

IU football stadium had its ups and downs in 1920s

Had you asked any Indiana University student in 1922 whether the game of football had "come of age," the answer would have been a resounding "Yes!" The administration and board of trustees apparently thought so, too.

In the years after World War I, the university had been accumulating donations in a Memorial Fund to honor IU students who had died in the war. One of the things planned was a new concrete football stadium.

The project got under way in the usual manner, with the trustees calling for plans, engineering advice and the letting of the contract to the lowest bidder. The winner



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

was the Bedford Steel and Construction Company at \$20,000. In conjunction with the project, there was a performance bond executed by the Detroit Fidelity and Surety Company for \$50,000.

So far so good. In March of 1924, students and alumni alike were already looking forward to the fall when the first game would be

played in the new stadium, located on East 10th Street at the current site of the IU Arboretum. But cracks began to appear in the construction work, and there was some evidence that the concrete was beginning to deteriorate.

Alarmed, the university administration called in an old friend, Leslie Colvin, a building expert from Indianapolis. After he recommended rigorous tests for the structure, the trustees notified the contractor and bonding company that the work was "unsatisfactory."

Meanwhile, IU President William Lowe Bryan assured the students and alumni that the university was protected from loss by the bond.

Students and alumni, eager to use the facility, urged the trustees to do whatever it took to have it ready for the Homecoming game with Ohio State in the first week of November.

William J. Titus, a State Highway Department bridge engineer, checked the stadium and turned thumbs down on the construction. Shortly thereafter the Bedford Steel and Construction Company received a message which began, "You are hereby notified that all of the work done by you for the stadium at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, is condemned by us as unsound and improper, and the same wholly fails to conform to the drawings and specifications of a

certain contract of July 10, 1923, between, the Trustees of Indiana University and yourselves; and the structure erected by you for said stadium should be in its entirety destroyed and removed."

Another contractor began tearing down and removing the stadium; and the structure. At the same time, the trustees filed a suit against the Detroit bonding firm, which chose not to give up the \$50,000 without a court fight.

Incredibly, the university lost the case, which was tried in the federal court in Indianapolis. The late Burton D. Myers, a university historian, explained that the Detroit firm

see **Looking back**, page C4