

Notre Dame Eleven Is Named As Champions Of Country

Lawrence Perry, Noted Expert on College Athletics, Ranks Iowa Second and Centre Fourth, Behind Penn State and Preceding LaFayette and Cornell.

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Noted Authority On College Sports.
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Football in 1921 saw its greatest season. There have been seasons in which leading elevens were separated by narrower margins than has been the case this year but the handful of 1921 outfits, which may be named as outstanding, compare favorably with the best elevens of past years, while, in point of absorbing public interest and attendance at games in all sections of the country, the present Autumn stands incomparable.

In ranking the various teams of the country, the task this year has been to some degree simplified by the numerous inter-sectional games that have been played; this phase of the schedules of many of the teams, which annually play important roles in a grid-iron season, has been wholly commendable, marking as it has the flowering of a trend which has been in evidence for some years. The casual follower of football, or one whose prejudices are his guide, will, without too much thought, permit comparative access to stand as the sole basis of reckoning when it comes to a question of relative form. And, while it is indeed difficult and often dangerous to oppose more or less expert theory against established facts, yet, taking the game of football by and large, the critic who is willing to accept scores as his chief basis of comparison is more likely than not sacrificing the interests of accuracy for the principles of safety.

We may for example select the eight important unbeaten teams of the country and place them in a superior class, but the classification would be unfair if only because of discrepancy in the calibre of opponents encountered. The big student elevens that went through the season without defeat are: Cornell, Centre, Lafayette, California, Detroit, Pennsylvania State, Iowa and Washington and Jefferson. But Cornell's opponents were all of second or third rate with the exception of Dartmouth, whose form this season was well below the Hanover standard. Centre must stand high because of victory over Harvard in the one game she played against a team of superior grade. Detroit met no opponents of class. Penn State was tied by Harvard and Pittsburgh, outplaying the Crimson, however, and being slightly outplayed by the Panthers. Iowa must stand high because she defeated Notre Dame and Illinois. Had her schedule been as stiff as that of Ohio State, Chicago, Michigan and other Conference schools she might or might not have her clean record. None the less the Hawkeyes were a splendid team, whose success was due as much, if not more, to her star players than to team efficiency.

In fact, having seen Notre Dame play twice, the writer is inclined to discount the defeat of the South Bend team by the margin of a field goal in her third game of the season, October 8—Iowa being the victor—and to rate

her as the leading team of the country in general excellence. This means team proficiency, individual merit and versatility. There was nothing Notre Dame could not do and did not do. Her short forward passing game was deadly; her long overhead game equally so, while her running attack, including the opening of holes, the celerity of backs in taking them and interference, was on a par with that of Cornell, to say which is to leave nothing more to be said. Her showing in three games within ten days—against Indiana, the Army and Rutgers—was nothing short of marvellous and the fact that the week before the Indiana game Rockne's men beat the powerful Nebraska eleven, Missouri Valley champions and conquerors of Pittsburgh, should also be taken into consideration.

Our ranking, therefore, is as follows:

1. Notre Dame.
2. Iowa.
3. Pennsylvania State.
4. Centre.
5. Lafayette.
6. Cornell.

Cornell might have displayed her crushing power against more exalted opponents, but, since she did not meet them, there is no way of knowing whether or not her rushing attack could alone have prevailed against a strong and discerning defense. This is to say that Cornell's overhead game has not been impressive. Pennsylvania State did not win two of her most important games those against Harvard and Pittsburgh. She would thus get even lower ranking than above had she not defeated Georgia Tech and the Navy. Her defense all season was far inferior to her attack.

Of other teams, the writer saw no eleven in the East or from the South that impressed him as Chicago did. But Ohio State was regarded by competent observers as slightly better than the Maroon. State's victory over Stagg's men bears out this opinion, which, however, was not formed on the basis of that game. Rating teams by sections, the following works out:

- EAST.
- Pennsylvania State.
- ALL-WEST.
- Notre Dame.
- WESTERN CONFERENCE.
- Iowa.
- SOUTH.
- Centre.
- WEST COAST.
- California.

The season's play showed a very gratifying tendency on the part of coaches to seek devices through which opposing lines might be penetrated successfully. This has led, especially in the West, to the adoption of various devices in the way of line and back-field shifts. No doubt this shift question will come up before the Rules Committee, but it would be a calamity were they outlawed, or even modified in material manner.

In forward passing, the Rules Committee will be asked to apply some measure whereby a screen forward pass shall be operated only upon the basis of strict observance of the rule

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that eligible men shall not be taken out after the ball is thrown. Notre Dame showed that the forward pass may be thrown with a large percentage of chances in favor of successful receipt. With further demonstration next season, some legislation may be forthcoming seeking to cripple the pass. If so we shall probably see Western teams withdrawing from affiliation with the present body of rules makers. The same will be noted, probably, if the shifts are frowned upon. This, of course, would be grievous, since, through the present system of inter-sectional games, the whole country is drawing closer together in a football sense, with consequent better understanding and common respect.

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