

Chapter 8

The Doc Is In

April 1947 - May 1953



ALL THINGS MUST END

Historical scholars often consider the conclusion of the Roman Empire to have taken place on the 4th of September in the year of 476. It is a very official sounding date and it aligns nicely with the sacking of Rome by Odoacer and the deposition of the last proclaimed Roman Emperor Romulus Augustus.

The truth of the matter though is that the Roman Empire had started to expire long before that. Years of constant leadership turnover, religious and economic division and wars had whittled away the strength and power of the Empire. All of which culminated with its ultimate conclusion in 476.

The decline of the Colorado swim team mirrors that of Rome. While we can point to the loss to Weber State in 1942 as the first visible crack of the swim team's decay, a laundry list of internal and external factors lead to its downfall. The loss of the team due to World War II, the shift to a much stronger athletic conference and of course the constant turnover at the head coaching position. All contributed to a team on the decline.

People often think of declines as steady and linear. Forgetting that any regression whether it is with Rome or the swim team has its peaks and valleys. Brief moments where things appear to be returning to their glory days. For the Roman Empire many historians look to the rule of Constantine the Great who reunited both halves of the empire, adopted the Christianity and stabilized the kingdom for a brief period. After his death the Empire again fractured and continued on its downward descent.

Roland "Doc" Balch was the Colorado swim team's version of Constantine. He took over at its lowest with a team stripped of talent in a unforgiving conference and although he never returned the team to its previous lofty heights his long tenure as swim coach would bring the Buffs back briefly to respectability.

Balch had a fair bit in common with the only other swim coach in Colorado history who was nicknamed Doc: Doc Waite. Both of them hailed from the state of Texas and came to the school as the athletic trainer hence the Doc nickname. But that is where the similarities end.

Balch was a Texan through and through. He grew up in



Roland Balch (1943)

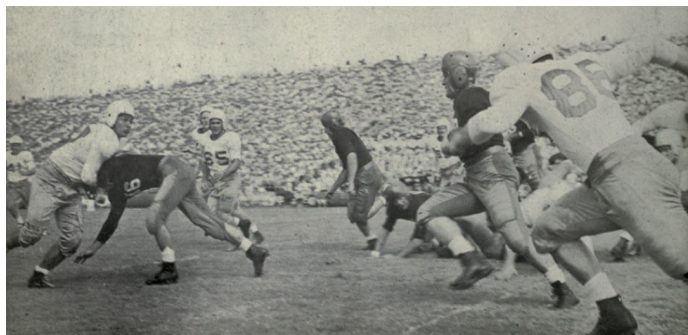
Fort Worth where he attended Paschal High School. After attending TCU and University of Texas for his undergrad and masters degree he taught and coached at various schools around the Fort Worth area. Unlike previous CU swim coaches he had at least some experience with swimming. When he landed a job with the Fort Worth YMCA in 1943 he taught swimming classes alongside other sports and even organized several swim meets.

Balch arrived in Boulder at the tail end of the war as a Lieutenant in a Naval Training Unit that was assigned to the University. Upon being dispatched he decided to stay in Colorado and joined the football staff as the team's trainer. His years of experience in physical education made him a logical fit for the role.

It has been said that if a trainer is doing his job right you will not hear anything about them. After all, trainers tend to only make headlines when their players are getting hurt. However in just his second game on the job Balch made headlines not because of the health of his players - but because of his own medical situation.

The Buffs were back in Balch's home state of Texas playing the Longhorns in Austin. The morning of the game he was stricken with appendicitis and was rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment. It was the first of two bad omens for CU football as later that day six players almost joined Balch in the hospital as the elevator at the teams hotel failed, dropping them six floors. Luckily the emergency brake kicked in at the last moment to prevent utter disaster. Things didn't get any better for the team on

the gridiron as they surrendered 10 touchdowns enroute to a 76-0 bashing by the hometown team. As the local newspaper wrote about the incident, “When it Rains, It Pours”



CU vs UT Austin Football (1947)

Doc would shake off the appendicitis and remain the football team's trainer for the next several seasons. Building up a strong reputation as a kind, caring and passionate coach. In the Spring of 1948 he was tabbed by Athletic Director Harry Carlson to coach the swim team. Unlike past coaches where swimming was more of an offseason activity this was to be his full time job. Balch was done working as the football trainer; he was replaced by Aubrey Allen; his sole focus would be on rebuilding the swim team.

But what of Coach Hartzell? What happened to him? Why was there an opening to begin with? There is no indication that Hartzell was fired or if and why resigned, but we can infer that he was always meant to be a temporary fill-in for the position. He was, after all, at CU primarily as a student furthering his engineering education. He would remain at the University as a student and instructor for two more years during which he completed his masters thesis in Mechanical Engineering.

He was then employed by the Monsanto Chemical Corporation and Denver Equipment before moving to Bristol, Tennessee to work for the Control Cells Corporation as Production Manager in 1955. Bristol was where his father called home from 1950 until his untimely death in 1954 from pneumonia. He had gotten the lung infection while working in Brazil while stationed there as the Director of the United States Foreign Operations Administration.

How long Hartzell stayed in Tennessee we do not know, but we can ascertain that he was back in Boulder, Colorado by 1969. As that year he formed an engineering consulting firm named Hartzell-Pfeifferberger and Associates, Inc which worked on a large variety of projects including

those involving drainage assessments.

At the same time he was the president of Crowley Land Development Company which was pursuing a large purchase of 50,000 acres of farm land in Crowley County, for 20 million dollars. His purchase was opposed strongly by the local Twin Lake city government concerned that his acquisition of the farmland would include the water rights to the area.

Water rights were on the top of the Twin Lake's politicians minds because of a precarious situation that neighboring Colorado Springs found themselves in. They were only part way through massive city developments and with water already scarce they would soon be in a water deficit. The scheme by Twin Lakes was to take advantage of the situation and sell their water to the Springs and reap the profits. Their concern was that Hartzell also saw this opportunity and was angling to profit on the water rights himself. It was a business plan that Hartzell strongly denied saying he had no plans to sell water rights, just farm land.

He didn't know it yet, but soon Hartzell would be changed by water in its frozen form of snow and ice. On November 14, 1970 he made the trip from Boulder to the Springs in blizzard conditions to meet some friends and watch Air Force take on Stanford in a football game.

After watching the Falcons drop the Cardinal by 17, Hartzell attempted to exit the stadium via the south stairwell but slipped on the ice, “striking his head and back on the steps, sliding to the bottom of the stairway where he laid in a dazed condition, with severe pain in his lower back”

Before the fall Hartzell had frequent back pains which had required surgery in 1962 and 1964. This stumble reaggravated those injuries and after experiencing tremendous pain and consulting medical professionals he underwent back surgery in 1972. This kept him bedridden for a month and left him unable to work. So he did what all Americans do when they are wronged, he rolled up his sleeves and called a lawyer.

Skipping ahead here Matt,

1949 - 1950 Season



Record

1-5

Head Coach

Howard "Doc" Balch

Jerold Baumgartner

Jim Berry

Arthur Damon

Tom Guggenheim

Conrad Horine

Dick Ready

Dick Symes

Hugh Berger

Stan Black

Tom Duesterberg

Clarence Herbst

Robert Pickens

Smith

Edward Timberlake

Inagural Wyoming Relays, December 10, 1948

In a season that would be full of lopsided defeats, Balch's first meet as coach was a fun one. Organized by Wyoming's Coach Francis Stroup, the Cowboys hosted the inaugural Wyoming Relays about a month before the season on December 10th. It wasn't an official meet and the events consisted of relay swims, diving and "novelty acts" by the Wyoming team. Despite the lower outlook for the Buffs season Colorado was still favored ahead of the met against its Rocky Mountain competition.

Other than a final standing, there are no meet results available. In a foreboding sign of things to come the Buffs ended up finishing in second place in Laramie. It could be argued that this was the first Wyoming victory against CU. But at the end of the day this was nothing more than a pre-season exhibition and so the streak continued.

The meet proved to be a massive success and would become a tradition amongst the local schools. CU would continue to participate in the relay meet for the next several

decades until the team folded in 1980.

Nebraska 44, Colorado 31, January 14, 1949

Nebraska's Hollie Lepley was experiencing a coaching nightmare. He had at his disposal a once in a generation talent, a swimmer whose individual accomplishments could rival a hero in Greek mythology, but he didn't have the supporting cast to win an elusive championship. The last two years even with Grimm lighting the pool on fire at the M.V.I.A.A championships Nebraska had still finished miles behind first place Iowa State.

With just two more seasons of eligibility remaining for Grimm Nebraska's didn't have much time before their championship window would slam shut. If the Huskers were going to capitalize on it they desperately needed strong injection of quality swimmers.

Unfortunately, for Coach Lepley that didn't come to pass, instead he would have to make due with what he had. A month into practicing the Daily Nebraskan reported that Lepley was, "moaning over the lack of depth and over all team strength". You can't exactly fault him for his frustrations; he wasn't working with absolutely nothing as he brought back five additional lettermen around Grimm. But the only noteworthy swimmers of that bunch were Gould Flagg who was runner up in diving and Conrad King who got third in the breaststroke.



Nebraska Swim Practice (1949)

The new crop of sophomores did little to shore up the depth for the Huskers, leaving the team as top heavy and over reliant on the skills of Grimm as ever before.

After a blowout win against the Jayhawks in Kansas where Grimm set a couple of pool records Nebraska

hit the road around noon on Wednesday, January 12th. They had a packed road trip itinerary as they would be swimming in three meets in three days. The first of which would be against Northern Colorado on Thursday, followed by the Buffs on Friday and concluding with the Rams on Saturday. It was sure to be a grueling trip for any team, and Colorado was optimistic that the UNC meet would wear down the Huskers rather than give them a tune up.

But that would be expecting too much out of the low-esome Bears. The meet was a cakewalk as the Huskers effortlessly breezed past Northern Colorado for a 30 point win. So for a second time in three seasons Nebraska entered Carlson Gymnasium Pool more than prepared for victory.

Even though the results from this meet are painfully incomplete the Buffs actually put up a fairly strong fight against their cross state rivals.

Leaning on their stroke depth, Colorado scored the first blow as their relay of Ready, Black, and Berger scored the first points of the meet. But the freestyle events followed shortly thereafter. We are missing the results for the 220 freestyle but the Buffs didn't win any of the other three freestyle events. For a team ridiculed for their lack of depth it was a team effort in those events as Grimm won the 100 freestyle, Branch the 50 freestyle and Hill the 440 freestyle.

Shockingly the worst freestyle performance was in the 100 freestyle as Berger the team's captain finished all the way back in third place. Meanwhile sophomores Dick Symes and Tom Guggenheim showed potential with second place results in their freestyle swims.

For those that have walked around the University of Colorado-Boulder campus the name Guggenheim is probably a familiar one. In the heart of the Norlin quad resides the old Guggenheim Law Building (Currently used by the Geography Department). The building was erected in 1909 and was fully funded by an \$80,000 donation from the coffers of the wealthy Senator Simon Guggenheim. His fortune was not really earned but rather inherited from his father who made millions from shrewd investments in Leadville mines.