

How World War II Impacted North Central College Sports

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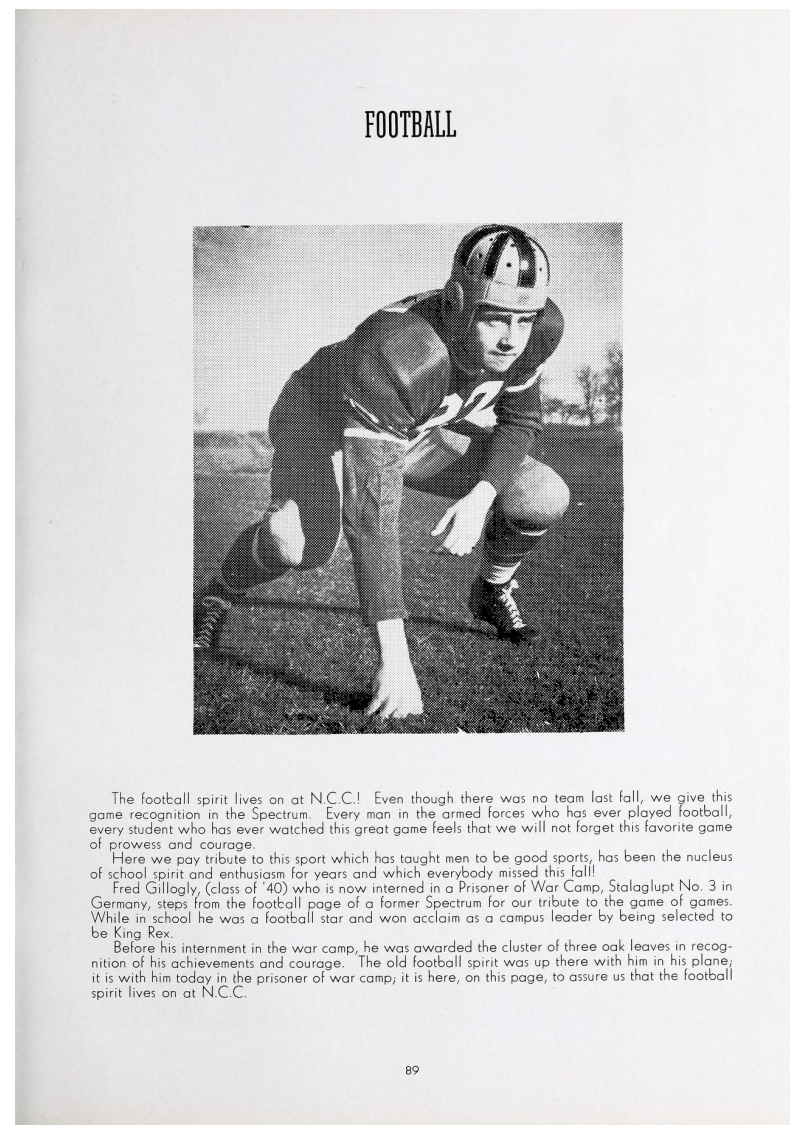
Background

Sports have long been an integral part of North Central College. With the additions of football and baseball in 1897 and 1898, the college began the journey toward for what it is arguably best known. However, this journey was not one without a few twists and turns. Although Illinois seemed removed from the threats of World War II, they soon found their way onto campus. Like almost all of the other programs, the football and baseball teams had to suspend play during the 1943 season. During this time, the teams lost some of their best players to the war effort and were used as funnels to the armed forces.

Lost Players

“Others of the team belong to the Naval Reserve. At any rate, this will probably be the last season for most of the boys. And it may be your last season to watch” (College Chronicle 30 September 1942, 4).

Many teams at North Central College lost key players to the war. The United States War Department informed all colleges that they needed a number of students to enlist in the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps. Because the military needed men with leadership abilities, most of the enlistments came from the sports teams, and when it came time for them to serve, they had to abandon their teams.



Military Funnel

“According to the Government, men who have received strict physical training and have participated in competitive sports, make the best soldiers which is another way of saying ‘Victory hinges on the side that can produce the most abled-bodied fighting force’” (College Chronicle 25 March 1942, 4).

Sports and the college itself were used as a funnel into the military because the military wanted men who were well-conditioned. The college’s teams opened up spots to the rest of the student body in order for them to get the required conditioning before being called on to serve.

Lost Seasons

“The 1943 and 1944 seasons were canceled, and just one game, at Wheaton, was played in 1945” (History of Athletics, 11).

Due to the unprecedented times, the seasons of many sports teams were canceled. The NCC baseball team played one game in three years, and the football team’s 1943 season was canceled. This is similar to what happened to the 2020 sports seasons. Due to the unprecedented times, this year’s seasons had to be put on hold.

Bibliography

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Acknowledgements

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