

LIFTING THE CLOUD

(Originally published September 1963)

Curtis Publishing Co. v. Butts concerns an article published in the March 23, 1963 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post* alleging that former University of Georgia football coach Wallace Butts conspired with University of Alabama coach Paul "Bear" Bryant to fix a 1962 football game in Alabama's favor. The article's source was George Burnett, an Atlanta insurance salesman who had allegedly overheard a telephone conversation between the coaches. Butts brought and won a libel suit against Curtis Publishing, owner of the periodical.

The 1963 football season is about to open on a note of renewed confidence. The verdict in the recent Wally Butts vs. Curtis Publishing Company (*Saturday Evening Post*) libel suit, a controversy that had all the overtones of a pot and kettle argument, was acclaimed by Southern coaches as a victory for college football. "A dark cloud over football has been lifted," said commissioner Bernie Moore of the SEC. Helping to move Moore and the Southern coaches out of the shadows was an award of over \$3,000,000 to Coach Butts. "A great thing for the coaching profession," said Clemson's Frank Howard. "The story could not have been true because that sort of thing simply does not go on in college athletics," said Athletic Director Shively from Kentucky. The cautious and diplomatic Bobby Dodd was "extremely happy for Wallace Butts and his family." And Shug Jordan, who has known difficulties of his own, probably expressed a profound sentiment of all when he said, "I'm glad the trial is over."

Inasmuch as all the brotherhood felt themselves involved and suffered along with Wally, it would be a nice gesture if Butts turned over the \$3,000,000 to the SEC where it could be handled like the proceeds from any other Bowl game—split up among the athletic departments of all the SEC colleges. [But the award of \$3 million was later reduced, and eventually Butts accepted \$460,000.]

Big time college football coaches should not be subjected to such trying experiences, particularly during the strenuous pre-season training period when all of their efforts are being expended toward building character, fighting delinquency, helping underprivileged boys obtain an education, and attempting to produce a team that will increase the prestige and enhance the reputation of their universities.

Certainly Drs. Rose [President of the University of Alabama] and Aderhold [President of the University of Georgia] must have shared Coach Jordan's well-stated sentiment. The conscience of a college president ordinarily has neither the elasticity nor the resiliency of that possessed by a seasoned athletic director or football coach; it is more comfortable dealing with the generalities of an annual President's Message, and should be spared the ordeal of coping with public statements made under oath. Dr. Rose, perhaps because of his background and greater familiarity with the game, seemed more at home with the sidestepping and double reverses of courtroom play than Dr. Aderhold, who avoided all razzle-dazzle and stuck to straight line plunges. Dr. Aderhold, undoubtedly unfamiliar with stunting, red-dogging, or shooting the gap, displayed an appalling ignorance of the

true functions of college football. It is inconceivable that he could feel that a coach, steadily engaged in building character for over thirty years, could have, himself, so bad a character that his word could not be believed under oath.

Dr. Aderhold's inept performance on the witness stand did not go unnoticed among influential and prominent Georgia alumni. One of them who writes a sports column pointed out that the decline of the University of Georgia as an athletic power started when Dr. Aderhold became president in 1950; and it is true that since that date the names of deserving Pennsylvania Polish scholars have been disturbingly lacking from the game programs. This alumnus further recommended that the athletic board be revised to include better informed and qualified members who might be less inclined to vote along with Dr. Aderhold at the board meetings. Another alumnus, the president of a Georgia Bulldog Club, who had considerable freshman experience at several colleges including Georgia, when asked his opinion, commented with keen logic, "I'd say Butts was the richest coach in the U.S. If they had convicted Coach Butts, they would have convicted Aderhold. I would like to see Aderhold resign."

It is evident that Dr. Aderhold does not have a strong grasp on the fundamentals of running a university. However, dropping him from the squad on the basis of one poor performance on a courtroom field would be a little drastic; maybe he fumbled because the stadium spotter relayed the wrong information to the sideline lawyer. Since he does have a few years of eligibility left, it might be better if Dr. Aderhold could be held out for a few semesters and sent over to Alabama under Dr. Rose and Coach Bryant for more seasoning.

(c) *The Bulletin of the Muscogee County (Georgia) Medical Society*, "Of General Interest," Sep 1963, Vol. X No.9, p.9