

a dean's view  
of sports



# Football Fatalities Cause Concern

By DEAN BILLICK  
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**LEBANON VALLEY HALFBACK JOHN ZOLA**, hit hard in a head-on collision with a Drexel College player, was rushed to the hospital when he failed to rise from the ground. He died following an operation from a blood clot in the brain.

Halfback Joel Brown staggered from a pileup, ripped off 15 yards on the next play for his high school team, and then collapsed and died an hour later in an Ortonville, Minn., hospital from a cerebral hemorrhage.

Nappanee, Ind., high school player Larry Slabaugh dived head-first at a ball carrier and lay motionless. He was rushed to the hospital but died before the game ended from a hemorrhage of the soft tissue of the brain.

Tackle Caspar Wiatrek died six hours after being crashed in the head by an opposing high school player throwing a block. The Fall City, Tex., athlete never regained consciousness, suffering a cerebral hemorrhage.

**TOO BAD, YOU SAY**, but it happens every year during the football season. Not quite. So far this year 37 fatal football injuries have been recorded, more than twice as many as last year.

Of the 37 deaths, 19 were attributed directly to football and 18 indirectly. The breakdown shows: colleges, 5 fatalities (all direct); high schools, 23 (11 direct, 12 indirect); semi-pro, 2 (both direct), and 2 officials (both indirect). These alarming statistics are the most tragic figures football has known since 1947, when 14 high school deaths and one college fatality were recorded.



California defender grabs face mask of Roger Kochman.

Well, then, what can be done, you ask. Coaches, trainers, athletic directors, players and fans have a thousand answers to the question, but on one point they all agree—some changes in equipment or in the rules must be made soon.

Three-fourths of all fatalities thus far have been due to head and neck injuries. Ever since the face guard was added to the helmet in the mid-50's, facial and neck injuries have shown an alarming increase. In 1958, 58 per cent of all injuries were in the facial and neck area. In 1959 the figure jumped to 69 per cent and in 1960 it rose even higher. This season officials say 75 per cent of all injuries have been to the face and neck.

**IT ONLY SEEMS LOGICAL**, that the "whipping boy" for these tragic figures is the helmet. Penn State Athletic Director Ernie McCoy is one of those who has become highly suspicious of the helmet and face protector.

McCoy, who is chairman of the NCAA committee on football injuries, said he is "concerned about the helmet we have been using, and some changes may be required."

Alfred H. Griess, team physician for the Lions, is of an even stronger opinion. "There is no doubt that the helmets are causing some injuries," he said. "Most of the team doctors feel that we are going to have to make changes in the helmets and many of them feel that the best way is to take the face guard off or shorten it."

"The face guard, which often sticks out three to four inches, is being used just like a handle many times," Dr. Griess said. "It causes injuries by hyperextending the neck or hyperflexing it. By hitting that guard a player's neck can be snapped either forwards, backwards or sideways."

Dr. Griess also said that the back of the helmet will have to be widened. "The back has a sharp edge, like a guillotine. It's too sharp and hits in just the right spot to do the damage, the cervical area," he said.

**IOWA ATHLETIC DIRECTOR FOREST EVASHEVSKI** is of the same opinion. "With that protruding bar, it's like putting seal belts in an auto and saying, 'Now go ahead and drive as fast as you want,' he said.

"The head is not meant to be placed in a meatgrinder. I think players feel that with that bumper in front of their face they can stick their heads into heavy traffic," Evashevski said. "I've heard that boys even have been told, 'Go ahead and stick your face into your opponent's chest and we'll polish off the rest.'"

Maryland coach Tommy Nugent feels that the helmets "are a weapon instead of a protective. Those plastic helmets are hard and don't give a bit," he said.

**NOT ALL OF THE BLAME** has been placed on the helmet, however. Clyde B. Smith, athletic director at Arizona State, says the "win-at-all-cost" attitude of coaches and alumni accounts for part of the trouble.

"In their efforts to win, some coaches are permitting their players to become very adept at using the forearm as a weapon to nullify the charge of the offensive linemen," Smith said. "Players are bringing their forearms sharply up under the chins and face masks of opposing linemen. The resultant jar jerks back the head and causes serious head injuries."

Whatever the cause, helmet, faceguard or forearm, something must be done. Next: What Penn State proposes to do.

# Overconfidence Hurt W. Va.

It may sound a bit strange to most football experts, but according to at least one West Virginia football player the main reason for the Mountaineer's 20-6 loss to Penn State Saturday was overconfidence.

The experts had West Virginia pegged anywhere from a one to two touchdown underdog before the game, but apparently the players didn't read the press clippings.

"I think the trouble with our team today was that we were too confident of victory," right end Ken Herock said in the quiet

Mountie dressing room following the game.

"We were high for the game and thought sure we'd win," Herock said. "I guess it took a half to knock the cockiness out of us. Watch us next year though, we'll really be good."

Statistics-wise, Herock had a good point. In the first half West Virginia sat back and watched State reel off three quick touchdowns before it could even travel into Lion territory.

The second half was a different story, though, as the Mountaineers apparently realized that their "sure" victory was fast slipping from their grasp.

West Virginia pounded at touchdown door throughout the second half, but reached paydirt only once thanks to some alert defensive work by the Lions.

"If only we could have played that first half like we did the second it would have been a different story," Herock said in disgust.

Herock praised the Lions for their hard-hitting line play, but he was not impressed as Mountie coach Gene Corum. "Penn State had a very good team and their line was by far the best we've faced this season," Corum said. That is high praise in view of

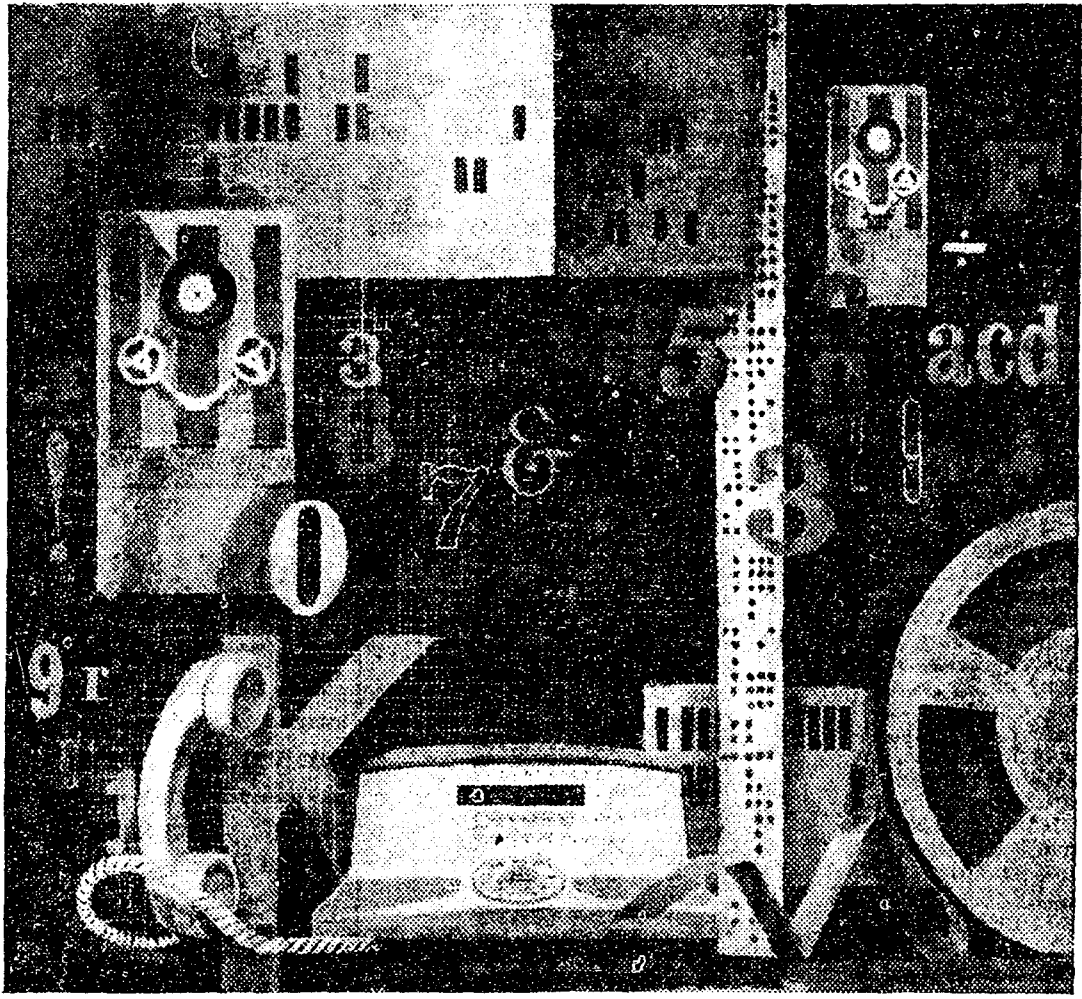
the fact that West Virginia has met the likes of Syracuse, Army and Pittsburgh.

"However," Corum added, "Don't take anything away from that backfield. Roger Kochman and Buddie Torris are good runners. But let's face it, the line was opening the holes."

Corum said he thought the first State touchdown on a pass from Galen Hall to Kochman was a great bit of teamwork. "Kochman threw a fine fake on our half-back and Hall used a good fake on the pass to fool our line," he said.—by DEAN BILLICK

IM Bowling Results		
INDEPENDENT		
Petroleum Eng. 6 Live Five	2	
Butler 8 Berks	2	
Hi-Five 6 Birch	2	
Screwballs 8 Washington	0	
Butternut 8 Erie	0	
High Game—Gaston Longo, Birch, 221		
High Series—Dave Herzog, Screwballs, 583		
FRATERNITY		
Alpha Sigma Phi 6 Alpha Zeta	2	
Phi Kappa Sigma 8 Alpha Chi Sigma	0	
Phi Kappa Theta 6 Delta Phi	2	
Theta Delta Chi 4 Pi Kappa Alpha	4	
Zeta Psi 8 Sigma Chi	0	
High Game—Ed Phillips, Zeta Psi, 215		
High Series—Ed Phillips, Zeta Psi, 577		

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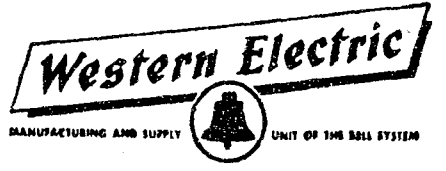
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