

The Frontier SPORTS

Jim Becker Lost for Grid Season

Cards 'Giant-Killers' in Friday Opener

Coach Don Templemeyer's St. Mary's academy Cardinals will assume the role of giant killers Friday night when they go to Crofton.

Crofton has yet to be defeated since that school began playing eight-man football two years ago. The Knox countyans have racked up 18 consecutive victories.

The Cardinals, entering their second season of eight-man ball, will attempt to improve on last year's 5-2 record. With returning regulars in Tom Schneider, Gene O'Neill, Jim Hickey and Jim Froelich, the Cards will offer a "fairly potent attack," in the words of Templemeyer, but will miss such regulars as Jerry Schmidt, Tom Head, Ray Donohoe, Larry Johnson and Matt Hynes, who were lost via graduation.

The Cards suffered early season blows via the crippling route. Jim Becker had a knee banged from behind and is in St. Joseph's hospital. Sioux City, recovering from cartilage surgery. He will be lost for the grid season.

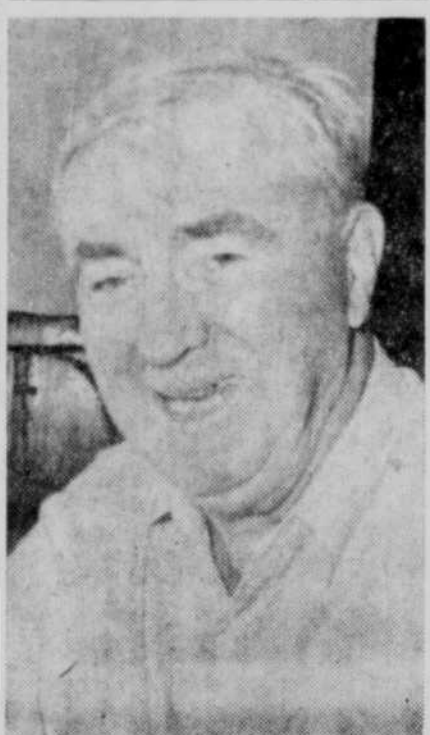
Larry Cleary is on the shelf because of hurts, and injuries are also expected to slow the running ability of Jerry McGinn and Bill Craig, both of whom are waging a lively battle for the left halfback position. McGinn has been out of action for a week due to some broken ribs, but expects to see action against Crofton. Craig is hampered by a sore back.

The game is apt to feature a lively battle between Academy Halfback Tom Schneider and Crofton's all-state Halfback Jerry Steffen.

Probable starting lineup for the Cards:
Left end—Bruce Weier, left guard—Jim Enright, center—Gene O'Neill, right guard—Jim Hickey, right end—Jim Froelich, quarterback—Gary Holly, left half—Jerry McGinn, right half—Tom Schneider.

Also ticketed to see action are Larry Donohoe, center and guard; Bill Craig, halfback; Jim McGinn, halfback and end.

Pete Becker of Ashby arrived Monday to spend a few days at the H. J. Birmingham home.



Hugh Coyne . . . as referee awarded Leahy the bout.—The Frontier Photo.



Montana Jack Sullivan (left) forgot the smelling salts, and Frank Leahy turned to football.—Photos courtesy Walter O'Malley.

LUCKY FOR FOOTBALL AND NOTRE DAME . . . Leahy's Fight Career Ended in '21

During the weekend, member newspapers of the International News Service published a story by John Barrington, INS sports editor, that has stirred memories of O'Neillites:

NEW YORK—Football almost lost one of its outstanding coaches, Frank Leahy, to the prize ring. The former Notre Dame mentor says he had pugilistic ambitions as a school boy at Winner, S.D., . . . until, as a 16-year-old light heavyweight, he was matched at nearby O'Neill, Nebr., against a blacksmith named Silent Blaha. "He knocked me down six times in the first round," Leahy recalls, "but I don't remember anything after the first knockdown until I came to my senses again in my corner between rounds."

Leahy's seconds were his brother and a former fighter, Montana Jack Sullivan. Leahy became dimly aware of his brother saying, "Give him the smelling salts." . . . "Can't," replied Sullivan, "I left them at the hotel."

Leahy finally won when his opponent was disqualified for kicking him after knocking him down again. But Leahy's ring career ended when he looked at his face in the mirror next morning.

"I came to a decision," he says. "I wasn't cut out for a fighter." And so it was football.

Rehashing of the Leahy-Blaha incident has centered around Hugh Coyne, O'Neill merchant, who was the referee.

Coyne recalls the fight—a preliminary three-rounder—was staged in a ring erected at the Noble lumber yard.

"It was a first-class ring, too," he remembers, and later was moved to the fairgrounds (in the northeast section of town) for outdoor fights.

"About that time there was a series of boxing matches at the Knights of Columbus hall.

"This card was sponsored by the KC's and the late Herbert Hammond fixed up the program. He had Ray Carter and Charley Young, Sioux City heavyweights, as the main event. Young was a Negro.

Leahy, who was born in O'Neill, was said to be something of a comer, so Herb matched him with this Sioux City fellow named Blaha.

"In addition, there was another

preliminary in which two kids from Sioux City were matched against each other.

It was in about 1921.

"There had been some fouling in the first round of the Leahy-Blaha bout," Coyne remembers. "I let it go, but in the second round I cautioned Blaha."

"I think Frank is mistaken about being knocked down six times in the opening round. It seemed to me that Frank was doing quite a bit better than that."

"Finally, in the third round, Blaha punched low and knocked Leahy down. I went over to Leahy, raised him to his feet, and raised his arm, signaling him as the technical victor.

"There was a big crowd and everybody seemed to enjoy the whole program."

That was the era when Jerry Vokoo, "the fighting Bohemian" from Verdigré, would draw a full

house in a boxing match, including Knox countyans en masse. Entertainment of another sort at that period included "ghost lights" on the Niobrara river and a "monster" that roamed the Hay Springs country. The latter was a fabrication of a news writer from out that way who kept the nation on edge until the hoax was revealed.

Leahy later went to Notre Dame, played football, turned to coaching, achieved success at Fordham and Boston (Mass.) college, and established a rare coaching record in recent years at Notre Dame.

He has been in private business for the past three years and lives with his family at South Bend. His brother, Gene of Rushville, is a frequent O'Neill visitor.

Montana Jack visited O'Neill when he made his annual pilgrimage to Nebraska.

It's a fair guess his mail will be heavy from friends throughout the country who have seen Barrington's story.

Reifert Preps Ewing for Start

Tigers Put 16-Game String at Stake

EWING—Coach Fritz Reifert has been tightening the screws this week in preparation for the Ewing High Tigers' grid opener Friday, September 14, at Bassett. The game starts at 8 p.m.

The Tigers posted an all-victorious season a year ago. In fact the victory string extends for 16 consecutive games during the past two seasons.

Reifert is working with an experienced backfield but the line is green and where the leaks will be is the big question. He has been working regularly with 33 candidates.

Members of the squad are Gene Sisson, Paul Gunter, Don Wright, Larry Larson, Jerry Hahlbeck, Tom Koenig, Bob Tuttle, Lyle Larson, Bob Tams, Jack Sisson, Maurice Schindler, Dennis Scheer, Richard Williamson, LaVern Stamp, Sonny Carl, Ray Turner.

Ronnie Hahlbeck, Francis Heumesser, David Wright, Ronnie Cloyd, Larry Rotherham, Bob Welke, Virgil Potter, Arthur Snyder, Duane Bollwitt, Gary Eacker, Jerry Jeff, Leon Hahlbeck, Royce Wright, Lyle Potter, Milton Biddlecome and Ronnie Thoendel.

Schedule:
Sept. 14—At Bassett.
Sept. 21—Pillger, here.
Sept. 28—Battle Creek, here.
Oct. 5—At Atkinson.
Oct. 12—Open.
Oct. 19—Tilden, here.
Oct. 26—At Stuart.
Nov. 2—Newman Grove, here.
Nov. 9—At Creighton.

(All are night games, starting at 8 o'clock.)

O'Neil Rockets Gain Revenge at Bassett

Gene Wolfe Hot in 15-6 Playoff

In the second game of the North-Central day-and-night league two-out-of-three playoff series, the O'Neil Rockets plastered the Bassett Towners, 15-6. The game was played Sunday afternoon at Bassett.

In the first playoff game, staged a week earlier at O'Neill, Bassett won it, 5-1, but O'Neill formally protested, charging that Bassett had used Marion Hicks as pitcher. League rules provide a playoff pitcher must participate in 25 innings of season's play.

Hicks, according to manager Dick Tomlinson of the Rockets had appeared in only seven innings.

The league hierarchy was slow to make a decision on the matter, so the Rockets went into game number two. In the O'Neill attack at Bassett was Gene Wolfe. In

five trips to the plate he poked out a single, a double, a triple and a homerun. The circuit clout came with the bases loaded. Junior Adamson connected with two doubles and a single. Third—and final—game of the series was to be played Wednesday night at Atkinson—a neutral field.

Summary:
O'Neill 003 440 031—15 16 2
Bassett 100 000 500—6 11 2
Batteries: O'Neill—Danny Helmer, Larry Heiss and Junior Adamson; Bassett—Larry Fischer and Doyle Dockens.

Hammond Heads SMA Athletic Group

George Hammond was elected president of the St. Mary's Academy Athletic association at a meeting of the group Friday night.

Dr. Edward M. Gleeson was chosen vice-president; William Mattern, secretary, and Arlen ("Shorty") Miles, treasurer. Finances of the organization were discussed.

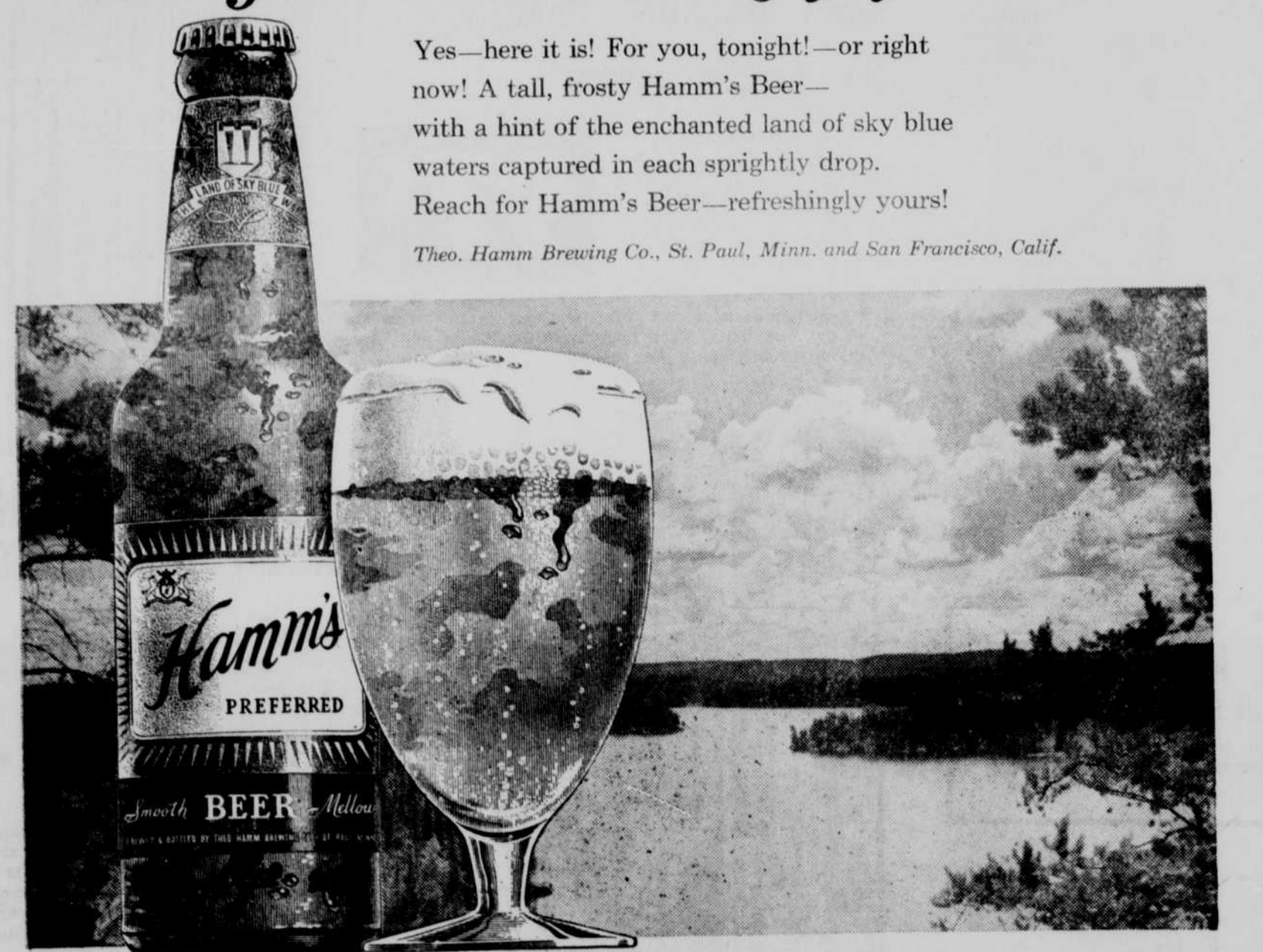
Sunday and Monday Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Merriman visited her sister and husband, Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Lyons of Winner, S.D.

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