

The Quiet Crusader

Holy Cross Baseball Coach - John J. Barry
1921 - 1961



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College of the Holy Cross

Nos autem gloriari oportet in cruce D.N.J.C.;
in quo est salus, vita et resurrectio nostra,
per quem salvati et liberati sumus.

But it behoves us to glory in the Cross of D.N.J.C.,
in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection,
by whom we are saved and delivered.

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Mrs. Faxon Rothschild, a member of the Arthur D. Little team engaged in an investigation of the athletic situation at Holy Cross College, made quite an observation. It had been her task to interview graduate schools and foundations. She said, "Whatever Holy Cross may or may not be academically in the minds of Deans of graduate schools and of the officers of the foundations, when it comes to athletics, Holy Cross is it."

One of the reasons why Holy Cross has won and maintained a position of some eminence in the world of athletics is the subject of this work. Jack Barry coached baseball for forty years at Holy Cross.*

The idea of writing on the man who coached baseball at Holy Cross for 40 years should call for little explanation. This is especially true when the coach in question compiled a record of about .800.

By way of garnering material for this undertaking, I wrote to some 420 men - most of whom played or managed under Mr. Barry. The letter to them reads as follows:

"Recently on the occasion of a visit to the President's office I saw a box of pictures. These had been presented to Holy Cross by Mrs. Margaret Barry, the widow of Jack Barry, the man who coached the baseball team for forty years. The sight of these pictures fathered the inspiration to bring to the public the career of Mr. Barry.

"My qualifications for writing this account are naturally limited. My knowledge of baseball is that of an amateur. My personal contacts with Mr. Barry were casual. Our personal friendship was limited to visits during practice sessions. On the other hand a peculiar accumulation of experiences gives me some basis for this work. It was my unusual experience to wit-

*In 1929, two of my classmates, C. Keefe Hurley and Ray Dohens, travelled around the world playing baseball. They were amazed to find that Holy Cross and great baseball were linked together in the minds of sport fans wherever they went.

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ness every game which Owen Carroll pitched in Worcester. For nineteen years I served on the Holy Cross faculty while Mr. Barry coached. During these years I had contact with some of the baseball players in class and on corridor in the dormitories. Occasionally I worked out with the batterymen in the Carlin cage (formerly Loyola) in the early spring and hit fungoes to the outfielders when the boys moved to Fitton Field for practice. These experiences gave me many insights into the mind and manner of the coach.

"It is my hope to describe the coaching career of Mr. Barry. The idea is to salute a life of dedication and achievement, to analyze (if possible) the constituent elements of his success formula, and to underscore the value of his contribution to Holy Cross.

"Relevant to this purpose will be the opinions and anecdotes of those who served with and under Mr. Barry. The testimony of players, managers, opponents, interested spectators, and sports writers will be sought with the hope of composing a true picture of this quiet Crusader. The details of practice sessions, the attention devoted to bunting, sliding, turning to the play on a relay, infield practice, and batting practice are all matters which contribute to the formula of success. The fact that mistakes were observed and constantly brought to the attention of the players is a point of great importance. How did Mr. Barry select his players? How much coaching did he give his pitchers? His catchers? His batters? How did he position his players on defense? How much of his own dedication did he pass on to his players? These are the points of interest which went into the formula of success and which must be gleaned from the testimony of those who know. Only thus can the true picture be constructed.

"No one need be a Solomon to realize that Mr. Barry, like every other mortal, had faults or shortcomings. When a committee goes about the task of selecting a coach, they delineate the ideal which they are seeking. They draw the picture of a paragon of all virtue. They want a man who is sincere, a winner, a teacher, understanding, fair, just, kindly and so on. No one actually possesses all these attributes. In reality coaches fail to possess the fullness of one or other virtue. As a team is built, it

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involves a process of selection and rejection. It is a matter of some poignancy that a successful team toasts its stars and looks back on a road littered with the beaten forms of those who didn't make it. In the life of every coach there are the lists of those 'who might have been.' For every player selected, there are two or more who are rejected. This is the nature of things. How did Mr. Barry score in this area? How did he pick his team? What was he looking for in a ball player?

"The foregoing gives some idea of the point and purpose which I have in mind. What is being sought may be summed up in the following questions:

- What was Mr. Barry's recruiting system?
- How did Mr. Barry go about selecting his players?
- How much attention did Mr. Barry give to detail?
- How did he conduct his practice sessions?
- How did he coach batters, pitchers, fielders?
- What was his formula of success?

Do you know anyone other than Holy Cross players who might be interested in contributing information to this chronicle?

"Thank you for any attention you give this letter of inquiry. Any and all who help in this work will, I hope, have the satisfaction of perusing the finished product with the consolation of knowing that they did their part in constructing the picture of the Quiet Crusader."

Fifty-four answers to my questions came in. They dribbled in. It took more than a year for some of the stalwarts to figure out their answers and to commit them to paper. There was something a little disheartening about this slowness of response. Also the more thoughtful responses were not always from the greatest of the players. Gradually, however, the conviction grew that the reservoir of information contained in these letters spelled out in strong and clear relief the answers to the questions raised. They describe the details of recruiting, of practice, of the elements of coaching in its various aspects, and of the secret formula of producing winners. Some effort has been expended in letting the replies speak for themselves. This fact may produce an impression of disorganization in the treatment of some aspects of the subject. This seems to be

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more than offset by the richness of the source--the words of the players who directly experienced the contact with the coach.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the men who shared in this effort to analyze the success story of the "Quiet Crusader." Putting this narrative together has been a work of consuming interest, of admiration and of love. It is a matter of some regret that someone more talented and gifted has not addressed the topic before.

VITA

John Joseph Barry was born on April 26, 1887 in Meriden, Connecticut.

He died on April 23, 1961 in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.

In 1918 he was in military service.

In 1917 he managed the Boston Red Sox.

His big league career spanned eleven years.

Beginning in 1908, he played 7½ years with the Philadelphia Athletics.

In mid-season in 1915 he went to the Boston Red Sox. He played there 3½ years.

His life time batting average in the leagues was .243.

In 1913 he hit .275 and batted in 85 runs.

In 1921 he became the Baseball coach at Holy Cross.

In 1944-46 he served as Director of Athletics replacing Eugene Flynn who was in the service.

His coaching career (1921-1961) was eminently successful.

CHAPTER I

HOLY CROSS IN 1921

In 1921, John J. Barry came home from the Big League baseball world. A member of Connie Mack's \$100,000 infield, the old shortstop had played in six World Series with Philadelphia and Boston. He had been the player-manager of the Red Sox in 1917. He served with the U.S. Navy in 1918. And now, with his playing days over due to an injury, at the age of 34 he began a new career as coach of baseball at Holy Cross College.

And--what was Holy Cross in 1921? It was a small liberal arts Catholic Jesuit College. It had been founded by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in 1843. From its modest beginnings, it had gradually built up until, in 1921, it boasted a faculty of 42 Jesuit priests, complemented by 9 lay professors. At that time, there were 733 young men in the student body.

The Founding Fathers at Holy Cross had a basic faith that an education loomed large in the development of an individual. They possessed, in addition, a strong conviction that Catholic education was an apostolate of prime importance. They envisaged education as a preparation for life, something embracing the intellectual, moral, and physical development.

In fact, the old catalogues of the College proudly described the purpose of the educational process at the College as being "the full and harmonious development of all the individual's faculties according to their essential hierarchy." Hidden away in all of this were many and varied objectives. They desired primarily to pass on the good of an education. They envisaged the building of a body of intelligent Catholic laymen prepared to man the professions in medicine and law and to hold the posts in our society with a sense of responsibility and goodness. The vision included the expectation that some of the graduates would find their way into the seminaries and the religious orders and later, as priests and religious, labor for souls in God's

Vineyard. Not the least among the objectives of the Founding Fathers was the provision of an opportunity for an education for the young men of less affluent means. In its earlier years, Holy Cross catered to the poor and underprivileged.

As a means of education, the Fathers reposed great confidence in the "Ratio Studiorum." This quaint term refers to the Plan of Studies which had characterized the educational institutions of the Society of Jesus for some centuries.

Thus we read in the College Bulletin for 1920--(page 15): "The system of education is the one in use in all the colleges of the Society of Jesus, and it is guided by the principles laid down in the famous Ratio Studiorum. The body of rules and suggestions has been elaborated by centuries of experience and has been judged worthy of attentive study and hearty approbation by the ablest scholars."

The Holy Cross adaptation of the plan of studies in the early 1920's was relatively simple. The freshman encountered Latin, Greek and English in the morning. He, in many cases, stayed in the same room--only the professor was subject to change. In the afternoon some limited choices existed. Thus various classes were devoted to Modern Languages, history, or mathematics. The first year concentrated on poetry. In this way the student probed the Odes of Horace and the plays of Sophocles. The second year revolved about Rhetoric. The sophomore confronted the speeches of Cicero, Demosthenes, Burke and Webster. The third year introduced the student to philosophy and, through the senior year, the emphasis was on philosophy. At Holy Cross the student learned a system of logic--minor and major--ontology and cosmology. In his senior year, he studied Ethics, Natural Theology and Psychology. During all four years, there was a course in Theology. From such an outline of courses one might conclude that a pre-medical sequence of courses would be impossible. This, of course, was not the case. Over the long years, it was possible for a student to garner credits in biology, chemistry and physics, and thus to enter medical school upon graduation. Similarly, a student was able to major in chemistry. Such students actually finished their courses with two majors.

Later critics have faulted the curriculum as it existed in the 1920's. The strictures cite the lack of flexibility, the inattention to the needs of individual students, and the lack of correspondence to the developments in other schools. That there is some merit in such criticisms seems a fact. However, it should be noted that not all educational experience need be confined to classroom studies. Much inspirational motivation and development of the faculties of the individual occur outside the confines of the curriculum.

Thus, at the College of the Twenties, ample opportunities for the development of individual tastes and talents existed in the extra-curricular activities.

The school boasted an active debating society. This activity embraced a club for intramural debates and sponsored a debating team for inter-collegiate competition. Some educators doubt the merit of debating as an educational tool. Some basis for doubt springs from the fact that the debater may be appointed to argue a stand which may run counter to his convictions. Be this as it may, the need for preparation, the development of forensic ability, the exercise in the art of persuasion, the knack of thinking on one's feet, the need to analyze the opponent's arguments--these may be put down as benefits to be derived from this form of activity. Similarly, the Dramatic Society produced plays. These included the plays of Shakespeare, Sophocles, and others. The "Purple" was the literary magazine which included the offerings of young poets and writers. The school paper provided an opportunity for news gatherers, editorial writers and sports analysts to exercise their talents. Many other activities, such as the Glee Club and the band, the orchestra, the Science Club, the French Club, and the regional clubs, provided further means for individual growth and development.

Not the least weapon for education was the "Bull Session." Almost endlessly discussions took place in the dormitories. Sometimes these sessions were devoted to "joshing," sometimes to "crabbing the system," to sports and amusements, to biographies or other similarly related topics. Often the discussions turned on politics, questions of value judgments, business, girls, and life in general. The educational value involved amounted to a testing of one's ideas against the opinions

