WAR SEASONS:
GLENN KILLINGER, SERVICE FOOTBALL, AND THE BIRTH
OF THE AMERICAN HERO IN POSTWAR AMERICAN CULTURE

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by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Glenn Killinger’s career as a three-sport star at Penn State. The thrills and fascinations of his athletic exploits were chronicled by the mass media beginning in 1917 through the 1920s in a way that addressed the central themes of the mythic Great American Novel. Killinger’s personal and public life matched the cultural medley that defined the nation in the first quarter of the twentieth-century. His life plays outs as if it were a Horatio Alger novel, as the anxieties over turn-of-the-century immigration and urbanization, the uncertainty of commercializing formerly amateur sports, social unrest that challenged the status quo, and the resiliency of the individual confronting challenges of World War I, sport, and social alienation. I attempt to present a profoundly moving American success story that offers a glimpse into a chaotic period of military training, combat experience, and athletic valor that gave rise to the American hero.

Some scholars have provided arguments that the so-called “American hero” was created by a paradigm shift within the field of communications. Others view fitness crazes or lifestyle changes of working-class families motivated by higher paychecks and more leisure time. While important in fueling sports hysteria in the 1920s, those views fall short of identifying the roles of the Wilson Administration and War Department that monopolized the media’s messaging and used intercollegiate and intramural sports to prepare soldiers for the front lines of World War I. The war, I argue, did more to make sports the cornerstone of American life in the 1920s; thus placing the college (and subsequently professional) athlete in the category of great American heroes.
I deconstruct American society during World War I and a few years thereafter into order to show how sports hysteria of the 1920s created America’s first celebrities. By examining this historically important cultural movement, I argue that the notion of the American hero emerged because of six factors: (1) newfound mass media models that included sports journalism, mass circulation of local stories through the Associated Press, and live broadcast radio, (2) the implementation of service sports at army and navy installations in 1917, (3) the creation of the Student Army Training Corps (which kept draft-age men in college by promising officer training in conjunction with a regular degree) and massed athletics (physical education) that mandated every college male participate in two-hours of military drill and one-hour of physical activity per day, (4) gender anxiety brought on by the “intrusion” (author’s quotes) of women into male-dominated areas like the workplace and political arena, (5) the shift from amateur to professional sports, and (6) the modern art of ballyhoo promotion that helped a sportscrazed public replace war heroes with sport celebrities.

I used four major research methods: (1) archival research, (2) historical reconstruction, (3) content analysis, and (4) oral history collection. Data has been collected from special collection archives, interviews, newspapers, military records, and Killinger family documents that included Glenn Killinger’s unpublished memoir. This interdisciplinary investigation is part biography, part cultural study, and part history. By situating Killinger in his time and place, an enduring legacy of manufactured heroism that has carried over into the twenty-first-century is revealed.
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Preface

I came across the name William Glenn Killinger in 2014 when I was working on a book about the history of Harrisburg. This dissertation is the offspring of that project. When the research process began, I was attempting to write an article for the magazine *Pennsylvania Heritage* about Killinger’s experience as a football and baseball coach as well as a lieutenant commander at the North Carolina Pre-Flight School during World War II. In October 2015, Killinger’s unpublished memoir, titled *A Penn State Walk-On*, surfaced when his granddaughter, Jessica, who, after bravely handling the death of her own father—and Killinger’s only child—unearthed the dossier in a pile of boxes at the retirement home where her dad had lived. The memoir was a boon to the narrative I was trying to compose as it corroborated much of the research I had previously completed. It was, up to that moment, a study based on media coverage of Killinger’s athletic feats and interviews that I conducted with people close to Killinger, including his son, Bill, before he passed away. As it turned out, I became fascinated with Killinger’s experience as a student-athlete at Penn State during the Great War. Though mostly forgotten in the twenty-first century, I soon learned that Killinger was one of the most popular athletes in the country—including Jim Thorpe and Babe Ruth—during the 1920s. He was first considered a college star and later became a venerated intercollegiate coach.

The sports-crazed cultural “dreamland,” as *New York Times* sports columnist Robert Lipsyte calls the sports world, that converged in American society in the 1920s actually predated this historic decade.¹ This is why I did not begin my investigation into the creation of the American hero by asking the standard question, “How did life change

at the end of World War I?” Instead, I ask one reflective question: “To what extend did sports-related military training in 1917 and 1918, plus the gradual shift from amateur to professional sports, an increase in leisure time following World War I, and the improvement of media-centered technologies lead to a shared popular desire for sports heroes during the 1920s?”

In the pages that follow, I argue that the American hero was created by six events. While scholars have certainly hypothesized some, there are a few antecedents that have never been cited as driving forces that created 1920s celebrity culture. They include: (1) the decision to include competitive athletics at military encampments across the country in 1917, (2) the creation of the Student Army Training Corps and the implementation of massed athletics (mandatory physical education) at more than 500 colleges and universities in 1918, (3) a masculinity vacuum caused when middle-class men migrated to pluralistic metropolitan centers after the closing of the frontier in 1890, (4) new methods of the popular press such as the commodification of the news by the Associated Press, newsreels, and live radio broadcasts, (5) a media-driven effort to replace war heroes with sports heroes beginning in 1919, and (6) the shift from amateur to professional sports that placed greater stakes on the outcome of athletic competitions as well as enabled expressions of nationalism on the athletic field that ostensibly amalgamated with turn of the century melting-pot assimilation efforts.

Beginning in 1917, the actions of the Wilson Administration’s propaganda machine, the United States War Department, and the popular press collaborated in a way that manufactured hometown heroes in order to promote a foreign war that would “make the world safe for democracy.” For the 19 months that American soldiers ducked
machine-gun fire and poison gas on the Western Front, government-control over the media fostered a reverence for the heroic soldier. While in today’s world the public gets to consider an issue through a variety of perspectives—many of which are divergent voices that include Fox News, MSNBC, Huffington Post, and the National Review—those opinions were not available during World War I. A single pro-war message conditioned the consciousness of the American people. Think about, for example, the first time the national anthem was played at a sporting event. It was during World War I. In the seventh-inning of Game 1 of the 1918 World Series, played September 5 between the Chicago Cubs and Boston Red Sox, more than 19,000 fans at Comisky Park were brought to attention as a military band performed “the Star-Spangled Banner.”

Putting an emphasis on the heroics of local men that braved the charge across No Man’s Land would eventually make common men the nation’s heroes. Soon after the war there was an absence of stories about hometown war heroes that had once appeared recurrently in local and national newspapers. And so, when wartime service sports were canceled, and after the war-centered massed athletics movement was integrated into standard college curriculum, the public continued to crave sports that were once so critical in aiding the doughboy for the throes of combat.

Additionally, sports’ popularity within industrial working class populations of the United States fueled the gradual professionalization of spectator sports. According to sports historian Tony Collins, sport is closely connected to shifting social, economic, and political circumstances. That viewpoint is not a novelty. However, he contends in Sport

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2 Jim Leeke. From the Dugouts to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017, 140-143.
in Capitalist Society (2013) that after World War I, sports became a corporate model in which control over the professional game was transferred from the player to the manager (team owner) and the consumers (fan base). Attracting consumers (fans) and sponsorships (speculators), professional sports, Collins argues, “provides a social significance magnified beyond that of other forms of entertainment.”

Because of wartime home front culture, in other words, spectator sports in the 1920s served a communal purpose. Success in bringing communities and cross-sections together around a professionalized and involuntary game that has formal rules enforced by regulatory bodies; and in which the outcome of each contest has serious implications for fans, organizations, and the paid players was a direct result of a perceived desire to find new heroes on the athletic field.

Sports scholar Michael Oriard explains football’s growing popularity as a result of “the renewed emphasis on rugged sports” caused by a “retoughening” effort, known in other circles as Muscular Christianity. This turn-of-the-century notion sought to apply physical fitness with disciplined Protestantism in urban, industrial, and ethnically pluralistic societies facing a threat to cultural normativity. In King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press, Oriard contends that football in the 1920s emerged as the preeminent spectator sport because the game conveyed traditional gender roles, a “male striving” in a feminizing urban society. While he does not go as far to say war mobilization made football king among America’s various games, Oriard argues that the grit and toughness embedded within football was important for developing the

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4 Ibid., 127.
masculinity of teenage boys. Football’s fame grew, he says, because high school aged boys grew fond of the sport. A higher percentage of Americans were graduating from high school; 16.8 percent in 1920 to 50 percent of the population in 1940. By 1923, Oriard notes, 91 percent of high schools had football teams. And what would come of football if schoolboys did not have the opportunity to develop mental and physical attributes on a football field during their teenage years? As more teenagers played the game in organized settings, newspaper coverage of high school competition grew as well. Oriard explains that the inches given to weekly columns on interscholastic sport coverage in the *New York Times* alone “increased from about 200 at the turn of the century to almost 1,000 by the First World War, then shot up to nearly 3,200 by 1926.” That expansion, he writes, “played out in other newspapers as well.” Oriard’s “King Football” theory is verified by Glenn Killinger’s biography: he was a little kid with big dreams. Killinger’s childhood aspirations of becoming a professional football or baseball player were cultivated by stories of his sports icons that dominated the headlines of local newspapers.

There is one final factor that aided in the creation of America’s first celebrity culture. In my research, unlike the previously mentioned factors, new methods of informing the public such as live radio broadcasts, beat sportswriters, newsreels, and silent film is responsible for intensifying the public’s demand for sport icons. In his 2009 book *Heroes and Ballyhoo*, Michael Bohn calls “loud, exaggerated, or sensationalized”

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6 Oriard, *King Football*, 5.
art of newspaper promotion “the ballyhoo.” After World War I, Bohn says, newspapers devoted “at least 15 percent of its reporting to sports.” The media’s increased investment in sports was “up from less than 1 percent in 1880.” While Heroes and Ballyhoo lacks depth of primary and academic source material, Bohn’s point that the marketability of the news with the establishment of the Associated Press (AP) decades earlier made information distribution by the twentieth-century not only easier but influential in creating a common sport-consciousness in America. Newspaper chains and wire service “facilitated widespread dissemination of event reporting,” he says. During the Great War, the AP aided in hailing combat heroics by selling stories of valor written by a London Daily Telegraph or New York Times war correspondent to individual newspapers throughout the United States. In the case of sports, Bohn writes, “newspapers didn’t have to send a reporter to the game any longer, because they could just buy the Associated Press write-up." The same approach applied to features on sports icons like Jack Dempsey or Red Grange. When a sports aficionado like Walter Camp wrote a thrilling or sentimental piece about a sport celebrity for the AP, the sports-crazed public devoured the account in local newspapers.

Similarly, Steven Riess, author of Sport in Industrial America (2012), maintains that after World War I the public depended on newspapers for sporting news more than ever. According to Riess, the average daily newspaper circulation in 1899 was 15 million. By 1920, he reports, “sporting news comprised 40 percent of local news in the [New

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7 Bohn, Heroes and Ballyhoo, 5, 13.
8 Ibid. 4-5.
York] World, and 60 percent in the New York Tribune.9 Whether the New York Metropolis, as evaluated in the work of Bohn and Riess, or smaller cities like Glenn Killinger’s hometown of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, newspapers that devoted more space to amateur and professional athletics yielded larger profits than rival newspapers that primarily covered politics and crime. As adoring fans demanded more information about their favorite players, newspapers assigned beat reporters to cover specific college teams and professional athletes year-round. “Sportlight” columnist Grantland Rice of the New York Tribune and Robert “Tiny” Maxwell of the Philadelphia Public Ledger were two distinguished sportswriters of the period who spoke favorably of Glenn Killinger’s unprecedented rise from high school benchwarmer to college All-American. At the conclusion of his senior football season at Penn State in 1921, newspapers ranging from the New York Herald to the Seattle Star printed half-page artwork featuring Killinger as college sports’ icon of the year.

Methods

My argument comes from an interdisciplinary approach that includes archival research, historical reconstruction, content analysis, and oral history. The research employed cross-curricular sources that explore the complexities of the home front during World War I. In order to explain how the 1920s became a time defined by popular celebrities, namely sports icons, this dissertation engages in a variety of sources that include silent film, radio broadcasts, nationally circulated newspapers, local magazine publications, military records, letters, art, playbooks, memoirs, interviews, scholarly

books, peer reviewed articles, transcripts, and yearbooks. This dissertation’s cornerstone source is Killinger’s unpublished autobiography.

Though not overly important for this investigation, oral history testimonies buttressed my research. I spoke with dozens of people who knew Glenn Killinger. The list includes Killinger family members, Killinger’s former football and baseball players, and Killinger’s former students. While this step was certainly a demanding process that included phone calls, long drives to the homes of interview subjects, and hours spent transcribing those interviews, the experience helped me understand my topic. I rarely reference any of the interviews that I conducted. Nevertheless, each interview subject provided context for the many topics discussed herein, including Killinger’s personality and competitive approach to life.

I first reached out to Killinger’s surviving family members. I used the alumni office at West Chester University, where Killinger coached and served as Dean of Men for 40 years. The alumni office got me in touch with Killinger’s granddaughter, Jessica. After a brief telephone discussion, Jessica arranged a meeting with her father William Glenn Killinger Jr., or Bill, who was Killinger’s only child. I had five meetings with Bill before he passed away at age 87 in October 2015.

Before his death, Bill was able to connect me with many of his father’s acquaintances. I recorded and transcribed each interview session on a word processor. All transcripts are kept on file in my home.

I spent much of 2017 in special collection archives at several colleges and universities that had some relation with Killinger. The list includes Penn State University, Ursinus College, Dickinson College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the University of
North Carolina, Moravian College, and West Chester University. Killinger spent time as a student, teacher, and coach at each institution listed above. I also utilized Penn State’s collection, including LaVie yearbooks, to obtain information about how the college reacted to the Spanish Flu, war mobilization, the Student Army Training Corps, Prohibition, and the Red Scare. It was beneficial to meet with the directors of the Centre County Historical Society in State College and the Dauphin County Historical Society in Harrisburg. I also uncovered the Glenn Killinger file at the College Football Hall of Fame.

As noted earlier, the most important source used to write this dissertation was the unpublished memoir written by Glenn Killinger. In addition to the memoir, personal and family documents preserved by Killinger’s granddaughter were helpful in completing this project. These documents include Killinger’s military records, college transcripts, playbooks from the 1919, 1920, and 1921 Penn State football teams, a playbook from the 1921 Penn State basketball team, and correspondences written to and from Killinger.

Killinger’s career at Penn State (and thereafter) was covered closely by the nation’s major newspapers, including the New York Times and Washington Times. The local newspapers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania wrote fondly of Killinger. These newsprints include the Harrisburg Evening News, Harrisburg Telegraph, Harrisburg Sunday Courier, Harrisburg Patriot, and Harrisburg Star-Independent. For an examination of American sporting culture, I turned to Simon Bronner’s Explaining Traditions and Manly Traditions, Robert Lypsyte’s SportsWorld: An American Dreamland, Michael Bohn’s Heroes and Ballyhoo, Alan Dundes From Game to War and Other Psychoanalytic Essays on Folklore, Steven W. Pope’s Patriotic Games: Sporting
Traditions in the American Imagination, Steven Riess’s Sport in Industrial America, David Nelson’s The Anatomy of a Game, Michael Oriard’s two books on football culture Reading Football and its sequel King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press, Tony Collins’ Sport in Capitalist Society and essays by Benjamin Rader, Ronald Smith, James Mennell, and John S. Watterson.


When looking to improve my understanding of home front culture during World War I, popular culture of the 1920s, and the concept of heroism, I read Alan Axelrod’s Selling the Great War, Paul Fussell’s The Great War and Modern Memory, J. Stuart Richards’ Pennsylvania Voices of the Great War, Lucy Fischer’s American Cinema of the 1920s, Annette D’Agostino Lloyd’s Harold Lloyd: Magic in a Pair of Horn-Rimmed Glasses and Other Turning Points in the Life and Career of a Comedy Legend. John J. Miller’s The Big Scrum: How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football and Jim Leeke’s From the Dugouts to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War. Ari Kohen’s Untangled Heroism: Classical Philosophy and the Concept of the Hero was important for helping me understand how American society has come to define its heroes.
Organization of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into four quarters. Quarters one and two, or chapters 1 through 6, are spent discussing intellectual sporting theories and home front culture in order to explain why the so-called Roaring Twenties was primed for heroes that were athletes instead of returning doughboys. Of particular importance in Chapters 1-4 is an examination of how the Wilson Administration’s Department of War collaborated with hundreds of colleges and universities to engender privileged draft-age men with the toughness needed for combat. Chapter 5 concentrates on the creation of service sports teams in 1917 that competed against intercollegiate colleges on various fields and courts across the country. In Chapter 6, I discuss the movement to implement massed athletics into college curriculum. Massed athletics functioned as a wartime measure when first applied in 1918.

The dissertation’s second half, quarters three and four, or chapters 7 through 12, illuminates Killinger’s career as a three-sport athlete at Penn State. Of note during these parts is the mass media’s paradigm shift. The popular press underwent a multifaceted transition because of World War I. First, newspaper publishers began investing more pages to sports coverage. Dueling newspapers discovered that consumers were more interested in reading about sports than world news in the 1920s. Consequentially, more sports journalists were hired and sports sections seemingly occupied significantly more pages of a daily publication. Second, presses found that the public was interested in reading about the personal lives of America’s famous athletes. Killinger’s rags-to-riches success that combed through central themes of the mythic Great American Novel was of particular interest for the doting public.
I have included commentary in Chapter 13, dually titled “Post-Game.” This section applies 1920s themes of heroism, Americanism, mass media, and the professionalization of sport to Killinger’s experiences as a celebrity. This chapter is extensive, as my aim is to engage an ongoing investigation into the remainder of Killinger’s life, in addition to drawing comparisons to the federal government’s method of using college sports to prepare soldiers for battle against either the Nazis or the Japanese with the creation of Pre-Flight Schools after America’s entry into World War II. In this vein, Killinger’s life fundamentally serves as an archetype for how someone at the start of the 1920s came to be hailed as an American hero.

Scope of Project

In respect to heroic idealism, “No one does it quite like the United States,” says Ari Kohen, an Associate Professor of Political Science and author of *Untangling Heroism: Classical Philosophy and the Concept of the Hero* (2014). He explains that heroism is baked into the American psyche, as the public has always sought out ordinary people only to raise them up to heroic distinction. The public, Kohen argues, plucks heroes out of everyday professions and then honors them at gala events, medal stands, or by placing their image on the front pages of newspapers, magazines, and books. He claims that there are three types of heroes that bear a resemblance to the Homeric figures Achilles, Odysseus, and Socrates. Achillian heroes take risks for what they believe in. Do Alice Paul, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Colin Kaepernick come to mind? Those who endured tremendous suffering like Hellen Keller, Rosa Parks, and Steven Hawking bring to mind Odysseus. And heroes that take risks for “selflessness” conjure up the

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altruistic death of Socrates. Of the three prototypes, most Americans, Kohen contends, finds its heroes in the graduate school of Socratic self-sacrifice: soldiers, police officers, and first responders, including firemen and women. Of course, all of this is certainly a matter of debate. Kohen could have spent more time discussing the pecuniary ways in which American society has formed its heroes, especially during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Two companion pieces published about the same time as Kohen’s Untangling Heroism are Larry Tye’s Superman: The High-Flying History of America’s Most Enduring Hero (2012) and Gary Andrew Poole’s The Galloping Ghost: Red Grange, An American Football Legend (2008). Tye and Poole use specific examples of American heroes—an immortal some may have heard of (Superman) and the other being Harold Edward “Red” Grange, a mortal sports figure whose legendary feats have attained immortality—to confront the economic impetus behind what Tye calls, “hero farmers.”

At the intersection of heroism and capitalism, superheroes, military veterans, and sports luminaries have always generated massive amounts of money in advertising, gaming culture, and Hollywood. In other words, heroism can be examined as a corporate model. Why would people not want to escape their own hardships by looking up to those who fall outside the normal parameters? During a time of uncertainty, like, say World War I, why would the American people not want to avert their attention to something more encouraging; to think about what they might have done in a similar situation if only they had the power? During Killinger’s time, newspapers, radio stations, and newly formed professional franchises profited exponentially from stories highlighting the action and

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adventure of athletic superstars. A hundred years later, those same mediums continue to procure earnings from manufactured heroes, as do movie studios, magazine publishers, and commercial retailers.

Even as the public embraced him through images dawning the front of sports pages, Glenn Killinger was not football’s most gifted athlete by any of the standards that history has used to judge memorable and prolific icons. He did not, for instance, possess the effortless durability and power of Jim Thorpe, the vision and speed of the incomparable Red Grange, the competitive intensity of Bronko Nagurski, the deft elusiveness of George Gipp, or the leadership and motivational abilities of Harry Stuhldreher, the linchpin of Notre Dame’s 1924 “Four Horsemen” backfield. Still, Killinger may be the most productive and cerebral, not to mention adept, football player of them all. It is not that Killinger lacked supreme talent in punting, passing, or running with the football. But he was more than the sum of his athletic feats. A considerable measure of Killinger’s physical heft was certainly extra-laborious, especially when well-publicized clashes with bigger, faster, and stronger opponents cast doubt on his physical capacity. Above all, Killinger was a transcendent force of competitive fury that unapologetically defined the GI Generation’s personality – its determination and endurance, its sacrifice and courage, its reliability and poise, its hopefulness and optimism. He was the zeitgeist in a leather helmet, wool jersey, and canvas pant.

Killinger was the “Star halfback at Penn State,” John Heisman reminded a new generation of sports enthusiasts in 1928, “who over came early physical drawbacks and
made himself a synthetic athlete and football player feared by opposing teams." To the
common American man with aborted aspirations, Killinger is easy to understand because
he is sports’ everyman, personifying in his approach to athletic competitions the trials and
tribulations that millions of others endured who are in many ways just like him—
undersized bodies with oversized dreams—except they lack the protean aptitude and the
benefit of an era of sports featuring smaller, slower, and weaker competitors. Despite
being pegged as “too small,” Killinger ran freely over and around the athletic landscape
of the war era, attaining realities that are nothing more than the dreams of most children.

Sports culture has come a long way since its fledging evolution during the second
half of the nineteenth century. The first football, baseball, and basketball players were
largely anonymous amateurs that rarely made a career out of athletic talent. By contrast,
contemporaries of Killinger’s age reaped newspaper publicity, radio broadcasts, lucrative
contracts, national recognition, and the admiration of their American peers. If there is a
dominant perception about athletic superstardom of the 1920s among American purists, it
is that they were able to transcend the gallantry of the Great War’s heroes by being
obsessed with alluring headlines, the emerging art of promotion, and pecuniary self-
interest. Although sports had succeeded far beyond the frontier of its birth, they have, in
the minds of some of its most ardent enthusiasts, grown into societal spectacles instead of
simple cross-town rivalries.

Here is where Killinger fits loosely into the narrative of heroism of the 1920s. He
was intent—and successful—on attaining celebrity status and in receiving lucrative
professional football and baseball contracts. Yet, he refused to conform to modern-era

12 John W. Heisman, “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Football Fame,” Marion Star,
October 27, 1928, 1.
schemes of self-promotion and the allure of fame. By the end of the war, he understood that his purpose in sports was similar to the purpose of the soldier: to perform, to make sacrifices, and to lead for the benefit of a team. This is why Ari Kohen maintains that war heroes—Socratic heroes—were and have since been held dearly in the hearts of the American people. This is Killinger’s legacy as a Walter Camp All-American athlete at Penn State and as a college football and baseball coach at West Chester State Teachers’ College. Unlike, say Ruth, Grange, and Thorpe, who are known for off the field pursuits of fame and fortune as much as athletic exploits, Killinger was passionately focused on the interests of others, not on himself.13 His legacy lives on in the actions of the children and grandchildren of those he played with and those he coached, producing what he called at a banquet held in his honor one year before his death, “good material.” To paraphrase Charles Dickens—an institution-like writer whose autobiographical tale elevated David Copperfield to heroic prestige—whether Glenn Killinger shall turn out to be the hero of our lives, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.

13 While the Associated Press and the United Press issued an “All-American” designation to college athletes beginning in 1925, football luminary Walter Camp was the first to select an All-American team in 1889.
Acknowledgments

My first and greatest appreciation is to Jessica Killinger. Jessica, the granddaughter of Glenn Killinger, was a wonderful supporter and liaison between her father and me during the writing of this dissertation. Her father, Bill, who passed away only weeks after I completed the first draft, was gracious enough to welcome me into his home at Maris Grove Senior Living Community in Glen Mills, where, on several occasions, we spoke about his father. We logged nine hours of interviews. I’m so happy that he was able to learn about his father’s life before his own death.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many of Glenn Killinger’s football and baseball protégés; all are in their sixties and seventies and hail from West Chester University, which was, of course, West Chester State Teachers’ College until 1960. I want to thank, in particular, Howie Bedell, John Furlow, Ken Campbell, Gump May, Paul Chenger, and everyone involved in the Leisey Lunch Bunch for allowing me to disrupt their lives. I offer a special token of gratitude to the late Dick Yoder, who was one of the first people I spoke with at the onset of this project.

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As always, I have benefited from the counsel of my family. My parents, Thomas and Maurene, provided sage advice from start to finish. I could not have written this dissertation without the love and support of my wife, Melissa, and our son, Carter, and daughter, Adeline.
For Adeline, Carter, and Melissa.

The three of you make every season a golden age.
Wm. Glenn Killinger, 1921. COURTESY OF PENN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
FIRST QUARTER
CHAPTER 1: BEGINNINGS

The October air was frigid, as it always is in the remote college town burrowed in the mountains of Central Pennsylvania, with the smell of manure and pounding sounds coming from one of the many mineral factories at the foot of Mount Nittany. It was the autumn of 1921. There they were, Killy and Bez, the dynamic player-coach tandem, leaning up against a Model T Ford. Both were future College Football Hall of Famers: Hugo Bezdek was already an All-American. Glenn Killinger was about to become one.

The two men, dressed in Chesterfield coats and flat caps, sat there on the car’s front bumper posing for a picture to promote Penn State’s upcoming game against the Naval Academy. When the photograph was developed and later published under the headline “Braced for Bumps,” the Associated Press article referred to the slim chance that Bezdek’s overachieving gridiron unit, which had already attained an unimaginable 6-0-1 record, had against the undefeated and seemingly infallible Midshipmen football team.

The game, which ended in a 13-7 upset victory for Penn State, turned out to be just a speed bump when compared to the world war that first brought Killinger and Bezdek together.

When the conflict that enveloped Europe, and ultimately much of the world, erupted during the summer of 1914, Glenn Killinger had little understanding of its relevance to the United States. He was just about to enter his junior year of high school when the guns of August ushered in the world’s first great war. Killinger, who grew up within the multicultural Allison Hill district of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was more concerned about running the streets and playing sports. He was happy—and proficient—
playing any sport. As long as there was a ball or stick in his hands, Killy was in his happy place.

Sports were first and foremost in his life. This likely would not have been an option a generation earlier when Americans worked on farms, plowed along the frontier, or were besieged as part of the urban working class. But as the twentieth-century dawned, and as the country modernized and grew more industrial, people of the Killingsers’ working class stature found themselves with more leisure time to shop, go bathing, play sports, and spend money.¹ By the time Killinger entered high school in 1912, sports had become an essential part of American culture designed to help develop boys into tough and responsible young men. Commander of the Rough Riders in the Spanish American War and later President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, who said a leader “can’t be efficient unless he is manly,” espoused that message.² To achieve in sports was presented as a metaphor for the American dream, one in which lower- and middle-class men of any pedigree could move up the social ladder. Although social status did not matter much to Killinger in his adolescent and teenage years, something fundamental about toughness made his desire to achieve in sports so important.

Despite his diminutive size growing up—he stood 5’1” 110 pounds when he entered high school and had grown just four inches and added thirty more pounds by his senior year—his best sport as a teenager was basketball. He seemed to excel as an

infielder in the city’s most competitive legion baseball league. Football was his favorite
to play, but he just did not fit in; and quite frankly, he was just terrible. Tagged with the
nickname “Shrimp” by his high school classmates, Killinger was always undersized and
failed to make the team until his senior year. Even then, he lasted just two quarters in the
only game he started and saw limited action in the remaining contests. “I was the worst
player on the worst team Harrisburg Tech ever had,” he divulged to sportswriters later in
his life.³ But he never gave up on his dream. When other kids tried to bully him, he
fought back. Instead of sitting at home or in his father’s hardware store, there were many
nights that he dragged his older brother, Earl, a popular sports referee in the city, to the
park to practice skills that would make him a better player.

Then the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. Unduly
influenced by the volume of propaganda distributed by the Committee of Public
Information, Killinger hungered to answer the call to duty. But he was too young for the
draft and his parents forbade him from volunteering. Consequently, five months later, he
enrolled in The Pennsylvania State College as a metallurgical engineering major, the
most popular field in academia due of war demands. Thinking that he would give college
football a shot, Killinger arrived late to practice on the first day of fall camp and watched
from the sidelines. Seeing that he weighed much lighter than the smallest person on the
team, he walked away feeling that football at Penn State would be as much of a waste of
his time than it was in high school.

In the meantime, the game of football changed for good in 1917. This is due to the
level of attention military training brought to the sport. Before Killinger arrived at Penn

³ Ridge Riley, The Road to Number One: A Personal Chronicle of Penn State Football
State, and before the intercollegiate football season got underway that autumn, the United States War Department took measures to make service sports an integral part of combat training. Every military encampment from Boston to Seattle offered intercollegiate athletics to thousands of cadets. Led by Commission on Training Camp Activities director Raymond Fosdick, tens of thousands of soldiers chose one sport from football, boxing, wrestling, baseball, track, and basketball to occupy down time during combat training. Football was the sport of choice for most servicemen. The game received an unmatched level of attention from the media. Parades usually preceded intercompany clashes. The annual rivalry game between Army and Navy held at Polo Grounds yielded 120,000 dollars for military training necessities. Benefit games to raise money for the Red Cross were often scheduled between a team from an army or navy installation and a varsity eleven from the intercollegiate association. Sports historian Steven W. Pope called the 1917 season “an unexpected success.” Writing in *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions and the American Imagination, 1876-1926* (1997), he provides insight into how service football manufactured an intense sense of passion for the gridiron sport, resulting in the new national pastime in the decade that followed the world war. “For those athletically inclined,” Pope says, “service football was more accessible than the select collegiate game. And the nonplaying soldiers experienced the music, color, drama, and spirit of the game, previously limited to the collegiate crowd.”\(^4\) In spite of war clouds hanging overhead, the 1917 college football season did more “in the way of the spread of the spirit of the game” than any effort before or since.

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The season in 1917 was the country’s first wartime football experience. The sport had not been interrupted nineteen years earlier during the Spanish-American War, which began in the spring and ended in August 1898. Therefore, not everyone knew how to respond. College football’s trendsetters—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—announced the cancelation of their football seasons shortly after the declaration of war. Athletic departments at other colleges followed suit. Citing “patriotism” and difficulty fielding rosters, each Ivy League school held out until November before playing a game that fall. For instance, out of 412 male students who were supposed to enroll at Yale in 1917, just 100 showed up to class on the first day of the semester. The rest were already in the service. Only one player from the 1916 team showed up at start of camp. By October, Yale had seventeen players in uniform. It was enough to schedule three games that fall, against Loomis Institute, Hampshire Naval Base, and Trinity College. The issue of player unavailability was ubiquitous. In 1917, Penn State returned just three of eighteen varsity lettermen and nine of sixteen members of the previous season’s freshman team. The Blue and White added a thirteenth player before the end of the season, and finished that autumn with a respectable 5-4 record.

One year into the war, nonetheless, Penn State’s football team was drained further by military enlistment. Every starter and coach was taken by the War Department and either sent off to the Western Front or to one of the officer training camps along the eastern seaboard or Midwest. The campus was placed under military occupation and was made host to a new division of the War Department called the Student Army Training Corps (SATC), a newly formed cooperative with some 540 colleges that gave students

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the opportunity to be trained as officers in the Army while earning credits toward a bachelor’s degree. The SATC was a complete overhaul of physical education requirements, intramural sports, intercollegiate competition, and massed athletics at civilian colleges. Almost 2,000 student-soldiers at Penn State, including Glenn Killinger, enrolled in the training program.

In the summer 1918, when the “Big Three” Ivy League schools again threatened to terminate their football seasons, the preeminent football authority Walter Camp, known in football circles as the Father of American Football who had recently been assigned athletic commissioner for the U.S. Department of the Navy, assembled a conference of college coaches to reassure that the Wilson Administration was wholly behind college sports. Indeed, the federal government launched earlier that summer the “Keep The Boys In College!” campaign. Cautious of losing skilled workers and future army and navy captains, the government actually discouraged citizens from volunteering for military service. As an inducement, the War Department established the Student Army Training Corps to force undrafted college students into a daily routine of military drills and competitive sports. For one hour a day, every college student was mandated to participate in either an intramural sport or varsity intercollegiate sport, in addition to completing all mandatory war aims courses. As you will read in the pages that follow, military training was predicated on getting college-age men acclimated to playing sports. Football, wrestling, boxing, swimming, baseball, and basketball were just some of the sports used to get idle and privileged young men into physical and mental shape for combat. Sports historian Michael Bohn observed in Heroes and Ballyhoo that, “when 30 percent of recruits failed draft physicals, alarmed military officers turned to sports to
Thereafter, it became characteristic to see doughboys return home with a desire to play sports like football, or to watch others play athletics as they waxed nostalgic about the good old days of military training.

**The Killinger Clan**

For William Glenn Killinger, this time began in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Its name, Harrisburg, dates from its eighteenth century cofounders—John Harris Sr. and John Harris Jr. By the time Glenn came along, the city spanned seven square miles, including 290 streets and over forty alleys. At least twenty-five miles of roads had been paved. Motor traffic was not the only source of transportation. A trolley system had already been established between Harrisburg and Hummelstown. With a population of 80,000, everybody but the “old fogies” in town met the trolley with great optimism.

Glenn was always proud of his upbringing. He was proud of his father; a former police officer that owned a successful hardware store in one of the most racially mixed neighborhoods in the city. He was proud of his mother, the ubiquitous caregiver who watched over every family member with unwavering love. He was proud of his older brother—a baseball-bat-toting local icon always looking to help out a member of the community—who never grew to resent Glenn’s fame and success. He was most proud of his older sister, the Red Cross devotee and fixture of Progressive Era Harrisburg who often seemed wrapped up in making moves as a trendsetter. This sense of pride

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manifested itself in his eagerness to talk about his parents and siblings with outsiders, his friends, and especially his son, Bill.

If there was one thing that was clearly noticeable about the Killinger family, it was their German heritage. It is an interesting part about Glenn’s background that was never addressed by sportswriters of his lifetime.

The Killingers’ roots in the United States extend back three generations. Dauphin County genealogist Luther Reily Kelker identified the first Killinger to arrive in the area was Glenn’s great-great-grandfather, Michael Killinger. Michael arrived in Dauphin County around the first decade of the nineteenth century. He purchased a large tract of land near present-day Hummelstown and lived there as a farmer. The name of his wife is unknown in genealogical records. He did have three sons: John, Michael, and David. Although they dabbled in a myriad of trades, the first two Killinger generations were farmers.

Michael’s son, David, was a shoemaker by trade, but he spent much of his life managing farms in Lebanon and Dauphin Counties. He raised his family—wife Catherine Rotz, and nine children—on a farm in Fishing Creek Valley, north of Harrisburg, in Dauphin County.

John Killinger, the second son David and Catherine grew up on his parents’ farm in Fishing Creek Valley. When he was old enough, he was apprenticed to a millwright in Grandville, also in Dauphin County. John worked as a tradesman for eleven years. He enlisted into Company D, 48th Regiment, Pennsylvania State militia on July 1, 1863. He was honorably discharged on August 26 of the same year. He moved around for the next

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three decades while trying to establish himself as a millwright. In 1894, he returned to Central Pennsylvania, finally settling in Harrisburg, where he opened a wheelwright’s shop. John, and his wife, Louise Stoudt, worshiped at the Lutheran Church in the city and had four children: Emma, born 1861, Jemima Margarita, born 1864, William Henry, born 1869, and Sherman Brooke, born 1880.

William Henry Killinger, or “Billy,” was the third child and eldest son born to John and Louise. He was born in Jonestown, Lebanon County on June 6, 1869. The family moved to Linglestown when he was one. It was there that Billy attained a public school education. Growing up on the outskirts of northern Harrisburg in the late nineteenth century, public schools in the area were segregated. That is, until June 1881, when a statute was passed by the legislature forcing racial integration throughout schools in the Commonwealth. The law had little impact on Billy’s schools, as Linglestown contained almost no African American residents. Yet, in the city, there was a substantial African American population that expanded south into Steelton and east toward Penbrook. Knowledge about the desegregation law was pervasive, nonetheless, as African Americans in Harrisburg were elected to political offices, hired as policemen, and worked as educators. Racial integration became apparent to Billy in 1885 when John Barth & Son Grocers hired him. The grocery store was located at 1025 N. Seventh Street. The exposure to different clientele developed some racial sensitivity against what he perceived as the usual prejudice of the day. Yet, no matter what the racial viewpoint that Billy maintained, he never turned away a customer. Even so when, in 1891, he and his father opened up their own merchandise store—Killinger & Son—at 110 Market Street,
located in an ideal part of center city. Billy took a respite from the retail business to work as a brakeman for Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh branch of the Reading Company, also known as the P. H. & P. Railroad Company, for three years and a city police officer for four years. That is, until 1899, when he purchased a hardware store at 27 South Thirteenth Street, in the heart of the Allison Hill District of the city of Harrisburg.

A contemporary of the Killingers’, Luther Reily Kelker, described Billy as “a man of progressive ideas and much force of character.” Many in the capital city shared the sentiment, as his resume reveals how in touch he was with the community. Billy was a member of the original Sons of Veterans Drum Corps. In addition, he was involved in the Free and Accepted Masons; Zembo Temple; Harrisburg Sovereign Consistory; the Knights of Malta; the Cincinnatus Commandery, No. 96; the Phoenix Lodge, No. 59; the Knights of Pythias; and the John Harris Commandery, Jr., No. 174. He was an active member of the United Order of American Mechanics. Billy’s wide acquaintance in Harrisburg knew him as an ardent sportsman, one who enjoyed all sports, loved to fish and went out each year during the hunting season. He took his family to the Lutheran Church. And, he was a proud Republican.

Glenn Killinger’s parents—Billy and Florence—were married on December 25, 1890. Glenn’s mother, Florence, was an impressive woman, deriving from a valiant

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10 Kelker, History of Dauphin County, 171
11 “Father of City’s NY-P League Team Manager is Dead.” Harrisburg Telegraph, October 20, 1928, 1, 15.
12 Charles W. Henry Jr, William Glenn Killinger: Athlete and Coach: A thesis in Physical Education (The Pennsylvania State University, The Graduate School, Department of
military family. Her father, Henry Harrison Wilson, was a printer by trade but enlisted in Company F, 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry, 106th Regiment at the onset of the Civil War. He rose to the rank of captain of the company before war’s end. After the war, Henry Harrison spent the remainder of his days working as a mail carrier between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. Florence had two industrious siblings, older brother Ira Homer, editor of Mifflin County’s Newton Herald, and younger brother Edwin, who worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

The couple first took up residence on Green Street between the city’s uptown and the State Capitol. The house was located two miles from the Killinger Hardware Store in Allison Hill, but the location was convenient for Billy’s participation in various independent orders. The Zembo Shrine Center and the Harrisburg Consistory Scottish Rite building were both located a few blocks from Green Street. So was the Lutheran Church. It was in the Green Street home where Billy and Florence’s four children were born.

Their first child, according to an interview in 1966 with Glenn, was a girl, born in 1891, who died shortly after birth. The first survivor of Billy and Florence’s brood, born August 1893, was Earl Wilson. A teller at the East End Bank in Harrisburg, Earl was a promising player and manager of the Allison Hill League’s Rosewood Athletic Club baseball team. He balanced his work at the bank and his involvement in the Rosewood Athletic Club with course work at the Harrisburg branch of the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton Business School. He earned extra money by officiating high school physical education.

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Physical Education, September 1966, 7-8; Year: 1900; Census Place: Harrisburg Ward 9, Dauphin, Pennsylvania; Roll: 1403; Page: 15A; Enumeration District: 0078; FHL microfilm: 1241403

13 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 8.
school basketball games and umpiring twilight baseball in the area. Earl was married on November 24, 1915 to Marian Elizabeth Mumma in a quiet ceremony held at the Centenary United Brethren Church. The newlyweds settled at 1831 Zarker Street, located half a mile north from the family’s hardware store. They had their only child, a daughter, who they named Jane Mumma, on February 1, 1917.

Earl was the Killinger family member who had the greatest influence on Glenn’s athletic development. The brothers frequently tested their physical mettle against one another. Earl was better at tennis, ice hockey, and basketball, while Glenn bested his older brother at sprinting and handball. Even at the peak of Glenn’s college career, Earl performed as an equal on the baseball diamond of the Allison Hill League. He could do it all; pitch, field, catch, hit and steal bases. Though there are no records, Earl, who towered over his younger brother during their teenage years, may never have gotten the better of Glenn at football. The two were inseparable; Glenn would gravitate to his older brother and pester him to play anything. Earl, who Glenn called his “guiding light” and “guardian angel,” often acquiesced; not surprisingly, he refused to hold anything back. Earl would turn a game of catch into tough-love competitions.14 The streets in Allison Hill were narrow, sloped, and consumed by dirt. The steep gradients never discouraged the boys from trying to outdo one another in sprints home from an afternoon at the park, no matter the age difference.

Earl, five-years older, would taunt young Glenn. He would speed pitches by his younger brother with ease. He bullied Glenn in sibling basketball contests. Florence thought Earl was too harsh. Glenn, meanwhile, hated to lose, but allowed the setbacks to

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teach him to search for advantages against his older brother. In sandlot games, Glenn focused on becoming a better fielder. On the basketball court, he worked to develop a smoother set shot. And he spent many mornings sprinting up the steep roads of Allison Hill to build mental strength.

Glenn’s sister, Elizabeth, was born next, in 1895, though there is confusion about the exact year she was born. Most people knew her as “Biz.” Biz was a socialite. The local newspaper often covered her afternoons of tea. She occasionally attained acting roles in the local theater. She hosted masquerade parties for her peers at the YWCA Business Girls’ Class. For many years, Biz was a member of the Young Women’s Christian Association and the Reservoir Tennis Club. At the tennis club, she worked as recording secretary of the house committee. Her boss was the local political authority, city councilman, and Superintendent of Parks and Public Property, Maris Harvey Taylor. He assigned Biz with the job of supervising the clubhouse and to distribute lockers to club members. When it was appropriate, she played in the club’s doubles tennis tournaments with her brother, Earl. Glenn’s sister was dignified and voluptuous, with dark hair cut short. She stood no taller than 5’ 4”. Pale in complexion, she possessed an enchanting smile with alluring charm that made her quite the catch among single women in Harrisburg, and her smile reeled in one of the most accomplished bachelors in the city.

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15 Maris Harvey Taylor (1876-1982) was became a nationally known member of the Republican Party by the 1930s. He is celebrated in Harrisburg as superintendent of parks and public property, which was one of his first positions held as a public figure. He was one of the frontrunners to the beautification movement in Harrisburg. He helped in the creation of the Sunken Gardens within Riverfront Park. Taylor was a leading figure in the development of Wildwood Park, including the operation of its zoo between 1929 and 1950. He died less than a month from his 106th birthday.
If Glenn looked up to Biz for any reason, it was more for whom she married. In December 1918, she was engaged to business magnate and Penn State track and field star Earl Lyter Kunkle. With a lean build, broad shoulders, chiseled jaw, pointed chin, straight nose, and parted hair, “Kunk” drew many whispers when he walked by crowds. He impressed for his third place pentathlon finish in the 1914 national track and field championships. He fancied doting women for his confident appearance, coupled with his family’s affluence. But it was Biz, five years his junior, who captured his heart. Kunkle and Elizabeth were married by 1920. They moved into a house on Brisban Road in the Paxtang district of greater Harrisburg.\(^{16}\)

Glenn looked up to his brother-in-law because he was an accomplished, strong-minded sort who had a resume like no other. A 1914 graduate of Penn State, “Kunk” was a young man with immeasurable energy and intelligence. Like he did on the track, he faired adequately as a Mechanical Engineering major. His mantra throughout college was: “To secure high efficiency.” This he did accomplish. Upon graduation, his peers described him as one who “will work on the football field three hours a day and still be able to climb four floors of ‘Old Main’.” Kunk used his degree to attain a job at the Harrisburg Auto Transportation Company as an engineer and manager. He also used his collegiate track success to attain the head coaching position of Harrisburg Central High

School’s track team in 1917. Kunkle selflessly enlisted into the army at the outbreak of World War I. By 1918, he received the rank of lieutenant in the Ordnance Department of the Army, receiving his commission at Camp Raritan in New Jersey.

With Earl, Biz, and Kunk, Glenn was blessed to have so many positive influences in his life. All three family members displayed a balanced approach to life that came to define Glenn’s future as a college student and in the professional ranks.

Glenn was the youngest child born into the Killinger family. He entered the world on September 13, 1898. His first name, William, was that of his father, but he went by his middle name, Glenn, which was the name of his great-grandfather on his mother’s side of the family. The family name, however, was spelled with only one “n.” At the age of four, the Killinger clan moved into an apartment above the family hardware store at 27 South Thirteenth Street in Allison Hill, later re-numbered 37 South Thirteenth Street, valued at $19,000. Along with Earl, Biz, Glenn, and their two parents, a domestic servant, Stella Runkle, a German immigrant with a heavy accent, resided in their home.

The new Killinger home, including the shop, was a three-story, gray stucco attached building. In those days the uppermost floor presented a splendid view to the northwest of the capitol rotunda, which sat one mile away. The trolley line ran along Thirteenth Street, diverging north toward Reservoir Park and south down either Market or State Streets, toward center city and the capitol building, respectively. The trolley existed as a fascination to young Glenn. He often stood at the stop to watch passengers

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get on and off. But when he needed to get to a destination, Car-Four, with red and white lights, costing a nickel, took him into center city.

Named for its founder, William Allison, the area in the southern end of Harrisburg encompassed three distinct sections—North, Central, and South Allison Hill. “The Hill,” as many called it, contained three-story family homes, stone churches, a synagogue, a recreation center, a doctor’s office, and small family-owned businesses like the Killinger Hardware Store. Most of the architecture was Italianate or Victorian. The roads were narrow, and they all sloped in and out of the city. So any exit out of Allison Hill meant a trek uphill was the only way back into the district. German-Americans mixed with Jews and African American residents throughout the district. It was—and still is—one of the most racially mixed areas of Pennsylvania’s capital city. The Hill, and the varied experiences therein, was the center of Glenn’s universe for the first nineteen years of his life.

Sports were always a part of the environment at the Killinger house, with friends of the three children coming and going. Glenn and his siblings were raised with tenderness, but taught to possess an industrious approach to life. Their father pushed their athletic pursuits while Florence kept a close eye on their approach to academics. Each would report back to the other. If a serious problem arose, Papa Killinger handled the discipline. In 1961, Earl said their father was “a genial, good-natured, lovable man with a sense of humor, and a great love for athletics.” He described his mother as, “energetic, decided in thought and deed, never idle, and considered by her children as the salt of the
The kids were allowed to cavort around the neighborhood with friends as long as Billy and Florence knew where they were playing.

They were proud parents, but it was especially difficult keeping track of Glenn’s active life. Jay W. Clark, a childhood friend, explained Glenn’s assiduous approach to sports as “insatiable.” As a youngster, watching sports was as important for his development as playing them. “I never missed an opportunity to watch the local sandlot and high school teams play,” he wrote wistfully in his memoir at age 87. Recalling the Harrisburg Senators of the New York-Pennsylvania minor league, which played its games on Island Park, present-day City Island, he said he attended games regularly “when I could beg twelve cents from my Dad.” In those common occasions when he was too afraid to ask for money, he admitted, “I would sneak into the games with some of my pals.” The island-based field near his Harrisburg home was “wide open with no fences.” He gloated vivaciously, “It was easy to outrun the policeman at the main entrance.”

Though Glenn usually obeyed the rules as a juvenile, he did have many ethical lapses. He had mentors in his life that steered him away from serious trouble. And yet, on occasion, adolescent impulses unlocked moral counterforces, especially when he spent time with his gang of friends. Historian Oscar Handlin wrote of a “consciousness of belonging” that second and third generation immigrants like Glenn Killinger clung to as urban youths. Killinger joined an ethnic gang as a way to establish an identity in the peculiar Allison Hill environment. “[E]ach individual had a role [in the gang] which reflected his own capabilities and qualities,” explained Handlin in his seminal book *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*

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Most of Glenn’s peers were as obsessive about athletics as he was, but some were on the lookout for trouble. And all craved a sense of fitting in that was tied to the neighborhood. Racial divisions normally caused the scuffles. Glenn’s friends, mostly of Jewish and German heritage that inhabited much of South Thirteenth Street bumped shoulders with African American kids throughout the neighborhood. “Every other night they would fight,” Glenn’s son Bill remembered about his father. “They’d meet and fight.”

Glenn was a small kid, skinny, just a tad over one hundred pounds when he entered high school, Bill described. He may have been scrawny, with more of an erudite appearance, but his squirrel-like agility made him never shy away from scrapes around Allison Hill. The skirmishes were far from momentous. None of the local newspapers reported racial incidents among adolescents and teenagers taking place in The Hill. Killinger’s fractional ramblings among the troublemakers in the city taught him some street skills of survival. Even better, this element of rebellion absent of the parental dictates of Billy and Florence helped to shape a competitive attitude on the playing fields.

The spots for young Glenn then were the two municipal parks in Allison Hill—the Twelfth Street Play Ground and Reservoir Park. Both refuges were a respectable distance from the Killinger home. Each was a bit more than a mile away, and for seven years, when he was between the ages of twelve and nineteen, Glenn spent nearly every day at one of these parks. The park on Twelfth Street was designed especially for the amusement of children. It encompassed swings, slides, and a space to play catch.

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Reservoir Park was much bigger, and offered more for the high school and college ages. Easily accessible by trolley, the park, eighty-eight acres in entirety, was complete with the city’s reservoir, park houses, tennis courts, volleyball nets, golf links, pavilions, a foot-powered merry-go-round, stages for concerts, swings, an ice-hockey rink, and fields for soccer, football, baseball, and the like. The parks helped provide a break from the structure in Glenn’s life, given the discipline imposed by his parents.

Allison Hill was far from a delight, but it was, perhaps, ideal to prepare Glenn for life in the twentieth century. Apart from its racial quarrels, it had chronic trash problems. The fire department was understaffed. The local newspaper often reported about mischief in the area, but never announced the names of culprits, hinting that the police usually never solved the crimes. While Glenn’s brother and father were away at work, and before his sister’s marriage, he spent many summer days at home with the Killinger women. Not old enough to understand how society expected women to behave, the two women modeled nineteenth century femininity for Glenn. “She taught me many social graces,” he said of his sister.23 At times, Biz possessed tendencies to break that perception when she took to the tennis court. Glenn often tagged along with his big sister to the tennis club. On the way, he would notice waves of Germans, Irish, Italians, African Americans, and Jews. None were rich. The Killingers lived comfortably when compared to others in The Hill.

Beginning in 1905, Glenn enrolled in public schools in Harrisburg. For grades one through five, he attended Webster Grammar School on the corner of Thirteenth and Kittatinny Streets. For sixth grade, his parents transferred him to the Forney Grammar

23 Killinger, *A Penn State Walk-On*, 2
School, located at Eighteenth and Chestnut Streets. The Killingers never went on record about the transfer, but the local media made Forney out to be a top-notch athletic school for middle school-aged students. Glenn’s focus toward academics was not a secondary thought. On the contrary, he performed so well that he was able to complete his seventh and eighth grade work in one year at Forney. Long hours of watching his older siblings coast through school left him with an acute sense of the importance for a quality education.

After graduating from Forney in 1912, Glenn enrolled in the city’s industrial training school, or Harrisburg Technical High School as it was officially called. Opened in 1905, the Harrisburg Tech school building had one of the most distinguished appearances of any building in the city. Located on the corner of Walnut and Aberdeen Streets, a sizable distance from the Killinger home, the building in 1982 was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The school was a four-story, concrete Collegiate Gothic building that sat on a brownstone foundation.

Harrisburg Technical High School operated as an alternative to Harrisburg Central High School. Most students attended the liberal arts high school, but Tech grew in popularity every year leading up to the time Glenn enrolled. Many saw it as a solution for the nascent problems of attendance, tardiness, and poor conduct. Still, the school lacked diversity. Harrisburg Tech was an all-boys school and was racially segregated.

The program Glenn entered at Harrisburg Tech was designed to prepare students for higher technical colleges, professional schools, for entrepreneurship, for advanced apprenticeships, or simple mechanical and engineering work. There was little classical education, but by graduation he was expected to have mastered composition, literature,
German or French, history, and civics. Mathematics, science, drawing, and different forms of practical shop work were heavily emphasized.\textsuperscript{24} His mathematics course load included arithmetic, algebra, plane and solid geometry, logarithms, and plane trigonometry. His science courses were physical geography, physics, electricity, chemistry, and steam engineering. Drawing courses included free-hand, mechanical and architectural drawing, shop drawing, blue printing, and tracing. A double period existed daily to give students shop experience. Accordingly, Glenn took wood working, sheet metal work, wood turning, pattern-making, molding, ornamental iron work, machine tool practice, and steam engineering.\textsuperscript{25}

The school years at Harrisburg Tech were divided into three equal semesters—Fall, Winter, and Spring—with the goal of seeing students graduate within three years. The workload was demanding, but school officials found time to take students on field trips to places like the Pennsylvania Steel Company in Steelton. The school established a credible relationship with various colleges and universities. Many of Tech’s students were admitted into Cornell University, the University of Pennsylvania, Penn State College, and Dickinson College.

This was a world that seemed to resemble the rough and tumble of Allison Hill, where Glenn could have had his nose broken out on the playground. The school was located about ten minutes away by trolley from South Thirteenth Street. Sometimes, Glenn and his buddies footed it to school, which took under twenty minutes with haste. The school was situated in eyesight of the imposing State Capitol, and three blocks from

\textsuperscript{24} Henry, \textit{William Glenn Killinger}, 9-10.

the Susquehanna River. His classmates came from all sections of the city. Most, Glenn realized early on, were just as formidable at learning than he was. When it came to sports, many were better at the grind.

At the three public schools he attended—Webster Grammar, Forney Grammar, and Harrisburg Tech—Glenn had his classmates fooled. His peers at Tech described him as both a “pool shark” and “card shark.” Among those his age, Glenn was considered a master at pocket billiards. He monopolized pool tables at Leonard’s Billiards and Bowling, the local hangout at 321 Market Street. He was even more impressive in games of pinochle, which is likely what gave those his age the impression that he was a shrewd tactician. He was never an imposing figure in high school. The most laughable nickname under his high school yearbook picture was “Shrimp.” Boyishly handsome, he parted his hair to the left, appeared as if he hardly ate, and possessed a trace of haughtiness. He was clever, but concealed it by singing and whistling in the hallway. Ernest R. Ball’s “Love Me and the World is Mine” was his favorite song. The yearbook mentioned, “the only work he does is work his jaws.”

In the streets, his appearance was unkempt. He dressed for sport, and wore his rough edges on his sleeve. Being a Killinger, there was no surprise that he would end up as a competent engineering student. After all, as much as his peers teased him, most people at Tech liked and respected him. He had little time for girlfriends, choosing instead to work hard at sports hoping someone would give him a chance. He even held

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his own against the best athletes in the school, but everyone knew he was undersized and sure to be cut from the team.

To his father and mother and siblings sports must have seemed like a pastime. They naturally assumed that giving Glenn a ball was giving him nothing more than a toy to occupy his time. His appreciation for carrying around a football or baseball bat grew into a lifetime love. Those toys were actually devices that would soon come to pave the road for an enduring career.
CHAPTER 2: EVOLUTION OF AN ATHLETE

Writing in his cultural study of American athletics, *Sports and Freedom*, sports historian Ronald A. Smith sees athletics as a foundational institution for cultural development throughout American history. College sports, he emphasizes, offers the means to hone American success skills. “The physical nature of the individual and of American society appeared to be a desired quality in the age of Darwin,” he writes. “Athletic victories gave an image of virility to institutions of higher learning.” Through success, athletics has the potential to both enhance visibility and generate revenue for a school, city, or locale. It can produce the same level of popularity and affluence for the individuals who play them. A sport, Smith argues, has the potential of paving a path to social mobility. Moreover, athletes become unencumbered from all such dictates of parents and institutional authority figures. “In a like manner,” the noted historian says, “athletics spoke for freedom of the body.”¹ That sense of “manly independence,” and the prestige that came with it, was pervasive throughout the more than sixteen million young athletes at the turn of the century.

Sport and Class

Glenn Killinger was just like many teenage boys in those days that sought the fame and fortune of America’s professional athletes. “As soon as I was able to read the newspapers,” Glenn said reflecting on his childhood, “I became an avid reader of the sports pages.” He studied the sports columns in the Harrisburg and Philadelphia

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newsprints. He was “intrigued” by the “great football and baseball athletic heroes.” As an unabashed youth in Harrisburg, he consequently played every sport in the style that “these great athletes” performed. “One day I would image I was Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants, the next as Walter Johnson of the Washington Senators, the next day as Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers.” He said wistfully: “I worshiped the deeds of Jim Thorpe of the Carlisle Indians.” Little did he realize as a boy that one day he would measure up to many of his childhood heroes.2

As a beneficiary of a middle-class German and Scots-Irish family, with a father who managed a popular hardware store and two impressive older siblings, Glenn virtually never faced social obstacles when it came to participation in sports. Highbrow or lowbrow, it never mattered to the aspiring boy who seemingly fit right in games played by upper and lower classes. He played most of them—football, baseball, basketball, tennis, golf, swimming, ice hockey, wrestling, and handball. He participated in the most popular sports in organized settings, while often tagging along with brother, Earl, and sister, Biz, for the others. There was a mythos of sports’ golden age that was prevailing in Glenn Killinger’s day: sporting trends imposed many unseen racial and economic divisions among America’s athletes. Writing for the American Quarterly in 1977, Historian Benjamin G. Rader argued that recreational sports “could be easily transformed into a multifaceted social agency” while also existing as “an instrument for social exclusion.”3 Glenn slipped through those socioeconomic cracks. Yet still, the divisions were inescapable in early twentieth-century Harrisburg.

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His sister, Biz, loved tennis. At the time, both in and out of Harrisburg, the game existed for the privileged, and was predominantly an all-white sport. The fact that she came from a middle-class household did not deter her from playing. This was mainly due to her job at the Reservoir Park Tennis Club, which gave her access to the courts. She played with her friends whenever possible.

Benjamin Rader’s *American Quarterly* article, “The Quest for Subcommunities and the Rise of Sport,” (1977) addresses the exclusivity of private clubs in the Progressive Era. Particularly noteworthy is Rader’s assertion that socially exclusive clubs were formed at the turn of the century to maintain social status within an urban-industrial society flooded with European immigrants. He notes that private sports clubs promoted a specific style of life that “would exclude outsiders.” Foremost among the lifestyles were a proper manner of dress and speech, education at the best schools, and a host of in-group behavioral nuances. Such traits brought harmony among highborn society members, Rader writes, by providing “an intricate web of primary group milieu which [gave] . . . form and structure to an otherwise impersonal urban society composed of secondary groups.”

While the wealthy class resided within the northern end of Harrisburg where many ball fields and recreational parks were placed, the southern end, where the Killingers lived, was a hubbub of immigrant life. In a way, the teenager drifted between the two societies as he traded one sport for the next.

While identifying with half the characteristics expected within upper-class barometers of early twentieth-century status, Glenn took an interest in tennis because of

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his older sister. He often played, with nominal success, singles and doubles matches in summer tournaments held at Reservoir Park. Comically, he once finished in last place at the 1913 city championship. He went home with the “Booby Prize,” which was a pair of tennis shoes.\(^5\) He even tried out for the Harrisburg Technical School’s tennis team in the spring of his senior year, only to quit after a few weeks to play interscholastic baseball against rival schools.

Like tennis, golf was and has remained a sport for the country club crowd. Glenn grew to love golf in the 1920s after he left Harrisburg. He even became a West Chester Golf and Country Club champion several times in the years following World War II. However, he had little interest in the game when he lived in Harrisburg. Few people spoke about it in his hometown, and the media seldom covered the sport.

**Sport and Masculinity**

Then there were the middle-class sports. A look through the local newspapers reveals bowling as a sport most city residents enjoyed playing, as did much of the country during the first six decades of the twentieth century. The media also covered wrestling, but few in Harrisburg paid much attention to the sport at any level.

Not surprisingly, football was Killinger’s favorite to play. Although it gave him the most hardships in his athletic pursuits, it ultimately made him one of the most accomplished college athletes of his era. Admittedly, Killinger unequivocally embraced the violent nature of the gladiator sport. Ever since the Americanization of football as a byproduct of British rugby, each year the sport had grown in popularity: college football

conferences emerged as did annual rules committees; and the media coverage became obsessive, making it apparent that football really was becoming a national fixation. According to Smith, a growth in football’s popularity was due in large part to Walter Camp’s relentless efforts to promote the sport through his publications in various media outlets, *Outing, Harper’s Weekly,* and *Collier’s,* in addition to his recurring columns in newspapers across the country. Camp’s message to his readers was that football is a manufacturer of manhood; its violence (in place of combat experience) gives American boys the skills to become, in his words, “virile and effective leaders of the modern age.” Camp’s doctrine of masculinity, discussed so articulately in Julie Des Jardins’s *Walter Camp: Football and the Modern Man* (2015), was convincing to young Killinger, who agreed that the game was transformative. This outlook was only buttressed by Camp’s journalism colleague and “Sportlight” columnist Grantland Rice, who wrote of football in 1954: “courage, mental and physical condition, spirit and its terrific body contact which tends to sort the men from the boys.” Football, Rice continued, “remains one of the great games of all time.” Whereas many people had already died from injuries sustained while playing the sport, the undersized Killinger was never deterred from the game’s savagery. In an age before mouthpieces, the fearless footballer would have six teeth replaced before his career came to an end.

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While the public craved college football after World War I through the 1920s, professional football was hardly recognized as a sporting phenomenon. The difference was the extent of school pride, rivalries between student bodies and faculties, and degree of media coverage that made the college game a cultural spectacle. Beginning with rowing competitions between Ivy League schools along the East Coast, and the subsequent growth in popularity of baseball as an intercollegiate sport at the turn of the century, football rapidly became America’s fall pastime at the start of the Progressive Era, claims Benjamin Rader, as students returned to college after an extended summer break by bonding “diverse groups into larger college communities” and helping “to unite students behind a common cause.”

Moreover, print media and the radio helped elevate intercollegiate football rivalries from campus to campus. Ronald A. Smith says football brought “students of various colleges together in displays of excellence and competition that faculty saw only rarely in the classroom.”

College football appealed to the high as much as the low. During Killinger’s era, teams from the Ivy League and military academies were among the nation’s best football programs; yet every year, independent colleges and universities held their own against the traditional powers. This was important for college presidents and faculties that quickly recognized football’s power over public relations. Owing to football’s popularity, it grew easier for America’s colleges to attract students who would have otherwise attended an Ivy League school. Rader says, “Administrators soon discovered that football was far more effective in attracting public attention than an institution’s reputation for

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9 Benjamin G. American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports. New York: Prentice Hall, 1999), 89.
10 Smith, Sports and Freedom 84.
scholarship, religiosity, or inspired teaching.\textsuperscript{11} Administrative reluctance combined with inevitable buy-in to football fostered the masculine image espoused by Camp in the years before the world war. Football, Rader affirms, projected the male collegiate as “rugged and fearless” with the capacity to “hold his own in the world outside the walls of academia.”\textsuperscript{12}

It was a simple era, but the sport’s violence generated intense waves of attack on two separate occasions during Killinger’s childhood. Football’s early form was played in a rudimentary fashion with players on both teams packed closely to the line of scrimmage. Instead of the flash and finesse that modern football offers, offensive linemen could go in motion before the snap and they usually formed a wedge so ball carriers could plunge forward for a few yards. In 1905, after twenty-five players died and another 168 footballers received serious injuries ranging from dislocated ankles, concussions, fractured ribs, broken arms and legs, cracked collarbones, and torn ligaments at all levels of football, which included high school, college, professional, and athletic club teams, college presidents and many from the public called for the abolition of the sport unless “the moral and physical evils” were expunged from the game. President of the United States Theodore Roosevelt encouraged rule changes, but not before telling football aficionado Walter Camp, “I would a hundred fold rather keep the game as it is now, with the brutality, than give it up.” The uproar from the public, however, was too vociferous. Modifications were needed. In December, the Intercollegiate Rules Committee, made up of head coaches, college faculty, and headed by Camp, with an unprecedented level of intervention by the United States president, created new benchmark rules that placed an

\textsuperscript{11} Rader, \textit{American Sports}. 90.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 91.
emphasis on stricter measures of fair play, academic eligibility, 10-yards for a first down, the neutral zone, and forward passing.\textsuperscript{13} The game was saved for the moment at least.

In 1909, a second crusade against football developed as a result of an upsurge of player deaths, including ten fatalities at the college level and thirty on all levels. Sports historian John Sayle Watterson notes in an article for the \textit{Journal of Sports History} that it was not the spike in the number of fatalities that “shattered this brief calm,” but rather where and when the deaths occurred that enlivened the debate over safety regulations. On October 17, Earl Wilson, the quarterback for the Naval Academy, was paralyzed from the neck down after breaking his spine in a game against Villanova.\textsuperscript{14} Two weeks later, three players died in a single day from concussions sustained in football games: Michael Burke of Medico-Chirurgical College in Philadelphia; Roy Spybuck of the Haskell Indian School in Haskell, Oklahoma; and Eugene A. Byrne of West Point. The death of Byrne, left tackle and team captain at West Point, received the most attention namely because the injury occurred against Harvard in a game played near New York City, the nation’s media capital. One scathing \textit{New York Evening Post} editorial that was reprinted in newspapers throughout the country after Byrne’s death attacked the brutality of the sport: “Football is not merely a sport now; it is a contrivance for injuring and maiming.”\textsuperscript{15}

Then, on November 14, 18-year-old, Archer Christian, halfback at the University of


Virginia, died after sustaining a concussion in a contest against Georgetown University.

As a result, Watterson notes, high schools in Washington D.C., St. Louis, and New York suspended football. West Point and the universities of Georgetown, Virginia, and North Carolina abruptly ended their seasons.16

Table I: Deaths and Serious Injuries, 1905-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Serious Injuries</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Levels</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Figures from New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and Harrisburg Telegraph17

Table II: Newspaper Reports on Causes of Death in College Football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Body blows</th>
<th>Spinal injuries</th>
<th>Concussions</th>
<th>Blood Poisoning</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figures from New York Times and Chicago Tribune18

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Most fans of the game wanted to save football, but several university officials became vocal in their opposition. Cornell’s prominent anatomist, Burt Green Wilder, attacked the game as “a relic of barbarism.” David Starr Jordan, president at Stanford University, said the injuries will lessen the popularity of American football and “may pave the way for the introduction of Rugby into the eastern colleges.” And Syracuse University Chancellor James Day decried that his colleges could not “afford to have their men killed and maimed in a game that serves only an exceedingly small proportion of college men.” But in spite of the reputable voices calling for an end of football, Watterson has a theory that the outcry was not so much over player safety than it was a reform crusade in line with efforts common to the Progressive Era. The period was famous for “self-criticism and political unrest,” writes Watterson, highlighted by congressional measures that cracked down on the meat packing industry and factories employing adolescent children as cheap labor. Muckraking journalists, such as Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, Jacob Riis, and Ray Stannard Baker wrote critiques that generated social change during the period. Like the social reform efforts that led to the Children’s Bureau and the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Chicago Tribune’s John McCutcheon and New York World publisher Joseph Pulitzer produced cartoons showing young men carried off the field in various stages of death. The sensationalized

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images created a frenzy that nearly led to the demise of football, but instead secured modified rules pertaining to diving tackles, onside kicks, and other mass plays.\(^\text{20}\)

Although the attacks drove a scare into players, coaches, and sportswriters that were excessively emotionally invested in the game, the rule changes between 1905 and 1910 actually made the sport more appealing for spectators. By early twentieth century standards, however, that was not saying a lot. Playing fields were eyesores. The gridiron was a hundred yards long, but it had no special logos or hash marks. It was possible to snap the ball to begin a play at any location on the playing field. Not until the 1940s did the ball get moved back to the center of the field for the start of a play. Before 1927, the goal posts were positioned at the goal line making it dangerous for the players. Each team had anywhere from sixteen to twenty-five players on their roster. Both teams typically wore dark jerseys without numbers. It was nearly impossible for fans to distinguish one team from the other, let alone try to identify their favorite player. Some players wore the traditional leather helmet, which seemed to serve as the emblem of the golden age. Others chose not to wear one. No rule required a helmet to be worn until 1943. While some players fashioned their own nose and ear guards out of leather, facemasks and protective mouthpieces were still things of the future. Rules notwithstanding, the forward pass, trick plays, and an evolving offensive system made the game more alluring for onlookers.

It was a player-centered era that was strictly dependent upon the intellectual competency of the team’s quarterback. A coach’s ability to instruct during a game was

limited. It was against the rules for coaches to bark directions or make schematic adjustments at all during regulation. Coaches were forbidden to send play calls or new alignments in with substitutes. So the burden of signal calling fell upon the shoulders of the quarterback, who hardly functioned the same way a quarterback operates in the twenty-first century. Quarterbacks were glorified linemen, a blocking back, who rarely touched the ball. He was a field general with the all-important job of calling the play first, then assuming the role of lead blocker. Teams seldom huddled. Therefore, between every snap, the quarterback had to check out the defensive alignment, get his teammates into the proper formation, and make the play-call. He called the plays, but, in the Single Wing and Double Wing systems, it was possible for any one of the four-backfield players to get the snap from center. The person fielding the snap would then spin 180 degrees to either hand the ball off, fake an exchange and plunge into the middle of the interior, throw a forward pass, or punt.21

The best players performed like iron-men. The eleven starters never came off the field unless due to injury. Which meant, all twenty-two players who were on the field for the opening kickoff had to remain on the field the entire game. The rules stated that if a player had to come out of the game for any reason, they were prohibited from re-entering until the change of a quarter. Stamina was important to survive the game, though many players mastered the tactic of faking an injury, especially in moments of the second half when fresh legs were needed.22

Even at a young age, Killinger thrived on that amount of pressure. He worshipped everything about the game. He loved the fact that football was grungy. He always appreciated football’s primal and yet cerebral precision. In his book, *Football*, published in 1938, Killinger explained that he was most impressed with the game’s sophistication, the amount of brainpower and mental toughness needed to perform well.

Out on the sandlots, he learned the many skills that it took to have any success as a football player. Dropkicking and punting were pivotal aspects of the game since its inception. Passing, which had its limitations because the oblong ball at twenty-seven inches in circumference resembled more the size and weight of a rugby ball, came of age in the mid-1910s. In 1906, the forward pass became legal, but the rule stated that the thrower had to be standing at least 5-yards behind the line of scrimmage. All passes, whether caught or dropped, were live balls, and must be thrown behind the line of scrimmage. When Glenn entered high school in 1912, the size of the ball was reduced to twenty-three inches and the forward passing rule was amended to allow passes down the field, but teams were penalized for incompletions. The rule was changed once again in 1914, stating that if a pass was dropped by a wide receiver, and the ball rolled out of bounds, possession was given to the opposing team. Possession was also given to the opponent if an incomplete pass was thrown in the end zone. The rules treated that like a touchback, giving the ball to the opponent at the 20-yard line. When Glenn was playing

at Penn State, the rule was changed again to nullify the penalty for incomplete passes and to allow passes to go beyond 20 yards.

It was very rare for a team to possess a dual-threat quarterback. In that day, dual-threat meant a quarterback was exceptional at play calling, running, passing, dropkicking, and punting. Glenn Killinger eventually became the pioneer for contemporary dual-threat quarterbacks.

Dropkicking was used to kick both extra points and field goals. Early in football, dropkicks had a higher point value than touchdowns. A rule in 1909 reduced the value of a field goal to three points—down from five points—and later, in 1912, a touchdown was increased to six points, up from two points.26

Punting was a big part of strategy. This aspect of the game was a key to Glenn’s gridiron success. “The way to victory was not to possess the ball,” wrote Chris Willis, the author of Old Leather: An Oral History of Early Pro Football in Ohio (2005), “but to give it to your opponent deep in their territory and let him make a mistake.”27 As the signal caller at Penn State—even at Harrisburg Tech on rare occasions—Glenn called punts on first and second down to play for field position. A look at the box scores during Glenn’s playing career shows a multitude of games ending in shutout scores, or one score victories.

Glenn’s attention was also drawn mostly to America’s summer pastime, baseball. It was a sport that signified the Killingers’ middle-class values above all else. By the 1910s, the sport had long been established as America’s pastime. It was especially popular in Harrisburg. There were three amateur league baseball clubs in the area with

26 Ibid, 22-23.
27 Willis, Old Leather, xiii.
the Allison Hill Twilight League existing as the city’s prevailing league, perhaps because it offered the most playing opportunities for locals. Local competitions attracted huge crowds; in many cases, media coverage for the Allison Hill League was as prevalent as that for the professional game. Postgame festivities, and talks with brooding sportswriters usually followed games taking place in Reservoir Park and other public parks. In unison with what was taking place across the United States at the turn of the century, baseball had quickly become Harrisburg’s pastime; which meant the role of the spectators became as important for the game as the role of the players.

Sports historian Steven W. Pope wrote that baseball brought together men of similar class backgrounds “to fraternize and play together.” Harrisburg was no exception to this interpretation. Baseball possessed a steep history in the capital city. More than any other sport, baseball came to reveal general aspects characterized in the socioeconomic disposition of the city. People in Harrisburg more easily identified with their neighborhood, or city district, when they attended ballgames at the various parks. The sport provided a tangible comparison between lower-middle class life in Allison Hill to upper class Uptown and the posh Midtown. Residents of The Hill were especially eager to show that their athletes were able to one-up those born with a silver spoon. This was especially evident on Glenn’s team—the Rosewood Athletic Club, which dominated the Allison Hill League between 1916 and 1920.

Baseball, like many other sports, was an integrated game before it became segregated by Glenn Killinger’s day. Before the disreputable Plessy v. Ferguson decision

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in 1896, which upheld the constitutionality of segregation and thus hardening Jim Crow’s hold on America’s public institutions, ballgames between whites and blacks were played at the city’s Island Park as early as 1870. The ruling effectively led to the segregation of the nation’s sports. The city was soon destined to acquire the Harrisburg Lincoln Giants of the Negro Baseball Eastern Colored League. Many of the Harrisburg Giants’ players lived at the foot of Allison Hill, in an area called Shipoke.

Harrisburg’s first semi-professional baseball club was formed in 1901. The same year that Glenn entered high school in 1912, Harrisburg won the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania Association championship. They won it again in 1914. And the Washington Senators minor league team was brought to Harrisburg in 1924. Killinger actually served as player-manager of the Senators that first year, and helped the club win back-to-back New York-Pennsylvania League pennants in 1927 and 1928.

Near the end of his junior year in 1915, Glenn’s high school incorporated baseball into its athletic budget. Exhibitions were scheduled against Lebanon Valley College and the Harrisburg Academy, but high school baseball never quite became something the community rallied around, especially when compared to the excitement and passion that was shown for one’s school in either football or basketball. Baseball at area high schools was half-hearted, and Harrisburg Tech did little for Glenn’s development as a player. Rather, it was in the city’s extremely competitive Allison Hill Twilight League where he honed both his skills and passion for the game. Indeed, community baseball was the way Killinger achieved his respectable reputation for athletic prowess and how he had gained

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a sense of belonging among his peers. As the ephemeral Philadelphia Phillies pinch-hitter Howie Bedell said many decades after Killinger’s death, “Baseball was always Dr. Killinger’s first love.”

In time, boxing managed to catch fire in Harrisburg. It was, remarkably, the most popular sport of the first three decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps more than football, world heavyweight boxing champions were considered, in the words of American cultural critic, Gerald Early, the “Emperor of Masculinity.” No sport during the era brought in the amount of gate proceeds than prizefighting. In the few years before World War I, gate receipts reached up to 300,000 dollars. While the sport was overwhelmingly popular in the 19-aughts and 1910s, due in part by the deeds of John L. Sullivan and James Corbett, and after them, boxers like Jack Johnson and Jess Willard, during the war, boxing was utilized as combat training to prepare soldiers for hand-to-hand clashes that might occur on the battlefield. After the war, prizefighting reached new heights. In the 1920s, boxing promoter Tex Rickard proclaimed that at least five bouts exceeded million-dollar gates.

Since the combat sport engaged underprivileged competitors against one another, most boxers were in the sport to make money. Like football, pugilism allowed status seekers to climb up the nation’s social hierarchy. Additionally, boxing mirrored late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cultural conflicts. As sports historian Benjamin

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33 Rader, American Sports, 152-54.
Rader once pointed out, “native workers saw in foreigners scapegoats for their plight.” 34 English and German Protestants in urban America lost autonomy in their work to Irish Catholic and Jewish immigrants. Prizefighters, therefore, found ethnocentric and religious redemption in boxing matches. “Competition for jobs and political power further kindled ethnic hostilities,” Rader observes, adding, “Prize fights dramatized these rivalries.” 35 The sports historian also suggests that boxing “manifestly mocked Victorian values, especially the cardinal virtue of self-restraint.” While middle-class Victorian culture of controlling impulsive behavior had some influence on would-be athletes, the steady influx of immigrants left Americans to continue to adhere to their traditional ways. Fighting became the means for settling disputes and maintaining status among fellow juveniles. Rader observes, “survival in the slums for a boy could depend as much on his skills in using his fists as on his intelligence.” 36

Though Killinger was involved in his share of scraps on the streets of Allison Hill, it was seemingly the only organized sport he chose not to do. His upbringing was responsible for that. Killinger’s mother, Florence, was an unwavering dove who had difficulty even letting her youngest boy play football. She always had a difficult time watching Glenn box his older brother in the living room. “Earl would get down on his knees and we would box,” he said. The bouts usually began with Earl holding out his left fist, poking short jabs at Glenn’s face. “I would become infuriated and rush him, swinging both arms wildly,” he recalled. Occasionally, he would “land a good blow” on

34 Rader, American Sports. 89.
36 Ibid, 42.
his brother’s jaw. Most of the time, however, he was on the receiving end of a good beating. The scraps “made me fearless,” he admitted years later.\(^{37}\)

This was a revelatory insight coming from a man who valued team sports. Boxing and football did share one parallel: both sports, like military combat, were in the business of developing tough-willed men. Rader suggests, “[They] offered opportunities for male camaraderie, shared excitement, and a refuge from femininity, domesticity, and the demanding routines of the new economy.”\(^{38}\)

Boxing was always under legislative debate. Some states allowed it, others had it banned. Harrisburg’s city council once passed an ordinance barring boxing matches for a time that spanned nearly the length of Killinger’s high school tenure.\(^{39}\) When boxing returned to Harrisburg in 1916, he did enjoy watching matches with Earl at the Chestnut Street Auditorium and the Orpheum Theater.\(^{40}\) Fighters demonstrated wind and speed stamina. They exuded self-confidence. Their physical and mental toughness was steadfast. Both Killinger boys were entertained by the sheer savagery of the sport. Glenn and Earl were drawn to the ring at any opportunity to witness the sport turn boys, many of whom were once wayward youngsters, into accomplished men. Glenn knew there were lessons about life to be learned from boxing even if he had to discover those as an observer.

\(^{39}\) “Grant First Permit for Boxing Show at Orpheum,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, February 18, 1916, 16.
Since his mother refused to let him box, Glenn spent his winters playing one of America’s newest indoor sports, basketball. Americans may not have been enthusiastic about basketball until the 1950s, but the public in Harrisburg adored the new sport. Every city-district athletic club, public school, and both the Young Men’s Christian Association and Young Men’s Hebrew Association had a team. To accommodate each team, every available auditorium and theater in the city was utilized to host games. One local newspaper cartoonist even joked that rooftops had to be cleared of snow, baskets placed at each corner, and on the water tower if necessary, so that games could be played.⁴¹

Trading one sport for another every season, Glenn grew accustomed to the array of games early in his high school career. He did the best that he could to become a factor in Harrisburg Tech’s athletic programs; but at his size, the odds were stacked against him.

CHAPTER 3: DREAMS AND DIVERSITY IN AN AMERICAN CITY

Glenn Killinger entered high school in 1912 as a short and puny 110-pound freshman, especially when compared to the boys his own age.\(^1\) He showed little promise as an athlete, especially in his most treasured game, football. It did not help that he battled hay fever attacks annually as football tryouts approached. The bouts against eye irritation and constant sneezing were as difficult to overcome as absorbing the hits of players much bigger than he. When Killinger tried out for football as a freshman, Tech’s treasured coach, D. Forest Dunkel, who felt the boy was too incompetent of a player to make any of the three teams offered at the school—the varsity, the scrub team, and the Tech juniors—cut him. After he got over the disappointment of not making his school’s roster, he joined an independent team made up of middle-school aged kids called the “Hill All Stars.” The all-star club played in a community league made up of city grammar schools.\(^2\) Glenn quarterbacked the mediocre All-Stars in games against other primary and secondary schools. “Killinger had the hardest time imaginable getting his high school coach to even let him don a football suit,” wrote Glenn’s hometown newspaper the *Harrisburg Evening News* in 1921, “he was regarded as far too light for likely football timber.”\(^3\)

**Learning from Jim Thorpe**

If the Killinger men were known for meeting challenges head on, Glenn, at the age of 14, apparently struggled to live up to the family’s expectation. The pressure nearly

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\(^2\) *Harrisburg Patriot*, November 22, 1912.

\(^3\) “Local star athlete honored by foremost gridiron critic,” *Harrisburg Evening News*, December 20, 1921, 11.
drove him to quit school sports in 1912. The thought was repressed quickly when he heard about an improbable feat accomplished by his boyhood hero, Jim Thorpe.

Killinger first witnessed the talent of Thorpe in a football game played between the Carlisle Indian School and Villanova College at Island Park in Harrisburg on Wednesday, October 2, 1912. After school, he and his friends walked a few blocks to the football field situated on an island in the Susquehanna River connected to the city by a walking bridge, and watched Thorpe score three touchdowns and dropkick seven goals after touchdown in an easy 65-0 victory. A month later, he opened the sports page in the local newspaper and read that Thorpe led the Indians to an unexpected yet convincing 27-6 victory over Dwight Eisenhower’s West Point Cadets. Killinger was left sputtering as Thorpe became his hero. The Carlisle Indian School was located just twenty-miles away from Harrisburg. It was accordingly easy for Killinger to follow his new hero’s career.

Thorpe was being tallied as the greatest athlete of all time. “He is the greatest halfback of all American football history and perhaps the greatest gridiron warrior of all time,” wrote the El Paso Herald. Thorpe had won two gold medals in the 1912 Olympics earlier that summer in Stockholm, Sweden. In addition to football and track and field, he was praised as the best baseball, basketball, soccer, hockey, and handball player in the country. Many were trying to get him to take up boxing. “He’d be a champion in that sport as well,” wrote the Harrisburg Evening Times. At six feet tall, stout, and able to take a beating, “There isn’t a man in the ring better built for boxing than Jim Thorpe.”

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5 “Thorpe is Army’s Nemesis,” Richmond Times Dispatch, November 10, 1912, p. 7; “Thorpe of Carlisle, Leads Field in All Lines of Sports,” El Paso Herald, November 21,
Considering that the Carlisle Indian School played many games in Harrisburg, Thorpe’s fifteen-year professional reign at the top of football and baseball had actually begun adjacent to Killinger’s hometown. To Glenn, Thorpe was the defining sports figure of the decade, especially with Babe Ruth a few years away from entering major league baseball. Thorpe’s accomplishments and popularity were yet to be rivaled in the sports world.

Killinger wanted to be just like him. He knew he would never grow to the size of his hero. So instead, he set out to refine other skills, particularly his speed and his mind. It was a difficult road for the middling athlete. Even among his peers at Harrisburg Tech, Killinger was a jokester and nearly invisible on the playing fields. His friends later described him as an ineffectual competitor who tried hard, but struggled to live up to the tradition already established by the local legends that scrapped on the gridiron and hit the hardwood. Among those legends that wore the maroon and gray was Eugene “Shorty” Miller, Tech class of 1909. Miller, who grew up, according to Killinger, “only a few blocks from my home,” was presently in his senior year quarterbacking the Penn State Blue and White to an undefeated season and an imminent College Football Hall of Fame career.  

1912. 28; “Jim Thorpe the Ideal White Hope.” Grand Forks Evening Times, November 30, 1912.

6 Shorty Miller (1890-1966) was a 5’ 5” quarterback who attended Harrisburg Tech, class of 1909, and The Pennsylvania State College, class of 1913. He was a four-year letterman who quarterbacked Penn State to eight wins and zero loss record in both 1911 and 1912. He was selected by Walter Camp as a third-team All American in 1912. He also earned three varsity letters as an outfielder and captain on Penn State’s baseball team. He played professional football with the Massillon Tigers. In 1974, he was inducted into the National Football Foundation College Football Hall of Fame; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
Killinger dealt with one setback after another for virtually his entire career at Tech. In the fall of 1913, he was cut again from the varsity football team. There was a need, however, for a quarterback on Tech’s third football squad, called the “Tech Juniors.” Since he loved the sport so much, he apathetically accepted the role.

Because of his size, Glenn, a high school sophomore, weighing under 130-pounds, was eligible to play in the junior league. He was never named a captain—his behavior in school always prevented him from the honor. Nevertheless, his team was better than average and Glenn was a major contributor. The Tech Juniors competed against local grammar schools and other junior teams. On November 27, he threw a touchdown pass for the game’s only score, which gave the Maroon and Gray a 6-0 victory over Sycamore Juniors for the Junior City championship.7

In the winter of 1913-1914, Killinger tried out for Harrisburg Tech’s basketball squad. The coach cut him before the start of the season. He ended up playing in a community basketball league as a forward for St. Andrew’s of the local Young Men’s Christian Association.

It was near the end of his sophomore year when Killinger reached out to his older brother for help. For the next several months, he and Earl spent much of their time discussing the rules of various sports. Earl, a trusted high school football official, basketball referee, and baseball umpire at the time, offered to discuss the rulebooks for each game with Killinger.

The brothers focused most on making Glenn better at football. The two would discuss one rule a day. They would meet in the solitude of their parents’ home, then head

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to the football field at Island Park to practice. Ira Stone, a lifelong friend of Earl and Glenn’s who witnessed some of the sessions, once described the brothers’ workouts:

“They passed and punted and ran and fell on the ball. Through the winter and on into the spring this practice went steadily on.”

The sessions were hardly flawless. Glenn was brash, and would at times frustrate his older brother. However, when he suffered a setback, he was back at the park with his brother. “In the good old summertime Killinger still dallied with that football and made the island his rendezvous,” recalled Stone. “He was an amateur Captain Kidd and this was his Treasure Island.”

As the youngest in a family known for self-made success, Glenn could never stop trying. He was surprisingly light of foot but he hardly looked the part. He had the body of a lightweight wrestler, a tad too big to be a jockey and too small to really become a contender in any of the major sports. Everyone called Glenn, “Too light,” Stone explained to a reporter in 1921 after Walter Camp announced Killinger part of his All-American team. Closer to Earl’s age, Stone often took Glenn with him to the annual University of Pennsylvania-Penn State games at fabled Franklin Field in Philadelphia. “Watching this game from the stands one day,” Stone recalled, Killinger said, “he was

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8 “Glenn Killinger Was Successful Athlete Despite Big Handicap” Harrisburg Telegraph, January 12, 1922, 17.
9 In January 1922, the Harrisburg Telegraph ran an editorial praising Glenn Killinger for his accomplishments despite the difficult road in sports. The article’s anonymous author said that he interviewed a good friend of Glenn’s, who traveled almost every year with Ira Stone to Penn State games. “Glenn Killinger Was Successful Athlete Despite Big Handicap,” Harrisburg Telegraph, January 12, 1922, 17.
going to play on the Penn State team some day on historic Franklin Field.” Stone
admitted that he laughed at him. He said, “[I] repeated those fatal words, ‘too light’.”

None of the detractors meant much to Glenn. He simply loved sports. That
summer, he registered for the annual 13 to 16-year old junior tennis tournament at
Reservoir Park. He played in singles and doubles matches. He won some and he lost
some. He never made a deal about it either way. His family loved the sport, but there was
no future for Glenn in tennis.

When his junior year started, Glenn was hardly bigger or stronger. He was,
however, smarter. He hoped that would be enough. Yet when over forty boys showed up
for practice on the first day of football tryouts in September 1914, Glenn was certain to
be cut from the varsity roster again. He thought maybe the gradual popularity of forward
passing would give him a slight advantage since he and Earl studied the rules so
vigorously. He also showed off his ability to dropkick from various distances. Glenn
hustled from one drill to the next. Even then, it was not enough for Coach Dunkel, who
considered him too small and too fragile to survive the beating of varsity football. He
was again waived from the varsity team.

Killinger was placed on the Tech Juniors for a second consecutive season. He
quarterbacked the team to victories over Camp Hill Juniors twice and the All-Grammar
School All-Star team of Allison Hill. His team only went down in defeat once, a
disconcerting 34-0 loss to the Harrisburg Academy’s third team.

10 Ibid, 17.
11 “Football Teams Work Hard; Tech Squad Out Yesterday,” Harrisburg Telegraph,
September 15, 1914, 8.
12 Harrisburg Star Independent, October 07, 1914, 9; Harrisburg Telegraph, October 07,
1914, 8; Harrisburg Star Independent, October 14, 1914, 5; Harrisburg Star
As maligned as he was, Glenn played well enough on the Tech Juniors to catch Coach Dunkel’s eye. On October 12, he was promoted to Harrisburg Tech’s scrub team, the twenty-first century’s equivalent of junior varsity football. Tech’s scrub team was filled with sophomores and a few mediocre juniors. There, Glenn ultimately stood out. In his first game, he played as a substitute quarterback against local rival Steelton High School. Tech started slowly, but when Glenn entered the game, the offense began to click. Glenn was Tech’s major contributor in a convincing 52-0 victory.¹³ His performance that day won him the starting quarterback position on Tech’s scrub team for the remainder of the season.

A week later on October 19, Glenn guided Tech’s Scrubs to a victory over Camp Hill. He dropkicked four points after touchdowns to help the Scrubs win 40-0. He started again a few days later in a rematch against Steelton’s scrubs. Glenn threw one touchdown pass and made one dropkick for a point after touchdown, but his team fell 12-7. Glenn struggled thereafter in his lead role. His offensive production progressively waned in the scrubs’ final three games. Tech earned a 34-0 victory over Enhaut Athletic Club, but then went down in defeat to the Highspire Athletic Club 6-3, and tied their city-rival Harrisburg Central Scrubs, 0-0.¹⁴

Glenn’s experience playing basketball during his junior year was much like that of his football season. In December, he tried out for the varsity team, but was given a spot on the scrub unit. As a forward on junior varsity, he was one of his team’s leading

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¹³ Harrisburg Star Independent, October 12, 1914. 9.
¹⁴ Harrisburg Star Independent, October 20, 1914, 8; Harrisburg Telegraph, October 27, 1914, 9; Harrisburg Star Independent, November 9, 1914, 5; Harrisburg Star Independent, November 23, 1914, 5; Harrisburg Star Independent, November 27, 1914.
scorers. Yet he did not manage pressure well at this stage of his life. While selected by his coach to be the team’s designated foul shooter, he sometimes ended up being more of a liability, especially in big games. In their biggest game of the year against Harrisburg Central High scrubs, a game in which he scored half of his team’s points, Glenn shot just eight for twenty from the foul line. Tech lost the game 33-28 in overtime.  

He kept his grades respectable during his junior year. Just before the completion of the school year, he received the news that he earned second honors of Tech’s Academic Honor Roll. The accomplishment was reported in a column of the local Telegraph. It was the only time in his four years at Tech that he received an academic honor.

After weathering a difficult beginning of high school, Glenn started to come into his own as an athlete by the beginning of his senior year. When he entered Tech for his final year, he was 5’ 6” tall and weighed 137 pounds. In reality, Glenn was still too small to play on the varsity football team. Needless to say, an auspicious opportunity presented itself at the start of the football season.

Before the season began, Coach Dunkel resigned so he could practice law in West Palm Beach, Florida. Athletic Director Percy L. Grubb commenced a hasty search for

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15 In 1895, the fouls shot as we know it today—a free shot from fifteen feet from the basket—was implemented into the basketball rulebook by James Naismith. Until 1924, a coach would designate one player that he wanted to shoot the team’s free shot. Coaches understandably selected the team’s most consistent shooter, someone who specialized in making free-throws. Harrisburg Star Independent, March 20, 1915, 9; Harrisburg Star Independent, February 27, 1915, 12; Harrisburg Star Independent, January 16, 1915, 12; Harrisburg Star Independent, March 25, 1915, 8.
16 Harrisburg Telegraph, February 8, 1915, 9.
17 “Comparison in Ages and Weights of Players on Central and Tech Teams,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 24, 1915, 12.
18 Harrisburg Telegraph, May 22, 1915, 5.
someone to fill the head football coaching position. The Tech students and many of the faculty wanted Eugene “Shorty” Miller, the former Tech legend and quarterback who set the Penn State career rushing record and was named by Walter Camp to the third-team All-American list in 1912. Miller played professional football for the Massillon Tigers in Ohio on Sundays while working at the Pennsylvania Steel Company during the week. His busy schedule prevented him from accepting the position. So the former football and basketball standout from Yale and Lehigh Colleges, Fred “Red” Green, was hired to head the Tech eleven.

On Glenn’s seventeenth birthday, seventy-six students tried out for the team when practice began on Monday, September 13, 1915. Coach Green had a tall order in front of him. The 1915 team was hardly a solid unit. “Tech has the hardest schedule in its history,” announced the Telegraph, “and with the cream of last year’s team graduated, the Maroon and Gray will have a difficult time winning the Central Pennsylvania honors.” According to newspaper articles from the Telegraph and Star Independent, Tech returned just six players from the 1914 roster. So the bulk of the 1915 varsity squad would be made up of reservists and scrub team members like Glenn Killinger.19

There was no practice field on the Walnut Street campus. So the Harrisburg Tech boys had to tryout on Island Park field, where most of their games were played. Back for another try at his favorite sport, Glenn put on his equipment at school, and then jogged across the Walnut Street Bridge, crossing part of the Susquehanna River and onto an island where the football field was situated. Members of the team were supposed to treat the hike as their warm-up before the start of practice.

At first sight, Coach Green was not impressed with the budding yet feeble backfield player. He thought Glenn was too small, too bow-legged, and undisciplined. All of it was true. Glenn was still undersized, even for a quarterback or halfback in the 1910s. Coach Green liked to throw forward passes, which was an uncommon aspect of the game during the era. Hardly tall enough to be a passer, he struggled to see beyond his offensive linemen. Glenn had impressive speed, but he lacked the ability to break tackles. He also had a reputation for being cheeky in school, a trait that made Green circumspect.

Would Glenn Killinger be too much of a nuisance for the team? There was just something about the kid that made Green consider making him one of his 20 varsity players. Was it because Green needed more than one quarterback? Or was it because Glenn had a fair reputation as a quarterback on the third team and scrub team the previous year? Or could it have been because Glenn had a dogged attitude about playing varsity football. No matter the reason, Glenn finally did it. He finally made the varsity football roster.

The euphoria of finally being selected to play varsity football lasted just a short time. By the first game, he was beaten out for the starting position by a sophomore, Reese Lloyd. On September 25, Reese shined in Tech’s 20-0 victory over Pottsville in the season opener. Glenn did not play in the game.

Not only was Glenn absent from the opener, he missed the first six games. Sources are unclear, but he was either hurt or ineligible. According to the Telegraph, a significant number of Tech players missed the first half of the season because of injuries and poor grades. The local newspaper did not report the reason why Glenn sat out, but

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20 “Comparison in Ages and Weights of Players on Central and Tech Teams,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 24, 1915, 12.
both are realistic possibilities. Before Glenn returned to the lineup, the Tech Maroon
and Grays compiled a record of three wins and three losses.

His first appearance in a game was on November 6 against Steelton High School.
It was a game Tech was picked to win. Just two weeks earlier, Tech handed Steelton an
18-6 defeat. Coach Green made the decision to start Glenn at quarterback in place of
Lloyd. It was the young coach’s first significant mistake. While the game presented itself
as Glenn’s first taste of varsity football, it was set to be his first varsity start. As one
would expect, it was a disappointing debut. He played terribly and was pulled from the
game after half time. Tech lost 13-0.

Eight days later, on November 14, the Tech football team and roughly sixty fans
boarded a train to Lancaster to play the Red Roses of Lancaster High School. Glenn
replaced Lloyd at quarterback when the latter threw two interceptions. The adjustment
in the backfield did not change the outcome. Tech lost 13-6.

Killinger’s customary broad grin had quickly faded as the season progressed.
With two games remaining on the schedule, he hoped to make any contribution that
would change the downward spiral of the season. A fleeting glimmer of hope appeared
on November 20 when Tech defeated Allentown, 13-0. Glenn did not start, but he
substituted in and scored the game’s first touchdown—his first and only varsity
touchdown of his career.

Game with Substitutes,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 22, 1915, 12; “Tech Loses out
at Lancaster,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 15, 1915, 11; Harrisburg Telegraph.
“Three Winners is Today’s Dope.” October 30, 1915, 15; “Greensburg Students to Travel
Thanksgiving Day Football

Tech’s biggest contest every year was the Thanksgiving Day city championship played on Island Park against archrival Harrisburg Central High School, a school located half-a-mile away on the corner of Forster and Capital Streets and considered Pennsylvania’s finest secondary school between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Thanksgiving Day football contests became the premier athletic event in many cities and towns across the United States by the mid-1910s. The custom dates back to November 30, 1876, when Yale defeated Princeton in the first Turkey Day game. Since that long forgotten moment in football glory, colleges, high schools, and professional football teams have made Thanksgiving Day the day of choice to play annual rivalry games. Ronald A. Smith, writing about the tradition in *Sports and Freedom* (1988), said the holiday spectacle spread across the nation in part because many realized its profitability. Speaking more specifically of college football, Smith writes, as schools looked for money, “it was only logical that Thanksgiving Day became a commercial day [for high schools and colleges].” By the mid-1890s, he claims, approximately “5,000 football games, involving 120,000 athletes, were played on Thanksgiving Day.” That number would grow exponentially over the next twenty years as high schools jumped on the holiday game bandwagon.

As popular as football is in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the twenty-first century, few high school football rivalries have ever compared to the turn-of-the-century City of Harrisburg championship game played between Harrisburg Tech and Harrisburg

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24 Ibid, 81; *Chicago Tribune*, November 29, 1894, 13.
Central High School (a game that would evolve into a showdown between John Harris High School and William Penn High School, and later Bishop McDevitt and Harrisburg high schools). While still a rivalry in its infancy—the series began in 1905—Thanksgiving Day gave the 64,186 residents of Harrisburg and scholastic football fans within a 50-mile radius something to look forward to each year. The student bodies of each school traditionally marched in unison to the island as almost a quarter of the city’s population squeezed into Island Park’s football stadium, the largest in Central Pennsylvania, to cheer on their respective teams.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the fact that Central High dominated the series, the proximity of the two schools buttressed by neighborhood quarrels, socioeconomic jealousies, and student body as well as professorial rivalries, year in and year out, the game was the talk of the state. Heading into the 1915 game, Tech’s all-time record against Central was one win and eleven losses. Tech had been both defeated and shut out in every game against Central except the only match it won, which was a 19-12 triumph in 1914.\textsuperscript{26}

For the Tech-Central showdown of 1915, 8,500 people filed into Island Park stadium—a favorable turnout for the city championship game, especially considering Tech’s lack of talent and mediocre season. Every available seat was filled, described the \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, and a line of “several hundred automobiles” lined around the field. People stood between the cars and the rope, “four lines deep” it was reported. While the scene of thousands of fans huddled around one another at the island’s field must have been a beautiful sight from above, the game itself was an unsightly display of

\textsuperscript{25} “Pick Central to Win Classic Game,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, November 23, 1915, 12. 
\textsuperscript{26} “Pick Central to Win Classic Game,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, November 23, 1915, 1, 12; “Central High Humbles Tech with Record Score,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, November 26, 1915, 19.
football. The game was ugly from the opening kickoff. “One point in yesterday’s game the spectators just couldn’t understand was Tech’s high tackling,” described the 
Telegraph. Harrisburg Central’s skill players were too big and too fast for Tech’s 
defenders. Hoping to get his team on the scoreboard, Coach Green sent Killinger in at right halfback while Lloyd remained at quarterback. Green thought having two experienced field generals on the field at once would help Tech advance the ball against Central’s “stonewall” defense. Disappointingly, the scheme was just as ineffective. Tech failed to score. Meanwhile, Central scored at will. The contest ended 34-0 and Harrisburg Central walked away with the P. G. Diener silver football cup, the traditional trophy named on behalf of Harrisburg’s wealthy jewelry mogul who sponsored the game.27

At season’s end, Tech had defeated four teams, but lost six games in convincing fashion. The Maroon’s earned only one victory in four tries after Killinger returned to the lineup.28 At a quirky ceremony held at the high school on December 23, Killinger received his first and only varsity football “T” and letterman cardigan. A member of the faculty dressed as Santa Claus gave the letters to Glenn and eighteen others. The honor would later become something he would often joke about. Years later he conceded to his closest friends, “I was the worst player on the worst team Harrisburg Tech ever had.”29

There were certainly better classes that passed through Harrisburg Tech before and after Glenn’s graduating class. However, the period within the decade that they

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27 Historian Benjamin G. Rader writes about annual “Big Game” rivalries in his book American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports. See Chapter 6. He writes mostly about college rivalries that entailed winning or losing a traditional trophy: Stanford and California play for the Axe, Minnesota and Michigan play for the Little Brown Jug, and Purdue and Indiana compete for the Old Oaken Bucket.
29 Riley, The Road to Number One, 180.
walked the halls was unlike any other. The Tech student body was racially segregated during its early years. High school-aged African American students either attended Harrisburg Central or went right into the work force. None was interested in attending the technical school. Glenn was German-American, the dominant ethnicity in Harrisburg. He was never kicked off the playground. He was never told to leave the theater. He had gone to school each day never having to think about the struggles of coming from a marginalized family. He never had to deal with prejudice in any form. That is, until his senior year.

**Race and Ethnicity in Central Pennsylvania**

The Great War, which began in the summer 1914, was escalating in Europe. Anti-German headlines appeared more and more frequently on the front pages of local newspapers. The United States was years away from entering the war, but Germany was making a steady habit of sinking ships in the Atlantic Ocean that were carrying American citizens. War preparedness advocates doubled down on their stance after each incident. As a result, racial hostilities between those of German heritage and non-German heritage in Harrisburg were mounting. The local food administration, believing the German name resulted in “patriotic persons refusing to partake” in the business of local restaurants, reported the *Harrisburg Telegraph*, changed the name of sauerkraut to “pickled cabbage.” Vigilantes in town forced German-American residents to salute and kiss the American flag lest they be lynched. Harrisburg Technical School pondered discontinuing German language classes. Before school administrators made a final decision, most of the students made the choice themselves to transfer into French class. For those who
remained in German class, school administrators told the Telegraph, “all German books in use had been censored carefully.”

The war’s impact on onlookers in Harrisburg helped Glenn notice the sting of racism. It is true: he had his share of run-ins with other racial groups in his neighborhood while growing up. For so long, he proved guilty of lacking sensitivities to prejudice even while living in the most racially inclusive neighborhood in Harrisburg. The war introduced something new, and dangerous, about race and ethnicity in the United States. Meanwhile, Glenn, in his teenage years, was slowly becoming aware of how the various ethnic issues sweeping the country were impacting daily occurrences in his hometown.

As Glenn’s football team took on its archrival that Thanksgiving Day, a thirty-five-year old Spanish-American War veteran named William Simmons climbed to the top of Stone Mountain in Georgia with a group of friends and inaugurated the new Ku Klux Klan in a cross-burning ceremony. For forty years the Klan had remained dormant before Simmons’ ceremony. Reacting to profound nativist influences against Eastern European immigrants and the steady fight for equality among America’s black population, the new Klan was set on opposing anybody who was not a native-born Anglo-Saxon. Stories about the Klan’s rebirth spread among ruffians in Allison Hill, which already had their share of run-ins with Catholics, Jews, as well as African Americans in the neighborhood.

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30 “Sauerkraut Renamed Into Patriotic Dish,” Harrisburg Telegraph, April 9, 1918, 2; “Ohio Citizens Compel Germans to Kiss the Flag,” Harrisburg Telegraph, April 2, 1918, 2; “High School Pupils Are Dropping German Tongue,” Harrisburg Telegraph, April 11, 1918, 1.
Simmons’s Klan was formed soon after the release of the silent epic drama *The Birth of a Nation*, which hit theaters in February 1915. Based on the novel *The Clansman*, the movie’s producer, D. W. Griffith, who started production on July 4, 1914, just days after the heir to the Austro-Hungarian empire was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist, which eventually led to the start of World War I, created the film to show life in the South after the close of the Civil War. Starting early in the history of the South at the time of the arrival of slaves, the film quickly arrives at the outbreak of the Civil War. In rapid fashion, the movie covers the call for volunteers, several big battles, General Sherman’s march to the sea, the Appomattox surrender, and the assassination of President Lincoln. Griffith’s epic climaxes with a series of Ku Klux Klan rides that aimed to restore civility among newly oppressed white southerners, particularly abducted and molested white women kept under duress by belligerent and monstrous African American men who had recently been set free from bondage.\(^{32}\)

Griffith said that he produced the movie “to tell the truth” about the Civil War. “It hasn’t been told accurately in history books,” Griffith asserted in an interview after the film’s release, arguing further that “the winning side” distorted the facts behind the war. The film’s thesis danced around emancipation and black suffrage, claiming that both had been a terrible mistake. Author Dick Lehr writes in his 2014 book by the same title as the haunting 1915 motion picture that Griffith’s theories were predisposed by the school of thought espoused by Columbia University professor William A. Dunning. The xenophobic lecturer’s revisionist history on Reconstruction, in which he called the “Tragic Era,” presumed “Negroes as inferior, ignorant, and incapable of the honest

exercise of political rights and power.” Griffith was also influenced by the anatomical studies conducted by University of Michigan professor Robert Bennett Bean, who theorized in 1909 that African American brains weigh less and were smaller, thus genetically inferior to those of their white counterparts.33 The message in Griffith’s film and the theories of the Dunning School permeated white America as the so-called Jim Crow laws and lynching amplified fear among black southerners and racial divisions increased as thousands of African Americans migrants arrived in northern cities in search of jobs. “The birth of the nation began with the Ku Klux Klans [sic],” the Kentucky-born director said after the release of his moving picture, “and we have shown that.” Griffith would say in a later interview, “The Klan at that time was needed. It served a purpose.”34

Marketed in the press as the “Eighth Wonder of the World,” the silent film’s arrival to Harrisburg was delayed until the winter of 1916, just three months after Killinger’s senior football season concluded. Evaluating the film’s impact on American society in later years, Lehr maintains that the movie has endured the test of time because it was a cinematic masterpiece, albeit an ugly milestone in American race relations. He writes, “the complete legacy of D. W. Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation—a masterpiece that, due to its bigoted slant, became a dramatic flash point in 1915 for a changing

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33 Robert Bennett Bean’s brain study was immediately rebuked by his former teacher and mentor, Dr. Franklin P. Mall of Johns Hopkins University, who found no difference in the weight, size or brain power of white and black brains. Mall also criticized Bean for not using a blind sample of brains in his study. Dick Lehr, The Birth of a Nation: How a Legendary Filmmaker and A Crusading Editor Reignited America’s Civil War (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 128-129.

America in mass media and marketing, civil rights, and civil liberties.” The content of the movie created a stir among racial groups throughout the country, which fostered ambivalence among the populace in Harrisburg that the teenage Killinger could not ignore. A Klan chapter existed in the capital city, where reports of “Tar and feather” parties, beatings, and maltreatment of non-White Anglo Saxon Protestants were rampant by the end of the decade. There were two popular movie-houses in town at the time: the Victoria Theater on Market Street and the Orpheum Theater on Poplar Street. The Victoria was already undergoing a legal battle over allegations of discrimination after an African American movie-goer was refused a ticket to the theater’s lower floor; whereas, the Orpheum faced no such accusations. So on February 16, 1916, complete with a symphonic orchestra, The Birth of a Nation was shown for the first time in Harrisburg.

As Glenn grew up in The Hill, running from park to park seeking adventure, it was easy to get caught up in unruliness among those who emanated from unhinged and less tolerant households. Acclaim about The Birth of a Nation and the Klan’s regeneration undoubtedly caught fire among some of his peers. With Glenn, however, there was little of that. Playing organized sports helped him mature as a young man. There was an amalgamation of Christians and Jews, wealthy and poor, on his football and basketball teams that bonded together in a way that those who lived within Allison Hill failed to do.

In the winter of his senior year, the hardwood offered a distraction from the outside world. Glenn made the varsity roster and won one of the starting guard positions

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36 “The Ku Klux Klan Menace A Blow at Law and Order,” Harrisburg Courier, September 18, 1921, 8.
37 “‘Movie’ Color Line in Superior Court,” Harrisburg Telegraph, March 10, 1915, 1.
in spite of being the shortest and frailest person on the team. In the first game of the season against York High he was held scoreless. Shortly thereafter, he found his way, finishing the season as the team’s second leading scorer, averaging 9.2 points per game.\footnote{“Tech High Loses Game; York Shows Great Form,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, December 11, 1915, 14; “Records by Tech Tossers Best in Local School History,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, January 31, 1916, 11.}

Glenn, who was given the nickname “Shrimp” during the season, set a Central Pennsylvania Scholastic Basketball League record on January 10, 1916 for making the most shots from the field in a single game when he made eleven baskets in a victory over Lancaster High School. It was a remarkable feat considering there was no rush to score points and in this era of basketball every shot taken from the floor was either a one-hand lay-up or a two-handed set shot (the jump shot was not introduced until 1931 by University of Missouri guard John Miller Cooper, but this is still under debate). Killinger’s record stood until in March 1918.\footnote{See John Christgau’s \textit{The Origins of the Jump Shot: Eight Men Who Shook the World of Basketball} (University of Nebraska Press, 1999) for clarification on the origins of the jump shot; “Tech is Winner over Lancaster,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, January 8, 1916, 6; \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, March 19, 1918, 11.}

The Tech tossers started the season on fire, winning seven of their first ten contests. When league play began, unfortunately so did a streak of eleven consecutive defeats. Lackluster shooting and careless play came to define the season. Harrisburg Tech finished last in the newly created Central Pennsylvania League, with two wins and ten losses, and an overall record of nine victories to twenty defeats.\footnote{“Tech Tossers to Play Lewistown,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, March 30, 1916, 10; “Steelton High Tossers Win in Final Game with Tech; Locals Still in Cellar,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, April 1, 1916, 12; “Interscholastic Season Ends with this Week’s Schedule,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, March 27, 1916, 11.}
In the waning days of his senior year Glenn thought about playing tennis at Harrisburg Tech, but after one week on the team he decided to join the school’s on-again-off-again baseball club. Earlier in 1913, Tech had dissolved the baseball program, claiming “a lack of competition with scholastic teams.” After a two-year hiatus, the students lobbied school officials to bring baseball back. The administration agreed and a team was formed in 1915, Glenn’s junior year. During the winter months of 1916, the students and administration resumed talks about the future of baseball at Harrisburg Tech. When the administration decided to continue with baseball in 1916, Glenn quit tennis so he could try out for the squad. He made the team and started at second base. The season, however, only featured a best of five series against the Harrisburg Academy.

With the pressure of scholastic athletics behind him, Glenn coasted into his high school graduation. Merely an average student throughout high school, usually bringing home Bs and Cs on his report card, Glenn received no honors at the commencement ceremony on June 15. Fifty students graduated from Tech in 1916. The Telegraph reported the majority of Harrisburg Tech’s students “will continue their studies in higher institutions of learning with the opening of colleges in the Fall.” Glenn, however, was not one of them.

He had no plans after graduation beyond working for his father in the family hardware shop. Truthfully, Glenn wanted to go to The Pennsylvania State College that

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42 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 14.  
his hometown hero and former-Walter Camp third team quarterback Eugene “Shorty” Miller attended. Only he was afraid to ask his father to pay for it. He wrote years later in his memoir, “My father pleaded poverty because his hardware store was not doing very well financially.” There was, honestly, a hue of teenage laziness in young Glenn. He had just received a degree in Industrial Careers, but he was in no way motivated to take on adult responsibilities. He specifically frustrated the Killinger men: his father, Billy, and brother, Earl. His father was a popular entrepreneur, a self-made success story who often cavorted with the city’s former mayor, John D. Patterson. His older brother was in the early stages of balancing a long career as a teller in the East End Bank of Carlisle and a wartime job as a consultant in the Constructing Quartermaster’s Department in Washington D.C. Meanwhile, Glenn had no plans other than playing sports.

For the first year after graduation, Glenn’s world of work and play was confined to the borders of Allison Hill. He was given a job making three dollars a week in the Killinger Hardware Store. He told people that he took the job out of loyalty to his family, but later admitted, “I probably played more sports, like baseball, tennis, and went swimming in the Susquehanna River more than I worked.” Much of his leisure time was spent at the Rosewood Athletic Club, located in the Hess Building two blocks west from his house, on the corner of Thirteenth and Market Streets.

In the summer after high school he played twilight baseball for Rosewood, which competed in the extremely popular and competitive Allison Hill League. Glenn, listed as a shortstop, displayed some toughness after he bruised several ribs attempting to steal second base in a game played on July 24. His speed was frightening for opposing

catchers in the Allison Hill League that summer. This time, to no avail, he slid awkwardly feet first into second base, lifting his right leg in an attempt to gash the shortstop trying to tag him out. His opponent fell on top of him, resulting in the injury. Glenn struggled to trot off the field after he was thrown out. The pain was too much, and he chose not to finish the game.

The rib injury occurred with a month left in the season as his team was nearing the Allison Hill League championship. Here is where Glenn displayed mental toughness that ultimately came to define him as a competitor. The opportunity to win a pennant in a community baseball league was the pinnacle for Glenn in 1916. So he gutted it out in spite of the pain. Rosewood defeated a team called the Galahads, 1-0, for the Allison Hill League pennant on August 24. Glenn went hitless in the title game, but he was hit by a pitch, stole a base, and made no fielding mistakes in the shutout victory.47

The experience should have been honorable for the brash high school graduate. His team’s performance that summer exemplified unselfishness and polished fundamentals. “Not a member of the championship Rosewood team hit above the .300 mark,” the Telegraph reported. Their pennant run was attributed “largely to good fielding and excellent twirling.”48 Glenn, somewhat expectedly at this stage of his life, instead looked like a haughty teenager with his cap tipped to the side in the team picture that appeared on the Telegraph’s sports page applauding the championship.

Glenn’s play unquestionably gave him a boost of overconfidence. He executed all 77 of his opportunities from the infield without making an error. He finished the summer

48 “Amateurs Play All-Star Team,” Harrisburg Telegraph September 14, 1916, 10.
league ranked tenth in batting average, second in the number of games played, second in runs scored, and second in hits. He tied for first in the league in doubles.\textsuperscript{49}

In November, Glenn tried out for the Rosewood Athletic Club’s basketball squad, a team managed by his brother, Earl. Rosewood competed in the Harrisburg City Amateur Basketball League.\textsuperscript{50} At 18 years old, Glenn was the youngest to make the roster, which was predominately made up of twenty-somethings.

The Killinger brothers warmed up for the season by playing in the annual Alumni versus Harrisburg Technical High School basketball game on December 8, 1916. Glenn scored the game high 22 points in the alumni’s 60-10 victory over the high school squad.\textsuperscript{51}

The Rosewood Athletic Club basketball team had similar success to that of the baseball team earlier that spring, except for a bad stretch in February when Earl and his wife, Marion, gave birth to their only child, a daughter that they named Jane Mumma, on February 1. Earl missed two games after the birth of Jane, which left the team without its coach. In the end, Rosewood coasted through the season on their way to clinching the City Amateur League championship by the end of March 1917.

\textbf{The Coming of World War I}

Due to their dominance in the city league, a game was schedule against the Pennsylvania Motive Power Athletic Association two and a half weeks later for the

Independent Championship of Harrisburg. Rosewood was out-played in a 48-33 loss.\textsuperscript{52} Though important for Glenn, the defeat was overshadowed by something much greater.

The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. America’s entry into the war might put an end to Glenn’s carefree athletic pursuits. Immediately a patriotic fervor swept across Harrisburg. Just three days after war was declared, a local citizen climbed to the top of Kittatinny Mountain, which overlooked the city from the north, “in the midst of the flurries of snowflakes,” the \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph} reported, and hoisted the American flag on the top of the mountain. Liberty bond drives brought more than $4,000,000 in Harrisburg and vicinity within two months.\textsuperscript{53} T. O. Lapp, the owner of a Newberry restaurant, displayed a sign stating hamburgers sold at his establishment would thereafter be called “Harrisburgers.” American flags decorating homes and windows of big stores throughout the city added to the patriotic spirit. The governor of Pennsylvania, Martin Grove Brumbaugh, called for the creation of “food growing groups” among students so they could plant “in available schoolyards and upon their home soil all forms of food plants to the end that these children, too young to enter the army or navy, may perform an important patriotic duty.”\textsuperscript{54} Door-to-door canvasses were launched to enroll every woman in Harrisburg into the nationwide food conservation plan. Complicit to social pressure, Glenn’s mother signed a pledge of affiliation with the food administration, agreeing to “carry out the advice and instruction of the food administration as far as her circumstances permit.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} “Rosewood Falls to Motive Power,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, April 23, 1917, 10.
President Woodrow Wilson’s war machine wasted no time getting people excited about the war. The Committee of Public Information, sometimes derided as the censorship bureau, with George Creel, the revered writer for the nationally syndicated magazine *The Century*, as chairman, dutifully disseminated among the populace strong anti-German silent films, pamphlets, and speakers. Immediately following Wilson’s declaration of war, the censorship bureau got started writing curriculum centered on the president’s war measures, including footnote references and notations for detailed study by schools. Professors in the field of history, most notably University of Minnesota scholar Guy Stanton Ford, and the National Board for Historical Service were responsible for editing the manuscript. Within the space of two months, the bureau authorized the “Four Minute Men,” which presented arguments to the public that were “strictly limited, confined and restricted to four minutes” and limited exclusively to topics related to the war. The CPI presented the subjects of the speeches each week, which mailed the data, including a sample 500 to 700-word speech, to every Four-Minute Man in the country. Speeches were usually made in front of an audience at a picture house after viewing a silent film. The censorship bureau further undertook the publication of a brochure titled “Why We Are Fighting for Many,” which was disseminated nationally in many languages. Its purpose, Creel noted, was “to answer completely and effectively questions concerning our participation in the great war.”

Killinger’s parents, the publication of the brochure provided a detailed report about the reasons for entering the conflict against the German aggressors who “had made the attack upon us,” which forced America’s hand.57

Additionally, the Treasury Department’s effort to fund the war by selling Liberty Bonds to the public bolstered an aggressive patriotic zeal in support of the war. On Saturday, April 21, more than 14,000 marchers arrived in Harrisburg to take part in the “Everybody’s Patriotic Parade.” Thousands more gathered to cheer and applaud the “marching patriots” in what the Harrisburg Telegraph reported to be the “largest demonstration in the city’s history.” Flags were draped over the fronts of stores and houses. People cheered, whistled, shouted. A large float representing America’s Allies led the procession. Forty-eight schoolgirls, dressed in white, each representing a state of the Union, carried a huge American flag. Much to the amusement of the parade-goers, a submarine built around a three-wheeled electric truck rolled down Front Street, shifting to starboard, then backward, before swinging hard to port “in bewildering succession,” wrote the Telegraph.58

The month following the declaration of war was exhilarating, and it did much to influence Glenn’s attitude about wanting to defend his country against the German savages. But then came the announcement on May 10 that draft registration was limited for men ages 21 through 31. He was too young to register with the selective service. He

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received no additional help from his parents. Both objected to Glenn’s volunteering for the expeditionary force. His mother Florence was especially adamant about forbidding Glenn from enlisting. He admitted that his mother was a pacifist, which was puzzling considering her father—Glenn’s grandfather—was a Civil War veteran. Raised to appreciate the valor of his antecedent, Glenn was never shy in blaming his mother for his absence from combat on the Western Front. He said in 1966, thinking back on his wartime experience, that she “hated war and refused to sign the papers,” which would have allowed his enlistment.  

But Glenn was far from giving up. The United States had just joined the fight. So in his estimation, the war would go on for several more years. He trusted one day he would have his opportunity to prove his manhood.

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SECOND QUARTER
CHAPTER 4
THE WARTIME FOOTBALL ADVENTURE

Glenn Killinger was three months away from his sixteenth birthday when the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, inspector general of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, died at the hands of Gavrilo Princip, who was part of a conspiracy concocted by a Serbian nationalist group called the Black Hand hell-bent on unifying Serbia and Bosnia. A month later, on July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Killinger was entering his junior year at Harrisburg Technical High School with goals of making the football team. However, the war became real to him during the first week of August when Germany declared war on Russia and France. The Killinger household was a little different that week as mild disputes between his parents transpired over who to side with, the Central Powers or the Allies.

According to his unpublished memoir, Killinger never really understood why the war was being fought; nationalistic dogma was above his intellectual capacity during the early stages of the war. His interests centered on competitions at the playground, music, and silent films. Then, when the United States entered the war in 1917, he started to think more about the lofty vision of a democratic world government promoted so vigorously by the Committee of Public Information. Still, he cared most about the news of submarine attacks resulting in the death of his countrymen, threats of domestic sabotage in the blowing up of buildings and destroying factories in various areas of the country, and that for three years the Germans waged a barbarous war against civilization. He wanted to fight.

So the fact that Killinger found himself enrolling at The Pennsylvania State College in 1917 instead of the Army was perplexing. Earlier in the spring, after he
conceded to his parents who prevented him from enlisting into the service, he recruited the help Earl and Biz to convince their father to give him a shot at college. He revealed in his unpublished memoir, “My older brother and sister were on my side and continually needled my father to send me to Penn State.” When his father finally capitulated, he remembered, “Before the words were hardly out-of-mouth, I was on my way to talk to Dr. [Charles B.] Fager,” the principal at Harrisburg Tech, who agreed to advise him through the application process as long as he majored in metallurgy, an art of preparing metals for use, which was the focus of Killinger’s academic career while at Tech. He was to become the first in his family to go to college.

The road to Penn State was not easy. Getting accepted was one thing. But with no one in his family to counsel him on how to prepare for college or what to expect upon arrival was just the start of his problems. It must have been a frightening experience for the impetuous youth, particularly since mustering up money to pay for all expenses was a major complication. While tuition for attending an instate college was free, Killinger needed to raise almost one-hundred and fifty dollars a year, which included ten dollars per week for room and board and contingent fees that amounted to fifty dollars per semester. The three dollars a week earned at his family’s hardware store would hardly make a dent in the cost. He needed a better job. Killinger found war-related work at the Harrisburg Pipe and Pipe Bending Works Company, a newly converted factory that produced shrapnel cases and air cylinders to fulfill government demands for war production. It is likely that Dr. Fager helped Killinger attain the job by reaching out to the general manager, William T. Hildrup. In any event, he spent the summer operating a steel

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lathe used to make products that would be used for submarine construction and to fill munitions orders from the Allies.²

Killinger was also clever in the way he managed to find an inexpensive place to live on campus. He had friends already at Penn State who were metallurgical engineering majors and members of Alpha Chi Sigma, a professional chemistry fraternity founded first at the University of Wisconsin in 1902, with a chapter established at State College in April 1911. Since Killinger was enrolling as a major in the chemistry field, he was eligible to pledge the fraternity. His friends helped arrange a room for him at the Alpha Chi Sigma house, but he had to survive pledge week to establish it as his permanent residence.

In subsequent years, doting hometown sportswriters applauded Killinger for his ability to pay for college on his own. “Killinger did not have things so rosy,” observed the Harrisburg Evening News in December 1921. “It is understood that it was necessary for him to borrow some [money], but this is virtually all paid back.” Killinger never revealed who lent him money to offset remaining college expenses. “This is also to his credit,” wrote the local newspaper.³

Before heading off to college, Killinger spent his evenings playing twilight baseball for the Rosewood Athletic Club. On June 22, he hit a home run in the final inning of a game against Galahad in front of 750 spectators, a considerable crowd for any twilight baseball game.⁴

³ “Walter Camp Puts Killinger At Half Upon All-American; Three Pennsylvanians on It,” Evening News  December 20, 1921, 1.
The summer baseball league was interrupted on August 26 when Killinger punched out an opposing player near the end of a game against the West End Athletic Club. Rosewood had given up four runs in the first inning, and another in the third. His team found themselves in a five to nothing hole heading into the sixth inning, when they scored once. Then scored three more runs to mount a rally in the seventh inning. In the bottom of the eighth, down five to four, Killinger was on first base as the tying base runner. He was tagged out in a rundown during which he was accused of trying to spike West End’s first baseman. Overcome by anger and noticeably embarrassed, Killinger gave him “one hard punch,” wrote the *Harrisburg Telegraph.*

The fight evidenced one of many routine controversies for Killinger at that point. The episode took place in front of a large crowd, including women and children gathered there to celebrate the West End Carnival and to send off soldiers of Company I to the Western Front. The newspaper refused to give the teenage scalawag a pass. His scrap was the lead in the *Telegraph’s* article about the game.

Stories like this fixed Killinger as an enigma. He admired both of his parents, and always credited his father for getting him interested in sports, but the household of stern discipline made him a mischief-maker on the streets and playgrounds. Going to college, which coincided with United States entry into the war, his family hoped, would help him mature.

**Penn State College and Military Preparedness**

Penn State was founded in 1855, located in Centre County, ninety miles west of Harrisburg, in the exact center of the state. Within seven years, the United States

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Congress ratified the Morrill Land-Grant Act, and Penn State became Pennsylvania’s first land-grant institution. The student body was divided among the schools of agriculture, engineering, liberal arts, natural science, mining, and home economics. Since its inception, the institution was co-educational with there being over 200 female enrollees.\(^6\)

Enthusiasm over military enlistment deeply sunk enrollment at Penn State after Congress voted to declare war on Germany. Total attendance when the college opened in September 1917 was 2,276, about 400 students short of registration in 1916. Glenn Killinger was one of 700 freshmen, approximately sixty fewer than the previous year. Despite reduced enrollment, his field of choice, metallurgical engineering, showed “a healthy gain,” suggested the *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, a fact attributed to the wartime demand for technically trained men as the conflict carried on.\(^7\)

Penn State’s metallurgical program—officially called the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering—was the first of its kind in the United States. Many considered it the most rigorous degree that a student could attain in college. Killinger worked hard, and enjoyed the tutelage of Robert Lemuel Sackett, one of the most distinguished members of the faculty at the time. Writing years later to a friend, he admitted that no Killinger is destined to ever bring home remarkable grades. No one can ever take away the fact that he enrolled in one of the most respected and rigorous majors


academia had to offer. “He took up one of the most difficult courses at the institution, that of metallurgy,” wrote the sports editor of the *Harrisburg Telegraph*. “And in his studies his marks have been high.”

Despite the accolade bestowed on him by his doting hometown newspaper, Killinger had grades that were actually nothing to write home about. His final transcript is full of Cs and Ds. Of the seventy-two courses he enrolled in during his four-and-a-half years at Penn State—many of which were one-credit workshops, research laboratories, and wartime required courses—he earned only one A and nineteen Bs. Still, the ability to juggle three intercollegiate sports and a myriad of college courses was quite a feat.

Killinger’s first official day at Penn State was September 10, 1917, three days before his nineteenth birthday. “When I first stepped on the Penn State campus, I imagined I was in Heaven. The first and greatest event had successfully [sic] taken place in my life,” he wrote nostalgically in his memoir. He spent most of his time the first few weeks pledging Alpha Chi Sigma. “We were subjected to all kinds of hazing,” he noted.

Killinger and the pledges were forced to perform menial jobs around the frat house, including shoveling soft coal into the furnace late hours into the night. One evening, pledges were pelted in the face with eggs and rotten fruit as they marched single file out of the frat house and led to the center of town where they were told to storm into the movie theater without purchasing tickets. “The few policemen were helpless and wisely

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9 Student Record Card of W. Glenn Killinger, the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania; Henry, *William Glenn Killinger*, 135.

offered no resistance,” he recounted. While generally hot tempered and brazen, Killinger remained obedient, as he was forced one night to go on coal walks over a series of bonfires while paddled by his frat brothers.

The hazing lasted just three weeks. And as time wore on, Killinger’s frat brothers accepted him into Alpha Chi Sigma. He ended up bunking with James Porter Harris, a longtime friend of Killinger’s older brother from Harrisburg and senior agricultural chemistry major.

In reality, Killinger was most excited about trying out for Penn State’s football team. There was so much about the game he loved. The hard hits. The element of savagery. He was not quite ready to let the game go just because he was in college. All first year students-athletes at Penn State were forced to adhere to the “one-year rule” which prevented freshmen from playing varsity sports. This rule was not enforced at every college in the country—and would not be for another ten years. But at Penn State in 1906, the athletic department had voted to prohibit its freshman from playing varsity sports. So on September 11, about two weeks later than usual because of the new regulations produced by the nation’s wartime environment, Killinger set out for freshmen football tryouts.

Penn State’s football team was coached by Richard C. “Dick” Harlow, an alumnus who shined as an offensive tackle in 1911 and 1912, and in addition received varsity letters in baseball and track and field. A boxer from Philadelphia, Harlow became Penn State’s football coach in 1915, having replaced William M. Hollenback. As the Penn State program floundered under Hollenback in 1913, finishing with two wins and

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11 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 18.
12 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 3.
six losses, Harlow joined the staff as the line coach in 1914. His contribution is credited for Penn State’s respectable 5-3 finish that year. “Much of the credit for last year’s success belongs to him, for it was through his coaching that the line, which was State’s strong point, was developed,” wrote the *Harrisburg Star-Independent*.13

Upon receiving the Penn State job, Harlow, a sturdy twenty-seven-year-old with an already balding head, broad shoulders with no visible neck, implemented an entirely new system—a system that Killinger would make special note of decades later when he was coaching at West Chester State Teachers’ College. Harlow adhered to the college’s one-year residency rule for freshmen and transfers, and a full-year player supervision program in which he would have full charge of all football players’ activities during the school year.14

Harlow hired two powerful assistants. His backfield coach on the varsity was Lawrence A. “Bud” Whitney, a former captain of Dartmouth’s football team who excelled on the Ivy League school’s basketball and track teams. He was also a member of the 1912 Olympic team, which presented him the chance to compete alongside Killinger’s hero Jim Thorpe in Stockholm, Sweden. Harlow’s freshman coach was Burke “Dutch” Hermann, who doubled as the head varsity basketball coach.

Both the varsity and freshman teams were highly successful during Harlow’s tenure. The Blue and White varsity had finished 7-2 and 8-2 in 1915 and 1916, respectively. The freshman teams led by Hermann finished 6-0-1 and 7-0 during that span. The outlook for each team in 1917, however, was in question. The football team

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was heavily hit by the departure of many players to the service. Just three of eighteen varsity lettermen and nine of sixteen freshmen from the 1916 teams tried out for Harlow’s new wartime unit. An additional setback came when backfield coach Whitney and freshman boss Hermann both left to enter the service two weeks before the start of the season. The 1917 Penn State Blue and White looked totally depleted from the outside. At the start of the season, the New York Tribune called the team “scant, light and inexperienced.” Harlow and his squad embraced the assessment by dubbing the 1917 season the “war-time football adventure.”

The call for troops had hit every other American college devastatingly hard too. A combination of patriotic fervor and voluntary enlistment compelled Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, college football’s leading exponents, in addition to West Point and Annapolis, to announce the cancelation of all sports that autumn. Though each university and military academy would eventually bring back football in the eleventh hour, most colleges and universities had equal trouble trying to field a team. And yet, individual collegians that answered the call found new opportunities to fulfill their athletic interests at military installations throughout the United States. In the summer before the start to the 1917 fall sports season, the United States War Department took measures to offer organized football, in addition to boxing, wrestling, and baseball, to drafted and enlisted soldiers stationed at a plethora of the country’s army and navy camps. In short, the

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intercollegiate football season would continue as scheduled, but with several modifications to suit wartime necessities. While big and small colleges across the country had rosters cut and game schedules shortened, the War Department oversaw actions to established service sports at each base which offered its servicemen a much desired leisure activity, while instilling a necessary must-win spirit within soldiers that would soon see the battlefield on the Western Front.

Service Sports and Football’s Growing Popularity

According to sports historian James Mennell, service football programs “can be traced to a military sex scandal during 1916.” After Pancho Villa’s deadly attacks on civilian populations in towns along the Mexican border, National Guardsmen were ordered to Fort Sam Houston in Texas to help defend the region from future attacks. With nothing to do during free time, the young Guardsmen promenaded into town, Mennell writes, “to look for fun, but found venereal disease and cheap alcohol instead.”17 As the rate of servicemen that had contracted some form of sexually transmitted infection increased, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker appointed former New York police chief Raymond Fosdick to serve as chairman of the Commission on Training Camp Activities, a role that compelled him to investigate the living conditions at every American army and navy installation. After studying several camp towns in the United States and the Canadian and British army training systems, Fosdick urged the War Department to

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arrange “clean entertainments and amusements” to maintain the health and well being of the soldiers.\(^\text{18}\)

Before the autumn sports seasons began, Fosdick’s committee announced that service sports teams would be implemented at each military installation. Grantland Rice wrote a column that ran in newspapers throughout the country supporting the measure: “The soldier in fine physical condition, used to long walks or hard exercise, may not have a soft and dapple time of it in war, but compared to the citizen who has never trained the athlete’s way is replete with roses and velvet.”\(^\text{19}\) Soldiers shook the countryside with a hurrah to celebrate this call to sports. The necessary appropriations for service teams in football, boxing, baseball, hockey, wrestling, track, and basketball were made through the Army and Navy Departments to cover the cost of equipment for each sport. Fosdick then appointed Joseph Raycroft, a Princeton University physical education professor, Athletic Director for the Army, and Walter Camp, former Yale standout and coach turned preeminent football authority, Athletic Director for the Navy. The two men were tasked with appointing athletic directors at every army and navy encampment and to craft game schedules.

In 1917, military teams generally schedule intercompany clashes—similar to a situation of a branch campus playing a game against the team from the original university or college, or if one branch campus would go toe to toe with another branch campus. In other words, Army would play Army, Navy would play Navy, or Army would play

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Navy.\textsuperscript{20} Fifteen cantonments for the national army and navy established service football teams in 1917 and 1918, including the New England National Guard camp in Massachusetts; Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia; Camp Hancock of Augusta, Georgia; Camp Upton in Yaphank, Long Island; Camp Pike located in Little Rock, Arkansas; Camp Sherman in Hamilton, Ohio; Camp Meade in Maryland; Camp Dix of Wrightstown, New Jersey; Camp Funston in Fort Riley, Kansas; Camp Wadsworth of Spartanburg, South Carolina; Camp Shelby at Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Wissahickon Naval Barracks in Cape May, New Jersey; Great Lakes Naval Station near Chicago, Illinois; Bremerton Navy Station outside of Seattle, Washington; and Camp Lee of Petersburg, Virginia.\textsuperscript{21} Some camp teams were lucky to schedule Red Cross benefit games against opponents from the intercollegiate football association. For instance, Princeton, once reluctant to field a team, elected to schedule just two games that fall against Army’s Fort Dix and Navy’s Wissahickon Barracks, the two military installations in New Jersey. Penn State, meanwhile, opened its season in 1917 with a 10-0 decision over the Army Ambulance Corps of Allentown, Pennsylvania, a team that featured two former Penn State players, Ben Cubbage and Clarence Beck, while the University of Pittsburgh ended its national championship run that year with a 30-0 victory over the service team from Camp Lee.\textsuperscript{22} A year later it would become easier for army and navy


\textsuperscript{22} “Benefit Game Won by Pitt,” \textit{The Pittsburgh Press}, December 2, 1917, 1; “Benefit Game is Won by Penn State,” \textit{The Pittsburgh Press}, September 30, 1917, 23; “Football
service teams to schedule games against regular varsity opponents. And those games would be played for more than just charity.

Fosdick was excited about his service sports programs. He said, “there will be more real and widespread athletic activity in this country during the next twelve months than ever before in our lifetime.” He explained that each cantonment consisted of anywhere between fifteen and forty thousand troops. The training camps, Fosdick said, “will be sizeable cities in themselves, and the need for social and relaxational [sic] facilities is going to tax the efforts of all those of us who are interested in providing a sane, well rounded life for the men in the camps.”

Each sport was designed to train soldiers in battlefield survival skills. Historian Steven W. Pope described Fosdick’s service sports program as superlative for preparing recruits for frontline combat. Baseball throwing fundamentals were good for grenade tossing. Wrestling maneuvers helped with hand-to-hand combat. Gymnastic skills like scaling, balancing, jumping, and vaulting helped out in the trenches. “The greatest attention,” Pope described, “was given to boxing as a training for bayonet fighting.” An added emphasis was placed on pugilism since the sport was illegal in most places in the country and most soldiers were being taught the basics of close-range combat for the first time.

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Joseph Raycroft’s public statement in defense of service sports reaffirms Fosdick’s initiative. While speaking directly about boxing, the Army Athletic Director said any criticism against boxing as a method to teach bayonet fighting “are based upon ignorance of both bayonet fighting and military boxing.” Raycroft told Fosdick the conscripts lacked “self-reliance,” “courage,” “quick thinking,” and “quick decisions under fire” since they have had “little or no experience in physical contact games” prior to entering the service. An influx of white middle-class soldiers, many of them privileged youths, had never been in a fight in their lives. Bayonet training, in other words, was needed for “speed, endurance and skill in handling the weapon.” The problem, Raycroft illustrated, was that “in the nature of things there can be no practice contests with the bayonets.” Boxing, Raycroft concluded, “furnishes a means of training men to keep their heads and to carry out an effective plan of attack.” Qualities in a bayonet fighter needed to be developed by means of boxing “to an extent and with a rapidity that is impossible in any other plan of training thus far tried.”

Football was deemed the most popular service sport to play by both army and navy cadets. However, owing to the considerable expenses needed for outfitting football players with equipment, Fosdick initially doubted that the game could be implemented as a service sport until the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, and the Red Cross provided generous financial donations specifically so military installations could carry football teams. Citing courage, pluck, strength, speed, agility, and the ability to think quickly under pressure, Walter Camp claimed, “No sport is quite so closely allied to modern

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26 “Boxing is a Big Aid to Bayonet Fighting,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 15, 1918, 3.
warfare as football.”28 From his own experiences playing and coaching football, and with his new perspective as the commissioner of service sports at navy camps throughout the country, Camp understood the importance of using football to give American soldiers an advantage overlooked by other warring nations. “If anyone were to ask a commander what qualities he wished in the body of men he was about to train for war,” he explicated, “he would repeat, in a great measure, the above football requirements.”29

Once established, the trouble with service football was that the resulting military teams would lack the skill and proficiency of traditional intercollegiate teams. Camp resisted all entreaties against service football: he claimed that since all service teams would have veterans “from former college gridirons, if properly coached, will have been shaped into formidable organizations.” He observed that thousands of current and former college football players were already in the service. Wherever a cantonment has “a fair nucleus” of star athletes, Camp said, “it will be possible to build up with the other material and by coaching develop a strong aggregation.”30 That is exactly what occurred. The service football team gathered at Camp Sherman in Ohio had six former Walter Camp All-Americans on its roster.31 The Army Ambulance Corps featured the University of Pennsylvania’s star fullback and intercollegiate decathlon champion Joe Berry. The result was something unparalleled in American sports culture.

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29 Ibid, 12; Walter Camp, “Camp Predicts Much Football This Fall.” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette Times*, October 14, 1917, 4.
Never before did so many Americans play and pay attention to football, noted *Outlook* magazine. “In every army cantonment,” the magazine’s editor explained, “footballs were as thick as pumpkins in an autumn cornfield.”32 Mennell suggests that service football in 1917 helped the sport become the foremost game played and watched by American citizens in the decade following World War I. “Not only was service football winning new civilian fans for football,” he writes, “but it also had a significant impact on thousands of soldiers and sailors.” For one, service football teams were actually star-studded, owing to transfers and training deployments. He added: “This quality of play had not been expected when the season began.”33

While the combination of dominant performances by large college teams and the pageantry of all-star service teams put the public’s interest in the gridiron game at fever pitch, some might argue that new rules passed between 1906 and 1917, many of which were discussed in Chapter 2, made football more engaging for spectators. Rules changes after the player safety crises of 1905 and 1909 banned mass and momentum plays designed to make the game safer while allowing the modern form of snapping between the legs (rather than rolling the ball to the quarterback with a foot), forward passes, and gimmicks opened offensive systems up for more exciting and crowd-pleasing action. Additional rules designed to improve the game were passed just before America’s entry into the war; they included a touchback on kickoffs, two points for a safety, and penalties

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32 Editor of *Outlook* magazine quoted in Pope, *Patriotic Games*. 149.
for pass interference and roughing the kicker. This was a radical paradigm shift in football, which previously featured middle wedges, something that twenty-first century coaches describe as “three-yards and a cloud of dust” plays that usually left fans bored. One year after the forward-passing rule was implemented, Illinois threw thirty completions against Northwestern and the University of Chicago connected on twenty-one passes against Purdue. That same year, the Pop Warner-led Carlisle Indians upset the University of Minnesota, 12-10, after connecting on two touchdown passes. The Oklahoma Sooners, led by one-armed coach Bennie Owen, averaged thirty-five forward passes a game in 1913. Historian David M. Nelson calls Owen “the founding father of the forward-pass tradition in the Southwest.” In the early 1910s, Notre Dame obtained national prominence for its exciting forward-passing offense. Nelson writes in The Anatomy of a Game, “The 1913 Army-Notre Dame game provided the forward pass the biggest one-game promotion ever recorded before or since.” The historic contest featured Irish quarterback Gus Dorais complete fourteen of seventeen pass attempts, connecting most of the time with chemistry major Knute Rockne, in Notre Dame’s dominant 35-13 victory. For all the attention the introduction of the forward pass has received for its benefits to offensive play, it was just as rewarding to the defensive unit in these early years. For every touchdown pass completed in 1913, Nelson explains, “two forward passes were intercepted for touchdowns.” A notable addition to the football rulebook came in 1916 when the rules committee, led by Walter Camp and Amos Alonzo Stagg, coauthored “The Football Code.” The code aimed to make football a “distinctively

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academic game—the game of the schools and the colleges.” The code, Nelson writes, “maintained high standards of sportsmanship.” Also in 1916, placekicking replaced the dropkick as the method of kicking a point after touchdown or a field goal.35

Sports revisionists agree that football’s popularity cannot be credited to the rule changes, but to the war. Their assertions are substantiated by a 1917 New York Times editorial that claims, “football owes more to the war in the way of the spread of the spirit of the game than it does ten or twenty years of development in the period before the war.”36 Walter Camp corroborated the Times editorial when he said, “A great deal has been said about the football season of 1917 being like the play of Hamlet with the omission of Hamlet. But as matters progress, it is very evident that this fall will see more football played probably than any other year for a long time.”37

Amidst all of these wartime transitions that warned him of a looming hell on earth, Glenn Killinger arrived on campus that fall inspired by the prospect of making the freshman team. Practice began as scheduled on September 11. Killinger, now about 5’ 7” and weighing 140 pounds, was eager to prove himself. “I reported to the Old Track House where the two squads dressed,” he recalled years later. “Just as I arrived, Dick Rauch, a Harrisburg native on the varsity squad, came out of the dressing quarters and I hailed him.” After asking how to obtain a uniform, Rauch looked over Killinger “with disapproving eyes” and told him to find the team manager.38

36 Pope, Patriotic Games. 149.
38 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 5.
Bill Martin was the man Killinger was looking for. Martin was a Penn Stater known for his scrupulous management of the football program. He was spotted resting under the shade of a tree waiting for practice to begin. Killinger moved close to Martin and asked about being fitted for equipment. Martin steadied his gaze straight ahead, watching a few of the players who gathered early on the practice field. Sitting idly, he responded, “wait until practice is over.”

Milling about nervously and clearly self-conscious, Killinger paced, arms crossed, sizing up each player as the team filed out of the locker room. “Most of the squads were big and burly,” he recalled, “all but a few needing a shave.” His pacing settled. Killinger now stood there petrified, wondering why he believed that he could actually become one of those pseudo-gladiators. He conceded, “my ambition to play football diminished rapidly.” Not long into practice Coach Harlow divided the players into two teams for a physical twenty-minute inter-squad scrimmage. After a few minutes, Killinger decided that he no longer wanted any part of playing football at Penn State. He confessed, “I walked away from the field and had no further desire to obtain a uniform that year.”

Harlow’s varsity eleven eventually finished with five wins and four losses. It was a respectable record considering that it was the first year that intercollegiate football was played during wartime. Penn State proved to have one of the nation’s most potent offensive units. It racked up scoring victories of 80-0 over Gettysburg College, 99-0 over

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St. Bonaventure, and 57-0 against Maryland State College. Meanwhile, the Blue and White freshman eleven dominated its opponents by finishing the fall with a 7-0-1 record. The yearlings’ season was highlighted by an overall scoring margin of 291 points to three. It was clear that Killinger would not have made a difference on the season. Self-consciously, he admitted, “[I] hid from the manager for the rest of that year for fear of being asked why I did not remain to pick up a uniform.”

42 The Pennsylvania State University. La Vie, 1919 (University Park, State College, Pennsylvania, 1919), 329.
CHAPTER 5:
MILITARY ARROGANCE, UNIVERSITY MISPERCEPTION

Glenn Killinger, Harold Lloyd, and the Hero on Campus

In 1925, comedian Harold Lloyd’s silent film, *The Freshman*, offered a rare combination of football and college lore as the actor played an imprudent and obnoxious college freshman named Harold Lamb, who tries to make his way onto the varsity football team at fictitious Tate University. The film begins with Lamb in his bedroom gazing longingly at a poster of a made-up movie titled “The College Hero” pinned on his wall. While eager to leave home, Lamb is the first in his family to go to college. Accordingly, he endures fits of anxiety about what may come of his future. No one in his family could tell him what the college experience will be like. He deals with the uneasiness by mimicking the personality of the movie’s protagonist, Lester Laurel, down to the varsity letter cardigan, moxie, and playful jig he performs when meeting peers on campus. The character Lamb even gives himself Laurel’s nickname, “Speedy.” The movie’s second part dramatizes student life on a college campus, where Lloyd naively becomes a laughing stock among his peers.

Harold Lloyd biographer Annette D’Agostino Lloyd (no relation) called *The Freshman* unique in “personifying the comedy of embarrassment like, perhaps, no film has ever.” While explicitly subjective—her passion for the subject is apparent—her point about Lloyd’s comedic originality could be argued. Throughout the film, Harold “Speedy” Lamb is humiliated and hazed “at the hands of both fellow students and faculty,” she writes, while adding: “It is hard not to cringe when you see all the things
that happen to Speedy in his quest for the golden ring of popularity.”1 In the film, he is often teased, shoved to the ground, and conspired against. In the middle of The Freshman, Lamb is mocked for trying out for the football team. When he breaks the tackling equipment used during tryouts for the varsity football team, Lamb is forced to stand-in as the tackle dummy. He becomes the laughing stock of the entire college when the team captain convinces the coach to make him water boy while letting him think he has earned a spot on the roster. Lamb never realizes he is being ridiculed.2

The theme of the film would be that of a can-do spirit, which, like Glenn Killinger’s life, embodies the great American Horatio Algerian promise. “The idea was simply that the Boy had an obsession,” Harold Lloyd wrote years later, “to go to college and be the most popular boy there.” Lamb’s problem was that he had no idea that the way he was behaving in order to become popular was all wrong, “so it got him in trouble,” explained Lloyd.3 That view can be seen in Lloyd’s other films; in particular the 1928 film Speedy, in which Lloyd’s character Harold “Speedy” Swift becomes distracted by baseball. Movie historian Steven Winer writes of Lloyd’s anthology: “In Safety Last (1923), he wants to succeed in the city. In Girl Shy (1924), he wants to succeed as a writer/lover. In the sound film Movie Crazy (1932), his dream is to become a movie star.”

2 Donald W. McCaffrey, Three Classic Silent Screen Comedies Starring Harold Lloyd (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976), 64.
3 Lloyd, 198-99.
In all of these films, Winer says, “by a combination of will and determination, he achieves these goals.”

The fact that this movie debuted in the mid-1920s does not remove suspicion that Lloyd’s character, Harold Lamb, strikingly resembles the life and college experience of Glenn Killinger, an undersized and middling footballer who was cut from his high school’s varsity team; but, with a mound of good fortune, became the Nittany Lions’ All-American quarterback four years before the release of The Freshman. Both the fictional character Lamb and real life Killinger were the first in their respective families to go to college. Moreover, they both understood that going to college during this era was not so much about enhancing intellectual skills at all. According to sports historian Benjamin G. Rader, attending college during the first quarter of the twentieth century was a means of “achieving a [higher] social position.” A degree from an institute of higher learning was “a passport to high society.” It was just the thing that unsophisticated and credulous tenderfoots like Lamb and Killinger needed in order to become part of the national upper class. Down to the lifelong dream of becoming the star football player and most popular man on campus, Killinger and Lamb share this unique, be it, comedic bond.

The Freshman draws another conspicuous comparison to the fledging Penn State footballer. In the movie’s final scene—the big rivalry game filmed on November 22, 1924 at the Berkeley Bowl at the University of California-Berkeley in front of an actual crowd of about 90,000 spectators gathered to watch a real game between Stanford and

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5 Rader, American Sports, 93.
California—Lamb becomes the star, thus the college’s hero, when his coach is forced to give him a uniform and insert him into the game because too many of Tate’s players had sustained game ending injuries and the bungling coach ran out of substitutes. Lamb’s performance during the game is mediocre, at best. He is knocked unconscious several times. He missed blocking assignments, and failed to bring down opposing ball carriers. However, on the last play of the game, Lamb, sporting Lloyd’s signature shell-rimmed goggles, knocks the football loose from an opposing ball carrier, picks up the fumble and weaves his way down the field for the winning touchdown. In the end, Lamb becomes the college’s hero and wins over the affection of the much sought after darling, played by Jobyna Ralston, an actress who co-starred as Lloyd’s love interest in a total of six movies, including *Why Worry?* (1923) and *Girl Shy*. He is carried away on the shoulders of adoring fans and hailed as the savior of Tate University.

Not only has the film been hailed for generating enthusiasm for movies based on sophomoric pranks; it is, in some ways, reflective of Killinger’s first and last years at Penn State crammed into Harold Lamb’s freshman year. In fact, Lamb’s mental and physical transformation at the hands of upperclassmen bullies gives him incentive to persevere through the hard hits that knocked him out cold more than once during the final scene of the film. But what *The Freshman* does best for the narrative of Killinger is embrace the spirit of the American Dream while suggesting that sports is a mechanism

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that can create social mobility. Silent film historian Donald McCaffrey suggests Harold Lamb’s rise to social acceptance “seems to be centered on the achievement of success through an unusual way (which is thus comic in nature)—through luck and determination and not through any particular skill.” The Freshman, McCaffrey continues, is the “embodiment of the social forces that keep Harold Lamb an outcast.”

A line might be drawn here between the attitude of the college students that mock Lamb throughout the film and the troubles of middle class Americans laboring in a capitalist society that does not guarantee rewards of a better life one day. The thing that keeps Lamb striving for popularity comes from his obsession with his love interest, Peggy. This notion is no different than a middle-class American powered by the possibility that a better life could be created for one’s children. From this synopsis, it can be argued that the chase for a combination of social acceptance while in pursuit of the material are inherited characteristics of real life jazz-era athletes like Glenn Killinger, who would soon find his a chance to play varsity sports as the United States of America engaged with Germany in World War I. To understand each theme presented in The Freshman—issues related to the Horatio Alger myth, anxiety, ridicule, acceptance, attaining popularity through athletic feats—it is necessary to know and appreciate the life of Glenn Killinger, who is, arguably, the best example of an ambitious yet disadvantaged athlete that reached the apex of intercollegiate sports and the summit of fame in American sports culture.

Wartime Closure of America’s Colleges and Universities

Just like the young chap in The Freshman, Killinger’s body began to mature by the winter of his freshman year. “I had grown almost two inches in height and gained

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8 McCaffrey, Three Classic Silent Screen Comedies Starring Harold Lloyd, 57-59.
about 15 lbs,” he later noted. And fortunately, his class schedule, which ended by 3 o’clock every day was, in his words, “rather light.” A young man with a lot of time on his hands, little interest in studying, and an urge to fulfill his competitive desires, he often went to the Armory, where the gymnasium was located, to play pick-up basketball or to wrestle. Though the start of wrestling season was weeks away, Killinger found himself surrounded by members of the team working out. “The wrestlers needed bodies to practice their skills,” he explained. Penn State’s 125-pound champion Dave Detar invited Killinger to wrestle with him. “I bashfully refused,” he confessed. Detar hardly cared. He grabbed Killinger’s arm and jerked him to the mat. Much like Tate University’s football players using Harold Lamb as their tackle dummy, Killinger was used as Detar’s sparring partner. “He gave me a thorough going-over,” Killinger recalled nostalgically. He continued his sessions with Deter almost daily in 1917 and 1918. He said, “I credit wrestling with helping me get mentally tough and lose all fear of physical contact.”

Killinger’s new physique and toughness was on display that winter as one of seven members of Penn State’s freshman basketball squad. Still, as one of the unlikeliest members of the team, he had to prove himself. His action was limited in preseason play as the freshman team often scrimmaged against the varsity. Killinger persisted, and found himself starting at left guard by the first game of the season. “I learned about rough basketball as the varsity [often] gave us a good going-over, especially under the baskets,” he said. “I learned to protect myself and return the rough tactics of the varsity.”

With Killinger as a contributing force at guard, the first-year men coasted to one of the most successful freshman seasons in years at the college. Much of their success

9 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 5.
10 Ibid, 6-7.
was due to scheduling limitations placed upon the nation’s colleges by the wartime modifications. Most of Penn State’s freshman games were scheduled against area preparatory and high schools. When the season ended in March with a victory over Lafayette High School, Killinger had become a primary scorer on the team.11

His performance did not go unnoticed. During one of the final scrimmages of the season between the varsity and freshman teams, Coach Harlow stood in the corner of the gym impressed at Killinger’s refusal to back down from the bigger varsity players. “Harlow talked with me after practice and invited me to come out for spring football practice,” he recalled. Of course the young acolyte said yes.

It was on Penn State’s basketball court that Killinger gained the confidence he needed to compete on a college level. In this environment, he was removed from both the traditional Allison Hill setting where people expected from him a certain behavior and from the playing fields of his old high school where opponents from rival schools held little respect for him. At Penn State, no one knew who he was. His durability was less of a factor in being selected for a team. He displayed poise and passion for team victories rather than the self-absorbed reputation that once characterized him.

He took his new attitude with him to the gridiron in March to participate in Coach Harlow’s spring football practices. There was considerable opportunity for Killinger to prove himself at spring camp because Penn State’s roster was still bleeding for reasons of enlistment. A number of expected returnees to Harlow’s lineup had chosen to take an active hand in the war. Among those who turned up in the spring were four returning

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lettermen, the fifteen that made up the previous season’s freshman team, and non-scholarship walk-ons like Killinger.

Killinger, of course, could play better and run faster than most. He just needed an opportunity to be taken seriously and this was the perfect time. With a depleted roster, he seized the moment. For two weeks, he ran around the football field perfecting offensive and defensive drills, participating in inter-squad scrimmages, and learning Harlow’s system. “I also learned that I could take the rough tackles with ease,” he wrote in his memoir, “I actually enjoyed the physical contact.” He spent most of his time at halfback that spring, responsible for taking or faking handoffs from youth sensation, Charlie Way, a swift-footed athlete who turned out to be Penn State’s most pleasant surprise of the previous season.

Way, a sophomore electro-chemical engineering major from Coatesville, Pennsylvania, was able to earn the starting job at quarterback at the midway point of the 1917 season. Despite his small build—he stood 5’7”, 140 pounds—he became a consistent force for the Blue and White when, in the last thirty seconds of the West Virginia-Wesleyan game, he picked up a punt and ran 45 yards through the opponent’s coverage for a touchdown. The miraculous play resulted in a one-point, 8-7, victory. When the 1917 season had ended, the school yearbook illuminated how people in State College were excited about “the uncovering of a sensation in the form of diminutive Charlie Way.” There was no way of knowing at that point, but Way and Killinger were

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12 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 7.
on the verge of establishing an enduring bond in the form of dual All-American honors and a lifelong friendship.

Killinger’s moment on the gridiron that spring was fleeting. But it was for good reason. He wanted to prove to Coach Harlow that he was serious about playing football, but he also possessed a deep desire to play baseball; the sport that he excelled at more than any other, and it was quite possible that he could make the freshman nine. So earlier that spring he cut a deal with Harlow, who was once a multi-sport athlete at Penn State and would clearly understand. Killinger vowed that he would do as much as he could at spring football practices, but once baseball season commenced in April, he would turn in his equipment. At that point, Coach Harlow would let him know if he would be needed for the football team in the fall.

As planned in April, Killinger departed from the football team to report to Coach Dick Harley’s baseball training camp. This brief time spent with the football squad made the right impression on the Penn State coach. Killinger later recalled that Harlow told him to, “report early in September, 1918, for fall football practice.”

While Killinger was reinventing himself, the overall atmosphere at Penn State was overwhelmingly hawkish. The war hit student life pretty hard. There were 1,513 former and current Penn State students training in the various military camps across the East Coast and among the throes of combat by the end of the school term. This fact came to occupy more and more of Killinger’s attention, especially as the fighting in Europe continued to escalate. On the eve of spring training, the Germans mounted the

15 1,513 Penn State Men in Active Military Service,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, November 10, 1918; “State College Has 1,435 in Service; Five Killed,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 12, 1918, 9.
first of five major offensives on the western front. The world was just weeks away from witnessing American troops face off against the Germans at Chateau-Thierry.

Within weeks of the deadly battle, colleges and universities across the country were taking measures more suitable for the wartime demands. Penn State joined twenty-one other Pennsylvania colleges in shortening the spring semester. Instead of the traditional five-month term ending with commencement in June, Penn State had moved up the end of the semester to April 23. Baseball at Penn State, like all of the other spring sports, accordingly, suffered because of the accommodations.

The athletic department at State College chose not to abandon the spring sports season altogether, but instead devised abridged schedules. The track and field season was abbreviated, albeit with a lot of success. Penn State squeezed in one of the best wrestling seasons in the school’s history before the semester ended. The athletic department was able to maintain only one game for the baseball team. So in April, the baseball coach proceeded with spring training in preparation for Penn State’s lone game against Carnegie Tech, scheduled for April 24, the day after the term was to expire.

There would be no freshman baseball club in 1918. As far as the rules were concerned, the one-year rule barring freshmen from varsity competition applied to baseball as it did every other sport at Penn State. So when Killinger showed up for baseball tryouts, he did so to impress the coach, while also hoping to earn a seat in the dugout for the varsity game against Carnegie Tech.

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It is unclear how difficult it was for Killinger to make the ball club. Evidence suggests the baseball roster was as depleted as any other sport at State College. The turnout likely didn’t matter; baseball was the sport that he was most comfortable playing. He had proven himself among the best in Harrisburg’s considerably competitive Allison Hill League, which featured many prevailing collegiate baseball players. That confidence helped him prove his mettle in front of Coach Harley. The week before Penn State’s one and only game, he was told to play second base on the practice squad.17

Killinger enjoyed his view from the dugout as he watched Penn State defeat Carnegie Tech. The headline of the Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger, announced, “Penn State Plays Season in Single Day.” It reported, “Penn State opened and closed its baseball season here yesterday with a victory over the Carnegie Tech nine by the score of 6 to 3.”18

After the game, Killinger and his teammates were forced to return to their homes without certainty about the future. The college was closed until September 25. Understandably, everything about the spring, summer, and fall in 1918 was overshadowed by the war. Voluntary enlistment seemed to be ubiquitous, especially among those in close proximity to Killinger. “Many of the students enlisted in the armed forces at the conclusion of the school year,” he explained.19 His friends in Harrisburg also took up arms. He was not persuaded by the departure of his friends. He remained respectful of his mother’s wishes by choosing not to volunteer.

17 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 20-21; The Pennsylvania State University. La Vie, 1920 (University Park, State College, Pennsylvania, 1920), 276;
19 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 17.
War and Community Sports

The only benefit Killinger could see with the abrupt end to his freshman year was the chance to return home in time for the start of the city’s amateur baseball season. He spent his summer days in one of two locations, the factory of the Harrisburg Pipe and Pipe Bending Works Company where he retained his defense job, and the baseball diamond on the corner of Seventeenth and Chestnut Streets where he played baseball in the Allison Hill League. He returned to play for the Rosewood Athletic Club, which his brother Earl was serving as player-manager. “Some of the best athletes in the city have been picked to represent the Rosewoods,” one local newspaper described. Rosewood, however, “received a severe blow” when two of Killinger’s friends “Snowball” Winters and, arguably the team’s best player, Warren Lyme took up arms to serve.20

Rosewood opened the season with an 8-6 victory over Hick-A-Thrift, a club carrying Carl Beck, a schoolboy god considered by many as the most popular sports figure in the city of Harrisburg. Beck derived from a family of successful athletic boys who all attended Killinger’s alma mater, the Harrisburg Technical High School. Beck was already called “a second ‘Jim’ Thrope [sic]” by the local media for his prowess in football, baseball, and track and field.21 In the Allison Hill League season opener, Beck’s two hits and one run in the box score looked slightly better than Killinger’s one hit, one run, and stolen base. But Killinger got the last word when Rosewood secured the win. The victory was the first of many, as Rosewood fought for the 1918 Allison Hill League pennant.

20 “Hill League Opens Season,” Harrisburg Telegraph, May 6, 1918, 9.
Along with Earl, Killinger made a notable impression on the fans during the summer. “When it comes to knocking out the ball,” wrote one local sportswriter with infection, “those brothers Glenn and Earl are surely killing’er.” The brothers provided the twilight league with more fans than ever at the Allison Hill grounds. A clear distraction from the events taking place in Europe, crowds between 700 and 1,500 packed onto the empty grass for each contest. Rosewood’s games were especially crammed with supporters. The Harrisburg Telegraph said of the Killingers’ following: “No team in the league shows more ‘pep’ than the Killinger crowd.”

The absence of two starters from Rosewood’s lineup because of military demands forced Earl and Glenn to play several positions throughout the summer. Especially early on, it was important to find the right rotation as Rosewood fought to keep pace with Reading for an early season division lead. While usually a second baseman, Killinger also played shortstop, first base, and catcher. Earl was typically the team’s catcher, but he sometimes pitched. Both brothers hit well all season, and were notorious base runners. At the season’s midpoint, Earl maintained the league leading batting average at .526. Killinger held steady at twelfth, with a .388 average. At nine wins and seven losses, Rosewood found themselves in second place, four games behind Reading. That was when Killinger and his Rosewood teammates really caught fire. In a game against Reading on July 18, he hit a three-run homerun in the sixth inning to lead Rosewood to a 10-4 victory, which helped to move his team within a game of first place. When the season

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closed on July 26, Rosewood and Reading were tied for first place, each with identical 15-9 records.

A best of three game series was arranged by the Allison Hill board of directors to decide the pennant. A media circus surrounded the game. Pictures of each team appeared in the *Telegraph* on July 30. Announcements were made throughout the city informing fans that a Red Cross benefit was planned for the game. And, stat sheets about the lineups for each club were published in the newspaper.

The newspaper reported that “no less than 2,500 people” came to watch the post-season series. With help from Earl, who threw out two base runners attempting to steal second base in game one and batted .286 for the series, Rosewood was able to sweep Reading by scores of 2-1 in game one and 2-0 in game two. Rosewood’s two pitchers—“Lefty” Landis of West Virginia University and John Jones of Villanova University—received most of the credit for the victories. But it was Glenn Killinger’s performance that turned out to be the main course to his productivity throughout the summer. By batting .750 for the series, and without committing any errors, Killinger became the difference for Rosewood in the title games. Especially in game two, with the scored tied 0-0, Killinger hit a triple to center field in the top of the sixth to drive in the game’s only two runs.25

This time around, as Rosewood team members and their fans took to celebrating the city championship, Killinger looked like somebody who genuinely cared about his team. When the August 7 edition of the *Telegraph* printed a picture of the Rosewood

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pennant club, Killinger was found standing in the back row, arms crossed, hat on straight, shoulders back, and eclipsed by the 6’ 3” Villanova slab artist-phenom John Jones.\(^{26}\)

Killinger had moved beyond his boyhood dream of playing in the professional leagues. He learned that to get the most out of football, basketball, and baseball, he had to play for the love of each game. His early tests at Penn State, combined with his observations of what the war was doing to the community at-large, was central to his emerging view of organized sports. He came to look at football, basketball, and baseball as competitions between two teams instead of individual tests of will. There were moments in the course of a game when Killinger knew he had to face off in a one-on-one battle; there would be situations on a football field when he had to call a play to give himself the ball, and times on a court that he would have to dribble around the opponent guarding him to score a bucket, and tests in baseball when he would narrow his focus to a head-to-head showdown between he and the pitcher. He came to believe, after those moments of individualism, the single way to be great was to help his teammates become better players, which would consequentially make the team great. Decades later, in the midst of his Hall of Fame coaching career at West Chester State Teachers’ College he often said the key to the team’s success was for each player to “play hard, play fair, and above all, want to play.”\(^{27}\) It was a creed he developed early in the throes of war clouds.

**The Student Army Training Corps**

When America’s war in Europe entered its sixteenth month in August 1918, the United States War Department announced the establishment of a new division of the

\(^{26}\) “In Heroic Pitching Bout Between John Jones and Earl Waltz Rosewood Wins the Allison Hill League Flag and City Title,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 7, 1918, 11.

army to consist of college undergraduates: the Student Army Training Corps. There had previously been two methods by which a man could enter the Armed Forces. He might enlist as a volunteer in the Army or the Navy, or he might carry on in civilian life until chosen by the draft after the age of twenty-one. At that moment, Glenn Killinger only had one option if he wanted to serve, which was to enlist voluntarily. Yet he was forced to submit to the demands of his dovish parents. He was still too young for the draft, so he watched many of his friends from Harrisburg and State College enter the national services earlier that winter and spring.

An overwhelming number of colleges and universities across the country had depleted enrollment numbers. “Uncle Sam was hard put to supply manpower for the final drive to win the war,” Killinger would later remember of his wartime experience.28 By fall, no one could guess when the war would end. The volume of college-age enlistses multiplying during the 1918-1919 school terms was inevitable. Fittingly, the War Department feared that if students continued to leave college before graduating it would lead to a disaster both overseas and on the home front; the Army was without skilled personnel or capable officers. The Washington Post suggested these men would be of “far greater value” to the army if persuaded “to complete their college courses and qualify for work as engineers, chemists, physicians [sic], or other services.”29 Additionally, the War Department acknowledged the need for educated men with “college training” to fill vital roles in the work force once the war would come to an end.

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28 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
29 “College Men Form New Army Division,” Washington Herald, July 12, 1918, 1; “College Men and the War,” Logan Republican, August 10, 1918, 1.
In an effort to undercut the bleeding, the War Department created the Student Army Training Corps to offer a third option for entering the service. By twentieth-century standards, this military training program was unprecedented, an untested experiment in preventing students from exiting college too early by offering a fast track to Officer Training School, money for college, and a stipend. Cooperative colleges had campuses commandeered by the military: classrooms, playing fields, dormitories, Greek houses, gymnasiums, and dining halls were seized for the Army’s and Navy’s use. The War Department even took control of college curriculum. This did not make previous majors of study obsolete. But rather course material was altered to meet the demands of the government’s war machine, which combined an aggressive anti-German curriculum with strict military standards like punctuality, proper demeanor, and appropriate dress code.

Penn State’s 1,375 student-soldiers were integrated with approximately 1,000 civilian students on campus for forty-two out of fifty-three hours of class per week. In a circular letter from Secretary of War Newton Baker addressed to the colleges of the United States on August 28, 1918, it was made clear the primary purpose of the army training program was to “utilize the executive and teaching personnel and the physical equipment of the colleges to assist in the training of our new armies.”

This was an experiment in military and civil relations with the onus on the academic institutions. The War Department expected colleges to “devote the whole

energy and educational power” in assisting the government to prepare the minds and bodies of prospective soldiers. Faculty members were expected to set aside research interests and daily lessons to lecture on war aims. Many professors, especially historians, were subjected to breaking objectivity ethics to misrepresent the history of German-American relations and to publish anti-German propaganda. In addition to pedagogy, intercollegiate athletics were eventually placed under the watchful eye of the War Department. Animosity would mount at several S.A.T.C. colleges as faculty scoffed at what they saw as “military arrogance.” There was a sense of confusion among faculties about the status of their universities. “We were not sure whether we were a University or a training camp,” wrote David Kinley, then-vice president at the University of Illinois, adding, “It was not clear ‘whether the Commandant or the President was boss.’”

Male students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one were encouraged to enlist. By enlisting in the Student Army Training Corps, a student-soldier instantly became a private on active-duty status in the United States Army obligated to wear a uniform of a soldier including a service hat, olive-drab cord, and collar insignia of a bronze disk bearing the letters “U.S.” Members were given military drill instruction under officers in the United States Army. Each private was paid thirty dollars a month and given free tuition. After a certain period, the student-soldiers were tested to

32 Ibid.
33 Shearer, 220; Norman MaClaren Trenholme, *Syllabus of The Background and Issues of the World War* (Columbia, Missouri: The Missouri Book Co.), 1918. 30-34.
34 Shearer, 223.
determine qualifications as officer candidates and technical experts such as engineers, chemists, and doctors. Most privates in the program expected to attain the rank of 2nd lieutenant after one semester and be sent to officer training school.

There were organized two cadet sections of the Student Army Training Corps: the Collegiate Section and Vocational Section. The Collegiate Section was composed of student-soldiers that met the admission requirements of the college. Each college capped enrollment into the Collegiate Section at 1,375 student-soldiers, including 1,150 men reserved for the Army and 225 men for the Navy. (If the war would have continued into the winter, these men would have graduated to officer training camp in January 1919.) These cadets were placed under ten hours of military instruction a week: six focused on rifle practice and outdoor training while four hours were spent on academic work for which military credit was earned, such as mathematics, chemistry, engineering, economics, geology, and hygiene.

The Vocational Section was composed mostly of men not meeting educational requirements for admission into college. Others were college graduates preparing for military vocations such as motor truck driving, trench digging, and trench telephoning.36 Each college accepted 500 vocational cadets into the Student Army Training Corps.

Every private in the training program was required to take a course called “War Aims,” which possessed a curriculum designed to enhance morale by providing cadets with a clear picture of the war’s causes and explanations for why the United States had

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36 Pennsylvania State College. *Penn State in the World War.* Alumni Association of the Pennsylvania State College (State College, PA, 1921), 496;
declared war on Germany.\textsuperscript{37} The course addressed a list of one hundred questions, with an accompanying reading list. Prize-winning historian David M. Kennedy writes in his classic, \textit{Over Here: The First World War and American Society} (2004), that the War Aims course “varied considerably” from one college to next, but that the curriculum examined nineteenth and twentieth century European history designed to “fix blame for its outbreak squarely on Germany.”\textsuperscript{38} An integral part of the class was to indoctrinate students with cultural stereotypes and anti-German propaganda.

The War Department’s training program offered an attractive alternative to early enlistment. Support for the Corps was prevalent throughout academia. “Keep the boys in college!” became part of the refrain that arose from the rate at which students dropped out of college after the war declaration. It was estimated that 40,000 students already left American colleges during the previous school year to enter active service in the Army.\textsuperscript{39} Thousands of others dropped out to take up jobs in defense industries where the war had created labor shortages; the possibility of earning a high wage was difficult to forgo.

Perhaps no college administration was more vocal about keeping its students than Penn State’s, who already lost more than half its male enrollment to the military. The college’s officials joined in on the campaign: “Keep the boys in college!” was the message the school promoted in the weeks leading up to the start of the new semester.

\textsuperscript{39}“Ohio Colleges and Students’ Army Training Corps,” \textit{Democratic Banner} (Mount Vernon, OH). August 27, 1918, 5.
To keep the boys at Penn State, in particular, administrators had to maneuver quickly. The Pennsylvania press kept a close watch on servicemen who were either previously enrolled at Penn State or were recent graduates. In August, the *Harrisburg Telegraph* praised former Blue and White football players Lt. Richard S. Davis, W. C. “Whitey” Thomas, Levi Lamb, and B. C. “Casey” Jones for their valor on the battlefield. Story after story added to the nationalistic fervor that compelled Penn Staters to enlist. The *New York Tribune* confirmed “a dozen or more” varsity lettermen were already in France. It reported: “A few are with the fleet, others are in ambulance service, some are with the expeditionary forces, but the majority are in the aviation service.”\(^40\) The college yearbook *La Vie* verified the *Tribune’s* report at the end of the school year when it wrote that all of the fraternities were nearly “depopulated” and the senior class was “greatly reduced” at the start of the 1918 fall term.\(^41\)

Of the 540 colleges that ultimately became hosts for the Student Army Training Corps, Penn State became one of the first schools in the East to welcome the trainee program on campus that fall.\(^42\) A Penn State alumnus, Major James Baylies, retired, class of 1913, was detailed to Penn State as a professor of military science and tactics and made commandant of the college’s Student Army Training Corps regiment, which was expecting over 1,500 cadets to arrive when the college was schedule to reopen on


\(^{41}\) Pennsylvania State University. *La Vie, 1919* (University Park, PA, 1919), 8-9.

Induction for trainees into the Corps was scheduled for October 1. When the Pennsylvania State Draft Headquarters tallied S.A.T.C. figures at war’s end, Penn State’s 1,477 Army infantrymen and seventy-five seamen inducted into the program rated first among schools in Pennsylvania, surpassing the University of Pennsylvania at 1,090 and Pittsburgh University’s 964.\textsuperscript{44}

Glenn Killinger was at his parents’ home the July morning that Penn State announced it was aligning with the War Department’s initiative. He vacillated about wanting to enter the officer trainee program. It made him part of the Army, gave him a uniform, and offered the prospect of being deployed overseas like many of his friends already had. And while he looked forward to digging and holding trenches during training, he held reservations about the course work. For all intents and purposes, Killinger was not enthusiastic about the curriculum that trainees were obligated to take. He did not go to Penn State to take geology or hygiene. He was even apprehensive about economics though it would come in handy years later when he obtained ownership of his family’s hardware store.

Killinger’s military burden was eased when the Corps offered assurances that intercollegiate athletics would continue with relative interference from the military. At its inception, the War Department declared that it would invest heavily in intercollegiate and intramural athletics, particularly boxing, wrestling, baseball, and football—the four sports

\textsuperscript{43} Shearer, 216; “Army Officer to Train Cadets at Penn State,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, September 17, 1917, 3.

that were vital for the 1917 service sports drive by Raymond Fosdick and his Commission on Training Camp Activities; and those were the four sports considered best to prepare student-soldiers for improvised decision-making and hand-to-hand combat. It was made clear that a wartime change to college curriculum required that every enrolled student take courses in physical training.

Certainly, the opportunity to play football in the fall was favorable for Killinger. However, intercollegiate football at Penn State was hardly a guarantee for the coming season. Despite President Woodrow Wilson’s public statements encouraging athletics of all forms in American colleges, there was a very real possibility that intercollegiate football would be suspended until the end of the war. In July, a panic developed among coaches, players, and fans after Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—college football’s trendsetters—announced for the second consecutive year that they were likely going to cancel their 1918 football seasons. The head coaches of several major college football programs, including Dick Harlow of Penn State, met in Philadelphia to express unanimously their sentiment toward going forward with football in the fall no matter what the big three decided.\(^\text{45}\) The paramount leader of the college football ranks, Walter Camp, working then as the commissioner of the athletic division of the U.S. Department of the Navy, presided over the meeting. He reminded the coaches that the War Department was facing a serious health disaster. The selective service figures in the summer of 1918 showed that one-third of the young men drafted were rejected for being physically unfit. “What a pity!” Camp told the coaches. “Exercise develops your engine,

makes you supple, quick and active.” The nation was in need of physical regeneration, therefore, Camp assured the coaches that intercollegiate sports were necessary.

Camp was instrumental in ensuring a 1918 college football season. A *New York Times* article vouched for Camp’s physical-fitness program: “Uncle Sam’s army of stay-at-homes is behind the army of gone-to-war and has organized a system of athletics which is far better systematized than the athletics of the leading eastern universities since the date of the war’s beginning.” Earlier that summer, Camp had begun circulating his “daily dozen” exercise routine encouraging all Americans to keep physically fit. Now, near the end of summer, Camp ensured a nervous group of coaches that the football season would be played simply because of its importance for raising the physical efficiency of future troops. “The men who had gone into the opposing football line when their signal came went ‘over the top’ with the same abandon,” Camp said as he assessed the effects of the previous year’s service sports program. Those footballers “who had made a stand on the last 5-yard line in the grim determination of the gridiron field faced the scrimmage of war with the same do-or-die fortitude.”

Camp’s reassurances had some effect on the coaches. While Yale eventually annulled its season in 1918, Harvard and Princeton maintained a reduced schedule of just three games. Discussions among various athletic directors, university presidents, sportswriters, and officials from the War Department were held in the final month of the summer, but the decision to carry-on with the season was ultimately left in the hands of individual colleges. Some institutions were cautioned about the kind of image that having

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a football season might give the college while so many of its students were off at war. Other colleges were concerned about having enough players to fill teams. But more than anything, the reason for cancelling a football season was over fear that intercollegiate sports would interfere with the Student Army Training Corps’ drilling.48

Earlier in the summer, Columbia University became the first school that offered a solution when it waived the “bothersome freshman rule,” which had prevented first year students from playing varsity football.49 Nebraska and West Virginia were next to suspend the freshman rule. Soon Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, and most of the Ivy League colleges jumped on board.

Penn State did not make a decision to waive the one-year residency rule until September 25, several weeks after preseason football camp commenced; but the college only did so after ordered to by the War Department.50 Before the fall semester began, officials at Penn State announced that the college intended to proceed with the football season as planned, but changes to the season’s schedule were likely to ensue after all of their opponents were contacted to confirm if games could actually be played.

The announcement that football would carry on with obvious modifications to game schedules was accompanied by a crippling blow to the Penn State program, and in particular, Killinger’s hope of making the team. On the morning of August 6, about a month before football camp was to begin, Coach Harlow announced his resignation as the head football coach of the Blue and White so that he could enlist in the Army. In fact,

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49 “War Brings Relief to Columbia Freshmen,” *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1918, 9;
“Mountaineers to Play Nebraska Next Season,” *Washington Times*, August 12, 1918, 12.
several East Coast newspapers reported that most of Penn State’s athletic coaches were enrolling in a month-long Officer Training Camp at the Plattsburgh military base in New York, which was established as early as August 1915 as a volunteer pre-enlistment training program designed to prepare prospective Army officers.51

Killinger never went on record about how he viewed Harlow’s departure. The loss undoubtedly caused reasonable distress since Harlow had offered him a shot at making the football team. An interesting fall was coming. Killinger now had no idea what would come of his future in football.

CHAPTER 6:  
MASSED ATHLETICS EXPERIMENT

By August 1918, the tide of the war had turned in the Allies’ favor following a push against the German line in the Battle of Amiens. Led by French field marshal, Ferdinand Foch, and British General, Douglas Haig, the Allies abandoned the trenches to raid German forces north of the Somme in Normandy with a total of nineteen British divisions, twelve French divisions, one American division, approximately 2,000 aircraft and more than 500 tanks. The offensive allowed the Allies to dictate the tempo of combat during the remainder of the war. Notwithstanding Germany’s General Erich von Ludendorff’s insistence that it was time for Kaiser Wilhelm to seek a peace settlement after the Allied victory, the war carried on through the fall.¹

At Penn State, the most dominant story was whether or not the Blue and White would field a football team after all of the changes that had taken place on the home front. Despite the loss of Coach Harlow and most of its returning players, and facing the “stiffest list of games ever planned for a State College gridiron eleven,” the New Castle News remarked, the athletic committee announced on August 26 that the school would “do its best” to field a team.²

Hugo Bezdek and the Construction of Massed Athletics

Once the announcement to resume intercollegiate football was made, Penn State’s president, Dr. Edwin E. Sparks, took only just twenty-four hours before broadcasting Harlow’s replacement. On August 27, Hugo Bezdek, who was hired away from the

¹ David T. Zabecki, Germany at War: 400 Years of Military History (ABC-CLIO, 2014), 515-16.
University of Oregon, agreed to assume the daunting duties of head football coach, director of the physical education department, and director of mass athletics at Penn State.

A Czech by birth, Hugo Francis Bezdek was born 1884 in Prague, a northern city in the Bohemian region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (typically known as Austria). His upbringing is so compelling, his life story reads like a Horatio Alger tale. Bezdek’s family arrived in the United States when he was six years old, choosing to settle in Chicago. He attended Lake High School (present-day Tilden Technical High School) where he was among the best at football and baseball. Barrel-chested and agile, the youngster was additionally known for his prowess in the boxing ring. Bezdek nearly lost his college eligibility for being a prizefighter under the name of “Young Hugo” when he was sixteen. He wanted nothing more than to attend the University of Chicago and play for one of the greatest innovators the game of football has known, Amos Alonzo Stagg.

A former Walter Camp All-American, Coach Stagg, who began his coaching career at the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1889 with James Naismith, who invented basketball, as his team’s captain, is credited with creating the direct snap from center, tackle dummies, lateral passes, uniform numbers, sending a man in motion, the unbalanced line, the dropkick, and the tradition of issuing varsity letters to deserving players. Bezdek must have been in awe at the way Stagg continued to reinvent the game.

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3 “Charges Against Hugo Bezdek,” Chicago Tribune, November 27, 1904, 2; “Of Course He Is An Amateur,” Minneapolis Journal, April 11, 1905, 3.
Chicago was among the first teams to use the huddle on offense and linebackers on defense.

In 1903, Bezdek enrolled as a chemistry major at Chicago. Though under suspicion in contemporary scholarly circles, he proclaimed to have attained medical and linguistic degrees. His gradations notwithstanding, he was always interested in the competitive disposition of American sports. “I have been interested in athletics since I came to America,” he said in 1917 when he was coaching three sports and serving as director of athletics at the University of Oregon, “and I am more interested in them now than when I was a boy or a young man. It is in me . . . I would die if I pursued a sedentary occupation.” He admitted, “it is in self-defense that I stick to athletics and keep away from the chemist’s retort and the physicians chair.”

Playing for Coach Stagg, Bezdek was able to establish an immeasurable reputation as a football player. Harvard All-American Charles Brickley said, “Hugo was as clean as a hound’s tooth, a hard-workning [sic], sterling athlete, commanding the respect of Coach Stagg and every sportsman.” Heavier, stronger, and rougher than most of his competitors, Bezdek was the bowling-ball fullback that guided Chicago to the national championship as a senior in 1905. Stagg gave Bezdek the nickname “The Human Shell” for the way he plunged into opposing defensive lines. During Bezdek’s freshman year, Stagg doubted the youngster’s ability to tackle. “If you’d only cuss me

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out, I’d be better,” Bezdek told his coach. Shortly thereafter, his tackling ability improved noticeably.

In a year considered the deadliest in the history of college football when three deaths occurred from injuries sustained during games, sportswriters still glorified Bezdek as “the best line plunger the West has ever seen.” Once, two broken ribs were hardly an excuse for him to come out of a game. At half time, he took a steel plate off a wash boiler in the locker room and stuck it under his uniform. “This was before the rules prohibited metallic guards,” said one witness. Bezdek played the entire game “with the tin shield to protect his body.” It was precisely this visceral toughness that earned him a selection to Walter Camp’s All-American third team as a fullback.

Interestingly, he excelled in baseball at the University of Chicago also under the tutelage of Coach Stagg. Writing for the Philadelphia Daily Journal, Robert “Tiny” Maxwell suggested Bezdek was “one of the best second basemen in the college ranks.” Before the start of his senior baseball season, he accepted a semiprofessional contract for the Logan Squares of the Springfield Central League, choosing instead to waive his last semester of intercollegiate baseball.

In the summer of 1906, at the age of twenty-two, Bezdek was announced as the athletic director at the University of Oregon. His duties gave him the charge of the physical education department as well as made him the head coach of the football and baseball teams at Oregon. At the time, he had become Stagg’s sixth player to attain a

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9 “Bezdek to Play Ball,” Rock Island Argus, March 26, 1906, 7.  
10 “Bezdek to Coach at Oregon ‘U’,” Minneapolis Journal, July 9, 1905, 8.
collegiate head coaching position.\textsuperscript{11} He guided the Webfoot eleven to a 5-0-1 record in his inaugural season.

Bezdek returned for one year as an assistant to Coach Stagg at Chicago, then moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to serve as the head football and baseball coach at the University of Arkansas. Between 1908 and 1912, Bezdek achieved a 29-13-1 record, including Arkansas’ first undefeated football season in 1909. While there, Bezdek was able to give Arkansas a new identity. At the end of the 7-0 campaign in 1909, Bezdek said his team “fought like a band of wild razorback hogs.”\textsuperscript{12} The moniker stuck, and Arkansas was hereafter known as the Razorbacks. His baseball teams at Arkansas had relative success by accumulating eighty-one wins and thirty-seven losses. When he left Arkansas, his teams were among the best in the South.

Bezdek returned to the Pacific Northwest in the spring of 1913 after he signed a contract to work as the West Coast scout for Major League Baseball’s Pittsburgh Pirates. The duty for the Pirates helped him retain his coaching jobs at Oregon. Between 1913 and 1917, the Webfoots acquired a 30-10-4 record, including an undefeated 7-0-1 record and a victory over the University of Pennsylvania in the East-West Football Game (known presently as the Rose Bowl) in 1916. In the days leading up to the game, Oregon held closed practices, while Penn’s coach, Bob Folwell, opened his to the public, including Bezdek. Penn’s quarterback, Bert Bell, who later became the first commissioner of the National Football League, remembered Bezdek asking Folwell to show him Penn’s famous reverse-pass play. “Folwell told me to run it, and I did,” Bell

\textsuperscript{11}“Bezdek Chosen Coach At Oregon University,” \textit{Salt Lake Tribune}, July 22, 1906, 2.  
recollected many years later. “Imagine our chagrin when Oregon scored its first
touchdown against us with our very own play.”\(^\text{13}\) The victory over the East Coast’s
perennial power put intercollegiate football in the West on the map. Football historian
Maxwell Stiles claims it was “the first significant victory of a Pacific Coast team over a
big-time team admitted to be truly representative of eastern football at its best.”\(^\text{14}\)

Bezdek tried something new at Oregon during that five-year period. He dissolved
the “one captainship” to avoid rifts of jealousy among his players. At Oregon he noticed,
“more or less rivalry for the position.” So he named each captain “a few minutes before
the contest” began.\(^\text{15}\)

Bezdek’s ability to make Oregon’s footballers into one of the most cohesive units
witnessed in the country stretched way beyond the gridiron. Before the start of the 1917
season, his entire Oregon championship team enlisted in the same ambulance unit for
service in France. Not one player from the 1916 team was among his first string. “Coach
Hugo Bezdek will have to build an entirely new team next fall,” wrote the *El Paso
Herald*.\(^\text{16}\) Bezdek’s inexperienced team eventually finished 4-3.

Perhaps earlier that year Bezdek’s imminent Hall of Fame adroitness was put on
display when he was injected into the position of manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates, the
worst team in Major League Baseball. Pittsburgh’s original manager, Jim Callahan, was
fired in July. Callahan’s replacement J. Honus “Hans” Wagner lasted just two days. The

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\(^{13}\) Riley, Riley, “Hugo Bezdek,” 47.

\(^{14}\) “The East vs. The West,” *Los Angeles Record*, January 1, 1917; Bob Folwell, “Best
Eleven Won==Matthews; Condition Told==Beckett,” *Los Angeles Morning Tribune*,
January 2, 1917; Joe Hendrickson and Maxwell Stiles Hendrickson, *The Tournament of

\(^{15}\) *Seattle Star*, February 26, 1917, 9.

\(^{16}\) “Hugo Bezdek is Gloomy Over Oregon Prospects,” *Tacoma Times*, October 13, 1917,
6; *El Paso Herald*. June 16, 1917, 15.
owner of the Pirates then went with Bezdek, who was recognized “more or less of an experiment” by the nation’s sportswriters. Bezdek never played major or minor league baseball. His coaching experience was limited to Arkansas and Oregon. So for a big league owner to hire a team manager “from among the ranks of college coaches,” wrote the New York Tribune, “is something unprecedented.”

The hiring of Bezdek was what western sportswriter J. B. Sheridan called “the theory of the superman, that a man who can do one thing well can do all things well.” The balance, persuasion, and rigidity displayed by Bezdek were the ingredients that brought out the best in every player who was tutored in his programs. There was no secret that he knew little about professional baseball. He was a chemist, a boxer, a wrestler, and a football player; he was “everything but a baseball player,” wrote Sheridan with hyperbole. It took just one year to show results. In late summer 1918, the Pirates were in the middle of a playoff run. The Philadelphia Evening Star called the rapid rise of Pittsburgh as a National League contender one of the great “surprises” of 1918, “considering that this experimental team, under an experimental manager, was universally consigned to last place before the season opened.” Bezdek utilized scientific base running and expert bunting. “With a mediocre pitching staff and an ordinary batting team,” Bezdek won acclaim by utilizing clever “base running and bunting tactics” to make below average players perform better than anyone anticipated. One Pennsylvania

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17 “Three Managers in Four Days,” Bismarck Tribune, July 12, 1917, 6.
newspaper editorialized, Bezdek “has shown results in developing team work and infusing the right spirit in his men.”20

The approaching season would be no easy task for Glenn Killinger. As war clouds hung overhead and a deadly influenza outbreak perpetrated fear throughout the nation, Coach Bezdek seemingly underscored the strength that held Killinger and his peers at Penn State together during that trying time. Years later when Killinger was establishing himself as a distinguished college football and baseball coach, he often thought about Hugo Bezdek. The bold Bohemian’s coaching style and competence across many playing fields were features that made up Killinger’s dynamo that eventually landed him in several halls of fame. “I think that athletic sports are essential to the vitality of a nation,” Bezdek said just days after he arrived at Penn State. That attitude was reflective of what the United States War Department was looking for in 1918.

**Merging Massed Athletics with the Student Army Training Corps**

Recognized nationally for his ability to make something out of nothing, notably for the jobs he had done at Arkansas and with the Pittsburgh Pirates, Hugo Bezdek was to become director of Penn State’s new wartime massed athletics physical education program. As department director, the new professor in State College was expected to collaborate with the Student Army Training Corps (henceforth S.A.T.C.) to design a curriculum that incorporated competitive sports into the physical training of all S.A.T.C. student-soldiers.

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To make Penn State’s physical education curriculum the vanguard for the nation’s colleges was clearly on Bezdek’s mind when he accepted the job that August. After meeting with Dr. Sparks and representatives within the War Department, he went ahead and designed a massed athletics program that required every student on campus to “participate in some form of outdoor sport” for one hour a day.21

The consensus was that sports made American doughboys better soldiers than the Germans. “Athletics surely are putting muscle and ‘pep’ into the young men who must handle the rifles, artillery, grenades, spades and other implements of warfare,” wrote the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Bezdek wholeheartedly believed that mass athletics could make resilient warriors out of privileged and out-of-shape young men. His new physical education program, which cooperated with S.A.T.C. authorities, was designed to increase strength and physical fitness, as well as better students’ competitive disposition that ultimately produced a courageous fighting spirit needed for combat. Students not involved in intercollegiate athletics were offered a choice among ten elective sports, in which football proved to be the favorite form of athletics at Penn State. In October, the S.A.T.C. released a report that showed 354 students elected football, 243 chose basketball, 169 selected tennis, 125 preferred wrestling, 121 cross-country, 100 soccer, 71 boxing, 36 baseball, 15 volleyball, and 10 signed up for quickening exercises.22

All S.A.T.C. cadets were divided into intramural companies, or teams, requiring them to participate in daily games against one another. The companies competed for points in each sport. The winning company was the one with the most points at the end of the week. Eventually, the sight of games played concurrently all over Beaver Field while

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21 “Athletics are Now Obligatory at Penn State,” *New York Tribune*, October 13, 1918, 2.
22 “Slam Mass Sports as Vote is Asked,” *Washington Times*, October 12, 1918, 10.
boxing and wrestling matches were held inside the college’s Armory “produced a sight never before seen,” remarked one Harrisburg Telegraph editorial.

Student-soldiers who harbored a desire to play a particular sport on an intercollegiate level, like football, tried out for varsity roster spots on Penn State’s teams. The approach meant that the success of Penn State’s football team, for instance, was secondary to the overall development of the cadets. Nonetheless, Penn State’s S.A.T.C. program was the nation’s “Mass Athletics” frontrunner. Soon, other colleges and universities were to adopt similar systems that looked toward dual facility control over both physical education courses and intercollegiate athletics.23

Bezdek said the American soldier has something that the Germans lack—“the git up and git,” he emphasized. “I think that had the Germans tuned themselves up on athletic games, instead of laboring twelve hours a day or dawn to dark, they would have put up a much more lively, dashing fight than they have put up. I think that athletic sports are essential to the vitality of a nation,” Bezdek asserted. He concluded, “The Germans are enduring and they are strong, but they lack the life, the vivre, the elan, the ‘git up and git’ of the Americans.”24 “I do not mean that you can make men strong or a nation great on athletics alone,” he reasoned. He continued, “Hard work gives a power that no athletics can impart. Too much hard work slows men up. Then comes athletics to enliven them, to give them dash, go. The athlete will derive fun from fighting.”

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Remarks like that persuaded Dr. Sparks to bring Bezdek to State College. Sparks gave Bezdek the freedom to enforce a complete overhaul of the physical education department at Penn State.

Before his arrival, physical education at Penn State was casually operated. Consisting of calisthenics and random exercises given to 100 to 200 students at a time, Bezdek alleged, it was “treated more or less as a necessary evil.” The transformation began with a budget request of $525,000 to construct a gymnasium and an eighty-acre outdoor field. The gymnasium, according to Bezdek, would be used five of the nine months during an academic year and would “practically be the center of activities” for the students during the winter months, complete with staff offices, adequate dressing and shower space, lecture halls, a general gym floor for boxing, basketball, volleyball, wrestling, handball, squash, and an indoor track. The building, when finally constructed ten years after the war, contained a swimming pool and a bowling alley. In contrast, Bezdek’s outdoor field was his “playground,” a space large enough for nine holes of golf, a track, a dozen football fields, five baseball diamonds, courts for basketball, tennis, volleyball, and multiple fields for soccer and lacrosse.

In addition, he requested $30,300 for staff salaries. Prior to Bezdek’s program, athletic coaches monitored the students’ physical activity. Their salaries were based on revenue taken from gate receipts at intercollegiate contests, guarantees received by host teams during away games, and the ten dollars athletic fee that each Penn State student was obligated to pay. Bezdek’s request assured yearly salaries for a head of the

department, a director of intramural sports, a women’s athletic director, six instructors, a stenographer, a field maintenance crew, and custodians.\(^{27}\)

Bezdek was charged with overseeing the facilities and staff while also writing a new curriculum designed to prepare men and women seeking degrees so as to become physical education teachers. To attain a physical education degree, students after 1918 had to take courses in hygiene and health, pass health efficiency tests, fulfill required course work for seven semesters, and learn the rules for most of the sports played in the United States.\(^{28}\)

In addition to acting as the physical education director, Bezdek officially became the replacement for Dick Harlow as the new football coach. Perhaps Glenn Killinger’s reaction to the hiring of Bezdek indicates how most Penn Staters reacted in the early fall 1918. “When I read about Bedek’s [sic] appointment, I was greatly enthused,” wrote Killinger in his memoir. Well aware of Bezdek’s playing and coaching acumen, Killinger said, “Here was my opportunity to learn football and baseball, providing I could play well enough to be chosen as a member of the varsity squads . . . Bezdek was always a winner.”\(^{29}\)

**Massed Athletics, the SATC, and Intercollegiate Football**

Killinger’s anticipation over the impending season finally ended in early September when a letter arrived from Penn State announcing that the preseason camp would start as scheduled on September 12, two whole weeks before classes were to begin. In the letter, Bezdek notified aspiring football players to report “in order to get into

\(^{27}\) Ibid, 8-10.
\(^{28}\) Ibid, 9-10.
condition for the opening game,” which, at the time, was scheduled for September 29 with Muhlenberg College. Even Killinger understood that the turnout would be on the low side, but he had no idea how many veteran players were not coming back for the 1918 season.30

The first day on the practice field was discouraging for Coach Bezdek, as Charlie Way was the only returning letterman from the previous season’s team. All of Way’s teammates were already called to arms. In addition to Way, just two candidates for the team reported to camp that first day. Notwithstanding the low numbers, Bezdek ran the three through drills.31 There was now the real possibility that Penn State would not have enough to field a team.

Killinger was not one of the three at tryouts that first day. His arrival was delayed because he was called to appear in front of the draft board in Harrisburg. The United States War Department designated September 12 as the nation’s draft registration day. Just a day away from turning twenty, Killinger proceeded to register for conscription into the military under the terms of the amended Selective Service Act, which, for the first time, lowered the draft age to eighteen, making him an eligible draftee. The revised law required him to report to the local selective service board located at the Horace McFarland Company building on Crescent and Mulberry Streets to sign up. He drew card A1720, which now meant that he could be called into service at any moment from his Dauphin County district. He put pen to paper: “William Glenn Killinger, 37 S. 13th St.,” he began to write. He abbreviated Harrisburg—“Hbg”—and Dauphin County—“Daup.”

30 “Hugo Bezdek Issues Call for Candidates,” Evening Public Ledger, September 11, 1918, 16; “State Will Travel,” Washington Times, September 17, 1918, 16.
He then incorrectly wrote “18” for his age. In a sudden rush to fix the mistake, he took his pen and darkened the “8” into a “9” to indicate his proper age. Killinger marked that he was “white” and “native born.” Under Present Occupation, he checked “student.” As for Description of Registrant, he identified himself as having blue eyes and brown hair. He check-marked “Slender” and “Tall.”

He was growing taller with each passing season. Just days away from his twentieth birthday, Killinger had grown to 5’ 8½” and weighed 155 pounds.32 He still looked thin, but firmly built with broad shoulders and powerful looking biceps. His face seemed more mature, too, with a strong jawline and a Brilliantine coated part down the center of his hair. Fleet footed with deer-like speed, and the same cocky assurance he once possessed as an adolescent running the streets of Allison Hill, off he went to State College to tryout for the varsity football team.

Killinger’s first day on the gridiron was Friday, September 13.34 He arrived with one of his teammates from the freshman basketball team, Gene Farley, who he described as “a striking blonde about 6’ 5” tall and over 200 lbs.” Coach Bezdek averted his attention toward Farley as the two brooding young men approached the registration table. “Obviously I made a mistake reporting with Farley,” Killinger regretfully said of his first encounter with the man who would eventually become a father figure. Bezdek showed

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34 Killinger mistakenly wrote in his unpublished memoir that he reported to football camp on September 12, 1918.
“great interest” in Farley, he admitted. The coach’s cold shoulder angered him. It was something he would use as motivation as he tried out for the team.\textsuperscript{35}

At the moment, there were two weeks before the opening game. With depleted numbers, common wisdom held that in spite of his fragile physique, Killinger would likely obtain a spot on the roster. “When the 1918 squad reported for the first practice session,” he wrote in his unpublished memoir, “I examined the backfield candidates critically and was very excited [about making the roster].” Charlie Way was a lock. “There was a third string fullback and several other backs I recognized from spring practice,” he remembered.\textsuperscript{36} However, he was still a long way from proving that he was good enough to play on a national stage against some of the best teams in the country.

Right away, he plunged himself into drills with the aspiring backfield, led by Way, the unanimous decision for team captain and a peer who Killinger called, “my hero . . . [with] All-American potential.”\textsuperscript{37} Killinger spent each workout following Way around as they practiced long punts, dropkicks and field goals, catching shotgun snaps from the center, and various deceptive pivots to either hand the ball off or fake an exchange.

Coach Bezdek ran the men through practice in military fashion. Harry Wilson, one of Killinger’s backfield mates who would become an All-American in 1922, noted, Bezdek’s strength was his drive. “He was always demanding,” Wilson once said.\textsuperscript{38} The ball players moved from one drill to the next at the sound of a whistle. Players were drilled on blocking and tackling, and tested on mental toughness throughout each session.

Bezdek coached non-stop with “vim” and “enthusiasm.” If Bezdek’s players failed to

\textsuperscript{35} Killinger, \textit{A Penn State Walk-On}, unmarked page.
\textsuperscript{36} Killinger, \textit{A Penn State Walk-On}, unmarked page.
\textsuperscript{37} “Way to be a New Captain,” \textit{New York Tribune}, September 27, 1918, 13.
\textsuperscript{38} Riley, “Hugo Bezdek,” 47.
share his passion, practice would come to an abrupt stop, and the discipline was handled on the spot. “The more you put out for something near to your heart the more you love and respect it,” Wilson understood. “So I believe that as tough as Bez was he was responsible for a lot of our affection for Penn State.” By fostering his players’ love for their school, all of those who played for Bezdek were willing to sacrifice life and limb on game day.

Bezdek’s stern coaching style was different than what Killinger was accustomed to. Each practice was a well-ordered regimen. For the benefit of the players, Bezdek’s routine was predictable. Each practice began with a half-mile jog followed by five repetitions a piece at interference (blocking) and tackling. The team was then run through stance-and-starts, emphasizing perfect form. Kicking drills followed, including punt and kick off placement. The remaining hour of practice was spent installing and drilling audible signals, forward passes, having every backfield player take snaps from center, and hard-hitting inter-squad scrimmages.

As challenging as practices were, Killinger grew to appreciate (and later mimic) Bezdek’s methods. The incessant coach took time before practice to meet with Killinger about the day’s plan, explaining in detail how certain plays should work. On the practice field, Killinger’s performance was held to a high standard. Every subtle movement was critiqued. “He insists upon and gets results,” Killinger and his teammates often conveyed to reporters. When Killinger made a mistake, there was little delay before he heard Bezdek’s voice correcting him. When Bezdek reproached Killinger, he did so in a way that was both demanding and respectful. Bezdek “doesn’t cuss and fume on the field,”

39 Ibid, 47.
40 W. Glenn Killinger, GW’s PSU Playbook and Notes, 1921 (Unpublished).
Killinger said of his coach. “He tells the men when he is disgusted with their work.” It was Bezdek’s subtle remarks of affirmation that kept Killinger loyal: “he doesn’t forget to tell them when he is pleased,” Killinger added.41

The constant back-and-forth between criticism and approbation was Bezdek’s way of establishing a player-coach relationship based on respect and trust. To outsiders, Bezdek’s behavior could be taken less tolerably. Once when Killinger was walking across campus reading a book written by Princeton’s Coach Bill Roper, How to Play Football, Bezdek snuck alongside, eyed the book, snatched it away, and tossed it twenty-five feet across the courtyard. “I never got the book back,” Killinger remembered. “Bez said he’d teach me how to play football.”42

Most coaches of the era preferred to watch practice from a raised tower so they could see all over the field. Bezdek loathed the custom. He once told Bill Roper that he, “would never be satisfied to be confined to any one place for a single minute, and that he liked to be all over the field on every play.”43

Killinger was drawn to Bezdek’s philosophy of scoring points. Bezdek often said, “A good offense is the best defense.”44 He taught a variation of the single-wing offense that was complicate for novice players to learn, but once mastered by the right kind of athletes, had the potential of rivaling even the most high-octane spread systems of the twenty-first century.

44 Ibid.
Killinger must have wondered why anyone would not want to play for a coach who while drilling players under constant pressure really took the time to teach the game. To his satisfaction, people gradually started showing up on the practice field. By the end of the second week of camp, thirteen players were in uniform.

Penn State’s fans perceived their players as they perceived themselves: eager, willing to learn, unpretentious, but inexperienced and needy. The lack of football knowledge and demeanor, standing around at practice until commanded to a drill, and undisciplined execution was surprising to nobody. It was far from being a source of embarrassment, and instead became a matter of pride for they simply confirmed the effect that the war had on the home front. The war had thrust them into a situation that they all wanted.

The roster was large enough to play the opening game, that is, if Muhlenberg College had not cancelled. On the morning of September 18, Neil Fleming, graduate manager of athletics at Penn State, informed his boss that authorities at Muhlenberg suddenly cancelled its football season. Bezdek was saddened but not surprised. He just hoped that the termination of Muhlenberg’s program wasn’t going to become contagious.

The cancellation of the game offered Bezdek more time to find the right lineup among his ragtag personnel. The next game was planned for October 5 against Gettysburg College. The arrival of students in a week also meant the prospects of more talent.

Eighteen hundred students arrived at State College on Wednesday, September 25. At their orientation meeting that first day, students were told that “some form of outdoor

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45 “No Football at Muhlenberg,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, September 18, 1918, 11.
sport” was required by orders of the S.A.T.C. All students were allowed to select their favorite sport “for daily exercise.”

Suddenly, there were about a hundred players dressed in football uniforms. To someone of Bezdek’s stature, they were in despairing shape. With some help from just two assistant coaches, he had to manage each practice with a hundred inexperienced players who had to learn some of the most basic elements of the game. The *New York Tribune* called the new candidates “light and inexperienced.” One critic noted, “the prospects have assumed a more roseate hue.”

It was never a secret that Bezdek rebuffed the idea of allowing freshmen to play varsity sports. Because of his position, Penn State was one of the last colleges to concede. On September 28, the *Washington Times* published an article detailing the S.A.T.C. order forcing Penn State to “waive [the] freshmen rule,” making all 1,100 first year students eligible for the school’s intercollegiate varsity teams.

The eligibility of new talent convinced Bezdek to arrange an inter-squad scrimmage in the last days of September to pick his first string. Killinger would have to perform flawlessly to make the cut. He was up against six others vying for the position of halfback; two would be selected for first string, while two more would be carried as substitutes.

On September 29, the Penn State football team was divided into two squads for a ninety-minute scrimmage. Killinger was picked for the first team, but told to wait on the

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46 “Athletics are Now Obligatory at Penn State,” *New York Tribune*, October 13, 1918, 2.
48 “Penn State Will Use its Freshies,” *Washington Times*, September 28, 1918, 12;
sideline to be substituted in. He stood there watching three other halfbacks—Henry Crum, Frank Unger, and George Snell—each score touchdowns. When suddenly, Crum went down with a sprained ankle. Bezdek inserted Killinger into the lineup. Near the end of the scrimmage, Killinger, now running with the starters, weaved through the defense on an outside sweep to score an impressive touchdown.

Two weeks later, Bezdek announced the first string. No surprise to anyone, Charlie Way was named quarterback, while George Snell and Henry Crum were appointed halfbacks, assuming the latter’s ankle would heal in time for the first game. Bill Gehring was made fullback. Killinger’s performance, though limited and not measuring up to that of his competitors, had earned him a spot on the twenty-man varsity roster as a backup to Snell and Crum. He was given jersey number-2 to wear.

In October, issues within and outside of the United States compelled the War Department to further regulate the intercollegiate football season. The military demanded that every college adjust football schedules to conform to S.A.T.C. weekend obligations. Typically, students enrolled in the Corps were barred from missing any drill instruction. But after significant deliberation with several colleges, the War Department authorized no more than two away contests per school; that way privates in the officer training program would miss just two weekends worth of drills instead of four or five as previously scheduled. Because S.A.T.C. induction day—October 7—was the same among the nation’s colleges, to assure a smooth start to the student-soldier program, the War Department trusted colleges to decide on a schedule that would not interrupt military drilling for at least two weeks after the training program commenced at respective schools.
Adhering to the wartime measures, Penn State officials pushed its football season back to October 19, the date of its home game against Bucknell College. Since October 7 was the date of S.A.T.C. induction, and the contest against Bucknell was a home game, college and military officials agreed that there was a long enough window of time between the start of the training program and Penn State’s first away game.

Meanwhile, Coach Bezdek worked on finalizing the new schedule. He first confirmed games with Bucknell and Rutgers, who were both previously scheduled to visit State College. He then added the newly formed service football team from the Wissahickon Barracks Naval Station in Cape May, New Jersey to be Penn State’s first game in November. Contests against Gettysburg, Carnegie Tech, and Washington and Jefferson colleges were cancelled. That just left overnight trips to Lehigh and Pittsburgh to finish out the season.49

Shortly after Penn State’s new five-game schedule was arranged, the team suffered a “rude jolt,” reported the New York Tribune, when Charlie Way, Bill Gehring, George Snell, Henry Crum, and five other starters were called to machine gun school at Camp Hancock in Georgia.50 The Pittsburgh Gazette Times, the chief newspaper covering sports for the University of Pittsburgh, Penn State’s biggest rival, ran the story immediately, gloating “the college eleven faces wreckage.”51

The news was definitely troublesome, but as pragmatic coaches normally do, Bezdek acted quickly. He moved Ronald “Buck” Williams into the starting quarterback position. Glenn Killinger was exuberant when he learned he had been promoted to one of the starting halfback positions to replace Snell.

On the morning of October 19, Bucknell arrived at Beaver Field eager to avenge an embarrassing 50-7 setback to Penn State when they last met two years earlier. To the uninitiated Killinger, well drilled and eager to play his first college game, the arrival of game day was met only by another unfortunate setback.

For weeks, health services reports whipped the public into a frenzy as word of a deadly outbreak of the flu made an appearance in all facets of American society. The so-called Spanish influenza, an H1N1 virus originating at American military installations earlier that spring wreaked havoc throughout the country in the months leading up to the Penn State-Bucknell game. The first wave of the pandemic arose in March. The virus had grown deadlier as it mutated during the summer and fall of 1918, “resulting in significantly enhanced virulence,” writes Jeffery K. Taubenberger, chairman of the Department of Molecular Pathology at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Media reports in every local and national news outlet terrified the public about the likelihood that the flu would sweep through every military encampment, college and town in the United States.

Reports were horrifying: those sick with the flu suffered headaches, muscle pains, sore throat, coughing fits, nosebleeds, and debilitating bouts of hallucination. Fevers
typically ranged from 100 to 104 degrees. The stricken slowly suffocated—gaspng for air to the consternation of those around them—as blood and other fluids suppressed oxygen in their lungs. By mid-October, twenty-six states already reported cases of the flu. Almost 30,000 incidents were reported within the military. Among that number, already 530 soldiers died nationwide in the first three weeks of the month. The Board of Health reported 4,597 civilian deaths from the flu in Philadelphia alone between October 12 and October 19. More than 11,000 people fell victim to the flu and other respiratory diseases by the end of the month. Within a year, 675,000 civilians, including 43,000 servicemen, and approximately forty million worldwide would die of the pandemic. Some who died had succumbed to pulmonary hemorrhage or pulmonary edema. Most, however, were strapping young men between the ages 21 and 29 whose demise, Taubenberger points out, was brought about by secondary bacterial pneumonia and respiratory failure “since no antibiotics were available in 1918.”

The lethality of the Spanish influenza took its toll on intercollegiate sports. The Washington Times was among the first to report that the flu was likely going to cause “quarantines to be placed around the players reporting for daily drills.” Two weeks before the scheduled game against Bucknell, drastic measures were already underway to inhibit the transmission of the flu. Schools, churches, local sporting events, theaters, and all

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53 “Spanish Influenza—What it is and How it Should be Treated,” Harrisburg Telegraph, October 12, 1918, 5.
54 “Spanish Influenza Halts Athletic Plans,” Washington Times, September 26, 1918, 13.
other public places were ordered closed by the Board of Health. The flu already brought all athletics to a halt at the Great Lakes Naval Station and imposed quarantines at many universities along the eastern seaboard.

Both teams had already gone through pregame warm-ups and were settled in their respective locker rooms when state officials called the coaches together to explain that the U.S. Health Authority demanded the cancellation of every game played in Pennsylvania. Bezdek and Bucknell Coach Edgar Wingard were both prepared to play the game in defiance of the public health order only state officials threatened to arrest the coaches and players if the game was played.

Killinger, who was named the starting left halfback, was the most distraught by the news. “I believe I was the most disappointed player on the squad,” he lamented, looking back. “In my early dreams as a youngster, I had imagined I was the great football star on a Penn State football team.” Yet with one setback after another, the start of the season was not a guarantee. Bucknell, which had one more game against the University of Pennsylvania cancelled because of the influenza, ended up coasting to a 6-0 record against a rather weak schedule. Killinger and his teammates at Penn State, meanwhile, held their breath. He must have pondered; what else could disrupt the season?

57 “Penn State Disappointed,” New York Sun, October 20, 1918, 3; “To Be Played Later,” Pittsburgh Gazette Times, October 29, 1918, 18.
58 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
If that was the question he asked himself, it was not long until he got an answer. On October 27, one week before the Wissahickon game, the War Department ordered Hugo Bezdek to report to Princeton to attend a two-week training camp in the Aerocraft Commission. Bezdek was told to share his experiences at Penn State to teach S.A.T.C. colleges and army campuses how to implement similar mass physical education programs. The appointment was a credit to the job Bezdek performed at Penn State. It took a special person to supervise more than 1,800 students as they participated in a myriad of outdoor competitive sports.\textsuperscript{59} He was praised by one California newspaper: “Bezdek was famous as a football coach before he became a baseball team manager, and the government’s call to him is a striking testimonial of his success as a handler of men.”\textsuperscript{60}

College president Sparks immediately began negotiations with the War Department about keeping Bezdek at State College. A simple deal was struck. Neil M. Fleming, Bezdek’s deputy in the athletic department, was sent to Princeton instead. The threat of losing Bezdek was over within forty-eight hours.

With his coach behind him, Killinger was ever so positive. He received an additional boost from his hometown newspaper on October 28. “If State College ever gets going,” the \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph} wrote, “coach Hugh Bezdek counts on our old friend, W. G. Killinger, the Harrisburg Tech radiant, to do wonders for his team.”

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\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{60}“H. Bezdek’s Ability Has Been Recognized,” \textit{Oakland Tribune}, November 21, 1918, 10.
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headline was accompanied with a picture of Killinger standing proudly in his Penn State football uniform and headgear. “Killinger is in prime shape and probably the best backfield performer that Bezdek has. He knows how to gain ground, is a sure catch and works with brain and brawn. With the season wide open Killinger is bound to help keep the Capital City on the map.”

Without further delay, Glenn Killinger’s debut as a big college varsity football player with Penn State arrived on November 2 in the game against the Wissahickon Barracks Midshipmen. To Killinger and his inexperienced teammates, Beaver Field looked larger than normal, and the speed and intensity of the game were unfamiliar. It took a quarter to get his bearings together. From his right halfback spot on offense and secondary position on defense, he made some early mistake in a scoreless first half.

In the third quarter, Penn State’s quarterback Buck Williams “displayed excellent field generalship,” noted the New York Tribune, including a bold risk to call a trick play that led to a touchdown. He unfortunately missed the extra point.

Penn State’s defense played flawlessly until the game’s final minute when Wissahickon completed its only forward pass of the contest, resulting in a game-tying touchdown. Somehow, the Midshipmen kicker shanked the point after, low and to the right of the upright. The game ended in a 6-6 stalemate.

Despite the heartbreaking final minutes, the New York Tribune reported that Penn State fans left “elated over the splendid performance of the Blue and White eleven.” Wissahickon carried a weight advantage of “fifteen pounds to the man,” but the first-time

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varsity players were able to battle to a draw. Most were impressed with Penn State’s stout
defense, which gave up just two first downs. As one would imagine with the inexperience
on the field and the sudden loss of Charlie Way, the offense still needed time to develop.

Though he had a big heart, Killinger’s fragility showed as he was forced to leave
the game in the second half when Wissahickon’s Duke Osborne, who would transfer to
Penn State after the war, cracked three of his ribs during a scrum. The injury was
unfortunate because the contest against the sailors exploited Penn State’s drawbacks in
the kicking department. Although it was only natural to have the quarterback operate as
the team’s punter, anyone could kick extra points and field goals. So after the game,
Coach Bezdek told the ailing Killinger that he would have an opportunity to earn the
kicking duties once he was healthy.63

Penn State limped into the approaching game against Rutgers, which featured
eventual All-American, singer, actor and pioneer for racial justice, Paul Robeson. The
game doubled as Pennsylvania Day at State College. Campus officials expected a
multitude of outsiders there to watch the S.A.T.C.’s intramural competitions in the
morning followed by the Penn State-Rutgers game in the afternoon. Even Killinger’s
parents, Billy and Florence, arrived with a small contingent from Harrisburg.64 Penn State
was considered a huge underdog against Rutgers, who previously defeated Ursinus,
Pelham Bay Navy, Lehigh, and Hoboken Navy. As fate had it that morning, in addition to
Killinger, two other backfield mates were injured so badly that they couldn’t dress for the

63 The Pennsylvania State University. La Vie, 1920 (University Park, State College, PA, 1920), 283-86; “Penn State is Tied.” New York Sun, November 3, 1918, 3; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 2.
64 “Motor to State College,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 9, 1918, 4; Pennsylvania State College. La Vie, 1920 (University Park, State College, PA, 1920), 333.
Pennsylvania Day game. Only the quarterback Buck Williams was healthy enough to suit up against Rutgers.

Killinger’s team marched down the field on the opening possession and converted a dropkick for three points. Everything after that was hard luck for the Blue and White. One sportswriter called Penn State’s ineffective offense “a futile plaything.” Rutgers’ defensive unit was just too powerful for Penn State’s fledgling offensive line. “The Scarlet’s line charged into State’s play and regularly downed the runners before they got under way,” wrote the New York Sun. Rutgers imposed its will on both sides of the ball throughout the first half, running up a score of 20-3 at intermission. The star of the half was Rutgers’ imposing end Paul Robeson. The Pittsburgh Daily Post described the performance of the future actor and civil rights activist as “masterful.” The situation grew dire in the second half when Rutgers scored once more and Penn State’s quarterback suffered a knee strain as Robeson and his teammates on the defensive interior continued to penetrate the line of scrimmage at will. Williams finished the game, but was eventually kept out of the next contest against Lehigh. Penn State’s record stood at an acceptable 0-1-1 with two games left.

**Football, War, and Truce**

On November 11, at the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour, the armistice ending World War I went into effect. While terms would be finalized later, the treaty established a thirty-day truce allowing Germany time to withdraw from the western

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65 “Rutgers Overwhelms Penn State Eleven by 26 to 3,” New York Sun, November 10, 1918, 3.
European countries that it currently occupied. Germany was additionally forced to hand over to the Allies valuable military equipment, including machine guns, submarines, and airplanes.

That night, President Woodrow Wilson issued a jubilant statement on the war’s demise. He said, “The armistice was signed this morning. Everything for which America fought has been accomplished.” All draft calls in the United States were abruptly halted. However elated Killinger was about the war’s end, he and thousands of others were told to remain in the S.A.T.C. until December 21, at which time every student-soldier would receive an honorable discharge. For the next six weeks, Killinger continued on with military drilling. He would continue to collect his rate of one dollar per day. And he would finish the semester free of tuition fees.

Whatever Killinger’s opinion about the S.A.T.C., it was clear that football, at least, was the closest thing to war in American culture. Folklorist Simon Bronner has interpreted the meaning of football in its abundance of military metaphors and the American frontier experience. The football season in 1918 demonstrated that the sport was more than an inconsequential game. Although Killinger and other privates in the S.A.T.C. did not join the fight on the Western Front, they found resolve and tenacity in their engagement in combat training. And football was a meaningful part of that training. Writing in *Explaining Traditions: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture* (2011), Bronner observes that football has always been linked to the public’s elevated sense of pride that can be seen in local patriotism, the battlefield, and conquest. He claims, for example, that,

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67 Fred T. Moore, “Fred T. Moore, District Business Manager, Third District, to College Presidents. Philadelphia, PA, November 12, 1918” (Penn State During World Wars Collection [1109], Penn State University Archives, Special Collections Library. Pennsylvania State University).
“the ‘big game’ has significance in serving as a town commons because of the lack of communal institutions that bring residents—adults and children—together with a local identity.”

People are drawn to football in a way that compares to the level of attention paid to soldiers in local media coverage. In one sense, the soldier on the Western Front is presented as the hometown hero. Likewise, an athlete like Glenn Killinger who excelled on the football field ultimately shared the limelight with the soldiers; and once the war drew to a close, left by himself in the spotlight was the athlete. Bronner says further: “In many regions that do not have major urban centers, the university football team represents the pride of the area.”

Since local media attention was split equally between the football player and the doughboy, the connections between what takes place on the football field and the field of battle must be copious. “Abundant military references are linked to the acquisition and defense of property,” writes Bronner in Explaining Traditions, adding, “which may be viewed as an outgrowth of the frontier experience” that is associated with competitions over Native American land, national unity, rugged individualism, and assiduous manual labor. Football, like the frontier, is distinctively American. It is literally a game that derives from some of America’s most historical virtues as well as faults in frontier culture. The closing of the frontier in 1890 meant that there was no more free land available for aspiring pioneers. American men were no longer making a living with their hands and their bodies. There were no more wars to be fought on American soil. Accordingly, Americans at the turn of the century moved to the cities, where elite college

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68 Simon Bronner, Explaining Traditions: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 394.
69 Bronner, Explaining Traditions, 394.
educated men were typically disengaged with sports. A number of factors—namely new media paradigms—made these urban dwelling, privileged people crave heroes. Football fed the need of a burgeoning urbanized population.

Though certainly not a folklorist focused solely on football, the frontier, or urbanization, Bronner sees the rise in football’s popularity as the twentieth century’s blend of timeworn frontier culture and the onset of the Great War. He argues that the connection between football and war expanded further during the twentieth century “with the experience of the world wars in mind.” Bronner describes, “the scrimmage line as warfare in the trenches, quarterbacks (also called field generals) throwing bombs, teams marching down the field, and running backs accelerating as if shot out of a cannon.” With a new wartime image of the game, the military rhetoric of “blitz,” “formations on the front line,” and linemen battling it out “in the trenches” came of age after World War I. A generation later, as war clouds gathered again over Europe, additional catchy metaphors became part of the game. Bronner notes, “quarterbacks throwing missiles, receivers catching long bombs downfield, and coaches strategizing an aerial attack.”

Bronner’s view of football's existence as a metaphor for the hawkish frontier tenets of America was certainly apparent in Killinger’s participation in the home front’s military culture.

In an example of football imitating war, folklorist Alan Dundes conjures up an allegory analogous to Bronner’s point of view. In “Traditional Male Combat,” an article subtitled “From Game to War,” Dundes claims that sport and war revolve around one theme: “an all-male preserve in which one male demonstrates his virility, his masculinity,

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at the expense of a male opponent.” Dundes observes, “games, sports, and war form a common continuum, with games at one end and war at the other.” It is not a coincidence that those in the military refer to “war games” when practicing warfare, or that sport metaphors—particularly in college football—often refer to an “arms race” when dueling teams try to woo a quarterback prospect one way or the other. While Dundes wrote mostly about sport and war reaffirming masculine hegemony on a feminized opponent—“the victory entails some kind of penetration”—he shares the idea that if boys could not fully participate in actual combat, their manhood could otherwise be forged on a playing field.71

Nationally syndicated “Sportlight” columnist Grantland Rice, who spent the final months of the war in France and Belgium, would affirm the notion that sport and war are closely bonded together. “I found war to be a quick distillation of life’s tribulations, all wrapped up in a red, raw bundle,” Rice wrote in his memoir titled The Tumult and the Shouting. He added, “In war, however, the good in a fellow surfaces—or sinks—much quicker than in civilian life. In many ways, the same applies to sport.”72

Most in the sports world were convinced. “Football is, in a sense, something like a game of war,” said Walter Camp in an interview with a correspondent of The American Boy. “The gridiron is the battlefield. The two teams are the opposing armies. The captain

72 Rice, The Tumult and the Shouting, 94-95.
and the coaches and the players are the brains that plan the attack and prepare the defense.”

He elaborated further:

Moreover, there is a rapidity approaching similarity between the theory of modern war and the theory of football. In old time war, the privates and humbler officers were there only to obey. In modern warfare, individual initiative is becoming more important—yet, obedience and united action are imperative. So in football, the humblest players may plan a play that may rout his team’s dearest enemy—yet instance obedience and discipline must govern the team’s movements.

Though no soldier liked the experience of living in a rat-infested trench, or ducking from machine gun fire; not quite the feeling of enduring the horrors of modern war, the S.A.T.C. gave Killinger and his fellow cadets and teammates something close to combat. The burden of preparing for the beatings that occur on the gridiron against major college opponents in conjunction with a level of psychological pressure levied during daily military training allowed Killinger to make sense of the whole experience. The fervor of war made those in Killinger’s position gain a sense of teamwork, national unity, self-sacrifice, resilience, and tradition. As he began to look ahead at a life in the post-war world, his path teemed with new insights and readiness. In his wake were two remaining football games against intrastate foes, Lehigh College and the University of Pittsburgh.

Penn State and Lehigh, a sister S.A.T.C. college located in Bethlehem, shared one common opponent that season—Rutgers. Both were badly beaten by the Scarlet eleven. Like Penn State, Lehigh had arranged a five-game wartime schedule. They already played three contests and accumulated a 2-1 record by November 16 when they lined up against Penn State.

74 Ibid.
The game featured the return of Penn State’s backfield, minus Buck Williams who sat out due to a badly sprained knee. Lehigh was a slight favorite because of Penn State’s paltry offensive production after two games. There was one report that acknowledged Penn State will be “fifty per cent stronger [with] Killinger, Unger and Brown recovered from their injuries and back in the lineup.”

After the departure of Charlie Way, and now Williams out of the lineup, what was Bezdek to do about the quarterback position?

Three practices before the Lehigh game were spent teaching Killinger how to quarterback the offense. The position change was, Killinger said, because Bezdek “told me later that he wanted to see how well I handled the team.” In all honesty, the problem at Penn State was hardly the backfield. Even though they were all first year varsity players: Killinger, Unger, and Williams were as good as they get at their positions. They were elusive and speedy ball carriers with excellent football minds. Penn State took beatings on account of its offensive line, which was proven to be too small and inexperienced to achieve at the highest level of intercollegiate football. The Blue and White had a stout defense, and Coach Bezdek believed that as long as his team could limit Lehigh’s scoring opportunities, they would have a chance to win no matter who was quarterbacking his club.

With a week of drills behind them, and a shot of post-war adrenaline, Penn State was primed for the challenge. Excitement aside, both teams played the game sluggishly. Killinger’s efforts in the first half yielded little productivity for Penn State’s offense as they struggled to gain inches on the ground. Killinger did complete several forward

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76 Evening News (Harrisburg, PA). November 15, 1918.
77 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
passes that gave his team opportunities to punt for better field position. This strategy ultimately proved advantageous.

Penn State gave up a score to the host within the first five minutes. Fortunately, the extra point was missed. Then, Lehigh’s quarterback and captain Vincent Wysocki suffered a fractured right arm. The injury to Wysocki greatly weakened Lehigh’s offensive firepower. Before the end of the first half, Penn State lineman Ralph Henry blocked a Lehigh punt. The ball rolled to 5-yard line where Henry recovered the loose ball and ran it in for a touchdown. Entrusted with the role as kicker, Killinger then dropkicked the decisive extra point.

Penn State endured several scoring threats in the second half when Lehigh attempted but missed three field goals. Killinger threw two interceptions in the second half that gave Lehigh scoring opportunities. Despite the turnovers, Killinger was the star for Penn State. In addition to the dropkick he converted in the first half, he called plays, threw forward passes, kicked punts, returned punts and kicks, and ran off tackle enough times to control the clock. He also captained the secondary, which thwarted every instant a Lehigh runner broke through the Blue and White defensive line. The game ended in Penn State’s favor, 7-6.78

This appeared to be the beginning of a Harold Lamb moment as Killinger emerged as the student body’s hero at Penn State—in fact, there would be plenty of them to follow. Just as Lamb’s sudden ascent to hero-status in The Freshman, the once frightened and self-conscious freshman that had tiptoed away from football tryouts now emerged as the big shot on campus. Killinger’s hometown newspaper delighted, “The

78 “State Wins Hard Game From Lehigh Eleven 7-6,” Brown and White, November 20, 1918, 1.
local lad then made history by booting the oval squarely between the posts for the one point that meant victory.” 79 Killinger and his teammates felt a deep sense of accomplishment that day. No matter how ugly they played, or how many breaks went in their favor, the green and battered group from State College had defeated a better team. Killinger privately experienced a new emotion: he was over the moon, in fact. Even to an outsider, it was easy to see that Killinger and his young teammates could end up doing something special before the time they graduated.

And yet, Glenn Killinger and his teammates were years away from proving how special they were to become. While eager to play their final game of the season, the annual Thanksgiving Day game was scheduled against archrival Pittsburgh at Forbes Field, the ballpark used by Major League Baseball’s Pittsburgh Pirates. The Panthers had not lost or tied in thirty-one consecutive games. It was a streak that spanned four years. Their last defeat came to Washington and Jefferson College, a score of 13-10, on November 7, 1914. The future Hall of Fame inductee Glenn Scobey “Pop” Warner coached Pittsburgh, who was recruited in 1915 from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School to bring winning ways to the gridiron in the Steel City. His savvy was much respected for mentoring the likes of Jim Thorpe. As a boy, Killinger spent occasional Saturdays watching Pop Warner and Jim Thorpe on Harrisburg’s Island Park. All three of Warner’s teams at Pittsburgh had won East Coast championships. During that stretch, two mythical national titles were bestowed to Warner’s teams by a consensus of sportswriters in 1915 and 1916, respectively. What could have been a third title by sportswriters in 1917 was

79 “Gee Whiz! Read How Native Sons Put Harrisburg on the Map Saturday,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 18, 1918, 11; Pennsylvania State College. La Vie, 1920 (University Park, State College, PA: 1920), 285-86.
given to John Heisman’s Georgia Tech contingent, which had piled up 491 points against just 17 points and a 9-0 record (Pittsburgh had amassed a 10-0 record in 1917 but dodged an offer to play a post-season title game against Tech). Warner’s 1918 team had yet to yield a point, having already defeated Washington and Jefferson 34-0, Pennsylvania 37-0, and the nation’s top ranked team, Heisman-led Georgia Tech 32-0.

The epic rivalry between the two colleges began on November 6, 1893 when Penn State triumphed over Pittsburgh, 32-0. That first game was played at State College, as three of the first five meetings were played in the remote locale of Central Pennsylvania. Penn State won the first six showdowns by an aggregate margin of 167-4. After the sixth meeting in 1903—a 59-0 victory for the scholars from Mount Nittany—authorities at the University of Pittsburgh refused to travel into the farming valley of State College, a place so geographically isolated that football games lacked the pluck and enthusiasm of their urban college town in Western Pennsylvania. Penn State officials agreed. The next twenty-eight games were played in the Steel City. The rivals increased public interest by scheduling the game on Thanksgiving Day—a popular tradition in intercollegiate competition dating back to the 1876 holiday showdown between Princeton and Yale. For the level of pageantry that accompanied the game each year, the two teams did not play for a traditional trophy, this presented a great contrast from the showdowns played between Stanford and California, who competed for the Axe; Purdue and Indiana, which vied for the Old Oaken Bucket; and Michigan and Minnesota that fought for possession

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of the Little Brown Jug.\textsuperscript{82} Trophy or no trophy, the Thanksgiving Day game between Penn State and Pittsburgh became the premier football event in Pennsylvania by the late 1910s. It remained as such for much of the century. The move to Pittsburgh was about adding breath into the clash between Pennsylvania’s big college football teams.\textsuperscript{83} And it worked, especially for the Panthers who won nine of fifteen games in the lead-up to the 1918 S.A.T.C. showdown.

Since this particular intrastate clash was scheduled for Thanksgiving Day, November 28, it gave Penn State extra time to prepare to defend Pittsburgh’s two All-American running backs: freshman Tom Davies and senior George McLaren. It also gave Bezdek’s walking wounded time to heal. Killinger, who was still nursing an injury sustained nearly a month earlier, sat out three practices.\textsuperscript{84}

On the eve of the game, Bezdek’s team boarded a train bound for Pittsburgh. A large contingent of S.A.T.C. privates accompanied the team on the journey. On the train ride west Killinger found a copy of the \textit{Daily Post}, a Pittsburgh newspaper, and began to read. The paper devoted a good deal of attention to the Thanksgiving Day rivalry game. The sportswriter identified him as one of Penn State’s stars, placing him among the opponents’ players to watch list. A picture of Killinger appeared on the sports page.

Nobody expected Penn State to win; that was clear by the headlines in the newspapers Killinger read. He learned, instead, that fans only wanted Penn State to score. If Penn State could find the end zone against Pitt, it would be a testament to the job Bezdek did holding together a team in such dire wartime conditions. The \textit{Daily Post}...

\textsuperscript{82} Rader, \textit{American Sports}. 93-94.
\textsuperscript{84} “Yerger Runs State Squad,” \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Post}, November 23, 1918, 11.
admitted, “If this is done it will be quite an accomplishment.” The local paper added, “There is every reason to believe that a chance exists for the Mt. Nittany aggregation to cross Pitt’s goal line.”

The players were lodged at the Fort Pitt Hotel and sent to bed early to focus on the contest. Bezdek, meanwhile, had no problem glad-handing with the local press. “Perhaps we will show Pittsburghers more football than they expect from us,” he said grinning to reporters in the hotel lobby, adding, “We do not intend to allow Glenn Warner’s great team to run all over us without resistance, that is certain.”

But the next afternoon, as a comparatively small holiday crowd of 6,000 had anticipated, a war-ready Pittsburgh team imposed its will against Penn State, winning by a convincing 28-6 margin in cold and foul weather at Forbes Field. It was an odd game that featured both teams punting often on first down to gain field position.

Playing in the sloppiest of conditions helped Penn State jump out to an early lead. In the first quarter, Pitt’s star halfback, Tom Davies, a freshman from Kiski allowed to play due to the wartime abolition of the one-year freshman residency rule, uncharacteristically fumbled the ball over to Penn State in Pittsburgh’s side of the field. After Penn State’s Buck Williams pooch punted out of bounds, Pitt had the ball on their own 9-yard line. Pitt wisely chose to punt on second down, but the kicker’s foot got stuck in the mud, and the ball traveled a short distance to the 18-yard line. On the first play,

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86 “Contest With Great Lakes Eleven Abandoned after Many Futile Challenges,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, November 28, 1918, 1.
Williams ran right for eight yards. Penn State was stuffed for a 1-yard gain on second down. Killinger then ran left off tackle on third down, but missed picking up a first down by an inch. Instead of attempting a dropkick in the muddy conditions, Bezdek’s team chose to go for it on fourth down. They handed off to Frank Unger, who picked up several yards, finally tackled on the 4-yard line.

Penn State had first and goal from the four. It took all four downs to get in the end zone. The first three attempts were all runs, which failed. On fourth down, Williams handed to Unger, the 5’ 11”, 175-pound sturdy fullback, who followed Killinger off tackle right for the touchdown.

They were the first points scored against Pitt in almost two full seasons. Fans who were well aware of the handicaps placed upon Bezdek’s team throughout the season considered the score “a moral victory,” wrote the Daily Post. There was another dimension to the touchdown. The points meant that Penn State completed a record of having scored in every one of its games. The milestone, as insignificant as it appears, was a bright light in an otherwise cloudy season. It was a feat that no other football team enduring the same disruptions over the course of the 1918 season had accomplished.

It was a short-lived celebration. The host dominated the remainder of the game. After Penn State’s point after touchdown failed, Pitt scored four unanswered touchdowns; three were made by McLaren while only one was credited to Davies, who had several long runs that set up McLaren’s scoring opportunities. Davies also threw a touchdown pass and he kicked all four extra points. Witnesses believe the outcome would have been

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87 Notables to Honor Tom Davies Tonight,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, “December 12, 1921, 7.
88 “Score is 28-6, Bezdek’s Eleven Being First to Cross Goal Line,” Pittsburg Daily Post, November 29, 1918, 8.
worse but Pop Warner inserted his second string into the game at the start of the fourth quarter.

The still ailing Killinger was—and would be for the next three years—Davies’ counterpart. The Penn Stater had a difficult time producing anything for his offense. The empathetic Pittsburgh press lauded Killinger, saying he played “a great game” despite the loss. But in fact, it was quite the opposite. Killinger, who played through pain in his chest, thwarted any chance Penn State had to keep the game close by fumbling twice in the second half.⁸⁹

Penn State finished the year 1-2-1, with both losses coming to top-20 teams. They were one missed extra point against Wissahickon away from a .500 record.

The crushing setback to Pittsburgh left Killinger in a strange state, sore and sour because of the loss, but strangely confident about the future. What amazed him was how a nondescript raw collection of young men showed glimpses of talent against much more hardened teams that fall.

In all, Penn State overcame the loss of every original starter and every coach to the war. Killinger knew Bezdek was more than the savior of the football program: he was the glue that held the entire campus together as it adjusted to a military takeover and the change to a wartime curriculum. And his football team proved to be a pleasant distraction from the war that beckoned from across the Atlantic Ocean. For a time in September, it looked as if the school’s intercollegiate athletic teams were going to be cancelled for the semester. The threat was compounded when the flu epidemic caused more panic. Bezdek

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remained the poised leader through it all. Not just the football players, but also all of the students considered Bezdek the face of Penn State. “State made a ten strike when it signed him for the position of football coach and physical director for an indefinite term,” the Daily Post said of him.\textsuperscript{90}

The 1918 football season placed Bezdek among the “few really great coaches in the country.” The Post admitted Bezdek was a special find for Penn State. It wrote, “Not once, nor twice, but several times, he selected a first team from among the candidates, and, after having them work together for several days, had his combination ripped to pieces by drafts of players for officers’ training camps and other service units. Never did he give up, though. Each team he put his shoulder to the wheel and started his task all over again.”\textsuperscript{91}

On November 29, the day after the Pittsburgh game, Killinger made his way back to State College with his team, then off to his home in Harrisburg for a small break from sports and S.A.T.C. drilling. Shortly before that happened, he took one final look at his coach and thought, “My coach was a god at Penn State.”\textsuperscript{92} It made him think over the season one last time. He criticized his own performance, blaming himself for not doing enough to help the team. He knew he had more to give.

Success in football is determined primarily by two factors: the bodily wherewithal to last without sustaining an injury that would sideline a player for much of the season and a cerebral capacity to comprehend the coach’s style of play as well as week to week

\textsuperscript{90} “Team Young and Green but is Full of Fight and Well Coached,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, November 24, 1918, 19.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Rick Barras, “Advice Shaped Grid Star’s Life.” Philadelphia Inquirer, date and page unknown; Furlow, West Chester Football, 9; “Football Team Proves Surprise,” Penn State Collegian, January 8, 1919, 1.
tendencies of each opponent. If a player has the physical durability to last the vicious pounding of each game but lacks the mind to understand how the game should be played, then the player is rendered useless on game day. Whereas, if a player understands how the game should be played and can predict the opponent’s next move based on down and distance or ball placement on the field but is prone to injury, then the coach tends to give practice reps to more robust and resilient players. But of course, a football player who has the combination of durability on one hand and acumen on the other can obtain the pinnacle of intercollegiate sports. Frankly, Killinger and his teammates proved to have the mind and skill to play big-time college football, but after the 1918 season they rated deficient in the category of physical durability. What Killinger noticed that season, as he and his callow teammates competed at a high level, gave him every reason to believe that under Hugo Bezdek’s direction they could pull off a championship before they graduate.

Killinger vowed to never forget that season.
THIRD QUARTER
CHAPTER 7: 
THE VETERANS

After a reasonable delay following the armistice, Glenn Killinger and approximately 1,500 cadets at Penn State (about 158,000 on campuses nationwide) were honorably mustered out of the Student Army Training Corps on December 21, 1918.\(^1\) As it developed, demobilization of the Corps meant a lot of things to the bemused cadet. For one, the allowance of forty-eight dollars paid to him by the War Department (another sixty dollars paid to him in April 1919 under Act of Congress), equivalent to a dollar per day he was enlisted in the student-soldier program, was not what he anticipated when he signed up for the Corps.\(^2\) The small sum did little to curtail college expenses. He was told, earlier that summer, that enlistment in the S.A.T.C. would guarantee a full year’s college tuition free of charge.\(^3\) Now that the War Department recanted that pledge, Killinger and thousands of cadets were left on their own to deal with the financial pressures of remaining in college. Killinger, of course, was assured of returning to Penn State in the spring by continuing to live in the Alpha Chi Sigma house while accepting loans from family friends to compensate additional college expenses.

The departure of the War Department’s program meant that Penn State’s sports were handed over to the college’s athletic authorities. That meant all athletic branches were now under the sole management of Hugo Bezdek.

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\(^3\) “Status of the S.A.T.C. Boys,” Harrisburg Telegraph, December 21, 1918, 10; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 2.
Apart from his older brother Earl, perhaps no person was more important for Glenn Killinger’s development than Bezdek. The bond was forged at the apex of the war, a difficult time in the life of an impressionable teenager trying to find himself. Throughout his lifetime, Bezdek spoke a lot on record about Killinger’s athletic talents. Sadly, there is no recorded thought that illustrates his feelings about Killinger off the playing field; although it is quite clear he treasured his protégé.

The two often had moments of affection that seemed more kindred than sports-driven. “Killy” was the nickname Bezdek called Killinger. His friends in Harrisburg first gave him the name. Although there was not any particular trait that it reflected, “Killy” seemed to stick at Penn State as his teammates echoed the coach’s moniker. Conversely, Killinger began to call his coach “Bez.”

When Bez first got to know Killy, he found that the youngster possessed skills as a runner. He was clearly undersized and on the slender side, but there was something different that set Killinger apart from every other player he previously encountered at Arkansas and Oregon. Bezdek said Killinger had “football brains.” At length Bezdek came to see Killinger as an extension of himself, someone he could eventually trust whenever the circumstance called for him to delegate authority. The player-coach bond grew tighter in the winter of 1919.

The Alpha Chi Sigma fraternity house where Killinger lived on South Pugh Street was located a few blocks north from Bezdek’s home on Allen Street. Reflecting back years later, Killinger admitted that most nights after team meetings and training table “Bezdek would walk to my fraternity with me.” Along the way, Killy explained, “He

4 “Bezdek fears injury; gives shadow drill,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, November 25, 1919, 1.
would tell me about the great football and basketball players of the past and present and why they were great.” As a result, “I learned about what made them great and tried to emulate them.” Like many who met Killinger, Bezdek developed a fondness for the boy. He was happy and spirited and always joked around with someone. Better yet, he had such potential as an athlete. Due to the almost daily walks home together, Killinger recalled with affection, “there was no doubt in my mind the observations of many others [was] that I was ‘Bezdek’s baby.’”

Killinger may have not been more proud of himself than on January 11, when he received his varsity “S” for his contribution to the football team. He had come a long way since the two full quarters of playing time he saw during his senior year of high school. His ego was in harness; tamed during his war-laden freshman year, but not entirely eliminated. There must have been a sense of assurance as Coach Bez and Killy stood on the banquet stage with one another. Far from the danger of war, there existed a shared, if naïve, belief that they each helped one another through the trying time. Killinger’s ability to be coached without challenging him offered Bezdek a diversion from the frustrations of his job; on the contrary, Bezdek showed Killinger a way to attain greatness. They were able to build upon that rapport even further at the onset of the basketball season.

**Reintegrating Intercollegiate Athletics**

Penn State was supposed to return one of the most seasoned basketball teams in the East. The war, nevertheless, took two lettermen and the head coach Burke “Dutch” Hermann, who was laid up in a hospital in Toul, France, site of America’s primary Air

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Service Army base, suffering from a “severe case of shell shock,” reported the Scranton Republican. In a letter written to friends in State College, Hermann explained he was leading two platoons “in an attack on a hill after crossing a field swept by German machine gun fire” when “a big Hun shell” landed near him. Hermann’s charge was part of the final Allied assault along the Western Front known as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the bloodiest battle that involved American doughboys. While reorganizing his men in the dense woods, German artillery opened four barrages of fire. During the final bombardment, a high explosive fell close to him and threw him fifteen feet in the air. When Hermann became conscious twenty-four hours later, he was left incapable of speaking for three more days. His injury, occurring on the same day the armistice was signed, forced him to spend the next month in a hospital east of Paris.  

Bezdek named himself the basketball team’s interim coach while Hermann recovered. To alleviate some of his workload while on the road for extended periods of time with the basketball team, Bezdek hired Dick Harlow back to Penn State to work as his assistant director of physical education. After completing officer training school the previous summer, Harlow was sent by the War Department to supervise the Student Army Training Corps at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (known contemporarily as Virginia Tech). He spent the fall as an assistant football coach for the 7-0 Hokies. Now asked to return to Penn State, Harlow was given the charge of the school’s intercollegiate

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7 “Basketball Coach is Shell Shocked,” Scranton Republican, January 8, 1919, 12; Pennsylvania State College. Penn State in the World War. Alumni Association of the Pennsylvania State College (State College, PA, 1921), 120.
boxing team and assisted with the intramural sports program that Bezdek developed. Bezdek additionally named Harlow his line coach for the football team.  

When basketball tryouts started in mid-January, Bezdek kept a close eye on Killinger. The absence of the team’s captain Lloyd L. Wilson, who was still stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Station but scheduled to arrive back to State College in February, left a temporary void in the backcourt. Killy could score, but Bezdek especially liked the way he played defense and thought he should be given an opportunity to start on the varsity team. There was another guard on the team, George Ewing McMillan, a muscular Irish kid with some size and seniority, who Killinger realized had twice his own talent but none of his doggedness. They both started during the first part of the season, but when Wilson returned, Killinger earned the spot.

The Penn State basketball team won eleven of thirteen games that year on its way to the college’s best basketball season on record, defeating Pittsburgh twice, Western Pennsylvania basketball power Geneva twice, and a season ending victory over Great Lakes Naval Station. Killinger, on the court for almost every minute of the season, performed well enough to impress sportswriters and rival coaches across the East. One Pittsburgh journalist touted Killy as “a star” with “uncommon ability” who was making “a wonderful record at Penn State” in his sophomore year. He finished third on the team in scoring with a seasonal total of sixty-six points, which was quite an accomplishment.

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8 “Harlow is to Assist Hugo Bezdek at State,” Harrisburg Evening News, January 8, 1919, 13.
considering most of his energy was spent guarding the opponents’ best offensive player each game.\textsuperscript{10} The most telling moment of the season for Killinger came in the final minute of a victory over Lehigh, a rival school in the midst of an average year. The Lehigh College newspaper, the \textit{Brown and White}, reported that Killy “took the joy out of life” when, down three points, he hit a shot with thirty seconds left to cut Lehigh’s lead to 23-22. Killinger “dropped in a pretty shot from the center of the floor,” then immediately stole the ball, passed to teammate Frank Wolfe, who hit a shot for the Penn State lead. Before the game ended, Wolfe made one more bucket, giving Penn State a 26-23 victory. Overcome with joy, a feeling that was becoming more common for him, Killinger knew he stole another game from Lehigh as memories of Penn State’s one point victory on the gridiron seeped into his mind. It was another Harold Lamb moment.

Spring weather arrived unusually early in 1919. With it, Glenn Killinger had little time to get in shape for the baseball season. Pursuant to the advice of his football coaches, he chose to entirely forgo spring football practice to put all of his focus and energy into playing baseball. His coaches agreed that he possessed value for the Penn State nine, and was projected to become a starter.

During the final weeks of the basketball season, Coach Bezdek, who would advise spring training before departing to Pittsburgh where he still managed Major League Baseball’s Pittsburgh Pirates, held indoor baseball practices in the Armory, which functioned as the venue for basketball games and wrestling matches. Killinger worked out with the team as much as he could. Just two veterans from the previous season attended the workouts. Most had yet to return from war service. So Bezdek spent the few

\textsuperscript{10} Henry, \textit{William Glenn Killinger}, 24.
weeks working mostly with freshmen, which were still permissible to varsity competition. Since he was still contracted to manage the Pirates, Bezdek worked against a fast approaching deadline. Not only did he have a short window to groom a team, he had to find a manager by March 21, the date of his departure for Pittsburgh.

As he walked from one group of players performing a drill to the next, he was pleased with the effort and level of talent that he saw from every position except the pitchers. “The pitching outlook was especially dull,” claimed the write-up about the baseball team in the college’s yearbook.\(^\text{11}\) Substandard pitching was a quandary Bezdek overcame in his first year managing the Pirates in 1917. At Pittsburgh, he was able to mitigate that problem by surrounding average pitchers with competent infielders. He hoped to pull off the same strategy at Penn State.

At trainings, Bezdek concentrated his energies on finding quality defenders while leaving much of the pitching duties to his assistant, and subsequent replacement. Bezdek named George “Doc” Wheeling, a twenty-two-year-old recent graduate and former captain of the 1918 baseball squad, the team’s manager. Bezdek fashioned a raw yet solid infield comprised of dual sport athlete Nelson Korb at first, theater enthusiast Orville Baublitz at second, freshman Corwin Knapp at shortstop, and Killinger at third.\(^\text{12}\) Meanwhile, Wheeling created a three-man rotation on the mound. Eugene Gramley was the only letterman with pitching experience. John Robert Hunter and Myles Thomas assisted him. With an unpredictable pitching staff, Bezdek found three dual-sport athletes to form the outfield—Bill Mullan at center field, Joseph Lightner in left field, and John

\(^{11}\) Penn State University. *La Vie, 1921*. (University Park, Penn State University, 1921), 347.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 349.
Traphoner in right field. They were the strength of Penn State’s defense. Each player, including Killinger, was interchangeable. While listed as the third baseman, Killinger occasionally played shortstop, second base, and catcher during the season.

With only a few days on the job, and no more than a four-year age difference from his players, Wheeling’s first duty as boss found him standing in front of the team to inform them that his friend and the team’s captain-elect David Mingle had died in a plane accident while instructing two other officers in a hydro-airplane at Pensacola, Florida. For Killinger, the shock of his teammate’s death was unsettling. Mingle and Killinger were never close friends, but they competed against one another many times. Regrettably, news like this reminded Killinger that, although the war was over, it was still a prevalent part of life. Even four months after the armistice, and with the world’s leaders halfway into postwar peace talks, bad news still affected his life.

After having spent many practices inside, Penn State got in one good week of workouts on New Beaver Field before the opener against Maryland State College. After rain postponed the opener at College Park, on April 18 Killinger saw his first varsity baseball action of his college career at third base. Batting in the clean up position, Killy performed admirably. He opened the second inning with a single through short and then reached third on a throwing error. Three batters later, he was driven in by Baublitz for Penn State’s first run of the 1919 season. Adversely, it was Penn State’s only score of the game, having gone down in thrashing fashion, 7-1. To credit Killinger’s unit, it was the

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fifth game that Maryland played that season. Killy finished the game with two hits in four at bats. Additionally, he threw out five base runners from his third base position.\(^{14}\)

The next day, Penn State traveled to Washington D.C. to play Catholic University. Killinger turned in a modest performance in the cleanup spot. He went hitless with two walks. He stole a base, scored twice, but also committed two errors. Despite being out-hit eight to four by the opponent, Penn State nudged out a 9-7 victory. One day later, Killy batted one for three with a run scored, but he committed four crucial errors that helped Catholic rally back from a seven-run deficit to claim a 12-9 victory.\(^{15}\) Penn State lost once more on April 22 to Washington and Lee College, 4-0. The setback was to become the last of the season as the Blue and White were poised to roll through the next eight opponents on their way to a 9-3 overall record. Supporters saw the season opening southern road trip through Virginia and the nation’s capital as an opportunity to “season the team” and give head baseball coach Wheeling “an opportunity to get a line on the new men.”\(^{16}\)

Penn State’s win streak began on its home field with narrow victories over Virginia Military Institute and West Virginia, 6-4 and 2-1, respectively. The Blue and White then pounded a strong West Point team 7-2. With the contest tied at two a piece, Penn State scored five runs in the eighth inning to turn the game open. Killinger went

\(^{14}\) “Marylanders Defeat Penn State by 7 to 1,” Washington Post, April 19, 1919.
\(^{16}\) Penn State University. La Vie, 1921. (University Park, Penn State University, 1921), 347-50.
hitless in five at bats, but played exceptionally well from the field, finishing with four put outs and an assist.¹⁷

The season ended with victories over Lafayette, Lebanon Valley, Bucknell and Carnegie Tech twice. During the eight game win streak, Wheeling moved Killinger to second base and down a spot to fifth in the lineup. Killy batted and ran the bases as well as any of his teammates. His performance in the field was superior. Penn State gave up just fourteen runs during that stretch. *La Vie*, the Penn State yearbook, professed, “In Killinger on second and ‘Red’ Korb at short, the team had a combination that was hard to beat. Their fielding was like clock work and they were always full of the old-time ‘pepper.’”¹⁸

The win streak created a sense of euphoria among those in State College. Only one player would be lost to graduation at season’s end. There was more pleasant news on the horizon. Penn State was soon to receive a transfer from Lebanon Valley College named Henry “Hinkey” Haines, a four-sport marvel destined for short careers with the New York Yankees and the New York Football Giants. The prospect of Haines and Killinger playing together only forecasted greatness for Penn State athletics. (Before his career ended at Penn State, Killinger’s baseball teams would finish with fifty wins and just nine defeats. They will run off the longest win streak in college baseball history—thirty-one consecutive victories stretching from the last eleven games in 1920 through the

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¹⁸ Penn State University. *La Vie, 1921*. (University Park, Penn State University, 1921), 349
first twenty contests in 1921.) There was more to come for Killinger. Shockingly, just around the corner was not triumph, but the bench.

**Hysteria**

As Glenn Killinger, Red Korb, Joe Lightner and the others who made up the Penn State nine concluded their unexpectedly fruitful nine-win season in the spring of 1919, millions of Americans concealed themselves in their homes and were extra cautious whenever a United Parcel Service package arrived at their front doors. On two occasions between April and June, packages containing dynamite were mailed to the homes of a cross-section of high-level politicians and businessmen. Industrial tycoons John Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Pennsylvania Governor William C. Sproul were among the targets on the April 30 attack. Although every bomb was intended for a reputed public figure, every citizen from San Francisco to New York seemed concerned about a violent overthrow after Russia’s new dictator Vladimir Ilyich Lenin openly encouraged communists worldwide to revolt. Most of the bombs were intercepted at post offices in New York, Atlanta, San Francisco and Seattle. However, one bomb blew off the hands of Georgia Senator Thomas W. Hardwick’s housekeeper when she opened a package that arrived at Hardwick’s front door. The Senator was a target for co-sponsoring the Immigration Act of 1918, which made punishable by deportation membership to anarchist affiliations in the United States.

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19 Ibid; Penn State University. *La Vie, 1922.* (University Park, Penn State University, 1922), 386-290; Penn State University. *La Vie, 1923.* (University Park, Penn State University, 1923), 422-26.

20 “Map Showing Ramifications of the Bomb Plot,” *New York Tribune,* May 1, 1919, 8.
The country was stunned again on June 2 as a second wave of terror attacks resulted in explosions outside the homes of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, Judge Charles C. Nott, and Massachusetts State Representative Leland W. Powers. Cleveland Mayor Harry L. Davis and Immigration Chief William W. Sibray were also targeted in the second attack. This time each package arrived with a flyer declaring war on American capitalists that read, “War, Class War, and you were the first to wage it under the cover of the powerful institutions you call to order, in the darkness of your laws. There will have to be bloodshed; we will not dodge; there will have to be murder: we will kill, because it is necessary; there will have to be destruction; we will destroy to rid the world of your tyrannical institutions.”

Everything about the terror attacks was frightening, forcing the government to reshuffle the Justice Department in order to suppress radical labor organizations by creating the Bureau of Investigation and General Intelligence Division. Attorney General Palmer, now twice victimized by anarchist terror, named twenty-four-year-old J. Edgar Hoover to direct the new departments. As the spring baseball season came to an end, Palmer and Hoover were on the verge of launching a series of police raids, eventually dubbed the “Palmer raids,” that would result in the detainment of 10,000 Eastern European immigrants living in over twelve cities of the United States. More than 550 foreigners would be deported under the Immigration Act of 1918.

The raids, detainment, and deportation actually fostered in a new level of xenophobic racial profiling as paranoid working-class White Anglo Saxon Protestants felt threatened by this fleeting period of criminality unleashed by an influx of foreigners from

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22 “36 Were Marked As Victims By Bomb Conspirers,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1919, 1.
such Eastern European countries as Italy and Russia. This inexplicable period following
the First World War left many in America anxious about the changes that had come to
their country. Even Killinger, one of the most apolitical students at Penn State, wondered
what might come of this unprecedented upsurge of ethnic unrest and domestic terrorism.

There were, however, other reasons why it was not easy for Killinger to focus on
his studies during his sophomore year at Penn State. Playing three sports, which meant a
lot of time was spent on the road instead of in classrooms, and a mixed curriculum
composed of military drill with metallurgical courses would have been agonizing for
anyone. His college transcript shows him to be a proficient, yet unimpressive, student. In
his sophomore year, alone, his marks were abysmal. Killinger failed two courses,
chemistry and military drill (two courses that he was forced to retake during his extra
semester of college in 1921). He finished the spring semester with a 62.47 average
college, Copy of W. Glenn Killinger’s Student Record Card, loc. Cit. 26, 135.}

His bad grades did not hurt his chances of being re-admitted to Penn State. Nor
did the report make him ineligible to play football in the fall. Instead, he received a lot of
ribbing from his teammates and coaches. Most of his teammates were serious
undergraduates that were just as involved with campus activities as Killinger. Unlike
Killinger’s approach to academics, they operated under the assumption that their athletic
career would culminate upon graduation. So they took their lives beyond sports very
seriously. While it is true that Killinger was a daffy kid with flaws, he was charming and
had a lot of potential. So his friends put up with him.
In ways large and small, Killinger never quite buckled down to make academics his top priority. During his sophomore year, Killy behaved like a naughty teenager often making scenes in the campus’s quadrangle. Dick Yoder, Killinger’s quarterback at West Chester State Teachers College in 1958 and 1959, grew up listening to stories about Killinger’s antics from his father, Walter, who attended Penn State with Killinger. “Killy was a character in college,” Yoder jested. His father suggested that Killy’s inattention toward academics was not a perilous thing. Rather, he lacked “some maturity.” That was especially evident years later when peers of Killinger admitted they often spotted him at frat parties late into the night on the evening before some of his baseball games. However, he was never out very late before football or basketball games. Yoder said, “Killinger liked to have fun, joke around. But nothing overtly obnoxious. I’m sure it had an effect on his grades.”

Killinger’s issues could be dealt with. It was clear he was not a worldly fellow. But he came from a family that expected hard work. While only a malleable sophomore, he was still developing character. And he possessed enough humility that kept him from being an upstart college punk that had little to offer beyond the athletic arena. Nevertheless, his popularity on campus grew exponentially by the end of his sophomore year. Near the end of his sophomore year, Killinger was elected by his peers to serve as a student council representative for the Class of 1921. Additionally, he was admitted into the Friars, an athletic fraternity promoting volunteerism within the community at State College.

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Amateurism to Professionalism

Home in Harrisburg for summer break had a calming affect. The Harrisburg Pipe and Pipe Bending Works Company cut jobs after the war, so Killinger found employment in the family hardware shop on South Thirteenth Street where he grew up. His nights, however, were filled with baseball, which seemingly added a few dollars to his summertime gains.

That summer of 1919, Killinger supplemented his college baseball season with an extensive sandlot schedule that served to showcase his game. He divided his time with two amateur teams, the Rosewood Athletic Club of the Allison Hill League and the Commonwealth Travelers of the West End-Harrisburg League, and one semiprofessional ball club that competed in the Pennsylvania Independent League called the Elizabethtown Klein Chocolate Company. Killy only played with Rosewood out of loyalty to his hometown teammates, which still included his brother, Earl, who occasionally caught for the ball club. In fact, he appeared in just three games with Rosewood. In his first game against Reading on May 29, Killinger pinch-hit in the bottom of the seventh inning when the team was down 7-2. “The Penn State star responded by rapping out a double to right center,” reported the Telegraph.25 He was then driven in for a score by his old hometown nemesis, Carl Beck, who was setting all kinds of football and track and field records at Harrisburg Tech, which had become one of the best high school football teams in the country. The scoring stopped there, and Rosewood went down in defeat, 7-4. Killinger then went hitless in six attempts in his two other games with Rosewood.

Of the three teams, Killy spent most of his evenings barnstorming the state with Klein Chocolate, whose owners, brothers William and Frederick Klein, earlier that spring, failed in their attempt to buy the team into minor league baseball’s International League. Klein Chocolate comprised college and former-Major League stars. This meant that Killinger was playing with and against ballplayers in their mid-twenties or older who had experience playing at the highest level. The team’s owners were former employees of Milton Hershey’s Chocolate Company that had relocated to Elizabethtown in 1913 to open their own chocolate business. While they shared a passion for America’s pastime, the entrepreneurs felt they needed to draw more attention to their young company. So they sponsored a baseball club in 1919 and actively recruited the best ballplayers available from the Mid-Atlantic. Benjamin G. Rader spoke about this practice in his book *American Sport: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (1999). He writes that investors in joint-stock baseball clubs like the Klein brothers were usually less interested in financial profits than they were about gaining publicity, which required high profile players and victories. Accordingly, the Klein brothers were able to reserve most of their ballplayers by giving them employment at the chocolate factory in Elizabethtown, located about twenty miles south of Harrisburg and even closer to Hershey. All of their players were given a guaranteed sum per game plus travel expenses. The team would journey by train to backwoods towns of Pennsylvania and major cities in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest challenging the best talent in those parts of the country. While showcasing the players’ talent in front of semipro and professional competition, the barnstorming trips utilized the ballplayers as breathing billboards that

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27 Fran Strouse, Telephone interview with the author, June 19, 2015.
advertised Klein Chocolate in areas of the country that otherwise would have never heard of the company. The Klein brothers asked Killinger to join the team, thinking that he might be the top draw in contests played in Pennsylvania. And Killinger agreed.

Two of the team’s pitchers once played for the New York Baseball Giants. Others played for teams in both the International and New York-Pennsylvania Minor Leagues. The Klein brothers and the team’s manager, Johnny “Jack” Brackenridge, set up a traveling schedule between May and October against instate semiprofessional teams from York, Lancaster, Ephrata, Hershey, Middletown, Hummelstown, Williamsport, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The owners scheduled games against a team made up of African-American war veterans from New York named the Harlem Hell Fighters and the Bacharach Giants of the Atlantic City Independent Negro League. Klein Company played exhibition games against Major League Baseball’s New York Giants, Philadelphia Athletics, the Babe Ruth-led Boston Red Sox, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Cincinnati Reds, and an all-star select team with players from Detroit, Cleveland, and Chicago. At season’s end, Klein Company finished 66-14-3. They dominated their Pennsylvania foes, scored unanticipated victories over the Dodgers, the Athletics, the Red Sox, and the major league all-star team. Seemingly, Klein’s biggest struggles were against the aforementioned Negro league teams from New York and New Jersey.28

On May 30, one day after his pinch-hitting cameo with Rosewood, Killinger played shortstop and batted second in the lineup for Klein Chocolate on its opening day.

double-header against Harrisburg’s West End League team, Motive Power. In the first game, Killy hit a homerun and tripled while driving in two runs. In game two, he recorded two more hits, one going for another homerun, which helped his team begin the season with two wins.\textsuperscript{29} He failed to appear in games for Klein Company over the next two weeks. When he rejoined the team on June 14 against a ball club from Coatesville, his second at bat went for a three-run homerun. He also recorded five put outs and one assist. Each homerun earned him the team’s incentive-prize—boxes of almond bars from the Klein brothers.\textsuperscript{30} Killy played six games in June, proving to be a batting sensation by scoring eleven runs and averaging almost two hits per game.

With July came a noticeable slump as Killinger’s performance receded significantly. In the eight games he played that month, he recorded two hits and five runs. He was walked a bunch, but he struggled when pitchers gave him something to hit. His manager, Jack Brackenridge, dropped him from second in the batting order to seventh. In two games played on Sunday, July 13, Killinger was moved to right field in Klein’s 6-4 victory over York Chain Works and left field in the day’s second game, a 4-1 decision over Fulton Athletic Club.\textsuperscript{31} Soon afterwards, Brackenridge may have dropped him entirely from the starting lineup, because Killinger appeared in only one more box score that summer for Klein Chocolate.

The reason for his abrupt departure is unclear. It is fair to assume he was benched, and accordingly left the team. His lackluster performance at the bat was not measuring up

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29} “Big Day at Elizabethtown When the Klein Company Opens Athletic Field,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, May 31, 1919, 13. \\
\textsuperscript{30} “Klein Chocolate Lads Beat Altoona by Heavy Hitting,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, June 16, 1919, 13. \\
\textsuperscript{31} “Peanut Bars Win Two Games,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, July 14, 1919, 13.}
to the former big-leaguers who surrounded him, and the fact that he could not lock down an infield or outfield position must have frustrated the youngster. That reason is feeble, however, as a more pressing matter arose in mid-July.

Earlier in the summer, manager Brackenridge had reached out to several major league baseball clubs for contests. Games against the Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Sox were on the horizon. With it would follow an unparalleled stream of media attention. Killinger, about to enter his third year at Penn State, already arrived on a road of foul play as a member of the Klein ball club. In theory, if anyone would accuse him of having been paid to play a professional sport, there was certainly a month worth of evidence that could be used to incriminate him in a case of professionalism. But, if he could disappear from the roster before the big leaguers came to town, then no one would ever notice. For decades, college athletes got away with playing summer ball for money. 

*McLure’s Magazine* journalist, Henry Beach Needham, wrote as early as 1905 that, “there was no one to say they [collegiate athletes] should not take it [the money], or that, by so doing, they forfeited their eligibility to the college team.”\(^{32}\) Brackenridge, with an unobstructed track record of winning-at-all-costs, was no exception to this form of exploitation. Since winning was the bottom line, professionalism was rarely, if ever, explained to amateur athletes by their coaches, thus the intercollegiate codes of amateurism were not clearly understood by collegians like Killinger. While violators knew that their eligibility was at risk by accepting money, coaches usually assured their amateur athletes that their subterfuge would go unnoticed. More often than not, college players participated in summer professional baseball under names other than their own.

“The practice of playing under an assumed name is growing,” Needham cautioned in 1905, “The act in itself makes a man a professional.” Since legal proof “is difficult to obtain,” wrote the McClure’s columnist, “players usually got away with it.”

Moreover, there were cases of blatant maneuvering among college faculties, which had seized control of collegiate athletics from undergraduates beginning in 1903. In the few cases when collegians were caught violating codes of amateur athletics, it usually meant that a rival school unearthed a very large degree of empirical evidence against the violator.

For whatever the reason, Killinger played left field in his final game with the Klein Company on July 14 when he turned in a no-hit performance in a 2-1 victory over Hummelstown. Killinger chose to ride out his final days of the summer on his brother’s West End League team, the Commonwealth Travelers. He was a below-average hitter for Commonwealth, hitting .150 with three hits in twenty at-bats in seven games. His addition to the team did nothing to improve Commonwealth’s league record. They were .500 when Killy joined them, and remained .500 when he left for college.

Once confident that he performed among the best athletes his age in the state of Pennsylvania, it appeared as if Killinger had run out of luck. The war, a year ago, adversely offered him many opportunities on the baseball diamond, on the football field, and on the hardwood. But once soldiers arrived home, Killinger no longer stood out. He quickly became an average athlete. If Killy wasn’t aware that his life in the sports world

33 Ibid, 262-63.
35 “Change in Batting Leaders of West End League During Games Played Last Month,” Harrisburg Evening News, August 4, 1919, 11.
was already more difficult, he would soon learn it when he returned to Penn State that fall.
CHAPTER 8:
WAR, SPORT, AND BROTHERHOOD

They arrived at different times in 1919. In one perspective, there was a platoon of war veterans that made Penn State fans clamor for the approaching football season; on the other hand, it was a squad of bigger, faster, and stronger athletes, many with combat experience who posed a threat for Killinger to retain his starting position in the backfield.

But the reality was that this could be the year Penn State would triumph over Pop Warner’s Pitt Panther contingent. Hopes were never higher at State College than in 1919 as this could be the year Penn State enters the realm of America’s top football outfits. Sidney Sanes, a sports columnist for the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, predicted Penn State would finish among the top teams in the country. Typically, a prediction like that was based on the number of returning lettermen. At Penn State, conversely, it was more than the number of lettermen expected to report to camp. More than thirty doughboys were expected at tryouts on September 2. Each war veteran was eligible to play after having missed either the 1917 or 1918 season, or both. Combined with the ten returning lettermen from 1918 and new faces of underclassmen to the squad, there was good reason to be optimistic about the approaching season. In the Post Gazette, Sanes wrote, “Penn State elevens are going to be as tough to down this fall as a pack of Jack Dempseys or [Stanislaus] Zbyskos.”1 In addition to the nearly three-dozen war veterans who attended Penn State on scholarship, Hugo Bezdek retained coaches Dick Harlow and “Dutch” Hermann, both servicemen, to help manage the skilled squad. Harlow, former head coach

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of the Blue and White, was assigned to coach the line, while Hermann, who was also the head basketball coach, reclaimed his duties over the freshman team.

**Sport and Identity**

Leading the list of war veterans that returned to campus were four ex-captains: Bob Higgins, Larry Conover, Charlie Way, and Harry Robb. Higgins previously was elected captain of the 1917 team during Killinger’s freshman year. Choosing instead to volunteer for the American Expeditionary Force, Higgins attained the rank of lieutenant and served a brief time in France with the 79th Division. While serving in Europe, he played end on the 79th Division’s football team and was unanimously selected for the All-American Expeditionary Force team. He was twenty-four years old, 5’ 10”, and weighed over 180 pounds when he arrived to camp that fall. Higgins’s replacement as captain in 1917 was Larry Conover, a 180-pound, twenty-one-year-old center. Conover received his call to serve before the start of the 1917 season. He was assigned to Camp Hancock, where he captained the Ordnance football team in 1918.²

As Higgins’ and Conover’s size offered muscle to the Penn State line, the return of the famed diminutive quarterback and 1918 captain-elect, Charlie Way, provided a modicum of intelligence. When Way, now twenty-one-years old, 5’ 7”, was called to machine gunnery school in Georgia, his replacement as captain, Harry Robb, was soon after called to officer training camp in Plattsburgh, New York. Unlike Way, Robb, age twenty-two, 5’ 10”, 165 pounds, who owned the school’s single-game touchdown record (six of them against Gettysburg in 1917 – a record that still stands at the time of this dissertation’s publication), ended up playing intercollegiate football in 1918. He was

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detailed to Columbia University to serve as a military instructor of the S.A.T.C. program after having won a Captain’s commission in the Army. He was permitted to play football at Columbia, where his teammates voted him team captain. Robb “proved the sensation of the year,” a New York sportswriter claimed. He made Walter Camp’s All-American second team. The accolade of receiving a varsity letter from Columbia made him one of the few who received football letters from two different colleges.³

The 1919 team was made up of twenty-two lettermen. Of that group, nine were backfield players, ten were linemen, and three played the end position. Fifty players were chosen for the roster, which was then divided into twenty-five first team players and twenty-five scrub team players. Taken together, the average age of the team was twenty-one. The average size of the line was 5’10”, 172 pounds. The backfield’s average was 5’10½”, 162 pounds.⁴

In addition to seeing war veterans fresh from officer training camps and the bloody battlefields of Europe, Killinger’s hopes of attaining a backfield position grew more difficult with the arrival of Henry “Hinkey” Haines. A year earlier, Haines, of York County in Pennsylvania and son of six-term United States Congressman Harry L. Haines, had given up an auspicious start in athletics at Lebanon Valley College to enlist in the Army. After the armistice, he chose to transfer to Penn State instead of returning to Lebanon Valley. Haines, who attended Red Lion High School, which had no football

⁴ Pittsburgh Post Gazette, September 26, 1919.
team, had previously played tennis, baseball, and track and field at Lebanon Valley. He had a “wicked” serve on the tennis court, which made him the best tennis player on his college team as a freshman. As captain of the track team he was untouchable in the pole vault and broad jump. Haines was touted as a future baseball megastar that was already under tentative agreement with the New York Baseball Giants. However much in love he was with baseball, football may have become his favorite. In 1917, Haines got his first taste of football as a halfback on the Lebanon Valley scrub team. His first career offensive play was a ninety-five-yard touchdown run against the Carlisle Indians. By the end of the season, his name decorated the headlines of Lebanon Valley’s newspapers. “His end runs are usually rather long, numerous, and spectacular,” said his friends at Lebanon Valley College. Standing 5’ 9” with a flair for bashing his body into opposing running backs, Haines was considered the toughest defender at his old school. After a few days of competing with him on the practice field, Killinger said Haines “was very fast and [was] a slashing type-runner with great courage and determination.” If there was a player at Penn State who possessed an erudite approach to the game while being one of the most elusive ball carriers like Killinger was, it was Hinkey Haines.

Complicating matters further for Killinger at the start of the season was the absence of Coach Bezdek, who was still managing the Pittsburgh Pirates. Bezdek was not scheduled to arrive back to Penn State until a week before the October 4 opening game against Gettysburg. Coach Dick Harlow, who scarcely knew of Killinger’s abilities on the gridiron, acted as the interim head coach. Harlow previously worked with Killinger

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5 Ibid.
6 Lebanon Valley College. Quittapahilla, 1919 (Annville, PA, Lebanon Valley College, 1919), 138, 180-196; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page; Riley, The Road to Number One, 196.
during two short weeks of spring football in March 1918. That team was greatly depleted, however, and Killinger appeared as a beam of sunshine among a maladroit group. It was hardly a way to measure his talents among the best that Penn State had to offer. This was Harlow’s first chance to see Killy in live action against Penn State’s elite.

Killinger was surely giddy at the start of the season when Harlow asked him to explain the basics of Bezdek’s fancy offensive system featuring unbalanced formations, backfield shifts, line shifts, straight bucks, cross-bucks off tackle, short passes, and deceptive passes down field. “Bezdek had paid me a compliment when he suggested to Harlow that I was more knowledgeable in the Bezdek system than any other player on the squad,” said Killinger as he remembered Harlow’s doubtful eye during the exchange. It took confirmation from George Brown, an end on the team, before Harlow took Killinger’s report seriously.

The first two weeks of tryouts went well for Killinger. He was drilled to the bone at both halfback and quarterback. The entire team was worked almost nonstop from the time the whistle sounded to begin the day’s first practice to the team’s post-practice breakdown well after sundown. Killinger was part of an eight-man rotation in the first team’s backfield, which included three imminent Walter Camp All-American selections, five future professionals, and four future professional and college head coaches. He felt entirely comfortable in his new surroundings, despite the level of competition. His self-assurance showed on the field. Killinger was doing “fine work of late,” revealed

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Harlow’s evaluation after two weeks of practice, “he cannot be discounted in the final makeup of the backfield.”

The truth was that Killinger felt that he fit in on the team. Though a walk-on competing against a collection of scholarship players, he entered tryouts in fine shape. At 5’ 10”, 156 pounds, Killinger was taller than ever, but was still considered rather fragile for the weekly poundings dished out at practices and games. The persona was certainly puzzling to Killinger, who watched tiny Charlie Way run circles around the scrub team every day without anyone questioning his durability. Killinger possessed an aura of self-righteousness; due to the circumstances, he felt that he had to act bigger and heavier than he actually was. Walking into that first meeting room filled with servicemen was reasonably daunting. So he set out to disprove that façade.

An inter-squad scrimmage was arranged for September 20. The best twenty-two players were divided into two teams. One onlooker described the scene: “the fact that there are so many veterans on the squad made the two teams nearly equal in strength.” Killinger impressed. “Killinger’s appearance is deceiving, but there isn’t a single sport in which he lacks unusual ability,” Coach Harlow told a local correspondent after the scrimmage. “He is comparatively small, but powerful, and added to that he is a real fighter.” Harlow predicted there is “a bright athletic career” ahead for Killinger.

A week later, a second scrimmage was held. The eight backfield players were the feature that day. Buck Williams and Thomas Ritner were made dueling quarterbacks for the first string and scrub team, respectively. The first team fullback was William Hess

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8 “State’s Gridiron Puzzles Continue; Bezdek is Absent,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, September 28, 1919.
10 Ibid, September 15, 1919.
while George Snell played the position for the scrubs. Halfbacks for the first team were Harry Robb and Charlie Way, while Killinger and Hinkey Haines were made the halfbacks on the scrub team. Behind the running and passing of Killinger and Haines, the scrubs defeated the first string, 3-0. The Post Gazette reported: “Sensational runs by Charlie Way gave the varsity several chances to score, but they failed to penetrate the scrub [defense]. Haines and Killinger starred for the scrubs.”\(^{11}\) A twenty-yard dropkick by Thomas Ritner was the difference in the scrimmage.

Killinger remembered this scrimmage as a “dog-eat-dog” competition “in the fight for starting jobs.” In his unpublished memoir, he wrote of the scrimmage in striking detail. He said:

> The war veterans cared not for life nor limb, especially those of their opponents. Charley Way had lost none of his brilliant running ability and won the right halfback job. A truly great athlete emerged as the other halfback in the person of one of my closest friends, Hinky [sic] Haines, a walk-on transfer student from Lebanon Valley.\(^{12}\)

> Two superior athletes may have beaten him out, but if there was one thing that Killinger proved after surviving two violent scrimmages, it was that he was resilient. Four potential starters suffered injuries, none worse than Buck Williams who broke a bone in his hand.

> An extra surge of assurance consumed Killinger at the start of practice on Monday, September 29, five days before the opening game, when Hugo Bezdek returned from Pittsburgh. Bezdek’s arrival at New Beaver Field was a staged exhibition highlighted by a pack of elated students, a military band, and the football team looking on suspiciously, most of whom had never seen him before. A special telegram in the

\(^{11}\) Ibid, “The Scrubs Beat First Team by Air Route.” September 28, 1919.
*Pittsburgh Gazette Times* reported that “nearly the entire student body surrounded the field and cheered” as Bezdek ran out on the practice pitch still dressed in his Pirates uniform and cap turned backward. He wasted no time in admonishing the players and coaches: “we are away [sic] behind and will have to work hard.” Bezdek ordered an impromptu inter-squad scrimmage between the first and second teams. The scrimmage lasted the duration of practice, and Bezdek refused to end the scrimmage until the starters scored four touchdowns against the scrubs.13 “Evidently, he was not totally pleased with the team,” Killinger recalled years later. “He made a few corrections in our plays and the manner in which they were executed.” The most noticeable vexation, he remembered, was the philosophical quarrel between Bezdek and Harlow that first day. Both larger-than-life head coaches with colliding egos was an early season handicap that the talented team struggled to overcome. “It was clearly evident that Bezdek and Harlow were not going to be bosom pals,” Killinger described grudgingly.14

Bezdek ended the practice by lecturing his team. He stressed that every player had to “come through with not just his best, but also with more than his best!” While Killinger appreciated the reprimand, his veteran teammates did not. Dick Rauch, one of the oldest players on the team who hailed from the same hometown as Killinger, let out a loud and insolent sigh. Ridge Riley, author of *The Football Letters* (1977), called Bezdek’s dramatic return “poorly conceived for a squad dominated by older war veterans already well acquainted with martinet types.”15

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15 Riley, *The Road to Number One*, 182.
Killinger did everything that was asked of him during the weeks leading up to the opening game. He stunned Harlow with his aptitude of the game. He held his own against the much acclaimed war veterans. To his chagrin, he was left out of the starting lineup when Penn State faced off against Gettysburg on October 4. Haines and Clarence Beck started at halfback. Robb got the start at quarterback over Way, who never truly recovered from a broken hand attained while playing baseball a few years earlier and consequently had difficulty handling the ball from that position. And Hess was named fullback.

Tied 0-0 at intermission in a day the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* described as “too hot for football,” Bezdek made half time adjustments that resulted in thirty-three unanswered points. He substituted Way for Beck, and inserted Killinger in at quarterback for Robb.¹⁶ The adjustments suddenly “speeded up the Penn State attack.” After Bob Higgins scooped up a fumble and ran it twenty-five yards for a touchdown to put Penn State on the board in the third quarter, the elusive Way ran for gains of twenty-three and thirty yards on the next possession, placing the ball at Gettysburg’s 2-yard line. Hinkey Haines scored on a goal line plunge. Haines scored again in the fourth quarter, as did Way and Higgins. Penn State won by a misleading margin, 33-0. Very late in the game, Haines

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¹⁶ In an article titled “Penn State Footballers Triumph 33-0” on October 5, 1919, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* wrongly reported Buck Williams was substituted into the game for Henry Robb. Williams had a broken hand and accordingly did not dress for the game. He did not play in any game until November 8 against Lehigh. In previous articles, the *Post Gazette* mistook Killinger for Williams.
was hurt. The Gazette claimed he sustained “general bruises.” The injury must have been severe; his play was very limited the remainder of the season.

The injury to Haines meant one of the halfback positions was open for the taking. Killinger worked hard during the week leading up to Penn State’s next game. One sportswriter called Killy “the scrappiest man on the squad” after watching him race through drills that week. Bezdek rewarded him for his diligence by naming him the starter at right halfback against Bucknell. Way became the quarterback, while Robb played left halfback and Hess started at fullback.

The Blue and White came in as a slight favorite, but Bucknell played a clean game in an otherwise soggy environment that, as the Pittsburgh Daily Post illustrated, “was better fitted for water polo than for football.” Penn State struck first in the second period when Larry Conover, an offensive tackled turned place kicker, nailed a field goal for the early lead. Later that quarter Way broke a 50-yard run to Bucknell’s 5-yard line. Bucknell’s defense held Penn State on downs, but then shanked a punt to the 12-yard line on their first play. Way scored three plays later. Penn State held a 9-0 lead at half time after Conover missed the extra point. Both teams were kept scoreless in the second half that, according to the Daily Post, featured a punting duel as a downpour turned New Beaver Field into a “sea of mud.” The nine-point victory was hard fought. Killinger was taken out of the game before he could do anything memorable, and his name did not appear in any of the post game commentary.

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One week later, sportswriters along the East Coast plugged Penn State’s major showdown against Dartmouth as the nation’s top contest. The game was hardly a disappointment to the 4,500 fans that showed up at Hanover ballpark. It featured an up-tempo pace by each team. Each of Penn State’s touchdowns—both by Charlie Way—were scored in unusual fashion. Way, who was then called “Rabbit” or “Pie” by his teammates, scored the first on an 85-yard kick-off return and the other was a fumble that he scooped up and took to pay dirt. Penn State led in the first half before Dartmouth’s best player, Jim Robertson, scored two touchdowns to tie the game at half time. In the third quarter, the Green and White’s Pat Holbrook scored the go-ahead touchdown. The final was 19-13 in Dartmouth’s favor. Killinger saw some action when he was substituted in for Harry Robb. There is no indication that he played any role in an unsuccessful Penn State rally.

The loss to Dartmouth exposed the copious level of dissension that permeated the team. Ever since Bezdek’s first practice with the team, the older war veterans never got over their first unfavorable impression of their coach. The veterans likewise loathed the younger players. Many of the war veterans were more loyal to Coach Harlow—their coach before the war—, which made them less inclined to respond to the discipline of Bezdek’s system. Some of the younger players, like Killinger, found themselves in backup roles, and were accordingly frustrated about playing time. It was clear within the group that the quarreling seriously impeded the talent of Penn State’s individuals, a translucent point made when considering they were shut out for a half against non-major college Gettysburg, defeated a mediocre Bucknell team by just nine points, and the loss

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21 Riley, The Road to Number One, 182.
to Dartmouth. In an odd way, Bezdek and Harlow were representative of the team’s contrasting demographic. Harlow, like all war veterans currently wearing the blue and white, had voluntarily given up his job to serve his country. The battle-hardened war veterans begrudged Bezdek and the others, who, in contrast, made fewer sacrifices as they remained on the home front during the final months of the war.

“Knowing Bezdek after a football and basketball season,” Killinger said diagnostically of the fragmented team chemistry, “I could feel an explosion coming.” At midweek in preparation for Ursinus, Bezdek called the varsity squad together before practice for a meeting. Killinger recalled that Bezdek, “gave each member of the squad an opportunity to express his true feelings without fear of any retaliation.” Bezdek said to the team: “Now you fellows decide which eleven of you are to compose the team. It makes no difference to me how you choose them. If you want to have a free-for-all and the eleven survivors be the chosen ones, have a free-for-all. Now as to system. I understand that there is objection to my system of play. All I have to say is, choose your own system. It makes no difference to me which one you choose. I can coach any of them.” Bezdek then left the room to let the players have it out.

Team captain Bob Higgins insisted that two teams be created, one pro-Harlow and the other pro-Bezdek, not to choose a style of play, but to find a permanent starting lineup for the remainder of the season. In jest, Killinger referred to the two teams as “good guys” and “bad guys.” He admitted, “The two teams played a hard-fought and viscous game with the bad guys winning by one T.D.” When the scrap ended, a point had been made; and the mutiny was diverted. Each player agreed thereafter on doing things

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Bezdek’s way. “It came forth as a body, united of purpose and pro-Bezdek to the core,” reported the *Indianapolis Star.*

The next time Penn State took the field, on October 25, they went on to roll their opponent, Ursinus College, 48-7. Despite a comfortable lead from the start, Bezdek never inserted Killinger into the game. Bezdek used thirty-three total players by substituting three different elevens. A frustrated Killinger just stood and watched. Ursinus’s only score came at the end of the game when an opposing player scooped up a bad center snap that got past the third string back and went eighty yards for a touchdown. To rub salt in the wound, the *Harrisburg Evening News* boasted about a seasonal record accomplished by the “flashy halfback” Charlie Way, who returned a kickoff for a touchdown for the second consecutive week. “Way is a hero in the minds of the Penn State student body,” the broadsheet expounded. “Way does not weigh more than 152 pounds, but is a speed marvel.”

On November 1, Bezdek took twenty players on the road trip to Philadelphia to face off against the University of Pennsylvania’s football machine that had given up only one touchdown all season and had outscored its opponents 237-7. Because of the loss to Dartmouth, the game against Penn, then considered the best team along the eastern seaboard, was a must win for Penn State to stay in a position to claim the championship of the East. For Killinger, the opportunity to play on Penn’s Franklin Field was important to him; it was a chance to fulfill his childhood dream. He went through the week with a

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better attitude and was included on the travel roster as a substitute. His work ethic that week must have been apparent because the day before the game Bezdek told reporters: “There’s not a boy on my team who won’t fight from the beginning to the end.”

Almost 20,000 fans sat in an incessant drizzle to watch Bezdek’s unit shock Penn, 10-0. The conditions should have neutralized Penn State’s speed while favoring the Quakers, who possessed a size advantage over the Blue and White. Yet one critical mistake gave the visitors the confidence it needed to hold on for a victory. In the second quarter, Penn’s Bots Brunner fumbled the ball at his own 2-yard line. With short field position, Henry Robb was able to power his way in for a touchdown. A 25-yard field goal in the fourth quarter by Larry Conover iced the game for Penn State. When the final whistle blew, the visiting student body rushed Franklin Field like “wild men,” reported the Post Gazette. Killinger, who substituted into the game to give Charlie Way a rest in the third period, was pleased to join in on the celebration.

After the game, Lou Little, an offensive tackle for Penn, regretfully admitted, “We didn’t think much of Penn State. We hadn’t lost a game. We were conquering heroes.” He added, “We thought all we had to do was blow up the football and go out and run over those birds. As a matter of fact, they had a whale of a team. So there we were, all swelled up like poisoned pups, fit to be killed—and they killed us.”

Penn State rolled Lehigh and Cornell in the next two games with scores of 20-7 and 20-0, respectively. Killinger entered the Lehigh game in the first quarter for Hinkey

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27 “Penn State Defeats Pennsylvania, 10 to 0,” Pittsburgh Gazette Times, November 2, 1919, 2; “Penn State Team Outclasses Penn,” Washington Times, November 2, 1919, 22.
Haines, who was carried off the field after having his bell rung, but did not see the field against Cornell.29

The win streak and upcoming annual clash at Forbes Field against Pop Warner’s undefeated Pittsburgh outfit had all of State College abuzz. Penn State had lost to Pitt in six successive Thanksgiving Day contests. But this year, Penn State turned out its best performance all season. While outgaining the host 372 yards to 81 yards, Penn State held Pitt to just four first downs, only one of which was given up before the final period. Using fancy forward passes on offense while packing the run defense tight to the line of scrimmage to shut down Pitt’s All-American Tom Davies, who shredded Penn State’s defense for over a hundred total yards and a score a year earlier, Bezdek’s team shut out Warner’s unit 20-0. The game’s highlight was a trick play in the first quarter when Penn State faked a punt out of its own end zone, which drew ten Pitt players up on the line to rush the punter, leaving space for team captain Bob Higgins to swing open in the center of the field to receive the forward pass from teammate William Hess. With the advice of assistant coach Dick Harlow, who was responsible for scouting Pitt during the preceding weeks, “The team practiced this play the entire week before the Pitt game,” Killinger recalled years later. He added, “Hess was not a very accurate passer and had trouble throwing the ball to Higgins.” But when Penn State stopped Pitt inside its own 5-yard line, quarterback Harry Robb signaled his unit into punt formation on an early down. The formation drew ten Pitt players up to the line of scrimmage with center Herb Stein,

usually a safety on punt return plays, eager to rush the punt. After catching the snap in his end zone, Hess rolled a few steps to his right then heaved the heavy, wet and muddy ball toward Higgins, who made the catch in stride. “Charley Way, because he was our fastest runner,” Killinger described, “was selected to go downfield and block the Pitt safety.” Higgins then motored the length of the field for a 95-yard touchdown. The play, officially credited in *Spalding Guide of 1920*, has stood as Penn State’s longest passing touchdown in its history. Penn State later scored on a 3-yard plunge by Hess in the second period and 47-yard run by Way in the third.

Despite the margin of victory, Killinger did not play in the game. He needed just one more quarter to qualify for a varsity letter. While stunned that his beloved coach denied him that opportunity, Killinger never expressed disappointment toward Bezdek.

The season’s success, especially victories over Penn and Pittsburgh, won Bezdek favor in the eyes of the trustees. At season’s end, he was granted a new contract that included a three-year extension and an increased salary of $7,500 for coaching and $4,500 for his services as physical education director.

**Defining A Champion**

Sportswriters were divided over how good Penn State was in 1919. Neither the Associated Press nor College Coaches Polls existed. Moreover, the only bowl game played at the time was the Rose Bowl. Consequently, there were no post-season

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31 Riley, *The Road to Number One*, 185-86.
32 Ibid, 182.
33 Ibid, 187.
opportunities for Penn State to prove itself among the best in the country against formidable competition. Usually sportswriters ranked teams geographically, then accordingly issued mythical titles. Much of the talk nationally was about Notre Dame who had gone 9-0 and Illinois who finished 6-1 in a difficult Midwest schedule. The loss to Dartmouth, a worthy opponent that finished the year 6-1-1 and ranked seventh in the country at the time they played, plus Penn State’s inability to run up the score on its opponents presented problems for sportswriters to name them the nation’s top ranked team. Penn State’s highest output that season was the 48 points scored against an unmentionable Ursinus team. Against ranked opponents, Penn State scored no more than twenty points, which they did against both Pittsburgh and Cornell. Bezdek’s offense scored 173 total points. In contrast to the offense, the Blue and White defense pitched five shutouts, while giving up a total of thirty-three points in eight games.

There was a consensus among eastern sportswriters claiming that Penn State did have the most difficult schedule among Eastern teams. Because of that, Penn State was named the hypothetical champion of the East ahead of Syracuse, Colgate, Dartmouth, Pittsburgh, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Harvard. Robert Maxwell of the Philadelphia Evening Ledger ranked Penn State first in the country, declaring that although it was beaten by Dartmouth early in the season, “the big green team would not now have a chance.” Maxwell added that Penn State “looked to be the best at the end of the season.” He remarked further, “I believe State could have beaten any team in the country.” Jim Isaminger of the Philadelphia North American, argued, “If Penn State has the championship of the Keystone State clinched, it also has a peep-in on the national title.” The Pittsburgh Gazette Times’ Harry Keck wrote, “The Pitt game was a triumph,
indeed. It wiped out the stigma of a seemingly endless chain of setbacks at the hands of the Panthers and it carried with it the collegiate championship of the State of Pennsylvania and rounded out a record that compared favorably with, if it doesn’t overshadow that of all other contenders for the Eastern championship.”

A week after the Pitt game, Coach Bezdek issued out varsity letters to just twelve players. Killinger was not one of them. He recalled missing out on the letter (which by graduation would have earned him four varsity football letters and ten overall) “by not playing in two full quarters of that football season.” He did receive a miniature gold football as a minor award along with everybody on the roster. Bezdek explained why he was so selective in issuing varsity letters: “from the Penn game on, the coaches stood pat on their first team and only made changes in case of injuries.” Killinger, consequently, after the inter-squad skirmish following the Dartmouth loss, hardly saw the field during the second half of the season.

Killinger took it well, nonetheless. He was all too excited for the 1920 season. Why would he not be? Penn State was riding a five-game win-streak and just four lettermen would to be lost to graduation.

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34 “Rank Penn State As East’s Leading Team,” Altoona Tribune, December 15, 1919, 10; “Penn State is Picked as Best,” New Castle Herald, December 19, 1919, 18; “Wonderful Record Made by Penn State Eleven,” Penn State Collegian, December 17, 1919. 1.
35 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
CHAPTER 9:
HAROLD LAMB MOMENTS

The Armory at State College was an uninviting gymnasium saturated with the sweat of boxers, wrestlers, and basketball players. It was used as the indoor facility for baseball in the early spring. Students often gathered there to play various intramural sports in the evenings. Sometimes Bezdek ordered his physical education professors to hold classes there.

Glenn Killinger was all too familiar with the Armory. Half of his spring semesters were spent there playing basketball and fitting in early baseball training. It might be odd to think that basketball and baseball at Penn State were kinder to Killinger than football was. There is no denying that he made quite a name for himself in each sport by the end of his sophomore year.

Practices for the 1920 basketball season began immediately following the Thanksgiving Day football game against Pittsburgh. After a two-year absence, Coach Burke “Dutch” Hermann assumed his job as boss of the Penn State five. Over seventy candidates tried out. Of that number just eight would be retained for the varsity.

All eight players were good enough to start for almost any team in the country. Some of them were returning lettermen, like Nathaniel Replogle at center; Bill Mullen, Frank Wolfe, and Lloyd Wilson splitting time at the forward positions; Glenn Killinger became the team’s right guard. Henry “Hinkey” Haines made the team as the left guard. Two war veterans made the team, Francis Young and John Robert Hunter. Hermann watched his varsity unit run through drills and there was little to scrutinize. His first impression of his new team made his heart beat faster.
As Hermann got to know his players, he found he had something in common with them: diligence. Hermann bristled with fresh theories, and his players were open to the most extreme of them. Best of all, Hermann was pleased to discover they were fast and observant learners. No sooner would he draw something on the blackboard than the players made his chalk marks come alive on the court. Penn State lore suggests Hermann was the creator of the five-man-weave, an offensive system whereby the players passed the ball around and continuously cut through the center of the key. As Killinger once remembered his coach’s pointers, “Short, snappy passes are the rule with every man moving at all times.”1 The scheme demanded that the man with the ball look for the teammate cutting under the basket first. Recognizing that Hermann’s system was still in a primitive stage, which eventually allowed future generations to perfect the weave, Killinger admitted, “Had we really developed the weave, we would have blown the opposition right out of the Armory.”2

The duo of Hinkey Haines and Killinger had much to do with the team’s ability to grasps new plays and defensive adjustments. The two shared a brilliant understanding of the game, combined with their speed on the defensive end, it was incredibly difficult for opponents to score from the backcourt.

After spending the past year recuperating from shellshock, Hermann felt at ease in his role as coach. He was known for enjoying a whisky every evening after practice. His talented 1920 team gave him fewer reasons to consume the spirits. Incidentally, the habit of drinking a glass of liquor was no longer an option for the weary coach. Something

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1 W. Glenn Killinger, *GW’s PSU Playbook and Notes*, 1921 (Unpublished).
disenchanting materialized on the eve of Penn State’s first game of the season. The Eighteenth Amendment banning the manufacture, sale and transportation of intoxicating beverages had gone into effect. Debated for decades as a measure to reduce crime, corruption, gambling, and to suppress immoral houses of debauchery while promoting wholesome recreation and sports, such as clean motion pictures, baseball and football, the elimination of saloons as the medium to consume alcohol picked up heavy steam during the war as the need for reserved supplies of grain for food production trumped traditional social behaviors. In February 1919, Pennsylvania became the forty-fifth state to ratify the Eighteenth Amendment. One year later, at midnight on January 17, 1920, the Volstead Act, establishing prohibition as the official law of the land, overrode President Wilson’s veto of the amendment. Suddenly, the United States became a dry country.

The reaction to prohibition was paradoxically satisfying and venomous. The earliest reports coming from prohibition law enforcement officials were upbeat and triumphant. On January 28, the Civil Service Commissioner in Chicago rejoiced in the fact that, for the first time in twenty years, because of prohibition the police trial board docket did not contain a single case.3 In Philadelphia, a father and son were arrested for operating an illegal still that was manufacturing whisky and whisky-flavored cigars.4 Near State College, one police officer was fired from the service when caught consuming the demon rum at a New Castle speakeasy while on duty. However, prohibition’s opponents now went ardently to work sketching out their views of the law in ways that

insisted the Eighteenth Amendment was a disgrace on traditional American values. One cartoon appeared in the *Harrisburg Telegraph* presenting the lifeless body of British folksong character John Barleycorn drugged through the marsh of the River Styx by ferryman Charon.\(^5\) The entire notion of eradicating alcohol from society was mocked in silent film as moviegoers were entertained by the re-release of the 1919 Mack Sennett comedy *The Speakeasy* about a hotel proprietor who tries to operate a speakeasy in the cellar of his boarding house.

Prohibition had little bearing on Hermann’s ability to coach his team. Meanwhile, neither Glenn Killinger nor his teammates went on record about how the new constitutional measure impacted their lives at college. They were a focused bunch that devoured every drill that Hermann made them do. It must have worked. Penn State opened the season impressively with six straight victories; then after one setback, finished the season with six consecutive wins.

The Blue and White’s high scoring offense embarrassed its opponents, who did not take it well. Among the lopsided outcomes were victories over Juniata 56-18, Dickinson 62-18, Washington and Jefferson 43-25, Lebanon Valley College (Hinkey Haines’s old team) 69-10, and George Washington 60-6.\(^6\) Penn State defeated Pittsburgh twice, Lafayette, an Alumni team that counted on the record, and Lehigh. They squeaked out victories over West Virginia by seven points and Swarthmore by two. In a playbook he kept after his senior season, Killinger explained Coach Hermann’s philosophy on beating an opponent: “Go hard for [the] first 10 minutes and then take time out if

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necessary and then go hard for 5 minutes and then rest up a minute and go hard [the] rest of [the] half. Take everything out of the [opposing] team at [the] start!7

That attitude helped Penn State achieve a 12-1 season, their only defeat coming to the best team in the country, the University of Pennsylvania, 23-16. Despite the loss, Killinger and Haines may have put forth their best defensive effort against the much bigger Quaker team led by the Ivy League’s leading scorer Lou Martin. The guards were forced to shoot from the middle of the floor all game. Killy and Hinkey made it impossible for Penn’s guards to get close enough to take shots from under the basket.8

At season’s end, the Blue and White scored 515 total points, an average of forty-three points a game. They gave up just 232 points, an average of nineteen points a game. Three times they scored more than sixty points, and once they held an opponent to single digits.9 Those were astonishing numbers for the era.

Penn State was rewarded with a number four national ranking and a second place finish behind Pennsylvania among teams in the East. In addition, the team elected Killinger captain of the 1921 squad. The Harrisburg Telegraph wallowed: “W. Glenn Killinger, of this city, star guard for past two seasons, was yesterday elected captain of the Penn State basketball team for next year.”

“He is an all around athlete,” the hometown newspaper said unrelentingly.10

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7 W. Glenn Killinger, GW’s PSU Playbook and Notes, 1921 (Unpublished).
Penn State’s victory over Lehigh on March 12 ended its basketball season. The following day, Killinger was back in the Armory getting ready to play baseball as inclement weather prevented outdoor work. He was one of seven lettermen returning to the lineup, which was needed because Athletic Director Hugo Bezdek manufactured “one of the hardest schedules ever arranged for a Penn State Nine,” as he put it, which included extensive trips North, South, East, and West.\footnote{Pennsylvania State University. \textit{La Vie, 1922} (University Park: Penn State University, 1922), 386-91.}

To Killinger’s surprise, Bezdek announced to the players that he resigned his job managing the Pittsburgh Pirates so he could coach the Blue and White full time.\footnote{“Penn State Coach Rounds Up Players,” \textit{New Castle News}, March 12, 1920.} Each day, Bezdek ordered bunting and base running drills; and tests of rundowns between first and second, and second and third. These drills were repeated daily. The drills and other activities of the team seemed to bore the players, but Bezdek was unrelenting in his approach. He had talent that he did not want to go to waste for lack of fundamentals.

Perhaps the most talented among the group was Bezdek’s new left fielder, Hinkey Haines. Truth be told, many of the team members were all too familiar with Haines as a halfback on the football team and a guard on the basketball team. Haines was already a decorated right-handed hitter, and he continued to live up to the celebrity against the best baseball talent in the country. During a game against West Point, Haines climbed the fence, robbing a homerun among the branches of a tree. He was a much better outfielder than hitter in 1920, but was kept fifth in the lineup all season and led the team in stolen bases.\footnote{Pennsylvania State University. \textit{La Vie, 1922} (University Park: Penn State University, 1922), 386-91.}
Killinger, meanwhile, ended up giving his best performance yet, making him into one of college baseball’s preeminent infielders by season’s end. Remarkably, Killy missed the season opening road trip through the South. Instead, he joined his meteorology class on a weeklong field trip through Eastern Pennsylvania. During the time away, Penn State had games against Yale and Catholic Universities cancelled because of rain. The Blue and White lost to Navy, but defeated Delaware and Maryland. Killinger returned to third base on April 14 and contributed in a 14-5 victory over Michigan played in State College.\(^\text{14}\)

In his second game, Killy had three hits and two runs, including a homerun that lifted Penn State over Swarthmore, 8-4. Two games later, Killy blasted a two-run homerun to deep left in the eighth inning to help Penn State defeat Fordham in a contest played in New York City.\(^\text{15}\)

Throughout his career, Killinger was known more as an infielder than a hitter. The *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* called him the “guardian of the Keystone” from his third base position.\(^\text{16}\) Bezdek said Killy was an excellent third baseman, but had the ability to “play anywhere, and play well.” The coach considered his protégé “one of those natural freaks.” And he hailed Killinger for his “particularly strong and accurate throwing arm.”\(^\text{17}\) As it turned out, Killy was as remarkable a right-handed hitter as he was a fielder in 1920 by batting .301 in fifteen games. Bezdek once praised Killinger’s ability to bat

\(^{16}\)*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. June 10, 1920.
well under pressure: “He hits his best in the pinches and usually his pinch punches are long swats.”

Killinger and his team were nearly invincible in 1920, scoring a total of 167 runs against just sixty-seven. “It was a team with a great attitude and team morale,” Killinger noted in his memoir. Owing to Bezdek’s professional style of managing, Killinger said, “we played like major leaguers.” The Blue and White finished 18-3, with signature wins over Yale, Princeton, Pitt, Syracuse, and Colgate. Included in the list of those who fell prey to Penn State was the University of California. Although no official rankings were kept for intercollegiate baseball during this era, sportswriters considered California, 22-9-1, the best team in the West, while Bezdek’s Blue and White was called by many the best in the East. Bezdek used his West Coast connections to arrange the post-season coastal challenge considered by writers in the East as the national title game.

The contest was scheduled the same day as Penn State’s commencement ceremony, which brought in nearly 10,000 fans to State College for the game. Many of the spectators drove their cars onto the back end of New Beaver Field, just beyond the outfield fence, and ruined the grass. They watched as Penn State pulled out a 6-3 victory. Killinger managed to get a single and score a run. The most impressive moment of the game came from Killinger on the defensive side when he snagged a hard hit ball that screamed down the third base foul line with his bare hand and threw a strike to first base to complete the put out. The victory capped an eleven-game win streak for Penn State and awarded them the mythical national championship.

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18 Ibid, 13.
19 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
The combination of Killinger and Haines began to capture the public imagination as the dominant duo of their era. They were each twenty-one years of age with another year together. It was common back then, as it is in the early twenty-first century, to see two players on the same team dominate a sport, but Killy and Hinkey marveled on the same playing surfaces in three sports: football, basketball, and baseball. The sports seasons of 1920 would become their gateway to immortality. They seemed to be equal in each sport; hitting and fielding in baseball; passing and running in football; shooting and defending in basketball. Lively debates began in State College, Pittsburgh, and among East Coast sportswriters about who was a better leader, which man was more reliable in the clutch, about what sport each should concentrate on. Their bond grew so close that Killinger admitted that the two “became inseparable as friends.”

That summer, he decided to spend a few evenings playing with Haines in a twilight baseball league in Haines’s hometown in Red Lion, Pennsylvania.

Baseball had become a vital part of Glenn Killinger’s life in 1920. So much so, that he made it his primary sport, vaulting the hardball ahead of football and basketball. He utilized another summer both developing his skills while exposing himself to major league scouts in the state of Pennsylvania. In addition to the three or four nights he played with Hinkey Haines in the Red Lion Twilight League, Killinger split time with the Rosewood Athletic Club and a new semiprofessional team from Newport, Pennsylvania of the Dauphin County-Perry County League.

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21 Ibid, unmarked page.
When he arrived home for summer break in June, Killinger spent the month playing for Newport. His time with the semiprofessional team was hardly newsworthy, but his motives were centered on playing against the best that Pennsylvania had to offer. His heart was really with his hometown’s Rosewood team. So in July, Killinger joined his friends in Harrisburg.

Rosewood was 11-7 and in second place of the Allison Hill League when Killinger entered the lineup on July 9. When the regular season finished in late August, Rosewood improved to 19-10, which was good enough to clinch the Allison Hill League pennant. During that span, hitting is where Killinger made his mark. He showed explosive power belting a grand slam in a game against Reading on July 13. He had more hits and runs in the eleven games he played in than any member of Rosewood.

A best of seven city championship series was arranged between Rosewood and the West End Athletic Club of the Harrisburg League. Games were to be played on Harrisburg’s Island Park, the Allison Hill ballpark on Seventeenth and Chestnut streets, and at West End’s diamond on Fourth and Seneca streets. The college star’s clutch hitting and nearly flawless fielding helped his team win the title while building his reputation. Rosewood was able to take down West End in five games. In the first game, a 6-2 victory, Glenn hit 2-for-2, scored once, put three out and assisted eight times from his shortstop position. After losing game two, 9-2, Rosewood rebounded with three consecutive victories. Glenn Killinger, the local Telegraph reported, “was shooting them
to first in great fashion.” Moreover, Killy emerged as Rosewood’s most consistent batter, hitting two triples and scoring four times in the final three games.

Killinger’s devotion to the various summer legion and semiprofessional teams was in good order. Major league scouts were busy tracking his abilities. Coach Bezdek had something to do with that, but it hardly served as an acceptable excuse for Killinger to miss the opening of the 1920 football season.

Though Hugo Bezdek could be a sentimental sort, he was first and foremost an obsessive winner. He pushed his players hard to achieve something greater than their best effort. The returning war veterans seemingly ceased their rebellious ways as Bezdek unveiled a new seven-days-a-week training program that included long hikes on Mount Nittany and extra scrimmages on Sundays for those who hadn’t played in varsity games. Loyalty was loyalty, but it only extended so far. As much as Bezdek planned to give Killinger all the opportunity in the world to earn a starting position in Penn State’s backfield, the fact that the Harrisburg lad arrived a week late to training camp and missed the first inter-squad scrimmage spoiled that chance.

Equally detrimental to Killinger’s opportunity to win a starting position was the unseasonable weather that intensified his hay fever symptoms, an affliction that plagued him since childhood. “I was suffering from my usual pollen fever that caused me to sneeze repeatedly and my eyes to water profusely,” Killinger said unapologetically.

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Feeling miserable, in fact, it was “the worst” case of hay fever he ever had, he recalled, “that I almost gave up football.”²⁵ His practice habits accordingly worsened, and he suffered because of it. That’s why, in late September 1920, Glenn had to accept that Buck Williams won the starting position at quarterback, and Hinkey Haines, Charlie Way, George Snell, Joe Lightner, and William Hess were already duking it out for the three remaining backfield positions.²⁶

After regaining his full strength by the second week of preseason camp, Killinger became as determined a player as most Penn Staters had ever seen. Much of his free time was spent at New Beaver Field getting in extra running until he could barely breathe. The team trainer Bill Martin put the whole team on a strict diet; “no more pie, candy or smokes” was the order.²⁷ Killy deliberately spent extra time on the tackling dummy and kicking punts. He knew there would be no shot to get on the field if he failed at either task. At the end of camp, Killinger “has broken into the second team backfield,” reported a correspondent for the Harrisburg Telegraph. It appeared that Bezdek planned to use him “as understudy to Buck Williams, at quarterback.”²⁸

By the time Penn State kicked off its 1920 season with a September 26 visit from Muhlenberg College, Killinger still found himself in standby. In the lead up to the opener, his hard-to-please coach called him the team’s “pinch hitter.” He could effectively play any position in the backfield, Bezdek said. “He is a scrappy player,”

²⁵ Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
wrote the *Telegraph*, “Bezdek considers him especially valuable to send in in a pinch.”

Despite the approbation, Killy unhappily resumed his role of supporter from the sideline as he was forced to watch the petite sensation and the college’s long jump record-holder Charlie “Rabbit” Way run rings around the visitors’ defense. Way scored twice on runs of seventy-two yards and twenty yards, respectively. Meanwhile, Williams played a solid game at quarterback; and Hinkey Haines and Joe Lightner were suitable additions at each halfback position in Bezdek’s single-wing offense. Bezdek inserted Killinger into the game at quarterback in the second half, but the contest was virtually over and uncompetitive at that point. Muhlenberg’s only score came on a scooped fumble returned for a touchdown. Penn State won, 27-7.

Afterward, Bezdek told his team he was far from satisfied, claiming ineptness on the offensive and defensive lines and a lack of team play. He told his team that he will “make several shifts in his varsity lineup” before the next game against Gettysburg. A couple of days later at practice, Killinger was leading the first-string offense. One *New York Times* reporter who observed the workout said Killy looked particularly impressive running with the ball. “When he tucks the pigskin under his arm he is even superior to Buck Williams,” wrote the nationally syndicated daily. Identifying one shortfall, the

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Times wrote, “he is far from the being the field general that the Monessen boy [Williams] is.”

Strangely, Killinger did not see a second in the contest against Gettysburg, which was a game Penn State eked out with a feeble offensive performance, 13-0. With a major showdown against Dartmouth a week away, the team that handed Penn State its only defeat in 1919, the narrow margin of victory caused reasonable concern among the Blue and White contingent.

Such was the draw of Glenn Killinger. The seesaw experience playing for Bezdek was reaching its tipping point. For years he was given opportunities at practice, but seldom had those chances morphed into playing time. Years later Killinger admitted that he always felt he was a better quarterback than Buck Williams. His performances, however, were not good enough for his ultra-demanding coach. When Killinger was coaching at West Chester State Teachers’ College in the decades after World War II, he applauded the coaching tactic. Bezdek used insistent, tough-love, methods to drain every iota of talent out of his already remarkable athletes. Killinger confessed that was what Bezdek did to him at Penn State. He later acknowledged his refusal to respond to the tactic until after that Gettysburg game in 1920. “Following that second game,” Killy would say forty-six years later, “I began to put forth more and more effort each day during practice.” From that day forward, Killinger vowed to invest every step and breath into his practice habits. His new attitude won him the starting position in Penn State’s first big contest of the year.

33 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 28-30.
Mascot and Homecoming Culture

The Penn State-Dartmouth matchup was portrayed as college football’s most important game of the young season. Dartmouth arrived in State College with the edge. The Green and White returned most if its 1919 team, significantly outweighed Penn State’s interior linemen, and was rated among the top teams in the East. The *Pittsburgh Daily Post* called it, “One of the greatest football tilts ever seen on new Beaver field.”

In addition, it was Penn State’s first ever alumni homecoming celebration. Advance tickets sold at one dollar and fifty cents for general admission indicated that a record-breaking crowd was to be on hand for the game. New bleachers were rushed to completion to accommodate 10,000 fans. Room was made available for several thousand more. And a parking lot for 5,000 automobiles was created.

To the enjoyment of the home crowd, one of the prime attractions was the presence of Penn State’s new mascot. Historian and former co-editor of *Sports and Society* Series of the University of Illinois Press, Benjamin G. Rader, suggests, “Mascots and nicknames offered even more room for the imagination.” For those schools that used a nickname rather than be labeled by school colors often evoked humor. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Washington was known as the Shoo Flies and later Sun Dodgers; Nebraska was the Bugeaters before it became the Cornhuskers; Oregon was known as the Webfoots long before the Ducks; Yale’s students named their teams “the Elis” after the institution’s founder, Elihu Yale.

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The mascot-naming frenzy hit the student body at Penn State in a similar way it had most colleges and universities across the country. It was sports-driven. Since 1904, students and alumni espoused the nickname “Nittany Lions” after a student-editor of a campus satirical magazine and infelder on the baseball team, Harrison Dennington “Joe” Mason Jr. led a campaign to adopt the mascot. Mason’s mascot campaign permeated throughout Penn State’s campus. In 1907, students convinced the trustees to authorize a senior honor’s fraternity called the Lion’s Paw (which Killinger eventually became a member). One year later, an unbinding vote of the student body reaffirmed the support for making the Nittany Lion the college’s mascot. Ever since, Penn State students called their sports teams by the nickname, and the lion started to appear in campus publications.

A lion resembling an African breed—not a mountain lion—appeared in La Vie, the college’s yearbook, for the first time in 1908. And yet, for more than a decade thereafter, there was hardly a newspaper, rival school, or organization that acknowledged the nickname. While most in the media still called Penn State the “Blue and White,” there were just a few newspapers that accepted the Nittany Lion as Penn State’s handle. One of these was the Pittsburgh Daily Post, which in 1908 became the first newspaper to call Penn State the “Nittany Mountain Lions” in an article about the baseball team’s visit to Pittsburgh.36 The next media references to Penn State as some variation of the Nittany Lions appeared during the 1911 football season, once in the Washington Times and another in the Pittsburgh Daily Post, in October and November, respectively.37 The two newspapers called Penn State the “Mt. Nittany Lions.” At the start of the 1920 season,

36 “State’s Alumni to Turn Out,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, May 2, 1908, 8.
finally, the *Daily Post* and its sister publication, the *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, embraced Penn State’s new nickname. This was likely caused by the first-ever appearance of a student dressed in a lion costume at Penn State’s football games.

In 1919, at Penn State’s home opener against Gettysburg, a new fight song written by alumnus Jimmy Leyden, who had once set several half-mile records running track at the college, former member of the glee club, and veteran of the Great War, titled “The Nittany Lion” was sung for the first time by the student body. The song weighed Penn State’s Nittany Lion against colleges with already established nicknames in this early period of intercollegiate student-body squabbling: there was Indiana’s Hoosier, Ohio State’s Buckeye, Michigan’s Wolverine, Princeton’s Tiger, and the biggest rival of them all, Pittsburgh’s Panther.

Like most colleges in the 1920s, Penn State’s cheer group normally consisted of one to five male cheerleaders. That changed when an Industrial Chemistry major and thespian from nearby Howard, Pennsylvania named Richard Holmes Hoffman dressed up in a lion costume. The annals of Penn State regrettably fails to provide the date of Hoffman’s first game as the mascot, but a photograph of Coach Bezdek standing proudly

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with Hoffman, down on all fours, as the Nittany Lion—actually an African lion, not the American mountain lion that is now used by the University—during homecoming weekend is an indication that Penn State’s new nickname was growing in popularity in 1920.\textsuperscript{40} Moreover, during one of the practices leading up to the Dartmouth game, the team posed for a picture that was used as a promotion for the college’s first ever homecoming game. Bezdek and fourteen of his players straddled a sideline bench and

\textsuperscript{40} Pennsylvania lore suggests that the word “Nittany” originates from the earliest days of the universe, when, according to Jake Faddy, a Seneca tribesman and one of the last Native Americans to wander the Juniata Valley, a war erupted between Southern tribes and Northern tribes for possession of the region. Chun-Eh-Hoe, chief of a Northern tribe, and his warriors were driven into the vicinity of present-day State College. Chun-Eh-Hoe died, and his daughter Nita-Nee became the tribal leader. She led her army to victory over the Southern tribes. Princess Nita-Nee lived to be 100 years old. When she died, she was buried beneath a mound of cedar branches. On the night of her burial, a storm blanketed the valley. When the sky cleared, there was a great mountain in what was once a valley. The people called it Mount Nittany. Ever since Penn State was founded as the Farmer’s High School in 1855, Mount Nittany has casted its shadow over campus activities. It was the school’s symbolic image. In 1907, Harrison Dennington “Joe” Mason Jr. wrote: “Every college the world over of any consequence has a college emblem of some kind—all but the Pennsylvania State College . . . Why not select for ours the king of beasts—the Lion!!” In several accounts, most notably The Nittany Lion coauthored by Jackie Esposito and Steven Herb, Joe Mason is generally credited with making the Nittany Lion Penn State’s mascot. Mason was a freshman third baseman at Penn State when on April 20, 1904 he and his teammates were led around Princeton’s campus before their afternoon game against the Tigers. The tour ended at the Ivy League school’s Bengal tiger where the guide promised a Penn State defeat. Mason, a capricious individual who would later write for the college’s yearbook and become his class’s historian, fired back, “Well, up at Penn State we have Mount Nittany right on our campus, where rules the Nittany Mountain Lion, who has never been beaten in a fair fight.” Penn State’s baseball team defeated Princeton 8 to 1 that afternoon. Years later, during Dick Hoffman’s sophomore year at Penn State, he secured a role as the lion for the Penn State Players theatrical group in George Bernard Shaw’s Androcles and the Lion. It is believed that his attire for Androcles became the original costume that he wore as the mascot. In an interview he gave forty years after he graduated, Hoffman remembered a little about becoming the Nittany Lion. He recalled it was “after World War I ended . . . When all those 20-plus-year old brutes came back from France and back to college, Well, I decided athletics were not particularly down my alley. They were big and tough, and that’s why I went out for Penn State Players. It seemed like dramatics was a lot safer.” (SOURCE: Jackie Esposito and Steven Herb, The Nittany Lion: An Illustrated Tale. (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 75-76.
smiled. The image was later superimposed on the back of an African mountain lion and circulated in the days leading up to the game.

Though the atmosphere for Penn State’s first ever homecoming game was at fever pitch, the home crowd’s enthusiasm over the festivities quickly developed into uncertainty as Dartmouth found the goal line first. In the opening quarter after a Killinger pass was intercepted, the Big Green scored moments later on a play action pass that fooled Killinger and his fellow safety Charlie Way who charged the line thinking the ball was handed off to one of the halfbacks. Penn State struck back in the second quarter after a 20-yard punt return by Way, then off-tackle runs by Hinkey Haines and Killinger put the ball on Dartmouth’s 40-yard line. During the drive, Dartmouth’s All-American tackle Gus Sonnenberg got chirpy at 145-pound Charlie Way, who said to his quarterback, “Come on, Killy, I don’t want to run into that fellow.” Killinger confidently called Way’s number anyway, who scampered twenty yards around the left end to put the ball inside the red zone. Killinger then completed a pass to the 8-yard line, and runs by Killinger and Haines put the ball inches from the goal line before George Snell plunged through the interior for the score. Way added the extra point, tying the game at seven-all.

The game remained tied throughout the second half when Penn State suffered a pivotal setback. Charlie Way was forced to leave the contest in the third period after injuring his hip. Joe Lightner, a two-year reservist who had grown up near Killinger in Harrisburg, replaced him. Fortunately for the home team, Dartmouth was dealing with its

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41 “Penn State is Victor Over Dartmouth, 14-7, Harrisburg Evening Star, October 10, 1920, 27; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
42 Riley, The Road to Number One, 194.
own set of injuries. The Big Green’s captain Jim Robertson played only two quarters due to an ailing shoulder. Dartmouth’s fullback, John Shelburne, the college’s first African American football player, who would go on to play one year for the Hammond Pros of the American Professional Football League, left the game in the fourth quarter after hurting his knee.43

The injuries were likely caused by exhaustion. In 1987, looking back to his experience playing in the game, Killinger observed that by game time it was “above 90 degrees and the humidity about as high.” Penn State wore wool jerseys, heavy canvas pants, high-top cleats, and substantially heavy helmets. He remembered the game was great fun, but “about the end of the third quarter both teams were exhausted.” He recalled, “I played the entire game and lost seven pounds. One of our tackles lost 13 pounds.”44

Penn State was able to keep the game even due to its “considerable ability to penetrate the Dartmouth line,” reported the Pittsburgh Daily Post. At no time in the second half did Dartmouth have the ball near Penn State’s red zone. The visitors tried a 53-yard dropkick, but it fell well short. When it seemed like one of Dartmouth’s ball carriers broke free through the front line, Killinger, from his safety position, “never failed to make his tackle,” wrote the Boston Post. “We were using a seven-man line on defense with a two-two box defense in the backfield,” Killinger remembered.45

Dartmouth tried to mount one final scoring threat before Glenn Killinger became the hero of the day. With two minutes to go and the ball at midfield, Dartmouth attempted

44 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
45 Ibid.
a forward pass. Killinger stepped in front of the receiver and intercepted the ball. He weaved through Dartmouth’s coverage before he was pushed out of bounds at the 2-yard line. On the ensuing play, Killinger called Lightner’s number, who plunged in for the score. Dick Rauch, another product from Harrisburg, kicked the point after touchdown. The game ended 14-7 moments later.46

It surprised most people when Killinger credited an unexpected individual for the interception that set up the game-winning touchdown. “Dick Harlow had scouted Dartmouth and gave us a true account of their strengths and weaknesses,” he told people after the game. “They used a forward pass to their right end running a 45 degree angle to his right. When we practiced defense, I told Harlow that I was going to intercept that pass and run for a TD,” he said with self-assurance. Then, in the fourth quarter with the game on the line, Killinger, from his safety position, thought to himself, “[I] was hoping they would call that 45 degree pass to their right end. Fortunately they threw the pass I was anticipating. I maneuvered to the proper defensive position and easily intercepted the pass.”47

Like Harold Lamb’s winning score in The Freshman, the heroic performance against Dartmouth was a balm to Killinger, who longed for this moment. No longer the shrimp, Killinger won his coach’s respect for toughness and steadiness, and his performance against Dartmouth cemented his future in the Penn State lineup. The

47 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, unmarked page.
*Pittsburgh Daily Post* said, “Killinger showed rare judgment in calling his plays and his running of the team indicates that Bezdek’s quarterback worries are over. This was his first start at calling the signals and he more than made good.”

**Affirming a Golden Era at Penn State**

With Killinger at quarterback, Penn State absolutely dominated its next two opponents. In a 41-0 win over North Carolina State, Killinger scored the game’s first touchdown on a plunge through the left side of the line. Later in the game he threw a “brilliant” 35-yard touchdown pass, the *Daily Post* reported after Penn State’s shutout, to his tight end Lloyd Jones in the second quarter.

Penn State then ran all over Lebanon Valley College by a whopping 109-7 score. Oddly, Lebanon Valley scored first when a forward pass was deflected by Hinkey Haines (a Lebanon Valley transfer) and fell into the arms of a Dutchman receiver standing in the end zone. Thereafter the slaughter ensued. Killinger scored Penn State’s first touchdown, then Charlie Way scored on three long runs to build up a 27-7 lead at the end of the first period. Before the first quarter ended, Killinger suffered a serious injury to his left shoulder, and was pulled from the game out of fear that he had broken his collarbone. As he watched from the sideline, Penn State scored 82 more points. In what is considered an

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amazing feat for an era characterized by frequent punting on early downs, Penn State was not forced to punt the ball over to Lebanon Valley once during the entire game.\textsuperscript{50}

Word about Killinger’s injury spread across the country as quickly as the fact that Penn State just scored a record-breaking 109 points in one game. His status was the talk of the nation, driven by the impending game against the University of Pennsylvania, which was being considered as one of the top East Coast matchups of the coming week. Reports on Killinger’s health varied. The \textit{Washington Post} reported the injury “has not proved to be as serious as was at first believed, but it is still doubtful if he will be able to play against Penn on Saturday.” On the Tuesday before the game the \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph} ran the headline, “Killinger’s Injuries Slight, No Broken Bones as Yet.” Two days later, the same newspaper reported, “Killinger Still Unable to Play.”\textsuperscript{51}

Killinger was given a thorough examination midweek to check the extent of the injury. The report revealed his shoulder to be “considerably bruised” with “badly strained” muscles. The Penn State student body was “overjoyed,” wrote the \textit{Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger}, when it learned Killinger’s injury was not season ending. However, no assurances were given that Killy would suit up against Penn.\textsuperscript{52} Perhaps Coach Bezdek wanted it this way. Not only was Penn State facing off against one of the most premier football programs in the Ivy League, Bezdek was about to duel it out with Penn’s new coach John Heisman, who had just finished a highly successful sixteen year


tenure that included a national championship at Georgia Tech in 1917. The tactic is commonly used, even to this day, as one coach would issue fabricated information to the media in an effort to mislead an opponent. Bezdek closed his practices that week to the public, and said only unenthusiastic things to the band of sportswriters that hovered around State College.

With Killinger, Penn State would have been the favored ball club. Without him, the Quakers were the favorite. In his three games as a starter, Killinger had become the star of the team. By keeping his status a secret, Bezdek hoped it would throw off Heisman’s preparations. Up against a coach that had a rich reputation for installing trick plays to be used against each opponent, it was a gimmick worth the effort.

When game day arrived, Killinger was dressed in his uniform and assigned to start at quarterback and safety. The opportunity to play through a serious injury sustained just seven days earlier allowed Killinger to demonstrate the level of masculinity that Walter Camp and Theodore Roosevelt expected to see in America’s football players, especially by those that had been hardened by combat training. If he had any pain in his shoulder before the game it disappeared during his coach’s spirited pregame speech. “I pick men who can always do a little better than their best,” Bezdek reaffirmed his life code. “A player says to me, ‘Coach, I’m doing my best.’ I say, ‘No good. It’s absolutely no good. I want something better than your best.’” Killinger and his teammates were sky high for the encounter, not to mention inspired. They struck first in the opening quarter as Killinger didn’t wait long to prove he was tough enough to play with a sore shoulder. Behind a determined offensive line, Killy, Hinkey Haines, and Charlie Way, who was later injured and would miss the entire second half, put on a running display that
appeared as if that they were still practicing against the scrub team. With the ball inside
the Penn 5-yard line, Killinger called his own number to score the game’s first
touchdown. It was his third touchdown in as many games as a starter. Penn threatened to
tie the contest late in the second quarter when it had the ball on the 1-yard line, but a
fourth down pass broken up by Killinger in the end zone spoiled the opportunity. The
score at intermission was still 7-0.\(^\text{53}\)

But while this play would be the most enduring memory of the game, a few
newspapers for the first half effort praised Heisman’s men, “the Red and Blue team put
up a game but vain fight,” said the *Harrisburg Evening Star*.\(^\text{54}\) The second half turned out
to be a lopsided display dominated by Penn State who turned up the heat on the opening
kickoff. With Way dinged up, the team was confused as to who would return the kick.
“Who gets the middle on the kickoff?” Hinkey Haines asked the coach.\(^\text{55}\) Whereupon,
Bezdek replied, “You do.”

Haines then fielded the kick at the 10-yard line and sliced through the center of
the field all the way for the touchdown. Just like that it was 14-0, but Penn State still was
not through. Killinger brilliantly guided his team to two more scores, extending the lead
28-0 in the final period. Bezdek then decided to replace Killinger, who had his bell rung
early in the game, with Buck Williams. Heisman’s unit added a score by way of a fake
punt after Killinger was taken out. The game ended 28-7.

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\(^{53}\) “Easy for Penn State,” *Harrisburg Evening Star*, October 31, 1920, 29; “Penn State
Wins over Univ. of Penn,” *Wichita Daily Eagle*, October 31, 1920, 14; “Local Stars Aid
to Penn State,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, November 1, 1920, 13; “Haines Makes 100-Yard


\(^{55}\) Riley, *The Road to Number One*, 195.
Killinger’s performance that day left an indelible impression on Heisman. Reflecting back years later, Heisman, who spent three substandard seasons at Penn before coaching at Washington and Jefferson College and Rice Institute before retiring after the 1927 season, claimed Killinger was among the top one hundred players to ever play college football. In a lengthy compilation he called “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Fame” that was reprinted in magazines and newspapers around the country in 1928, Heisman said Killinger “sparkled and scintillated.” The coach’s approbation of Killinger came with a touch of nuance: “he started fast, kept going faster, and then, when pressed, showed you just how much faster a man could go when he really had to.”

With Killinger as field general, Penn State was the real deal. The Nittany Lions were 6-0 at midseason. Its defense ranked among the best. Only Boston College and Princeton had given up fewer points. In addition, Penn State had the top scoring offense in the country; halfbacks Charlie Way and Joe Lightner ranked third and fourth in the nation with total points. By now, Killinger was gaining notoriety for his management of Coach Bezdek’s complicated system of misdirection runs, fake passes, fake kicks, and both intermediate and long forward passes. His favorite play to run was the cross-buck, a play designed for guards to pull while the quarterback faked to the fullback one way before handing off to the halfback who followed his blockers in the opposite direction. In a 1923 op-ed in the Ironwood Daily Globe, Killinger described how he depended on the play.

If I was to be pinned down to one certain play as a consistent ground gainer, I would have no hesitation in selecting the cross-buck or off-tackle run . . . running off-tackle or a short end run, you have a chance to spread the opponent’s line.

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56 John W. Heisman, “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Football Fame,” Marion Star, October 27, 1928, 1.
Usually a hole opens up somewhere in the line where a good runner can slip through. Incidentally, the cross-buck offers a chance for deception. It is possible for the player with the ball to start wide and then cut back or start cutting in at the inception of the play and then switching to a wide end run, according to the manner in which the other team is playing. During my career at Penn State under Coach Bezdek, most of our scoring was done in the manner described despite the fact that opposing teams knew we used the cross-buck on a majority of our plays. By changing our pace in making the same play we kept the opposition from concentrating on any one point.\textsuperscript{57}

Killinger’s exploits on the field attracted the attention of Walter Camp, the world’s eminent football mind, who claimed in a November column that his “eyes [are] glued on Killinger as a field general” and that in a year’s time, Killy will be in consideration for an All American team.\textsuperscript{58}

Penn State’s schedule grew more difficult on November 6 when the big Nebraska Cornhusker team, coming off a convincing 28-0 triumph over Rutgers at Polo Grounds in New York City, visited State College. If they could win this one against a Western foe whose only setback was a 16-7 loss to Notre Dame, Penn State would cement itself in a reasonable position to be considered by sportswriters as the best team in the country. Only Knute Rockne’s Notre Dame eleven, anchored by lightning rod George Gipp, was having a season similar to Penn State.

Nevertheless, beating Nebraska would be a tall task. Killinger’s shoulder and head injuries and Charlie Way’s hip injury kept the duo out of practice all week. Bezdek’s right tackle, Richard L. Schuster was taken to the hospital with an infected leg, and right end Stan McCollum was limited at practice after suffering injuries in the game.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Bismarck Tribune}. November 22, 1920, 8.
against the Quakers.\textsuperscript{59} Each injury was a real concern to Bezdek, who considered his players undersized, and was accordingly circumspect about his team’s endurance during a physical sixty-minute contest.

Though a loss to Nebraska would hurt Penn State’s national standing, it would hardly damage its chances of being named top team the East. Bezdek’s group already proved it could defeat the best that the prominent Ivy League had to offer. He accordingly chose to start Buck Williams at quarterback in place of Killinger. And the more-than-capable Joe Lightner was inserted into the starting lineup in place of Way at right halfback. Both Killy and Way were in uniform. Bezdek planned to insert them into the game if needed. Bezdek had developed a game plan fixated on throwing the ball and backfield shifts. He saw the pass game as an equalizer against Nebraska’s “fast, wide awake,” and powerful team. Backfield shifts, he considered, could give his undersized players a mental advantage aimed at confusing the Cornhuskers’ defensive secondary.

The teams appeared evenly matched in the first quarter. Both teams had golden opportunities to score early when drives ended at the other’s 2-yard line without putting points on the board. With five minutes left before half time, and Penn State’s offense unable to do anything productive, Bezdek inserted Killinger into the game. On his first offensive series, Killy completed a 45-yard pass to Hinkey Haines down to Nebraska’s 10-yard line. But he then threw an errant pass on the ensuing play that was picked off by a Nebraska secondary player. A defensive play moments later put Penn State back in scoring position when Lightner stepped in front of a Nebraska receiver at the 50-yard line to intercept a forward pass. He carried the ball to the 32-yard line. Killinger then shot a

long pass to Ross “Squeak” Hufford, who was playing for the injured McCollum, for the
game’s first score. The Nittany Lions led 7-0 at half time.

Hugo Bezdek’s team clung for dear life to their one-score lead as much of the
second half was controlled by Nebraska’s ground game, including two opportunities from
“within the very shadows of Penn State’s goal twice,” wrote the Daily Nebraskan.
Fortunately for the home team, the Cornhuskers failed to penetrate the goal line. The
entire time, the Penn State boss contemplated the best time to insert fresh-legged Charlie
Way into the game.

The substitution finally occurred at the change of the quarter. Nebraska’s two
guards, the Munn brothers, Monte and Wade, admonished Way as he ran onto the field
toward Killinger. “So this is the famous Way,” bellowed Monte, a 6’ 5” 200-pound
behemoth that went on to become a boxing and wrestling champion at Nebraska. Decades later, Bezdek remained impressed—and mystified—by the sequence of plays
that followed as an unruffled Killinger steered Penn State to a game clinching drive as he
called Way’s favorite play “Old 42” at the Munn brothers. He recalled: “Penn State,
greatly outweighed, was having a rough going against the giant ‘Husker team, although
leading 7-0 early in the second half.” Bezdek’s team had the ball close to the left sideline.
Since the right halfback typically runs to the left, Killinger saw that he couldn’t get the
ball to Way in the open field from his normal position. “Killie [sic] sized up the situation
in an instant,” Bezdek explained, “and when Way had reported to the referee, Killinger
placed him at the left half instead of at right. He called for a kick formation.” Killinger’s

60 “Bezdek Machine Victorious in Grinding Battle With Huskers,” Daily Nebraskan,
November 8, 1920, 1-4.
61 Killinger, Glenn. West Chester Killinger Football Foundation Celebratory Dinner,
strategy was to deceive Nebraska with a punt formation on first down to play for field position—it was a tactic Killinger was known for. “I saw at once what was coming,” said Bezdek. Nebraska did not know which halfback spot Way ordinarily played, “since he had just entered the game. Expecting a kick as the logical play deep in our territory, they were foiled, and Way broke off right tackle, where he had the whole field to run in.” He picked up fifty-two yards. On the ensuing play, “Killinger’s brain was working, for this time he placed Way at his regular position, right half, and on the next play sent him whirling around the left end for the remainder of the distance to the goal-line and a touchdown.” Bezdek insisted: “Those two plays defeated Nebraska.”

Thereafter it was a hopeless battle for Nebraska. When the Cornhusker offense stalled at its own 28-yard line on their ensuing possession, Penn State increased its lead with another touchdown, this time it was a 4-yard plunge by Killinger. The hardened quarterback’s score through the center of the Nebraska line stretched Penn State’s lead to 20-0. The game ended moments later.

In all, Killinger dropped back to pass thirty times during the game. He completed eight of fifteen attempts, while scrambling for yardage on the remaining passing plays. Thinking back on the victory, Bezdek said, “about half the number of plays [against Nebraska]” were forward passes, “and spectators declared it to be the greatest game that they witnessed.” Killinger left his mark on every end of the field. Penn State amassed 385 total yards. Killinger threw for 178 yards, an unprecedented feat for 1920, while he

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and his teammates rushed for 207 yards. He picked up forty-two yards on thirteen punt returns in addition to punting ten times for a 39-yard average.\footnote{“Huskers Beaten By Penn’s Open Game,” \textit{Sunday World Herald} (Lead, South Dakota). November 7, 1920, 18-21.}

Indeed, the victory over Nebraska created a distraction among the faithful at State College. Sportswriters immediately began suggesting that a post-season showdown between Killinger’s Nittany Lions and George Gipp’s Fighting Irish of Notre Dame be arranged to decide the nation’s top team. “If Notre Dame and Penn State could be brought together, a national football championship would not be mythical,” proclaimed United Press sportswriter Henry Farrell.\footnote{“Notre Dame Has Class, East Says,” \textit{Sandusky Star Journal}, November 1, 1920, 15.} The two teams’ common foe was Nebraska, which Penn State just handled. Notre Dame had defeated the Cornhuskers earlier that season by a score of 16-7. The media’s buzz about Penn State’s rise to national contention crept into Bezdek’s locker room. And the impact was detrimental to his team.

Penn State followed the Nebraska victory by almost sinking its season against Lehigh College. Lehigh was hardly a slouch. Earlier in the fall, it had defeated Rutgers 9-0 and tied West Virginia 7-7. Lehigh and Penn State shared lopsided victories over two common opponents, Lebanon Valley and Muhlenberg.

During the November 13 game, big plays—usually runs by Hinkey Haines and forward passes from Killinger to Haines or George Brown—were often negated by penalties, or spoiled by sequential turnovers or tackles for loss. With Charlie Way preserved on the sideline for much of the contest because of his ailing hip, Killinger was Mr. Do-it-all. He received punts and kicks, and operated as Penn State’s punter. On defense, he intercepted a pass and on several occasions read run so quickly that he
stormed through the line from his safety position to tackle Lehigh ball carriers in the
backfield. Penn State dominated everything except the score, and found itself down 7-0
deep into the fourth quarter.

Killinger accepted responsibility for the deficit. In denial of the media’s coverage
of his performance, he said, “I played my poorest game against Lehigh and was directly
responsible for allowing Lehigh to complete an easy pass over my head for their TD.”
Killinger conceded that his team’s week of preparation for Lehigh “was horrible.” No one
on the team took Lehigh seriously, he said. “Bezdek was after us constantly,” he
acknowledged, “and his theme song that week was that Lehigh would beat us easily and
he was nearly correct.” Lehigh’s quarterback was George Rote, a graduate of Harrisburg
Central High School and hometown adversary to Killinger in football and baseball. “We
had played baseball that summer together on Hinky [sic] Haines’s Red Lion team,”
Killinger recollected. “He told me how he had scored the winning TD in their game with
a good Lafayette team by running a boot-leg fake buck around his right end to score.”
When Lehigh had third down on Penn State’s 20-yard line, Rote ran the same bootleg
play. Killinger, who was readily waiting in anticipation for the play, ran up from his
safety position to tackle Rote, who at the last moment before being tackled lofted a pass
over Killinger for a touchdown. “Rote lobbed a pass over my head to the right end who
had run ten yards in back of me and I completely ignored him,” said an outwitted
Killinger.66

In the fourth quarter Way was sent into the game as the clock ticked close to the
end of regulation. It was then that Penn State opened a volley of forward passes. Killinger

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hit Haines on three consecutive short passes over the line for nine yards, twelve yards, and seven yards, respectively. Then Killinger called a trick play. He stacked the backfield, including himself, on the right side of the center. He positioned Haines deepest directly behind the center. On the snap, Killinger darted left into the flat as a decoy hoping to take out a man in the Lehigh secondary. The right end streaked down the field while the fullback and halfback ran off tackle on the heels of one another, circling the linebackers. Haines, with his big league baseball talent, took the direct snap and ran toward the line of scrimmage before pulling up short. His options were to throw a deep ball to his end Brown or a mid-ranged pass to the halfback, Way, who divided his route between the fullback’s pattern and the end’s fade route. Haines saw Brown open down the field and shot him a pass for twenty-nine yards. Killinger then handed off to Way for a 7-yard gain to Lehigh’s 15-yard line. Way was given the ball once more taking it the distance for the touchdown. The Penn State contingent held its breath as they watch Dick Rauch execute the goal after touchdown to tie the game.

On a late drive, Lehigh was close enough to attempt a winning field goal, which barely missed. In a bizarre transition allowed according to the rules in 1920, the kicking team could recover a missed kick. Author of Penn State Football Letter, Ridge Riley described the sequence: “as the ball bounced around in the end zone, a Lehigh player was in position to recover for a touchdown. Instead, a local fan ran onto the field, picked up the ball, and helpfully tossed it to the referee.”\textsuperscript{67} The game ended, 7-7.

“I really went out of my way to avoid a confrontation with Bezdek after the game,” Killinger admitted, “I had lost my concentration and it cost us a win as we were

\textsuperscript{67} Ridge Riley. The Road to Number One: A Personal Chronicle of Penn State Football (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1977) 199.
easily the better team.” The stalemate against Lehigh did not terminate the discussion of setting up a title match against Notre Dame. But for that to happen, Penn State had to get by its final opponent. On tap for Thanksgiving Day was the annual showdown against Pop Warner’s University of Pittsburgh eleven, which still featured the fine running of All-American halfback Tom Davies. The drubbing that Penn State laid on Pitt the previous fall was surely on the minds of the folks in the Steel City. Both teams entered the game undefeated and with one tie. The showdown offered itself as the Eastern football championship game.69

By the time the contest with Pitt began, Bezdek’s men were exhausted and ailing from a week spent practicing in eight inches of snow, rain and sleet that alternated by the chilling wind and freezing temperatures.70 Penn State was thought to be the better ball club with Way now healthy enough to start and Killinger and Haines playing as well as anyone in the country at their positions. The defenses were both strong, but Penn State seemingly had the dominant line. Although Pitt had one of the nation’s most elusive and powerful halfbacks in Tom Davies, Penn State had more overall speed.

Yet, for the second time in three years, the clash was mired by rain and mud. “Forbes Field was a quagmire,” recalled Killinger.”71 The conditions did not stop a boisterous crowd of 35,000 from watching the Keystone foes slug it out in six inches of

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69 “State’s Supremacy of East At Stake in Game with Pitt,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, November 21, 1920, 5.
71 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 3-4.
mud, which negated the speed of both teams, and arguably, the speed and power of Penn State’s line. Pitt received the ball first. They made no yards on its opening drive.

Killinger then fielded a punt from Davies, but was stopped dead his tracks, stuck in the mud, at the 35-yard line. He flung a forward pass to Haines for a short gain. On second down, Killy called a successful double pass to Haines, which placed the ball on Pitt’s 35-yard line. There the drive stalled, and Killinger punted over the goal line. Rival stars Killinger and Davies were each guilty of frequent fumbles caused by the wet ball. The game carried on in this fashion for four quarters. At game’s end, both teams had punted twelve times, and total yardage was virtually equal, 198 yards for Pitt and 182 yards for Penn State. The result was a dispiriting 0-0 tie—the scoreless effort marked the first time in Bezdek’s three seasons at Penn State that his team was held without a point.

With the season now at its end, Penn State found itself a somewhat disappointing 7-0-2, again in limbo for the Eastern football crown. The brooding began among the sportswriters, who weighed strength of schedule, game performances against common foes, total points scored verse total points given up, home game performances measured up against road performances, which teams were playing its best ball at the end of the season, and what would happen in hypothetical matchups. What was for certain, no game would be scheduled against Notre Dame, who was unanimously given the intercollegiate Western football championship. In the East, sportswriter George Curry ranked Penn State

fourth behind Princeton (6-0-2), Harvard (8-0-1), and Pittsburgh (6-0-2).\textsuperscript{73} Just like that, two ties kept Penn State from a repeat Eastern championship.

Some of the pain about losing out on a championship lessened in December when Killinger was named one of fifteen quarterbacks nationwide to the Charles Evans National Honor Roll. In addition, he was selected to Pop Warner’s “All-Star Eleven,” a team composed of the best eleven players made up by the University of Pittsburgh’s 1920 opponents. The anointment was a big deal, especially considering that teammate Charlie Way was picked by Walter Camp as a first team All American halfback and Hinkey Haines was placed onto Camp’s third team All American roster. Linemen Clarence Beck and Red Griffiths, along with end George Brown received honorable mention consideration on some All-Eastern teams.\textsuperscript{74}

The season gave Killy much to think about. Although a senior academically, Killinger played just three years of football and therefore possessed one more year of eligibility if he chose to delay his graduation and return in the fall. On paper, Penn State’s 1921 team would to be depleted with the loss of seven starters, including half the line and backfield stars Way and Haines. Even Killinger admitted that expectations for the next team were reasonably low. He said, “I did not think that our prospects were too bright for the 1921 season after losing two All-Americans from our backfield by graduation.” Fortunately for Killinger, he had time to think. The upcoming basketball season would serve as a distraction, which, by the way, was touted as Killinger’s best sport.

\textsuperscript{73} George Curry, “Tiger and Crimson Outrank Pittsburgh and Penn State,” \textit{Brooklyn Daily Eagle}, November 30, 1920, 22.
\textsuperscript{74} “Western Players Mentioned on Outing’s Football Honor Roll,” \textit{Wichita Daily Eagle}, January 1, 1921, 4; “Pittsburgh Picks All-Star Eleven,” \textit{Lafayette} (Easton, PA). December 7, 1920, 1.
FOURTH QUARTER
CHAPTER 10
CLASS OF 1921

The blaze of the best year of Glenn Killinger’s collegiate career ignited in the Armory, an eighty feet by 120 feet space already badly damaged on account of the Student Army Training Corps’ use in 1918, when it was utilized as an assembly room and storage facility. The building itself was always unsanitary. The men’s showers were located in one corner of the basement, while no such accommodation was provided for women. Despite the building’s defects, it was a place Killinger always considered his sanctuary. He would visit its hardwood floor as often as possible until it was torn down in 1964.

The Armory, with its triangular exterior, rubble stonewalls, brick chimney, and picturesque tower was long used for weekend events. More distinctly, perhaps, it was used as the college’s home basketball venue. Here, at the Armory, Glenn Killinger clinched his athletic celebrity.

With Killinger’s help during his junior season, Penn State’s basketball team entered the winter of 1920-1921 with high expectations. When a team finishes 12-1, as Penn State did the previous year, people crave more of the same. The Nittany Lions were returning all five starters, and in Killinger, who was unanimously selected captain by his teammates, at point guard, and Hinkey Haines at the shooting guard position, Penn State boasted the best backcourt combination in the country. “Basketball is probably Killinger’s best sport,” said the Harrisburg Telegraph, “and although he has won his varsity letter at baseball and football also, he really prefers the indoor game.”

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1 “Local Stars to Play Cage Game,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 30, 1920, 15.
The Nittany Lions opened at the Armory against Juniata on December 16. With several hundred fans seated on the floor with a hundred more standing in the mezzanine balcony, the student body witnessed a convincing 45-13 victory. Killinger dropped six points. Haines added four. Their defensive effort was more impressive, holding the visitors to single digits before three starters were pulled from the game.\(^2\)

With Killinger leading the way in scoring and defending, Penn State routed its next six opponents, Dickinson 48-19, Washington and Jefferson 53-20, West Virginia 52-14, Susquehanna 47-13, Lebanon Valley 51-12, and Carnegie Tech 62-17. He had scored seventy-two points in the first seven games, including a twenty-point effort against Carnegie Tech.

But Penn State’s first real test came against Pittsburgh on February 4 at a jam-packed Motor Square Garden filled with 4,000 enthusiastic fans accompanied by the Pitt marching band. Penn State jumped to an early 7-0 advantage before Pitt’s forwards helped tighten the score. When Pitt took a 32-30 lead in the second half, Killinger “came through with another basket again tying the count,” reported the *Pittsburgh Daily Post*. Pitt was held without a field goal in the final minutes while Killinger hit another basket and helped break the game open for Penn State. The game ended 38-33.\(^3\) The thirty-three points against the defense ended up being the largest point total scored on Penn State all year.

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On the next night, Penn State improved to 9-0 with a 26-23 squeaker over Washington and Jefferson. The road trip proved exhausting as the Nittany Lions lost their first contest 29-23 to Virginia Tech in a game Killinger was held to four points.\(^4\)

Penn State rebounded with blowout victories over Pittsburgh, 50-28, Buffalo 43-16, and Swarthmore 34-11. The Pittsburgh press said, “Killinger and Haines were mainly responsible” for the pounding handed to the Panthers. Killinger’s twelve points was the game’s highest output.\(^5\) Against Swarthmore, Killy turned in ten points. It was on the defensive side where Killinger and his teammates shined most against Swarthmore. Penn State allowed just two field goals all game, both made by Swarthmore’s center.

Perhaps looking ahead to the season finale against the nation’s best team—the Pennsylvania Quakers—Penn State was upset by the worst team in the Ivy League, Yale, 23-20, on March 8. Due in part to Killinger’s team-leading three field goals in the first half, Penn State led 14-12 at half time. In the second half, however, Killinger was held scoreless and Hinkey Haines had trouble guarding Yale’s Harry Alderman, who nailed seven field goals from the top of the key and converted on five free throws that eventually determined the game. “Nobody could have stopped those shots,” Killinger said in defense of his friend. Near the end of the game Haines was injured and taken out. More bad luck struck Penn State when center Bill Wolfe, who tried to play through

pneumonia, eventually was substituted out and rushed to New Haven Hospital after the
game.  

In the locker room after the game, Coach “Dutch” Hermann, a person Killinger
always considered “one of the greatest [coaches],” while admitting, “I’ve been around a
lot of good ones,” scolded the team for their performance. “He told us we were the
lousiest team he had ever coached,” Killinger recounted. “I went berserk at his remarks.”
Killinger ripped off his uniform, rolled it up, and threw it at Hermann’s head. It was the
“first and only time” he ever displayed that level of anger toward a coach, he confessed.
“I was crying like a baby because his criticisms were so completely unethical and out of
order.” Killinger glared at the team manager Malcolm Myers and insisted that he get him
a train ticket back to State College. He was adamant that he was not going to accompany
the team to Philadelphia, where they were scheduled to play Penn in two days. “Hinky
[sic] and the other players finally calmed me and I agreed to stay that night with the
team.”

The peace was restored between Killinger and Hermann in a matter of hours. And
the loss to Yale lit a fire for the March 10 showdown with the 18-1 and No.1-ranked
Pennsylvania Quakers. Penn State needed to play inspired basketball without its center
Bill Wolfe, who was also the team’s foul shooter (this era of basketball allowed one man
to shoot all the foul shots for the team). Meanwhile, Killinger was assigned to guard Lou
Martin, the top scorer in the Ivy League.

“We played like a bunch of maniacs,” Killinger proudly testified of his team’s effort. The fans that piled into Weightman Hall saw five ties during the contest. Killinger was held scoreless in regulation, but his contribution on the defensive end helped his team rally from a 12-10 half time deficit. “I held Lou Martin to one goal and [he] missed a hard lay-up shot,” that could have won the game for Penn, he recalled. “It was a dog-eat-dog game,” he said, which was tied 19-19 at the end of regulation. In the extra period, Killinger was called on by his coach, with whom he almost got into fisticuffs forty-eight hours earlier, to shoot a pair of foul shots. He was successful with each attempt, which turned out to be the difference in Penn State’s 21-19 upset victory in overtime. Upon the final whistle, the Penn State contingent swarmed the court and carried Killinger off on their shoulders.  

Killinger’s superlative performance felt like another Harold Lamb moment. It must have been some experience for the heralded senior. In his last college basketball game, Killinger helped his team defeat the two-time sportswriters’ national champion and the nation’s No. 1-ranked team; and he did it in overtime by nailing the game-winning foul shots. To be carried off the floor by his peers certainly cemented the moment among the most dramatic in Killinger’s lifetime. Basketball was not an incredibly popular sport. The media posted box scores inconsistently after each game. The sportswriters refrained from naming mythical champions of the East or West, or even the nation for that matter. The writers were not even keen on naming All-American teams like they had for football.

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9 University of Pennsylvania was retroactively recognized as the national champions by the Helms Athletic Foundation in 1919-1920 and 1920-1921, and the Premo-Porretta Power Poll for the 1919-1920 season.
If more attention would have been paid to college basketball during the golden age, writers would have argued that Killinger—one of the nation’s top defensive players who also scored 126 points for an average of eight points a game—was among the best all around guards in the East Coast, if not the country. Those accolades certainly would have helped bolster him among the best to play in the shadow of Mount Nittany. Penn State finished the season 14-2, among the nation’s best in total points—643—and among the best in fewest points allotted—318. The 1920-1921 season ranked “among the greatest in the history of the Blue and White institution,” bestowed the nationally syndicated \textit{Washington Post}. The \textit{Post} conferred: “Capt. Killinger and his mates can well be proud.”\textsuperscript{10}

Killinger could be incredibly proud. In the three seasons he earned varsity letters, his basketball teams finished with an astonishing overall record of thirty-seven wins against just five losses.

\textbf{The Golden Era of America’s Pastime at Penn State}

On March 15, 1921, Glenn Killinger wrapped up his senior basketball season, grabbed his cap and glove, and set out for his final adventure as a baseball player at Penn State. It would be a season in which Killy would establish himself as a remarkable talent among intercollegiate baseball circles, becoming as much of an attraction to spectators as he had been during the football and basketball seasons.

In this final year, he clung tight to his Penn State family: outﬁelders Hinkey Haines, Horace “Rip” Koehler, and Joe Lightner (his tie to Harrisburg), pitchers Clyde

\footnote{\textit{Penn State Quint Closes Best Season}, \textit{Washington Post}, March 20, 1921, 26.}

In one year under Hugo Bezdek as manager, good hitting and lots of scoring had characterized the baseball team. As if the 167 runs scored in 1920 wasn’t enough. By the end of his senior year, Killinger’s team drove in 192 runs, and not only defeated several of the best teams that the East and South had to offer, but annihilated many of those teams by double digit scores. The 1921 Penn State baseball team featured two starters that batted over .400 and four others at .350 or better. The team’s three best pitchers from the previous season returned to the rotation. The team’s star Hinkey Haines was voted captain. Previously a left fielder, Bezdek moved him to center field where, the coach said, “his speed will prove to be more of an asset.” In addition to Haines in the outfield, Bezdek had inherited a brilliant infield. Led by Killinger, and celebrated as the “Million Dollar Infield,” each had potential to make the big leagues.

One year earlier, Killinger missed the team’s opening road trip through the South to accompany his meteorology class on a graded field trip. This year, he was again forced to join his class on a mining inspection expedition in Pittsburgh lest he fail the course. Killinger was forced to miss six-games played in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Even without Killinger, the Nittany Lions won all six games by defeating Navy twice, 8-6 and 4-1; Virginia, 14-2; Virginia Military Institute, 8-4; Washington and Lee, 18-9; and Georgetown, 7-0.

11 “Penn State Nine Leaves for South Tomorrow,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, March 26, 1921, 9.
Killinger’s first game was a 7-0 victory over Gettysburg on April 11. Hitting second in the batting order, he singled, doubled, and tripled. He also stole a base. A friendly wager was made between Killinger and Haines during the game—who would be the first to steal home plate? Haines tried it in the eighth inning against Gettysburg, but was thrown out.13 After a 7-1 victory over Delaware on April 15, Killinger tried stealing home on April 23 against Lebanon Valley. In the sixth inning, up 2-0, Killinger’s single was followed by a Haines drive to the outfield. With Killinger now on third and Haines on first, the friends attempted a double steal, but Killy was tagged out at the plate. Haines was driven in for a run later in the inning. Penn State won 3-0.14

Penn State blasted Carnegie Tech, 18-0, and won a squeaker against Bethany College, 4-3, to extend its record to 12-0 halfway through the season. Dating back to 1920, Penn State had now won twenty-three consecutive games. The milestone was impressive, but it wasn’t until Penn State’s eastern jaunt that featured contests against Princeton, New York University, and Yale that the sportswriters really started to cover the win-streak.

On May 12, Penn State pulled out a 6-5 victory in ten innings over Princeton. The host Princeton scored runs in the first, fifth and seventh innings, with Penn State pushing over two runs in the fourth and one in the eighth. In the ninth inning, both teams had runners on second and third, but neither scored. With one down in the top of the tenth,

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13 “Killinger Leads Team in Penn State Game,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, April 12, 1921, 13.
14 “State Blanks Lebanon, 3-0,” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, April 24, 1921, 18.
Kid Mearkle, Killinger, Haines, and Joe Lightner all singled, netting three runs. In the bottom of the tenth inning, Princeton scored two runs before the final out was recorded.\textsuperscript{15}

Penn State pulled out another one-run victory over New York University on May 12, a score of 4-3. One day later, the men from Mount Nittany handed a beating to Yale, 9-3. Killinger hit a single and a double, and had a homerun robbed in the fifth inning when the score was 3-1. Yale tied the game at three-all in the sixth inning. However, a six-run ninth inning broke the game open.\textsuperscript{16} Penn State’s win-streak on the season reached fifteen. Its streak overall was at twenty-six and counting.

By now, interest in the streak was at fever pitch. The writers who started to cover Penn State grew exponentially up and down the coast. The Nittany Lions defeated a plucky Lehigh team, 5-4, to make it twenty-seven straight. On May 17, the Pittsburgh nine guided by the ubiquitous Tom Davies visited Glenn Killinger territory and was handed an embarrassing 15-2 defeat.

The victory over Pitt officially gave Penn State the consecutive wins record. “By this victory,” the \textit{Harrisburg Evening News} wrote, Penn State “set the record in college circles for this year at least, and it is believed to have set a new record for consecutive wins in college baseball, for it was the twenty-eighth straight game won by Hugo Bezdek’s aggregation.”\textsuperscript{17}

After the unbeaten Nittany Lions methodically took care of Pittsburgh, a significant blow was rendered to the team. Officials from the University of Pittsburgh brought to light the fact that Penn State’s captain, Hinkey Haines, played a few

\textsuperscript{15} “State Nine Wins Thirteenth Fray,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, May 12, 1921, 14.
\textsuperscript{16} “Yale Banged By Penn State,” \textit{Boston Post}, May 14, 1921, 7.
\textsuperscript{17} “State Nines Have Won 27 Consecutive Contests,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, May 18, 1921.
professional baseball games in the Virginia League under the name of “Hinkie” in 1918. “I played league ball for a very short time during the summer of 1918 without knowing that it was against the eligibility code,” Haines testified. “As soon as I learned that my eligibility to participate in college athletics was jeopardized, [I] stopped. This was before I entered Penn State and the authorities here knew nothing about the matter, as I have told no one.” To avoid damaging “the college that I love,” Haines abruptly left the team.

In the modern era of sports, the National Collegiate Athletic Association would have likely removed all thirty-six wins during the two years that Haines played baseball at Penn State in addition to reversing the fourteen football and twenty-six basketball victories he shared. Surely, the NCAA would have imposed additional post-season sanctions and fines, and Coach Bezdek would likely have been suspended. Nevertheless, the NCAA dished out no punishments in 1921. It could not. The NCAA had no power to legislate or enforce rules until after World War II. Haines dismiss himself from the team immediately. Within two weeks after the scandal broke, Haines passed on a contract with the New York Baseball Giants to sign with the emerging American League power New York Yankees. He spent much of the summer playing in seventy-one games for the Yankees’ Class-A team, the Hartford Senators of the Eastern League. Occasionally, he returned home to play for his hometown’s twilight team and with Killinger in the Allison Hill League. He even flirted with Lebanon Valley College after the institution offered him the director of athletics position in June. Instead, he signed a contract to become an assistant football coach at Gettysburg College in the fall 1921.

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Penn State moved quickly to avert the attention toward anything but the Hinkey Haines scandal. The team voted three-year starting second baseman “Kid” Mearkle captain, and began preparing for a double-header scheduled against the University of Detroit. In the team’s first games without Haines, the Pittsburgh Post Gazette wrote: “The whole Penn State infield played sensationally.” Penn State dropped Detroit 8-2 in the first outing, and 4-3 in the second.

The streak-watch continued as Penn State handed Pittsburgh its first home loss of the season in extra innings on May 25. Pitt led 2-1 entering the ninth inning when Penn State tied the contest. In the top of the tenth, Killinger hit a shot to deep left field. The ball bounced off the fence, driving in two runners. One batter later, Killinger scored. The host team was held scoreless in the bottom of the tenth, allowing Penn State to clinch the game 5-2. In addition to the two-run triple that he hit in the extra inning, Killinger hit a double and played solidly at third base. His counterpart, Tom Davies, Pitt’s shortstop, recorded two hits but never reached home plate. Penn State’s win streak stretched to twenty on the season and thirty-one overall.

A break in the schedule after the Pittsburgh victory allowed Killinger time to visit his family in Harrisburg during the final week of May. Accompanying him on the trip home was Hinkey Haines. The two college stars joined Killinger’s older brother Earl in a game with the Rosewood Athletic Club on the evening of May 27. Killinger used the evening to tune up for his game against the Pennsylvania Quakers while Haines prepped himself for his audition with the Yankees’ farm team. Haines turned in an impressive

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19 “Haines Quits But Penn State Beats Detroit, 8-2,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, May 21, 1921, 10.
20 Cliff J. Ryan, “Pitt Beaten by State 5 to 3, in Ten Innings,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, May 26, 1921, 12.
performance at the plate, connecting safely on three hits in as many at bats, and was able to score on each occasion. Killinger’s outing was unimpressive, having gone hitless.\textsuperscript{21}

Two nights later, Killinger was with his Penn State team in a major showdown against the University of Pennsylvania on Franklin Field. The game was tied at two through eight innings when Penn drove in two runners and held on in the ninth for the victory.\textsuperscript{22} After winning thirty-one consecutive games, Penn State’s streak ended there in Philadelphia.

“That defeat was hard to take,” Killinger wrote in his memoir. Penn’s second baseman, Danny McNichol, who also started at guard for the Quakers’ basketball team, approached Killinger after the game, who remembers McNichol saying “that their victory evened the score for the one game they lost to us in basketball.”\textsuperscript{23}

The loss seemingly put out the fuse that fueled Penn State’s record-breaking engine. Penn State downed Bucknell on consecutive days, winning 6-5 and 14-6. But on the final road trip west to finish out the season, Penn State lost both games in a two-game series against Pittsburgh. In the first game, an extra-inning affair, Killinger hit three singles and scored three times, including an amazing steal of home. He assisted on five outs, but the team gave up five runs in the tenth inning and lost 12-8. The twelve runs given up was the most any team scored against Penn State all season. In game two, a 10-7 setback, Killinger recorded a hit and a run. The star of the series was Pittsburgh’s Tom

\textsuperscript{21} “Haines to Join Yanks in June; May Also Coach at Annville,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, May 28, 1921, 11; Ibid, June 3, 1921; “’Hinkie’ Haines to Play with Rosewood Team,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, May 27, 1921, 21.
\textsuperscript{22} “Penn State Defeated,” \textit{Scranton Republican}, May 30, 1921, 14.
\textsuperscript{23} Killinger, \textit{A Penn State Walk-On}, 25.
Davies, who batted 3-for-5 and 4-for-5, respectively, including a homerun, a triple, and three doubles.\footnote{“Pitt Beats State Nine in 10th Inning,” \textit{Pittsburgh Gazette Times}, June 14, 1921; “Panther Nine Defeats Penn State Again, 10-7,” \textit{Pittsburgh Gazette Times}, June 14, 1921, 7.}

Penn State’s season ended inaudibly with a record of 23-3. Killinger had his best year, batting .371 in nineteen games. He recorded twenty-eight hits. Included in his total were two homeruns, three triples and four doubles. He scored twenty-five runs. In the field, Killy committed just six errors in seventy-four chances, making twenty-four put outs and forty-four assists.\footnote{“Killinger Batted. 371 for Penn State Team,” \textit{New York Tribune}, January 20, 1922, 15.}

After three years of baseball at Penn State, Killinger shared fifty wins and nine losses with his teammates. If championships were granted during the era, he likely would have been part of two, arguably three, national titles. The numbers, combined with Coach Bezdek’s connections, made him a top prospect for a dozen major league ball clubs including the New York Yankees and Detroit Tigers.

The close of the 1921 school term brought an end to a memorable three-year run by one of the most successful groups to step foot on the athletic fields at Penn State. Glenn Killinger found among his football, basketball, and baseball teammates at Penn State a wealth of friendships such as he would ever know. There can be no doubt that the Class of 1921 shared a deep affection for their school and emotional bond brought together by sports and war.

Further, as what was already clear, they had endured a broken college experience during the Great War: semesters cut short, a campus turned into a military outpost, curriculum taken over by the War Department. It was a time when Americans in
abundance were asked to make courageous decisions of sacrifice as never before. Some left overseas and saw first-hand the horrors of mechanized warfare, while others remained home to work in defense industries and train as captains in the Army with the belief that their day in combat would soon arrive.

Members of the Class of 1921 would never forget the period. Nor would Glenn Killinger. Nor would they ever again enjoy such a time together. In June 1921, Killinger would say good-bye to his friends. He would choose to return to Penn State for one more fall to play his final semester of football and to make up his final eight credits that he failed to attain earlier in his college career.26

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26 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 53.
CHAPTER 11:
A CRAFTY FIELD GENERAL

Surprisingly, the football world again turned its eyes towards State College in 1921. To the surprise of nobody, Glenn Killinger, who filled out and looked like a major college football player, was projected to be QB-1 on the first day of team practice. In previous years, Killinger was a scrawny but fast and modestly determined backfield player. As he entered his twenty-third birthday, still a smidgen on the thin side, he entered his final year with lean yet awkwardly bowed legs, a broad back, and ripped arms. Clocked by Coach Bezdek for having run a 10.2 in the 100-yard dash while in his uniform, he carried himself with rigidity and confidence.¹

After losing seven two-year starters, including All-American Charlie Way, the entire team was built around Killinger’s 5’ 10”, 165-pound frame. Although not selected captain—that duty was bestowed to fullback George Snell—he had already won over his teammates. As one correspondent for the Harrisburg Telegraph wrote before the start of the season, Killinger was “the all-around star” of the team.²

Killinger struggled early in football camp with his annual hay fever symptoms. “I reported with red and swollen eyes that constantly watered,” said Killinger. The effects of the affliction were so dreadful that it took all of his willpower to make it through the first two days of practice. Then things got worse for the veteran quarterback.

On the third day of camp, Killinger separated his shoulder during the team’s first inter-squad scrimmage. It was September 4 and the first game of the season was

Chapter 11: A Crafty Field General

¹; John W. Heisman, “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Football Fame,” Marion Star, October 27, 1928, 1.
² “Penn State has Three Veterans,” Harrisburg Telegraph, August 27, 1921, 13.
scheduled to kick off in twenty days. The injury forced Killinger on the sideline for three weeks. “The injury, coupled with the pollen fever attack, prompted me to return home and I seriously considered giving up football,” he said with remorse. “I was greatly discouraged about the entire football situation.” His health, plus the departure of his close friends Charlie Way and Hinkey Haines to graduation, in addition to the recent news that the team’s captain and star fullback George Snell was lost for the season because of a throat infection was, for a moment, too much for the four-year veteran to deal with.

Mass Media and the 1921 Intercollegiate Football Season

According to Bezdek, his quarterback’s injury and mental state were hardly a concern. “The bump was not serious,” Bezdek told reporters when asked why Killinger wasn’t participating in practice. Since the team was shy on quarterbacks, he said, there was no point taking “chances on losing the services of the Harrisburg lad.”

Coach Bezdek had already complicated matters for Penn State in the off-season by lining up, as he said, “one of the hardest [schedules] ever arranged for a blue and white eleven,” including games at home against North Carolina State and Lehigh, and contests with Harvard, Georgia Tech, Navy, and Pittsburgh on foreign gridirons. But now with Killinger out, and the previous year’s scrub team quarterback, Tommy Ritner, splitting time with junior Michael Palm, the fate of season was in question.

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4 “Penn State Has Wet Ball Test,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, September 6, 1921, 13.
Bezdek found Killinger an osteopath from Bellefonte to treat his shoulder five days a week. After evening training table, the coach and his scion would walk to their respective abodes together: “Bezdek kept needling me, saying that Mike Palm would take my quarterback job away from me,” said Killinger, who found his customary genial attitude after the hay fever symptoms subsided. “Little did I realize that he was very anxious to have me get healthy in a hurry.” Each day at practice, Bezdek ran Killinger through noncontact quarterback drills. But once the inter-squad scrimmaging began, Killinger was forced to run twenty laps around the field. “One day at practice I was feeling very miserable after running my laps. Bezdek was sitting along a pile of dismantled wooden bleachers. As I came abreast of Bezdek, I said sarcastically, ‘Is that enough laps?’ Bezdek replied, ‘No, wise guy, five more laps.’ Never again did I make any wise cracks to Bezdek.”

After three weeks, a joyous Killinger was cleared to play by trainer Bill Martin and the Bellefonte osteopath Bezdek provided for his rehabilitation. But in spite of being dressed in full gear and running through daily drills with what Killinger described as an “eager-beaver attitude,” Bezdek kept him out of the contact scrimmages. “I ran my usual 20 laps with a greater enthusiasm, making sure Bezdek observed my antics,” the signal caller recounted. There was “Still no response.” Later in the week, when Killinger told his roommate at the Alpha Chi Sigma house, Bill Sieg, he was not starting in the opening game, “Bill broke down and cried like a baby,” he noted.

Many were surprised to see Killinger with his helmet on, dressed in his number-2 jersey but standing on the sideline at the beginning of the season opener on September

6 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 29.
7 Ibid, 29.
24. It was a 53-0 drubbing handed to Lebanon Valley College, hardly a formidable opponent. The strength of Penn State’s offense was its powerful backfield comprised of Ruel “Pete” Redinger, Joe Lightner and Frank Hess, which averaged 175 pounds. Reserve fullback E. H. Cornwall, weighing over 180 pounds, was the heaviest backfield candidate. The Nittany Lions also featured sophomore marvel Harry “Light Horse” Wilson, future two-time All-American and the younger brother of former team captain Lloyd Wilson, as a reserve halfback.⁸

Inexperience, however, was costly for Penn State in the opening quarter, especially with Tommy Ritner, who had beaten out Michael Palm, at quarterback. The Nittany Lions played “over-anxious and as result were given numerous penalties.” Penn State held a 7-0 lead entering the second quarter when, as the Dutchmen were forced to punt the ball away, Killinger replaced Ritner and quickly ran for a touchdown. Killinger recalled, “Bezdek was obviously disgruntled with the team and substituted me to return the [Lebanon Valley] punt.” Killy then caught the ball on the run at the 15-yard line, sprinted up the middle for fifteen yards, then cut to the right. He tiptoed the sideline for the touchdown.⁹ Killinger scored once more on a 20-yard off tackle run in the second half.

The following morning, the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* wrote, “A strange feature of the game was that the second team sent in by Coach Bezdek looked better than the first.” This was “largely due to the sensational running back of punts by Killinger,” the

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newspaper added, who “showed flashes of greatness while piloting the second team and seemed to be recovered from the injury secured during practice.”

Killinger started the following week in a surprisingly close 24-0 victory over Gettysburg. Penn State played without Joe Lightner, its bruising halfback who sprained his shoulder in the previous contest. Penn State scored within two minutes of the opening kickoff when a Gettysburg punt was blocked and recovered. On Penn State’s first play from scrimmage, Killinger handed off tackle to sophomore E. H. Cornwall, who skirted twenty yards for a touchdown. Killinger later scored on a plunge through the middle in the fourth quarter. The press learned after the game that Bezdek told Gettysburg’s coach Bill Wood that his team would not throw any passes and would run plays only to the strong side of the line.

Of great interest to fans before and during the game was the presence of Hinkey Haines, who worked as the backfield coach at Gettysburg. “Hinkey Haines may mean nothing more than a Czecho-Slovak dispatch to the average country newspaper but to the real football and baseball fan-well in the words of the poet, ‘Hinkey’ is some pumpkin,” wrote the Gettysburg Times before the game, “It was he who with Charley [sic] Way and Killinger . . . gave Penn State its greatest backfield.”

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Seven days later, Killinger was back to full form as quarterback, safety and punter against Penn State’s “first real test,” the Twin-City Daily Sentinel alleged, the “scrappy” North Carolina State Wolfpack. Killinger “scintillated all afternoon,” wrote the Harrisburg Telegraph. The most spectacular play of the game was Killinger’s 70-yard punt return along the right sideline for a touchdown in the third quarter. On a subsequent possession, Killinger had a 54-yard touchdown called back. According to an old Bezdek custom, he explained, when a touchdown was called back for a penalty, the coach demanded that same play would be run again. “We ran the same play,” he recalled, “and I scored the TD,” a 59-yard jaunt through the center of the line. For the second consecutive year, Penn State held the team from Raleigh scoreless, winning 35-0.

Radio and Football

Penn State’s third straight shutout was overshadowed by a development coming out of Pittsburgh. For the first time in the history of college football, play-by-play of a game was commercially broadcasted over the radio. The so-called “Backyard Brawl,” an annual contest played between the University of Pittsburgh and West Virginia University, aired on Westinghouse’s KDKA. Not even a year old, KDKA wasted little time before it began broadcasting boxing matches and Major League Baseball games. Hugo Bezdek lobbied to no avail to get the Pittsburgh-based station to transmit Penn State games. In fact, in what is considered the first collegiate broadcast by the station, KDKA had aired

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14 “Carolina State vs. Penn State,” Twin-City Daily Sentinel, October 6, 1921, 6; “Penn State to Get Real Test,” Harrisburg Courier, October 2, 1921.
15 “Snell is Star for Penn State,” Harrisburg Telegraph, October 11, 1921, 13.
Bezdek’s address to the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association on April 9, 1921.

This was a revolutionary innovation. Radio’s ability to reach large numbers of people simultaneously could irrefutably help promote his football team, Bezdek thought. In particular, it could help give exposure to his quarterback for whom he had been petitioning Walter Camp hard for consideration to the Camp All-American team. When he failed to get a commitment from Westinghouse to even broadcast the future Thanksgiving Day game against Pittsburgh, Bezdek reached out to an old rival for another means of exposure. Talks began in mid-October between Bezdek and Enoch Bagshaw, first year head coach of the University of Washington Sun Dodgers, to arrange an extra game after each team finished the regular season schedule. No commitments were made as of yet, but the prospect that Penn State could play a season finale in the state of Washington excited a lot of people. The coastal matchup would go a long way for placing Penn State in contention for a national title in the opinion of the sportswriters as well as make a case for Killinger as the top quarterback in the land. And quite possibly, the game could be broadcasted on Penn State’s newly minted radio station, operating under the call name 8XE, which had obtained an experimental license from the U.S. Department of Commerce earlier that year.\footnote{“Tune in Your Radio and Get State College News,” \emph{Penn State Alumni News}, Vol. 9, No. 3, November, 1922, 10; Gilbert Crossley, “History of 8XE,” December 1, 1952. A 555.02, Box 1: Campus Radio, PSULSC; Kathleen O’Toole, \emph{Intercollegiate Football and Educational Radio: Three Case Studies of the Commercialization of Sports Broadcasting in the 1920s and 1930s} (Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, August 2010).} For as exciting as the prospect of playing a game 2500 miles from campus, Penn State had to get through its challenging schedule.
A few days before Penn State’s next game against Lehigh in State College, Bezdek pulled his starting backfield from practice and replaced them with the second string. Lehigh was without a loss, had just defeated Rutgers, 7-0, and had yet to give up a point in the young season. On Bezdek's mind additionally was Penn State’s languid effort against Lehigh the previous season that had ended in a tie, and likely ruined its chances to be crowned best team in the East. So he sent a message to Killinger and his teammates that if they would fail to play with precision in the early stages of the intrastate contest, he wouldn’t hesitate to insert a different backfield tandem into the game.

The skull session helped. On the afternoon of October 15—homecoming at Penn State—the unbeaten Nittany Lions methodically took care of Lehigh in front of 10,000 spectators. Penn State scored in the first minute of play when left end Stan McCollum picked up a Lehigh fumble and raced thirty-six yards for a touchdown. They scored again in the second quarter after a series of off tackle runs saw Pete Redinger skirt off the right end for a touchdown. Joe Lightner and Killinger added touchdowns in the fourth quarter, and the game ended 28-7.18

By now, everyone in the East was talking about Penn State’s potential as a legitimate contender. Work began immediately to prepare for undefeated Harvard, whose defense had given up just seven points through their first five games. “The Pennsylvanians are fast rounding into a powerful machine, one of the strangest Hugo Bezdek ever turned out,” wrote sportswriter William Abbott, adding “Penn State elevens

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always play hard and smart football.”19 History, nonetheless, was against the Nittany Lions. Harvard and Penn State had met just three times previously. Harvard led the series 2-0-1.

Bezdek adopted the slogan “On to Harvard!” in the week leading up to the game. Citing previous success against major Ivy League opponents, such as the University of Pennsylvania in 1919 and 1920, and Dartmouth in 1920, Bezdek said, “all other thoughts [other than on Harvard] are relegated to the background until after the contest with the Crimson.”20

Like many footballers, Glenn Killinger was superstitious. All season long he took the same route to and from the practice field each evening. He got in and out of bed on the same side every night and morning. And on game days, he wore his stockings turned inside out.21 As illogical as those behaviors sound, and despite the ribbing that came from his teammates, he paid extra attention to those habits in the lead up to the Harvard contest.

On to Harvard the team went. After an overnight train ride on sleepers departing from Tyrone, Pennsylvania, the Nittany Lions arrived in Boston as slight underdogs. “Harvard supporters are given odds of 10 to 8 that their team will win,” the Harrisburg Telegraph reported.22

20 “‘On to Harvard’ is Slogan at Penn State,” Scranton Republican, October 19, 1921, 16.
21 “Penn State Players Not Superstitious, But—,” Pittsburgh Post Gazette, December 9, 1921, 9; “Killinger Goes to Bed So-So To Thwart Jinx,” Indianapolis Star, January 2, 1922, 14.
22 “Glenn Killinger to Pilot State,” Harrisburg Telegraph, October 21, 1921, 21.
The pivotal East Coast matchup featured contrasting style quarterbacks. Like Killinger, Harvard’s Charley Buell was a candidate to be an All-American selection. In contrast, the Ivy Leaguer’s method of play differed greatly from Killinger’s run and gun style. Writing for the *New York Herald*, Grantland Rice described Buell’s traditional approach more suited to make him the best field general in the East. Buell selected the plays and was a fine punter. He seldom received the snap and did little running or passing. “Harvard’s system is to use the quarterback as a field general almost exclusively,” wrote the *Oregon Daily Journal*, “no quarterback can be tackled, hammered and constantly battered, and have the brain function properly. Harvard depends on the quarterback for strategy.”

Killinger, meanwhile, touched the ball nearly every play. In addition to sizing up the defense and calling plays accordingly, “Killinger passes the ball, punts, drop-kicks, and runs,” said Robert “Tiny” Maxwell of the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger*, “He is an ideal combination man.” Killinger represented a new, ever more equalizing quarterback just beginning to manifest itself in a kind of practical gridiron impulse. Killinger was very much a man of his time: he punted, passed, kicked, ran, and barked out signals better than any of his childhood heroes ever had. If Penn State could pull off the upset, sportswriters believed, Killinger would become the trendsetter for a new age of quarterback play.

During the previous week of practice, Bezdek’s assistant, Dick Harlow, reported that every visiting team fumbled the ball over to Harvard on the first play of the game. In

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the locker room before the game, Bezdek looked at Killinger and said, “Killy, you are an old veteran, you carry the ball off-tackle on the first play. You won’t fumble!”

The game began when Killinger returned the opening kickoff to the 30-yard line. Then, just as his coach requested, he called his own number for an off-tackle run to the right. Just as he drove through a small hole at “full speed ahead,” he met a Harvard linebacker head-on. “I went about five yards back and the ball flew five yards forward with Harvard recovering the fumble,” Killinger wrote in his memoir. He refrained from making eye contact with his coach “for the remainder of the half.”

Harvard’s possession ended in a missed field goal. On their next possession, however, Harvard proceeded to score off of a series of line plunges and buck sweeps. Minutes later, the Crimson scored once more to lead by fourteen points.

The Nittany Lions re-entered the game in the second quarter after Killinger shook off nerves to pilot his team seventy yards on seventeen plays for a touchdown. Acting as captain for the injured George Snell, Killinger called close formations that positioned all four backfield players up close to the line of scrimmage. Before the snap, he quickly signaled shifts to the right or left, then “uncorked a series of plays that completely bewildered Harvard,” wrote the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. The plays that Killinger called embodied a mix of line plunges with double passes to receivers streaking down the field and short delayed passes directly behind the linebackers. When inside the 5-yard line, the determined quarterback called his own number by showing a forward pass, but as he

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rolled to his right, he tucked the ball away and plunged over the goal line for Penn State’s first score. Harvard led 14-7 at half time, but Penn State had the momentum.

Bezdek’s first words to Killinger since the fumble on the opening play came as the team jogged off the field at the half. “I saw Bezdek walking towards me,” Killinger said. “I angled away from him but he kept coming and finally I was trapped.” The impassioned coach said only one thing: ‘Killy, you are an old veteran, you won’t fumble.’” Bezdek did not say another word to his quarterback. “We were a sober and angry team between halves,” recalled Killinger, who did most of the talking. He openly criticized himself for fumbling, which he said led to his team’s early fourteen-point deficit. Years later, he could still remember the feeling of his team regrouping in the locker room: “I knew we were ready to play a tough second half and I could hardly wait.”

Penn State had taken its beating in the first half. Rags Madera, the team’s big left tackle who was also an intercollegiate heavyweight-boxing champion, suffered a career ending broken leg on the opening kickoff. Starting fullback Frank Hess and halfback Pete Redinger were also knocked out of the game. As expected, Killinger put the team on his back in the second half. He and reserve halfback Harry “Light Horse” Wilson are credited with carrying the ball on ninety-percent of Penn State’s running plays.

After forcing a Harvard punt in the third quarter, Penn State’s first drive of the second half began in the shadow of its own goal posts at the 6-yard line. With the help of

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26 “Crimson Host, Near Defeat, Spurts to Deadlock, 21 to 21,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, October 23, 1921.
sophomore sensation Wilson, Killinger guided his team ninety-four yards for a game tying touchdown and extra point. Using his earlier tactics, Killinger drove the ball to the 33-yard line. “The Crimson found it difficult to find the man with the ball,” the 

*Harrisburg Evening News* wrote. “Killinger, the Penn State quarterback, kept his plays covered up and had Harvard at sea guessing to whom he would pass the ball or whether he would run with it himself.”29 Near midfield, Killinger called a misdirection play, giving the ball to Wilson who broke clean to the Harvard 8-yard line. The halfback Joe Lightner scored three plays later to tie the game, 14-14.

There was a play during the drive when Wilson was slow to get off the ground. Killinger approached him and said, “Come on, Harry, give the referee the ball.” Wilson had been kicked in the mouth and lost a tooth. His nerve was exposed. “Killy didn’t have much sympathy,” Wilson recalled. The young halfback remembers Killinger saying, “What can we do about that?” Later that night as the team boarded a train at the Boston station the referee spotted Wilson and handed him his tooth.30

After two punt exchanges, Penn State had the ball at its own 15-yard line in the fourth quarter. Killinger ran for a gain of forty yards and completed two passes to McCullom, reaching the Harvard 15-yard line. After two losses accumulating for five yards on first and second downs, Penn State faced third down and fifteen yards to go. Killinger threw a forward pass directly over the middle of the defense where Lightner circled out of the backfield and took the ball to the 8-yard line. On fourth and short, most people present thought Killinger would to call his own number; instead, he audibled a play for Lightner who broke through the defense and scored a touchdown. Penn State

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30 Riley, *The Road to Number One*, 205.
obtained its first lead, 21-14, and was on the brink of pulling off the biggest upset of the season.

On the ensuing possession, in conditions so dark that sportswriter Will B. Johnstone said, “one could see flashes of cigarettes [sic] in the darkened stands,” Harvard’s Charles Buell threw a rare pass, letting loose a long heave down the right sideline where end Little “Winnie” Churchill, a remarkable running back so nearsighted he was normally useless in the pass game, had gotten behind Killinger to make a running catch about five yards from the Penn State goal. Churchill carried Killinger over the goal line for the score. The extra point by Buell was good.

In the pitch-blackness that had enveloped all of Cambridge, Penn State mounted one final attack to score. Starting the drive at the 13-yard line, Killinger completed a 22-yard pass to Lightner. After another first down, a roar from the crowd went up as Killinger faked a pass and ran toward the right sideline, then reversed the field, galloped across the field to the left and was brought down at Harvard’s 15-yard line. There was time for one play, but Killinger was sacked for a loss when he dropped back to heave a final pass. The game ended, 21-21.

In the dark evening air, Killinger told reporters crowded around him that he “would have opened up his aerial attack but for the fact that darkness made it decidedly too big a risk with a tie assured.” Since both teams were wearing dark uniforms—Harvard wore dark crimson jerseys with black helmets while Penn State had on Navy

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blue jerseys and black helmets—he said, “it was too dark to distinguish readily between friend and foe at some little distance away.”\textsuperscript{32}

Sportswriters covering the 1921 team considered the tie with Harvard a triumph for Penn State, and many hinted that stars were born that weekend. A day after the game, the \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Post} reported that Penn State had a new dynamic duo in its backfield in Killinger and Joe Lightner. Both hailing from Harrisburg, and both having played together on Penn State’s record-breaking 1921 baseball team, Killy and Lightner were now among the best backfield tandems in the country. “The pair scored every one of the 21 points the visitors rolled up [against Harvard],” wrote the \textit{Daily Post}.\textsuperscript{33} At this point in the season, Lightner’s five touchdowns and nine extra points—for a total of thirty-nine points—ranked sixth in the nation in scoring. Lightner’s milestone was doubly impressive considering he missed two of Penn State’s five games. Killinger’s five touchdowns placed him twelfth in the country.

\textbf{Polo Grounds}

The hoopla before the next game against southern powerhouse Georgia Tech was unprecedented for Penn State. The contest, scheduled to be played at Polo Grounds in upper Manhattan (located in present-day Harlem), was blessed with the presence of two

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} “Georgia Tech and Penn State Both Rely on Offensive Game,” \textit{New York Tribune}, October 27, 1921, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{33} “Penn State Holds Harvard to Tie in Spectacular Game,” \textit{Pittsburgh Daily Post}, October 23, 1921, 18; “Lightner Sixth Among Scorers,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, October 25, 1921, 17.
\end{itemize}
World War I heroes, General John J. Pershing of the American Expeditionary Force and Ferdinand Foch, Marshal of the French Army during the Great War.³⁴

Originally called the Georgia Institute of Technology, the Yellow Jackets once gained notoriety as one of the country’s top football teams under the tutelage of John W. Heisman. During the wartime adventure of 1917, Georgia Tech split the first International News Service national championship with Pittsburgh. Sports columnist Hal Reynolds of the *Atlanta Constitution* coined a nickname for Heisman’s 1917 squad, the Golden Tornado. The Georgia Tech student body fancied the new moniker and adopted it as their catchy mascot for the next twelve years.³⁵

After sixteen seasons and 104 wins, Heisman moved on to the University of Pennsylvania after the 1919 season.³⁶ With Heisman’s assistant Bill Alexander as their new coach, the Golden Tornado still dominated the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association, having won the conference title in 1920 (and later in 1921 and 1922). Georgia Tech had just come off a 48-14 trouncing handed to Rutgers, whose coach said after the game, “The Georgia Tech backfield in the game against my team did things that brought me to my feet applauding instinctively an exhibition of football that I rarely have seen equaled on any field by any team.”³⁷ Although its schedule was not as strong as Penn State’s, the Golden Tornado had only given up fourteen points all season—all to Rutgers—and won by margins of 42-0 over Wake Forest, 70-0 over Davidson, 69-0 over

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³⁴ “Foch and Pershing to Witness Tech-Penn State Game,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 27, 1921, 1.
³⁶ Heisman, 146-85.
Furman, and topped Oglethorpe 41-0. The sportswriters questioned whether Penn State had the defensive power to stop four-time All-Southern quarterback David “Red” Barron, who was also the South’s 60-yard indoor sprint champion, four-year starter wrecking-ball All-American fullback Julian “Judy” Harlan, and the mighty Georgia Tech offense.

In truth, Georgia Tech and Penn State’s styles resembled one another. Assistant coach Dick Harlow, who scouted Georgia Tech in Atlanta the previous week, said “their team was easily the equal of our team and possibly better if we did not play up to our ability.” They each possessed a diverse attack that included line plunges, misdirection buck sweeps off tackle, perimeter runs, and what the *New York Tribune* called “a liberal mixture of forward passing.”

Sportswriter William Abbott said before the game that Killinger could be the difference maker. Abbott claimed, “Killinger at quarterback is the keystone of the team’s offense. He is a veteran, a crafty general, who can run and throw with equal skill.” At its pep rally the day before the game, the captains of Georgia Tech sang a few lines of a song they composed about the game. “We are on the way to the Polo Grounds to smash the Yanks from the opening down. We are big and tough enough, we are the fighting engineers from Georgia Tech.” The ditty, Killinger wrote, “really aroused our anger and made us a more determined football team.” Meanwhile, at Penn State’s pep rally, held at an undetermined location in New York City, Killinger was told by his coach to make a speech to the crowd. Penn State fans had nothing to worry about, he told listeners. “Our

40 Abbott, 34.
forefathers stopped the Rebels at Gettysburg” and that Penn State “would stop them at Polo Grounds!” That remark incited the crowd, who embarked on an impromptu parade downtown.\textsuperscript{42}

Time spent inside the exalted Polo Grounds ballpark before the game could have obstructed the players’ focus, as Penn State dressed in the New York Baseball Giants’ locker room. “I could hardly believe that my idolized Giant baseball heroes had dressed in this same room,” Killinger said with reverence, adding, “I pictured John McGraw, Christy Mathewson and all the other N.Y. Giants of national fame gathered in this room.” As Penn State took the field for warm ups, Killinger admitted, “I was further awed when I saw the high capacity crowd of some 33,000 spectators [sic]. The grass on the outfield was cut short like a golf green and was fast and a pleasure to run on. The weather was perfect and our team was sky-high and ready to go.”\textsuperscript{43}

Near the end of pregame, the referee called Killinger, who was again acting as team captain in place of the sickly George Snell, to the center of the field where he met Georgia Tech’s captain Judy Harlan, who towered over the much shorter and gaunt Nittany Lion quarterback. There were two-dozen New York photographers taking pictures as the two shook hands while the referee tossed a silver dollar in the air for the coin-flip, which was won by the southern contingent.

What happened next was history for the men from Mount Nittany. Led by Killinger, who turned in his most brilliant performance of his career, Penn State pulled off a 28-7 upset win over one of Georgia Tech’s strongest teams in its history.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 38.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 39.
Georgia Tech scored first in the opening quarter when the “Red” Barron picked up sixty yards on a wide toss and Harlan followed with a buck sweep off tackle that found the end zone. Penn State found itself trailing for the third consecutive week. The moment, though, was fleeting.

Killinger fielded the ensuing kickoff at the 15-yard line, weaved through the defenders and raced down the right side of the field, all the way for a touchdown. He recalled with pride, “I put my chin on my chest and really sprinted about 50 yards for the TD. I heard footsteps thudding behind me and I dove over the Ga. Tech goal line.” At a cocktail party in New York years later, Killinger was approached by future Hall of Fame Major League Baseball infielder Frank Frisch who told him, “he had a seat on the 50 yard line at the Ga. Tech game. When I ran for the TD, he ran the last 50 yards in the aisle. When he returned to his seat he discovered that he had torn . . . his pants by catching his pants in the folding seat.”

Killinger’s score became the talk of the country. One witness said “our voices left us with Killinger’s remarkable run.” Renowned sports editor of the New York Tribune Grantland Rice described the play: “Georgia Tech made six first downs against nothing for Penn State, but on the next kick-off the ball settled lightly into the arms of Killinger and the ‘Red Deer’ was on his way through the golden autumn afternoon with the entire Tech team in pursuit.” Rice said onlookers were “lucky” to witness a kickoff returned for a touchdown in “one of the big games.” He added, “Only a great back of the Killinger

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44 Ibid, 40.
type is qualified to make such a play, and as he bounded into the open beyond midfield
the entire stand arose to pay him tribute."\textsuperscript{46}

Walter K. Ross, an impartial spectator who traveled from Washington D.C. to
attend the game, wrote to his father in Harrisburg, “Killinger’s fine run had robbed the
Georgians of their courage and resourcefulness."\textsuperscript{47} Penn State went on to score three
more unanswered touchdowns, including a twelve-yard off tackle run to pay dirt by
Killinger, to win by an impressive margin. The difference could have been worse, but
Georgia Tech prevented Penn State from scoring on two additional occasions within the
10-yard line. Ross continued, “The forward passes, some of which were executed
superbly, added greatly to the brilliant work of State’s quarterback, and should cause
Walter Camp to place him on his All-American eleven without further consideration.
Harrisburg may well be proud of Killinger, as the college undoubtedly is.”

Calling Penn State a “Wonder Squad,” southern sportswriter Cliff Wheatley
asked, “What hit us?” He wrote, “Penn State had everything. There is nothing that I can
think desirable in a football team that these Nittany Lions don’t possess . . . strength . . .
power in the backfield, good punting, fine generalship, a bewildering pass system, and a
general attack that is as varied as it is effective.”\textsuperscript{48}

The \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, Georgia Tech’s hometown newspaper, praised
Killinger’s performance. “Penn State’s aerial system would be a complete failure without
the services of an accurate tosser, but Killenger [\textit{sic}] tops off his incomparable broken-
field running and kicking with unnerving accuracy in throwing, making him one of the

\textsuperscript{46} “Killinger is Penn State Star,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, November 2, 1921, 17.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, “Killinger is Penn State Star,” November 2, 1921, 17.
\textsuperscript{48} “Golden Tornado is Defeated 28-7 by Wonder Squad,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, October
30, 1921, 3.
few football players in the country at this time around whom a triple threat could be built. When he starts calling signals from any formation, a team is likely to start centering their eyes on him, and another runner is given a mighty good chance to gain some ground.”

In addition to his two touchdowns, Killinger accounted for 200 punt and kickoff return yards. He added another 100 yards either running the ball or passing to his receivers. Wheatley said, “he is simply not capable of being brought down by a single tackler.” He added after the game, “it is doubtful if he can be left off any of the all-American selections.”

In the locker room after the game, Georgia Tech’s coach Bill Alexander congratulated Killinger. Alexander said the Nittany Lion quarterback played “the best game he had ever seen a quarterback play in his many years at Ga. Tech.” Bezdek then called Killinger to his dressing room where he was talking with, what Killinger described as, “a very distinguished looking gentleman who was neatly dressed and had a small mustache.” It was Walter Camp, the foremost authority on college football. Standing there in his signature trench coat and bowler fedora, Camp congratulated Killinger on winning the game. Killinger wrote nostalgically in later years, Camp “especially mentioned that I had demonstrated remarkable ability in open-field running with the ball.”

A few days later, the New Castle News called Killinger: “concentrated T.N.T.” “How many quarterbacks,” the newspaper queried, “could possibly be much better than this lad is hard to figure.” The Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger followed up the

49 Ibid. 3.
50 Ibid. 3.
51 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 42.
comment by saying, “Killinger is one of the best quarterbacks in football today. He’s a
‘bad man’ in the broken field, he runs well from scrimmage formation and is a good field
general.”

With a lot of media attention on Glenn Killinger after the victory, people started
to notice that Penn State had not lost in twenty consecutive games. It was the longest
active streak in college football, dating back to the 1919 season when Penn State last lost
to Dartmouth in week three of Killy’s non-lettered year.

Seven days after the trouncing of the Golden Tornado, Penn State started slowly,
but ultimately took care of business in a snowstorm by defeating Carnegie Tech of
Pittsburgh (present-day Carnegie Mellon) 28-7. For the fourth straight week, Penn State
found itself losing by seven early after a hook-and-ladder play yielded a 55-yard
touchdown for Carnegie Tech. In the second quarter, Killinger intercepted a Tech pass
deep in Penn State’s territory then, moments later, scored his team’s first touchdown to
tie the game a seven-all. He later fumbled on Tech’s 10-yard line, which kept the game
tied at half time. After Killinger’s 45-yard kick return to open the second half, he threw a
40-yard pass to Harry Wilson. Then Joe Lightner took the ball over the goal line for the
lead. Wilson added two more scores in the second half to give Penn State a comfortable
margin of victory.

“All-American Season is In,” *New Castle News* (New Castle, PA). November 2, 1921,
6; *Evening Public Ledger*, November 9, 1921, 21.

“‘On To State,’ Tech Slogan As Game Looms,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, October 30,
1921, 27; “Irresistable [sic] Offense of Nittany, Warriors Downs Carnegie Tech Team,
28-7,” *Penn State Collegian*, November 8, 1921; “Tech-State Game in Detail,”
*Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, November 6, 1921, 23; “Nittany Lions Unruly After Plaid
Threat; Battle in Snowstorm,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, November 6, 1921, 23; “Penn
State Keeps Record of Victories Unbroken,” *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, November 6, 1921,
On November 12, with the odds stacked against them, Penn State had its chance to shock the sports world once again as it matched up against the Naval Academy in a game the *Washington Times* said “will largely determine the final rating for both teams.” Under the coaching of Bob Folwell, Navy presented itself as another opponent that entered the game undefeated and without having given up a point. In fact, Coach Harlow, who returned from scouting the Midshipmen’s game against Princeton, a 13-0 drubbing in which Navy did not yield a first down, reported to the team that Navy was definitely the best team on their schedule. During his chalk talks all week, Bezdek hammered the fact that Navy was bigger and better. “Bezdek needled us and told us that Navy was too tough for us and would run us off the field,” recalled Killinger, who knew what his coach was trying to do, but it “still got my temper so high that I was about ready to explode.”

In the locker room before the game, Bezdek made one final speech in front of the twenty-four players who traveled to Philadelphia’s Franklin Field, the neutral site chosen for the game as to accommodate the demand of a growing fan base. “He began his talk by describing the Navy team and their strengths and weaknesses,” Killinger illustrated. “He kept repeating how tough they were and he doubted our ability to stay on the same field with Navy.” He said with fury, “The longer Bezdek talked the more angry I became. Finally, I exploded.” Bill Martin, the team’s manager, was standing near the exit with the game ball in his hands. “I jumped up and yelled, ‘Come on, fellas!’ I brushed Bezdek aside and nearly flattened him. I grabbed the football and rushed to the exit door with the

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entire squad following close behind. We sprinted out to the playing field yelling like a bunch of lunatics.”

The scoring began in the first quarter when Navy, featuring a split formation that Penn State hadn’t seen all season, recovered an onside kick to start the game then marched forty-five yards to score their first, and only, touchdown of the game. It was the fifth consecutive week Penn State fell behind to begin a game. Killinger then trudged his team down the field with misdirection runs on the ensuing possession. He scored from twenty-two yards out around the left end, which, incidentally, was the first score of the season against the Midshipmen. The Penn State contingent, however, had to watch nervously for the next quarter after Lightner missed the extra point and the Nittany Lions trailed 7-6. Killinger remembered: “When Lightner and I were try[ing] for the goal, Navy gave us a lot of remarks about little boys and how they would run us off the field.” The trash talking was of a “vulgar character” that Killy described as “unprintable.” One for never backing down, he admitted, “I was not bashful and made some ungentlemanly remarks about their ancestors and the Naval Academy.”

As confident as ever, and in a steady drizzle, Killinger led his team to another score before the end of the first half. Starting from the Penn State 12-yard line, Killinger broke a run off tackle to Navy’s 43-yard line. After two Wilson runs mounted a first down, Killinger flung a forward pass to Lightner to the 25-yard line. Seven running plays

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56 Ibid, 44.
57 Ibid, 46.
later Lightner went over top of the Navy defense for the go ahead score. Penn State led 13-7 at half time.\(^58\)

Killinger made another play for the ages early in the third quarter to foil Navy’s second half scoring threat. Navy’s offense had relative success mixing forward passes with line plunges in the first half. Its game plan was to continue the same diet of runs and passes in the second half. Early in the third quarter, with the ball at its own 23-yard line, Navy plunged through center for four yards. On second and six, Navy called a play action pass that nearly burned the Nittany Lions for a score. Coach Bezdek fondly remembered the incident:

We were playing a regular box defense to stop their passes, with Lightner and Knabb close behind the line and Harry Wilson and Killinger farther back. ‘Killie’ had to watch for a quick kick, run, or most anything unexpected, for he was our safety man . . . The Navy called a pass play and Harry Wilson, then but a sophomore, was sucked in toward the center. The man he was to cover was off to the side ready to take an easy pass for a touchdown. Killinger diagnosed the play like a flash, saw Wilson’s plight and the open Navy man. Tearing at full speed across the field, he made a flying leap into the air, snatched the pass almost out of the arms of the waiting Middie end, and undoubtedly saved a touchdown by his alertness.\(^59\)

Penn State threatened the Navy defense on several occasions in the second half. Killinger’s 54-yard touchdown run on a trick play was negated by an offside penalty. Another scoring opportunity was halted when Killinger’s long pass to Ross “Squeaks” Hufford was dropped at the 5-yard line. Then the drizzle hardened to a downpour in the final period, which hindered the footing of players on both squads. The condition of the

\(^58\) “Middies’ Line Crumbles Before Driving Offense,” *Penn State Collegian*, November 15, 1921, 1, 5; “Penn State-Navy Clash in Detail,” *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, November 13, 1921, 25.

\(^59\) Hugo Bezdek, “The Headiest Play I ever Saw; The Best Player I Ever Coached” (date unknown, source unknown); “Penn State-Navy Clash in Detail,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, November 13, 1921, 25.
field played a large part in the second-half stalemate. When the game ended, Bezdek praised Killinger for his interception that “saved the game for us.”

The milestone victory over Navy was hailed as one of the most extraordinary feats in the annals of Penn State football. Glenn Killinger’s performance dispelled any last lingering doubt as to his talents as a field general and as a pure athlete. “There was no defense in the country that could have stopped him,” Grantland Rice wrote in *Leslie’s Weekly*, “as the strong Navy defense soon found out.” Navy was deemed infallible, having shut out every opponent before and after the showdown with Penn State. “Up field and down field,” Rice wrote in the *New York Tribune*, “the Blue and White marched steadily, surely and relentlessly.” This would not have been but for Killinger’s unrivaled speed. “He is as fast as a greyhound [sic] and as hard to pull down as a rhinoceros,” said Rice. “He starts at top speed and once under way can slip through an opening that is less than a span in width. He is one of those fast, elusive, hard running backs who is first hard to catch and then hard to stop even with a clean, hard tackle.”

The *Pittsburgh Gazette Times* echoed Rice’s remarks about Killinger’s performance. In the *Times*’ postgame analysis, Penn State’s quarterback was made out to be the game’s “dominating figure.” It wrote, “His open field running, generalship and defense on forward pass plays were factors that raised him into the class of all-American

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61 Bezdek, Ibid.
players.” There seemed to be some great significance in that as Killinger’s steady field generalship was every reason why the Nittany Lions had extended its no-loss streak to twenty-two games.

Penn State played a lot of big games in its history, including several in the 1921 season. Perhaps no game was more built up by the media than the much-awaited Thanksgiving Day intrastate clash against the University of Pittsburgh. Glenn Killinger had a distinct history playing against Pitt. In 1918, his S.A.T.C. team lost 28-6. During his non-lettered season in 1919, although he stood on the sideline in uniform, he watched his team win over Pitt 20-0. The two foes battled to a scoreless tie in a mud-covered field in 1920. Additionally, Glenn Killinger and Tom Davies, Pitt’s three-time All-American halfback who was considered by the Pittsburgh Gazette Times’ sports editor Harry Keck as “one of the greatest and most popular players that ever wore the Blue and Gold,” would meet fisticuffs one last time. The fabled individual rivalry between the two multi-sport athletes that dated back to 1918 would come to an end on Thanksgiving Day 1921.

The game was marketed as a Killinger-Davies showdown more than it was for Bezdek and Pop Warner—the two future Hall of Fame coaches. The athletic department at Pittsburgh reported it sold out all 32,000 seats at Forbes Field, although, Karl Davis, graduate manager of athletics at the university, said it could have sold 75,000 tickets if that many seats were available. The capacity crowd, said Harry Keck, “will be privilege

64 “Lions are Outrushed at the Outset but Win by Sudden Comeback,” Pittsburgh Gazette Times, November 13, 1921, 3.
to look at the greatest quarterback in the East and probably in the country in the person of Glenn Killinger.”

Despite a persistent drizzle, the city of Pittsburgh was crawling with people the day before the game. A large parade proceeded from Oakland to the downtown section. “Beat State” signs were hung up all over the city. More than 500 students and the band arrived from State College in the New York-Chicago express. The fans engaged in usual pregame trash talk. The bookmakers were favoring Penn State over the Panthers, offering bettors ten-to-six odds. And yet, in more than one way dark clouds hung overtop the city the evening before the game.

The Penn State factions grew nervous twenty-four hours before kickoff when the Pittsburgh Gazette Times ran an article suggesting Killinger was involved in a professionalism scandal similar to the one that took down Hinkey Haines the previous spring. The newspaper claimed that Pitt’s athletic department was going to protest Killinger’s eligibility, suggesting he was paid to play professional baseball and basketball. Details about the allegations were murky. The Gazette Times report did not give specifics. The accusations may have originated from Killinger’s ball playing days with the Klein Chocolate Company semiprofessional baseball team in the summer of 1919. Later, in a post-season interview with one of his hometown’s reporters, Killinger insisted that neither the Klein brothers nor any of the various summer twilight teams he played for during his summers of high school and college ever paid him. The Harrisburg Evening News defended him. The newspaper did not give specifics about Killinger’s relationship with the Klein brothers. Instead, it reported only on a transient moment when

66 Ibid.
Killinger played in the Allison Hill League. It wrote, “During the two seasons with which he played with the Rosewood club in the Hill league here he passed up many opportunities to earn ready change with semi-professional organizations of other places, and in many of the games in which he participated here he performed without remuneration.” Although believable, Killinger lied to the local newspaper. He did get paid to play semiprofessional baseball; if he didn’t get as much as money for travel expenses from the Klein Chocolate team in 1919, he revealed in his unpublished and incomplete memoir, written in 1987, that he was paid eighty-five dollars a game, eight games total (played only on Sundays), by Wilkes Barre of the Lycoming League during the summer before his senior football season.

There was a subsequent problem that surfaced just before the trip to Pittsburgh. Two recent publications in the *Harrisburg Evening News* and the *Scranton Republican* may have stirred the detractors. In late October, both newspapers reported that Killinger committed to play professional basketball for the Coatesville Coates of the Eastern Basketball League. And yet the element that the pundits failed to acknowledge was that Killinger had not yet signed a contract with Coatesville. He was scheduled to sign the contract after the new year, on January 1.

In a quick retraction that put the rumors to rest, Pittsburgh’s athletic department wrote a letter to the *Gazette Times* affirming that they did not plan on protesting the allegations toward Killinger. Graduate manager Karl Davis said, “The story is absolutely

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without foundation." Since it was Pitt that reported on Hinkey Haines’ professionalism violation the previous spring, Penn State did have just concern over the rumors. Frankly, Killinger was lucky.

Any accusation toward Glenn Killinger was forgotten on the afternoon of November 24 when a capacity crowd turned out for the game that was played on a cold, cloudy, windy, and wet day. From the outset, it became clear that both teams were going to have trouble moving the football, as the game was virtually a replica of the waterlogged 1920 contest when the two teams slugged it out on a surface of mud and puddles. “[F]rightful weather conditions,” said Princeton head coach Bill Roper, mired the day. “I have never seen a field in worse shape.”

The result was a 0-0 tie for the second successive year. Sportswriters were forgiving to the Nittany Lions, who were not dropped from consideration in the Eastern rankings. Walter Camp called the game “a joke.” He ranted, “It was a great pity that the Penn State-Pittsburgh game was played, as last year, in a sea of mud. The game promised to be one of the best of the year.”

The conditions made for an anticlimactic finish to the rivalry between Killinger and Tom Davies, although the play-by-play of the game makes it appear that they were the only two athletes on the field during the contest: either Killinger punting to Davies, or vice versa. “The battle between Davies, the Pitt captain and star, and Killinger, the State

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71 Walter Camp, “Development Shown in 1921 Grid Game Greatest in Decade,” Great Falls Tribune, November 27, 1921, 12.
quarterback and acting captain, was about an even thing,” said the *Gazette Times*’ Harry Keck. The Steel City sports reporter gave a slight edge to Killinger. “Killy was slightly steadier on his feet than Tom, and his sure handling of punts was remarkable,” wrote Keck, adding, “He caught the slippery ball on the dead run, high or low, scooped up bounders and made pickups, and never was guilty of a slip.” Killinger impressed with his kicking. Keck said, “He got greater distance to his kicks on average than Tommy, and he placed some of them in great style.” Keck granted a slight advantage to Davies for yardage on the ground. He said, “[Davies] advanced 23 yards and lost only one from scrimmage. Killinger gained eighteen yards and lost three.”

Most of Penn State’s offensive attack was limited by the conditions. The slippery and muddy ball made it nearly impossible for Killinger to pass with accuracy. Without traction on the surface, Penn State’s backs and ends couldn’t get open. The conditions, wrote the Penn State beat writer for the *Harrisburg Evening News*, “choked all the glitter and whirl and glory of a great football battle, and reduced it to a mere clutch and batter and spatter in the mud and wide, shallow pools of water.”

Penn State had one opportunity to score in the second quarter when a Killinger punt that went over Davies’s head was picked up and fumbled by a Pitt player. Penn State regained possession at the Pitt 18-yard line. On the next play, Penn State’s sophomore halfback Harry Wilson unfortunately fumbled, giving possession back to Pitt. The ball was in Pitt territory most of the game, but the Nittany Lions couldn’t score. Penn State was never in danger of being scored on.

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Immediately following the game with Pitt, the Nittany Lions left muddy Pittsburgh for a post-season contest against the University of Washington Sun Dodgers in Seattle for the sixteenth East-West Classic. The post-season game pitting the two coastal teams against one another was actually a commonality by 1921 as colleges believed national exposure would “increase their drawing power.” Historian Benjamin Rader writes, “all major college teams [in the 1920s] attempted to schedule at least one big intersectional game per season.”73 Penn State already had plenty of those, but a trip to the West Coast would bring a new level of attention to the remote college situated within the mountains of Central Pennsylvania.

Radio and Penn State

Adding to the hype surrounding the road trip, Penn State’s licensed radio station announced it would broadcast the game to the student body. This would not be the first commercial radio broadcast of a college football game. That honor was bestowed to the Backyard Brawl played between West Virginia and the University of Pittsburgh and aired on KDKA Radio in Pittsburgh with Harold W. Arlin providing the commentary. And it would not be the first non-commercial radio broadcast of college football: the October 9, 1920 clash between Texas A&M and Southern Methodist in Dallas own that crown. Instead, Penn State’s low-budgeted and student run broadcast that would soon be known as WPSC could only reach the students on campus.

As early as 1903, Penn State integrated special classes in wireless telegraphy. During World War I, the War Department selected the college as its center of training for the U.S. Army Signal Corps. After the military ban on civilian radio stations was lifted in

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October 1920, newly inaugurated president, Dr. John M. Thomas, allowed students and faculty in the Electrical Engineering Department to use the Army Signal Corps’ station as an experimental radio station called 8XE. Operating lawfully with an experimental license issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce, 8XE’s first wireless broadcast covered the presidential election in November of that year as it picked up dots and dashes from Westinghouse Electrical Company’s station under the call sign 8ZZ, later KDKA, which reported Warren G. Harding the next president of the United States. At the start of the fall semester in 1921, Penn State began construction on a new broadcasting station that could transmit audio point-to-point. Though still a decade away until radio became a fixture in the homes of the American public, college football in the early 1920s deserves much of the credit for popularizing radio. This new means of communication existed as another conduit to teach young men teamwork and toughness, in addition to delivering entertainment to an eager audience.

The Penn State-Washington game was actually scheduled at the midpoint of the season after the Nittany Lions emerged as a top contender in the East. The University of Washington had, in many regards, according to sports historian Daniel James Brown, the most successful football program of any team along the Pacific coastal states. Much due to the leadership of two famed coaches, Gil Dobie and Enoch Bagshaw, Washington had

racked up sixty-three consecutive victories without a defeat between 1907 and 1917. During that stretch, the Sun Dodgers amassed a record 1,930 points to its opponents’ 118. It must be noted that Hugo Bezdek, as coach at the University of Oregon for five years, was twice among the victims that fell prey to the Sun Dodgers. In 1921, however, the team from Seattle limped into the season finale. After winning its first three games against non-major college teams, Washington entered its contest against Penn State with a record of 3-3-1, including a humiliating 72-3 loss to its Pacific Coast rival, California.

Regardless of its record at that point in the season, Washington possessed several undeniable advantages over its upcoming foe. For one, the game was to be played on Washington’s home turf. The playing surface, made of sand and sawdust, was particularly abnormal for the nomads from Pennsylvania. Moreover, Penn State was asked to travel a long distance and across three time zones. These facts would no doubt leave the visitors in a state of lethargy. Last, a vigorous hatred of eastern colleges might carry the Sun Dodgers to victory. Brown expounds upon the cultural attributes that structure the coastal rivalry. Those in the East embodied attributes in stark contrast to their western counterparts. Brown said Westerners seemed “self-made, rough hue, wild, native, brawny, [and] simple.” Whereas those in the East appeared “a bit superior,” well-bred, sophisticated, moneyed, well read, and refined. Eastern snobbery habitually prevailed in the national press. Newspapers like the New York Times and Pittsburgh Post Gazette outright ignored covering teams on the West Coast. And during the few occasions when an East Coast school was defeated by a West Coast foe, media biases prevailed in the form of tailored stories around what the Eastern team did.

uncharacteristically wrong, as opposed to crediting what the Western team did right. The 1921 East-West Classic between Penn State and Washington was once again inked by the media as a clash between Eastern privilege on the one hand and western incivility on the other.

Although most observers saw Penn State as the true champion of the East, Bezdek, a westerner, considered the game a chance to showcase his football program in front of a Pacific audience hoping that a good showing would bolster consideration for a national title. Most in this part of the country still confused Penn State with the University of Pennsylvania. A special telegraph to the Gazette Times in Pittsburgh said, “In spite of the great record made by the football team, there is still a rather hazy idea in the minds of most football followers as to just where Penn State hails from.”

The Railroad, Sport, and Coastal Rivalry

Penn State’s team, composed of twenty-three players, traveled alone on a Pennsylvania Railroad train pulling ten Pullman cars complete with a formal dining car with tables for four and waiters wearing white jackets serving fine food. The train had a club smoker, although Bezdek and his training staff enforced a policy restricting his players from the habit. Killinger and his teammates behaved like eager college kids, as courteous porters, not much older than they were, provided free pillows and service with a smile. It was especially amusing to see childlike excitement befall upon the football stars as they monopolized the women’s toilet facilities and loitered in the club car. Upon reaching Bezdek’s hometown of Chicago, the team boarded a Northern Pacific Railway train destined for St. Paul, Minnesota, where the coaches allotted a few hours for the boys

76 “Nittany Lions to Close Big Season in Far West,” Pittsburgh Gazette Times, November 20, 1921, 27.
to explore. At other terminal stops along the “Route of the Great Big Baked Potato,” a slogan used by Northern Pacific to promote the railway’s historical connection to the oversized potato crops grown in the Yakima Valley of Washington state, the team’s trainer Bill Martin forced the players off the train for conditioning and sprints. Killinger remembered it as the time of his life: “Every time the train stopped at the numerous water tanks to take on cool water, we went outside with a few footballs and limbered-up by passing and kicking practice in our regular garb and jogged through signals.”

The Keystone travelers most enjoyed the train’s layover at the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana where they entertained the Salish and Kootenai tribesmen with football drills. With celebrity appeal, Killinger and his teammates showed the onlookers, who crowded around them, how to throw and punt a football. They even demonstrated how to tackle. Killinger said, “They stood around with mouths agape and were truly amazed at our maneuvers.” He expressed that the footballers shared the tribesmen’s admiration for the cultural novelty. “I believe we got a bigger thrill at watching the Indians in their native dress draped in colorful blankets and some with feathers stuck in their block western hats.”

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78 Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 49.
79 Ibid, 50.
Bezdeks plan was to arrive a week early, on Monday, November 28, to give his players enough time to get accustomed to the “climate, air currents, and the like,” the coach said to reporters. There were four inches of snow on the ground at the beginning of the week. The weather had a clear impact on the team’s focus and energy. On Wednesday, November 30, the team had a lackadaisical showing at practice. Bezdeks short fuse ignited as he kicked all of the first team players off the field except for Killinger and Harry Wilson. “Killy, you are next,” Bezdek indignantly chided to his quarterback, who retorted, “I didn’t come 3000 miles to lose my job.” The next day, all of the starters were back in the lineup.

In addition to the lousy conditions, the Nittany Lions would be without fullback George Snell and halfback Joe Lightner. Snell, who was plagued by injuries and a throat illness since late September, traveled west with the squad but was still not cleared to play. And in practice two days before the game, Lightner, a certain all-star selection, suffered an ankle injury, knocking him out of the lineup. The absence of Lightner bestowed all of the kicking duties to Killinger, who was already the team’s punter. The injury now meant that Killinger was forced to handle kickoffs, field goals, and extra points.

The absence of Lightner and Snell from the backfield hardly mattered in the game’s lopsided outcome, although their presence could have increased the margin of victory. The added responsibilities only allowed “Glenn the Great,” as Matt Zabitka of

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80 “Snell goes West with Penn State,” Reading Times, November 29, 1921, 10.
the Wilmington *News-Journal* called him, to close out his college career by
masterminding Penn State to a brilliant 21-7 win over Washington in front of 35,000 fans on December 3.\(^{82}\)

The first score came in the opening quarter when a torrent of Killinger runs and forward passes to Stan McCollum brought the ball to Washington’s 8-yard line. Arthur Knabb then went through the line for the touchdown. Killinger kicked the extra point. A few moments later, after Killinger fair caught a Washington punt, Penn State went on a 75-yard drive capped by a Killinger-to-McCullom forward pass for a touchdown in the second quarter. Inspiration for that drive spilled out from an altercation between Killinger and a Washington player moments after his fair catch. He recalled: “Their left tackle was a rough and tough player, according to his own thoughts. They had to punt and their punter kicked a very high punt. I called for a fair catch with half their team waiting for me to catch the punt and run. I knew I had no chance to gain yardage and made the only sensible decision. Their left tackle was crowding me and he called me several unprintable names for playing it safe. I told him that I was running the first four plays over his position and we would see how tough he was.”\(^{83}\) Killinger returned to the huddle before the ensuing play and told his teammates what just happened: “I wanted our blockers to concentrate on him and everybody that could hit him legally, to do so.” After four running plays off tackle, Killy boasted, “they carried him off the field.” Killinger recalled

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their captain apologizing for the lack of sportsmanship. He said, “Their left tackle caused trouble in practically every game.”

The Nittany Lions scored its third touchdown in the third quarter. The Gazette Times described the drive: “Killinger fought his way through on play after play, amazing the stands by his superb running.” Penn State had possession near Washington’s goal line when Killinger called Redinger’s number, who swept around the left end for the third unanswered scored. Killinger kicked his third extra point putting Penn State up 21-0. Washington’s touchdown came in the fourth quarter after a Penn State fumble.

Penn State’s offensive statistics were spectacular. Behind the generalship of Killinger, the Nittany Lions gained 530 yards from scrimmage against 90 for Washington; recorded thirty-two first downs to five for Washington; and completed 11-out-of-14 pass attempts—an aspect of the game that Washington was not yet accustomed to. What was believed in 1921 as an intercollegiate record, Killinger’s offense ran off 114 plays from scrimmage while Washington attempted just fourteen. “Killinger [is] one of the best quarter-backs ever seen on a [west] coast gridiron,” reported the Penn State beat writer for the Harrisburg Telegraph, who added with distinction, “Killinger’s equal is not in the Pacific Conference.”

After the game, Killinger and many of his teammates took a celebratory dive into icy Lake Washington. Unlike his celebrated game performance, that decision is recorded in the Penn State annals as one of Killinger’s worst calls of the season.

84 Ibid, 51-52.
86 “Killinger ends Career with High Grid Honors; Final Penn State Victory,” Harrisburg Telegraph, December 5, 1921, 17; Manager of Shamokin’s Baseball Team has had Meteoric Rise to Fame,” Shamokin News-Dispatch, March 25, 1926, 2.
The Nittany Lions finished the 1921 season with a record of 8-0-2, and ranked by all of the leading sportswriters including the New York Times as the best team in the East. “Considering the schedule Penn State has waded through and the fact that the men of the Nittany Mountain stand undefeated, it seems only proper that Hugo Bezdek’s protégés should be ranked as the champions,” said Times sports columnist Ray McCarthy.87

The two authorities on national rankings, Lawrence Perry and Walter Camp, ranked Penn State third in the country behind Notre Dame and Iowa.88 However, sports columnist Robert “Tiny” Maxwell rated the Nittany Lions as the country’s best team. He wrote in the Philadelphia Daily Ledger, “Penn State ended a transcontinental season in Seattle, Saturday, winning from the University of Washington 21-7. This victory gives State a clear title to any championship it wishes to claim, for the best teams in the East, South, and Far West have either been defeated or tied. State also traveled more than any other team and faced a harder schedule. Taking all in all, Penn State met all comers, dodged no opponent, went through a stiff schedule and has yet to lose a game. A record like that is worthy of recognition and we believe the Nittany Nomads are entitled to all championship honors that are lying around loose.”89

Indeed, the performance throughout the 1921 season was magnificent. The Nittany Lions had given Georgia Tech and Navy their only losses of the season. They went on the road and tied Ivy League powerhouse Harvard, and was just yards away from

89 “Penn State Team Was Best in East,” Penn State Collegian, December 9, 1921, 1.
winning before the final whistle blew. Still, some sportswriters asked how could Penn State be ranked ahead of some of the Midwestern teams after tying Pittsburgh, who had three losses? Granted, Pitt’s losses were to 10-0-1 Washington and Jefferson, 7-1 Nebraska whose only setback was to Notre Dame, and 9-0 Lafayette who flaunted wins over Rutgers and the University of Pennsylvania, and ranked fourth in Eastern polls and fifth in the country when the national rankings were released. The answer apparently was that football in the East was much better than the West in 1921. Notre Dame played a rigorous schedule, even though they lost one game, to Iowa, 10-7, in week three of the season. The Irish finished much stronger with impressive wins over Army, Rutgers, Nebraska and Michigan State. There was also Big Ten champion Iowa, which touted Frederick “Duke” Slater, the school’s first great African American who lettered four years as a tackle, and Aubrey Devine, the Iowa City “wonder man” who was perhaps the only quarterback in the country whose performance during the season measured up to Glenn Killinger’s. The flaw for Iowa was its weak schedule. After its victory over Notre Dame on October 8, none of Iowa’s five remaining opponents had a winning record.

At season’s end, Penn State’s record-breaking streak of games without a loss had extended to twenty-four games. (The streak will eventually stretch to thirty games before losing to Navy in the post-Killinger era on November 3, 1922.) Glenn Killinger was likely the reason. In his four seasons, 1918 to 1921, Killinger compiled a 23-3-5 record. He started 19-of-31 games. He played in twenty-three of those contests at either halfback or quarterback. Of the nineteen games he started, fifteen were at quarterback. Penn State never lost a game that Glenn piloted from the quarterback position. The Nittany Lions,

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with Killinger as a starter at either position, amassed a record of 13-1-5. Perhaps, the biggest accomplishment during his four years was the honor of winning two East Coast titles in 1919 and 1921, and given one national title by a Philadelphia sports authority. The thought of coming close to a third championship in 1920 but for two games ending in ties makes for a troubling reality of life in sports.

Asked many years later to explain how valuable Killinger was for his teams at Penn State, Hugo Bezdek said, “As a quarterback I would put Glenn up against any player I ever coached, ever seen or ever heard of in my many years in football. Glenn was a smart player, always thinking and alert to choose the right play for any situation. Not only would Glenn tell his fellow players what to do but he could and would do it himself.”

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91 West Chester Daily Local News, March 17, 1948; Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 42.
CHAPTER 12:
ALL-AMERICAN HERO

Glenn Killinger generally enjoyed train travel, which was the best method of traveling to away games. The excursions to Pittsburgh every year for the annual Thanksgiving Day game was especially important for bonding the team together. Penn State’s exceedingly tough travel schedule in 1921 had included trips to Cambridge to play Harvard, Philadelphia to play Navy, New York City to oppose Georgia Tech, the Steel City to face Pittsburgh, and, obviously, Seattle. The Nittany Lions covered a total distance of 8,500 miles during the season, a feat matched by no one until Notre Dame’s 10,500 miles of travel in 1924. Philadelphia Public Ledger sports columnist Robert “Tiny” Maxwell gave Bezdek’s boys the nickname “Nittany Nomads.” One editorial in the Pittsburgh Gazette Times called them the “Nittany Tourists.”¹

Bezdek and his assistant Dick Harlow arranged sightseeing stops in Salt Lake City and Denver, but not before spending a night in Portland, where the alumni of his former team, the University of Oregon, honored Bezdek.² The team enjoyed Salmon steak in Portland and a Western steak dinner at the famous Manhattan Restaurant in Denver. But in the down time on the train, Killinger had plenty of one-on-ones with his coach.

¹ “Penn State Football Team Known as Nittany Nomads,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 18, 1921, 26; “Nittany Lions to Close Big Season in Far West,” Pittsburgh Gazette Times, November 20, 1921, 27; Rader, American Sports. 183.
On this particular trip, the six-day journey home from Seattle did much to strengthen the bond between Killinger and Bezdek. The coach’s scion had a plethora of options in front of him. He was already sought-after by several major league baseball teams, he was now brooding about signing a contract with professional basketball’s Coatesville Coates, and he wished to try his hand in coaching. All of these options, and Killinger had yet to graduate from Penn State. Along the way back to Pennsylvania, Killinger needed Bezdek’s advice.

Talk of Killinger’s selection to a multitude of All East and All-American teams was already underway before the Penn State football team arrived back on campus. During the golden age, sports columnists from various newspapers would select their own All-American teams. In addition, more than 250 coaches would come together to make their selections of who they thought was the best eleven in the country. Killinger was selected first team in every poll—nine total. The most prestigious honor was to be named to Walter Camp’s list.

Camp was responsible for creating the “All-American team.” After playing and coaching at Yale in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Walter Camp became the foremost authority on intercollegiate football. He was the Navy Department’s athletic commissioner in 1917 and 1918 when he helped devise an organized sports program to help servicemen become more physically fit. It was Camp who offered up Hugo Bezdek’s name as a leading candidate for the Student Army Training Corps. Camp is the originator of the All-American idea. He first selected an All-American team in 1889. As a writer for several sporting magazines, Camp may have capitalized on shifting trends in
mass media by devising the idea of the “All-America” to make money. Ever since that inaugural All-American squad, Camp’s selections certainly generated debate among an interested readership. Though not always agreed to by the majority of sports followers, his teams were considered official.³

Shortly after the game with Washington, Killinger was named to Walter Camp’s All-American First Team at the position of halfback. The quarterback position was given to Aubrey Devine of Iowa. Devine and Killinger were spitting images at quarterback, and multisport luminaries on their respective campuses (Devine became a nine-time letterman at Iowa in football, basketball, and track and field).⁴ Camp said, Devine’s “play has been a model of consistency throughout the season on a team which has gone undefeated.” He commended Devine’s ability “to interfere and take hard knocks without exhaustion or injury.” As for Killinger, Camp said that although he played quarterback at Penn State, he “played virtually the halfback position.” Camp said Killy possessed, “the most peculiar elusiveness of any back on the field this year, and that, too, when apparently about to be stopped.”⁵

Glenn Killinger became Penn State’s fourth football player selected to Camp’s All-American first team, following on the heels of center William “Mother” Dunn in 1906; and two of Killinger’s former teammates, end Bob Higgins and halfback Charlie Way in 1919 and 1920, respectively. The first to tell Killinger the news was former University of Pennsylvania tackle Lou Little, a 1919 All-American selection. Little was,

⁵ “Walter Camp Puts Killinger at Half Upon All-American; Three Pennsylvanians on It,” Harrisburg Evening News, December 20, 1921, 27.
at the moment, trying to recruit Killinger to play for the Canton Bulldogs of the professional football league. Proud, but naturally coy, Killinger told his hometown newspaper: “[It’s] Very nice to get an All-American place, but a good bit of it was luck.” He wrote many years later, “I was completely amazed and my joy knew no bounds.6

The entire experience was humbling, in fact, considering that Killinger’s career started on the cold and hard, sometimes snow-covered field at Harrisburg’s Island Park with his brother Earl, learning the ins-and-outs of football. Nobody forgot that young Killinger was cut from the varsity team in high school every year except his senior year. Even then, he started only one game, which was a losing effort that found him back on the bench by halftime.

Killinger’s career of gridiron feats were something to marvel upon. John Heisman, former coach of the University of Pennsylvania who witnessed Killinger’s abilities directly in a 28-7 setback to Penn State in 1920, would publish “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Fame” with William Randolph Hearst’s King Features Incorporated in 1928. In “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Fame,” Heisman rated Killinger among the top college football players to ever play the game. Heisman’s approbation was directed at Killinger’s unrivaled football speed. The coach claimed, “On cinder tracks many men can go pretty fast in track suits but put a heavy football uniform on them and cumbersome shoes with cleats on their feet and they don’t look too much for speed. But Killinger fairly flew in any kind of togs.” The fact that Killinger was, as Heisman put it, “a self-made athlete,” was an unrivaled feat. It is a “point worth dwelling on more than the number of long runs he made,” said Heisman, adding, “and he made a

6 “A Line of Talk,” Harrisburg Telegraph, December 21, 1921, 1; Killinger, A Penn State Walk-On, 55.
lot of them.” Killinger must have had an idea that the legendary coach had honored him. “Heisman’s Hundred” was reprinted in newspapers throughout the country. If so, in classic Killinger style, he never related the accolade to anyone.

Attention was drawn back to Killinger decades later. In 1931, twelve Hall of Fame coaches including Pop Warner, then at Stanford, Gil Dobie of Cornell, Princeton’s Bill Roper, and Hugo Bezdek met to create a list of the best college football players of all-time. The coaches awarded five points for first place votes, four for second, three for third, two for fourth, and one for fifth. Being on the committee allowed Bezdek to have some influence on the voters. In the end, Killinger tied for seventeenth, behind players like Jim Thorpe, the easy selection for football’s greatest star, George Gipp and Harold “Red” Grange.

The Walter Camp All-American honor was a wonderful tribute to the Harrisburg lad who lined up a busy month before his graduation from Penn State. The college granted its students an extended vacation before they had to return to take final exams after the New Year. Glenn had until January 3 to return for finals. His graduation was scheduled for January 31, 1922.

Sport Journalism, Professionalism, and the Hometown Hero

In a way that few would understand, Killinger spent nearly every waking moment of break playing sports for profit. He was not the first collegian yet to graduate before capitalizing financially upon his fame; nor would he be the last. In truth, he had to.

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Killinger was in debt to family friends who helped pay some of the costs so that he could attend Penn State.⁹

With help from Hugo Bezdek, Killinger announced his willingness to play professional football as soon as a team would have him. Professional football operated in an obscure manner under the auspices of the American Professional Football Association (the initial name of the National Football League founded in 1920). Players of the APFA (NFL) weren’t always committed to one team, and often played for up to three teams during the course of a season. Killinger was in need of money, so he wasted no time shopping for a professional contract.

In early December, Killinger signed a one-game contract with Leo Conway, manager of the Philadelphia Quakers, to play in a game against the Canton Bulldogs. The game was played on Saturday, December 18 in Philadelphia. His mentor, Hugo Bezdek, watched from the sideline during the game. He had good reason. A considerable number of his former players were suited up that day. Canton’s roster included four of Bezdek’s former captains at Penn State: tight end Bob Higgins, center Larry Conover, and halfbacks Charlie Way and Harry Robb. Meanwhile, Killinger and his good friend Hinkey Haines were assigned to play the halfback positions in the Quaker lineup. There were other college star players who, like Killinger, had just finished their senior seasons, including Lafayette’s wonder-boy quarterback Johnny Scott for Philadelphia and Notre Dame’s sensational guard Hartley Anderson who played for Canton.¹⁰ Two weeks prior,

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Canton had edged out a 14-9 victory over Philadelphia, but the additions to the Quakers’ roster greatly improved the team’s talent.

Glenn Killinger dazzled in his professional debut in front of 12,000 fans at Phillies’ Park. The *Harrisburg Telegraph* called his performance for the Quakers “sensational.” Killinger threw a touchdown pass to Hinkey Haines and was responsible for three other scores after breaking several long runs deep into Canton territory. The Quakers won 34-0.  

The APFA season was already near its end, and former three-sport star at the University of Illinois and ensign in the U.S. Navy during World War I George Halas’s Chicago Staleys already claimed the championship of the American Professional Football Association in this pre-playoff era (the title was confirmed in January 1922 by the association’s executive committee). However, the addition of Killinger and Haines to the Philadelphia Quakers had sportswriters reconsidering who the best professional football team was at the end of the season. Sports columnist Jinx Tucker of the *Waco News-Tribune* argued, “the recently organized Philadelphia Quaker team appears much stronger on paper and in Hinkey Haines and ‘Kill Em’ Killinger, Penn State heroes, the Quakers have an attack hard to beat.” Tucker drew a comparison: “The Staleys were able to defeat Canton only 10 to 0, while the Quakers won from the same club 34-0.”

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The bearer of the APFA’s title was not important for Killinger. Making money drove his brief experience in professional football. Killinger’s professional debut with Philadelphia had been played on a Saturday because Pennsylvania blue laws prohibited professional sports on Sundays. Knowing that other professional teams preferred to play games on Sundays, Killinger had earlier reached out to both the Canton Bulldogs and Washington Professionals, who were scheduled to play one another the following day, to see if one or both would sign him, and if so, what team would offer a better contract. That night, after helping Philadelphia maul Canton, Killinger announced he would wear a Bulldog uniform on Sunday. So Killinger hopped a train from Philadelphia to Washington D.C. to play games on back-to-back days with two different teams.13

The largest crowd of the season for the host—7,000 fans, which was nothing close to what Killinger had experienced during his college football season—arrived at American League Park to witness the game between Canton and Washington. “Probably half of the crowd turned out lured by the prospect of seeing Glenn Killinger,” suggested Ray Helgesen of the Washington Herald. Killinger did not start, but when he substituted into the game, three of the Bulldogs’ backfield players represented Penn State—Robb, Way, and Killinger. The Bulldogs’ captain was former Nittany Lion Bob Higgins. Canton won the game 28-14. The analysis of Killinger’s performance, however, “proved more or less of a disappointment,” opined the Herald. His mediocre performance should have been expected, due in part by the fact he had just played his first professional football game less than twenty-four hours earlier. The Herald pontificated, “while brilliant in spots, [Killinger] was far from the form he flashed during the college season.” Killy was

13 “Glenn Killinger Certain to Play,” Washington Herald, December 18, 1921, 12.
criticized for fumbling five times, though it should have been expected for never having practiced snaps with the center or the timing of Canton’s plays with the backfield. The “Red Deer,” the Herald called him (a former Grantland Rice moniker), “lacked the drive and polish which marked it during the college season.” Killinger was tasked with the kicking duties for the Bulldogs. His punts, reported the Herald, averaged almost fifty yards and “were always well placed and with distance he always managed to get sufficient height, so that his ends were generally waiting for the ball to fall into the receiver’s arms.”

Though not as high profile as when Earl “Red” Grange joined the professional ranks with the Chicago Bears before his graduation from the University of Illinois in 1925, Killinger’s two professional games on successive days create quite a stir within the sporting world. Team-jumping did not cause the controversy—this was a common feature in professional football in 1921. Instead, like Grange four years later, many decried Killy for not yet having graduated from college. “The fact that Killinger has turned to professional athletics so soon is not to his discredit,” the Harrisburg Telegraph defended him. The hometown daily added, “when one is offered several hundred dollars for an hour’s work, it is a temptation that is hard for any person to resist, particularly a lad who is working his way through school.”

The professional experience was rewarding for a reason other than earning a quick buck. When Killinger grabbed the newspaper on the morning of December 24, he

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was delighted to see an image of himself superimposed on the sports page along side three-time Olympic gold medalist Ethelda Bleibtrey, US Open champion Molla Mallory, PGA champion Jack “Jock” Hutchison, member of the 1920 Olympic rowing team Clyde King, Grand Prix champion Johnny Duff, and baseball luminary George Herman “Babe” Ruth as the Associated Press’s “Champions in Sport” for the 1921 calendar year. The honor meant that he was selected the most valuable player in the game of football, both professionally and collegiately. It was an honor that left him speechless for the rest of his life.

While it was fun getting his feet wet playing professional football, Killinger’s plan was to join the Coatesville Coates of professional basketball’s Eastern League, which competed against teams from New York, Trenton, Camden, Wilkes-Barre, and Reading. Earlier in November, he had made arrangements with John Behney, coach of the Coates, to join the team on New Year’s Day in a game against the barnstorming New York Celtics at Madison Square Garden. And yet when January 1 arrived, Killinger was not in a basketball uniform.

Instead, Hugo Bezdek, acting in his role as athletic director, offered Killinger a more secure job as head coach of Penn State’s freshman basketball team. He accepted the position rather than play for Coatesville, which eventually earned a 6-14 record that season. Basketball practice at Penn State was to begin on January 3.

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Glenn Killinger leaned hard on Bezdek immediately following his senior football season. Coaching sports was something Killinger longed to do. Knowing this, in addition to hiring him to coach basketball at Penn State, Bezdek helped him get his first head-coaching job in football at a small but historic liberal arts college in Carlisle, Pennsylvania called Dickinson College.

The lowly football program at Dickinson had floundered near the bottom of the football ranks in the years following the Great War. In the three football seasons since World War I, Dickinson had trouble scoring and had attained an overall record of ten wins, twelve losses, and three ties between 1919 and 1921. In December 1921, Forrest E. Craver voluntarily resigned himself of the head coaching duties, but agreed to stay on as the director of physical education and athletics to counsel the new hire if asked to do so.18

The Dickinson Athletic Association was charged with finding a new coach. The college needed a celebrity coach, the kind Dickinsonians would get animated about. There were only two people in Pennsylvania that Dickinson’s Athletic Association could think of who were looking to coach and whom met that criteria: Glenn Killinger and Tom Davies. Hugo Bezdek sold his protégé pretty hard to the selection committee knowing that Davies’s coach, Pop Warner, had strong ties to the college town after serving as the football coach at the nearby Carlisle Indian School from 1899 to 1903, and again from 1907 to 1914. “Killinger plays the game scientifically,” Bezdek told the committee, “he is a natural football player and has a good head to command men.”19

18 “Little Lines from Nearby,” Harrisburg Telegraph, August 5, 1919, 2.
Dickinson was not only one of the worst programs among the small colleges on the East Coast, the sport was nearly terminated by the school’s administration in 1916.\(^{20}\) A change in leadership and a last-minute decision by the Athletic Advisory Committee to save the sport kept the program intact just before the United States entered the war. Then, the 1917 team lost many of its players and coaches to the war and one year later the college was converted into an S.A.T.C. institution with mediocre intercollegiate talent. By 1921, the team was not competitive and townspeople were losing interest in Dickinson football.

How could a competitor like Killinger tolerate as much imperfection as he would see at Dickinson? Glenn Killinger was an extroverted and gregarious leader who overcame steep odds by working hard all of his life. Yet, the question remained: a young man with a proven temper, could he remain poised enough to perform a job that required patience and tact? Killinger had been a leader at Penn State, having been elected captain of the basketball and football teams because of his ability to exert his influence on behalf of the team.

Then there was the proximity between Carlisle and Harrisburg where the best football talent in Pennsylvania over the last ten years was produced. Just twenty miles separated the two communities. Killinger’s ties to Central Pennsylvania would likely be a better fit to draw the best possible talent to Dickinson. The author of *History of Football at Dickinson College*, Wilbur “Goby” Gobrecht, who also coached at Dickinson between 1965 until 1979 and one season in 1984, claimed “‘Killy’ was to use his influence to get ...
alumni support and material out of the Harrisburg area.” Recruitment methods at this stage of college sports history was rudimentary and simple; nothing compared to the ingenuity of college visits, letter writing, and level of courtship used for recruiting in the twenty-first century. Talented prospects in this critical era of football were sought out, not by the coach, but by alumni, team members and students. Sometimes elite colleges in the Northeast—namely the Ivy League schools—were able to recruit promising players from preparatory schools, but for smaller and less remarkable colleges, the big draw was the name of the coach.

Then again, why would Killinger want the job? If he really desired, it is likely Bezdek would have placed him on his coaching staff at Penn State. Moreover, Killinger had not yet signed a contract with a major league baseball club, which was certainly going to happen after the New Year. At Dickinson he would be inheriting one of the worst small college programs in the East, with no tradition and uncertain support from the college’s administration. Actually, there was a bright side to coaching at Dickinson. If he chose to accept the position, Killinger, a twenty-four-year-old first year head coach, would be the benefactor of modest expectations. If the team’s record got no better, people would say that the players were awful and he would not be blamed. If the team improved, however, he would likely get the credit.

Negotiations between Killinger, via Hugo Bezdek, and the Dickinson Athletic Association, began as early as Penn State’s road trip to Seattle to play the University of Washington. On December 3, the Harrisburg Evening News broke the story that

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22 Rader, American Sports. 175.
Dickinson made Killinger an offer. According to the *New York Tribune*, Killinger
verbally accepted the job on December 29 under the terms that the college would not
penalize him if the major league baseball team that he would eventually sign with has a
season that runs beyond the start of the football season. Killinger stated that he would
sign the contract in February 1922, after his graduation from Penn State.

Upon signing the contract with Dickinson College, Killinger would become the
eleventh player under Hugo Bezdek at Penn State to become a college football coach.
Bob Higgins at West Virginia Wesleyan and Harry Robb at Catholic University,
members of the one-loss 1919 team, were already working as head coaches. Eight others
had become assistant coaches by 1922 including Ben Cubbage at Virginia Polytechnic
Institute, Larney Conover at Clemson, Hinkey Haines spent the previous fall at
Gettysburg but was about to join Bezdek’s staff at Penn State, Charlie Way at Dayton
University in Ohio, Harold Hess at the University of Southern California, Dick Rauch
assisted Bezdek at Penn State and later coached at Michigan. Clarence Beck will
eventually sign on to assist Killinger at Dickinson in the fall. (Joe Lightner would
ultimately become the head coach of Dickinson College after Killinger’s departure). Of
that group, Bob Higgins will be the one that returned to Penn State to replace Bezdek as
the head coach in 1930.

23 “Rumors Intimate Dickinson Has Made Offer to Killinger to Coach Football Next
Year.” *Harrisburg Evening News*, December 3, 1921, 17.
24 “Killinger to Join Yank Training Camp in Texas,” *Dickinsonian*, January 14, 1922, 2;
“Glenn Killinger Elected Football Coach For 1922,” *Dickinsonian*, January 7, 1922, 1-3;
“Killinger to Coach Dickinson Eleven,” *New York Tribune*, December 30, 1922, 14;
“Killinger Signs Contract to Coach Dickinson Team,” *Dickinsonian*, February 11, 1922,
1.
25 *New York Evening World*, October 29, 1921, 6; “Teach Coaching At Penn State,”
*Harrisburg Courier*, June 18, 1922, 3.
These were all young twenty-somethings taking on important coaching roles around the United States. It was more popular and financially advantageous to go into college coaching instead of pursuing a long career in professional football. Moreover, since colleges played games on Saturdays while most professional games were scheduled for Sundays, many young college coaches, like Killinger, could spend the week coaching only to moonlight as professionals on Sunday afternoons. Unlike baseball, where the major league offered more suitable contracts, longevity and fame, the pre and early-NFL era of football lacked officialdom. Players were paid on a game-by-game basis, there was no playoff system, champions were selected by a vote of the American Professional Football Association’s executive committee, and the media hardly paid any attention to the professional football ranks.

Killinger’s quest to play professional football was based solely on earning a quick buck. His coaching career, as unmapped as it was in 1921 and 1922, was to become a livelihood. Killinger’s career, of course, as a head football coach hinged on his success as a major league baseball player.

The owners of the New York Yankees in baseball were Jacob “Jake” Ruppert, a former member of the United States House of Representatives from New York’s 15th and 16th districts, who spoke with a heavy German accent and had made a fortune as the owner of several breweries along the East Coast, and Tillinghast Huston, a Spanish-American War veteran. The New York Yankees had been a cellar-dweller in the American League for years when Ruppert and Huston bought the franchise in 1915 for $480,000. Their first move as co-owners was to poach the young pipe-smoking Miller Huggins from the St. Louis Cardinals to manage the Yankees. This was done following
the 1917 season. After the announcement that Huggins accepted Ruppert and Huston’s offer, the *East Liverpool Evening Review* said, “The bravest deed since war was declared [was] Miller Huggins signing to manage the Yanks.” Huggins proved to be a success, leading his team to a fourth place finish in 1918, third in 1919 and 1920, and winners of the franchise’s first American League pennant and a World Series appearance in 1921. Huggins made an unprecedented number of personnel changes during that stretch, which included the obtaining of such players as George Herman “Babe” Ruth, Wally Schnag, and Waite Hoyt from the Boston Red Sox.

Having come off a championship season and the prospect of playing beside popular American cultural icon Babe Ruth made the Yankees the clear frontrunner for Glenn Killinger, who was working closely with Hugo Bezdek to score a major league contract. Additionally, the chance to live and play baseball in Manhattan during the Jazz Age was a welcoming thought for the spirited twenty-four-year-old.

The thirty-seven-year-old Bezdek used his connections as the former manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates to attain contract offers for Killy from seven major league franchises including the Detroit Tigers, Philadelphia Athletics, and New York Yankees. Bezdek told the management of each club, “He is one of the best infielders I have seen in years and will make good at second, third or shortstop. I believe he will make good in fast company.”

When it came time to pick a contract, Killinger seemingly allowed Bezdek to make the decision for him. “In closing with the [New York] Americans Killinger was

governed wholly by the advice of Hugo Bezdek,” wrote the *Harrisburg Telegraph*.

Bezdek believed New York was the quickest way to the majors. The reason is speculative, but Manager Huggins was dealing with a controversy at third base that traced back to the 1921 season. John Baker, a future Hall of Famer, was once the starter at third, but when his wife died of scarlet fever and his daughters were stricken with the disease, he missed much of the season so that he could tend to his family. Huggins replaced Baker with Mike McNally as the Yankees reached the World Series. The quarrel among the three—Baker, McNally, and Huggins—persisted as spring training neared. Bezdek believed that the acquisition of Killinger might solve Huggins’s problem; furthermore the decision to go to the Yankees might give Killinger the best chance to contribute in his first year in the majors.

The Detroit Tigers, with star player Ty Cobb, whom many sportswriters like Grantland Rice already compared Killinger to, was in need of a shortstop. The comparison spoke volumes, as Cobb was on his way to breaking nearly every possible record in major league baseball; Rice called Cobb “one of the finest hitters I have ever seen.” The Tigers made “a particularly strenuous effort to obtain [Killinger],” reported the *Telegraph*. However, the contract that Bezdek was able to negotiate with Ruppert and Huston made all the difference for why Killinger chose the Yankees. The contract gave Killinger a “fancy” salary that included a $5,000 signing bonus, $800 monthly, 50-percent of his selling price if he was released under optional agreement, and declared that the New York club had to retain Killinger for one year regardless of how well he

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performed. One newspaper chided, “Hugo Bezdek who handled his affairs with the major league clubs naturally arranged a contract that protected the youngster.”

Yankees’ scout Paul “Kritch” Kritchell explained why Ruppert, Huston, and Huggins were so interested in Killinger. He suggested, “Killinger is every bit as promising now as Frankie Frisch was at a corresponding period of his sensational career.”

Frisch was a four-sport legend at Fordham University who signed with the New York Giants in 1919 and moved directly into the starting lineup without playing a moment in the minor leagues. “But do not quote me as predicting that Killie [sic] will break right into the Yankees batting order as Frisch broke in with the Giants,” Kritch added. “That sort of thing doesn’t happen more than once in 10 or a dozen years.” Killinger had the tough task of trying to outdo John “Home Run” Baker and Mike McNally, “and that’s a tough assignment to wish on any kid,” professed Kritch. “But you can never tell,” he carried on, “Killinger is mightily fleet and has a great pair of hands and a wonderful arm and takes a fine clout at the ball.”

On December 19, Manager Huggins actually announced at a press conference with New York City reporters that Bezdek informed him that Killinger was set to sign with the Yankees. Killinger’s commitment to the Yankees received national attention that reaped an excess of skepticism. The New York Daily News downplayed the news. “Some little excitement was shown in the announcement that the New York Yankees had

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32 “Yanks Sign Killinger,” Kansas City Kansan, December 20, 1921.
prospects of signing Glenn Killinger,” it wrote on December 29, “unless he’s one out of a thousand, he would do the Yankees no good next year.”

In spite of the criticism, Bezdek was a terrific agent for Killinger. His reach extended well beyond that of his quarterback. As he was managing Killinger’s professional ambitions, Bezdek worked hard for many of his other protégés including Hinkey Haines, who was retained by the Yankees as an outfielder in 1922. The Yankee scout Paul Kritchell said, “Haines is a major league fielder right now.” The question on his game was batting. “He was a fine, free hitter in college,” where Haines batted .426 to lead the nation Kritch articulated, “but looked as though he was shoulder-bound the few times I saw him play with Hartford” of the Eastern League earlier that summer. He finished, “Hinkey is too good a fielder to be kept out of the majors by inability to hit big league pitching.”

Killinger’s signed contract with the Yankees reached the front office on January 6, 1922. The legal agreement now offered him the chance to play professional baseball on Polo Grounds, site of his legendary football game against Georgia Tech a few months earlier. His next move with the New York club was spring training in New Orleans beginning in March.

He still had a busy month of playing in exhibition football and basketball games in his hometown, a freshman basketball season to coach at State College, and a

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33 “Select Glenn Killinger to Coach Dickinson; May Not Join Yankees,” Harrisburg Telegraph, December 29, 1921, 19.
commencement ceremony to attend. Killinger’s life was definitely moving forward in a way that few had ever experienced.

The public in Harrisburg possessed a brazen sense of pride after having spent many years in the shadow of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Locals in Pennsylvania’s capital city felt that its homegrown athletes could compete with best athletes that hailed from larger urban centers. The indelible Glenn Killinger, the town’s Walter Camp All-American, had much to do with that. On returning home for the holidays, Killinger found himself a celebrity since all the newspapers in Central Pennsylvania had carried stories about his recent college and professional achievements.

Proprietors of the West End Athletic Club prevailed upon convincing Harrisburg’s newest professional athlete to participate in a series of exhibition games of football and basketball between Christmas and New Year’s. The games would support the West End Twilight League’s charity drive benefitting the Commonwealth baseball club. The featured attraction was the multitude of college stars that were back in Harrisburg for the holidays. A best of three basketball series between the local college stars and an independent community team was arranged at the Chestnut Street Auditorium between December 24 and January 1. In addition, a football game between the Harrisburg All-Collegiates and the Williamsport All-Collegiates was planned for December 26. As it was, Killinger was the biggest draw at every event.36

The charity games offered a way for the community to honor Killinger—and for the hometown boy to capitalize on his fame. The recent news about his head coaching

position at Dickinson College, the major league contract offers, and the Walter Camp All-American selection made Harrisburg relevant in the sports world. The *Harrisburg Evening News* called the first charity basketball game “Killinger Night at Chestnut Street.” Headlines and editorials in the local newspapers about Killinger’s recent feats along with the presence of other local college stars were printed to boost attendance for every holiday event. In addition, another unique draw to the basketball games, at least, was the matchup between the Killinger brothers, Glenn against his elder brother Earl. “Greek against Greek,” the *Telegraph* called it.  

In the first basketball game, played Christmas Eve, the elder Killinger bested his younger brother when the local independent team stunned onlookers by defeating the college athletes, 26-24. Two days later, Killinger laced up his spikes to play in the charity week’s showcase event. At 2:15 in the afternoon on December 26 the best college football players from Harrisburg, most were graduates of Harrisburg Technical High School, and the best college football players emanating from Williamsport High School clashed on the city’s Island Park. Advance ticket sales at Shenk and Tittle Sporting Goods Store on Market Street were sold under the placards and newspaper announcements that said, “See Killinger, Harrisburg’s All-American.” Killinger, wearing jersey number-3, a break from his traditional number-2, played quarterback. He was joined by two of his former Penn State teammates: Clarence Beck at left tackle and Dick Rauch at right tackle. His childhood adversary, Carl Beck, Clarence’s brother, was also a Harrisburg team member. One former Penn Stater E. H. Cornwall, who played

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under a false name because he was still eligible to play intercollegiate football and was in the process of transferring to Colgate University, appeared on the Williamsport team. 39

A large crowd of 5,000 people paying one dollar per ticket packed into the lower field on Island Park to witness Harrisburg All-Collegiates hand Williamsport’s college men a 66-0 shellacking. Killinger rushed for over 100 yards and scored two touchdowns on runs of twenty-five yards and six yards. The other star of the game was Carl Beck, the former West Virginia halfback who had transferred to University of Vermont, who scored three touchdowns and displayed “mustang running,” as one local newspaper reported. 40

That same night, Killinger was back on the hardwood at Chestnut Street gymnasium for game two of the collegiate men series against the independent locals. Killinger and his teammates got their act together in the second game as they pulled off a decisive 35-18 victory, setting up game three on New Year’s Day.

In the final contest Killinger scored six points, an unspectacular output that seemingly impressed everybody, in his team’s 37-36 exhilarating victory to close out the week’s charity sporting events. 41 Because this was Glenn Killinger, there would be no rest before he headed off to training camp with the Yankees.

   “College Athletes are Ready For Grid Game; To Entertain Visitors,” Harrisburg Telegraph, December 24, 1921, 19; State Loses Four Members of Grid Squad,” New Castle Herald, “August 31, 1922, 11.
He returned to Penn State on January 3, 1922 to balance final exams with the freshman basketball season. His debut as a college coach was nearly flawless. After he reduced the roster down from seventy-five candidates that showed up on the first day of tryouts to nine regulars, Killinger’s squad rolled through an eight-game schedule unbeaten.

The first two victories came on January 14 and January 20, a 33-16 win over Altoona High School and a 26-21 score over Bellefonte Academy. The Harrisburg Telegraph suggested, “Coach Killinger’s first-year quintet looks like the best yearling combination to represent Penn State in years.”\(^4\) Then a break in the basketball schedule arrived as the semester came to an end.

During the following week, Killinger’s degree work concluded with the submission of his undergraduate thesis on metallurgy, which was titled “Investigation of the Durability of a Solid Carburizing Material.”\(^5\) After finally completing his course work in the School of Mines, Killinger received his diploma from the Pennsylvania State College in a small ceremony held inside the Armory on Tuesday, January 31. Since he was delayed in his college work because of his enlistment in the Student Army Training Corps in 1918, he received a special military certificate from the college in addition to his

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\(^5\) William Glenn Killinger, “Investigation of the durability of a solid carburizing material,” Publisher not identified, 1922.
diploma.\textsuperscript{44} The ceremony was unusually attended to capacity by the student body that arrived merely to give Killinger a “rousing sendoff,” reported the \textit{New York Times}.\textsuperscript{45} An unpredictable four and a half years of one accomplishment after another due to skill, auspicious timing, uncommon resiliency, and pure luck found Killinger with an impressive vitae that included membership in the social service campus society called Parmi Nous, the underclassmen athletic society called The Friars, and induction into the Lion’s Paw, an exclusive senior service fraternity devoted to the moral and ethical upkeep of the college.

That night after the ceremony, Killinger’s brothers in the Alpha Chi Sigma fraternity held a banquet tendered in his honor. A nine-time letterman at Penn State, and already two-sport professional, Killinger was given a silver loving cup in appreciation for the dignity that he brought to both Penn State and Alpha Chi Sigma.\textsuperscript{46}

One day after his commencement, Killinger found himself back at freshman basketball practice. He was committed to seeing the team through to the end of the season. His yearlings played impeccably well, winning six more games while defeating the freshman teams from Pittsburgh twice, West Virginia twice, Kiski Area High School, and Bellefonte Academy for a second time. “Glenn Killinger’s opening assignment as a college coach resulted most successfully this winter,” expounded the \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}.\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{45} “Penn State to Honor Killinger At Mid-Year Commencement,” \textit{New York Times}, January 24, 1922, 12.

\textsuperscript{46} “Honor Killinger After Graduation Ceremonies,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, February 2, 1922, 17.

\textsuperscript{47} “Killinger is Good Coach,” \textit{Harrisburg Telegraph}, March 8, 1922, 13.
On February 24, Killinger packed his bags and bid ado to Penn State. He had one final brunch with his coach and mentor, Hugo Bezdek, before boarding a train to Harrisburg where the Dickinson Club of Harrisburg was hosting a dinner in his honor at the Plaza Hotel. A group of students surrounded the Pullman to see him off and to wish him success at the Yankees’ spring training camp. While he was as optimistic about his future as ever before, the sendoff was an indication that he had left an indelible mark on the institution.

CHAPTER 13
POST GAME

In the summer of 1988, Glenn Killinger, then 89-years old, was often visited by his son, Bill, and two grandchildren, Mark and Jessica, at the Delaware retirement home where he was living with his wife, Wilda, after sixty-five years of marriage. The couple had moved into the Churchman Village Retirement Community in Newark in 1984 to be close to their grandkids.

Their life together in retirement was calming. There were no more scouting trips or long hours spent apart due to various coaching duties. Killinger could concentrate solely on his family. He had been good about it too. Occasionally friends and former players visited the Killingers. At times, he would be pulled away from his wife and taken on trips back to Penn State to watch practice or a game. Once, before the 1979 Sugar Bowl, Killinger was invited by then-coach, Joe Paterno, to watch a practice as the Nittany Lions prepared for the national championship game against the University of Alabama and its legendary coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, who was also an old friend. After practice Killy, twenty-eight-years Paterno’s senior, said, “You’re working these kids too hard.” The reaction by the throng of people standing around Killinger and Paterno was comical. Did Glenn Killinger, the institutional coach who was trained in the military style of Hugo Bezdek and had become a Hall of Famer in his own right as a coach, just tell Joe Paterno he was working his players to hard? One week later, Penn State played sluggishly and lost in heartbreaking fashion, 14-7. Maybe the old man was right.1

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More than sixty years after Walter Camp selected Killinger as the best player in college football, he conceded those memories to the past. His focus was on family.

Starting in 1980, Killinger began suffering from progressive vision loss in both eyes. The frightening experience was caused by age-related macular degeneration. “It very slowly got worse,” said his son, Bill. “My mother was blind [with macular] for 50 years, but you would have never known it.”¹ Killinger, on the other hand, grew sick at a much faster pace and was taken to Christiana Hospital for treatment in July 1988. At his request, he soon returned to Churchman Village after responding poorly to treatment. Glenn Killinger died in his retirement home bed on July 25, 1988.

The Killinger family, although prepared for the loss, was devastated. Before his death, Killinger told his son that he did not want a funeral. “That’s one thing my father told me,” noted Bill. “He said, ‘Whatever you do, when I pass away, don’t have a service for me. I don’t want anyone to know.’ So we didn’t do anything.”²

“We could have had a parade in town with fire engines,” stated Dick Yoder, one of Killinger’s former quarterbacks who eventually became the Mayor of West Chester. “Killy was a great man. Can you imagine the number of people that would have come to his funeral?”³

There would in fact have been hundreds of people at Glenn Killinger’s funeral. But true to his character, attention was not what he wanted. He had made his points: He had taught his lessons.

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Yoder, Ibid.
Yet, at the moment of death, for all of his admiring fans and loved ones, he was a young man standing in the batter’s box at the New York Yankees’ spring training, waiting for the first pitch; waiting still for a long and flourishing career in athletics, both as a resilient player and as a transformative coach.

New York Baseball Yankees

On the morning of February 27, 1922, Glenn Killinger and Hinkey Haines met in Baltimore to catch a train that would take them the remainder of the way to the Yankees training camp in New Orleans. Once camp got underway, the “Penn State Twins,” as everyone in the Yankees organization called them, had very different starts. Haines immediately impressed. Killinger, conversely, was disparaged from the start. Phil Schenck, the Yankee groundkeeper, failed to recognize Killinger when he arrived at the ballpark. “No, siree. You can’t kid me that way,” Schenck said to Yanks’ catcher Fred “Bootnose” Hofmann who pointed out Killinger among the crowd of gathering ballplayers. “I saw Killinger play at Polo Grounds, when he threw a whole Golden Tornado for a loss, and that little fellow ain’t the same bird.”

“Yes, it is,” replied Hofmann.

Schenck inquired, “Then who cut him in half?”

Killinger was slow to shake off nerves as he was tried out at second, third, and shortstop. He additionally showed poorly at the bat. “Glenn Killinger, college star of

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6 “Glenn Killinger Seems to be Getting Smaller,” Charlotte Observer, March 5, 1922, 19.
football fame, is failing to show a great amount of stickwork [sic] at the plate,” several newspapers reported.  

When asked after his first day of spring training, Killinger responded to the sportswriters with a mea culpa about preferring football over baseball: “I like to play baseball and will try my best to succeed in this business, but I must admit that I can’t get as much thrill out of baseball as football.” He preferred studying football plays and the physical contact of the game. He admitted, “I guess I would rather play football than do most anything else.” He was speaking the truth, but it came off flippantly. He dug a deeper hole: “If I find out after a year or so that I am not a big leaguer I will get into some other business.”

Killy seemingly came into his own during the team’s first inter-squad scrimmage on March 10. Before the game, Yankees Manager Miller Huggins named Killinger and Haines rival captains of the two teams. Killinger selected Babe Ruth, “my favorite player,” he conceded, with the first pick. Even with the Bambino on his team, it was Killinger who impressed everyone that day as he rose out of his slump by pasting a homerun ten feet over the left field fence. “It was a rookie who made the longest drive of the day and the best clout of the season to date,” wrote the Scranton Republican. Surprisingly, that hit was not the highlight for the rookie that day. Killinger would later describe his experience:

From his third base position, Killinger started a fast double play from third to second to first. Babe Ruth, who was at first base, yelled “loud enough to be heard almost

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9 “Rookie Killinger Bats Ball Over Park Fence,” Scranton Republican, March 11, 1922, 18.
to New York City,” described Killinger, “‘Hug [short for Miller Huggins] that kid is the best third baseman in camp.’”\(^{10}\) The *New York Times* responded to the performance by reporting, “Killinger appears to be getting over his anxiousness, and to-day showed a great improvement.”\(^{11}\)

The early performance was good enough to get Killinger into the starting lineup in three spring training games against New Orleans. In his first game, on March 11, Killinger had one hit in one official at bat. On March 21, he batted 0-1 with three put outs.\(^{12}\) In the third contest, played on March 23, he again batted 0-1 and failed to make a play from the infield.

Killinger made it to the March 24 cut before getting optioned to the Yankees’ farm team in Jersey City. Management told Killinger it would be to his advantage to play in the minor league where he could gain more playing experience rather than sit in the Yankees’ dugout all season.\(^{13}\)

The Jersey City Skeeters finished the 1922 season with eighty-one wins and eighty-one losses, and in fourth place of the International League. Killinger was a consistent player at second base most of the season, but saw some time at shortstop and center field. He finished the summer batting .275 with five homeruns before he left Jersey City early to assume his football coaching duties at Dickinson College.\(^{14}\)

\(^{10}\) Henry, *William Glenn Killinger*, 46.


\(^{12}\) Altoona Tribune, March 23, 1922, 10; “Penn Twins are Parted,” *Sporting News*, March 30, 1922.

\(^{13}\) Henry, *William Glenn Killinger*, 47; *Penn State Collegian*, March 23, 1926.

College Coaching is More Lucrative

Glenn Killinger’s 31-year college football head coaching career began at Doubling Gap near Carlisle, Pennsylvania on September 6, 1922. He instructed all twenty-five players on his roster at Dickinson College, plus his friend and new assistant coach Clarence Beck, to report for eight days of training camp in the mountains of Central Pennsylvania before the official opening of the college season. In addition to regular drill work, Killinger forced his team to go on long hikes and undergo “considerable mountain climbing,” described the *Harrisburg Telegraph*. After his signature preseason camp, Killinger arranged for the Gators of the University of Florida to practice against his team as the latter journeyed north to play Harvard.\(^{15}\) The experiences helped him breeze into the season with confidence, even telling friends that “he hopes to bring as much fame to this conservative old English town as Pop Warner did with the famous Carlisle Indians.”\(^{16}\)

Dickinson started the season on fire by winning its first four games, including a 27-7 victory over Swarthmore College that the *Philadelphia Daily News* called “the weekend’s greatest football upset.” The game was played on Island Park in Killinger’s hometown of Harrisburg. His ability to lead Dickinson out of the cellar to a 4-0 start won him considerable media attention. The *Harrisburg Evening News* editorialized, “with his football instinct and developed grid brain, aided by his knowledge gained while starring at Penn State, has shown that when it comes to strategy or a little use of the old gray


matter, he is a Marshal Foch himself.” The praise by the local daily compared Killinger to the World War I field general Ferdinand Foch. It was evidence that in the postwar era the country was seeking fresh heroes from within the sports world. The association to the French military commander credited with taking down the Germans at the First and Second Battles of the Marne was a boon to Killinger’s coaching acumen. Unfortunately, Dickinson lost the next game to Gettysburg College, 23-6. As the game was locked in a fourth quarter stalemate, 0-0, Killinger’s team became demoralized when Gettysburg executed the “hidden ball” trick play for a touchdown. Dickinson collapsed thereafter, allowing Gettysburg to run away with the victory.

Rumor had it that Killinger was to received a purse of $1,000 from the college’s athletic committee if Dickinson would have defeated its greatest rival. Instead, Dickinsonians ailing from the loss chose to blow the whistle on an apparent violation to Dickinson College policy. Killinger had been moonlighting as a professional football player on Sundays for the Baltimore Pros, an independent team with games scheduled against professional clubs from Ohio, Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Included on the schedule were the Oorang Indians, a team that featured Killinger’s childhood hero Jim Thorpe as player-coach. Killinger was an exceptional halfback and safety for Baltimore. In a game against the Wilmington Chesbrooks, he scored four touchdowns and kicked two extra points in his team’s 39-0 victory. His name began headlining newspaper columns to help market the profession. This infuriated the Dickinson College contingent, including the president, James Henry Morgan, and many in the community,

who considered Killinger’s decision to play football on Sundays a debauchery. On October 16, 1922, an alumnus, F. Y. Jaggers wrote to college President Morgan, “It was with no little chagrin that I read in the *Balt. Sun* of last Monday that Glen [sic] Killinger Dickinson’s coach leads Semi Profs to victory on the gridiron on Sunday afternoon. Perhaps it is not possible to control a coach’s actions on the Sabbath but I do think the good old name of Dickinson should not be dragged in the mire.”

Morgan responded, “I agree with you entirely . . . and have made arrangements whereby the thing to which you objected will no longer exist.” When reproached by Morgan, Killinger chose to ignore the president’s directive. He was back on the field against the Washington Pros on Sunday, October 22, a game in which he made the headlines again after he intercepted a pass and returned it fifty-five yards for a touchdown in his team’s losing effort, a 7-6 defeat.

The entire ordeal with Dickinson College frustrated Killinger. At football practice a few days after the loss to Gettysburg, he told the players in the locker room that he would to resign his coaching duties at the conclusion of the season.

Dickinson finished the season with six wins and two defeats. It was the college’s best football season in the post war era. Rumors started swirling about where Killinger would end up coaching. Reports ranged from Columbia University to Wesleyan College;

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19 F.Y. Jaggers letter to J. H. Morgan, October 15, 1922.
20 J.H. Morgan, letter to F. Y. Jaggers, November 1, 1922.
and the University of Oregon to the University of Alabama. Dickinson’s president was happy to see Killinger go, and he made no reservations about voicing his distaste for the young coach. When asked by Fred Hixson, the president of Allegheny College, who was considering making Killinger an offer to be their next football coach, for a recommendation, Morgan said, “he is altogether disloyal to the college administration, considers us back members because we will not throw everything into the athletic grist . . . He is not profane, I think, but is so overbearing and brutal in his attitude toward his men that I am informed on good authority that his men are practically in revolt, certainly they are not playing for him.”

By the end of the fall, the ultimate triumph of his Carlisle experience was meeting his future wife. Wilda Evelyn Holtzworth of Gettysburg was a radiant, headstrong young woman who graduated from Drexel Institute in 1921 with a degree in Dietetics and who loved sports. Wilda had a bubbly personality; her college friends, who called her “Bill,” said she possessed “the spirit of deepest loyalty.” The two met at Carlisle Hospital, where Wilda had worked as a dietitian since June 1922. Killinger was there visiting one of his injured players and instantly fell for her.

Their fling quickly diverted to an engagement. Killinger and Wilda were married on August 25, 1923 in the presence of family and a few invited guests at St. James’

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Lutheran Church in Gettysburg. The two honeymooned in Atlantic City. For Killinger, who spent his life committed to sports, Wilda’s unconditional love produced only a slight change in his sports-is-life behavior.

Killinger’s compassion for Wilda was deep, but he was also, in a way, still self-absorbed in his coaching obligations and professional pursuits. The newlyweds left Carlisle for a home at 504 Pugh Street in State College. Killinger’s former coach, Hugo Bezdek, had offered him coaching jobs in basketball, baseball, and, if his reappearance with the Yankees failed to work out, football. Between winter 1923 and spring 1926, Glenn spent two seasons as the head coach of Penn State’s freshman basketball team (1924, 1925), three seasons as the head coach of the varsity baseball team (1924-1926), and two years assisting Bezdek on the football team (1923, 1924).

He spent his summers during that period playing on various minor league ball clubs. In 1923, the New York Yankees sent Killinger to play for Atlanta of the Southern Association, where he appeared in 105 games as the Crackers’ second baseman. He batted .268 with ninety-five hits and five homeruns. At the conclusion of the season, he requested that the Yankees place him on the voluntarily retirement list so he could devote his time to coaching at Penn State, where his duties were expanding. In 1924, Killinger

worked as Bezdek’s assistant Athletic Director and was named backfield and specialist positions coach and scouting director for the football team.

The coaching timetable at Penn State enabled Killinger to play minor league baseball in the New York-Pennsylvania League (Nypen) during his summers. On July 2, 1924, the midpoint of the season, he signed a player-coach contract with the Harrisburg Senators. Before season’s end, he set a Nypen record for scoring thirteen runs in ten consecutive games. When he left the Senators on September 12 to report to football camp at Penn State, Killinger ranked third in the Nypen with a batting average of .347.

The following summer, Killy signed to play second base for the Williamsport Grays, where he batted .315. The Grays lost to York in a best of five series for the Nypen pennant. In May 1926, Killinger found himself unemployed after the Penn State Athletic Committee informed him that his contract as assistant athletic director was not going to be renewed. He and Wilda returned to Harrisburg and moved into a home at 17 North Nineteenth Street. Later that same month, Killinger was offered a player-manager contract with the Shamokin Indians of the Nypen. He accepted the contract and appeared in seventy-six games at second base, batted .290, and attained a fielding percentage of .952 for the Indians before suffering a compound fracture his right wrist. In the eighth inning of the second game of a double header between Shamokin and Elmira played on July 24, Killinger attacked umpire Hanson Horsey by punching him three times after he

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ran onto the field to dispute a call at home plate. Killinger was suspended by the league commissioner for the remainder of the season.

In September 1926, Killinger, with his good friend Hinkey Haines, obtained a contract to play football for the New York Giants, which was entering its second season in the National Football League. (The NFL in 1926 featured twenty-two teams. It was the largest number of teams in the league until equaled in 1961.) He shined “Brilliantly,” reported the *Mount Carmel Daily News*, in the season opening 19-0 victory over the Hartford Blues. “Killinger was one of the stars of the game, making numerous long runs, sharp line plunges and on one occasion carried the ball over the line for a six-pointer.” The newspaper pronounced, “He is counted upon to scintillate for the Giants thruout [sic] the season, thus resuming his place in the football sun.”

His durability in the professional ranks was regretfully exposed shortly after that initial game. Although it seemed as if Killinger was due for a breakout season with the Giants, his time in the NFL was short-lived. Before the next game against the Providence Steam Rollers—a game the Giants won 7-6—the Giants’ front office announced that he had re-fractured his right wrist in the Hartford game. Two weeks later, the Giants released Killinger from his contract, citing “because of a distressing fracture to his arm that he received in baseball last season and which prevented him from playing his usual game.”

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In the first week of November, Killinger received a fortuitous offer from the Philadelphia Quakers, the team he once played a game for in 1921. The Quakers were one of nine teams competing in the NFL’s rival association: the American Football League. In his first game with the Quakers on November 6, he intercepted a pass, completed several forward passes, and caught a 55-yard touchdown pass. His team defeated Rock Island (Illinois), 24-0. His former Penn State teammate, Charlie Way, joined him in the Quaker backfield and scored two touchdowns. Then Killinger fractured his right arm for a third time one-week later in Philadelphia’s 3-0 loss to the Chicago Bears (formerly the Chicago Staleys). It was his final appearance in a football uniform. Unfortunately for Killinger, the Quakers went on to win the American Football League football championship by defeating Red Grange’s New York Football Yankees, 13-6. He could only read about it from his home in Harrisburg. (The AFL dissolved with the conclusion of the 1926 season.)

The failed venture in professional football put Killinger in a state of depression. With the book closed on his playing career, he returned to his hometown to manage the family hardware store while playing in a handball league at the Harrisburg Y.M.C.A. He additionally played in a basketball showcase against Jim Thorpe’s World-Famous traveling LaRue Indians at the Chestnut Street Auditorium. Neither Thorpe or Killinger scored in the game, but the Harrisburg Evening News reported, “Killinger played an

37 “Killinger Hurt Again,” Harrisburg Telegraph, November 24, 1926, 19.
excellent game on the defense” in spite of his team’s 41-33 setback to Thorpe’s “all-star Indian basketball team.”

His luck change near the end of the winter when he accepted two contracts. On February 12, Killinger, then twenty-eight-years-old, was announced as the new football coach at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. That summer before leaving for Troy, he played second base for the Harrisburg Senators. His return to the Senators garnered attention from the management of the St. Louis Browns, who considered offering Killinger a second chance at the majors. Killinger led the New York-Pennsylvania League in fielding with .962 fielding percentage in 133 games. He recorded 333 put outs, 438 assists, thirty errors, and thirty-one double plays. Unfortu

nately, the contract offer never came. Killinger received some pleasure in helping the Senators win the 1927 New York-Pennsylvania League pennant.

On September 9, the Killingers arrived at their new home in Troy, where Glenn was to begin a 5-year career as head coach at Rensselaer (RPI). He arrived as a hero: still touted as the All-American who in 131 career varsity games played in three sports at Penn State, lost but seventeen contests. Surprisingly, his record as boss of the Engineers was anything but brilliant. His five teams (1927-1931) at RPI attained a cumulative 14-24-3 record. The poor record is misleading; his total wins and losses can easily be accepted as the reason for his eventual departure. As a matter of fact, the lack of production on the football field had little to do with his dismissal from RPI in 1931.

When the time came to either retain or release their football coach, the president of the

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institute chose to terminate all part-time contracts due to Depression-era budget cuts.

Killinger accordingly lost his job. His split with the technical school was much more of an amiable experience than his departure from Dickinson College almost ten years earlier. Harry Van Velsor, RPI’s athletic director, called Killinger “likeable” and “a credit to the coaching profession.”

At any rate, Killinger’s life in Troy was erratic. He could never offer any explanation for why he refused to invest more of his attention into the lives of the boys on campus. He only spent the falls there during his tenure. He would returned to Harrisburg each winter, where he played professional basketball for the Harrisburg Velveteers during the winter of 1927-1928. He signed on as the Harrisburg Senators’ player-manager in the spring of 1928. As manager of the Senators later that summer, he arranged a game against Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and the New York Yankees on Island Park. Ruth hit 3-for-5, including a homerun and two stolen bases, but the Senators were able to tie the Yankees 6-6. Killinger batted 2-for-4, stole two bases, and scored a run. The Senators repeated as champions of the New York-Pennsylvania League later that summer.

In 1929, Killinger returned to the Williamsport Grays as player-manager. By season’s end, he batted .318 as the Grays finished in second place for the Nypen pennant. He remained with the Grays for two more years. In 1930, Killinger helped Williamsport set the Nypen record for double plays, tallying 182—Killinger took part in 134 of them. He also batted .344 with 181 hits, nine homeruns, thirty-three doubles, 111 runs, 64 RBIs,

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41 Harry A. Van Velsor, “Harry A. Van Velsor to Whom it may concern” (File letter of recommendation), December 16, 1931, Troy, NY.
twenty stolen bases, and a slugging percentage of .526. In 1931, he batted .272 with six homeruns.

His final year in minor league baseball was 1932, when he signed on to play for and manage the Allentown Buffaloes of the Eastern League, which had a higher classification in the minor leagues than the New York-Pennsylvania League. However, the Eastern League disbanded in mid-July. Not surprisingly, Killinger was recruited back to Williamsport as player-manager. He finished the season batting .196, with just thirty-five hits in the fifty-five games he played for the Grays. Upon his retirement from the minor league, Killinger’s lifetime batting average was .292.42

The highlight for Killinger during that period was the birth of his namesake. On December 11, 1927, Glenn and Wilda gave birth to their only child, a boy that they named William Glenn Killinger, Jr., who they called “Billy.” The birth announcement in the *Harrisburg Telegraph* pronounced, “New Ball Player! Killinger Will Hand Out Cigars.”43 The headline and accompanying article completely ignored Wilda’s role in the birth of the child; thus reflecting the patriarchal nature of American sporting culture of the twenties.

Ever cognizant of the kind of benevolent father he had, Killinger assumed a larger role than the family’s prize breadwinner. He unconditionally loved his son. With a military bent, he sternly parented. Yet, one thing was certain: he was an embracing and loving father who spent every available moment with Billy. When it came to parenting

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norms, he appeared to be ahead of his era. In *American Fatherhood* (2016), Lawrence A. Samuel provides an illustration of the evolving role of the American father during the twentieth century. Citing psychologist Joseph Peck, Samuel writes of nineteenth and early twenty-century fathers as “godlike figures” whose job it was to serve as the “moral compass of the family” by modeling spirituality and the importance of obtaining a quality education. When Billy reached his adolescent years, Killinger became his son’s “model of masculinity.” Fatherhood changed during and after World War II, Samuel argues, when “men held onto their moral and financial responsibilities but took on the greater purpose of serving as models of masculinity,” including gender roles characterized by a “more traditional and conservative cultural climate.” It became atypical in the 1940s and 1950s for fathers to embrace female characteristics resembling that of loving nurturer or domestic caretaker while parenting. This was reason enough, Samuel claims, “for men to impart a maximum amount of masculinity to family life.”

It was within this cultural climate that Killinger molded his son into a sports-crazed scion of the Killinger clan. They were together on the golf course, on scouting trips, and even during his many years coaching he gave Billy full access to visit practice, stand on the sideline or sit in the dugout. “The coach rarely makes a trip without Billy,” reported the *West Chester Daily Local News* in 1936, “He has traveled all over the East, South and Middle West. Some of the trips are with the teams; others?-Oh, just the Killingers taking a jaunt to see some sporting event, and maybe do a little scouting.”

Billy spent so much time with his father in the sports environment that he was labeled by the *Daily Local News* as a “Sports Library” at age eight. “Billy’s a very important

member of the Killinger board of strategy,” the daily local explicated. “His Dad’s the skipper; Billy’s the clipper. He clips all the papers and keeps a rather complete reference department.”

While Killinger was once a mediocre academic in his own right, Billy was generally a run-of-the-mill student as well. Nevertheless, the patriarch insisted on extraordinary marks from his son. Once, as a ninth-grader at West Chester Junior High School, Billy brought home a C in English. “My father is sneaky,” the Killinger scion recalled. “I said, Cs aren’t bad, it’s passing.” Unhappy with the boy, “he went to my basketball coach and had me suspended from the team . . . He said, ‘[when] You get Bs you can play basketball. No Cs!’” Billy’s weak academic record was not the product of carelessness. Rather, it may have been nurtured. Killinger once wrote to Lt. Richard Nye, one of his former West Chester football players, in 1945 that while Billy was excelling at basketball and baseball at The Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, he was “doing as well as a Killinger can do academically.” The two undistinguished students eventually grew to enjoy reading Louis L’Amour Western novels.

Killinger always had a tight bond with Billy, who was as busy of an athlete as his father had been at similar ages. (Billy would go on to become an All-American third baseman at Lafayette College and play two years for several St. Louis Cardinals minor league teams, two years for Chicago White Sox’s farm teams, and one year with the Detroit Tigers’ farm teams). There was always a hint of rivalry between father and son,

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45 “‘Little Killy’ Big Fan,” West Chester Daily Local News, (date unknown).
but Killinger did not waive his resume in his son’s face. Billy was not made to live in a shrine of his father’s accomplishments. The newspapers did a fine enough job reminding Billy who his father was. “Every time I did something that was good,” Billy expounded in 2015, “the paper would say, ‘the son of Glenn did this.’ It drove me crazy.” The father-and-son rivalry did not discourage the loving support from Bill, who admitted to seeing 609 football and baseball games that his father either played or coached in.48

Billy would meet his wife, Karol Marie, while playing ball for the Omaha Cardinals in 1952. They married on November 25, 1953. The newlyweds gave Glenn and Wilda their first grandchild, Mark William, on September 28, 1954. Almost three years later, on March 30, 1957, a second grandchild, Jessica, came along. The two grandchildren were the only people on earth who could pull Killinger’s attention away from sports.

**Great Depression and the Loss of the Sports Hero**

There was a scary moment in 1931 when Killinger was forced by school officials to resign his post as the head football coach at Rensselaer in order to give the position to a full-time member of the Physical Education Department. The moment of his departure marked the end of the second year of the Great Depression, and RPI, like many other colleges and universities, were cutting budgets. Rensselaer wanted to fill all coaching positions with their full-time employees.

Killinger was exhausted after years of overtaxing himself for coaching and professional playing jobs. In July 1932, he enrolled in the Teachers’ College of Columbia

48 Ibid.
University to attain a Master’s degree in Physical Education. The program lasted one year, and in April 1933, Columbia’s College Placement Office notified Killinger that there was a physical education opening at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Killinger had already turned down coaching jobs at Albright College and an offer to return to Dickinson College. The position at Moravian was offering longevity: the job was to make him the Director of Health and Physical Education, in addition to the head football and basketball coaching positions.

Killinger completed the necessary thirty-four credits needed to graduate from Columbia with a Master’s degree, which was conferred on June 6, 1933. He started at Moravian in September. The *West Chester Daily Local News* named his football team, which finished the season 8-1, “one of the best small college teams in the country.” In addition to the exceedingly successful football season, Killinger created an impressive college curriculum. Wesley P. Cushman, a staff member at Moravian, said, “[Killinger’s] greatest contribution was . . . the development of a sound program with required courses in health and physical education and an intramural sports program.”

Killinger’s year at Moravian had won him attention from other colleges in Pennsylvania. In March 1934, he would make a decision that decades later etched his name within the pantheon of great college coaches. Glenn was approached by Howard A. Wescott, the head football coach at West Chester State Teachers’ College in Chester

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49 Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. “Record Book of Mr. William Glenn Killinger.” 1932-1933, (Killinger Family Files, Jessica Killinger, Wilmington, DE); W. H. Hitchler, “W.H. Hitchler to Dr. Jesse Williams” (File letter of recommendation), March 14, 1932, Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, PA.
County, to see if he would be interested in replacing him as boss of the football team. The contract also included jobs as director of the Health and Physical Education Department, head basketball coach, and head baseball coach. Killinger accepted the offer.

For those who have heard of W. Glenn Killinger, it is likely that they know more about his tenure as the football and baseball coach at West Chester and not his feats as an athlete at Penn State. (His tenure at West Chester is worthy of a book of its own). Upon his retirement, West Chester was included on the same list as Notre Dame, Nebraska, and several big colleges as the tenth winningest college football program in the country. In twenty-three seasons as the football coach of West Chester, his teams attained 147 wins, 41 losses, and 12 ties. Killinger’s teams won five Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference championships, one mythical sportswriters’ conference title, and played in four bowl games—the Burley Bowl and Cigar Bowl in 1947, the Burley Bowl again in 1948, and the Pretzel Bowl in 1952. He was always a rock as coach. But he let his guard down at half time of West Chester’s final game in 1958 when, against Baldwin-Wallace, the No. 1-ranked small college team in the country, he let his players see tears well up in his eyes and said, “You are the greatest team I have ever coached.” After West Chester’s 69-12 trouncing of Baldwin-Wallace, his players carried him off the field. That 1958 team finished second for the Lambert Cup, beaten out by the University of Buffalo for the small college East Coast Championship. Even though many in the sports world felt West Chester was robbed of a national title, Killinger got to experience one final Harold Lamb moment as his players carried him off the field as their hero and into the locker room.

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52 Henry, William Glenn Killinger, 69; “Glenn Killinger to Head Footballers,” *Quad Angles*, July 18, 1934, 4.
He led West Chester one more season and ended his coaching career as the head coach of the Small College All-Stars against the Big College All-Stars in the January 2, 1960 All-American Bowl in Tucson, Arizona. When he retired from coaching football at age sixty-two after the 1959 season, he proudly said, “I wish to thank everybody at West Chester who has made the job of Head Coach of Football a very pleasant experience. No football coach has ever received more wonderful cooperation.” Although there were rumors that he was leaving to manage the Philadelphia Phillies’ minor league team in Johnson City, Tennessee, he remained at West Chester to coach baseball and concentrate on his administrative job as Dean of Men for eleven more years.

Killinger’s baseball teams at West Chester were always among the best small college ball clubs in the country. In thirty-two years as manager of the Rams, just five of his teams finished with losing records—four of which came before World War II. He attained two Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference titles, 335 wins, 161 defeats, and six ties on the West Chester baseball diamond before his retirement in 1970.

Early in his career at West Chester, Killinger was named Dean of Men. He remained in the position until his retirement. His duties included the responsibility to approve adequate off-campus housing for male residents, supervision over the use of automobiles on campus, and, most importantly, command over the behavior of the male students. His policies were strict, and Killinger carried a short leash. Dick Yoder, one of his former football players recalled, “We weren’t allowed to keep our cars on campus. If

54 Glenn Killinger to Dr. H. LaRue Frain, Acting President of West Chester State Teachers College, West Chester, PA. December 10, 1959.
55 “Retired Football Coach May Manage in Minors,” Pantagraph (Bloomington, IL), December 24, 1959.
he’d catch ya, he’d throw you out.” The students tried to find a parking garage in town, but he knew what was going on. “He’d go around checking. It was almost every night. He rode around in his car—uptown, down the streets, and he’d see a car with a certain license plate, he’d have a flash light and he’d check.”  

In 1936, Glenn, Wilda and Billy moved into Wayne Residential Hall where an apartment was constructed for the family. “What I remember most about Wayne Hall,” recalled Billy, who was still very young when they moved into the dormitory, “was my dad going into his office to write his book.” In 1938, Killinger wrote Football, an instructional book for football novices and experts alike published by The Ronald Press Company that was released as part of William L. Hughes’s sports series called “The Book of Major Sports.” The students, though, remember life under the same roof as Killinger much differently. Bob Warner, a baseball player for Killinger, amusingly, recalled, “Once I was coming up the steps, I had just taken a shower. I was pulling my shirt on, buttoning it up. He was standing at the top of the steps. He grabbed me and put me up against the wall and put his nose in my eye. And told me, ‘didn’t I realize that his wife lived here and that he never wanted to see me unless I was completely dressed.’” 

While Warner and his friends often got away with the typical antics, there was always one eye looking out for the deterring old man. One such occasion occurred in 1957 when three anonymous students tied a hawser rope to the chassis of his black 1955 Roadmaster Buick parked in back of Wayne Hall, next to the fence surrounding the campus’ tennis court.

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58 Bob Warner, Personal interview with the author. West Chester, PA. May 21, 2015.
courts. After trying to pull out of his parking spot, he let a sortie of profanities fly once he realized why his tires were spinning and the fence nearly collapsed on the top of his car.\footnote{Anonymous. Personal interview with the author. West Chester, PA. May 21, 2015.}

The Legacy of World War I Service Sports and Massed Athletics – Pre-Flight School and Sport on the World War II Home Front

Killinger’s tenure at West Chester was split in half by World War II. On December 11, 1941, three days after America’s declaration of war on Japan, Killinger assumed the role of Chief Air Raid Warden and fire protection officer on campus. On March 19, 1942, he obtained a leave of absence from West Chester after he accepted a commission as a lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserves. At 10:00 a.m. on March 23, he reported for active duty at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland where he underwent a 30-day indoctrination V-5 Instructors Course. He was taught how to administer and organize various athletic programs for the different branches of the United States Navy.\footnote{“Miller Takes Job at West Chester,” \textit{Harrisburg Evening News}, June 26, 1942; “Dean Killinger Leaves College For Navy Job,” \textit{Quad Angle}, March 20, 1941, 1; “Farewell, Dean Killinger!,” \textit{Quad Angle}, March 20, 1942, 2.} On April 18, he was told to report to the Naval Aviation Selection Board in Philadelphia where he was given orders to recruit cadets into the Navy’s V-5 pilot program. One of the recruiting stops was a visit to Penn State on April 29.

While Killinger underwent training in the early months of 1942, the Navy Department worked to create a program designed to prepare Naval cadets to become fighter pilots with competence enough to maneuver modern war machines. Captain Arthur W. Radford, head of Naval Aviation Training for the Navy’s Bureau of Aeronautics, a position created after Pearl Harbor, suggested after thorough observations
that pilots who were not in good physical condition could not stand the pace that the Navy set in its flight training. Captain Radford accordingly set out to conceive a rigorous athletic program, one inspired by World War I S.A.T.C. training, but built to condition fliers to handle modern equipment and survive the pressure of fighting against a modern enemy. We are trying “to develop in the embryo pilots that all important spirit—the will to win,” Radford told reporters at a 1942 press conference, “Pre-Flight training started with the purpose of making Uncle Sam’s Navy fliers the roughest, toughest and smartest in the world.”

Several colleges and universities throughout the country were vetted before being selected to host these V-5 Pre-Flight training programs. Four schools, one for each region of the country, were initially chosen: the University of Iowa, St. Mary’s College in California, the University of Georgia, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Lieutenant Commander Thomas Hamilton, a former football player and coach at the Naval Academy, was given charge of creating an extensive physical fitness program for the rookie pilots. Hamilton aspired to toughen up the program’s cadets, most of which, he knew, were going to arrive with privileged backgrounds. “Our pilots to be inducted into the Naval Service in general come from a soft, luxurious, loose-thinking, lazy, peacetime life,” Hamilton claimed. He believed that intense competitive training would foster a realistic view of combat, plus give America’s pilots an edge over the already seasoned German and Japanese fighters.

Much like the Student Army Training Corps program during the final three months of World War I, the physical training endured by the cadets at the Pre-Flight

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Schools was designed to incorporate competitive sports into the daily routine of all cadets.\textsuperscript{62} Each cadet participated in athletic training that increased their strength and physical fitness, as well as competitive sports that drove their will to win. The sports used in training included swimming, boxing, wrestling, basketball, football, soccer, gym and tumbling, and track. If a sport was not viewed as useful to the physical conditioning or mental development of a cadet, it was not used. In Hamilton’s own words, competitive sports at Pre-Flight Schools aspired “to give the Navy the best pilots possible; put learning in his head, muscles on his bones, steel in his soul, and fire in his heart.”\textsuperscript{63}

Sportswriters considered football the most useful sport to train pre-flight cadets. In a 1943 poll of eastern journalists conducted by the Public Relations Office of the North Carolina Pre-Flight School, football was unanimously voted as the top-ranking sport for physical training. All of the sports listed, which, in addition to football, included track and field, baseball, and basketball, were considered useful because they nurtured “physical endurance, agility, coordination, poise, confidence, and fighting spirit.”\textsuperscript{64} Grantland Rice, still one of the foremost sportswriters in the country, buoyed the football claim in 1943: “football . . . is probably the best game to develop quick thinking under


\textsuperscript{64} “Sports Poll Rates Football Tops for Physical Training,” \textit{Cloudbuster}, May 1, 1943, 1-4.
pressure.\textsuperscript{65} Not only did football prepare cadets for increased physical fitness and fighting spirit, but also for when a pilot needed to make a quick decision in combat.

The importance of football as training by the Pre-Flight Schools was not lost on the Navy men themselves either. On a visit with Pre-Flight cadets at Chapel Hill, heavyweight-boxing champion Lieutenant Jack Dempsey eagerly gave his view on sports as a method of training. “Competitive athletics make men though, instills a fighting spirit, builds morale we need in our fighting forces,” the golden age’s boxing champion said, “Give ‘em football, boxing, and other body contact sports to make ‘em rough.”\textsuperscript{66}

Yet, not every cadet at the Pre-Flight Schools grew up playing competitive sports. Most had little or no sports background. This meant that most of the cadets that arrived at Pre-Flight Schools lacked the traits of courage, toughness and decisiveness that characteristically are fostered by athletic competition. The U.S. Department of Navy believed that sports at its Pre-Flight Schools were to develop that dogged spirit.

Glenn Killinger’s metallurgical engineering degree made him valuable to the Navy’s war preparedness effort. On May 28, 1942, he was assigned to the North Carolina Pre-Flight School at Chapel Hill with duties to work as the Athletic Construction Officer responsible for overseeing the erection of new wartime barracks, dining halls, playing fields, and a bowling alley.\textsuperscript{67} In addition, he was given the job as head baseball coach of the Pre-Flight School’s baseball team: the Cloudbusters. He was an obvious choice for

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\textsuperscript{66} “Pre-Flight Training Here is Praised: Navy Leaders Visit Station to Inspect Local Program,” \textit{Cloudbuster}, September 18, 1942, 5.

\textsuperscript{67} Navy Department, Bureau of Naval Personnel. “Officer’s Qualification Record Jacket, William Glenn Killinger, File No. 133062.” April 10, 1945. Killinger Family Files, Jessica Killinger, Wilmington, DE.
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those positions, having become one of the successful dual-sport coaches in the college ranks that carried with him a degree in engineering. His annual allowance was $2,640.\footnote{W. Glenn Killinger, “Change in Status of Applicant for Dependent Benefits.” Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, February 22, 1943.}

Killinger and his family accordingly moved into a house at 411 McCauley Street in Chapel Hill.

The Pre-Flight School must have been analogous to Killinger’s experience as an undersized S.A.T.C. private and athlete at Penn State during the First World War. During that era, twenty-four years earlier under the tutelage of Hugo Bezdek, Killinger was prepared for war while playing sports that called for physical toughness in addition to great stamina and mental power. Football especially, with its savagery and rigid rules that compelled players to remain on the field as they played through injuries, helped to enrich his win-at-all-cost attitude.

To be eligible to coach a sport at the Pre-Flight School, faculty members had to possess a record of athletic participation and coaching, be between the ages of twenty-one and fifty, exemplify “clean living,” and possess a “rugged manhood.”\footnote{Mary Layne Baker, \textit{The Sky’s the Limit: The University of North Carolina and the Chapel Hill Communities’ Response to the Establishment of the U.S. Naval Pre-Flight School During World War II.} (Unpublished Manuscript, Chapel Hill, 1980), 36-40.} America’s best coaches arrived in Chapel Hill, including Oliver Owen Kessing, football coach at the Naval Academy; James Crowley, one of Notre Dame’s four horsemen and head football coach at Fordham; Harvey Harmon, head football coach at Rutgers; and Don George, the former World Wrestling Champion.

Among the cadets at Chapel Hill that Killinger worked with were several Major League Baseball all-stars, including Ted Williams, Johnny Pesky, Johnny Sain, and Joe...
Coleman. Future Presidents of the United States George Herbert Walker Bush and Gerald Ford were stationed at Chapel Hill for short periods. And in 1944, the pre-flight cadets were visited by World War I “Ace” Eddie Rickenbacker, who had recently survived twenty-four days on a life raft when his plane was forced down in the Pacific Ocean.\(^70\)

To Killinger, sports on the home front during World War II were more than inconsequential games. In 1942, he used the baseball diamond at Chapel Hill to train the brightest young men in the country to make sacrifices for their country. Killinger’s team ended up winning fourteen of nineteen games.\(^71\)

Many months after the baseball season ended, he was reassigned to active duty with the Atlantic Fleet on December 28. He was stationed at Quonset Point Naval Air Station in Rhode Island where he was to supervise the physical training of all aircraft pilots onboard the carrier *U.S.S. Essex*.\(^72\) The commission on the *Essex* was brief—eight months total—as Killinger found himself back at the North Carolina Pre-Flight School within a year’s time. An announcement was made in July 1943 that Killinger was to be reattached to Chapel Hill and assigned to work as an assistant football coach under former Baylor boss Frank Kimbrough.\(^73\)

\(^{70}\) “Captain Rickenbacker to Speak Tuesday,” *Cloudbuster*, May 6, 1944, 1.


The Cloudbuster football team ended the 1943 season with a substandard overall record of 2-4-1. The team was recognized not for its success on the field, but for its spirit. In an article titled “Serving Its Purpose,” the school’s weekly newspaper *The Cloudbuster* reminded the cadets, “spirit on the battlefield and football field go hand in hand.” It is regrettable to say that the 1943 football season was the Pre-Flight School’s worst. They won against North Carolina State and Camp Davis (NC), but lost to wartime powerhouses Duke University, Georgia Pre-Flight, Wake Forest, and the Naval Academy. They tied with Camp Lejeune.

In February 1944, the *Cloudbuster* announced that Killinger was promoted to the position of head football coach and he retained his position as manager of the Pre-Flight baseball team. Coach Killy led his baseball club to a 10-2 record and the Ration League pennant that spring.

As for the gridiron that fall, it was a very difficult task for anyone to manage a complicated sport like football, especially when players came and went as cadet reassignments were issued out frequently. On top of that, it was extremely difficult to squeeze two-hour football practices into days filled with military drills and aviation courses while sharing facilities with civilian students on campus. No one had a clue how good Killinger’s gridiron Cloudbusters were going to be in 1944. Not even the school’s newspaper could report a few days before the start of the season on the team’s prospects. The weekly wrote, “Little is known [of] the quality, and no information will be available

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74 “Serving Its Purpose,” *Cloudbuster*, October 2, 1943, 2; “Good Record Made by Grid Elevens Here,” *Cloudbuster*, September 14, 1945, 4.
before the latter part of August.”\textsuperscript{76} When suddenly, quality players and coaches arrived in droves. A month before the season began Killinger obtained a top-rate second-in-command when former-Vanderbilt assistant coach Paul “Bear” Bryant arrived at the Pre-Flight School after fifteen months spent on sea duty in the Atlantic. Then just days before camp, ex-professional Ray Bray of the Chicago Bears, All-American halfback and basketball guard from Northwestern Otto Graham, and the East’s leading touchdown maker from Holy Cross Stan Koslowski were transferred to Chapel Hill.\textsuperscript{77}

Killinger developed something special that fall. He switched from the single-wing offense to the t-formation at Chapel Hill. He then moved Graham to quarterback in the new system and had Koslowski at fullback. With “Bear” Bryant coaching the line, the team was called “the finest to wear Cloudbuster colors.”\textsuperscript{78} That was a bold prediction since several of the nation’s best football teams were on the schedule. So how good did Killinger’s team become? That season, the Cloudbusters ranked as high as number-2 in the Coaches’ Poll. He took his ragtag group of players into Durham and defeated Duke, 13-6.\textsuperscript{79} He led his team into Annapolis and upset the highest ranked team in the country, the Naval Academy, 21-14. The Cloudbusters remained undefeated until November 5 when they lost 49-20 to unbeaten Bainbridge Navy, a team riding a twenty-one game winning streak and loaded with ex-professional stars and youth sensation Charlie “Choo

\textsuperscript{76} “Varsity Football Schedule is Announced,” \textit{Cloudbuster}, July 29, 1944.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, September 3, 1944.

The Cloudbusters lost one more game before the season ended, resulting in a 6-2-1 overall record. Killinger’s unit rated among the top third in the country. For his leadership and assiduous work for the Navy Department, Killinger had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander earlier that spring.81

On February 9, 1945, Killinger was detached to work as athletic director and Military Training Officer at the Naval Air Station in Deland, Florida. His replacement as football coach was "Bear" Bryant, who, unfortunately, never got to coach a game as the boss at the North Carolina Pre-Flight School. Germany surrendered in May. The Japanese submission followed a few months later. The school was decommissioned just weeks after the Japanese surrender.82

After the war, Killinger and Bryant both applied for the University of Maryland’s vacant head coaching position. Bryant, who received the endorsement of Washington Redskins owner George Preston Marshall, won the job. Killinger was gracious in defeat and subsequently returned to West Chester on October 3, 1945.83

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81 The Ration League was the wartime substitute for the Southern Conference. The Pre-Flight baseball team competed against the North Carolina Tar Heels’ civilian team. “Four Man Staff To Have Charge of Cloudbusters,” Cloudbuster, August 19, 1944; Yackety Yack, 1945, 237; “Varsity Football Schedule is Announced,” Cloudbuster, July 29, 1944; “Killinger football head,” New York Times, February 27, 1944.
83 Paul Bryant and John Underwood, Bear: The Hard Life and Good Times of Alabama’s Coach Bryant (Chicago, IL: Triumph Books, 1975), 230-245; William “Billy” Glenn
coaches remained friends throughout Bryant’s legendary career at the University of Alabama, at times notifying one another about potential recruits for their respective teams. And when Bryant wrote his memoir in 1974, *Bear: The Hard Life and Good Times of Alabama’s Coach Bryant*, Killinger was among the names credited for helping the Hall of Famer become a national title-winning coach.

**Hall of Fame**

In reality, Killinger’s return to West Chester after World War II was just the beginning of his Hall of Fame coaching career. He could have chosen a different life, but he loved the town of West Chester, and he appreciated how the people on campus treated him and his family.

He was greeted with delight by the West Chester faculty upon his return in September 1945. At this time, the students were new and had heard little about Killinger before his arrival. In addition to his coaching duties, Killinger assumed jobs as faculty director of the Veteran’s Emergency Housing Units and the Veterans Club. As the coach of two sports, he held a distinct bond with many of his students and athletes that had served in either World War II or the Korean War during the remainder of the forties and fifties.

In 1951, on the thirtieth anniversary of his Walter Camp All-American year, Gettysburg College gave him an honorary doctor of science degree in Physical

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“My dad was always so proud of that honor,” said Bill Killinger. The prefix stuck, as many of his football and baseball players at West Chester thereafter called him “Doctor Killinger” instead of “Coach Killinger.”

Although frightened most of the time by his presence, the students at West Chester were always so enamored with him. The 1958 college yearbook, *The Serpentine*, was dedicated to him. It read: “In every age capable leaders are needed to guide and to inspire youth. West Chester is fortunate to have as a member of its professional staff Dr. W. Glenn Killinger . . . he represents that great combination of strength in mind and in body which opens doors to education and to success.” Ten years later, the W. Glenn Killinger Men’s Residence Hall was dedicated in his honor. As of 2018, Killinger Hall is the oldest building remaining on West Chester’s campus.

The tributes continued to come. In October 1963, Killinger was inducted alongside Chuck Bednarik into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame’s first class. In January 1970, the American Association of College Baseball Coaches inducted Killinger into the Coaches’ Hall of Fame. He was honored at a banquet in Washington D.C. with a plaque that had been placed in the Coaches’ Baseball Hall of Fame when it was once located at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

Then, on February 21, 1971, after finishing as a finalist many times before, and fifty years after his record breaking senior year at State College, Killinger finally made it into the College Football Hall of Fame for his accomplishments as the quarterback at

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84 “Commencement Exercises At Gettysburg College To Open With Alumni Dinner Tonight,” *Gettysburg Times*, June 1, 1951, 1.
Penn State. The banquet’s keynote speaker was then-California Governor Ronald Reagan.\(^{87}\)

In 1979, several alumni established the Killinger Hall of Fame at West Chester University and the W. Glenn Killinger Football Scholarship Foundation. The fact that the foundation exists carries a surfeit of irony. In his day, Killinger was always opposed to scholarships. He paid for his own education at Penn State. Scholarships didn’t exist at West Chester when he paced the sideline. Everything that he accomplished as a player and coach was done through his own unremitting determination.

“I believe that not many persons have lived a happier or more exciting life,” Killinger said to his son, Bill, a few months before passing away on July 25, 1988.\(^{88}\) Word of his death spread quickly throughout the country after he died as an incalculable number of Killinger-Men lived coast to coast. The honors already bestowed were all that Killinger could bear. He asked his son to have his body cremated and the ashes buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

His wife Wilda lived until March 31, 2001. She died at the age of ninety-nine, just sixteen days shy of her one-hundredth birthday. Her ashes are buried next to Glenn’s at Evergreen.

In contrast to the somberness of his grave the effect does not feel that lonely. There is a sensation of that Glenn-Killinger-self-assurance that permeates around his burial site and makes one think of his resilience to overcome uncontrollable


circumstances. Even though he is long dead, his presence is so strong that one feels as if he will reach out beyond the grave to scold us for not being willing to put forth every ounce of our potential to a certain task. At one of the annual gatherings of former Killinger-Men—a group of football and baseball players who once played for Killinger and now meet twice a year to talk about the good-old-days at West Chester—John Ford, a left handed pitcher in 1959, warned, “This book better be good, because if it’s not, the old man will jump out of his grave and let you know about it.”

89 John Ford, Personal interview with the author. West Chester, PA, May 21, 2015.
CONCLUSION

Since few people in the twenty-first century ever heard of William Glenn Killinger, how can I say that he matched the level of celebrity status that household names like Ruth, Dempsey, and Rockne attained? Sport celebrities of the 1920s arrived at that prestige because they possessed personal stories that had serious implications on the direction of society. Babe Ruth was able to save Major League Baseball after cynical fans became disillusioned by the level of corruption exposed in the so-called Black Sox Scandal of 1919. World heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey was able to make prizefighting a respectable profession. Knute Rockne’s influence as the skipper at the University of Notre Dame made the coaching profession a lucrative enterprise.¹ Swimmers Johnny Weissmuller and Gertrude Ederle were emblematic of the American dream. An immigrant from Austria-Hungary, Weismuller popularized swimming while playing Tarzan in a dozen movies. Ederle, meanwhile, empowered female athletes with her Olympic gold and bronze medals and her swim across the English Channel. Like his athletic contemporaries, Killinger moved the nation because he was an otherwise average citizen that refused to surrender to insurmountable odds.

When the popular press christened Killinger as a sports hero in 1921, it did so by flaunting his distinctive rags-to-riches success. The level of fortitude, hope, and determination that he exuded is why so many today appreciate the story of schoolteacher-turned-Philadelphia Eagle Vince Papale, or that of Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger, who fulfilled his dream by walking on to Notre Dame’s football team and recorded a sack in his final game for the Fighting Irish. Killinger’s story also reads much like that of

¹ Bohn. Heroes and Ballyhoo, 2-3.
Michael Jordan’s. Ironically, an undersized and skinny Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team during his sophomore year. His Airness then spent the year developing his skills, which helped him make the varsity team his junior season. Like Jordan, Killinger was cut from every high school sport he tried out for until his senior year. He spent early mornings and evenings, often in brisk Pennsylvania temperatures, working on his football, basketball, and baseball skills. Unlike Jordan, Killinger never became a great high school athlete. Instead, he enrolled as an engineering student at Penn State in 1917. Standing only 5’ 6” as a freshman, he seemingly walked away from his dream of playing football for the Nittany Lions. That changed within a year. Like Jordan, who grew from 5’ 10” to 6’ 3” during his sophomore and junior years, Killinger experienced a growth spurt. Thanks to his new body and modifications to campus life during World War I, he successfully walked-on and excelled at three varsity sports at Penn State. He became one of the most formidable college athletes of his era to ever lace up cleats. And similar to Jordan, he had his chances to become a premier professional player in a sport of his choosing.

The popular press in 1921 universally lionized Killinger as football’s greatest player at any level. Two coaching legends Glenn Scobey “Pop” Warner and John Heisman each rated Killinger along side Jim Thorpe as America’s greatest multi-sport athlete. Sportswriter Grantland Rice, who coined the nicknames of Notre Dame’s famed Four Horsemen and Red Grange as the “Galloping Ghost,” called Killinger “one of the greatest running quarter-backs that football has ever seen.”² He could run, pass, punt, and kick just about better than anyone in the country except for George Gipp. The

² Evening News, August 1, 1924; John Heisman, “Heisman’s Hundred in the Hall of Football Fame.” Marion Star, October 27, 1928, 1.
Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger called him “the greatest running back in the history of the game.”³ Killinger was a common-man with rags to riches success. He truly was the prototype of 1920s American heroes.

The Vestige of 1920s Heroism

Examining how popular heroes were made during wartime offers a previously unexplored interpretation of the 1920s. It is common to know the “Roaring Twenties” as a decade defined by the Model-T, talkies, flight, prohibition, and a new consumer culture that spurred a transformation in American society. These popular innovations and novel behaviors obscure the level of influence that wartime decisions had on revered professional and amateur athletes. It may seem reasonable to label athletes as American heroes. But most of the many scholarly definitions of 1920s heroism fall short of recognizing wartime culture as responsible for creating it. True, many scholars find augmented leisure time, increased disposable income, the radio, and a new Hollywood-led fitness trend as responsible for the birth of the American hero.⁴ Such theories ignore the patriotic pageantry surrounding service sports in 1917. Moreover, although some discuss sports’ increased importance for demonstrating nationalistic greatness, there is not a scholar that touches upon the enactment of the Student Army Training Corps or the

implementation of massed athletics at hundreds of colleges in 1918. More than anything else, those two programs existed as a Trojan horse that conquered the minds and bodies of college-aged Americans that found both entertainment and inspiration in the figures that were made into celebrities.

The sports world, in other words, aided the president’s call for a return to normality after the Great War. As amateur and professional games both helped distract and calm families that had sons and fathers in France or Italy during the war, spectator sports were instrumental in restoring a daily routine of work and play after the war. With greater disposable income and cars to navigate on newly paved roads, Americans became regular sports fans. Almost annually new professional teams were formed in urban centers. Colleges went on to what historian Benjamin G. Rader calls a “stadium-building binge” as new stadiums were constructed or renovated to outfit growing crowds after World War I. For instance, for its first homecoming game in 1920, Penn State’s Beaver Field was renovated with a slightly taller and wider set of bleachers to accommodate 10,000 fans and a parking lot with 5,000 new parking spots. A number of newly construction stadiums were dedicated to veterans of the First World War: among them are Memorial Stadium (1923) in Champaign and Soldier Field (1924) in Chicago, Illinois. Constructed also were the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum (1923), California Memorial Stadium (1923), otherwise known as the Berkeley Bowl, Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium (1923) in Norman, Oklahoma, and Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium (1924) in Austin, Texas. Other athletic behemoths constructed during the decade following the war were Ohio State’s “Horseshoe” (1923) and Michigan’s “Big House” (1927) of the Big Ten. Louisiana State’s Tiger Stadium (1924), Georgia’s
Sanford Stadium (1929) and Alabama’s Denny Stadium (1929) made up the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (present-day Southeastern Conference) schools with new stadiums. The Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association built the Rose Bowl in 1922 in the shape of a horseshoe. The completion of the southern stands six years later gave it its bowl shape. In 1920, only one college stadium could seat 70,000 fans; ten years later, there were seven. Penn State and other eastern colleges moved popular sporting contests to larger neutral venues in big cities like Philadelphia’s Franklin Field or New York City’s Polo Grounds.

Precisely because 1920s heroism was so mainstream, investigating its origins also reveals continuing currents in American society. Underneath the surface of this examination of the past is a probing of the values and manner at which contemporary Americans see public figures as role models. The implications of the birth of the American hero generate questions about twenty-first-century notions of masculinity, toughness, sportsmanship, and integrity. Moreover, studying athletic celebrities of the past aids in understanding athletic expressions of protest, especially as it pertains to how displays of nationalism at professional sporting events—e.g. the NFL’s melodramatic tributes to servicemen and servicewomen on Veterans Day weekend, the mandatory presence of players on the field or court for the pregame performance of the “Star Spangled Banner,” and other exhibitions of political patriotism—contrasts with the rising current of anti-war, anti-racism, and anti-state-violence protests conducted predominantly

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by athletes of color. As a result, the methods of how President Wilson’s War Department and propaganda machine (Committee of Public Information) formulated and imposed a set of characteristics that defined America’s heroes during World War I should be called into question. It is the contemporary problem of how sports and politics collide at a cultural intersection; it is an issue that sees politically driven patriotism surrounding athletic events that weighs heavily in this dissertation. The fact that there is an embellished level of deference for the country’s military without affording people any latitude of dissent that might call into question decisions that lead to the repression of citizens in other nations or to the death of American soldiers heavily informs this investigation.

As a student of social justice, I have always been interested in political demonstrations that touch upon race, ethnicity, and gender. How many movies today pass the Bechdel test? Does Hollywood continue to malign Arab actors as terrorists? What psychological damage does perpetuating stereotypes do to the next generation of Americans? Why does the media still credit the African American quarterback as being “naturally athletic,” while the talent of his white counterpart is often ascribed to “intelligence?” In terms of stamping out implicit bias and racial anxiety, what price is society paying when the Trump administration and several NFL owners pull stunts that undermine and vilify athletes of color that take a knee to protest racial injustice? Because I have argued that the Great War had the biggest impact on the creation of America’s first celebrities, and because of the way America’s political climate today uses sports to redefine patriotism, examining the origins of the American hero helps to grasp the cultural value of celebrities in any era of American history.
This project has not examined athlete-activism in 1917 or 2017. Rather, it undertook an interdisciplinary investigation that was part biography, part cultural study, part sociology, and part history aiming to explain how a coordinated effort by a presidential administration, its War Department, and the popular press manufactured the first generation of American heroes. Though in a different form, that legacy of synthetical heroism has carried over into the twenty-first-century.
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