

# How Yale Deals with Beef and Brains

By John J. Mack

*Yale Football Trainer*

Illustration from Photograph

I HAVE often puzzled over whether training college football men is an art or a science. It is a pretty hard question to decide. But if there was a word that meant about half of each, I think that would be the proper one to use.

The point was illustrated pretty well to me one day not long ago. I was talking to an old coach, who had turned out two or three great teams in his day. But he is now, to say it roughly, in regard to ability and tactics, of the past tense. He had played the old style game so long, that he would not accept modern ideas. To him, the old way was the best way.

"I'll tell you what is the matter with football," he said to me one day, in a querulous, complaining voice, "and it's this: a fellow has to be a Ph. D. to play it." He told in those words better than he knew, that a man of this day to be a star football player has to have brains. Sheer beef doesn't always mean goals.

There it is all in a nut shell. Yale endeavors to train the brain as well as the beef.

From the very first time the squad of football candidates assemble until the last game is called, it is the constant

desire of the Yale trainers to drill into the players the importance of brain work. In these days when games hang on tip of a straw, it is taken by the Yale authorities that the man with a clear football brain will turn the balance in his own favor. Wit will win.

It is hard to make a man think quick and accurately when in the stress of a heavy game; things are happening so fast around him that he can scarcely comprehend all. But his brain must be trained so, and must have football so well drilled into it, that it will almost function without his willing.

The first year we do not get to pay very much attention to freshmen. All our highest efforts are put on the men who are already in the game, but the freshmen are watched for promising material, and a man is studied. He is then taken in charge, and put through a system of training that will by the time he is a sophomore, eradicate some of his faults.

Actual practice is begun in the middle of September. The work is at first light and nondescript, taking up nothing more serious than falling on the ball, passing it, and running. There is a whole lot in getting a man to thinking football, dreaming football, and



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eating football. By the time college opens up we usually have about one hundred men out. Then the great weeding out process begins. This is no easy task. The best men are selected for the first and second elevens, which are given especial attention. These are sent to the training table at the very first opportunity. The daily grind of practice is gone through until about two weeks after school has opened, when the first and second elevens are allowed to meet.

Yale is not as strict as it once was in regard to diet for the football men. There is no confining bill of fare. Steaks, chops and eggs form the substantiate for breakfast; steak or a single chop for lunch, and the usual roasts and plenty of vegetables for the evening meal. So that a man in training keeps within reasonable bounds is all that is required.

But there is one thing that is tabooed on the menu—tobacco. Tobacco and football, says Yale, do not mix. Besides pulling down the muscles, tobacco affects the nerves, and a man who is going to carry the pigskin across the goal line needs the best of nerves.

There is one thing that the New Haven school insists on, and that is high standing in class-room work. A man to win out in football must be a bright student, for if he falls below in his studies he is dropped from the team. Here again brains are auctioned off at a high price. The football men at Yale burn much midnight oil.

I wish to say a good word for the high school football teams. The university or college depends directly on the high school or the preparatory school. The high school is the recruiting station for the college. Each year better work is being done in the high schools, and this means that better football will be played by the colleges. I know something about the work the high schools are doing, for I served an apprenticeship there. In 1893, I went to Clinton, Iowa, where I had charge of all the athletics including football and baseball. We landed the state championship, and at the International Inter-scholastic Championship Meet at New York, secured second place. From Clinton I went to Columbia, and

from there to the University of Maine, and then to the Wanderers' Athletic Club at Halifax, finally to land up in Mercersburg Academy in 1901. For three years Mercersburg won the inter-scholastic at Princeton, Yale, Pennsylvania, and Cornell, but we were beaten at Yale by Worcester Academy under "Pooch" Donovan, now of Harvard.

I like the present game very much indeed. It is a better game for the spectator. I think the game will be improved right along. The day of the mass play is gone, which is something that the public is thankful for. The forward pass and the on-side kick were popular moves that ought to be retained. The game is becoming more of a moving picture game; formerly one picture stood out before the bleachers for some time, but now the scenes shift quicker.

In the old game, the weak team had little show; but now there is always a chance for the losing side. The score can change very rapidly. And again, under the open rules, a team that is light, but is backed with thorough training, is a very formidable rival of the team that claims weight as its chief asset.

From a trainer's point of view, I don't think today's game is any harder on the player from a physical standpoint than was yesterday's game, but I do think, though, that it tells more quickly upon his nerves. For now the player has to keep alive to every move. There is no telling when something is going to happen which will necessitate his complete knowledge of all the plays made, and a certain knowledge of the last move.

Football is going to get more popular right along, and deservedly so. It will take a higher type of man to play it, that is a better all around man both as a student and as a general athlete. The dub and the slugger are fast losing out, giving way to the bright-minded, fair player. I think that football will keep on growing, developing and becoming more popular until a man, on leaving college, will be ashamed to say that he did not play it while a student.