

# Wrestling Coach Never Played Game; Yet Turns Out Champions

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ITHACA, March 7. (AP)—This is a story about a man who never did the job himself, but for more than 25 years has been telling others just how to do it—and turning out experts.

He is Walter O'Connell, Cornell University's wrestling coach, who has never wrestled a match in his life, either professional or amateur. He is a coach who has never played the game. The explanation is simple but puzzling. He never performed the gyroscopic contortions, the windmills, hammer-locks, and half-nelsons in contest because he was a coach long before he knew enough about wrestling to risk his neck on the mat.

To look at Walt's Atlas-like frame, the massive shoulders, and see him towering over his proteges, one has difficulty in picturing the spindling youngster of 127 pounds, tortured by the consciousness of physical inferiority, the easy victim of any 135 pounder who did not like his looks, as he describes himself at the time he began coaching.

Here is the story within the story:

In 1907 O'Connell was working in a railroad office in New Haven. His doctor had informed him that he would be lucky to live more than a year. But O'Connell had a brother, Ed, who was tough and sturdy as he himself was feeble and timid; the brother spent most of his time coaching wrestling teams at Yale. The brother, in fact, was one of the best teachers of wrestling in the country.

In three years he had tutored three championship Blue teams, and his methods had so impressed the athletic authorities at Cornell that they had hired him to coach their team. That left the desirable post at New Haven vacant.

The older O'Connell went to his ailing brother and suggested that he take over the position of coach of the Yale team. Aside from the fact that the veriest beginner on the freshman team knew more about wrestling than did Walter, and that the merest bantam on the team could have trounced him with one hand, as he explained, he was eminently fitted to direct the team.

But the older brother had a compelling argument. To continue to work in the stuffy smoky railroad office was suicidal for one who had been given a year to live. Only an athletic job, a kind of life that would rebuild his health would do, the brother argued.

"But," protested Walter, "those fellows will kill me."

"Well," said brother Ed, "that's

a better way to die than the way you seem to prefer," and that clinched it. Walter learned enough from his brother in the course of one summer to take a wild stab at the job the following year.

When Ed O'Connell left, he also left a few maxims of wrestling pedagogy in the mind of Walt. "Let them wrestle—you coach. No matter how well they carry out your instructions—change them."

Walter went to the Yale gymnasium for the first day's practice. He walked up and down awhile, trying to screw up his courage, then went in. The team that emerged that year had little difficulty in winning the intercollegiate championship. Cornell, impressed by the showing made by the younger O'Connell's team, offered him a job in 1908 when brother Ed announced his intention of going west. Walt did more than coach at Yale. He gained eight pounds. He kept on gaining at Cornell.

In his 25 years at the university his teams have participated in 24 intercollegiate championships, and they have won eleven, been runners-up to the champions nine times, third twice, and fourth once, and seventh once. In dual matches, Columbia and Syracuse have never beaten Cornell, and Pennsylvania has been victorious only once in the long line of encounters.

O'Connell has produced 51 intercollegiate champions, four of whom became Olympic contenders, and two of whom have worn Olympic crowns.

## BRITISH TENNIS STARS TO MEET AMERICANS TODAY

NEW YORK, March 7. (AP)—Tennis stars of England and the United States clashed in a six-match international series at the Heights casino today.

Frank Shields, Sidney Wood, Gregory Mangin and Manuel Alonso represented the United States while England's banner was carried by K. C. Gandard-Dower, E. R. Avory, R. K. Tinkler and H. G. N. Cooper.

The pairings:

Singles—Shields vs. Gandard-Dower; Woods vs. Tinkler; Mangin vs. Cooper; Alonso vs. Avory.

Doubles—Shields and Alonso vs. Gandard-Dower and Cooper; Mangin and Wood vs. Avory and Tinkler.