SPORTS

WAR AND THE DRAFT BRINGS WORLD OF SPORTS INTO NEW ERA—THE AGE OF AGED ATHLETES



Willie Pep takes the featherweight title crown from aged Chalky Wright

By Sgt. Walter Bernstein

PRESIDENT ALVA BRADLEY of the Cleveland Indians has announced that he doesn't want any men on his club who aren't heads of families, thus ushering in The Age of Aged Athletes.

This condition has been around the corner for some time now, but Bradley is the first solon to state it publicly. "The members of the Cleveland Indians will have a very good reason for not being in the Army," he has said proudly. "They will have wives and children to support."

It is a little too early to go around weeping that the sport is going to the dogs, but it is certainly well into the pipe-and-slippers stage. All the young men are either in the armed forces or defense plants. This leaves the older generation carrying the ball and while the spirit is undoubtedly willing, the flesh is unfortunately weak. It would be fairly safe to bet that not as many bases will be stolen this season as last season, simply because the current crop of players will have their hands full even *walking* from base to base. And not even all the old men are returning; Lefty Gomez, for example, has taken a duration job in a defense plant at $40 a week.

All this is swell for the war effort, but it is raising hell with high class athletics. Some sports escape, such as pro football which is played by a bunch of old men anyway. But baseball will suffer and basketball and especially boxing.

There are no decent heavyweights around who are old enough to vote and the paucity of talent in the division is shown by the attention currently given Lee Savold, a nice guy, and Lou Nova, making another comeback. Both these gentlemen are proud fathers and good providers, but neither is what you would call a hurricane inside the ropes.

The situation in the other divisions is more or less the same. Chalky Wright, the featherweight champ who admits that he will never see 35 again, recently had his crown lifted by Willie Pep, who had not yet been confirmed when Chalky first began fighting. The top-ranking welterweight is Ray Robinson, who expects to register for the draft soon, but the tip-off on that division is that two

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leading contenders are Henry Armstrong and Fritzie Zivic, both of whom are old enough to know better.

Armstrong has been making a successful comeback in the West, knocking over the weak, the halt and the blind, and recently took a decision from Zivic. This rivalry is beginning to resemble the French and Indian Wars, but there is apparently no one around good enough to make either of these two accept old age with grace.

Age is even coming before beauty in basketball circles. Probably the best basketball team in the country is the Grumman Wildcats, recent winner of the National Service Team Tournament. Their star is a gentleman affectionately known as "Pop" Gates. Pop formerly played with the Renaissance pro team and is believed to be 89 years old, but that has been unconfirmed.

The Wildcats consist of ex-college and pro stars who just happen to be working in the factories that make the Grumman planes, and won their title in a playoff against a soldier team from the Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

There is still college sport to be considered, but even here the war is striking hard. The new draft of 18 and 19 year-olds will cut very deep and there is a possibility that many schools will stop all outside competition and confine themselves to intramural sports. This will mean a dearth of newspaper stars, but it will probably mean better all-around condition for the country as a whole, and that's the important thing at this point.



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