

"Have pity on us, have pity on us, at least you who were our friends, for the hand of the Lord is heavy upon us!"

A FOOTBALL CAREER

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For five years I have been trying to become a football player. I didn't succeed. So I am through trying. I have quit. I have sold everything I had which resembled football equipment or reminded me of football.

When I arrived at the College five years ago, I went immediately to see one of the faculty about getting a room, and his first question was, "Did you ever play football?" Needless to say, he was the football coach, and to my answer of, "No!", he came back with, "Well, you will." I really thought then by his talk that I was a born football player. I weighed one hundred and seventy-five, and had come straight from the country where men are supposed to be men.

A few days later I felt a glow of pride in seeing my name among about thirty others on a sign which read, "The following will report for practice on the football field at three forty-five." At four o'clock my career had begun, or was it a career? I had never been on a football field, I had never touched or seen a football, and I knew nothing about the game. Since that eventful day I have spent countless hours on the field, have had the football before my eyes continually, have touched it once or twice, and still know nothing about the game.

I shall never forget that first practice game. I still don't know what they were trying to do. There was a steady scream of, "Smear him, heel, scrum down, line out, pass, and boot." I knew right away that I was headed for trouble. No man could remember all those orders. It didn't matter anyway because whatever I did that first day was sure to be wrong, or so I was lead to believe. If I tried to run with the ball, a voice shouted, "Pass"; if I kicked the ball, someone bellowed, "Pick it up and run"; if I left the ball alone, everyone screamed, "You're yellow."

I was supposed to be a forward. My orders were to follow the ball, which, of course, was quite impossible. I was in the front line of the scrum. This is where one has to

be a tractor, a battering-ram, a veritable Samson. Seven men from each side put their arms about each other, got down in a crouch, and pushed in opposite directions. There were three men in the front line of either side, and four more pushing from the rear. If your neck held out you were all right. If not, it just broke and another man took your place. Unluckily, mine held out. After we had been pushing and grunting for about a minute, some idiot rolled the ball in around our feet and everyone began to kick. I understand, or, at least, I think I understand, that only two men were supposed to raise their feet in an effort to get the ball out to their team, but, just the same, everyone pushed, kicked, and even boxed in that scrum. Strange as it may seem, however, some of us had skin on our legs after the game.

Then there was the line-out. Some player must have been getting short of wind because he kicked the ball as far as he could off the field. We, the forwards of each team, then formed up in two lines at one side of the field, and the same idiot threw the ball in over our heads. Foolishly enough, I jumped up and caught it. That was the end of that practice for me. I came to some time later, and what they called the "game" was over.

Well, I kept at it. For some reason which I have never figured out the coach put me on second team where I played for two seasons. I had to stop smoking and run the track each night like a racehorse. The coach said this was to get me in shape. I couldn't quite see his point since I never had any shape after a game. I was usually just a mess.

I finally worked my way up the ladder to first team. I must have been put on this for the same reason as I had been put on second team. No one ever told me why and I could never figure it out. In the first game our team played that year I made a try. I was sauntering along quite coolly near the opponents' goal line when I spied the ball. Without thinking I picked it up, raced madly for a yard and a half to cross the line, and fell on the ball. There was no opposition. I then straightened up, stuck out my chest, and, trying to assume an air of indifference as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, strutted proudly back to centre field. But something out of the ordinary had happened. I had scored. The future then looked bright to me, but it has surely let me down.

I have now finished my third and last year on the first

team. I am still alive, but badly scarred. I have four loose teeth, a mark over one eye, a cauliflower ear, one rheumatic arm, and two legs kicked to pulp. I attribute my success to my ability to let the other players handle the ball.

One thing which always struck me as being extremely strange was that before each game the coach would give the team a pep-talk—all coaches are alike in this. The big thing in their pep-talk is that they always tell the players to go out and do their best, to remember Husky Hercules or some other teammate who was killed or permanently crippled in a previous game. This thought that they leave with each and every player is supposed to make him fighting mad. It always frightened me.

My final word of advice to those who aspire to a future in athletics is to leave football alone. It is not a game. It is lunacy played according to rules that do not exist. It might be fun for cannibals, but not for you or me.



Marriage, rightly understood,
Gives to the tender and the good
A paradise below.

—(Cotton)—

Let not the man be trusted that hath no music in
his soul.

—(Shakespeare)—

The future belongs to him who knows how to wait.

—(Russian)—

As charity covers a multitude of sins before God,
so does politeness before man.

—(Greville)—