

## THE LAWYER-ATHLETE

The image of the student-athlete has taken a serious beating lately. Newspapers, magazines and broadcast coverage of collegiate sports are filled with reports of controversies involving the academic eligibility of athletes in major sports. Last fall the Big Ten conference was involved in a dispute over the academic eligibility of a quarterback on the University of Illinois football team. CBS broadcast a report questioning whether there was any serious attempt to educate student-athletes.

No, it has not been the best time for college athletics, and some would suggest that the days of the student-athlete are indeed gone forever. But is that the case at Wisconsin? Can students here participate in athletics and still maintain the grades and desire to

further their education after an undergraduated career? Does athletics have some positive benefit to the participants?

One way to explore that problem is to look right here at the Law School. Have former UW athletes been able to make the transition from the locker room to the Law School.

*The Gargoyle* has found more than 75 UW Law School alumni who participated in intercollegiate athletics during undergraduate careers on this campus alone. We expect that there are more whom we will still learn about, as well as others who came to the Law School after competing at other undergraduate institutions. Our athletes participated in a variety of sports before moving into the legal field. There are former foot-

ball and basketball players, as well as ex-golfers, oarsmen and tennis players. Some achieved fame — such as former professional football players Pat Richter and Ken Bowman. Most, however, did not have professional careers as an option when they came to law school.

Beginning with the following article about an early lawyer-athlete, *The Gargoyle* will look at our experiences to see if one can indeed participate successfully in intercollegiate athletics at the University and then go on to a successful law school and legal career.

We think some of the answers will be interesting, and we hope you enjoy them.

— Sylvan Sobel

### ROBERT BRUCE McCOY CLASS OF 1891

One of the University of Wisconsin law school's first student-athletes was Robert Bruce McCoy. As a student at the school from 1888 to 1891, McCoy excelled as a varsity baseball player. After graduation he had a distinguished career as a military leader, judge, mayor, and gubernatorial candidate.

McCoy was born on September 5, 1867 in Kenosha. As a child he moved with his family to Sparta, where he lived most of his life. Before entering the University of Wisconsin in 1887, McCoy worked as a news reporter for the *Monroe County Democrat*, published by his father, and for the *Milwaukee Sentinel*.

The Law School McCoy entered in 1887 was different from the school as it is today. There were only 61 law schools in the United

States, and only 18 had any entrance requirements. Wisconsin admitted students who presented evidence of good moral character and a high school diploma. Fees were sixty dollars per year. The school had not yet incorporated the casebook teaching method begun in the east in the 1870's. Instead, the curriculum was modeled on the apprenticeship system, and students spent much of their time performing the duties of law clerks. The school's first full-time dean, Edwin G. Bryant, was appointed in 1889.

McCoy's athletic career began in his sophomore year, at the university, his first year in the law course. He was pitcher and captain of the sophomore class baseball team, which played against other class teams. McCoy also played third base on the "League Nine", which consisted of the school's best players. The "League Nine" competed on the intercollegiate level against Lake Forest, Racine College, Northwestern, and Beloit.



McCoy as a law student