

# The Battalion Sports

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## Varsity Level II

### New classification gives 'minor' sports chance to compete for NCAA championships

by Tracey Taylor

Contrary to most Texans' belief, there is life outside of football at Texas A&M. Texas A&M, and other Texas colleges and universities, offers a variety of varsity sports for men and women.

Some of these sports — this year designated as rifle and men's soccer — are considered varsity sports of a different kind. Participants don't get special athletic dorms, they don't get away competitions and they often hear the roar of large

these teams are classified as level II varsity sports — part of the Athletic Department, but at the same time separate.

Varsity Level II is a classification distinct from the other three levels of athletic competition at Texas A&M (intramural, club sports and varsity). The special status was approved last month after two years of study by the Athletic Council and an ad hoc committee headed by the Texas A&M Athletic Director Frank E. Vandiver.

The committee's goal was to try to

and provide an opportunity for certain club sports to compete in NCAA competition.

Varsity status gives all teams the chance to compete in national tournaments at the NCAA level. But for level II teams that's about all the status guarantees.

The approved policy statement on the Varsity Level II status states that no athletic scholarships will be given and room and board for players of Varsity Level II status will not be provided.

And yet they're called varsity teams for scheduling purposes.

Dr. Tom Adair, director of the Texas A&M Athletic Council, said the distinction is the amount of money available for the two levels. "Promoting a team to varsity status can cost anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000," Adair said. "If a team is competing nationally and we don't feel the Athletic Department can take on the financial responsibility of a new varsity sport, what can you do?"

What they did was create Varsity Level II. But the money for level II sports does not come from the \$6 million dollar athletic budget. It comes partly from the Intramural Office and partly from



*'Scholarships and funding are not the purpose. Level II is a way for the student body to become involved as a student athlete — rather than a scholarship athlete.'* — Texas A&M Associate Athletic Director John David Crow on the new Level II varsity classification.

student activities funds.

"Funding was our only problem," Adair said. "So, our goal was to create a level responsible to two organizations in the University System. The Athletic Department is responsible only for seeing that the players meet NCAA eligibility rules — the Intramural department handles the daily administration."

The two committees also set some guidelines that a team must meet before it can be considered for Level II status.

The adopted guidelines state that a team must have participated as an extramural club sport for four

years, have the recommendation of the Director of Intramural, Recreational Sports, and have access to "adequate facilities without interfering with the other university programs" before being considered.

There must also be an NCAA championship offered for that sport and the team must receive the approval from the athletic director, the Athletic Council and the University president.

John David Crow, the associate athletic director at Texas A&M and A&M's only Heisman trophy winner, said that sports like rifle are chosen because they offer

something extra to Texas A&M.

"A team like the rifle team, while not exactly a spectator sport, offers many things to this University," he said. "They're competing on a national level, and they're good."

"And with the emphasis on the military in this school, I was kind of surprised when I found out we didn't already have one."

Crow believes that money should not be a factor in creating Level II sports.

"Scholarships and funding are not the purpose," Crow said. "Level II is a way for the student body to become involved as a stu-

dent athlete — rather than a scholarship athlete.

Adair also agrees that scholarships are not the key to competitive sports.

"The more we stay away from scholarship things — the better off we'll be," he said.

There are people, however, that think differently. One of them, rifle team coach Maj. Richard M. Pitts, says the new status his team received changed some things for the team, but he could still use additional help.

"The varsity status allows us to compete in the NCAA championships," Pitts said. "And that's what we need to be considered a national competitor."

"But we're not getting any more money because of it, and lack of funds is critical to us. Right now, I don't have enough air rifles to shoot two (three-man) teams. The money we've got won't even cover travel expenses."

As for support from the athletic department, Pitts said it's great from a moral standpoint. "We get a lot of 'Thatta boys' and 'Keep it up's' from them," Pitts said. "They like us because we win — last year we were first in the

Southwest Conference, and 17th in the nation. Right now we're sitting at about 13th overall."

"But sometimes it's hard to compete with the top 10 universities, because they all can give scholarships," he said. "Eastern Kentucky offers \$6,000 worth of scholarships to their shooters."

Adair said that there are no plans to offer scholarships to the Level II participants in the immediate future. In fact, there are no plans to include the teams in the athletic department budget. The teams will be granted their \$7,500 from the Intramural Office on a year-to-year basis.

Overall, however, rifle coach Pitts said he is thrilled with the opportunities the varsity status offers his team.

"The rifle team will keep competing, keep winning," he said. "because we've got the talent. Sure, money would be great, but we'll take what we can get."

## Schramm: Halas greatly influenced NFL

DALLAS — Dallas Cowboys president and general manager Tom Schramm said Tuesday that National Football League pioneer George Halas should be remembered most for simply keeping the league alive in the years before World War II.

The Chicago Bears owner, who learned the hard way that it was better to be a fan than a player, was with the Cowboys since he was the team's sponsor when it was trying to gain admission into the NFL and since he agreed to help Halas' play of signing quarterback Meredith and running back Perkins to personal service contracts in 1959.

The last coach Halas fired, Neil Armstrong, is now employed by the Cowboys.

His greatest contribution to the National Football League was to keep it going from 1920 to 1959, said Schramm. "Nobody else could have done that. He even kept the Chicago Cardinals going and they were in the same town."

Dallas was granted an NFL franchise in 1960, at the same time which resulted in the hiring of Pete Rozelle as the league's commissioner. But before the franchise was awarded, Schramm and Meredith and Perkins to sign contracts that committed them to playing with the Cowboys.

Word went out to all the clubs to draft those players," said Schramm, whose team was not allowed to participate in the 1960 draft. "That word came from Halas. He was the leader of the

league. He even drafted Meredith in the third round I think it was to make sure nobody else would do so.

"Halas also stayed out of the commissioner's fight at that same meeting. That fight (over the hiring of the new commissioner) lasted seven days and it caused a lot of acrimony and split the league into camps."

"But Halas stayed out of the debates and even passed on some of the votes because he didn't want to create any ill feelings that would reflect on the expansion."

Schramm got his start in the NFL with the Los Angeles Rams, where he rose from publicity director to general manager.

"The thing I remember more than anything else about Halas,"

said Schramm, "was actually a very little thing. This was in a league meeting when I was with the Rams and you have to realize in those days there were only a few teams and everybody was very close."

"I got up and was talking, trying to defend a point or whatever it was, and some of the people started jumping on me. Halas got up and took my position. And I know he did it because he thought it was unfair that they were doing something to somebody who was scared to death and hadn't been in there for very long."

"I always remembered him doing that. He got up and said something and all of a sudden the attitude changed."

Armstrong was dismissed as

coach of the Bears in 1981. He is now a part of Dallas' research team, which is charged with pouring over films of the opposition in search of weaknesses.


"Every meeting I ever had with Mr. Halas was good except the last one," said Armstrong. "That meeting (in which Armstrong was fired) was the last time I saw him. That day was hard on him and hard

on me. But it was held in a businesslike manner.

"He was respected and feared. His teams were always feared. When he hired me I told him that our old coach at Philadelphia, Greasy Neale, used to say that he always hated George Halas and hated the Chicago Bears."

"When I told him that, Mr. Halas said, 'good.'"

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