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FOOTBALL AND THE WOLVES

"The best thing that could happen to Nebraska would be to have the Cornhuskers lose every football game for a couple of years." To this statement of a student close to the athletic situation in the University, The Daily Nebraskan, is with regret, inclined to agree.

After the Missouri game, Coach Bearg was hailed all over the state, as a great coach. He was credited with having put on the field one of the master teams of Nebraska history, a team whose coaching was such as to establish it with the great of all time. But after the Pitt tie and the Army defeat, the "wolves began their howling."

The Daily Nebraskan was just as sorry as any sports writer of the state at the failure to win those games. It was just as sorry as any of the thousands of Nebraska alumni. But this paper is highly disgusted with the caliber of sportsmanship shown by sports writers and alumni of the state, openly and by inference in the concluding weeks of the 1928 season.

The concluding statement of the student quoted above as saying that an unvictorious series of games would be beneficial to Nebraska is a vigorous assertion of a sentiment in accordance with the opinions of The Daily Nebraskan. He says:

"If they'd lose every game for a season or two, perhaps they'd appreciate a coach who could take them through a season of tough games, with but one or two defeats."

Three fundamental causes lie at the root of the expressed and inferred dissatisfaction with the Nebraska team and its coach. They are:

1. Failure to realize that the other schools in the "Big Six" have material very similar in quality and quantity to Nebraska, and with finances to secure just as adequate coaching staffs, a situation which was not true for a period of years when many alumni were still in school.

2. Over-estimation of the Cornhuskers when they win and failure to give them and their coach due credit when they lose, as well as failing to recognize the merit of the opposition when a loss is rung up against Nebraska.

3. The betting element in the alumni which raises the howl of the injured wolf when it makes a bad guess and finds a Husker team defeated when the bettors had predicted a victory.

The first of these causes has operated since Coach Bearg's arrival, to hamper his efforts to build successful contenders. Alumni and sports writers alike, accustomed to a long series of Nebraska victories, forgot that the other schools which now form the "Big Six" had grown in material and resources to a near equality with Nebraska. The organization of the "Big Six" from the old Missouri Valley conference helped to bring a recognition of that fact. If Nebraska had dropped a couple of close games this year to "Big Six" schools, further recognition of the fact might have been gained.

But as a result of Coach Bearg's success in developing his material far past the point of development of the material of the other "Big Six" schools, his smashing winning of the "Big Six" title is passing over and the attitude taken that that is a mere matter of form.

One of the best examples of the second cause, that of over-estimation of the Huskers is furnished by that most readable of sport writers, Frederick Ware, of the Omaha World-Herald. Mr. Ware has never been a particularly strong supporter of Coach Bearg but the adulations heaped on the Husker mentor after the Missouri game were piled about as high as Mr. Ware could pile them. Then came Pittsburgh and Army and the return to veiled allusions to the "smart coaching" of the Nebraska team. Sunday, Mr. Ware spent two columns lauding the individual merits of the Husker team, congratulating the assistant coaches, and attacking the record of the season as being entirely inadequate with continuous references to the fact that the team was not developed properly. Falling once to mention Coach Bearg, Mr. Ware's remarks can hardly be interpreted as anything but a slurring and inferential attack on the mentorship of Ernest E. Bearg.

Delighted as all Nebraskans must have been at Mr. Ware's selection of nine Huskers on his all "Big Six" eleven, a glance at other all-star selections could hardly fail to give one the impression that Mr. Ware was over-rating the Huskers and under-rating the opposition, a feat very easy for the over-enthusiastic supporter of any football team to do.

Clyde McBride of Kansas City, veteran official and sports writer, and probably as keen and astute an observer of football as Mr. Ware, with the added advantage of having seen the conference teams in action from the field instead of from the press box, finds room for a horde of Huskers but reduces the number to six. A similar situation is found in the case of Ed Cochran, another sports writer who has had a chance to see the players from the field. Leslie Edmonds, another official, gives the Huskers even fewer places. To the outsider, there could be only one conclusion—that Frederick Ware was over-enthusiastic about the Nebraska players.

And The Daily Nebraskan ventures the opinion that the reason for his over-enthusiasm is because Coach Bearg built a great team, a team which took

advantage of the material offered, a team which by rolling over "Big Six" opposition made all of its players look outstanding to the lover of Husker teams, so outstanding that the fine playing of opposing players went unnoticed from the press box.

If one gains the belief that Mr. Ware is the only one who has been guilty of over-estimating the Huskers, permit The Nebraskan to correct the impression. There have been others, both sports writers and alumni along with less numerous groups of students. Mr. Ware merely furnished a delightful illustration of the tendency.

For those who criticize the Huskers or their coach through either of the first two causes, The Nebraskan is merely regretful. It is too bad that their enthusiasm, that their loyalty, that their zest for victory has run away from them.

For the disappointed betting element, The Nebraskan has no sympathy. There is no one quicker to raise the cry of "Get the Coach" than the losing bettor. There is no poorer sport in sportdom than the fellow who has lost a sizeable bet on an inter-collegiate football game. If a series of Nebraska losses would cure Nebraska's betting alumni of the habit, it would remove perhaps nine-tenths of that criticism of defeat and over-laudation of victory, which has been the curse of Nebraska football for a good many seasons.

Discussion of the merits of a coach is always involved in difficulty. This whole discussion has been based on a standpoint merely of victory and defeat, a most unstable scale upon which to weigh the worth of an athletic mentor. On this scale which is the only one to which the out-state zealot shows much concern, The Daily Nebraskan feels Coach Bearg has shown his worth. Hampered by unfriendly alumni, over-enthusiastic sports writers, improved athletic situations in other conference schools, he has built teams which have maintained Nebraska's reputation for great athletics.

It is when one analyzes his other qualities that his value to Nebraska athletics becomes most apparent. There is no harder worker than Ernest Bearg. There is no more conscientious servant of the University than he. His great work is with youth, the youth that in a few short years is to govern and be governed in the state of Nebraska. If he molds that youth in the best interests of the state, he is a far greater coach than if his achievements consist merely in the recording of scoreboard victories.

The Daily Nebraskan renews the criticism of Coach Bearg because it fails to tell the whole story. It fails to tell the story of a man who is successfully working with the youth of the state to help in the university's mission of sending to the state, a better, a cleaner, a more vigorous, a more active, a more honest citizenry. It is hard to understand the state of mind which permits the taxpayers of the state to be swayed more by consideration of the hollow fame of football victory than by the lasting significance of well-trained youth.

OH CAPTAIN! NO CAPTAIN!

Scholarship of football players receives a severe jolt today at the hands of a member of the student body in the column, "Other Students Say." Undoubtedly an exaggerated opinion, it does offer food for thought as to tendencies of attaching too great importance to athletic endeavors. Comments of Dean Thompson and Athletic Director Gish on the article are carried in the news columns today.

Of more serious concern to The Daily Nebraskan, in an internal analysis of the football situation on the Nebraska campus, is the football captaincy. An office that until this year has been a plaything of fraternity politics, a source of dissension both within and without the team, the time for an election of another football captain must bring concern to the lover of Nebraska football.

The fraternity political situation was solved for this year by the election of two captains. It will be a rare year that two equally worth-while players from opposing fraternity factions will be available for such a system of joint captaincies. The institution has already seen in recent years the effects of fraternity politics in the election of captains. Little excuse for the continuance of the situation is to be found.

It is easy to say: "Let the captain be elected on merit alone." But anyone conversant with student politics knows that such a thing is not possible. It might be done once in a while after a remarkably apparent example of the folly of electing a factional captain without just merit. But, year in and year out, Nebraska can expect to see any elected captain chosen by the fraternity political faction having the most letter-men. Such a man may or may not make the best captain. Too often he will not.

The Daily Nebraskan advocates the abandonment of the system of athletic captaincies. It advocates that in substitution the coach be given the right to select a field captain for each game who will be the official leader of the team on the field during that game.

In support of this position, The Nebraskan presents the following:

1. Factional election of athletic captaincies is inimicable to the best interests of Nebraska's teams, because it often fails to reward the proper man, and because it encourages dissension in team and university.

2. Any elective system of captaincies is open to a primary objection. The outstanding player is often not the best leader of a team's morale. An elective captaincy must do an injustice when the two abilities are not vested in the same player. It is an injustice to the outstanding player if he is not selected. It is an injustice to the team's need if the morale leader is not chosen. An appointed captain would not be expected to be the outstanding player. The coach could readily, therefore, appoint as field captain the man best fitted for the position.

3. The appointive system would remove the tendency to swelled heads which often afflicts an elected captain and would remove much of internal jealousy and striving for the honor of the captaincy since little importance would attach to the captaincy under the game appointive system. The captaincy would, in other words, become as it should be, a cog in the team, instead of a special honor.

At first thought, the suggestion may be received unfavorably. The Daily Nebraskan asks that a little serious thought be given the plan in the belief that it offers a chance to take a significant step towards improving the internal situation of Nebraska athletics.

THE RAGGER: Definition of campus incongruity: A pair of corduroy pants and a fur coat.

The campus dumbbell was found with tears in his eyes the other day. He said that he had just got the point to "The Singing Fool."

Other Students Say—

FOOTBALL JUSTICE

Why should a good football player "get away" with breaking university rules on scholarship when "just a student" must obey these rules?

The thing I have in mind is this: A certain student in the university is down in more than the allowed number of hours. He is notified to "see about the matter" and in most cases, if the number of hours in which he is falling is comparatively high, he is denied the privilege of remaining in the university. He may be working so that he does not have much time for study, or he may have difficulty in getting the material. In either case, he is usually dismissed, and if he is allowed to remain, it is after much argument and explaining.

But consider the football star who comes from some famous high school team. Perhaps he is taking fifteen hours and is down in ten of them. Or perhaps the case may be worse. He is sent a "down" slip and asked to "see about the matter." This "seeing about the matter" results in his getting "special permission" to remain in school. This special permission means that if he promises to play football, his studies can be "arranged."

This may be "football justice," but it is not right. The University of Nebraska has its aims and ideals. Is this institution to be a football factory or a university of learning? Why should the athlete get more consideration than the "ordinary student" who is trying to get an education, not recreation?

An instructor puts down a grade in a book. This grade goes to the registrar's office. Then why, under all laws of justice, should a coach be permitted to "fix" certain grades, or to give certain athletes special privileges that the other students cannot obtain? Why should one's football ability influence his grade that has been given by the same instructor who grades the other students?

It seems to be a fact that universities are more interested in getting football stars than in making educated men. Who will leave his mark in the world, the football hero or the member of P.B.K.? By all means of fairness, which should be the one to be dismissed, the student who tries hard, but cannot make the grade, or the football star who doesn't give a bang, but does play football?

What advantages are there in cutting classes the day before a football game? Why should the players be given such grants, when the student himself cannot have them? Football men are praised and lauded for their prowess on the gridiron, but who ever gives any praise to the student who, through hard study and long labor, has made himself great in a branch of education? Nobody holds rallies for him and gives him the "rah-rah," or "Atta-boy."

Think it over. Which is more important, a good football player or a good student? From results this year, it seems as though the scholarship committee leans toward the football star.

AN ORDINARY STUDENT.

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