

Denison's Earlier Athletics

THERE are four kinds of athletics which have at different times gained special prominence at Denison. These are baseball, track events, football and basketball. The position which Denison now holds in these sports among the other colleges is shown in the articles under the heads of the various sports. This article, however, pertains more directly to their infancy. At first Denison did not take part in any intercollegiate contests, but baseball was indulged in between various teams brought together in the institution, and was played almost all the year round.

The first account of baseball is found in Vol. I, No. 1 of the *Collegian*, published in '67, where we find that two clubs had been organized the year before, but that, for some unknown reason, one of these, the Olympic, had been disbanded and another would be organized. The other one was known as the Buckeye. The new club became the Isthmian club, and there was great rivalry between it and the other clubs which were formed in the village and school. It is interesting to compare the 2-to-0 and like scores of the present day with the 64-to-48 score of one of these games played on November 9, '67, the other scores of that time being of similar magnitude. In '69 the interest even in baseball seemed to be dead, and the question was raised as to whether a velocipede club ought not to be organized for the sake of exercise. In '69 and '70 the favorite exercise was of a pugilistic nature, and students were distinguished from other people by their black eyes and bunged noses. On the 21st of May, 1870, occurred the first intercollegiate baseball game of which record is found. This was between Denison and Kenyon at Granville, and the outcome was 35 to 20 in favor of the Kenyon team. The *Denison Collegian* of that date has this to say about the game: "The Kenyon nine showed every evidence of thorough organization and practice, while all that we had to oppose them was a 'scrub nine' which was hustled together for the occasion without ever having played together. We were agreeably surprised at the result, for we thought that the playing of our nine was only equalled by their foolhardiness in accepting the challenge." The next intercollegiate game was a return game with the same school, played at Kenyon on October 15, '70. This game was peculiar in that, being played in the football season, it seemed to have acquired some of that spirit. In the second inning, the catcher of Kenyon batted the ball and tried to stretch the hit into a two-bagger. Being ordered to "slide in" to second by the coacher, he did so, with the result that the whole weight of his body was thrown upon the leg of Van Vorhees, who was playing that sack for Denison. The base being made of wood and firmly fastened down, did not allow his foot to be pushed back and so his leg was fractured below the knee. Accordingly the game was called at the end of the first half of the second inning and the game