

CHAPTER XI

THE PRESS AND COLLEGE ATHLETICS

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MANY college administrators hold that during the past twenty years the relations of the college to the public have been seriously impaired by the way in which American newspapers treat college athletics, but not all of those who hold this opinion have taken the trouble to enquire into the matter from other than their own point of view. The difficulties are not all on the side of the college administrator. Newspaper men themselves have noted that the growth of public interest in athletics is in large part the result of an attempt of the newspaper publisher and editor to satisfy a stimulated appetite of their readers. Professor James Melvin Lee has pointed out ¹ that "the newspapers in the United States tend with the passing years to become more and more economic products." By the very nature of the present situation, the publisher or editor must regard college athletics as a single phase of sport, which in turn is only one phase of news, and news shares with editorials and "other interesting reading matter" that portion of the pages which is not offered to advertisers "at so much an inch."

Admitting, then, for the sake of argument, that the view of the college presented in the newspapers is distorted through overstressing of athletics, nevertheless college athletics are news, and news that appeals to many readers as the most consistently

¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Thirteenth Edition, 1926, new Vol. II, page 1054c.

interesting and important aspect of college life. The present chapter points out some of the problems involved in the relationship of the press to college athletics.

I. THE GROWTH OF THE SPORTS PAGE IN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

The increased attention given by newspapers in the United States to athletic sports — the extension of the sports page, in a word, has coincided with a proportional growth in the space assigned to other departments of the newspaper. In this connection the contents of six representative newspapers published in various parts of the country were studied over corresponding weeks in the autumn of 1913, 1920, and 1927. This sampling may not adequately represent the 400-odd morning, the 1,200 and more evening, and the 500 Sunday newspapers of the United States, but the changes that it reflects are illuminating.

A. IN CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS OF NEW YORK CITY

The New York newspapers selected for study were the *Sun*, an evening paper, and the *New York Times* and the *World*, published in the morning.

1. The *Sun* (evening)

In six days of the week of November 17, 1913, the *Sun* published, not including for comparisons a Sunday edition which did not appear in 1920 or 1927, a total of ninety pages, of which nine pages, or 10 per cent, were devoted to sports. Those nine pages contained in all 865.5 inches of reading-matter concerning sports, divided as follows: professional, 436.5 inches, school and college, 378.5, other amateur sports, 50.5. Of matter with which we are especially concerned, fifteen and a half inches gave accounts of school and college games, while 119 inches dealt with practices. Only 3.5 inches of sporting news appeared on the *Sun's* first page during these six days, while editorial comment ran to 9.25 inches. No sporting news was signed; there were no columns and no "comics" on the sports pages. Advertisements on the sports pages dealt with clothing, theatres, and, especially, automobiles, with some classified advertising.

For the week of November 15, 1920, the *Sun* published in six days a total of 144 pages, of which twelve, or 8.3 per cent, were assigned to sports. The actual amount of sports reading-matter dropped to 842 inches, of which 306 inches dealt with professional athletics, forty-nine with miscellaneous sports, and 487 with school and college athletics. These 487 inches included 245 inches devoted to games, and 133.5 inches given to practices. The *Sun* had now become an evening newspaper. The increase in the news value of sports for evening papers is indicated by the fact that the *Sun's* first page held seventy-four inches of sports news during this week, of which seventy-three inches appeared on Saturday with a head that streamed across eight columns of one edition. Editorial comment on sport, however, totaled only a single inch. All told, 557 inches of sports reading-matter were signed, and 160.5 inches may be classified as "column." Comic strips ran about twenty-two inches a day, or 133 inches for the week. Racing results began to take on an added importance. Advertisements (492

inches) were of clothing, cars, and amusements, with some classified. The space emphasis has clearly shifted to amateur sports, especially school and college games.

This tendency is continued in the week of November 14, 1927, during which, out of a total of 262 pages, twenty-nine, or 11 per cent, were sporting pages. The total of sports reading-matter increased to no less than 1,956.5 inches, or 232 per cent of what it had been in 1920; professional 643.5 inches, or a little more than double that measured for 1920; school and college 1,217.5 inches, or two and a half times as much; and other amateur sports 95.5 inches, or about twice as much as for 1920. With respect to selected phases of sports news, only nine inches of the week's first pages dealt with sports, and all of this on Saturday, while editorial comment amounted to only four inches. Signed stories had become the rule; they totaled 1,186.5 inches for the week. Columns occupied 309.5 inches. The comic strip had disappeared from the week's sports pages, but advertising, 2,096 inches, had quadrupled since 1920 and now exceeded the reading-matter. Advertisements increased not only in amount but in variety; cars, clothing, travel, sporting goods, and beverages, together with classified.

The *Sun's* changes in emphasis respecting professional athletics and school and college sports from 1913 to 1927 may be gathered from the fact that, for the respective weeks, in 1913 professional sports bore to school and college sports a ratio of four to three; in 1920, a ratio of three to four; and in 1927, a ratio of one to two. In actual space professional sports claimed 436.5 inches in 1913, 306 inches in 1920, and 643.5 in 1927, a gain in fourteen years of about 50 per cent; while school and college sports had 378.5 inches in 1913, 487 inches in 1920, and 1,217.5 inches in 1927, a gain of more than 220 per cent between 1913 and 1927.

2. The *New York Times* (morning, daily, and Sunday)

For six days of the week of November 17, 1913, the *New York Times* published 114 pages, of which eleven, or 9.6 per cent, dealt with sports. On Sunday, Part V of the paper contained thirty pages, of which sixteen formed a Special Football Section and three pages were occupied by the regular sports news. During the entire week sports reading-matter totaled 1,159.5 inches — 418.5 inches of professional, 584 of college and school, and 157 of other amateur sports. All told, the Sunday *Times* ran 254 inches of school and college athletics, of which 128.5 inches dealt with games; only 2.5 inches pertained to games during the other six days of the week. Eight inches of the entire week's first page dealt with sports. There were no signed articles, no columns, and no editorial references. Advertisements offered cars and accessories, clothing, cigarettes, and whiskey, a total of 747 inches for weekdays and 778 inches for the entire week.

Seven years later, the *Times* printed 188 pages for six days of the corresponding week. Of these fifteen, or only about 8 per cent, were sporting pages. On Sunday, November 21, 1920, however, the *Times* devoted five pages to sports. For the seven days, sports reading-matter totaled 1,692.5 inches. Of this total, 477 inches were given to college or school athletics on Sunday — nearly as much as they received for the rest of the week (558 inches) and an increase of about 44 per cent over the same total seven years before. Other amateur athletics in 1920 occupied a total of 277.5 inches, — thirty-three inches only on Sunday, — and professional athletics about 366 inches. The signed article or the column had not yet appeared. A fourteen-inch Sunday editorial dealt with "The New Football." Advertisements to a length of 1,069 inches on weekdays and

1,311 inches including Sunday were used on the sports pages, principally for automobiles, clothes, racing, and cigars. The amount of space devoted to college and school athletics was still increasing.

In 1927, for the week of November 14, out of a six-day total of 292 pages the *Times* carried twenty-two pages, or only 7.5 per cent, of sports. On Sunday, November 20, 1927, it carried ten more sports pages. The six-day total of sports space was 2,110.5 inches — professional 772.5 inches, college and school 1,148 inches, other amateur 190 inches — while with Sunday's edition the total ran to 3,379 inches, of which 2,139 inches, or about 63 per cent, dealt with schools and colleges. For the seven-day week, professional athletics totaled 956 inches, and amateur athletics other than school and college, 284 inches. Games for the week had only 143 inches, but practice and prospects occupied 811.5 inches, or 231.5 for the first six days only. Signatures were attached to 297 inches for the first six days, a total of 539 inches including Sunday. The column appears with 191 inches for seven days, — about twenty-seven inches a day, double measure leaded. Advertisements totaling 1,102.5 inches for six days and 1,372.5 inches for seven have become rather more miscellaneous, but cars, tobacco, and clothing still predominate. Only 4.25 inches of the first news page are used for the Harvard-Yale and New York University-Allegheny games. Sports in this week far outran advertising on the sporting pages, with a strong leaning toward college and school games and practice.

The *Times* as well as the *Sun* has increased its emphasis upon school and college sports. In 1913, the ratio of space given to professional and to school and college athletics was about four to five; in 1920, about three to ten; in 1927, about three to seven. In 1913, the amount of space for professional sports was 418.5 inches; in 1920, 366 inches; and in 1927, 956 inches. School and college sports occupied in 1913, 584 inches; in 1920, 1,035 inches, and in 1927, 2,139 inches. Thus, while between 1913 and 1927 professional sports only a little more than doubled their space, school and college sports almost quadrupled their space.

3. The *World* (morning, daily, and Sunday)

The morning *World* for the six weekdays following November 16, 1913, ran six sporting pages totaling 642 inches out of 102 pages. On Sunday it printed two sporting pages instead of one, a total of eight for seven days. College and school sports claimed 484 inches out of a week's total of 866 inches, or well over half, while professional sports took 260.5 inches. Whereas during six days college and school games were given only twelve inches, as compared with 116.5 inches for practice, they received 108.5 inches on Sunday. The *World* had begun the use of signatures, as 106.5 inches for seven days testify. There were no columns and no editorial references, although the Harvard-Yale game took eighteen inches of the first news page of the Sunday edition. Advertisements totaled 190 inches for six days, or about 224.5 inches for the week's sports pages.

At the end of the following seven years the *World* had increased its weekday pages until they totaled 138, of which twelve, or about eight and a half per cent, were sporting pages. For six days sporting news ran to 747 inches, an increase of 105 inches; with the two Sunday sports pages the total was 1,064 inches, an increase of nearly 200 inches or about 23 per cent. Of these 1,064 inches, school and college athletics had 710.5 inches, professional 307, and other amateur sports 46.5. College and school games ran to 289

inches on Sunday, and only nine inches for the rest of the week. Four days' practice stories received 89.5 inches. The Harvard-Yale football game occupied the first two columns of the first Sunday page. Advertising on the sporting pages had increased greatly, to 722.5 inches for the week, with none on Sunday. Signed articles have for the week 235 inches, with 143 inches for six days. Advertising emphasizes principally clothing.

The week of November 14, 1927, indicates some striking changes in the *World's* sporting pages. In the first place, they had increased in number to three on weekdays and six on Sundays. For the whole week they carried 2,419.5 inches of sports reading-matter, of which 1,439 inches dealt with college and school sport. Of these 1,439 inches, 444 were given to school and college games. The total increase in seven years was about 127 per cent. Signed sport articles now aggregated 335 inches for the week, columns 234.5 inches, and first-page stories nine inches under a double-column head with pictures of the captains of opposing elevens. The lack of editorial reference continued. Sports page advertisements appear to have been crowded into only 301.5 inches for the whole week by the greatly increased reading-matter.²

From figures for the three weeks under discussion, it appears that the *World* has maintained between professional athletics and school and college athletics a space ratio of about one to two. The actual amounts of space, however, for professional sports were, for 1913, 260.5 inches; for 1920, 307 inches; and for 1927, 750.5 inches. The space devoted to professional athletics has therefore not quite trebled over the fourteen years. In 1913, school and college sports had 484 inches; in 1920, 710.5 inches; and in 1927, 1,439 inches. Here, too, the space has about trebled.

²Other data bearing on sports space in New York City morning papers, kindly furnished by Arthur S. Draper, Esq., of the *Herald Tribune*, may be condensed and adapted as follows:

DAILY AVERAGE OF COLUMNS OF SPACE IN FOUR NEW YORK CITY MORNING PAPERS WEEK OF FEBRUARY 4, 1928

	<i>Total News</i>	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Total Reading Matter</i>
American	33.75	16.5	144.5
Herald Tribune	48.5	20.5	157.0
New York Times	64.75	23.5	181.75
World	59.25	17.5	120.0

DAILY AVERAGE COLUMNS OF SPACE IN FOUR NEW YORK CITY NEWSPAPERS DURING AUGUST OF FOUR YEARS

	<i>Total News</i>	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Total Reading Matter</i>
American			
1924	23.0	16.5	105.25
1925	30.75	22.0	122.5
1926	32.25	22.0	135.5
1927	28.5	22.5	129.75
Herald Tribune			
1924	33.5	18.25	114.25
1925	34.0	21.0	121.75
1926	40.25	22.0	142.25
1927	40.75	24.0	147.0
New York Times			
1924	40.75	16.75	113.0
1925	51.5	17.75	133.75
1926	54.5	21.75	148.5
1927	62.0	29.5	172.5
World			
1924	37.5	16.0	93.75
1925	36.75	17.75	112.75
1926	38.0	20.5	123.5
1927	37.5	19.5	112.75

B. IN CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS IN OTHER CITIES

Many of the tendencies reflected in the three New York City newspapers just examined are visible also in three newspapers from other sections of the country : the Boston *Transcript*, the Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, and the San Francisco *Chronicle*. Of these, only the *Chronicle* issues a Sunday edition.

1. The Boston *Transcript* (evening)

During the selected weeks of November, the *Transcript* in 1913 devoted eleven of its 148 total weekly pages to sport, a total of slightly more than seven per cent ; in 1920, seven out of 176 pages, or about four per cent ; in 1927, seventeen out of 228 pages, or about 7.5 per cent. The number of inches ran from 989 in 1913, of which 850 dealt with school and college athletics, to 9,405 in 1920, of which 871.5 dealt with college and school, and to 1,779.5 in 1927, of which about 1,500 inches were devoted to school and college sports. Signed sporting articles, absent in 1913, ran in 1920 to 302 inches, and in 1927 to 727.5 inches, while a column reached sixty-two inches in 1927. Professional sport dropped from 81.5 inches in 1913 to thirty-six inches in 1920, but increased to 244 inches in 1927. Advertisements, with space of 263.5, 121.5, and 596.5 inches for the three respective weeks, show a curiously similar tendency.

2. The *Deseret News* (evening)

Over the three selected weeks, the *Deseret News* increased its sporting pages from one daily in 1913, one on each of five days and two on Saturday in 1920, to two in 1927. The total numbers of pages were 108, 134, and 128 respectively. Total sports reading-matter ran from 640 inches, of which 430 inches dealt with school and college in 1913, to 877.5 with a slight increase in school and college to 475.5 inches in 1920, and to 1,614 inches in 1927, of which no less than 1,052 inches dealt with school and college athletics. Professional sport increased from 140 inches in 1913 to 387 inches in 1920 and to 451 inches in 1927. Sports page advertising for the three years respectively totaled 188, 117, and 99.5 inches. In 1913 no sporting stories were signed, but in 1920, 69.5 inches, and in 1927, 462 inches bore signatures. The only editorial reference to sports appears on November 19, 1927, "To an Athlete's Memory," in appreciation of the late Christopher Mathewson.

3. The San Francisco *Chronicle* (morning)

In the week of November 17, 1913, the emphasis of the two daily sports pages of the *Chronicle* fell heavily upon professional sports, with 517 out of 890 inches for six days and 692.5 inches out of 1,235.5 for seven days. School and college sports occupied only 197.5 inches on weekdays and 305.5 inches, Sunday included. Seven years later a distinct change is noted ; out of 964 weekday inches, college and school athletics claim 457.5, and out of 1,383.5 inches for seven days, no less than 827 inches. The figures for the corresponding week of 1927 are : Total space on an average of four sports pages for six days, 2,250 inches, of which 1,308 inches are given to school and college athletics and only 580.5 inches to professional sports ; for seven days, 2,800 inches, including 1,801 inches for college and school and 611.5 inches for professional sports. Signed

articles in 1913 occupied 376.5 inches for the whole week, in 1920, 380 inches, and in 1927, 745 inches. Columns had twelve inches in 1913, 46 inches in 1920, and 88 inches in 1927.

Sports page advertising increased from 370.5 inches devoted to theatres, clothing, cigars, and cures in 1913, to 604.5 inches in 1920, with fewer patent medicines offered, and declined to 446 inches in 1927, which, however, appeared to be of a distinctly better grade. In the Sunday edition of November 20, 1927, one page displayed 160 inches of football rotogravures.

C. THE SPACE EMPHASIS UPON COLLEGE AND SCHOOL ATHLETICS IN NEWSPAPERS

To the extent that the six newspapers selected for analysis typify tendencies in American newspaper editing and publishing, the following generalizations are justified: First, sports have grown to an unprecedented importance as news. Secondly, amateur sports, especially college and school athletics, have been increasingly emphasized over the past fourteen years. Thirdly, on the whole, this emphasis has proved profitable to newspapers as regards both the influence and the respect in which they are held, and also the advertising carried on the sporting pages. As regards quantity, the growth of space emphasis is apparent. The only test of quality which these figures contain is to be found in the amount of signed sporting material published.

II. THE COMPLAINT AGAINST THE PRESENT TREATMENT OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

The extraordinary growth of the sporting page shown by the preceding figures has led to the charge that newspapers are exploiting college and school athletics for financial gain. Nor is this accusation directed against the daily press alone; it extends to monthly magazines and weekly publications. An attempt will be made to summarize these and other charges: sensationalism, petty graft, and the exploitation of school and college athletes.

A. THE SENSATIONAL IN SPORTS WRITING

If it is the function of the newspaper to report the affairs of life according to recognized standards of sound journalistic taste and of that very intangible but much blamed criterion, "human interest," then some sort of sporting page is justified, whether the intelligent reader likes it or not. He who dislikes the sports columns of a newspaper need not purchase it. This, however, is not what we mean when we speak of sensationalism. In sports writing, as in other phases of newspaper work, sensationalism almost always originates in a deliberate policy of magnifying the supposed interest or emotional connotations of facts beyond the proportions that their intrinsic values justify. The less intelligent reader is the more likely to be attracted by the sensational

in sports writing and much of the material on certain sporting pages represents an attempt to provide such persons with the kind of reading-matter which, because of years of carefully incited indulgence, they increasingly crave.

1. Sensationalism in Usage

Different though the standards of English usage on the sports page must be from those of the study or of scholarship, examination of the work of the better sports writers reveals an astonishingly accurate, serviceable, and cultivated style. Such men stand at the head of their profession. When, however, the inspection of sporting pages is extended beyond the metropolitan dailies, it reveals an ignorance of the canons of respectability in writing. Apparently, in many instances deliberate attempts are made to pervert the technical language of sports reporting to a sensationalism that violates not alone taste but fact.

It has long been customary in certain newspaper offices to write accounts of professional baseball games in a kind of jargon that contains an element of humor. From this cant use of language there grew the notion that the technical vocabulary of any game or contest was not properly used unless it was accompanied by exaggerations of phrase. The result has been not alone a certain humorous picturesqueness, but also a great preponderance of the sensational in the reports of most sporting events. Another phase of the development accompanied the transfer of terms from the prize ring to other sports. For example, it is still the mode in some newspaper offices, in writing a baseball story, to employ such phrases as "So-and-So clouted the ball on the nose." A football player suffering from concussion is referred to as having "taken the count." A third stage of the linguistic process is represented by the introduction of terms from war and the battlefield. Accounts of college football contests have suffered most from this use of metaphors. The corruption of the vocabulary of many sports reporters and in some instances their apparent inability to report a contest in workmanlike, technical English is one of the most astonishing results of sensational journalism, even though it be one of the least important. Alumni publications naturally exhibit on the whole far better discrimination in such matters than the daily press; they are written for a public of greater intelligence and their writers are relatively free from the pressure of time.

2. Fact and Fancy

It must be reluctantly noted that evidence occasionally points to a deliberate policy of sensationalism in athletic news or comment. It was a newspaper man who stated that always to agree with the decisions of football officials does not make for news. In the past two seasons more than one metropolitan daily has printed articles signed by members of their staff that imputed incompetency and even implied calculated prejudice among officials at football matches.

The serious charge has been made that newspapers publish false information concerning college athletics, especially preparation for contests. This has sometimes

occurred, but the fault has been less the reporter's or the correspondent's than that of partisans, including alumni, coaches, players, and university publicity agents who have given out misleading information in order that it might deceive newspaper readers and especially future opponents concerning the strength of teams or crews. Before a college contest of moment, the athletic or physical condition of many athletes interests the public. The advance stories concerning Oxford and Cambridge crews testify to the fact that this interest is not an exclusively American phenomenon. On the other hand, a deliberate magnifying of rumor and reports concerning any isolated group of young men may, through an unhealthy and partisan insistence upon victory, take on a wholly unreasonable importance. It is sufficiently unfortunate that newspapers should reflect this distortion. When the chicanery of laymen forces it beyond the bounds of truth, the result is intolerable. Happily, once deceived thus, a sports editor is unlikely to be caught a second time.

With the best of intentions an inexperienced correspondent, especially if he is an undergraduate immaturely loyal to his college, may send to his newspaper material founded in rumor which might far better be omitted from any sports page. Resort to such clichés as "it is said," "it is understood," and others of a similarly cautious nature is learned early by the budding journalist. These phrases may be all very well, provided they represent actual current opinion. Perverted from their legitimate uses they readily become mechanical devices that encourage space filling "at so much an inch." A man, be he novice or thoroughly seasoned reporter, who is pressed by editorial order or by his own hope of financial gain, to turn out a story, quickly perceives the uses to which such padding may be put.

The chief temptations to the adulteration of fact in sporting news are the "assignment," whether imposed by superior order or by the need of maintaining an average of pay; the "advance story," which is rapidly dropping into disfavor with the best sports media unless it is written by experts; and the necessity of employing less skilful personnel than the responsibility of any newspaper warrants. Even "experting" has been made to appear a somewhat ridiculous business.

3. The Exploitation of Persons and Personalities

Protests against the exploitation of school and college athletes are not new. Thirty years ago Professor Henry D. Sheldon read a "three-page newspaper account of a great football game in the West," consisting of a technical and a general story, "biographies of all the players, the opinions of the captains, coaches, and the presidents of the two universities. In a personal note, the emotions of the gray-haired father of one of the players are described in detail." The whole ran to "twenty columns of printed matter and seven columns of illustrations, including cartoons." Professor Sheldon comments: "Such a cheap notoriety tends to place the football player on a level

with the prize-fighting and bicycle-riding profession.”³ It is entirely natural that a generation of such sensationalism should obscure the distinction between amateur and professional athletes. Nowadays, athletes are exploited in news stories, columns of comment, and illustrations, and even in advertisements.

a. *In News Stories*

The exploitation of the college athlete in news stories is so common that examples would be supererogatory. The matter has been given an even more sinister turn by the exploitation of football and other coaches. As Mr. E. K. Hall has pointed out, nowadays undergraduates appear to have no teams; all teams are commonly referred to by the names of their coaches. It is noteworthy, however, that many of the more seasoned writers on college athletics are departing from this practice; younger men might well follow their example.

b. *In “Columns”*

To any column of sporting comment personalities are as the breath of life. The best of the sports columnists write usually in good journalistic taste. Their interest in college athletics, in most instances acquired or strengthened by their own participation during undergraduate days, has kept them young, while the passing years have brought them a mature judgment and in many cases, whether or not they are college men, a lively appreciation of the problem of sport in relation to education. The best of these men write, as the saying is, with no axes to grind. Their versatility and the quality of their work, produced without intermission for every day of the year, commands the respect of numberless sportsmen. They constitute a decidedly wholesome force in college athletics in so far as they endeavor to maintain standards of honest and clean sportsmanship, whether amateur or professional. Their defects arise from the necessity of doing a daily stint, lack of time for reflection, and, occasionally, the necessity of conforming to a policy of publication with which they themselves lack sympathy.

One of their outstanding weaknesses is their propensity to name all-American football teams. If the late Caspar Whitney could have foreseen the abuses to which his device for honoring the most expert among American college football players has led, he would certainly not have inaugurated it. The absurd growth in the number of all-American teams has been prompted partly by the notion that if one sports writer was qualified to select such a group, other sports writers were equally capable. To this rivalry has been added the sentimental feeling that a selection of an all-American team by one man omits the names of many deserving players and thus works an “injustice” to them. Finally, the conception of news as an aggregation of names doubtless has played its part in the rapid growth, not only of a number of all-American teams but of all-sectional and all-state selections. The result is a collection of publicity that dilutes an intended honor to the level of the ridiculous, and, the country over, includes an astonishing number of mediocre players.

³ Henry D. Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 1901, page 236.

Among sports writers a feeling is growing that all-American teams are better left unnamed. One columnist whose work is widely read received from a managing editor instructions to nominate such a team. Although he was reluctant to comply, his protests availed nothing; the newspaper had always named an all-American team and therefore an all-American team must be selected. This writer finally solved his problem by selecting a burlesque eleven, which assuredly entertained many more readers and provided far more diversion than a serious selection could have produced.⁴ One reason for the vogue of all-American teams is, of course, the profit that accrues to the newspaper owner who through this device exploits the name of his sports writer. Among the qualifications for membership in any such team sportsmanship and cleanness of play rarely receive the high rating that they should have.

c. In Illustrations

The growth and the changes of fashion in newspaper illustration during the past quarter-century would provide an interesting subject for study. As regards college athletics alone there is no reason to suppose that the increased use of half-tones, line drawings, and cartoons on sporting pages is other than what is to be expected in consideration of the changes that have been wrought in sports stories. Photographs of coaches, however, have much increased in numbers and frequency. Even superficial enquiry has shown that the number of pictures of single individuals has grown materially, while the use of group pictures or large cuts of games has not perceptibly diminished. The quest of the sensational leads to the publication in Sunday supplements of half-tones or rotogravure pictures of football captains and players who may be entirely respectable young men, but who in these sheets resemble cannibals or criminals. Finally, the captions placed on sporting illustrations of all kinds are open to adverse criticism from the point of view of both taste and accuracy.

d. In Advertisements

The advertiser has been among the most persistent exploiters of college athletes. He has discovered that the bestowal of a sweater, a typewriter, or some other article readily procures from many a college athlete a testimonial (written by the advertiser or his agent) which may contain statements or implications deliberately perverting fact. In the course of the enquiry a case was studied in which as part of an advertising campaign an already unduly exploited athlete was requested in exchange for a sweater to sign a statement that he had used this particular brand for years. As a matter of fact, the young man had never possessed a sweater of this make. In spite of repeated good counsel from the athletic authorities of his college, the young man signed the

⁴ To an Englishman the all-American team is incomprehensible. The man who plays for Scotland or for England is a member of an all-Scottish or all-English eleven or fifteen which actually plays together. Hence, the Englishman is accustomed to seeing his all-national teams in action. He is not slow to ridicule the all-American team which, selected by a sports writer, is never assembled for a game, although at times it has been assembled for purposes of entertainment, and to point out that the team as an expert unit is never tested by the exigencies of a single contest.

statement and accepted the sweater, and in due course his name and likeness were published far and wide in recommendation of an article of which from long inexperience he knew nothing whatever. This is not an isolated instance. Testimonials from college athletes have been repeatedly purchased by payments in kind, if not in cash — by gifts to fraternities of which they were members, and by the bestowal of such valuable considerations as automobiles, clothes, typewriters, and haberdashery. It is a matter of record that at least one professional heavyweight champion has shown a much keener sense of the proprieties.

Fifteen years ago most sporting pages contained a liberal sprinkling of advertisements of patent medicines, liquors, and tobacco. Newspaper publishers have themselves barred columns of advertising that extol "cures" and quack medicines. In accordance with postal regulations and numerous laws they have dropped advertisements of whiskey. But so desirable is the space on certain sports pages that in 1928 advertisers of cigarettes offered for it premiums over the regular "position charges." There is no valid reason to exclude tobacco advertising from the sporting page through the censorship that every newspaper publisher reserves the right to exercise, but there is very good reason to refuse advertisements that violate good taste, misrepresent fact, and exploit college athletes and college sport.

4. The Effect of Sensationalism upon the College Athlete

The effect of newspaper notoriety upon secondary school athletes was well set forth by a writer in the *Harvard Graduate Magazine*, 1895 (Volume III, page 318): "A schoolboy finds his photograph and a sketch of his life put before the public, and he is described as a future star. The consequence is that the first few weeks, which ought to be spent developing him into a player, are spent in reducing, what is the natural result of his publicity, a 'swelled head.'" In 1901, Professor Sheldon concluded that "the results of the notoriety and fever of expectation are seen in (1) the recruiting of men, (2) the extravagant outlays of money, (3) the overtraining of teams, and (4) the fierceness and intensity of the contests." At the annual meeting of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1925, Professor J. F. A. Pyre, of the University of Wisconsin, noted that the publicity accorded college athletes in newspapers results in (1) the excessive pursuit of high school and migrant athletes by colleges and the offering of inducements, and (2) the development of a "pre-professional" type of college athlete. These are only a few of the critics who have pointed out the harm that sensationalism in newspapers has wrought, not only to college athletics but to the individual participant.

An indeterminate number of athletes deliberately set about capitalizing newspaper reports and stories of prowess. The usual means is the clipping or scrapbook, in which is pasted every available printed reference. Doubtless many such collections start as

college memorabilia, but many more appear soon to reach the position of a stock in trade, to be treasured and used as a means of commercializing athletic ability. A football captain at a Mid-Western university, on the other hand, being determined to avoid some of the ill effects of publicity, scrupulously refrained from reading any newspaper stories in which his name appeared during the season.

B. THE ACCUSATION OF "GRAFT"

The committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, reporting in 1927, whose function was to investigate "every improper attempt to influence sports publicity," reached three important conclusions. First, most of the things that it "had heard and suspected were true." Its chairman, the late Will Owen Jones, of the *Nebraska State Journal*, stated that the committee "could make a sickening list of bribery, improper influence, stupid betrayal of the public, venial participation in profits, and overplaying of mediocre events." But, second, the committee's task had hardly begun before the discovery was made that "cleansing processes of great potency are already at work." Third, these processes apparently are induced in part by the influx of high school and college graduates into the sporting departments of newspapers, and "such abuses as still persist will soon be reduced to a minimum by good sense, plain honesty, and competent management."

Although in Texas the number of free passes to college contests distributed to newspapers seems excessive, nevertheless, whatever temptations may assail the underpaid sports writer, college athletics the country over have not descended to the level of professional sports-promotion in offering of gifts, tickets, and even cash to sporting writers. The charge that college coaches, especially at football, always pay in some form or other for the publicity lavished upon them has not been substantiated in a single instance. Study of one case in which a man stated that he had seen money passed from a coach to a newspaper correspondent yielded no corroborative results beyond a more circumstantial reiteration of the allegations.

The motive that leads to the excessive distribution of passes to college games is plainly fear lest more open-handed rivals may receive more favorable press notices. The motive in accepting tickets that can be sold is more complex, but probably in many cases includes the inclination "to make a little on the side." Both motives are unworthy. Members of sporting departments of metropolitan newspapers are, as a rule, far less prone to accept perquisites from college athletics than reporters employed by smaller papers. Moreover, whether perquisites are involved or not, one veteran newspaper man has stated that "a small college town paper would not be able to exist if it gave impartial accounts of home-team games." The distribution of free passes to college games and the giving of perquisites have much decreased in recent years.

C. SUMMARY

An analysis of the charges of sensationalism and of bribery that have been made against the sporting departments of newspapers suggests two inferences: First, that the ethics of the rapidly developed sports department have rarely been formulated with the same precision as has obtained in the case of the long-established editorial, news, advertising, and circulation departments; and, secondly, that in formulating accepted policies of treatment and display, too little attention has been paid to the essential distinctions between college and amateur athletics on the one hand and professional, openly commercial, sports on the other.

D. OTHER PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS

The recent revival of interest in college athletics on the part of magazine editors has been in the main wholesome. In so far as writers have been actuated by worthy motives, have eschewed mere rumor and scandal not substantiated by facts, and have guided their readers to sound views and a realization of the value of honesty in college sport, they have served well both their publishers and the colleges. On the other hand, one editor rejected a manuscript because it was not sufficiently scandalous, and another, in an athletic controversy between two great universities, solicited contributions that should have "punch" in them — in other words, that should be abusive or rankly partisan or accusatory. Such policies as these acts reflect debase both American sport and American education.

III. A FEW OF THE CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THESE COMPLAINTS

Such are some of the complaints against the way American college and school athletics are currently dealt with in newspapers and periodicals. We turn now to a few of the conditions in the newspaper office, on the campus, and in the community that explain much of the criticism that has come to be directed against the present mode of treating college athletics in American newspapers.

A. THE EXIGENCIES OF NEWSPAPER WORK

The lay critic of the sporting page of an American newspaper is seldom aware of the number of persons involved in the publication of a single story dealing with college athletics.

Much of the local athletic news is gathered by a reporter or correspondent, who writes or telegraphs the story himself or telephones it to the editorial rooms of his paper to be put into form by a "re-write" man. For morning papers or late evening editions, accounts of important matches may consist of two or even three divisions: a general story, a story detailing the match play by play, and the "crowd story." Ac-

counts received by telegraph are treated somewhat differently. In case one set of facts is to serve a number of metropolitan newspapers, the material is collected and bulleted to different offices by a news association, to be later revised in accordance with the needs and policies of particular papers. The copy-desk men and editors review the drafts of articles prepared as indicated, and on the larger papers they or others especially assigned to the task provide the headlines. First a sports editor and then perhaps other editors see the copy for the sporting page, revise it as seems best, and assign it provisionally to a position in the edition. The managing editor also sees it, if the story is to start on the first page. The story is then set in type. Proofs are pulled, to be scanned and corrected by proof-readers. After the necessary changes have been made in the proofs, the types are put into forms for pages by a "make-up" man. The forms are locked, matrices, or molds of paper pulp or other material, are fashioned for each form, cylinders of type metal are cast to fit the rolls of the press, and the paper is printed. Material distributed by national news-gathering agencies is received by telegraph or on thin sheets of duplicating paper and is passed, cut, or rejected, as occasion warrants. Meanwhile, illustrations for the story or the sports page have been secured from special or staff photographers or from distributors, captioned, and edited. The advertisements have been contracted for and prepared, and the distribution and sale of the papers has been arranged on the basis of orders received.

Of the men engaged in getting out a newspaper varying in number on different papers from as few as three ⁵ to as many as a hundred, only a few are known to readers by name. This is especially true of the sports department. Thirty years ago the number of signed sporting articles or columns was small. The practice had become common in French journalism and in our own Far West before it was adopted to any great extent by Eastern and Mid-Western papers. Nowadays, the country over, not only are columns of sporting comment, whether specially prepared or acquired through syndicates, signed with the names of their authors, but in not a few newspapers a great number of sporting stories, accounts of preparation for matches, and special articles on all phases of sports gain an added authority from the names attached to them. Apparently, a signature is accepted by the run of newspaper readers as a guarantee that the story to which it is attached is of a certain type and character; doubtless in many instances the signature actually does operate to increase the accuracy and trustworthiness of the individual writers. The value of the author's name is not less in sports writing than it is in other fields of journalism.

Many signatures are *bona fide*. But the names of certain widely known baseball players, boxers, golfers, and other athletes are signed to newspaper or magazine articles to which they have perhaps at the most contributed a few very scanty notions which have been put into intelligible language by "ghost writers." The practice is now so common that few except the most trusting of newspaper readers are hoaxed by the amiable and profitable deception.

⁵ A small daily may charge an already burdened reporter or editor with the preparation, editing, and proof-reading of sports material, but at least two employees in the mechanical processes are necessary to place the sports page on the street.

These notes upon the preparation of a sporting page or of a single article appearing on it perhaps suffice to indicate the large number of persons involved in the process, its complexity, and the chances for error which it affords. They make no mention of three other factors which are of the utmost importance: first, the extreme rapidity with which much of our sporting news must be collected, written, edited, and printed; second, the difficulty of maintaining a personnel of sufficient expertness at the salaries that can be paid; and third, certain technical considerations. The adverse critics of the modern sporting page are too often unfamiliar with problems which, upon acquaintance, lead the layman to wonder at the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and interest that contemporary journalism attains.

1. The Element of Time

In newspaper work, as in college administration, it is extremely difficult to find the time for adequate reflection. The collection of athletic news, its writing, editing, and other preparation for printing are processes performed at a speed that makes errors, including misquotations, unavoidable. Moreover, a newspaper is an affair of each day and every day; twenty-four hours at the most after its appearance it is antiquated. The ephemeral character of newspaper writing is at once a safeguard against lasting harm to college athletics from a single article, and a hindrance to effectual improvement through insistence upon sound principles. Only by repeatedly emphasizing those aspects of college athletics which the policy of the newspaper is intended to perpetuate can any writer hope to impress his views upon his readers. The assertion so frequently made that a newspaper reporter exercises no discrimination in preparing his material is false. Because of the nature of his calling and the very process of writing, every newspaper man is a censor, whose work, good or bad, is highly selective. The difficulty is that his mistakes, most of which are due to haste, are made, so to speak, in public, and that correction of an error of fact or of interpretation necessarily draws attention anew to the error. No one relishes reminding himself of his own mistakes.

2. The Element of Personnel

The problem of securing an adequate personnel for a sporting department is no less serious than it is in other aspects of newspaper work. A comparatively large number of young reporters have the ambition to become sports writers, probably less from motives of financial return than because of the intrinsic interest of the calling.

In a number of cases situations similar to the following have arisen: On a Saturday in the height of the football season a sporting editor finds his staff of writers taxed to the utmost to cover even a few of the important contests. He must have more men for the day. It is impracticable to engage temporarily any new writers. He therefore enlists the services of young street men or others who may have had experience only in the covering of an entirely different type of news. To such relatively inexperienced men

are assigned some of the less important school and college games. These they report with a fair degree of satisfaction to their chiefs. The experience has given them a taste of a fascinating branch of newspaper work and renewed their ambition to proceed in it, but it has furnished them with very few of the technical qualifications that are needed in covering school and college sport. Again, the sports editor presses into emergency service writers who, although they can turn out satisfactory copy concerning a prize fight, a professional baseball game, or a wrestling match, have no notion of the significance of a college or school football game. From the point of view of the college, the use of either of these types of man may prove disastrous. It has been suggested that, as a general rule, only college graduates should be engaged to write of college athletics. This brings up such questions as these: How, in our present economic situation, could the smaller newspaper offer a career that would satisfy the ambitious alumnus? How reduce the dangers of rabid partisanship, so often displayed by younger alumni? Even if the course were practicable, it is no guarantee of the quality of the result. Among the most influential and wholesome sports writers stand men who have never attended college or university. They have achieved their standing because they combine a quick perception and an ability to seize upon the essential quality of a situation. These are attributes of any good newspaper man.

Nor is it wholly clear that increases in salary will purchase an adequate staff for the treatment of college athletics. On the large majority of newspapers in the United States sporting writers seem to be paid on a scale about equal to that in force for other departments. On the whole, competition between newspapers being what it is to-day, a man is very likely to be paid what he is worth. The rewards in salary, power, and influence to which the more industrious and talented writers attain are commensurate with their value to their newspapers.

Probably in no other calling is experience so essential. The most respected of the sports writers are men who know news writing and usually editing from many points of view; they have specialized only after they have learned the technique of other branches of the work, often having begun as general utility men on smaller papers and risen through their own talents and exertions. Only the very exceptional young man becomes a successful or even a readable sports writer without serving a tedious but highly useful apprenticeship in other branches of newspaper work. The requirements of sports writing are succinctly expressed by one editor as follows: "Our sports writers . . . are expected to write plain English and stick to the facts. Newspaper writing requires practical experience."

3. Technical Considerations

The problems of haste and of personnel are common to many forms of business enterprise. In newspaper work certain technical considerations also operate, of which only one can be stated in this place. Exigencies of space may compel the make-up man or the copy desk to delete from an account of a contest the paragraphs in which the reporter has endeavored to make clear the sportsmanlike qualities of players. When such paragraphs are discarded by the man who arranges the typographical contents

of a page of a newspaper according to the space at his disposal, the deletion, always performed at top speed, against time, is a purely mechanical matter. When, however, the deletion is the result of editing by the copy desk, it may reflect a deliberately adopted editorial or financial policy.

B. THE CONTACT OF THE COLLEGE WITH THE PRESS

Thirty years ago, and perhaps even more recently, at most of the smaller institutions and, indeed, at many universities, the reporting of college events for newspapers and news agencies was in the hands of undergraduates who were working their way wholly or partially. Exceptions to this rule were those athletic contests which were considered to be of sufficient importance to be written by professional newspaper men. This situation proved to be undesirable to both the college and the press, largely because of the lack of a feeling of responsibility on the part of the student reporters. Attempts to guide them failed in the face of payment "at so much an inch." The system, if such it may be called, is still in use at some universities and colleges, but at probably a large majority of institutions it has been either superseded or greatly modified by the college publicity agent or bureau, whose duty it is to gather items of news, to distribute "tips," and to prepare typewritten or mimeographed "releases." The function of the publicity agent is to "keep the college in the news."

Sometimes he is a duly appointed officer of the institution, who adds publicity to other duties. More frequently, in the Middle West, he is an employee of the athletic department. In cases in which his salary is paid from the athletic budget, his releases are usually of athletic news. Such a man often receives a high salary because of the naïve appetite of many an institution and its partisans, including especially some of its alumni, for publicity at any price.

This semi-official currying of journalistic favor by men whose salaries are paid out of athletic funds is yet to be justified either in theory or in practice. Few universities are so poverty-stricken in scholarship or in good works as to need a "press agent"—a paid employee operating on a strictly commercial basis, whose success is measured by the inches of reading-matter that he succeeds in placing in newspapers. On the other hand, the advantages of a central, responsible, and official source for university information or the verification of news items are obvious to both newspaper men and the college family. A well-operated athletic association or department should have little need of gratuitous advertising, except as a means of promoting the sales of tickets through which a stadium may be financed. The danger in respect of a college publicity officer is lest he forget that he is not a press agent but an educational official.

C. COMMUNITY, COLLEGE, AND PRESS

On the whole, however, it is not so much the college as the community in which it

is situated that to-day influences a newspaper's policy in the treatment of college athletics, for the community provides the circulation for the newspaper, and circulation is the standard by which the success or failure of a sports-page policy is measured. In the community must be reckoned those alumni whose blind partisanship leads them to protest against friendly references to the teams or the sportsmanship of other universities. The college graduate who becomes a sports editor or the owner of a newspaper affords to such alumni a clear target if his sports page offends them by omitting the complimentary references to the teams of Alma Mater which they expect. The day of writing to the editor and canceling subscriptions over these fancied slights is not yet past. Sometimes it is to such men as much as to local pride, and the subservience of the local newspapers to both of these forces, that the commercial setting of post-season contests is ascribable.

D. THE SOURCES OF THESE CONDITIONS

To the desire of the colleges and their partisans for the good-will of the public is due much of the publicity hunting that now obtains in athletics. The natural wish of the alumnus for news of his college is one thing. The notion that a university's teams or crews must be referred to only in the most laudatory terms is quite another. In many instances the state of mind commonly referred to as an inferiority complex is the root of the desire for athletic notoriety, whether in the individual or in the group.

As for the newspapers themselves, this should be said : Although it is entirely natural that the alumnus who becomes the owner or editor of a newspaper should be led by affection for his college never to resist an opportunity to bring that college into favorable notice, as regards athletics or otherwise, nevertheless the editors or owners who push this tendency to the limits of good taste are after all very few. It may be a confession of sin, but it is also a symptom of regeneration, that the following observation should have been made by a publisher before a gathering of newspaper editors : "It strikes me, gentlemen, the time has come for the American newspaper to establish its own integrity and with courage support the things that are to be supported without regard to the box-office receipts. Too many of our policies are established in the business office."

IV. RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NEWSPAPER'S HANDLING OF COLLEGE ATHLETICS

It is certain that without the help of the American newspaper, little if any improvement is possible in college athletics. It is equally certain that this help will be lacking without the deliberate adoption for the American sporting page of a policy intelligently calculated to assist, without priggishness or display, in changing our college athletics

for the better. Fortunately, a number of sporting writers have long pointed the way, and certain individual newspapers have already begun the process.

The ideal of newspaper reports of college games preserves the point of view of the college, recognizes sportsmanship, clean play, and expertness, indulges in no grotesqueries of language, bears a head in consonance with the story, and is placed in the edition in strict accordance with its importance in the news of the day. The same is true of all college athletic news. The great news-gathering agencies, like the Associated Press and the United Press, generally produce for distant newspapers accounts of games that are open to little adverse criticism. Whether these accounts appear with appropriate heads depends upon the policy of individual newspapers and the competence of editors, head-writers, and copy-desk men. For purposes of reporting, editing, and display, certain newspapers have regard to, first, a distinction between amateur and professional athletics, and, secondly, the question who profits, if at all, by admissions to contests. When an editor or a writer insists too ostentatiously that through his accounts of games he is providing his readers with a vicarious participation in sports and is thus performing a public service second only to affording active physical participation, he is laying himself open to the suspicion of distorting results to justify a commercialized sports policy. Factors in the shaping of a valid policy for the handling of college athletic news include the size of the newspaper, the size and character of the community that it serves, the rate of pay of its sports writers as compared with that of other employees, and, finally, the immediate return which the newspaper yields to its owner.

Doubtless many American newspapers have adopted for the guidance of their sports writers and editors a definite policy. The *Chicago Tribune* is said at one time to have made an effort to reduce its reports of certain professional games to "a bare news basis." The efforts of two other newspapers, which doubtless are representative of many more, will be considered in more detail.

A. THE DES MOINES *Register*

The *Des Moines Register* distinguishes, in the first place, between amateur and semi-professional sports on the one hand, and professional sports on the other. Special letters of instruction are issued to correspondents, and from some of these the following paragraphs, addressed especially to college correspondents, are taken :

We want every correspondent to understand that we do not expect him to give away secrets or betray his team or coach. However, neither do we want false stories nor reports. We do not want a story that Jim Blood will not be able to play next Saturday because of an injured ankle when the correspondent, the coach and the entire campus know he will play. Nor do we want a story that the attack is being rebuilt around Blood, when everyone on the

campus knows he has a broken collar-bone and will not play. We are not concerned in winning or losing games for any team through the news columns. What we want is the news, while it is fresh and is still news. Remember *The Register* and *Tribune-News*, and not your college or coach pay your monthly correspondence checks.

Help us make our sports pages during the week something more than mere propaganda sheets for the college.

Concerning one special feature of the sports page of the *Register*, the following letter was dispatched over the signature of the sporting editor :

We believe a daily feature in our papers dealing with outstanding examples of good sportsmanship will make good reading. It is impossible to interview everyone personally so we are appealing to you to send us an account of the greatest piece of good sportsmanship you have ever witnessed.

Occasional stories about a college "team, its prospects, schedules, players, coaches, etc.," are used, but they must be short.

B. THE NEW YORK *Herald Tribune*

In the autumn of 1927, the sports editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* sent out the following notice :

TO HERALD TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENTS :

In reports of football games and practice for the *Herald Tribune* emphasize as much as possible the names of the players, rather than the coach.

The tendency to play up the coach has grown to a point where the college, the captain and the players are in many instances submerged in the news reports, while the work of the coach has dominated the stories.

It is not our intention to overlook the coach or his methods. It is simply to make the coach secondary to the college and the football players.

The captain, the Varsity players, substitutes and scrubs should be the main subjects in the reports of the development of the eleven. The part played by the coach must not be disregarded, but it should not be the subject of the lead of the story.

These instructions form a part of a carefully considered policy concerning the handling of sporting news, including the emphasis to be placed, through character of news, way of writing, position, and display, upon amateur, including school and college, sports and professional games and contests.

C. THE EFFECT OF A CONSIDERED SPORTING-PAGE POLICY

The best test of the success or failure of an editorial policy is to be found in circulation. The net paid circulation, however, is not conclusive evidence, because other

factors than editorial policy enter into it and in part modify the results. On the other hand, an unsuccessful sport policy is reflected in circulation figures, to an extent which it is impossible to gauge with accuracy. Figures, partly from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, published in *Standard Rate and Data Service* for June, 1927 and 1928, show the following facts: As of March 31, 1927, the average net paid circulation of the *Des Moines Register* for which the figures were computed was, daily, 106,392;⁷ Sunday,⁶ 161,871.⁷ Similar figures for the *Herald Tribune* as of March 31, 1927, were, daily, 289,674; Sunday, 366,220. In June, 1928, as of March 31, 1928, the same sources assigned to the *Des Moines Register* average net paid circulation daily of 109,499, Sunday of 169,248,⁶ and to the *Herald Tribune* daily, 302,365, Sunday, 398,766.⁶ The increases tend to show that an enlightened sports policy has not been fatal to circulation. It is probable that the same inference could be drawn concerning other newspapers which have adopted similarly commendable policies.

V. THE INTEREST OF THE NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER IN THE SPORTING PAGE

To those concerned with the publishing of a newspaper, athletic games and contests are important in at least three aspects, all closely interrelated: the general reputation and influence of the newspaper among its readers, its circulation, and its advertising. None of the very special and technical problems raised by these matters can be more than suggested here.

A. SPORTS AND THE NEWSPAPER'S REPUTATION

The highly intangible force known as good-will, which in newspaper publishing depends upon the attitude of the newspaper reading public toward a particular journal, stands among the most valuable assets of all newspapers. An indefinite but none the less certainly recognizable portion of the reputation of any newspaper among a portion of its readers depends upon the length, detail, accuracy, and tone of its sporting news. In identifiable cases, a newspaper's reputation and, as a result, its influence have been enhanced by an improvement of its sporting pages. On the other hand, when sports pages are neglected or are permitted to decline, the effect upon the good-will of the public toward the newspaper is as quickly reflected. The aphorism that "a newspaper is no better than its sporting page," although it indicates the close relation that exists between a single department and the whole newspaper, is, of course, an exaggeration. With equal truth it might be said that a newspaper is no better than its editorial page, or its financial page, or its first page, or its advertising. The general policy of a newspaper, however, is reflected at least as sharply in the sports pages as in any others, and

⁶ Not an A. B. C. Figure.

⁷ The *Des Moines Register* figures for 1927 run from February 14 to March 31. The increases between figures for 1926 and 1928 for this newspaper were even more marked.

it is also true that the good-will of a considerable proportion of the readers of a metropolitan daily depends upon the repute of its sporting pages.

B. SPORTS AND NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING

A generalization often heard is that "the American newspaper field is divided into New York City and the rest of the country." Its basis may be seen by a comparison of the advertising rates and practices of some thirty-five newspapers, of which twelve are published in New York City and the rest in other parts of the United States.

The twelve New York City newspapers have a combined net paid daily circulation of 4,485,000 copies,⁸ six having a Sunday circulation of 4,253,000, in a population area of 5,970,000 (estimated) and a trade area of 9,500,000. All of these twelve papers maintain a "position charge" for certain advertising; that is, for specified preferred portions of the paper, like designated pages, the columns next to reading-matter, or the tops of columns, a premium must be paid over and above the rate for general advertising or special classes. Moreover, four, with a daily circulation of 1,596,000 copies specify a premium for advertising on their sporting pages, while four others, selling 1,252,000 copies daily, include the sporting pages in the class of "other designated pages," for which a premium is charged. Sunday newspapers that make an extra charge for advertising on the sporting pages number three, with a circulation of 1,573,000. The New York *Evening Post* announces "specified position not sold on . . . sports . . . page," and the New York *Graphic* makes a position charge for pages two or three, neither of which is a sports page. It should be noted that in a number of cases the society pages, financial sections, and the columns opposite editorial pages are also rated as preferred positions. In three instances the premium charged for position on the sporting pages are the highest of all position charges imposed by the respective newspapers.

In a word, publishers of New York newspapers have been fully alert to the interest of their public in athletics.

Outside of New York City, apparently, conditions are different. Three influential New England papers, with a combined daily circulation of 326,000 copies in different cities, charge a premium for "selected pages." One Boston paper makes "no charge for position. A desired position will be given when possible." Certain newspapers in California and Missouri, however, with a combined daily circulation of 330,000 copies, maintain a position charge. None of these twenty-three newspapers published outside of New York City specifies a position charge for the sporting page by name. Their combined daily circulation is 4,506,000 copies, or only slightly more than all of the twelve dailies studied for New York City taken together. It therefore appears that the sports page is not capitalized outside of New York City to anything like the extent to which it is capitalized in Manhattan.

C. CIRCULATION AND SPORTS

The regard in which a newspaper is held by the general public is reflected in its

⁸ The statistical material concerning newspaper advertising is drawn from *Standard Rate and Data Service*, June, 1928, which for each daily newspaper gives circulation figures vouched for in many instances by the Audit Bureau of Circulation or by the United States Government. In the present discussion, circulation figures are given in round numbers.

circulation. The relation between circulation and sports is indicated by two statements by the late Will Owen Jones, of the *Nebraska State Journal*, chairman of the Committee on Sports Publicity, before the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1927. After noting that about one-half of the one hundred and twenty-five newspapers studied by the Committee devoted more than fifteen per cent of their "reader allowance of space" to sport, the total average being a little more than ten columns of sport a day and from two to three times as much on Sundays, Mr. Jones stated that seven give more than twenty per cent and five more than twenty-five per cent, while "some have 'no limit' on the space devoted to sports." "The circulation department," said Mr. Jones, "demands more and more sport; city editors and managing editors, overburdened with their regular duties and uncertain as to how this young giant is to be handled, permit it to do things that could not be tolerated on any of the other pages."

It seems clear that a great many circulation departments — and these departments are the thermometers of public interest and financial success — are more concerned with the quantity of sporting news than with its quality. On the other hand, newspapers of a certain standing, which number among their readers a greater proportion of college men and women, do give much attention to the quality of their sporting pages. In short, sporting news, in quantity proportionate to other news and of quality equal to that of the rest of the newspaper, appears to pay its own way. Examination of certain Canadian and British papers confirms this view.

D. SUMMARY

From various indications, it might be inferred that the interest of the newspaper publisher in the treatment of games and contests is almost wholly financial, — a question of profit or loss. It is not to be denied that in newspaper publishing, as elsewhere, financial prosperity has come to assume much importance in our scale of values. On the other hand, the traditions of the great names of American journalism — Benjamin Franklin, Greeley, Bolles, Dana, and Pulitzer — have not by any means been submerged in the rising tide of commercialism. These eminent exponents of individual journalism have been succeeded by other men with a power to direct the general sentiment of which their predecessors never dreamed. The great news-gathering agencies, the chains of newspapers, and the syndicates afford almost unlimited opportunity for a single publisher or for small groups of newspaper owners to give the public not alone what it wants but what, by every standard of taste and merit, it deserves. Nor do these men as a group possess a less lively sense of public welfare than their predecessors. Outside or on the fringes of the reputable group of publishers who endeavor to meet the responsibilities that power brings, there stand and will probably always stand the commercially minded owners of newspapers, devoted to the making of money through

a debauched sensationalism without regard to the intangible values involved. The problems which the sports page presents to the publisher differ in essence not at all from the problems of other departments. A worthy policy of publication will reflect itself as quickly in the treatment of college athletics as in any other phase of newspaper proprietorship, and it need not be displayed in sixty-point type across seven or eight columns to become effectual.

CONCLUSION

The person upon whom rests the final responsibility for a newspaper's sports policy is not the reporter, or the desk man, or the sports editor, or the editorial writer, or, indeed, the managing editor; it is the owner or publisher, who initiates or approves the policies which his employees effectuate. In several instances publishers have adopted, usually without announcement in their newspapers, enlightened policies that have improved both emphasis and quality in their sporting pages. Without detracting from the interest of the sports pages, such policies have significantly affected the standards of sports reporting, writing, and editing. In leading public opinion to esteem the true value of the amateur status for American higher education, to cease to view, with a kind of cynical admiration, evasion or open defiance of the amateur convention, and to appreciate both amateurism and honest professionalism as tests of the sportsman's personal integrity, the publisher serves not alone education and sport, but the best ideals of our national life.