball at speeds up to ninety miles per hour. The pitch may curve, drop, twist weirdly, or "hop" to the plate. The batter must know the pitcher's weaknesses and strong points. And vice versa.

The outfielder who is attempting to field the ball is often forced to play off of walls set at odd angles which may send it careening wildly. The quickness of his throw, the speed, and the accuracy may determine the outcome of a ball game. No, Mr. Loeffler, it isn't as easy as it looks.

Loeffler is engaged in a great sport—a sport that has taken its place along with America's other great sports and is getting stronger each year. But he should realize that each one, with its one peculiar traits is needed on the nation's sporting scene. Basketball may be America's best game. Who is to decide? But one thing is certain, he certainly won't gain any more friends for the sport by tearing down the rest.

# Gymnasts Seek 3d Win Against Navy Saturday

When the mats and apparatus are brought on the floor Saturday night following the Penn State-Syracuse boxing match, Gene Wettstone's Blue and White gymnasts will be gunning for their 12th straight intercollegiate victory. Navy will furnish the opposition in the all-important Eastern gym duel.

The Nittany performers possessed a 9 game win streak when they entered the current season, and have thus far trounced Michigan State and Syracuse to account for their 11 victories.

## Grid Candidates

Candidates for the 1954 football team should report to the varsity locker room at 5:15 p.m. today, according to an announcement made by head football coach, Rip Engle.

## Matmen Win 33d Straight

(Continued from page one) cause Fischer held an illegal handlock. In the third period Fischer escaped. He also received two-minutes time advantage.

Ending the dual meet in championship form, Krufka and Oberly put falls back to back. Krufka was deadlocked at 4-4 before he had Drake sunny-side up. Oberly's lead, however, was 5-2. Speidel's heavyweight won his third match without a loss. He has one draw.

Penn State's National and Eastern championship team next engagement will be against the Big Orange of Syracuse Saturday afternoon at Rec Hall.

## Perini Owes Fans Favor?

MILWAUKEE, Feb. 10 (AP)—Milwaukee baseball fans have "rewarded the Braves beyond their dreams" and owner Lou Perini ought to do something about it, Sports Editor Russ Lynch of the Milwaukee Journal said today.

"If the Perini brothers would part with a little of the two million dollar profit which appears certain in 1954, and offer to move up the 5 per cent rental deal one year, it would be very difficult to find any fault with their operation," Lynch said in his signed column.

## Two Perfect Years

Only unbeaten, untied football teams in Penn State history were produced in 1912 and 1947.

## Host to Boxers

Penn State, for the fourth time since 1932, will serve as host to the National Collegiate boxing tournament April 8, 9 and 10.

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The Middies, along with West Point's Gadets, appear to be the big hurdles in the Lions' quest to repeat as Eastern titleholders for the second straight year. The Nittanians thus far possess five Eastern crowns.

**Navy Undeclared**  
Coach Chet Phillips' Midshipmen are undefeated so far this season, owning wins over Georgia Tech, North Carolina, and Duke. The latter victory a shutout.

The Middies will be led by Captain Bob O'Malia, standout on the parallel-bars, and are expected to be strong in three events—tumbling, rope climb, and H-bar.

Last year they copped the tumbling and H-bar events, taking first and second places in both attractions. Burton Munger, their number one performer on the ropes this year, took a third in that event.

## Close Contest Expected

Wettstone expects his squad to have a close contest in their quest to keep the undefeated skein from being marred. In last year's skirmish, the Lions were facing defeat by eight points in the next-to-last event, the parallel bars, when they came from behind to cop the flying rings and a victory.

Munger, besides being a standout on the rope, is Navy's number one man in tumbling and their second best on the H-bar. Other Annapolis entrants held over from last year's squad are Phil Cronk and Ed Shuman. Cronk is their H-bar specialist while Shuman performs on the flying rings. The latter placed third in his event in last year's duel.

Captain O'Malia is the Middies' parallel bars expert, and is expected to give Al Wick, Lion ace in that department, a close battle for the win.

The series between the two teams began in 1937 and now stands at eight wins and eight losses for each team.

Following the Navy duel, the Nittanians will meet Army, Temple, and West Virginia on successive weekends. The Saturday night skirmish is the final home meet scheduled for this year.

# Duquesne Accepts NIT Cage Bid

NEW YORK, Feb. 10 (AP)—The National Invitation Tournament pulled another raid on basketball's top ten today and obtained undefeated Duquesne for the Madison Square Garden post-season play-offs next month.

Duquesne is ranked No. 2 nationally and is one of the two major unbeaten teams remaining in major college basketball. The other is Kentucky, No. 1 in the Associated Press poll.

Thus it is a strong prestige stroke for NIT sponsors, who have to vie with the National Collegiate (NCAA) tournament for talent.

Kentucky may pass up the NCAA because of rules disqualifying the Wildcats' three top players—Frank Ramsey, Cliff Hagan, and Lou Tsioropoulos, all now graduates. Kentucky reportedly is not interested in NIT bid.

The Dukes from Pittsburgh conceivably could be the highest ranking team available for post-season competition, and the NIT has 'em.

Last week the NIT nailed Western Kentucky, rated the fifth-best college team in the country on a 22-1 record.

The invitation, with a 12-team field, will be played March 6-8-9-11-13. The NCAA begins with regional eliminations March 8 and ends March 20 with the finals at Kansas City.

Duquesne has a record of 18 straight collegiate victories and an exhibition triumph over the Quantico Marines. The team is averaging 72.7 points a game and is second in defensive rankings behind Oklahoma A&M with 51.1 points yielded to the opposition per game.

This is the seventh time in the NIT for Duquesne, which gained the finals before losing to Colorado in 1940 and went to the semi-finals in 1950-52-53.

**Made Umpire-in-chief**  
FORT WORTH, Tex., Feb. 10 (AP)—Art Passarella, an American League umpire for 13 years, today was appointed umpire in chief of the Texas League.

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