

GEORGE BEAHON

"In This Corner"



Five years or so ago, when a recruiter for West Point, or Annapolis, or the Air Force or Coast Guard Academy suggested scholarship to a student-athlete, the prospect, more often than not, would look at the offer like something that came from beneath a rock, or crawling from underneath the soup plate.

Today's prized college jocks are taking a different view, and it's a whole new ballgame for the coaches and athletic directors at the service academies.

"The pendulum has swung the other way," says Tom Cahill, head coach of football at West Point, and one of the name coaches touring 45 American cities to spread the gospel of a "Physical Fitness Task Force" sponsored by the American Tea Council.

A mixture composed of juniper berry and tonic water and lime wedges outsold iced tea at a visit the other day when Cahill explained the change that has come over the athletic situation at military schools.

Cahill had just watched commencement proceedings at The Point for a record graduating class of 801 Cadets. Of these, 13 were varsity footballers, including the coach's son, Tom (Tec) Cahill, who is on his way now as a second lieutenant to Wurzburg, Germany, and duty with the Third Infantry.

"A few years ago," the coach conceded, "it was tough to compete in recruiting with the bigger football areas. Now it's reversed its trend. The pendulum has swung the other way. It's most noticeable the last three, four years."

There are reasons, as explained by the man who was promoted by acclaim of the football team, from Plebe to Varsity status, in 1966, and went on to be named Kodak's "Coach of The Year" that same season.

One of the reasons, according to Cahill, is that today's scholar-athletes have a different look at the military. "The winding down of Vietnam," is one reason scholar-athlete is judged differently by his peers when he chooses a military school.

"And a lot of fine athletes have learned something else. They know now that being a good athlete is not an automatic entree to professional sports. (Service School graduates must put in a full hitch.)

"There's another economic factor. Job opportunities for the college graduate are not so good. Every one of ours has got a job when he finishes his four years."

There's still another economic factor, which actually gives The Point a distinct advantage over other recruiting schools. With the exception of those schools which are out-and-out athletic factories, and pay under the table, fracturing all the rules.

The NCAA permits other schools to pay \$15 — no more — per month to their jocks, above and beyond tuition and board and room.

At West Point every athlete — every student — receives \$284 monthly, 12 months a year, in compensation, above and beyond room, board, tuition. The only obligation financially from the \$284 monthly is for uniforms and books.

"I would say 90 per cent of our graduates emerge now with enough money saved to buy new automobiles," says Cahill.

What's happened to West Point football is notable. And consider that recruiting doesn't show its true effects for three or four years.

Two years ago, Army suffered its worst record in history, 1-and-9. It was

against a major league schedule, and five of these losses were by a cumulative total on only 19 points. Still, it was 1-and-9, at Army, which used to fill Yankee Stadium playing the likes of Notre Dame.

Last year Army again bunked into a big league schedule, and came out well above water, at 6-and-4.

Next Sept. 23rd Army will hook Nebraska, defending collegiate champion of the universe, in its opener at West Point. ("They scheduled that one ten years ago," says Cahill, "and nobody will admit who did it.") Still, Army was only 7-0 back of Nebraska two years ago in the fourth quarter, before falling out of it.

This year's Army schedule includes not only Nebraska, but powers like Texas A&M, Miami, Syracuse and Penn State. West Point could not compete in this area without success in recruiting, which means revived response from the nation's student-athletes.

West Point will have 1,360 Plebes next Fall, for a total registration, of 3,900, with a projected figure of 4,400 ultimately. The attrition rate ranges from 27 to 37 per cent. The athletes' drop-out percentage is slighter.

It cost the Cahill household "zero number of dollars" for the education of football player-student Tom (Tec) Cahill, now 2nd Lieut. T. E. Cahill.

Resurgence of success in the recruiting department, according to coach Cahill, can be credited also to a massive public relations job. "More athletes are aware of what it takes to get in, and what it takes to stay in; job opportunity comparisons; educational visits by prospects and high school coaches; literature and film, everything helped."

Still, says Cahill, West Point maintains all its standards. "You pay a price to win," he says, "but you don't win at any price." Let the record show that today's high school student-athletes have a brand new view of what's happening at West Point.

JOHN DOSER

Scholastic Notebook



The Hickok Belt is dead.

At least so far as Rochester is concerned.

John Cosby, president, Hickok Division, The Tandy Corp., Fort Worth, Tex., said last week that Tandy will continue the tradition of the belt, established in Rochester by the Rochester Press-Radio Club 22 years ago, as "more of a promotion in line with our industry, tied in with a charity, most likely in Chicago next year."

The Press Radio Club, which severed connections with Tandy in February because of confusion over the belt's ownership, made the front page of Rochester's morning newspaper a few days later when The Gannett Co. announced its interest in retaining the annual dinner under a new format.

Last week Gannett changed its mind, offering the same muddy reasons the PR Club broke with Tandy for originally. The club then made, as a final effort to retain the belt dinner here, contact with Hickok president Cosby.

THIS YEAR the morning paper stripped the dinner of any surprises by digging out the winner's identification and printing it four days in advance of the dinner.

Courier-Journal

The dailies usually devote great full page coverage to the dinner — after. If the PR Club depended on the dailies to help put people in the audience to insure the dinner's success, the PR Club and the charities would have withered up and died long ago.

The PR Club's strength today reflects its open membership — the real workers are from TV-Radio, public relations, industry. The influence and work output of its press members is nil.

There'd be no abrasive feeling toward Gannett if it had only stayed out of the picture. The belt was slowing dying here after Tandy acquired Hickok. A Hickok official here suggested not to bother giving Tandy a call to try and keep the dinner here. It was entirely academic, he said.

The PR Club knew the belt was on its way out, too, and was seeking a new sponsor with a new format when Gannett President Paul Miller approached the PR President George Sisler and expressed his firm's interest in putting on the dinner. But Gannett just further muddled an already muddy situation.

The odds are favorable there will be a PR dinner in town next year. Several local firms are interested in combining talents and dollars to put it on.

The PR Club will need all the promotional help it can get. Let's see what happens.

Editor's Note — Doser is 1971-73 president of the Rochester Press Radio Club.

YOUTH COUNCIL

A regional youth council is being developed by the Northwest Region Interim Youth Council. Steering committee members are Patrick Madama, Carol Ann Walters, Rose Marie Goodlein, Anthony Milonni, Nanci Igna-

towski, Kim May, Dennis Heizyk, Patrick Mannion, Larry Blake, Michael Mooney, Charlene Drexler, cochairman, Julie Pagerey, cochairman, Father Thomas Bales.

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