51st Field Day Holds To Tradition

For these freshmen and sophomores who will not enter the glue fight tomorrow on Field Day, THE TECH prints a history of the evolution of the Cane Rush to what we knew today as Field Day. When, after reading this, you dare to say that the Cane Fight is too old-fashioned, you had better remember that the first Field Day was held in 1901. Previously underclassmen found an outlet to their rivalry in the annual Cane Rush which was sometimes literally a fight to the death. The freshmen were given possession of the cane and attempted to defend their ownership from the sophomores who contested it. The fight was supposed to end with a pistol shot, fired fifteen minutes after the contest began, but it usually served only to increase the battle tempo. When scrimmage was finally halted, the number of men from each class having a hand on the cane was compared, and the class having the highest number won. The tradition of the Purple Shaft commemorates this event.

Cane Rush Fatal

In 1901 the Cane Rush had fatal results. At the pistol shot on that day the fight appeared even more determined. When the numbers of the rival classes were compared, and to quote The Tech, Nov. 5, 1915, "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. By his side was Harald W. Shertell '06, who was carried from the field suffering from a hemorrhage of both eyes and enlargement of the heart, and who never recovered." The innovation of Field Day in its present form came about at the spontaneous and unanimous demand of the student body.

Events held on the First Field Day included football, a relay race, and a tug of war. The glue fight was adopted in 1927. Since then the crew race and the swimming meet have been added.

Tug Night Abolished

The night before Field Day is traditionally one of open rivalry between the freshmen and sophomores. Until 1939 this night was known as Tug Night, a night when the student body met to stage merry, usually at a local theatre production. A gang fight was a customary part of the proceedings and festivities usually ended with a parade through the streets of Bomont or Cambridge. It was brought to an end when complaints were raised over the loud campus TECH Night caused. In its present form Field Day, possibly as competitive as it ever has been.

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