

Sport SPOTLIGHT

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THIRD NCAA ATTEMPT FOR GROSS

When Elmer Gross waded onto that French beachhead as an Army infantryman smack in the middle of the United States' European campaign in World War II, he probably wondered if he'd ever see a basketball again.

A young college graduate, he had left his beloved basketball courts and marched off to war with the rest of the nation's youth. Only a few months earlier he had been a star on the Penn State team which went to the school's first NCAA tournament. Gross, as forward and co-captain, was the team's top-scorer.

His fears were almost realized that day. Soon after his platoon hit the beach he was wounded. He made it through the war, however, and returned to Penn State after his discharge and resumed relationships with his former coach John Lawther. Lawther was the boss in 1942 when Gross and his teammates went to New Orleans for the opening round of the Eastern regional playoffs in the NCAAs.

The Lions weren't expected to do much that year. They had won 17 of 19 games but weren't rated very high in the tourney pairings. Dartmouth dumped the Nittany squad, 44-39, in the opening game and then went on to win the national championship. However, the Lions came back in the consolation match, whipping Illinois, 41-34.

Sports writers covering the meet rated the Lions as the second best team in the playoffs.

But that was all past when Gross returned to Penn State as assistant to Lawther. Then when Lawther retired in 1949 Gross took over the coaching chores and called on John Egli, a teammate on the 1941-42 team, as his assistant. In March of 1952, the NCAA tournament was upon them again. Led by a crew of freshmen and sophomores—the nucleus of his 1954 tournament entry—the Lions won 20 games while losing four.

They went to Raleigh, N.C., and ran into powerhouse Kentucky. Adolph Rupp had one of his greatest teams that year and they had little trouble handling the Lions, 82-54. This time the Nittanians dropped the consolation game when North Carolina State whipped them, 69-60.

But Gross brought back with him a group of seasoned tournament players and now they are faced again with another NCAA

challenge. Gross has five members of the 1952 players on his squad this year and has indicated that they will start against Toledo at Fort Wayne, Ind., Tuesday night.

Led by towering Jesse Arnette, four other Nittany cagers—Ed Haag, Jack Sherry, Jim Blocker, and Ron Weidenhammer—will be getting their second taste of NCAA competition. Only this time the competition doesn't appear to be as stiff.

The Lions, with a 12-5 record and two games left to play, face a much easier team than Rupp's phenomenal Wildcats of three winters ago. However, Gross and his ball players realize what kind of a test lies ahead of them. Tournament play is rugged. Toledo is a conference champion and will toss plenty of good material at the Lions.

However, a little experience is apt to go a long way in this game. Gross's Lions have played a lot of basketball since they entered their last NCAA tournament. Toledo has lost nine games this season proving that they can be beaten. It was a very doubtful question when the Nittanians engaged Kentucky in 1952.

So Penn State will be making it's third try in the NCAA fight Tuesday and the picture is probably brighter in the opener this year than in either of the past two attempts. But win or lose it's nice to know that the Lions command enough respect to be asked to play in the collegiate classic. The rest of the story will have to wait until Tuesday.

Kentucky Tops AP Poll

NEW YORK, March 2 (AP). — Kentucky returned to the top of the college basketball rankings today on the strength of a double knockout.

The Kentucky Wildcats completed a "knockout" season of 24 straight victories just after Duquesne, which had won 22 in a row, was belted out twice in succession. The result, reflected in the weekly Associated Press poll of sports writers and broadcasters, sent the Wildcats back to the lead and the Dukies clear down to fourth place.

Kentucky, which topped the poll from the third week of the season through the ninth, compiled a point total of 964 to take the lead by the unusually large margin of 242 points. Indiana moved up to second place and Western Kentucky held third.

Points were counted on the usual basis of 10 for each first

place vote, 9 for second, etc. Kentucky collected the season-high number of 59 firsts while Duquesne, which had 38 firsts and 934 points a week ago, headed only 3 ballots after successive losses to Cincinnati and Dayton.

Nine of the first 10 teams and most of the second 10 are sure, or almost sure, of seeing tournament action.

Lion Grid Flavor

Three former Penn Staters—Earle Edwards, Al Michaels and Bill Smaltz—spearhead the new football regime at North Carolina State.

Lions to Defend

Penn State's wrestlers and gymnasts will defend their National Collegiate team titles in the 1954 skirmishing.

Werner--

(Continued from page six) given Penn State the title.

Bill Youkers ran the best hurdles race of his life, but in the semi-final heat the judges could not determine whether he finished first, second, or third. According to a Bulova camera, which snapped a picture at the finish line, Youkers placed third, inches out of first.

Werner was not making excuses. These breaks are common to all sports and the Lions were not the only team which failed to get the advantage of them.

"I am not complaining," Werner said, "because credit must be given to the teams which beat us."

Shotputter Charley "Blockbuster" Blockson set a Penn State record in this event. His heave of 51' 3 1/2" eclipsed by two inches the mark established last year by teammate Rosey Grier. Blockson finished third and Grier fourth.

Ollie Sax' anchor leg on the mile relay was termed by Werner as, "the most exciting thing in the whole meet—it stole the show and had everyone cheering."

Taking the baton about ten yards behind Manhattan's Vern Dixon on the final quarter, the Clarks Summit flash ran one of the finest races of his life to finish first.

Barbell Club to Show Films Tonight

The Penn State Barbell Club will show movies of the Mr. America Contest and the Paris weightlifting championships at their regular meeting at 7 tonight in 102 Willard.

Slides on the Penn State weightlifting team at the Berks County Championships held at Reading will also be shown. The public is invited to attend.

Golf Candidates

Coach Bob Rutherford has announced that candidates for the varsity golf team should report to the Caddy House at 5 p.m. tomorrow.

Ted Williams Due To Return March 21

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) — Ted Williams, whose fractured collarbone was the latest shot heard round the baseball world, underwent further X-rays before leaving for his Miami home where he will be under care of Dr. Herbert Virginia.

Williams, who suffered the injury in a tumble yesterday only a few minutes after arriving here to train with Boston's Red Sox, is due to return to camp March 21.

Soph Tennis Managers

Sophomore candidates for tennis managers may still sign up today and tomorrow in the Student Union office, Old Main.

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