

Comment on Current Events in Sports

Gridiron Season's Aftermath.

In a whirl of blinding dust the football season of 1916 passes into the far reaches of gridiron history, and the thousands in whose lives it has played a part peer after it, sprawling and confused, with much the sensation of one whose Pullman car has suddenly left the track and taken to the woods. It is gone, but it will not soon be forgotten, for its trail is deeply blazoned on unaccustomed byways, and it scattered its sweets and its bitters with no regard whatever for the sanctity of precedent. Sweets fell into hands gaunt from long, hungry waiting, and bitters drenched palates used to nothing except confections.

The prophets, perhaps, fared worst of all from the vagaries of this Autumn's football. A winsome band, bright of eye and confident, they were in September. Now they are haggard and gray of face, and an approaching footfall sends them up an alley. They were gluttons for punishment, but too much was amply sufficient.

As for the experts, those who must diagnose and explain, reason and conclude, and from the still bubbling cauldron extract the spun gold of team and individual rankings, their plight is peculiarly sad. Out of midnight oil, mental perspiration, and abstruse mathematics they must compound logical conclusions from utterly illogical occurrences. They must rate the teams only to be berated themselves. To a most perplexing riddle they must evolve an answer which cannot be riddled.

There will be, doubtless, general approval of the practical unanimity with which writers and students of football place Glenn Warner's remarkable eleven on the apex of the Eastern pyramid. Even upon this point, however, those who find bliss in lining up always with an opposition party will not be devoid of material for argument. They will call attention to the poverty of Pittsburgh's schedule in so-called "big games," to the team's narrow escape in the Navy game, and to the scoring achievement of Carnegie Tech against Warner's machine. However, an eleven which has rolled up 81 points against Syracuse, Pennsylvania, and Penn State, while keeping the ground behind its goal line terra incognita for three such potent adversaries, can reasonably well afford to smile, remain silent, and point with pride.

As a result of the surprise package opened in Providence on Thanksgiving Day, Pittsburgh may regret the failure to arrange a game with Colgate. As things are, however, it would be eminently fitting for the Western Pennsylvania institution to rechristen its chief building "Colgate Hall" and to call its athletic arena "Bankart Field," thus recognizing the debt of gratitude imposed by the men from Hamilton when they clipped the almost flowering bud of Brown's championship vision from its stem to use for a boutonniere. Colgate's defeat or a tie game would have resulted in the bestowal upon the Providence eleven, by consensus of opinion, of the Eastern title. Even the beating of Robinson's men by a close score in a hotly contested game would hardly have dislodged them entirely from their comfortable seat on the band wagon. It took a sound walloping by Colgate, a display of overwhelming superiority, to send Brown's temple crashing and crumbling and erect a Pittsburgh shrine upon its site.

There will be a considerable amount of sympathy in some quarters for the contention of West Point that no eleven of the East deserves to be rated in advance of the cadets' gridiron machine. The service teams always and naturally have a popular appeal, and the Army's record, clear of defeats, calls for ungrudging admiration. It is hardly to be granted, nevertheless, that a team scored upon successively by Washington and Lee, Villanova, Notre Dame, Maine, Springfield, and Annapolis can be considered worthy of first place in the ranking for the season.

As for the "big teams" of recent years—Yale, Harvard, Princeton—they barely emerge from the also rans. Good elevens, even powerful elevens, they had, to be sure, but their sole claim to pre-eminence for 1916 rests upon the traditions which make multitudes eager to see them do battle with each other. It is believed by many close observers that the former and fallen member of their coterie, Pennsylvania, could have beaten any one of the trio at the season's close, for Folwell's incisive work resulted in the uprearing of a formidable machine.

New York's Great Golf Season.

The Lakewood Fall tournament has come and gone, and the golf season in the metropolitan district has drawn to a close. The Lakewood event was a fitting end to what has been the best competitive season that golf has ever known in and around New York. Not one of the three national championships was decided here, but in the invitation

tournaments that make up by far the major part of the annual competitive play, the 1916 fields were uniformly large and encouragingly well provided with fine players.

The Spring tournament at Lakewood and the Fall tournament at the same course among the pines are the start and finish of what is known as the Northern golf year. In the seven months that lie between these dates the New York golfers and their visiting friends were entertained at Ardsley, Garden City, Apawamis, Greenwich, Sleepy Hollow, Arcola, Englewood, Wykagyl, Baltusrol, and the other representative high-class links that dot the region known as the metropolitan district. The metropolitan open championship at Garden City and the metropolitan amateur championship at Nassau will stand as a mark to aim at for the coming season. Each succeeding year brings better golf, better golfers, and better golfing facilities. It is doubtful whether this country ever before witnessed such a succession of high-class golf matches as were seen in the single week of the Professional Golfers' Association championship at match play over the Siwanoy links. In spite of the defeat of the metropolitan team in the Lesley Cup contests, it is also doubtful whether this section will ever have better material for a team than was available this year.

Jerry Travers did not play on the Lesley Cup team, and neither did Phil Carter, but they are nevertheless metropolitan golf stars of the first magnitude. Walter J. Travis has withdrawn from tournaments, yet he is still a low handicap golfer, and as such may be claimed by this district. Even without the services of these three more or less magic wielders of the mashie and midiron, the metropolitan team was strong enough to vanquish its opponents for the custody of the Lesley Cup. The trophy was lost through careless work, and the players themselves know it only too well.

It is true that Philadelphia and Atlanta won the major honors in women's national golf this year, but golf as a pastime for the fair sex has made wonderful strides in New York in the season which has just closed. This is shown not so much in the fact that two of the four semi-finalists in the women's national championship were from New York as in the great series of inter-club and intersectional team matches that the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association carried through a long season to such a successful conclusion. This series has done more for the general improvement of women's golf in this district than any other movement in recent years.

As for the metropolitan professionals, they hold their own with the best in the country. Some of the brighter luminaries of former days, who upheld the dignity of New York and vicinity for many years, have begun to shine with a lessening ray, but where other districts point with pride to one outstanding star, metropolitan golf courses can boast of a dozen scarcely a stroke behind. In any case, the drift of the best professionals is always toward New York, and the outlook for greater glory in this respect is more than bright. In amateur and professional golf the metropolitan district has made steady progress through the 1916 season, but it looks forward to even better things in the year that is to come.

Taps for Eastern Racing.

The most successful racing season under the jurisdiction of the Jockey Club since 1910 ended with the last race on Thanksgiving Day at Bowie, with the prospects for the renewal of the sport in 1917 brighter than they ever have been since the turf was staggered by the hostile legislation that had its inception in New York State and swept with crushing force through most of the other racing centres. Maryland was the one State over which the Jockey Club held control that remained steadfast and true, while the leading tracks in New York were forced to close gates until public sentiment again established contests among thoroughbreds. It is only fitting, therefore, that the Maryland tracks should have a fair share of dates and should reap liberally of whatever harvest accrues from the revival of the sport, which was kept alive for years largely through the meetings held in the vicinity of Baltimore and Washington.

Reports from Havre de Grace, Laurel, Pimlico, and Bowie indicate that the season just closed has been a banner one for those tracks. The class of horses running has been superior to that of any other year, the gate receipts have been larger, and the profits from the pari-mutuel machines have reached stupendous figures. Assuming that speculation of some kind is necessary for the continuance of racing on a large scale, the proved popularity of betting machines is worthy of the consideration of legislators, who insist that if speculation must be indulged in, it should not be conducted in an underhand manner that

provides no actual evidence of wagers being made. In spite of the great amount of money that passed through the pari-mutuel machines during the Fall meetings in Maryland, there was not a breath of scandal occasioned by the speculation, and the State itself, as well as several worthy charities, benefited largely by the percentage from the money that the losers lost in any case, and the winners did not miss.

Turning from racing institutions to individuals, it is gratifying to note the success attained by the stable of Richard T. Wilson in the campaign just ended, and for the same reason that it is pleasing to note the profits gathered in Maryland. Mr. Wilson was a turfman who stood out in troubled days by the support he provided when racing was threatened with extinction. Instead of sending his thoroughbreds abroad and reducing his running expenses when purses were lessened, Mr. Wilson showed his confidence in the future of the turf by branching out and collecting a string of thoroughbreds, which he raced with greater enthusiasm than ever before in his career, wherever the law permitted. The season just closed finds him for the first time at the head of the list of winning owners, and what is more to the point—judged from a true sportsman's standard—that success has been obtained mainly by the efforts of a horse of his own breeding, the great two-year-old, Campfire, which stood head and shoulders over the other cracks of his age.

Another feature of last season, and one which augurs well for the future of the sport, was the number of new owners who entered the list and spent small fortunes in purchasing horses abroad calculated to enrich the blood of the horses of the United States. The most enthusiastic of the newcomers was A. K. MacComber, a wealthy Californian, who at the beginning of the season appeared to have lavished large sums with little prospect of gaining the honors he sought. Undismayed by initial failures, Mr. MacComber stuck to the task of acquiring a racing stable of merit, with the result that his colors were frequently carried to victory, and he now has in his stable five horses that rank with the best in training in Dodge, Ed Crump, Boots, Star Hawk, and Dick Williams—a formidable array with which to begin the 1917 campaign. Among the other owners, always staunch supporters of the turf, who stood well up in the winning list were August Belmont, James Butler, and John Sanford.

Amateurism and Tennis.

In attempting to solve the perplexing riddle of amateurism the United States National Lawn Tennis Association is treading a dangerous labyrinth where the false and the true converge so closely that only penetrating judgment and a discerning eye can guide it past disaster. The devious route has often been attempted in the course of the last few years, but few controlling bodies in the field of sport have been entirely satisfied that they emerged by the right exit. Now the tennis association is attempting to thread the maze, depending in part on the experience of those who have gone before, and trusting to the pilotage of its Executive Committee.

The line of demarcation between amateurism and professionalism a few years back was considered to be rather sharply drawn, with those who competed for the love of the game on the one side, and those who competed for money ranged on the opposite. But with wider participation the problem has become more confusing. The question of indirect gain has gradually risen until it now reaches towering heights and opinions of able men are found to be at wide variance regarding the wording and application of a rule which shall answer every purpose and yet preserve the future of the sport, clear and unblemished.

The ramifications which the question of amateurism is taking are indicated by this condition in tennis—the endeavor to bar a man from competition among amateurs, and yet sidestep the responsibility of calling him a professional. This is perilous ground; it tends to complicate the already intricate issues by creating a third body of men who are neither amateurs nor professionals, a nameless group.

This is a novel distinction; by many it is called unfair. The endeavor to enact it may wreck the association itself on the rocks of internal dissension. Most men believe in a clean-cut stroke. There can be little doubt that the Executive Committee's proposed law is an evasion of the issue. The Executive Committee will meet in this city on Friday. Already it has made its recommendations and pointed its course, but it is not yet too late to modify or amend so that an open break will not be a strong possibility when the proposals are submitted to the annual meeting of the association in February. If the committee adheres to its first pronouncement, it looks as if there were breakers ahead for tennis.