

Chapter 47
1958 – 1961
Bannockburn / Jordanhill College (vi)

As can be seen from the match cancellations noted in my rugby fixture card for 1958-59, the Scottish winter was harsh with temperatures well below freezing point from about the New Year until the middle of February. This placed severe limitations on many outdoor ball-sports, and indeed I only managed to play in thirteen matches during the whole season, when my normal calendar would have contained about twenty-five.

1958/59

1st XV				2nd XV			
Date	Opponents	F	A	Date	Opponents	F	A
1958				1958			
Sept. 10	Boroughmuir F.P.	A		Sept. 6	Rolls-Royce 1st XV	H	
" 13	Allan Glen's F.P.	A		" 13	Cambuslang 1st XV	H	
" 20	Stewart's College F.P.	A		" 27	Stirling County	H	
" 27	Edinburgh Wanderers	A		Oct. 4	Greenock Wanderers	A	8 6
Oct. 4	Wigton Wanderers	H		" 18	R.N.A.S. 1st XV	H	6 17
" 6	Gala	A	3 11	" 18	Gordonians	H	9 0 2
" 11	Gordonians	H	12 13	" 18	Kilmarnock	H	
" 18	Kilmarnock	H	9 8	" 25	Rolls-Royce 1st XV	A	
" 25	Jordanhill Coll. Sch. F.P.	H	9 0	Nov. 1	Shawlands 1st XV	H	
Nov. 1	Dunfermline	A	6 3	" 8	Greenock Wanderers	H	
" 8	Ayr	A	2 0 0 3	" 15	Orkney 1st XV	A	
" 15	Laird Academicals	H	22 3	" 22	Parrish Academicals	H	8 6
" 22	Parrish Academicals	H	18 3	" 29	Walkerburn 1st XV	A	3 3 3
" 29	Carlisle	A	28 2	Dec. 6	Queen's Park F.P. 1st XV	H	
Dec. 6	London City	A		" 13	Jordanhill Coll. Sch. F.P.	H	
" 13	Greenock Wanderers	A		" 20	Uddingston 1st XV	H	
" 20	Langholm	A	3 6	1959			
" 27	Allan Glen's F.P.	H	20 3	Jan. 3			
1959				Jan. 10	Musselburgh	A	
Jan. 10	Musselburgh	A		" 17	Hutchesons' Grammar F.P.	A	
" 17	Hutchesons' Grammar F.P.	A		" 24	Glasgow Academicals	A	
" 24	Glasgow Academicals	A		" 31	Aberdeen Grammar F.P.	A	
" 31	Aberdeen Grammar F.P.	A		Feb. 7	Greenock Wanderers	E	
Feb. 7	Greenock Wanderers	E		" 14	Edinburgh City Police	H	18 0
" 14	Edinburgh City Police	H	18 0	" 21	Howe of Fife	H	19 11
" 21	Howe of Fife	H	19 11	" 25	St. Andrews University	H	
" 25	St. Andrews University	H		" 26	Melrose Greenock XV	E	
" 26	Melrose Greenock XV	E		Mar. 7	Bellahouston Academicals	H	
Mar. 7	Bellahouston Academicals	H		" 14	Painnure	A	
" 14	Painnure	A		" 21	Aberdeen University	H	
" 21	Aberdeen University	H		" 28			
" 28				" 30	Jedforest	A	
" 30	Jedforest	A					

Although this major six week gap in Jan/Feb. was frustrating for many, it did in fact give me a chance to recover (albeit temporarily!) not only from the gymnastically induced damage to the sciatic nerve in my sacro-iliac region, but also from the many bouts of debilitating sinusitis that I had suffered as a country boy unaccustomed to Glasgow city 'smogs'.

The bad weather over this period also caused curtailment of many practical outdoor games' sessions within the college time-table. But our two-days-a-week 9 a.m. appointments down-town for life-saving swimming practices proceeded as normal. While these 'dips' were good therapy for reducing my tendency to suffer from the back-spasms that quite often made me walk around like the proverbial 'crooked man', the journeys to and from the baths were nightmarish for us all. In particular, penetrative freezing fogs took great delight in causing misery by attacking, and then infecting parts of our anatomies unprotected by anorak, and scarf.

This happened, firstly - as we left our cosy 'digs' to make our various ways to stand in rush-hour queues to wait for the required bus; secondly - as we later emerged overheated from the steamy warmth of the pool environment into the icy street; thirdly - as we reluctantly made our way from the warmth of a local breakfasting cafe to the nearest convenient Corporation stop to catch a bus to within quarter of mile of the college some three miles away; finally - as we left the heat of the bus to face the elements again, and trudged up both Southbrae Drive and the full length of the college driveway - all in the knowledge that, 'right reason or none', we were expected to be ready, properly kitted, to run in file through the gymnasium doorway and into 'open-order' by 10.35 a.m. ! During this next physically demanding forty minutes, many a sausage and egg roll previously consumed in haste down-town was 'sicked-up' by those who had foregone 8 o'clock breakfast in their rush to get to the baths in time.

I smile now, somewhat wryly, as I recall these experiences. And they bring to mind a favourite threat that our tutors occasionally issued to any recalcitrant 'freshers' in these early days of what could be called our masochistic 'initiation'. "Keep up to the mark, lad - or it's

down the drive you'll go ... never to darken the door of this institution again." To which an apocryphal sotto voce response from our inimitable colleague Ron Marshall might well have been, "F--- me, that would at least provide an escape from f----- freezing slogs up the f----- drive!"

In the second week of April, I was selected at fly-half for the College 7 a-side squad to take part in the Gordonians Tournament at Seafield in Aberdeen. We travelled up to the Granite City early that Saturday morning train to be greeted on arrival by typically 'dreich cauld' weather that was far from ideal if you were not eliminated in Round One and able to escape to the warmth of some nearby hostelry! In the event, courtesy mainly of our 'flying-machine' Peter Connolly, we progressed remorselessly through three rounds and three excruciatingly bone-chilling intervals to reach the final against our hosts.

Despite all feeling the debilitating effects on our muscles from five hours or so in the damp and chill, this 10 minutes each way match was energetically contested ... until after about seven minutes, I was heavily tackled by the redoubtable Ron Glasgow. Unfortunately I was in full stride when he, quite legitimately, crunched his shoulder across my outstretched right knee. I swear to this day that the colour of the initial pain I experienced was bright red! It was little consolation that, as I was carried off to the touch-line and pavilion, the agony was a mere pink mist! With no substitution allowed in these days, victory for Gordonians became a formality ... or so I was later told in the wash-room where I was unsuccessfully attempting a knee-ligament-damage-limitation immersion exercise in a waist-high sink filled with cold water, when what I really yearned for was a piping hot shower! I was able to hurple my way to the refreshment-room, but with appetite gone, all I managed was a glorious mug of hot tea, before we all got a lift down to the station to catch the 7pm express south.

By the time the train reached Stirling, I had stiffened up completely, but somehow managed to get to a pay-phone and SOS my father in Bannockburn. As usual he was ready to deal with what he often called 'John's propensity for injury-proneness', and thus promptly, yet again with the family car, did a rescue-act in my hour of need. After I had put up with relative incapacity, but with little sign of improvement over the three-week Easter break at home, I returned to Glasgow and there went to the Casualty Department at the Western Infirmary. The doctors diagnosed torn medial ligaments of the right knee, but tried to comfort me with the comment that a lateral tear would have been much more serious. Duly plastered from knee to hip, and armed with crutches to use once the restrictive, but supportive 'stocking' had dried, I hibernated in my digs for the first week of the new term.



After two weeks in plaster, the crutches discarded in one, and with the sole of my foot worn through to leave a mush of dirty strands of bandage, I felt able to attend an international soccer match between Scotland and Austria at Hampden. This adventure only left the plaster in a worse state of disintegration, so I went to the infirmary next day and had it removed. Lo and behold, I found that I could walk again unaided, and within days I was skipping around like a two-year-old.

By the lighter and warmer days of May, 1959, we ‘knew the ropes’ and really began to appreciate more of the advantages of being a trainee at the SSPE.

Relaxing after lunch-time in the College grounds

Left to Right

(Surnames only as we got them from tutors!)

Liddell/McConnochie/McCallum,S/McManus/Baptie/McCallum,D/Blisset/Keenan/Hand/McKinney/Gray/Barclay/Bradley/McCrimmon



We were already feeling, despite the exigencies of our curriculum, that we were, not only very lucky to be part of the extra-specially dedicated group of Phys. Ed. men there at that time, but also embryo partners of many of our admirably able and professional predecessors. Thus, we worked hard, played hard, ate well, socialised with growing confidence and enjoyed life to the full.

Apart from the cricket in Term 3 that I have already mentioned, formal examinations had to be passed in most subjects. These obstacles as I recall were surmounted without much fuss, but I also remember, playing for the college tennis team, taking part in Inter-College Field Day Sports, and, with the rest of my SSPE cohort, practising a repertoire of Scottish Country Dances partnered by a selected group of Year One ladies as our contribution to the 1959 College Graduation Gala Day display performances on the huge lawn at the front of the main building.

As was traditional, the graduating students of S3 in the SSPE took top-billing with their well orchestrated demonstration of free-standing exercises, vaulting and agilities. This was the first time that I had ever viewed our senior group in action, and I was not only amazed to see the high standard shown by all, but also quite appalled that some of the fearless acrobatics performed might, two years on, be expected from the likes of us.... and myself in particular!

Some of our lads after the Scottish Country Dancing Display in June 1959

Those in Kilts Left to Right

Caesar, Telfer, Travers, McKinney, Fraser, Assiedu

Jess, Hand, Scott, Mitchell

