

# Comment on Current Events in Sports.

## FOOTBALL

Hard on the heels of the 1922 football season the members of the Western Conference met last Saturday to make their plans and schedules for 1923. While this meeting was a strictly Middle Western affair, at least two of its developments were of interest to the East. The first of these, and the one which immediately affects Eastern football, was what amounts to an agreement to discontinue games with the Big Three. This decision was based, no doubt, on the agreement which exists in the Big Three to play no home and home inter-sectional games.

In the face of the great interest which the Princeton-Chicago and Yale-Iowa games aroused and the increasing sentiment in favor of inter-sectional games this breaking off of relationship will be received with regret by football fans both East and West. However, it could hardly be expected that universities of the size and importance of Chicago and Iowa would consent to send their teams East without the assurance of a return game at home. No fault can be found with this. Neither can any fault be found with the evident desire of the Big Three to limit its football activities.

Because college football players are students and not entertainers the appetite of the public for these inter-sectional contests must be regulated by the best interests of the players themselves, and rightly so. That is just what has happened in the present situation between the Big Three and the Big Ten, and the losers are those who can best afford to lose—the fans.

The other development at Saturday's meeting which aroused interest here was the scheduling of a unique game between Illinois and Nebraska. The coaches of these two elevens, Zuppke and Dawson, have agreed to send each other a complete list of the plays to be used before the game. Trick plays will be barred. The idea, and on its face it is a good one, is to have a stiff game early in the season in which both teams can become thoroughly schooled in fundamentals. The emphasis will be placed on tackling, holding on to the ball, interference and the other A. B. C's of football, with the hope that both teams will come out of the contest materially strengthened. Probably more games were lost this last season by weakness along fundamental lines than from any other cause. The innovation of Zuppke and Dawson seems to merit careful consideration from football coaches everywhere.

## BASEBALL

With the opening of the next baseball season still more than four months distant, plans already are well under way for the inauguration of the new campaign. Only four of the sixteen major league teams are still undecided as to where their training quarters will be located next Spring. The Yankees have decided to give New Orleans another trial, while the Robins have selected Clearwater, Fla., as the scene of their preparatory sessions. The Giants' management has not as yet announced whether the world's champions will return to San Antonio, their Spring headquarters for the past few years, or whether they will pitch their camp in California. Both the Giants and the Yankees already have started to round up an array of young talent to be given a trial in the South and from present indications, the Southern activities of New York's two championship teams will be followed with as much interest as in the past. Followers of the Giants will eagerly scan the reports of the training camp performances of Jimmy O'Connell, the \$75,000 Coast sensation, and Jack Bentley, former star pitcher and batsman of the Baltimore Orioles, as these two players will don the New York uniform next year for the first time. The Yankees' adherents will be particularly interested in the work of Babe Ruth, who will make a big effort to regain some of his lost prestige.

The next news of interest to baseball fans may develop when the club owners of the two big leagues assemble next week in their annual meetings. It is not altogether improbable that some important trades may be put through at these conclaves, as several star players are anxious to change their club affiliations and the magnates may find some way of accommodating them. According to the present outlook, the American League conference promises to be by far the stormier of the two league sessions. Certain matters on which Ban Johnson and some of the club owners are not in accord will come up for decision, and some lively arguments may ensue. For instance, there is the matter of setting the date for the opening of the next season, which Johnson has announced as Tuesday, April 17. It is known that Harry Frazee, owner of the Boston Red Sox, intends to object strenuously to this date on the ground that, as his club is scheduled to open the campaign in the Yankees' new stadium, the four-game series would end on Friday and thus deprive him of the fat Saturday plum. Johnson's announcement that the American League meeting would be held in Chicago on Dec. 13 thus preventing the magnates from attending the joint major league conference which is scheduled to be held in this city on the following day, has amazed the club owners, who profess to see in it another slap on the part of the American League head at Com-

missioner Landis. It will be interesting to learn what steps Landis will take to offset this apparent frustration of his plans by Johnson. That Johnson is entirely within his legal rights in naming Chicago as the scene of the conclave is admitted, but his move may cause a showdown between him and Landis.

## TURF

Judging by the auspicious manner in which Winter racing has been inaugurated at New Orleans, Havana and Tijuana, the sport will enjoy a prosperous season. Some years ago, Winter was regarded as an off-season by turf devotees, but in recent years the activity has increased until racing has now become an all-year around sport. Stakes have been increased at the Winter tracks to such an extent that each season has found a better class of horses competing, and this season there is every reason to believe that some extremely interesting racing will be produced.

The openings at all three of the tracks were impressive. Better horses have been seen under colors and the attendances have been larger than in other years. Many sportsmen who formerly rested during the Winter are now almost as active as during the campaigns on Eastern tracks, in Maryland and in Kentucky. Kentucky owners are playing a prominent rôle in the racing at New Orleans and Havana and thus far they have been successful to a marked degree. Easterners, too, have gone in for Winter racing on a larger scale than ever before.

With the advent of the Winter racing season came the announcement that Morvich, which as a two-year-old in 1921 was one of the greatest colts in the history of the turf, has been retired to the stud. According to Benjamin Block, who owns the son of Runnymede-Hymir, Morvich will be limited to fifteen mares and will be put in training again about May 1 next year. Morvich has been sent to Hyland's, the farm of Miss Elizabeth Daingerfield, near Lexington, Ky. A coincidence is the fact that Man o' War also is quartered there.

If it should later be decided not to bring Morvich back to racing, he will retire with one of the greatest records ever made by a two-year-old. It is true that as a three-year-old he was a big disappointment. He started five times this year, winning the Kentucky Derby and then losing four straight races. As a two-year-old, the colt captured eleven straight races, winning \$115,234, a mark which has been surpassed only by Colin and Domino. This year he won \$50,875, making his total earnings \$165,909. If Morvich never accomplishes anything more, he has earned a niche high up in turf's Hall of Fame. Should he be brought back his work will be watched with close interest. Purchase was retired to the stud and then brought back to race in 1921 by Sam Hildreth. He won two races, but his showing was so unimpressive that he has not been seen under colors since.

## BILLIARDS

Ralph Greenleaf has added another trophy to his collection. Last week the \$1,000 diamond medal emblematic of the professional pocket billiard championship became his personal property. This was accomplished without a struggle, when the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company, donor of the prize, declared that Arthur Church had forfeited his right to play for the title when he declined to compete the first night because of a misunderstanding regarding the balls.

Greenleaf, afterward stated that he would rather have played the match than gain permanent possession of the coveted trophy by forfeit, and every one who is familiar with the circumstances realizes that Greenleaf did not attempt to dodge the issue in any way. He was willing to play with the set of balls that had been used in the New York State professional championship tournament—a set which was entirely strange to him, but which Church had previously played with. Church, however, declined, stating that he wanted a new set of balls, although there is nothing in the rules governing championship competition which demands that a new set be used. The rules simply state that the balls used in championship contests must be made of ivory and that they must be of a certain size, and true.

Greenleaf won the title a year ago at Philadelphia when he finished first in the tournament for the third time in succession. The rules had been changed to provide for challenge matches, and it was specified that a player would have to defend the medal for one year in order to gain permanent possession. The match with Church was the last in which Greenleaf would have had to be successful. He had previously beaten Arthur Woods, Tom Hueston and Benjie Allen. Therefore, when Church forfeited, Greenleaf automatically gained the trophy for his own.

Greenleaf has earned a position in pocket billiards similar to that occupied by Willie Hoppe in balkline billiards for the long stretch of years prior to Hoppe's defeat by Schaefer. Greenleaf is without peer. As a shot maker none of the champions of the past has been his superior and few of them have excelled him at safety play. A quiet, retiring young man who just recently turned his twenty-second birthday, Greenleaf is a credit to the game, and has done much to help lift pocket billiards to its present popularity.

## WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

The organization of the National Women's Track Athletic Association last Saturday at Mamaroneck, N. Y., calls attention to the great gains which women's athletics have made recently in the United States. Before the war women were scarcely more active in athletics than they were at the polls, but a marked change has taken place since that time. It is a change in attitude as well as fact and has been noticeable in many places and ways. The war brought a realization to this country that athletics are necessary to the physical well-being of the nation and it was evident that the women as well as the men of America must be strong physically if the future of the country was to be assured. All sorts of governmental and other organizations realized this fact and movements were begun to bring about the desired ends.

As a result of this activity the Amateur Athletic Union has, within the last fortnight, signified its intention of supervising and controlling women's athletics just as for years it has looked after athletics for men. This puts women athletes on an equal footing with their brothers so far as America is concerned. Europe also has been making great strides along these lines and it is wholly possible that events for women will be added to the Olympic program in 1924. In case such an arrangement is not made, however, a special set of games similar to those held in Paris last August will be held just after or just before the Olympic proper.

Despite the fact that heretofore America has been limited to schools and colleges in the selection of its women athletes, American girls captured twenty-one of the forty-nine world's records for women recently recognized by the International Sports Federation. Surely America can be proud of this record and can harbor great hopes for the future when it is realized that from now on the same rules will apply to women as to men and that records made by girls' clubs and non-scholastic organizations will have the same standing as those of the schools and colleges.

## RACQUETS

Although Jock Soutar, world's professional racquet champion, now trails the English champion and challenger for the title, Charles Williams, by four games to three, as a result of their meeting in Philadelphia, the American's chances of retaining his honors are by no means seriously clouded. Soutar has been the favorite, but it was expected all along that Williams would offer the stoutest of opposition. It was stated here a week ago that Soutar was under a handicap because of the poor quality of gut which he is forced to use in his racquets, but it was not thought then that the condition was as serious as it turned out to be. In advance, it did not seem possible that the strings in his bats, inferior though they might be, would prove a determining factor. Yet it is related that "poor gut strings virtually caused Soutar's downfall."

So many bats did Soutar use in the course of the match that the onlookers differed materially in the count. One observer said that he smashed the strings of thirty-four bats and the frames of four others and another said that he was obliged to use "at least forty or fifty racquets," while Williams, with the superior English gut, had to change only half a dozen times. It is further related that, in many cases, the strings of Soutar's bats were smashed on shots that would have given him certain aces, while, on one occasion, the chance to turn the tide of a game was lost when the whole racquet head flew off as the ball was struck. Again, "in one game alone, he lost no less than six strokes due to this cause."

The statistics of the meeting, with Williams winning 4 games to 3 and 94 points to 87, show that the men were so evenly matched that this difference in racquet strings may well have been the deciding element. It was nobody's fault; merely Soutar's misfortune in that the quality of American gut is so far inferior to the English article. It is to be hoped that some means of remedying the condition may be found before the two meet here next Saturday, at the Racquet and Tennis Club, in the second half of their match. Soutar, with a good racquet in his hand, still has an excellent chance to win. The playing of both, in Saturday's match, was accounted the finest exhibition of racquets possible. Williams is the only man in the world with a chance to beat the champion, and Soutar is the only man who could beat Williams.

There is a wonderful treat in store for local followers of this most difficult sport next Saturday when the championship will be decided. Soutar must win five of the seven games here to hold his title or, if he wins four with the result that the games are even at 7-all, his point total must transcend that of the Englishman. It is a heavy assignment, but Soutar, especially if he can get hold of some strong bats, is quite capable of carrying it through. In this connection, it is to be recalled that when the two met in 1913 for the title, Soutar overcame a 4-2 lead to win in the end by 6 to 4.