

Kaye, Ivan N. *GOOD CLEAN VIOLENCE: A HISTORY OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1973).

"What's wrong with a little good clean violence?" is the opening quotation in Ivan Kaye's volume on the American game of football. Journalist Kaye takes us from the 1869 Rutgers-Princeton soccer style game to the classic Nebraska-Oklahoma Thanksgiving Day game of 1971. Along the way he covers the great players, coaches, and winning teams with such likely chapter titles as "The Irish Arrive," "The Iceman Cometh," "Brave Old Army Team," "Woody, Evy, and Biggie," and "Make Way for the "Wishbone." The book might best be described as the portrait of a century of college football nostalgia with an intriguing title, *Good Clean Violence*.

One would expect that there would be a thesis in the book built around the question of violence or brutality in college football. One looks in vain for a thesis or central theme. It is ironic that the shortest chapter in the book, "Critical Spirits," is the only one devoted to the critics of the intercollegiate game. In a chapter of less than three pages, criticisms from 1905 to the present are given with little interpretation. Writes Kaye: "That the game has survived in nearly all of the great academic centers, as well as those of more modest cerebral attainments, suggests that there may be something in football which is fundamental to the American campus mentality, or perhaps, more accurately, alumni mentality." (p. 142). He goes no further to enlighten the reader. In an attempt to discuss the 1905 football crisis which saw a number of colleges drop the game, Kaye states that: "Those schools which did choose to abandon the sport, however, generally based their action not on ethical but, rather, on economic grounds." (p. 141-142). This would support the contention that money, not the moral issue of brutality in sport, was the central focus of the 1905 controversy. If this were true (and it is not), it would further distract from his book title which suggests that football has been a violent game. The chapter is concluded with the strange proposition that "it could well be the case that the athletes who benefit most from football, except financially, are those on the third and fourth strings." (p. 143). Kay might well have tested this hypothesis by looking at third stringers (like Whittier College's Richard Nixon, for example) to see if they emerged, as Kay predicts, "from the whole process with probably a healthier self-awareness than does the star."

While there is no apparent central theme, Kaye devotes most of his narrative to personalities who have been successful. If one is interested in great coaches, great players, and great teams, this may be a valuable book. Among the numerous coaches discussed are Walter Camp, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Fielding H. Yost, "Pop" Warner, Percy Houghton, Red Blaik, Fritz Crisler, Bud Wilkinson, and Ara Parseghian. In addition, he does a creditable job of recapturing some of the playing glory of the likes of "Pudge" Heffelfinger, Willie Hoston, Jim Thorpe, Red Grange, Tom Harmon, Doak Walker, Howard "Hopalong" Cassady, and O.J. Simpson. This is combined with an examination of the successful teams over the

years, forming the dominant material for the volume.

A major criticism of *Good Clean Violence* is that Kaye has failed to probe the deeper questions regarding the development of intercollegiate football. The following questions, and many more, could have been pursued but were neglected. Why did football become the dominating college sport by the 1890's? How did it change from a student controlled to a faculty controlled game? When did college administrations first begin using football as a means to advertise their institutions? How did the recruiting of players and the hiring of professional coaches change the nature of the game? Why, if students began football for the fun of playing the game, did it become a sport which by 1900 was considered by many players more work than fun? How was the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association an outgrowth of problems related to brutality in football, and why did member colleges refuse to grant the NCAA the powers necessary to control certain evils connected with the game? What has been the role of the alumni in the development of football? Why have American intellectual institutions seemingly been dominated at times by the non-intellectual nature of football contests? What does a study of college football tell us about American society in the last 100 years? If a person hopes for answers to some of these questions he will be left with a void when the volume is read.

There are a number of factual errors in *Good Clean Violence* which are more irritating than significant. The proposed Michigan-Cornell game, which was vetoed by President White of Cornell on the grounds that he would "not permit thirty men to travel four hundred miles merely to agitate a bag of wind," was in 1873, not 1883 (p. 22). The "V" formation was developed by Princeton in 1884, not 1888 (p. 25). It is not true that players wore no padding in the 1890's, for they often wore shin guards, ear guards, and nose guards (p. 27). The four downs to make 10 yards was not legislated in the 1905-06 crisis, but rather was passed in 1912 and has remained unchanged since, (p. 54). President Teddy Roosevelt never threatened to "ban the game by Presidential edict" in 1905, in fact he criticized those who desired to ban football (p. 54). Many of Kaye's facts can not be easily checked for accuracy for there are no citations in the text. There is, however, a bibliography of 60 sources, mostly secondary, on which he has based his narrative.

*Good Clean Violence* can be added to the long list of football "histories" which have been written since the early part of the century. No new evidence has been presented by Kaye, though if one is interested in personalities and in wins and losses the volume can make interesting reading. Of the published histories on college football none is interpretative. That is a task which, hopefully, will soon be tackled.

Ronald A. Smith  
Penn State University