

Larry Amann's Skillful Coaching Responsible For Many Victories At Hartford

Mentor Of Minor Sports Has Remarkable Record

Cross-Country, Swimming and Track Teams Have Piled Up 186 Triumphs to 87 Defeats Over 18-Year Period; Have Won Many Championships

BY WILLIAM NEWELL.

Connecticut, a state which needs take a back seat to no other in the calibre of its high school athletic teams, can well afford to be exceedingly proud of the men behind these teams, the coaches.

The "builders of men" who have led the way include such personalities as Chick Bowen at New Haven Hillhouse, Tommy Monahan at Bristol, Peter Foley at Naugatuck, Billy Schotfeld at Waterbury Crosby, Chick Shea, lately of New Britain, Tommy Callaghan of Windham and countless others too numerous to list here.

These men have done much for the youth of the state, not by their individual records of victory but through their skill and perseverance in teaching the fundamental principles of athletics to youngsters of the trying adolescent stage of life.

Such a man is Larry Amann of Hartford High School.

His classification as a coach of minor sports at the Hartford school has kept his run-of-the-mill accomplishments from the limelight, no source of sorrow to him, incidentally, but on frequent occasions in the past decade his track, cross country or swimming teams have rocketed to state and even national fame.

Held in High Regard.

As a coach and teacher, he ranks with the very best. Held in the highest regard by his superiors and fellow coaches, the best proof of his efficiency and understanding comes from the boys he handles.

His record has been nothing short of remarkable. In fact, his three teams a year have now reached the point where they are monotonously clicking off championships and a glimpse into the future indicates even better things to come.

A few figures show how Larry's tireless efforts have born fruit. In 18 years, he first began at Hartford in 1925, his cross country, swimming and track combines, have amassed a total of 186 victories to 87 defeats. These figures are based on dual and triangular meets in the three sports and do not include events where more than three schools participated.

Swimming has been the most productive sport under Larry's guidance, this being so mostly because of the longer season which permits a greater number of events to be scheduled. Hartford tankers, who were first organized in 1929, have piled up 95 conquests against 24 defeats and from 1934 through 1938, the team went unbeaten.

Harriers Next.

Cross country has been next best, even though Larry confesses track is his chief love. The Owls harriers in 18 seasons have won 44 events and dropped 27. In this sport Larry turned out the most unbeaten teams, seven.

Track, from a winning point of view, has been considerably tougher, but it must be remembered that the competition throughout the state is much keener in this sport than in the other two. Amann's track teams, through this past spring, had captured the decision in dual and triangular meets exactly 47 times, six better than the string of defeats. Two teams with perfect records were also realized in this sport.

Not bad, you say. Read on:

In 1925 Larry's first track team lost four dual meets but the relay team of Sullivan, Scanlon, Conway and Ellard placed fourth in the Penn Relays at Philadelphia and the team composed of Main, Muzio, Andrews and Ellard won the Springfield Invitation one mile relay. In 1929 the track team won the state championship and in 1932 the cross country team captured the state title at Yale.

Won 10 Meets.

Getting over to swimming, the 1934 team went unbeaten in 10 dual meets, placed first in the Springfield Interscholastics, fourth in the Brown University interscholastics and first in the Springfield Boys' Club championships. In 1926 the tankers took 11 dual meets and Dave Tyler, Albert Aksomitas, Ed Conway and Fuchalski won several individual championships. A year later, the remarkable Tyler won the Connecticut AAU 220-free style and splashed home fifth in the National AAU meet.

The track and cross-country outfits continued to pile up championships in 1938 and 1939 and then in 1940 came the beginning of the chain victories.

Since the winter of 1940, Hartford teams coached by Amann have swept all three big events, the state, triangular and city championships. The only thing to mar a perfect score for the past three complete seasons was the victory by Weaver over Hartford in the 1939 state cross country championship.

Strangely enough, the stocky little man who moulds these championship teams never competed to any great extent in the events he now coaches. A native of Rochester, N. Y., and a graduate of Springfield College, as are most of the coaches in greater Hartford schools, Larry played football in his freshman year and later some baseball. As a matter of fact, he helped Johnny Newell coach football and basketball the first few years after he came to Hartford and before organizing the swimming team, handled hockey for a couple of winters.

Tyler Best.

Asked who he regarded as his three best athletes, Larry had to ponder for some time. He finally decided that Dave Tyler, who later went to Mercersburg Academy and then Trinity, where he shone in swimming and football, was his best natator. Tyler is now in the Army Air Corps.

Francis Furcy, who later went to Manhattan College, was his best cross country runner.

The surprise, however, to most people, is his nomination of Billy Duffy, the Frog Hollow product, as his most outstanding trackman. The word surprise is used because of late, until he went into the Navy as a physical instructor under Commander Gene Turner, Duffy won acclaim as an outstanding inter-collegiate boxer at Villanova. Duffy says Larry was the first miler he coached who did this distance under 4:40.

In cross country and in swimming, Larry had other standouts who would rank right up with the three he selected as the best. Two top ranking harriers were Louis

Has Great Record At Hartford



LARRY AMANN.

Main, who set the Keney Park course record in 1927-28-29 that still stands, and Chet Kobialka, the star of the past several seasons.

Many others.

Some of the others who went on to achieve fame and the colleges they attended are: Donald Root, RPI, sprinter; Oswald Johnson, Union, shot and discus; Barney Keeney, North Carolina, quarter-miler; Bill McKone, Holy Cross, sprinter and quarter-miler; Francis Breen, RPI miler and cross country runner; and Joe Eastman, Trinity, who holds the college pole vault record.

Only two youths, both at-school within the past four years, have, to the best of Larry's recollection, won letters in three sports, at least two of which he coaches. Jim Hanley, who has another year at Hartford, is the most notable example. Hanley during the past school year, won letters in cross country, swimming and track, and was outstanding in all three sports.

The other fellow was Willie Sutton, a colored lad, who collected cross country and track letters and also one in basketball.

About schoolboy track in Connecticut, Larry has something to say. "High school track in this state has reached the point right now where it surpasses baseball in both player and spectator interest," he asserts.

"I would say that on the whole, Connecticut schoolboy trackmen are on a par with those in other states but right here better practice facilities are sadly needed. The equipment is inadequate for the type of program now being carried on."

Have Problem.

Coach Amann and most of the state's track coaches realize this difficulty. They are faced with a problem of getting equipment and cooperation from their superiors in many instances because school heads and boards of education are extremely hesitant about appropriating funds to a sport that brings in little or no revenue.

Larry isn't kidding when he talks about better practice facilities. In track, his weight men and jumpers must work out in the cramped confines of the school yard while the runners are limbering up daily on a none-to-well kept cinder track two miles away at Colt Park.

This situation is not uncommon through the state and is especially true in the larger cities where the schools are located in the business section and are without a field they can call their own.

Larry is a crusader. He states that the hardships are no stumbling block to his teams. Instead, he carries on with what he has and in his spare moments is hard at work with the other coaches, who are all seeking to improve their projects.

Teams Will Walk.

When the news first came out about the government order prohibiting transportation companies from carrying athletic teams in chartered buses, Larry snorted with displeasure. In the next breath he vowed his teams would walk to their meets if necessary.

That's typical of Larry Amann. Though he most certainly wouldn't go so far as to order his charges to such a task, he is determined that his program will be continued and that not a single meet will be erased from the schedule unless it becomes absolutely impossible to get to the scene of battle.

He is one coach who knows full well the value of the job he teaches and especially its importance in wartime. He is an example—a coach in a school that isn't seeking the easy way out by cancelling athletics just because things are getting a little tough for the people at home. He's an American and Americans go best when things are tough.