

The 1908 Spirit in Football

By Joseph B. Pendleton

Football Official on Central Board Staff

Illustration from Photograph

THE banner year of revised football is rapidly drawing to a close. Everywhere one hears well satisfied comments from players as well as from spectators, and it would gladden the hearts of the Rules Committee, could they hear the remarks of parents who have sons participating in this strenuous sport. Not only has the game been freed from its former objectionable features, but it has been improved to such an extent that it now presses close for the honor of being our national game.

Too much credit cannot be given to those men, who for love of clean sport have given their time and the best of their judgment to placing football where it is today. Those of us who have followed the game either as players, coaches or officials, know the vast difference between the game of 1900 and that of 1908.

Not alone is the change shown in the rules, but rather is it in the vital difference in the attitude of the players. The spirit of fair play permeating the entire college world is witnessed on every grid-iron. Men enter the contest determined to play *hard*, but clean, football. Good

plays by the opponents are freely discussed and acknowledged, and while victory is still as sweet as ever, the thought that your team has not misrepresented its alma mater goes a long way to atone for defeat. No player today feels free to show any spirit that savors of meanness. Public and undergraduate sentiment is of such a high class that he knows that swift condemnation would be his merit. Such an atmosphere as this tends not only to improve the game, but is at the same time a much needed moral tonic for the man.

Another aid in keeping the sport where it should be, is faithful work on the part of the officials. Thanks to the clean-cut interpretation of the rules by those who framed them, there is now no excuse for a game poorly handled.

To the coaches also, no little credit is due, for to them the players look for instructions. It would do you good to be permitted to hear a varsity coach talk to the men at the beginning of a season, to see how emphatically he insists that the players are to observe the *spirit* of the rules, to obey them and above all else to play the game fair.



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The coming season will probably see a few changes made in the rules, but they will not be radical ones. Some few points will be cleared up, and probably one change made under the head of "Penalties that may be declined." It was not the intent of the Rules Committee that a team should profit by a deliberate foul committed, either by its players or coach. At present it is possible, under the letter of the rule, for a coach to turn a sure touchdown or long

gain into a mere fifteen-yard distance penalty, by unsportsmanlike coaching of his men. The side-line play and others equally good would thus be neutralized.

In such a case it would be the duty of the officials to disregard the coaching, and remove the guilty party from the field. The rule should be changed to read: Coaching shall call for a fifteen-yard penalty unless it is for the advantage of the offended side to decline.

