

POOR DOCUMENT NOV 20 1905

ST. JOHN STAR, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1905.

The Football Hero's Spartan Training



For Two Months Before Thanksgiving He Leads as Rigorous a Life as Ever the Doughty Spartan Warrior Did.

And for That Period He Has to Forget Absolutely That He Has a Mind of His Own and Obey Implicitly the Instructions of Trainer and Coach.

From the Time He Rises at Seven in the Morning Till He is Tucked in Bed at Ten He Is Training—Training—Training.

By Guy T. Wainwright.

As you occasionally watch your dear, beloved son (or some other girl's brother) imperially covering himself with glory and glory on some of the "starving" American football fields, these crisp November days, when the season is in its apogee, do you ever give a passing thought to the course of training that the boy has had to undergo in order to become a hero in your own eyes and the eyes of the frankly cheering thousands about you?

No, you haven't. Well, let's consider it now; and as we do, it's dollars to doughnuts that admiration will grow apace for the lusty specimen of young manhood, this moment being lifted in triumph upon the shoulders of his joyfully insane college mates. For his is a training that doubtless would have made a Spartan warrior of the days of Lycurgus win—and admiration for that doughty, self-denying ancient has always been great through the centuries, right down to the present day.

For two months, counting backward from Thanksgiving Day, the football hero is in training every minute. As early as possible in the season he must become chock full of strength, speed, endurance, agility, and the science of the game. It is the trainer's duty to equip him with all the essentials, except the last—that is the coach's task. That he may perform his part of the work to the best advantage, the trainer, whenever the college authorities will let him, gathers each and every football hero unto himself in a training or football house. And right here it might be well to remark that no college or university which offers an advanced course in football is without its football house nowadays. Only those sets of learning equipped to give the ordinary course still insist that the training shall take place in the dormitories.

CHIEF QUALIFICATIONS OF THE TRAINER.

Although a football house usually holds, besides the trainer, from twenty-five to thirty players, four or five assistants to the trainer, a chief and a corps of waiters, there is only one mind in that house from the time it opens until the men break training at the season's end. And that mind is the trainer's.

When he says come, the man to whom he goes with even greater cheerfulness. It must be no questioning of his authority, even by his own quarters. He hands must not be tied by any one, in any way. All the responsibility for the physical condition of his charges must be his. His word must be law, and final law at that. Else how could a team be whipped into perfect condition, physically, in a few all too fleeting weeks for the overhauling big games of the season's height? For, as every right minded person knows, too many cooks invariably spoil what was meant to be a good meal; and the old world long since learned by bitter experience that the only way to handle a body of men to the best advantage of all collectively and individually, is by discipline—the more perfect the better.

But it must not be gathered that the trainer, because his powers in the training house are autocratic, is anything short of a very benevolent despot, indeed, since he exercises his authority for the sole good and immediate glory of the young men under him. They recognize this; but ask some grizzled veteran what was the hardest thing he had to do while training for the "varsity" team and I'm certain that you will get a reply worded something like this:

"To forget that you had a mind and a will of your own from the moment you began training until you broke it with a 'feed' fit for the gods."

From the start of training, too, begins a rigorous daily routine that would prove disastrous to any person less steadily and enthusiastically imbued with a grim purpose than is the weakest hearted of all the "scrub" men.

THE DAY'S STRENUOUS START.

In a certain famous eastern university, whose method of training is representative, the football squad is turned out of their beds by the trainer and his assistants three-quarters of an hour before breakfast. The men jump into jerseys and trousers, and a few minutes after seven, the regular hour for rising, they start in on a half hour's stiff exercise. One morning this consists in going through the setting up exercises of the army—a splendid series of movements for every part of the human system. The next morning it is calisthenics, perhaps, or the medicine ball, or a walk of two miles, finishing with a sprint of a hundred yards. Frequently there is punting and drop kicking by the kickers, excused from walks and other exercise.

Once back at the football house, those men who have perspired freely rub themselves down with a rough towel, all dress for breakfast, and, right on the minute of the hour set for it, the meal begins. At the head of the varsity table sits the trainer; one of his assistants occupies a similar position at the college, or scrub, table, usually set in another room; and each trainer serves to each player just as much food as he (the trainer) thinks the player should have, and no more. Three times a day a player's food is thus dished out to him, the portions being determined by the trainer's careful study of the needs of the young man's physical being. Thus, many a player is kept from eating too much; and if the trainer sees that a player is not eating what he should, then steps are taken to provide him with a proper appetite. Perhaps he has been worked a little too hard, and is proving himself too "fine" or "stale" by refusing his food. In that event, his task is lightened until he is in fine fettle once more, and ready to eat any and everything set before him.

A representative breakfast consists of fruit, with laxative properties—above all things, the functions of the body must be regularly maintained—a cereal, with cream, a chop, soft boiled eggs, and a cup of coffee apiece for only those men who have been accustomed to it. All others are forbidden to taste of it—and they know better than to beg for it, no matter how tantalizing the aroma from the steaming cups of the more favored table mates on a frosty morning.

LESSONS IN HOW TO EAT.

While the men are disposing of this simple but highly nutritious meal, as well as the other two of the day, their manner of eating is constantly under observation.

"Jones," the trainer, calls to the "varsity" fullback, "quick bolting your food like a starved dog. Eat slowly—eat like Smith, who's chewing as deliberately as his mouthful of chop as a cow chews her cud."

"Look here, Henry, this eatin' ain't a life and death matter," the assistant trainer calls out to a line man of the scrub. "Cheer up when you eat—a good laugh'll help your digestion. 'Beef' ain't you got any appetite this mornin'?"

Guess I'll have to find out the reason why soon's the meal's over. If any man has an appearance of not having slept well, a mental note is made of it, and after breakfast the matter is taken up with him, that sound sleep may be his portion thereafter. Oh, in numerous ways the boys are scrutinized at meal time—studied as carefully and in as cold-blooded a manner, apparently, as is a race horse by the men charged with developing every iota of its potential powers against the day of a famous derby. And yet the meals are well spiced with heartiness, cheerfulness, and sometimes a green vegetable. At 1 o'clock the men are in lectures again or laboratories, where they remain till 2, when they report to the "gym," and there, after being weighed, stripped, and exercised in the preliminary season of the field. During the preliminary season the trainer sees to it that the men are padded like so many vain women. As their bodies become insured to the rough and tumble of the game the pads are reduced in number, until, with the coming of the big games, they have been almost entirely discarded. In such a brief time, by systematic training and regular life, can young muscles be made to withstand shocks that would result in broken bones and general disability for weeks were they to be experienced by even the strongest men in ordinary walks of life.

FATHOMING THE SCIENCE OF THE GAME ITSELF.

Of course, with the players once on the field, the trainer drops to second-ary, the head coach taking first place. He alone instructs the men in the intricate science of the game, its plays, signals, tricks. The trainer, so far as this part of the work of developing a team is concerned, is as if he does not exist. Yet before the practice begins he tells the coach how much physical he wants each player to do; he remains on the side lines to see that each does his allotted task; and if he discovers that any man is being worked too hard for any reason whatsoever, he takes that man out of the game entirely, or directs the coach to ease up on him—and the coach must do it.

Also, as the men are injured, the trainer rushes them to the "gym"—that is, provided no bones are broken or

other serious injuries sustained, these being looked after by the team surgeon, who always attends practice, and is, therefore, within easy call.

Practices usually last for an hour and a half. In that time each man is instructed not only in team play, but his own specialty, the object of it all being ultimately to make eleven units work beautifully as one. Sometimes the practice is discouraging, sometimes highly pleasing to coach and trainer and players alike; but whatever the state of mind of the players, as soon as the coach is done with them, they go to the "gym," strip, and are weighed again, that the trainer may ascertain what effect, physically, the practice has produced on them. For the first week of training each player, as a rule, will lose several pounds of flesh. A fat man will get rid of six or seven pounds, a man of average build a pound or two less.

This loss is usually made up by the next afternoon, however. For several days following the first week it is the rule for players to put on from eight to ten pounds apiece; then, as the training becomes more severe, they drop back to normal and remain there throughout the rest of the season. A change of the weights is kept by the trainer, and by means of it he is greatly aided in determining the physical condition of each player, and in the peculiarities of training that he needs to bring him to the height of physical condition, and to keep him there until his last football day is over. It is as important to keep a player in this state as it is to get him into it. A player who becomes "stale" is as useless, almost, on the football field as a novice.

THE EXQUISITE ORDEAL OF BEING RUBBED.

The weighing in, over the players who have bruises or sprains get over hot or cold water jets, according to the trainer's instructions, and later on, like their more fortunate fellows, stand under hot water shower baths for two minutes, finish off with dashes of cold water, dry themselves briskly with rough towels, and then go to the rubbing tables.

Here the men are rubbed, thoroughly, systematically, strenuously, and with all muscular power possible, by the trainer and his assistants. The massage that one gets in a Turkish bath is merely a fly's touch compared with the tortuous kneading that the player undergoes. Small wonder, then, that at this time sprains and bruises on the very bones themselves are made to vanish completely.

Every trainer makes a great mystery of the rubbing material that he employs. Not for a million dollars would he let its ingredients become public property, for, he it knows, these ingredients are the only ones that, mixed, will make bruises to disappear as if by magic; and cause even a badly battered player to rise up from the rubbing table feeling like a freshly groomed god. It has frequently been whispered by the cynical that this secret compound is nearly always nothing more than a mixture of such common stuffs as alcohol and witch hazel. The reply of a self-respecting trainer to any such insinuation is to throw more mystery than ever about the preparation, which little circumstance has led

he cynical to add that the trainer makes all this mystery in order to fill the players with the firm belief that he is rubbing material is even more potent in its effects than it really is.

Long experience has taught trainers that sleeplessness on the part of football players, in the face of all the work they are called upon to do, is almost invariably due to "nerves" and worry.

Sometimes a stiff curtain lecture will straighten out the player nicely; sometimes it is necessary to load work on him till sheer weariness makes him fall dead asleep just as his head sinks into his pillow.

again in the morning, on the minute, again in the evening, on the minute, to drink a glass of water apiece (or take a laxative twice a week), and do all the other things of the day before all over again—and again—and again—and yet again, for the glory of the dear old alma mater, till the season ends with victory, let us hope, over the doughty warriors of the traditional rival. Oh, it's real Spartan training, there's not a doubt of that!

DIVERSIONS THAT THE TRAINER PERMITS.

And yet the players have their diversions; that trainer is unknown who does not insist on diversions, and see to it that they are indulged in, simply and moderately, of course.

A great deal of the amusement is of an informal character. The trainer, as a forethought, the trainer has a piano put into the house with the coming back of the old "varsity" men and the best of the "scrub" two weeks before the opening of college, and he encourages the men to gather about it and sing their college songs. He also crastily leads them up to the pool table in an adjoining room, and if he discovers that some one is expert on the mandolin or guitar, he diplomatically induces its owner to entertain his mates with their favorite melodies. The trainer leads in the joke making; he laughs heartily and long at the slightest provocation—laughter is contagious. Withal, he endeavors to make every man a jolly good fellow with all the others. A team of friends can go through a line of college beef that would stand like a stone wall against the onslaughts of a team with members of both "varsity" and "scrub" teams attend a football lecture by the coach, and give heed to blackboard demonstrations of plays, old and new.

At seven-thirty o'clock, or possibly eight, the book lessons of the evening day are taken up, and from then on till nine-thirty the men's heads are close to their students' lamps, for they know that unless they keep up in their college work the faculty, with little or no warning, will surely disqualify them from playing. At nine-thirty the trainer and his assistants start out to visit each man, and at this time hot water applications are given to swollen joints, others are rubbed with liniments, much skin surface is liberally painted with iodine, and bruises are variously and efficaciously treated for the night.

TUCKING THE PLAYERS IN BED.

And then, at ten, it's to bed for everybody, except the trainer, who, five minutes or so after the hour, goes the rounds to see that each room is getting plenty of fresh air, and listens to the toings and of any sleepless one among his charges. Happily, this part

of his vigil is seldom rewarded, but a sleepless player found, the trainer at once sets about to make his nerves steady and divorce him from worry.

Long experience has taught trainers that sleeplessness on the part of football players, in the face of all the work they are called upon to do, is almost invariably due to "nerves" and worry.

Sometimes a stiff curtain lecture will straighten out the player nicely; sometimes it is necessary to load work on him till sheer weariness makes him fall dead asleep just as his head sinks into his pillow.

again in the morning, on the minute, again in the evening, on the minute, to drink a glass of water apiece (or take a laxative twice a week), and do all the other things of the day before all over again—and again—and again—and yet again, for the glory of the dear old alma mater, till the season ends with victory, let us hope, over the doughty warriors of the traditional rival. Oh, it's real Spartan training, there's not a doubt of that!

THE PROPER WAY TO TAKE FOOTBALL.

"But," you say, "as saying in a puzzled sort of way at about this point, 'can the boy manage to do all this and still keep up in his regular college work?'"

Well, the answer is easy. He studies on an average two hours a night, besides putting in his regular periods in lecture rooms, laboratories, etc. He would scarcely devote more than two hours a night to study were he taking no football course. In his spare time he goes to the fraternity meetings and receptions, fraternal engagements with the sisters of college friends and seek the theatre frequently. The time taken for football is not subtracted from the time for study. It is included by the players as one of their social pleasures for the period of training.

That this method of dividing time between football and studies is right and proper has its proof in the record that the football players are generally to be found among the leading students at any college or university. And the work they do in football, as well as the regular life they lead, adds then greatly to stand at or near the heads of their respective classes. It is a tried axiom that a riotously healthy body makes a vigorous, active mind; and if ever any form of exercise is calculated to import riotous health to any one, it is football. Football, rightly taken, is complementary to the regular work of college.

WHY SOME PLAYERS "FLUNK."

Once in a while, it is true, the outside world hears of some football player who is "flunked" by a faculty because he has "funked" in his studies; or of being dismissed from a college for the same reason.

If you will take the trouble to investigate the next case of the sort coming to your notice, it's practically humanly certain that you will discover that the man flunked because he tried to take at one and the same time not only the course in football, but another as well in social amusements—when he should have been bending over his books instead. There have been cases, however, of star players—students who also spent several nights a week earning their way through college. One man that I recall who did this was a "Pioneer" of Columbia University, he teaching night school four nights a week in Newark, N. J.

Such men are rightly and doubly respected and honored by undergraduates and alumni and faculties alike for their unselfish and equally heroic work in behalf of both the school and the athletic glory of their beloved alma maters.

JUST BEFORE A GAME.

I have said that the trainer keeps at the players continually; but, of course, there is the invariable exception, which is evident on the morning of a big game. When the men appear in the dining room for breakfast, the trainer does not stily crack jokes, that the solemn looks may be lifted from the faces of the young men before him. The meal is eaten in silence; silently, one by one, the men steal away and the table, and as silently they disappear, each to his own room. Five minutes later, if the trainer were foolish enough to go the rounds, he would find every man stretched full length on his bed, with his face turned to the wall, and apparently dead asleep, and quiet is he. But instead of doing so unwise a thing, the trainer slips quietly to the phone, calls up the head coach and gives him a message after this fashion:

"It looks good. They're as solemn as owls, and they're all in their rooms, making up their minds to do or die."

And when lunch is over, the trainer, having beheld a table full of determined men, makes the coach's heart exceeding glad with this bit of intelligence:

"They've fought the game to a finish in their closets. Every mother's son of them has looked his weaknesses straight in the face and made up his mind to overcome them, and it looks as if we'll surely win this afternoon."

But how great is the gnashing of teeth on the part of trainer and coach when on the morning of an important game, the men get up laughing and joking, for long experiences has taught them that players so light hearted on the eve of conflict are almost certain to play losing ball from the first call of the referee's whistle to battle.

THE PROPER WAY TO TAKE FOOTBALL.

"But," you say, "as saying in a puzzled sort of way at about this point, 'can the boy manage to do all this and still keep up in his regular college work?'"

Well, the answer is easy. He studies on an average two hours a night, besides putting in his regular periods in lecture rooms, laboratories, etc. He would scarcely devote more than two hours a night to study were he taking no football course. In his spare time he goes to the fraternity meetings and receptions, fraternal engagements with the sisters of college friends and seek the theatre frequently. The time taken for football is not subtracted from the time for study. It is included by the players as one of their social pleasures for the period of training.

That this method of dividing time between football and studies is right and proper has its proof in the record that the football players are generally to be found among the leading students at any college or university. And the work they do in football, as well as the regular life they lead, adds then greatly to stand at or near the heads of their respective classes. It is a tried axiom that a riotously healthy body makes a vigorous, active mind; and if ever any form of exercise is calculated to import riotous health to any one, it is football. Football, rightly taken, is complementary to the regular work of college.

WHY SOME PLAYERS "FLUNK."

Once in a while, it is true, the outside world hears of some football player who is "flunked" by a faculty because he has "funked" in his studies; or of being dismissed from a college for the same reason.

If you will take the trouble to investigate the next case of the sort coming to your notice, it's practically humanly certain that you will discover that the man flunked because he tried to take at one and the same time not only the course in football, but another as well in social amusements—when he should have been bending over his books instead. There have been cases, however, of star players—students who also spent several nights a week earning their way through college. One man that I recall who did this was a "Pioneer" of Columbia University, he teaching night school four nights a week in Newark, N. J.

Such men are rightly and doubly respected and honored by undergraduates and alumni and faculties alike for their unselfish and equally heroic work in behalf of both the school and the athletic glory of their beloved alma maters.