Field Day Emerged Out Of Violence Of Earlier Soph-Frosh Rivalries

Field Day is now fifty years old. An annual, traditional event at the Institute, it is much the same now as it was in 1910, when the first Field Day was held.

The advent of Field Day, a celebration of quite a different sort compared to underclassmen in the fall. The rivalry between the freshmen and the Sophomores then found an outlet in the annual Class Rush, which was sometimes literally a fight to the death. The freshmen were given possession of the cane. They then tied it to the back of a Sophomore, who usually employed a flying wedge. The fight was supposed to end at a pistol shot fifteen minutes after it had started. The shot usually served only to increase the tempo of the battle, however. When the scrummage finally ended, the number of Sophomores having a band on the cane was compared to the number of freshmen, and the class having the highest number won. The tradition, "The Purple Shaft" commemorates this event.

The first freshmen class to win over the Sophomores was in 1901. At the pistol shot on that day, the cane was compared to the number of Sophomores having a band on the cane. By his side was Chadwick Moore, ’04, found an outlet in the annual Cane Day merged out of the less barbarous Field Day. Before the advent of Field Day, the rivalry between the freshmen and the Sophomores was shown by the annual Cane Day, which was later changed to the present Class Rush, as a fight to the death. The freshmen were given possession of the cane. They then tied it to the back of a Sophomore, who usually employed a flying wedge. The fight was supposed to end at a pistol shot fifteen minutes after it had started. The shot usually served only to increase the tempo of the battle, however. When the scrummage finally ended, the number of Sophomores having a band on the cane was compared to the number of freshmen, and the class having the highest number won. The tradition, "The Purple Shaft" commemorates this event.

Faced Results

An officer might imagine these in nearest pastimes often had disastrous results. In fact, the innovation of Field Day in its present form came about at the spontaneous and unconscious demand of the student body after a fatal Cane Rush of 1910. At the pistol shot on that day, the fight, as usual, took on an even more determined aspect, rather than shutting. When the fracas was finally ended, the members of the rival classes were implied. To quote from "The Tech," November 5, 1910, "The unconscious body of Hugh Chadwick Moore, ’04, was found wrapped about the cane and although he was removed immediately, all efforts to revive him were unavailing. His body was that year, but since then, the existence of the Sophomores has been the determining factor, and the truth has been imitated by all the eleven competitions since. The first freshmen class to win over experienced opposition was the class of 1912.

Events held in 1916 included football, relay race, and tug of war. Since then the crew race and the swimming meet have been added, and in 1927, the "dike fight" was adopted. Originally the tug of war consisted of only one trial, but this was later changed to the present two out of three trials, on the complaints received from the losing teams.

Field Day has never been confined merely to the sport's field. (Continued on Page 4)