



The Argonauts, of Toronto, Inter-Provincial Champions, Whom McGill Has Declined to Play, Tussling with the Montreal Team at Rosedale, Oct. 19.

The Rooter and the Professional

What an Old and Tried Football Player Thinks of Some Present-day Aspects of Football

By J. M. MACDONNELL

ON Saturday, November 9th, the deciding game of the Interprovincial series was played on Rosedale athletic field, Toronto. As an exposition of football the game was not a success. As an exhibition of sport it was a disgrace.

The game was punctuated with numerous delays due to injuries. Many of these injuries were, no doubt, of that variety which, as anyone who has ever been "on the inside" in football knows, are nothing more than a tired feeling and a rather childish desire for the plaudits of the rooters which will greet the wounded gladiator when he returns to the struggle. The majority, however, were genuine, and were the result in most cases of deliberate foulness. One Argonaut man was completely floored by a quick strangling clutch round the neck, administered with a skill that must have been the result not only of long practice, but of long training. It reminded one of what I have read of the habits of a certain East Indian tribe, who dispose of their enemies by strangling them from behind. While the other Ottawa players were perhaps not so skilful as the hero of the above episode, several of them gave one the impression that they would be more useful in a rough and tumble fight than on the football field and certainly much more at home.

Let us not, however, refuse to the Argonauts their share of the honours of the day. I believe they boasted before the match that they would not be behindhand in any rough work, and to do them justice they showed themselves pupils of decided promise. One of the choicest feats of the day was a deliberate attempt on the part of one of them to "give the knee" to an Ottawa half-back who was already securely tackled and lying on the ground behind his own goal, and who was known to have commenced the game in an injured condition.

The instances that I have given were by no means isolated. Similar tactics were constantly displayed. While it would be unfair to suggest that all the players were tarred with the same stick, for there were some on both sides who would not have been out of place on a team of gentlemen, the general tone of the game was bad.

NOR was this game, though worse than most, altogether untypical of what goes on constantly. Nearly every Saturday there are similar incidents on the football field, and through the week the sporting columns of our newspapers harp on this unpleasant side till the pleasure or sport is all gone and only bitterness and malicious recrimination left.

What is true of football is true of baseball, hockey, lacrosse—all the great popular games in which the mass of people are interested.

Well, and what of it? you will say—just this: that we are disregarding and allowing to be degraded into the gutter the one means that we have ready to hand of creating among the people a healthy spirit of sport which brings in its train a healthy view of life. The man who is "dirty" (I do not mean merely rough) on the playing field will be "dirty" in after life. The man who plays a game fairly will play fair in the game of life. It never fails.

I said a moment ago that we are allowing sport to be degraded into the gutter. It is a hard saying, but not exaggerated. The truth is that sport is suffering from a disease with two main symptoms, the spectator, or to use technical language, the "rooter" and the professional.

The rooter is a curious sort of barnacle or parasite that lives on sport. Though he glories in the fact that he is a "sport" your true rooter never plays himself. He saves his wind for shouting—encouragement to his own men, usually jeers and in-

sults at the visitors, for the "rooter" does not associate hospitality with sport. Having none of the pleasure of playing the game his only pleasure can be to see his own side win, and this he desires at all costs. The curious result is that he comes to admire above all not the skill shown in playing the game, but the skill shown in injuring the opponent. While we are not to suppose that when the rooter exhorts the players of his own side to "kill" or "eat" their opponents he actually has murderous or cannibal feelings in his manly breast, he will be far from displeased if the best men on the opposing side are "put out" and forced to retire early. The little feat of strangulation which I mentioned above evoked the admiring and delighted comments of an Ottawa man standing near me who called on the friends about him to admire the skilful way in which it was done.

WE have noted one extreme—the rooter who doesn't play—there is the other—the professional who plays but regards the game not as an end, but as a means to an end, in whose hands sport is prostituted, only less than in the hands of the rooter. For the purpose of this article I am leaving out of account those men who make their living out of sport just as other men out of law or medicine or farming. The professional that I am thinking of now is the man who plays on one of our so-called amateur teams. Now, an amateur means a man who plays a game because he likes it. But do our amateurs play for the love of the game? In most cases, no. It is the social distinction, the notoriety which is the stimulus even in our schools. Watch the player when the scheduled matches are over. He will play no more. Ask him to play when there are no spectators. His keenness at once evaporates. Besides, he must be financed, and when the only games worth playing are those with outside towns or colleges, where there will be sufficient extraneous excitement to lend an interest which the game as a game seems to lack, the expense is considerable.

It would thus appear that instead of being the pleasure of the many sport is becoming the business of the few and that in the process it has deteriorated. It would be surprising if this were not the case. If I am right, neither player nor spectator approaches athletics in a healthy spirit—the spirit of the amateur—but in the spirit of the professional who must stake everything on winning. I have tried to show how both rooter and player can only be satisfied with victory, the rooter because he has none of the pleasure of the game itself, the player because he no longer plays the game for the pleasure to be derived from it, but for the social distinction and notoriety which depend in a large measure on

winning. The necessary result of this attitude of mind is that none considers it worth while to play unless he can be a professional in the sense above defined.

To see the extremity which we as a people have reached one need only reflect on the spectacle of a so-called sport-loving people going twenty thousand strong to spend their every holiday watching a few foreign hirelings display their athletic prowess. One is inevitably reminded of the gladiatorial shows at which the Romans—by that time too effete to enter the arena themselves—reclined at ease and applauded the courage and the skill of their future conquerors.

IT seems a paradox to say that the reason sport has become a business, not a pleasure, is that we do not take it seriously enough, but there and nowhere else lies the reason. There is only one way to stop the decline of manly sports, and that is by taking them seriously in our schools. Until we do the decline in national physique and national morale, at any rate in our great cities, will proceed apace.

The position of athletics in our schools is to-day absurd. The spirit of professionalism, of specialization, cannot help but creep in. There is no room for a fraction to play if they wished. What we need is room for all to play and that athletics should be compulsory. That would be one point gained and if to that we add efficient supervision the battle would be half won. A proper physical instructor on a playground could do more for the physical and moral qualities of children than all the sermons which their unwilling ears will listen to. I remember as a child playing a game with some other children, when there was an attempt made to "rattle" an opponent who had a difficult play to make. We were fortunate enough at the moment to be playing under the supervision of a man whose views of the ethics of sport were not those of the ordinary baseball fan, and he severely called to order the offender. I venture to say that incident was indelibly stamped on the minds of many of those present, and gave them an entirely new attitude of mind, for the minds of children are impressionable not only to evil, but to good.

There lies the opportunity—with the children. When those worthy educational authorities who now insist on making little boys and girls uncomfortable inside by teaching them the evil effect of tobacco on the heart and the dire results of a drop of nicotine on a dog's nose (why a poor dog I could never understand), come to realize that the time wasted on that would be better spent in playing games under careful supervision, they will go far, not only to prevent a repetition of the scenes which disgraced the Interprovincial final, but—which is more—they



Line-up of the Bishop Ridley Football Team at St. Catharines, Ont.