

# Losing Weight the Hard Way

By Frank Hermes

The sharp blast of the whistle cut the early morning air. Some sleep-groggy pigeons flapped their wings and flew nervously from pillar to pillar as seventeen equally groggy young men flapped their wings and began sprinting in the frigid solace of Pneumonia Downs, the indoor track under the stadium. For the hour of the day—6:45 a.m.—the dedication was surprising—impressively so.

Sixteen were Oklahoma wrestlers training for the national tournament. The seventeenth was me; I was simply along for the punishment, to see how a former high-school athlete, though now woefully out of shape, could fare in the grueling conditioning spree Coach Tommy Evans annually puts his boys through prior to the NCAA meet. The extra work has paid off in superbly conditioned teams which in the six Evans years have never finished worse than fourth nationally and have two titles.

It became an increasingly personal thing with me as the days went by, and I was determined to stick it out till the end, which I hoped wouldn't be fatal. I took ribbing from Evans, the wrestlers, and even student manager Joe DeVito, who is probably the best conditioned manager in collegiate wrestling.

One thing was certain: I really needed the

exercise. At 24, I could already detect a distressing bulge around the mid-section. Coach Evans suggested I kill two birds with one agonizing experience. I could write my article and lose weight, too. I was hustled over to Ken Rawlinson, the Sooners irrefragable trainer, to ask his advice. He sat me down, felt my spare tire, and said I should get down to 145. I looked at him quizzically. I weighed 175; losing 30 pounds was too much. He laughed unsympathetically, and we settled on 152, Wayne Wells' weight, as a goal. I vowed to make 160 by the Big Eight tourney (Mar. 10-11) which was ten days away and lose the remainder before the team left for Kent, Ohio, the site of the 1967 nationals on March. 23-25.

Wrestlers have an advantage in losing weight. They do it all year long, so their bodies are used to it. Fellows like Wells and Tony Bennett can lose seven or eight pounds in a single workout, but I couldn't. I am no wrestler; the closest I have ever been to a wrestling mat is the newsmen's table in the Field House. So I ran and dieted and dieted and ran until I had half-starved, half-exhausted myself. If there's a will, there's a way, encouraged Coach Evans, who began looking more like the Marquis de Sade to me every day. I tried to convince myself.

The early morning running wasn't bad. We weren't really wide awake yet and we ran with our bodies on automatic pilot, one foot in front of the other. The scene might have been amusing to an outsider. Coach Evans bounced all over the indoor track, prodding his men on—"Only ten seconds to escape. Let's go now. (Blast of the whistle, the men sprint) 10-9-8-7. You have to have it. Push. 4-3-2-1." (Blast of the whistle and we slow down to a jog).

Actually the wrestlers were in fantastic shape to begin with after wrestling an 18-match, four-month schedule; they finished 17-1 and No. 1 in the nation. I was the only one who was hurting. In fact I lagged so badly that Coach Evans once scolded me, "My student manager is outrunning you now. You'll have to get on the ball." Sure enough, he had just passed me by.

I tried at least to imitate the wrestlers sartorially, appearing the first day in a sweat suit and rubberized jacket. Bryan Rice wore swimming trunks, Roger Mickish wrestling tights, and Bruce Landrey bermuda shorts.

The first three days were the worst. I noticed a discomfort in my legs after eight laps of a scheduled 24-lap, three-mile run. Then I started to sweat profusely. At 12 laps, my arms and legs started to knot and I had a fire in my throat. I wished I hadn't had so much beer the previous night. But Evans was always ready with encouragement. "You can tell the fellows who are in shape," he

# A Source of Encouragement

By Donna Gragg

THE LONG GREEN-AND-WHITE bus labeled "Central State Hospital" rolled to a halt outside the attractive brick building. The chattering of the dozen or so girls inside the bus subsided, then swelled with increased intensity. Already accustomed to the procedure, the group, which includes one long-suffering male student, moved up the sidewalk, hesitating briefly before thick, locked doors. The doors swung open, and the students moved noisily inside, stopping to exchange greetings with three patients waiting at the entrance. A tall coed in slacks and sweater immediately stepped toward a strong-looking, reserved Negro patient of about thirty. His sad eyes gained warmth as she talked to him, and soon he was leading the conversation.

A pretty student with short, curly brown hair turned to a female patient. "I like your haircut, Betty," she said to the short, heavy-set woman, who lifted her hand quickly to touch the new hairdo. "Oh! Well, thank you!" she replied, flattered.

The collegians then hurried down the corridor, eager to sign in and begin work. What draws these students to a mental hospital on a Friday afternoon, when most students have plans for gaiety and weekend fun? Essentially these OU volunteers come to make friends with the patients. The students are instructed by sponsors to talk, make conversation, but most of all, to listen. Their mission is to draw the patients out of themselves, and into an awareness of others.

Ward 37, where the students visit, is an experimental ward, and includes men and

women. Partly financed by federal funds, the program is designed to place patients in a more natural setting, to bring the "outside world" inside a mental hospital. Bright curtains, sunny lounges, and music give the ward a cheerful atmosphere. A part of this natural, relaxed environment is human contact. Every effort is made to draw each patient out of silent, lonely frustration, and into conversation and friendship. Group activities include dances, musical programs, cooking classes, and outdoor recreation.

Although this ward is staffed to meet national requirements, there is never enough personnel on the staff to give each patient the friendship he wants and needs. Hospital personnel have long recognized the value of the volunteer worker's role as friend to the patients. Continuously enlarged since it was first organized in 1952, the volunteer program now has a full-time coordinator and state advisory committee supervising the system. Two groups of OU students participate in the volunteer program. One visits twice each week. These students, who live in honors housing on the campus, spend two hours with the patients during each visit. Pi Omega, women's service sorority, conducts programs once a month, usually style or talent shows. This program was recently enlarged to include work in Ward 37 also. About 20 girls go to the hospital each Thursday afternoon to visit with patients.

The OU students meet no special qualifications. Their majors range from journalism to pre-medicine. The volunteer handbook

lists "sincere interest in rendering service," "sense of humor," and a "sense of responsibility and dependability" among desired qualities. Since the students do not counsel with the patients, they are not required to have professional or technical skill.

A regular Friday afternoon visit may include a variety of activities. One of the most crowded rooms in the ward is the television lounge, where patients gather to smoke, watch television, or just sit quietly.

Down the hall from the TV room is a less crowded place, the arts and crafts room. Colorful displays of rugs, clothing, paintings, leatherwork, and other handiwork made by the patients show that mental illness does not destroy the desire to create.

Forgetting to treat the patients as they would treat anyone else is one of the students' greatest problems. "Even though we were told to behave naturally, I still felt uneasy," said one girl in explaining her first feelings about the patients. Cautioned that the patients would resent any "superior" treatment, the OU volunteers were at first almost afraid to speak to them.

Ward 37 is not a dull, somber quiet place. Adding to the general noise of people in motion is the sound of music which floats out of the music lounge. Sunshine pours into this colorful room through a wall of windows, hung with gay green-and-white drapes. If someone is not playing the piano, the record player is usually on.

For these OU students, a trip to a mental hospital is not a depressing experience. Instead, it is a source of encouragement and pleasure. The thrill of being told "We're so glad you come out here!" and "Please come back; it's so nice to have you here" casts a warm glow on any day. END



Our hero, Frank Hermes, huffing and puffing on the extreme left, shows he is all heart.

laughed. "They just keep going on and on even when they are tired. Some people can endure pain better than others. They will be in a little better shape."

Frankly, I didn't want to endure the pain; I wanted to stop. There were only eight more laps to go. Finally we completed the 24 laps. No? One more for the nationals? We sprinted all the way around now. Then, surprisingly, after the third day it didn't hurt as much when I awoke.

Perhaps the hardest thing about the early morning running was the hunger it inspired. But eating leads to weight, unfortunately, and hunger must often be ignored. The wrestlers who were working twice a day really had to fight their appetites.

The Big Eight tournament was upon us before we knew it. The Sooners hosted the meet, won the title, and crowned three individual champions: Rice at 123, Wells at 152, and Granville Liggins at heavyweight.

Oklahoma had to overcome an early Iowa State lead by winning five of six third place matches to go ahead. For juniors Rice and Wells, it was a successful defense of their titles won a year ago at Kansas State. For Liggins, a nose guard for the football team, it was a magnificent upset victory over unbeaten, monstrous 6-6 by 238-pound Ted Tuinstra who almost filled the Field House by himself, 2-1, for his first championship. Liggins wrestled at 225.

Sunday and Monday thankfully were days of rest, then Tuesday it was back to the grind. I had made 160 on Friday, gained a few pounds, and joined the wrestlers in the anguishing morning and afternoon grind. The day before I was to weigh in, I was down to 158. I put on my sweat gear and rubberized suit and jogged out to Kraettli Apartments and back, did a few situps and pushups, and weighed in at the end of the day at 154.

That night I ate two poached eggs and drank three glasses of water. I still weighed 154 two hours before weigh-in Tuesday morning. Again donning my sweat gear, I took another round-trip to Kraettli, did my exercises, and went in the steam room. The wrestlers started to wander in about a half-hour before they departed for Kent. They jokingly prodded me and offered to buy the beer if I made weight. Tony Bennett manned the scales. I gingerly stepped on the scale. Slowly lifting my hands, I watched the needle climb steadily. It wavered near 152. As it hit 152, I jumped from the scale. I had made it, but the Sooners didn't, as it turned out.

Oklahoma's tournament hopes suffered a severe blow when Roger Mickish, the Sooners' 167-pound runner-up last year, bruised his shoulder and couldn't make the trip. It's ironic that one year ago Coach Evans also lost Bill Lam, his fine 160-pounder, just prior to the national tournament. In addition Rice had a hip pointer and 115-pounder Tom Pennington bruised his ribs the day before they left. Both wrestled, however.

David McGuire, a 130-pounder, kept Oklahoma's tradition of having a national champ for the last 14 straight years. He upset Joe Peritore, two-time runner-up, in the second round, 4-2, and decisioned Don Behm of Michigan State, 9-6, in the finals. Wells and Sophomore Cleo McGlory both made the finals, but lost one-point decisions and finished second. Liggins was sixth at heavyweight. No other Sooners placed.

It was a long week at Kent, the site of the Sooners' last team title (1963). Four men dropped out in the first round, one in the second, and two more in the quarterfinals. Michigan State won the team title with 74 points. The Spartans, incidentally, put the only blot on Oklahoma's 17-1 dual record. The team victory was the first for a Big Ten school in 35 years. Michigan was second, Iowa State third, Oklahoma fourth, Portland State fifth, and Oklahoma State finished sixth, its lowest tourney finish in history.

It was a long haul for both the team and me. They'll be back (eight return next year), but I vowed never to do it again. Oh, yes, I'm back to 162 pounds and Ken Rawlinson notwithstanding, am gunning for 175. END

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