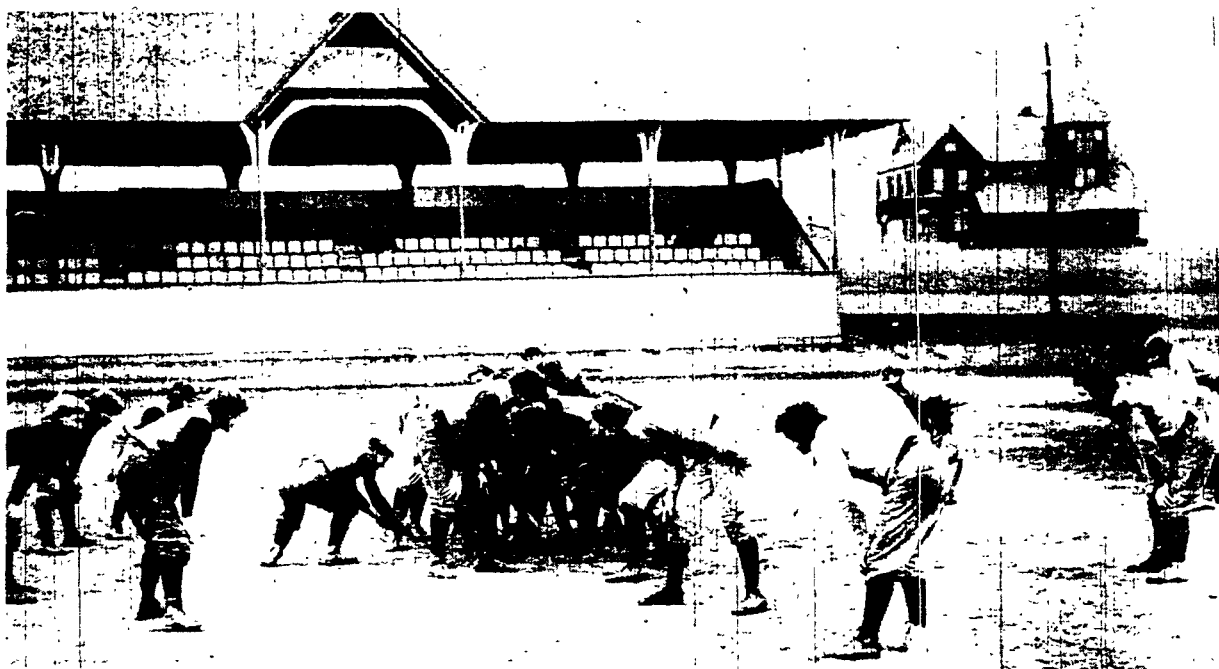


iversity



It used to belong to the students

The first Penn State intercollegiate football contest was Nov. 12, 1881. The students first issued a challenge to Bucknell, it was accepted, and on the afternoon of Nov. 11 the team left State College in two horse drawn rigs. The carriages were left at a livery in Spring Mills where the team caught the train to Lewisburg. On the next afternoon, in a drizzling rain, Penn State won 9-0.

Intercollegiate football at Penn State has seen four major eras since students of the Pennsylvania State College organized the sport in the 1880's. But it wasn't until 1887 that the students had their athletic association organized well enough to field a team that owned a schedule.

At its beginning, students handled every aspect of the football program, even the coaching. Students comprised the athletic association in its entirety. They even made the schedules and chose the starting teams.

In the years following the students tried to improve and expand the program, but, lacking funds, they eventually turned to the alumni.

The era of alumni control began in 1908 when the students reorganized their association and transferred the authority for the business and management affairs to the alumni.

Under the alumni the program moved into the "Golden Era," the period immediately following the First

World War. During the period from 1921 to 1929, the team repeatedly generated surplus revenue in excess of \$25,000. These were also the years Penn State made two trips to the West Coast, beating Washington 21-7 in Seattle in 1921, and losing to Southern California 14-3 in the 1923 Rose Bowl.

But late in the decade, amid mounting criticism from the intellectual community, the rapid growth of football at Penn State was halted.

Specifically, there were two evils singled out; subsidizing (awarding scholarships); and proselyting (recruiting). Penn State began its curtailment of big-time athletics even before the famous Carnegie Foundation report on college athletics was published in 1929, which documented abuses and irregularities in college athletic programs.

In 1926 the Alumni Athletic Board sliced scholarships from 75 to 50. The following year the board ended this subsidizing program completely.

That started a period of de-emphasis that lasted well into the 1930's. During this time, scouting was forbidden, spring practice was voluntary, and scholarships were not awarded. At this time the alumni also recommended that the Department of Physical Education be separated from the coaching of intercollegiate athletics.

Thus in January, 1930, the Board of Trustees approved and established the new college.

The "Alumni News" of Feb., 1930, recorded the fact with the following note:

"All members of the School of Physical Education and the Athletics staff, including present and future coaches, are to be employed as regular members of the academic staff of the College, and are to be responsible to the college administration in the same manner as are faculty members of the six other schools of the College."

Slowly, the attitudes on football relaxed, the de-emphasis of football was itself de-emphasized, and after toiling through the '30's, Penn State experienced its last losing season in 1938. The new era, the winning, streamlined, professionalized era, is the one that comes up to the present.

The whole thing started with an unorganized group of students, who probably learned a lot running such a disorganized program laden with problems (the Columbia game in 1893 ended in dispute when spectators ran onto the field and helped Columbia push over the final touchdown.) Officiating was very bad and eligibility rules nonexistent.

But it all belonged to the students at Penn State, back in the 1880's and 90's.

—Rick Starr

because they do not drain on the university's educational money. The Athletic Department is (at least at Penn State) a self-supporting operation; it makes money.

And if we assume that the existence of all other varsity teams at Penn State is justifiable, then the football program benefits the university by financing all their operations.

However, the financially autogenous structure of the Athletic Department is not by itself reasonable justification for its continued operation. But as long as the football team is winning big, the surplus money generated by bowl windfalls and television contracts is channeled into improving the intramural facilities for the students, building new tennis courts, and upgrading the available facilities in general. This is a distinct, measurable benefit of the program.

Another measurable plus for big-time football is the interest in the University it keeps alive in the alumni. This means money; for the Athletic Department (Levi Lamb Fund); and, more importantly to this examination, for the university's growth (Alumni Fund). Football keeps the alumni active with their alma mater.

As one alumnus stated, "If I was a geology graduate, why would I ever come back except for football? To visit my favorite rocks?"

As far as football's assets to the average student, the arguments divide sharply.

Penn State students started the sport, but every year the Athletic Department recruits the high school graduates that it wants to play it. So apart is the program from the university that students who only wish to watch practice are ordered to leave.

At the state-funded Pennsylvania State University last spring, 19 of 27 recruits didn't even attend high school in Pennsylvania. However, education at Penn State, to be sure, is not offered exclusively to Pennsylvanians.

Even when the students are allowed to watch the team, they receive the worst seats in Beaver Stadium. Money may not be all important in the football program, but it does seem that Rec Hall caters much better to spectators bearing \$7.50 than to its most vocal supporters, the students.

As mentioned above, the program does fund athletic improvements exclusively for the students. It also provides socially important functions.

Among new acquaintances, over a few beers in the evening, talk usually includes football.

There can be no denying that students genuinely love college football. They love to read about it, talk about it and watch it.

More than simply entertainment, the team adds an additional element to campus in the fall which makes that term seem best. It's not school spirit — it's impossible to love an institution like Penn State. Perhaps it's a feeling of involvement and union with the entire student body and alumni. The heart of the university is in Beaver Stadium on home game afternoons. It's a valuable feeling.

Even though the football program touches only a very small number of students, it must still answer one fundamental question to justify its presence in the university community: Does it contribute to the intellectual growth of its participants?

Again the answers separate.

As viewed by the alumni after establishment of the College of Physical Education, college football was to be a showpiece for the university, with the actual benefits to the participants secondary considerations at best. In 1935, the Special Alumni Committee on Athletics reported the following need for college football:

"The School of Physical Education and Athletics has a most potent influence on Alumni attitude...Intercollegiate athletics in the public mind is one of the important expressions of the College's activities, and this is particularly true of football. Excellence in competition is expected by Alumni as an evidence of the good spirit and adequate physical training of the student body, in fact, as a reflection of one of the accomplishments of the College. Teams need not win every time, but they must win a reasonable number of times in a given period if the Alumni and public are to believe in the soundness of this particular phase of College activity."

But even if the Alumni committee in 1935 failed to report them, there are strong arguments that correlate intellectual development and athletics.

Dr. Paul Weiss, Sterling Professor of Philosophy at Yale University, writes in favor of sports:

"No one seems to have discovered a better way for producing fine adults than by making young men learn how to make creative use of rules which demand self-discipline, thoughtfulness, and cooperation. Such rules govern athletic events...It is sometimes contended that athletics not only builds bodies but character.

"Character, it has long been known, is best forged by making men face crises in the little; by being pushed up against limits they define themselves. If they are made to do this again and again in the same areas, firm habits are established, enabling the men to act without much reflection and yet with surety and precision.

"Properly trained, the men gradually learn how to act quickly and yet successfully; properly aimed, their actions will be productive of what enriches while it satisfies. As a result of their athletic activity the men will become more alert to the insistence and rights of others, both those with whom they play and those against whom they play.

"If athletic training will lead to such outcomes as these more expeditiously than other means allow, it will provide a strong justification for sport programs."

In the final analysis, any realistic conclusion must support the continuance of professionalized collegiate athletics, at least temporarily. But this does not mean all is well.

Although little has been said up to this point about scholarship abuses, recruiting abuses, the influence of athletic depart-

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