

Season Hinges On Injuries, 'Breaks'

Football Practice: Key Word Is No Longer 'Baby'

Players Are Physically Sanforized

It is still early, so everything looks good. Everything always does look good early in the season: the team is fresh and unbeaten, muscles are summer job-limber, nobody has classroom pallor or girl troubles. There is nothing to be depressed about, and the whole UNC football team is determined not to do anything during the next twelve weeks to make anybody depressed.

Kenan Stadium cannot be used for scrimmages this fall because of the construction crews building the new tiers of seats. The team is practicing on one of the intramural fields, scrimmaging there too. This is not quite as happy an arrangement for the scrimmage-watchers, that small band of die-hards who keep as keen an eye on the football players as some other men keep on their stocks and bonds. Because of the danger to children of stray punts and runaway players, and the possible distracting influence of pretty girls at close range, Coach Jim Hickey has given strict orders that nobody gets out on the field unless directly connected with the team. Watchers sit on low bleachers around the edge of the field. For a hot-blooded football fan, watching a scrimmage at ground level from the edge of an intramural field must be like watching the Folies Bergeres from the top of the Eiffel Tower. On the other hand, says UNC Sports publicist Bob Quincy, "show me a football player who won't stop and look at a pretty girl, and I'll show you a man on the third team." There is a blue-shirted manager who criss-crosses the practice area steadily bird-dogging errant watchers.

At one end of the huge practice area, Coach George Barclay bellows his chant to his freshman players: "No pussyfootin' now, you can't pussyfoot on a football field, get in there and fight for the ball, fight for it, get rough, no pussyfootin'." Coach Barclay's voice sounds like a Force Ten gale coming up out of the southwest. When asked during a rest break how his voice was holding up, the Coach said it was fine, that he had stopped smok-

ing. "Chew instead," he said, and decimated half an orange in three bites.

When asked how his players were holding up, Coach Barclay said this year's backfield was the best ever, and that he was in particular awe of one young gentleman who, he said, could catch anything, "even on the top of his head if he wants to."

There are familiar names among Coach Barclay's assistants: former varsity players Cave, Mueller, and Farris, all now doing graduate work at the University after having been out working for a few years.

At the other end of the field, the Varsity players were working in three groups, each group practicing something different. On one side there was some beautiful kicking being done, long, booming punts spiralling cleanly as though fired from a cannon — Junior Edge's work.

Coach Joe Mark, working with linemen, scolded with curious gentility. "Gracious sakes alive," he said, and an erring player shook his head with chagrin.

"I once knew an old baseball manager," said Mr. Quincy, watching from the sidelines. "He never used profanity. When a player did something wrong and he got mad, he'd go up and give every sign of using every dirty word in the book, but all he ever said was, 'You dirty rotten dirty, you dirty rotten dirty.' I guess it's the thought that counts. If you were a dirty rotten dirty, you'd had it."

From his physiological point of view, trainer John Lacey, who spends the season bracing bones, staunching blood, mollifying muscles, and soothing outraged tendons, was somewhat happier about this year's team than last year's.

Facts:

Most of this year's team went through the 1962 season, leaving them more or less pre-bruised, like Sanforized shirts.

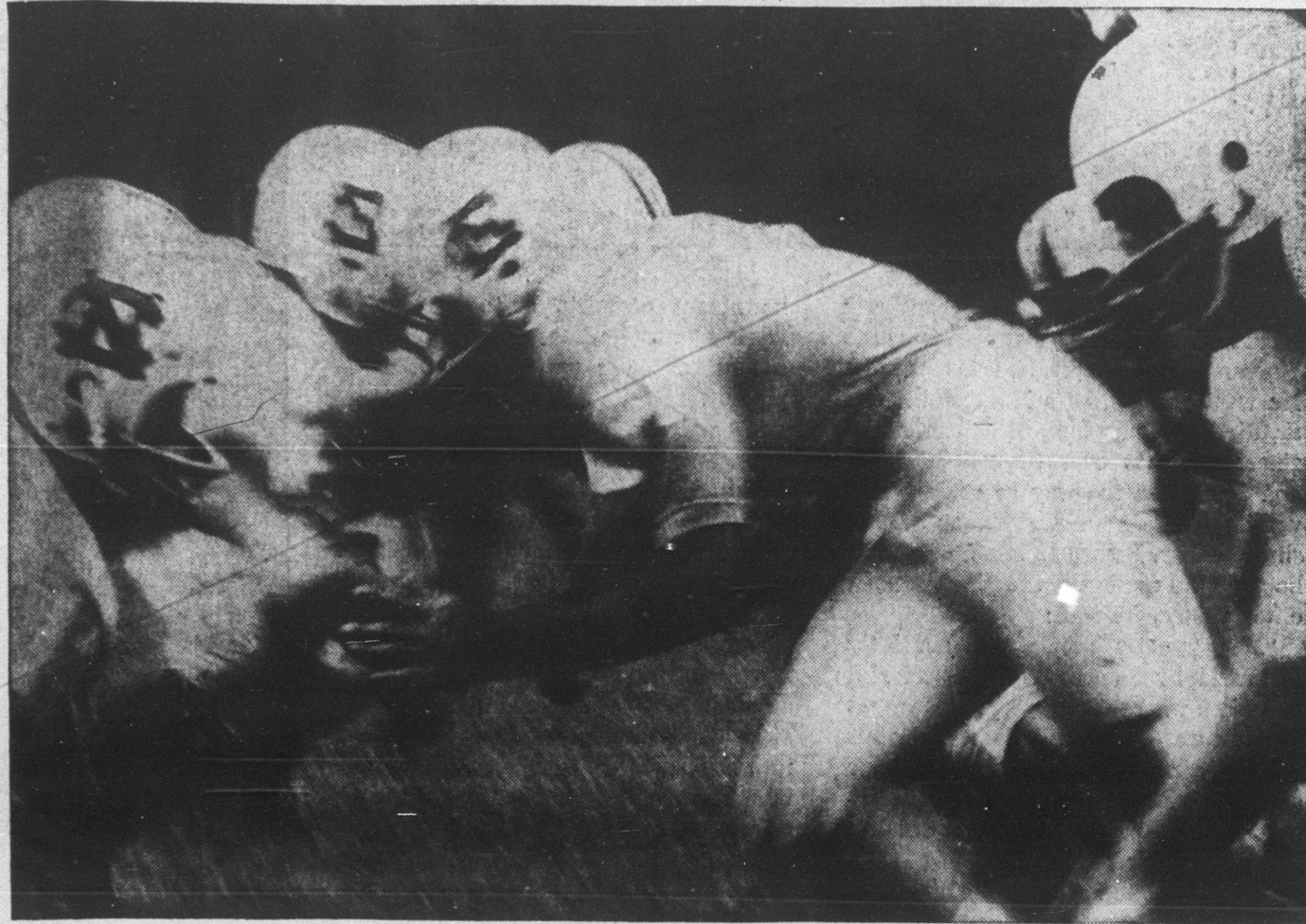
This year's team knew definitely that it would have to be able to run the mile in six minutes or less. Only four of 86 players ran slower than six minutes on the first try. One man got his time down to 5:09. The players were due a week ago Friday, but some came the preceding Wednesday and tested themselves on the UNC track.

Contact practice started earlier this year.

There have been fewer injuries so far this year than last.

Last year there was a good deal of sideline chatter among the players during practice. The key word was "baby," pronounced "behbeh" ("Whussay, behbeh, whussay"). This year baby seems to be not quite as much in evidence. Doubtless, there is the same chatter. Huddles still break with a sharp clap of hands. The same encouragements are rattled off. But you don't get the old feeling of constantly chanted commentary. You know the spirit must be there, but you don't hear it. It gives the practices a different atmosphere.

The atmosphere is hard to assess. Mr. Quincy is very circumspect in expressing his opinion. "I think Coach Hickey feels he can have a very good team," he said after a long pause for thought during which he watched warm bodies clad in blue and white pounding back and forth like well-oiled machines. "Depending on two things: injuries, and the common breaks — like when a man is running in the clear and falls down for no



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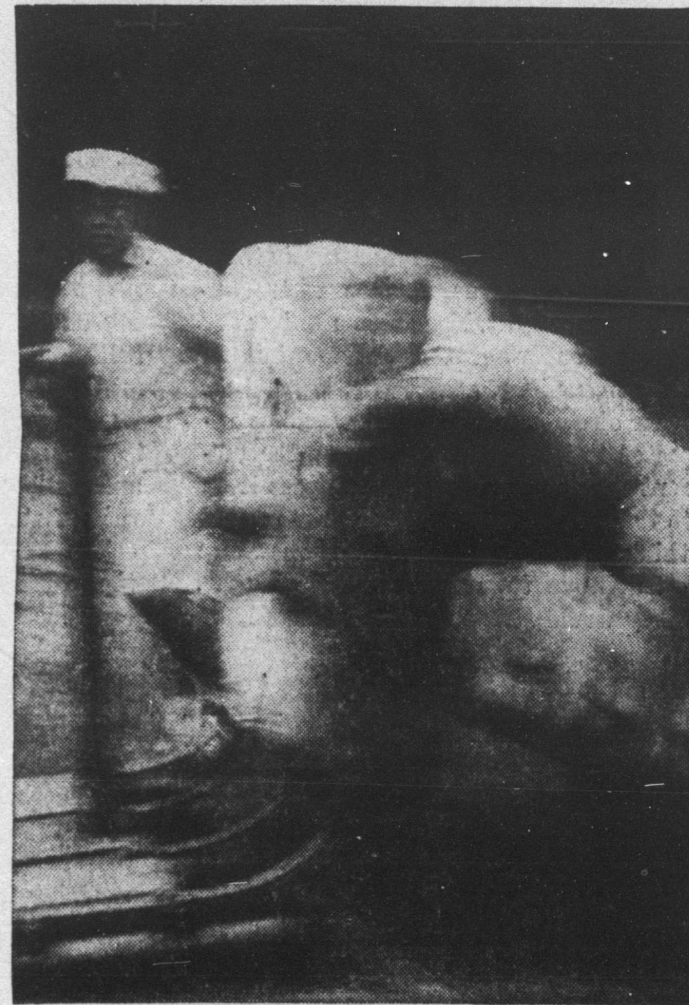
reason."

Mr. Quincy said that one day last week he had come down to practice and as he came through the gap in the hedge between the track and the practice field, he found two guinea pigs, a brown one and a white one. He picked them up. The brown guinea pig subsequently departed, but he took the white one home. He had no idea where they came from. Someone suggested that they might have escaped from Memorial Hospital's pen of laboratory animals. Had he considered the possibility of having carried a rare virus into his home via guinea pig?

"That's all I need, a virus and a losing season," said Mr. Quincy. He considers the guinea pig a sort of good luck omen, although as an amulet a guinea pig does not lend itself to being worn around the neck.

So the atmosphere seems to go something like this: everybody is in good shape, everybody is loaded with determination, the team has the advantage of a great deal more experience, but nobody is crowing, at least not as audibly as before. There is less of the close-knit family atmosphere and the practices give a feeling of less jollity and more grit.

Every twenty minutes or so the bird-dog manager whangs with a hammer on a hunk of metal nailed to a telephone pole (one bystander said the whang made him think of chow), and the groups of practicing players all play musical coaches, shifting from practice area to practice area. As they lope in clumps across the soft green field, their pads squeaking gently and their faces barely visible behind cow-catcher face guards, they remind you of Swiss watches: toughly but delicately put together, precision movement, shock- and water-proof, and highly effective. This year they may very well be self-winding, too; but that will probably depend on how much they are shaken in the next few weeks, as the green trees turn to gold above them and the deep, wall-to-wall pile of the turf gradually turns beige and barren under the straining, cleated feet.



Work On Fundamentals

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Joe Mark, Gentlest Scolder Of All



From The Top Of The Eiffel Tower



Five Minute Break For Oranges