WHY NOT A CHAMP?

(Editor's Note: Following is an unbylined article I happened to find while browsing through some old newspapers. This piece originally appeared in the Washington Herald in December of 1911. Long before the advent of the formal Associated Press rankings in 1936, the writer, frustrated with the annual speculation over which team was the best in the country, put forth a proposed method for naming a national champion of college football. And it did NOT include a playoff system.)

New York - The echos of the football season have not yet died out. Fact is, the echo is even at this date as loud, if not louder than the original noise. It is the season of squabbles, arguments, and boasts that is upon us.

The championship of the East is in dispute, the championship of the West is undecided, the championship of the South is being determined by debate, and the championship of the country is contradicted. And the season of 1911 is over.

Both the Navy and Princeton have sound claims for the supremacy of the country, but since those two teams fought to a tie in the early season, neither can claim superiority over the other.

There should be some way of determining the champion. It could be done - there is no doubt about that. A central body could be created, made up of representatives of, say, eleven of the most prominent universities in the country. These experts could gather together about December 1 of each year, consider the claims of each of the teams, and by vote come to a conclusion and designate the champion of the year, giving to the winner some cup or banner, for possession during the year, emblematic of the championship. The name of the triumphant institution could be engraved upon the cup or embroidered upon the banner, whichever it might be. There are plenty of football enthusiasts willing to donate such a trophy or contribute to it.

As to the championship board - it could be composed in part, at least, of the members of the present rules committee. The institutions represented should include Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, Cornell, Pennsylvania, Army, Navy, Chicago, Michigan, and three or four others The membership should be an odd number. In the event there were several rightful claimants to the title, the question should be decided by an elimination vote. The three leaders on the first ballot would be candidates on the second. Then it would narrow down to two, and the odd number would compel a majority of at least one. In this way there would be no danger of the committee not being able to select a champion.

The chief objection to such a plan would be that some colleges, or several of them, would be dissatisfied and might even rebel and leave the "national conference", or whatever it might be called. But there is no reason why this should occur. The colleges - every one of them - abide by the decisions of the rules committee in regard to changes in the playing code. Why shouldn't they abide by the decision of a national conference in regard to the championship?

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