

Carlisle Massacre:

By WALTER LEWIS REISNER

It was Sept. 27, 1911, when the massacre took place. All of these Allenfown old-time football stars beside the author survived the harrowing fracas: Rev. Bill Katz, Dr. Jim Flexer and "Haps" Nenow. Perhaps they, like me, have an occasional twinge of pain to remind them of the lacing Coach Tom Kelly's motley herd of Mules took from Jim Thorpe and Co. It was an unmerciful beating—Indians 32, Muhlenberg 0.

Although Thorpe was the outstanding star of the Indian outfit, he had plenty of solid assistance in Lone Star, Welsh, Wheelock, Roberts and Powell, who were all good enough for All-American team any time. Thirty-two points was a low score for a team of such strength. The Mules' zero is misleading. In scoring for grit and courage, we rated at least a 100, and in fighting spirit the Mules were superb.

Outside Testimony

To substantiate my biased opinion here's outside testimony as recorded in the October, 1911, issue of the "Muhlenberg."

"Well, we started out with defeat, but there was no disgrace in it. In the first place, Jupiter Pluvius showed up in rather poor style, giving us a muddy field, to play a heavy team." "But even at that, the dusky brothers would hardly have gotten six touchdowns, if it had not been for the number of our varsity men laid out. The first and last quarter showed that we have a well-coached, hard-fighting team of which we were then, and are now justly proud."

Now, for the Mule quarterback's inside story, as he recalls it after 46 years:

We were a train-weary, anxious squad when we reached Carlisle that memorable day, left the day coach and crawled into a waiting horse-drawn hack to be taken to the Indian reservation. The ride was exciting. The rattle of the rickety, old hack and pounding of horses hooves over the cobble stones reminded me of historic hold-ups and gunfire.

Foreboding Atmosphere

This foreboding atmosphere didn't help my peace of mind. I was still pretty much a boy and couldn't keep frightening story-book tales out of my mind. It would have been better had I been able to dismiss my childish fear and nervousness and concentrate on the strategy the coach had mapped out coming up on the train.

Luckily, I was unaware of



the exceptional prowess of one of the Indians I was doomed to meet, the renowned Jim Thorpe, reputed to be the greatest all-around athlete of all time. All I knew was that the Indian team would be a formidable one. The Carlisle school was noted for its athletic teams which were better than average in every sport. After lunch I had myself under good control, reasoning that I had often played on an underdog team.

I had a tough lesson in football ahead of me and was to learn a lot about the rugged brand of game the Indians played. I didn't anticipate meeting Jim Thorpe, who packed the violence of a tornado on the rampage. It was just as well that I wasn't forewarned of the battering ram of which I was to be the unfortunate target.

After lunch I was eager for the game to start. My anxiety vanished as I went to the dressing room and out to the gridiron. The Indians won the toss and elected to receive the kick. I calmly teed up the ball.

The welcome blow of the whistle and the feel of the thud as my toe hit the ball, primed me for action. I followed the ball down the field to tackle the ball-carrier. It was Thorpe. When we collided, I wondered if I had rammed a goal post or

tackled an elusive, granite ghost. Looking down the field I spied a tangled mass of players. I had merely slowed down Thorpe to permit my teammates to rush up and gang up on him. I arose to my feet thoroughly winded, realizing how tough our opposition was going to be. I hurried back to my position as safety man in front of our goal line, where I was to stand guard alone, just 145 pounds of fragile youth, masquerading as a road-block.

I soon learned that Thorpe was a team in himself. The shock of tackling this brave of

One-Man Team Jim Thorpe Sent Mules Home Limping

the Sac-Fox tribe was like ramming a runaway diesel engine. He was 6-foot-1 and packed 185 pounds of power. He seemed like a super man. He could punt 100 yards and drop-kick half that far. His straight-arm delivered the force of a wild stallion's kick. He was a wonderful hurdler as he sailed over opposition with ease when he carried the ball — which was most of the time. He took off with the speed of a startled cheetah. His high piston-like knee action made him difficult to tackle in the usual manner. He kept sweeping around the ends ahead of his interference to elude his opponents, or shooting through a hole in the line, hell-bent for the goal line.

On and on he flew, weaving and running over those in his way. Time and again I hurled myself at him, only to be shunted painfully aside. The best I could do was try to grab one leg until the rest of the team could rush to my aid.

From the start it was apparent how the odds were stacked against the Mules. But, like typical Pennsylvania Dutchmen, we fought stubbornly to hold down the score. There was no sign of the Mules stampeding as the game progressed. We were game to fight it out. Perhaps, as the saying goes about the Pennsylvania Dutch, we were "Too dumb to know when we were licked."

As the game progressed rain fell, increasing our handicap. Now I had to be careful not to rush up to tackle Jim, but try to take him from an angle, but he was too adept in the art of stalking to permit me to outwit him. In one of his wild dashes, he maneuvered me into meeting him headon. It was too slippery to duck out of the way and the crash of our collision must have echoed up the Cumberland Val-

ley as a salute to my relatives in Mercersburg.

Unfortunately, in the pileup I was underneath. Something had gone wrong with my left shoulder when it dented the ground. The pain was terrific. My arm hung limp. I called for time out. When Coach Kelly reached my side I remarked, "I think my shoulder's broken."

He answered, "Raise your arm."

That would have been too painful, so I pretended to raise it by raising my forearm, which procedure he failed to notice.

He said, "Your shoulder's not broken. If it were, you couldn't raise your arm."

With this diagnosis, the ball was put back into play, forcing me to carry on the best I could with my useless left arm until, whether intentionally or not, I was mercifully, but painfully, given a coup de grace. I received an Indian's knee in the groin. I went down in agony and out of the game. Arriving at the field house, I found that my left arm was strapped to my body to prevent painful movement. Then I was seated on a bench to sweat out the end of the game.

Long Dispensary List

When our squad limped back to the station an inventory of our casualties listed this sorry sight:

One player was emotional, he was so badly beaten up; another was delirious from a blow on the head. I was nursing a broken collarbone, as X-ray years later proved. And the rest of the team was badly bruised and visibly skinned.

But, we were all glad to be alive after our grueling experience and well-tempered for the later, crucial game with F&M which we won — our first victory over this rival.