

Why Small Colleges Have Been So Successful In Football

By FIELDING- H. YOST

The small college football teams have been remarkably successful during the season just closed. Colgate defeated Yale 16 to 0, and trimmed the Army 13 to 0. Virginia beat Yale 21 to 0, and Washington and Jefferson disabled the Elis with a score of 16 6. The Michigan Aggies showed remarkable strength. The University of Pittsburgh and Washington and Lee won their share of games.

Why is it that small colleges, each with a meager student body, are able to defeat teams selected from universities with enrollments of thousands?

I have been asked this question number of times, and believe I know the answer.

In the first place, the one-year residence rule and the three-year playing limit of the large universities keep away natural athletes, the husky boys who are anxious to make a varsity team immediately on entering college.

Add to these facts the secondary consideration that the large universities as a rule have higher entrance requirements and insist upon a higher standard of scholarship. The big universities are in the limelight.

Even if they were disposed to more lenient toward athletics, their prominence does not admit of any such leniency.

Further, the boy of average means who has to work for his college course is apt to feel an easier environment in a small school, where there is not much show of wealth, or aristocracy.

Most of the good football players have been poor boys, or boys in very ordinary circumstances. It is natural that boys of this class should be attracted to the small colleges, where they can "work their way through and still feel no social disadvantage.

But the big think to emphasize is this: The ambitious, aggressive football player just out of school is attracted to the small college because he stands a chance of making the varsity immediately and playing all of his four years. He is a bit afraid of the entrance requirements of the big universities—in fact he often knows that he couldn't get in without conditions.

He also knows that eligibility rules are not very strictly observed sometimes, in the small schools: He knows that he has a chance to play summer baseball without being barred? Why? Because nobody takes the trouble to question the eligibility of the men from small colleges.

The small colleges are spared the limelight of eligibility inquiry that floods the big university teams. The past season furnishes plenty of illustrations.

Yale lost LeGore, star fullback; Galvin of Wisconsin, another star fullback, had to drop out, and Minnesota had to give up Solon, its fullback and captain, all because they had played summer baseball. In the meantime, nobody bothered to inquire whether any small college men had played baseball or not.

A four year football player has the wonderful asset of experience! The team playing four-year men has more of its old team left over from the previous season with which to build a new team than can be the case in the large universities.

The small colleges usually play longer schedules, which also helps materially in training and seasoning men. The man who gets a chance to play in a maximum of not over fifteen or twenty games in his whole college career has not the opportunity for development afforded the man who plays in eight or ten games every season for four years.

Briefly, the ambitious preparatory school football player finds it easier to get into a small college, easier to stay there, easy to make the team the first year if he is a star, and easy to escape too searching inquiry about his eligibility. He has a chance to play four full years.

My own opinion is that young men should find it far preferable to master the higher scholarship requirements of the large universities rather than take the easier way. They would be much better off in the end in compensation for the greater effort.

As further reward, they would have the greater prestige the large university affords.

Football men are born, and then developed. It is impossible to develop some men as they do not have the native ability. As good a coach as "Pop" Warner found this out when with poor material at Carlisle during the season of 1914 he lost nine games.

The size of a student body has very little to do with the success of a football team. The number of first-class athletes who choose to enroll themselves determines results.

Give me fifteen men naturally fitted for football, and the student body can number 200 or 10,000 without affecting the outcome.