

## **IRON MEN ...**

By Vic Frolund

When Fielding H. "Hurry-Up" Yost counted noses upon arriving at Pasadena, Cal., with his University of Michigan squad for the first Rose Bowl Game, he found he had a party of 18. Fourteen of the group were players. A few days later, when the "point-a-minute" Wolverines had defeated Stanford, 49-0, Yost did not use a single substitute. The three players who saw no action were so ashamed that before the return trip to Ann Arbor, they donned their clean white uniforms and rolled in the mud and dirt in the hope that no one at home would know that they did not play.

Although Yost's Michigan team was among the first famous "Iron Man" football machines, it was common practice prior to and long after that 1902 contest for players to play the entire game or until flesh, blood, and nerves could take no more. Stanford sent in four subs, all they had, then called off the battle before the allotted time had expired. Stanford end, Joe Sefton, played with a broken collar bone and wore a harness made by a saddlemaker. He possible was the first player to wear such a contraption. Tackle Bill Trager also emerged with a shattered collar bone and guard W.K. Roosevelt played 15 minutes with a broken leg and a pair of broken ribs. Stanford found Willie Heston, Neil Snow and Dan McGugin -- still famous names in football -- and their teammates too rough and tough.

Football games were endurance contests back in those days, with no quarter asked and none given. No one thought of calling the Wolverines "Iron Men" in 1902. That the 11 men who started the game should finish it was not unusual. It attracted no particular attention and caused very little comment. Most teams of the first two decades of the 1900s could be classified as "Iron Men Teams."

One classic example was Gil Dobie and his University of Washington teams. Dobie coached the Huskies from 1908 to 1916 and never lost a game, permitting opponents only 110 points in 59 games. In three seasons only 12 letters were given out each year. The most awarded at any time during Dobie's regime was 17.

In 1926, Brown University, so far as research discloses, was the first to which the appellation "Iron Men" was applied. This team, coached by D.O. "Tuss" McLaughry who played for Westminster College in New Wilmington and played some Sunday pro ball with the Youngstown Patricians in 1915-16, defeated Yale and Dartmouth on successive Saturdays without a substitution. Two weeks later the 11 starters played the first 57 minutes in a victory over Harvard. Brown had a record of nine wins without a loss that season, but was held to a 10-10 tie by Colgate in a final contest that saw 11 Brown starters all go 60 minutes again.

These were "Iron Men" teams, durable and successful. Many games were played in which the 22 men who started were still out on the field busting heads when the final gun sounded.

Football players were men of steel before and after the turn of the century in more ways than one. They played without looking toward the sidelines for help and they completed often. They may not have had the finesse of the modern athlete who has several coaches, who has the benefit of spring practice, who practices in the afternoon and has skull sessions at night, who wears light comfortable equipment, who enjoys rubdowns from a trainer and treatment from the team doctor when he needs it, and who is scientifically fed at a training table. But the stalwarts of three score years ago yield nothing in the way of doggedness, persistence, ability and willingness to take punishment throughout game after game. This was football, but it could also be called endurance, a word Webster's defines as: the power to suffer without succumbing.

## **THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 2, No. 9 (1980)**

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How about this for endurance?

Andrew R.E. Wyant played in 98 college football games and never missed a minute of play. He was with Bucknell in 1888-89-90-91 as a tackle and guard and then switched to the University of Chicago for 1892-93-94 where he played center. There was no three-year or four-year rule in effect at that time, thus making it possible for Wyant to play seven years of college football. He was 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed 175 pounds in his prime. In 1930 he was a doctor in Chicago.