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***Paul Dojack and the Regina Dales 1929-1940:
The Formative Years of Junior Football
in Western Canada***

In 1929 Paul Dojack, then only twelve years old, could have become a member, perhaps even a leader, of a street gang engaging in petty thievery and other mischief. Instead, inspired by the owner of a local confectionery, he organized other boys from his neighbourhood—the tough east side of Regina—into two teams and began playing football. They lacked proper equipment and a prepared field, but with the diminutive Paul Dojack as quarterback and chief organizer they were soon playing regular games, and playing well. Within a year the Regina Dales were challenging local high school teams and within two had defeated all comers and could claim to be Provincial Juvenile Champions. By 1935 Dojack, forced by injury to retire from his position as leader on the

field. moved to an administrative and coaching role and helped guide his team, now of an age to play in the junior ranks, to the Junior Championship of Western Canada. And finally, still not content, in 1938 Dojack led his team on an improbable trip from Regina all the way to Montreal, to victory over the Montreal Westmounts, and acclaim as National Junior Champions. Only World War II could stop the Dales—Paul Dojack and so many others of his generation signed up—but their legacy lived on, in the post—war shape of the Regina Rams, the most successful junior football team in Canada.

Paul Dojack was certainly a central figure in this remarkable story, but exactly how much of what happened was dependent on him? This paper examines two periods, the original start up phase in 1929 and the decade of growth following, in an effort to answer this question. The sources include local and Canadian print media, an extensive collection of contemporary materials in the possession of Paul Dojack, and a series of interviews with Dojack himself. What emerges in the first part of this enquiry is an understanding that there was much in the background of the youthful Paul Dojack which made his involvement in the formation of the Dales Athletic Association understandable but, at the same time, that social conditions in Western Canada during the late 1920s were conducive to the formation of sport clubs for young people. It is, therefore, possible to say that he played an important role, but not to say that without him nothing would have been accomplished. During the period of consolidation and growth which followed. however. developments seem to have depended less on existing social conditions and more on the drive and abilities of the young Paul Dojack. During the difficult years of the 1930s his efforts were crucial at a number of points in bringing a group of young men from Regina to provincial, regional, and finally national prominence, and at each stage to victory. It is certainly not the case that Paul Dojack was unique; there have undoubtedly been other significant builders in the history of sport in Canada. However, what was achieved by the Regina Dales during the height of the Great Depression must stand at least in part as a monument to this extraordinary sport builder. And, by the same token, it must also stand as eloquent testimony to the importance of the efforts of individuals in the history of sport.