

Coached by the Sun

By Grantland Rice

What's the meaning of the Western march to victory? Climate's at the bottom of it, says Mr. Rice. You can't become an expert between showers

FOR some years along the Eastern frontier there has been what you might call considerable kidding back and forth about the climate of the Pacific Coast, especially the California climate.

But toward the close of 1928 this climate spoofing suddenly ceased in athletic circles. It was supplanted by something closely approaching a dazed look as the East began to take stock of several incidents. First of all, the Stanford track and field team came to the Eastern intercollegiate meet at Cambridge and ran away with the show, matched against the pick of 15 or 20 leading Eastern universities.

A trifle later on the California crew swung into action and cleaned up from Poughkeepsie through the Olympic finals. This California crew had to beat the best in the East to win its journey across the Atlantic. And it did precisely that.

A few weeks later Miss Helen Wills of California reported again at the women's tennis championship meet, and the hardest competition she ran across came from another Californian, Helen Jacobs.

Eastward Ho!

The Western march was monotonous—but it was not yet over. For as the football season came tearing down the home stretch Oregon State and Stanford traveled 3,000 miles to beat, respectively, New York University and the Army decisively while the University of Southern California was crushing Notre Dame on the other coast.

So the Far West opened its 1929 season

with more Eastern scalps than it had ever gathered before. They were all over Western wigwams. And if the East wants to know part of the answer it is simple enough. It is climate.

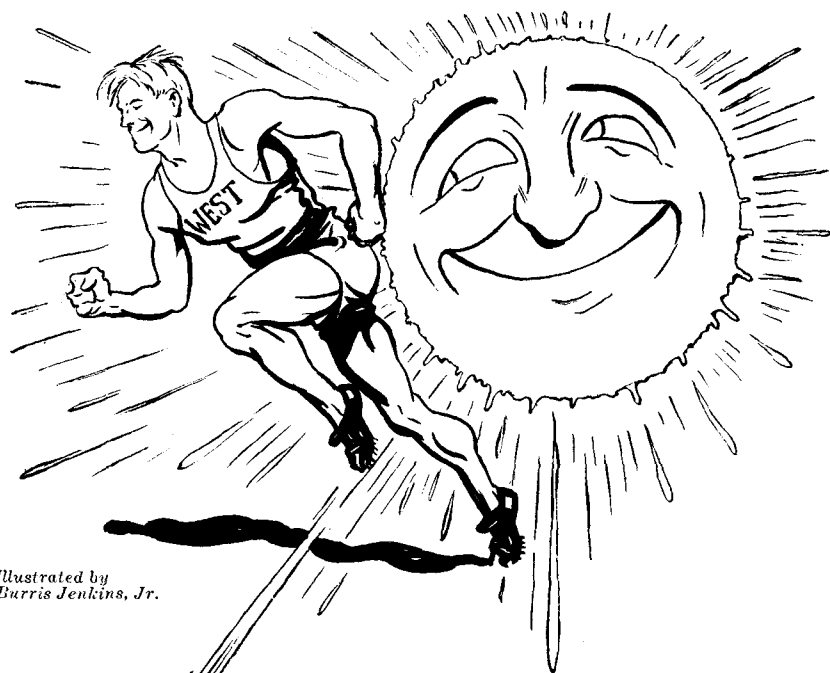
I asked Pop Warner what he thought about it. Pop has coached football at Cornell, Carlisle and Pittsburgh. He has been at Stanford for several years. "So far as the athletic world is concerned," he said in discussing the entire matter, "that California climate makes a big difference. The East is more conservative than the Far West in football and to a certain extent it has to be. When I was at Pittsburgh there were a lot of plays I wanted to try, but many of them were plays you couldn't put through with a wet ball on a muddy field. I had worked for weeks developing an offense and then when the big November games came along there wasn't much one could do except kick. I had to discard about two

thirds of my attack to keep the bunch from fumbling the game away.

"It has been different at Stanford. I know in September just what plays I can use in November, because I know that when the November games come on we will have a dry, fast field and a dry football and a warm sun, and the hands will not be half frozen."

"Doesn't climate also make a big difference," I asked, "in the matter of spring practice and learning how to handle the ball?"

"All the difference in the world," he said. "Most Eastern teams along the northern zone won't get any decent football weather until April. You can't do much outdoors in rain and snow and cold winds over muddy, slippery playing fields. But at Stanford I'll have from 80 to 100 football players out from January to late May. My spring squad will average about 100. My aver-



Illustrated by
Burris Jenkins, Jr.

age practice will have from 70 to 80. They learn how to pass and kick and handle the ball, how to block and tackle and the rest of it. All this is going on under a warm sun while the northern part of the East is under a blanket of

snow or a sweep of winter rain.

"This modern game of football has become a lot more intricate than the old game ever was. It means a lot now to know how to handle a football—how to throw one and how to catch one. It has taken over the science of baseball. It takes hard work, practice and schooling to learn how to throw a football and how to catch one in the right way. The fall season lasts only a little over two months. Match three or four months of spring training, outdoors, against the fall season and you get part of the answer."

All of which is true. There are nine college months. In the East, September, October, November, April and May are outdoor months. Four of the nine months—over 40 per cent—are lost for any outdoor sport except winter play. The West can call on nine months out of the nine.

This is also true of the deeper South, and the advance in sport through recent years in this section has been phenomenal. The South and the Pacific Coast have been improving together, for they have had more outdoor opportunities to play and practice. Good weather not only lures a greater number to some form of sport but it also gives this greater number a better chance to become proficient.

Practice Makes Passers

Crews at Washington and California—the two crew headquarters of the Far West—can spend the entire nine college months on the water, while Syracuse, Harvard, Yale, Columbia and others are waiting for the ice to melt.

Several Eastern coaches complained this last fall that they had so few passers or pass receivers of any ability. Several Eastern teams had none to cheer about. I asked Pop Warner about this phase of the situation.

"Three months or more of spring

training," he said, "are certain to develop a number of good passers and pass receivers. Nearly every man on my team can throw and catch a football up to at least a fair standard. I have at least four or five high-class passers always ready and as many good pass receivers. It is important always to have at least one good, accurate passer on the field. It is important to have others ready to take his place. And I don't mean just pretty good passers and pass receivers. I mean top grade. And these can't be developed in a few weeks. A football, as my friend Bob Zupke says, has a funny shape. It isn't naturally easy to throw or catch. It is an art that calls for a long grind before it can be handled in the right way."

Why the West Should Lead

It was along this same line that Dick Hyland, a former Stanford star, had a few words to spill in connection with passing and receiving. Hyland played Rugby football for eight years before playing the American college brand. "Our football players," he said, "are far behind the best of the Rugby players in handling a football, in passing and receiving. A good Rugby player thinks nothing of scooping up a low pass at top speed, using one hand. Or taking the ball out of the air with one hand. He can take a pass with either hand or arm on the run and never think about muffing it or fumbling it. I believe, through lateral passing and backward passing as well as forward passing, that our college football will soon begin to take over several of the Rugby fundamentals. This can't be done in just a few weeks or a few months. Or in a year. It will mean long periods of play and practice. It will only come to those who love the game well enough to give it all the time they can through recreation periods."

If this comes to pass, and there have been signs pointing in this direction for a year or two, the football players of the Far West and South will soon take a big lead in the art of handling an egg-shaped object that is neither easy to throw or catch with any consistent steadiness. The Mid-West and the East have shown they can meet this situation with two such phenomenal passers as Benny Friedman of Michigan and Howard Harpster of Carnegie Tech, but they have been exceptions who devoted a world of spare time through several seasons to this knack. Not many will be willing to overcome the weather handicap through January, February, March and part of April by hard practice at passing and receiving through late spring and summer.



Climate differences give the West more time to develop great athletes

A Short
Short Story

Half-Shell Blues

By John
Forbes

Mr. Moberly was somewhat worried. He had learned to open oysters by now but the tips weren't coming very fast

Illustrated by
Jeff Tester

FALL was in the air, and Sidney Moberly lit the gas heater of his small room in Mrs. Manners' theatrical boarding house in Forty-eighth Street, just off Eighth Avenue. Then he continued his careful search through the want ads of The Billboard. Mr. Moberly was "at liberty," very much at liberty, indeed. Too much at liberty. Both of his elbows were almost at liberty, not to mention the soles of his feet. He was on half rations; had been for three weeks. In another week, if no rent were forthcoming from his all but empty pocket, Mr. Moberly rather fancied his landlady would extend even greater liberty to him—the liberty of the streets.

In a way, he was grateful for the crisp tang of October. The closed window muffled the noises which had offended his artistic ear all through July, August and September. Those deafen-

ing roars from the subterranean depths of the new Eighth Avenue subway, for instance. The throaty but inharmonious singing from the mission meeting across the street. And jazz—in a thousand forms. Phonograph jazz. Radio jazz. Jazz that issued from an under-cover night club. Jazz that echoed from the western fringe of Tin Pan Alley's maddening medley of tunes and instruments.

WHAT Mr. Moberly hoped to find in the ads was something like this:

"Wanted—First-class piano player, who can read or fake, to travel with A-1 Tom show. Must double in brass for parade. Only sober, experienced trouper need apply. No boozers or jazz hounds wanted. Wire salary wanted, and be prepared to join immediately. So-and-So's Uncle Tom's Cabin Company, Rye, New York."

A good "Tom" show was dependable. Plenty of work, to be sure. But always three squares a day, enough money for clothes and laundry, and a little to put by against the close of the season. And always a clean berth in the combination baggage and sleeping car at night, with the whirr of wheels and the rhythmic click of the rail joints as a lullaby.

Not that Mr. Moberly had given up the idea of a Broadway engagement. He was only forty-eight. His big chance would come one day. Meanwhile, the road would be welcome.

Mr. Moberly was two thirds through the want ads, but instead of a Tom show, looking for a pianist who could read and fake, and double in parade, he found only such ads as: "Wanted—Hot and sweet saxophone players; collegiate type preferred; must be young and handsome; also high-class traps man, who can get special effects into his stuff and set night-club crowds on fire."

Toward the bottom of the list Mr. Moberly's attention suddenly riveted on an ad. He read it twice. Then he searched through the balance of the list. After which he returned to the ad he had read twice and read it again.

"Wanted—Piano player who can open oysters. Must be sober and reliable. Good opening for right man. Room and board and fair salary to start. Must have tuxedo. Apply in person. Marine Café, No. — Amsterdam Avenue."

Mr. Moberly put on his hat, picked up his bass horn, and started for the street. In the hallway he met Mrs. Manners.

"Good evening," she said, looking at the bass horn, which was the last of Mr. Moberly's tangible assets.

"Good evening, Mrs. Manners," said the trouper. "I guess you're wondering where I'm going with this horn. I think I have a job.

And I need the horn. The horn is part of the job."

Mrs. Manners smiled sweetly. No, she wasn't worrying about the rent, or about him taking his horn out of the house. And congratulations on the job.

Mr. Moberly let himself out into the early evening. The lights were just flashing on along Forty-eighth Street. He turned not toward Broadway but toward Eighth Avenue.

When he emerged, half an hour later, from Uncle Bennie's Square Deal Pawn Shop, Mr. Moberly was minus the bass horn. But he was resplendent in a white shirt, dinner coat, braided trousers and black shoes. Under his arm he carried his daytime suit.

His pulse quickened as he set out for the Amsterdam Avenue address.

Apparently he was the first man to answer the ad.

They sat him down at the piano,

and he played. He apparently satisfied them. The job was his. He ate an oyster stew—the last, incidentally, ever to pass his lips—and then went to work.

By the end of the week, Mr. Moberly's hands were so badly cut by slips of the oyster knife he could hardly hit the keys of the piano. He opened oysters all afternoon, and played the piano most of the night.

The boss didn't appear too pleased when he gave the trouper his first week's salary—ten dollars. But he didn't say anything. Mr. Moberly pocketed the money, and the next day, which was Sunday, he returned to his landlady's, paid her a month's rent, gave up his room, and moved his trunk to his little quarters back of the café.

During the second week, Mr. Moberly was somewhat worried. He had learned how to open oysters by now, and his hands had healed. But the tips weren't coming very fast.

When he drew his pay Saturday night, however, he discovered a five-dollar raise, which more than made up for his loss in tips. He was appreciated. That was the main thing. He had been afraid they might insist on jazz. Apparently the manager of the place knew the difference between jungle junk and real music.

At the end of the third week, there was an extra two dollars in the pay envelope. Seventeen dollars, room and board. That was better than he had done tramping with the Tom shows, or even the minstrel shows! And tips too.

He placed the seventeen dollars in his pocket beside the twenty dollars already nestling there. He felt opulent.

In the week that followed, Mr. Moberly played as he had never played before. He was an artist again, an artist among friends. He hoped the manager noticed how much better he was playing.

WHEN Saturday night came around, the manager—his name was Blatz—smiled one of his rare smiles.

"You've made good," he said.

"You notice an improvement?"

"Yes," said Mr. Blatz. "You're a lot better than when you started. Always on the job. Know your business. I'm going to give you a promotion."

Mr. Moberly tingled with happiness.

"You know," Mr. Blatz continued, "this isn't our only place. We got a bigger place on Broadway—upper Broadway. I decided to transfer you there at a big raise—twenty-five a week, your meals and a better place to sleep."

On Broadway. At last. The Big Street. Big money. A real performer. Farewell to the sticks. He had arrived.

"Yeah," said Mr. Blatz. "I been watching you, and you've made good with me. This new job won't be half as hard. And no night work. All you got to do is show up at eight in the morning and you're through at five. No more drummin' on a piano. Moberly, you'll be the day manager of the oyster bar."

Mr. Moberly shuddered. He turned on his heel and walked out. He had twenty dollars. Ten of this he gave to Mrs. Manners for advance rent. In selling his tuxedo and redeeming his bass horn he lost two dollars. That left him eight. With five of this he inserted the following ad in The Billboard:

"At Liberty—First-class piano player, who can read or fake. Prefer to travel with A-1 Tom or minstrel show. Will double in brass—BUT NOT IN OYSTERS."