

SPORTS...

By Eddie Ash

"FIFTH FLOOR! House furnishings—curtains—draperies—kitchenware!"

Roger Birtwell, a young man who writes sports for the New York Daily News, cocked his head. . . The voice of the department store elevator operator had a familiar ring.

Birtwell looked closely at the tall, young, uniformed Negro. . . Then he recognized him.

It was Johnny Woodruff—the Long John Woodruff who thrilled hundreds of thousands of sports fans at Randall's Island, at Berlin, at Tokyo, at Philadelphia—the lean, lank Long John Woodruff who came from last to first in the 1936 Olympic Games 800-meter championship.

BIRTWELL PROMPTLY made an appointment with the young man who came from Connelville, Pa., to the University of Pittsburgh, to New York University, there to pursue a sociology degree in graduate school. . . They met later in a neat apartment on Edgecomb Ave., on the fringe of Harlem, and Long John told his story.

"I'm studying sociology in the graduate school of N. Y. U. and running that elevator to pay my expenses," Woodruff explained. "No, I haven't given up running," Long John guessed the question. "I work out several days a week on the New York U. track."

Day Starts Early for Great Athlete

BIRTWELL IMAGINED that a young man going to graduate school and running the half mile would spend much time operating a department store elevator, but Long John said:

"You think not! Only from 6:30 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon, six days a week!"

Does Fritz Kreisler swing a pick and shovel? Does Lawrence Tibbett call trains in a railroad terminal?

No—but the fastest, longest-striding legs in the athletic world stand stiffly, protestingly, all day in the cramped confines of an elevator cage no longer or wider than one of Woodruff's copy-righted strides.

"I GET UP at 5 a. m.," Pitt's only Olympic champion began to unfold his story. "For 15 minutes, I do stretching exercises to offset the effect of the elevator work on my legs. Then I take the subway downtown, about seven miles, and start work at 6:30 a. m."

"For three hours before the store opens, I haul scrub women up and down, and other employees who come in early. I finish work at 4:30 p. m."

"Then, three days a week, I go to classes from 6 until 10 p. m. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays, I go out to Ohio Field for workouts. Then I come home and study. Except for my workouts, I spend all day Sunday doing research work in the library, or writing here at home, I'm studying for a master's degree, and I have to write theses."

Grew Up in Pennsylvania Coal Fields

WHAT KIND of sociology does he study? "Children's problems," Johnny explained, "juvenile delinquency and prevention of crimes. I grew up in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, so I know there are a lot of kids who never had a chance."

"I supervised kids in their games and helped to keep them out of mischief at Centre Avenue Y. M. C. A. in Pittsburgh, when I was at Pitt."

Johnny told of his forebears—his grandparents as slaves in the Virginia tobacco fields, his parents born free in Virginia and moving to Connelville, his father working as a coal miner, his mother, a tall woman from whom he got his height and his great nine-and-a-half-foot stride, the longest in the legend of championship racing.

HE CRACKED a world's scholastic mile record while he was in Connelville High School. . . He won the Olympic 800-meter championship between his freshman and sophomore years at Pitt. . . He ran an 800-meter race in 1937 in 1:47.8, two seconds under the world's record, but officials found the track to be a few feet short of the full distance and the record didn't count.

Mr. Birtwell heard 1:47.8, then observed: "Whew! That's not running—that's broad jumping!"

Golden Boy McCoy Faces Problems

CONNIE MACK will get back a neck punch of the Benny McCoy investment during the spring exhibition games. . . Baseball's Golden Boy is sure to receive a carload of publicity in ink and pictures just as soon as he dons a uniform.

Uncle Sam rubbed his hands after the Athletics shelled out a young fortune to the ex-Tiger, baseball's newest gate attraction. The young bachelor will have to pay income tax on \$55,000 a year hence. . . Not even Judge Landis can knock Mr. Whiskers out of the box when March 15 rolls around.

Golden Boy McCoy's problems are just beginning. . . For instance, come spring and summer he will have to stand guard at second base in 22 games against the Yankees and hear the cannon shots whistle by his ear. . . see the hits pin the rightfielder against the wall.

ST. LOUIS FLYERS of the American Hockey Association chalked up 17 consecutive home victories before the St. Paul Saints knocked 'em off the other night. . . and last year the Saints stopped a Flyer string at 14.

The Flyers are well out in front in the A. H. A. race. . . In that loop lies do not count in the points standing—just the victories at two per.

The Saints are running second, the Millers third and Kansas City's Greyhounds are not going as fast as their name indicates.

Joe Williams Says—

NEW YORK, Jan. 31.—Connie Mack seems to think he struck a good deal for himself when he gave Benny McCoy a \$45,000 bonus and a two-year contract at \$10,000 to play for his drab Athletics.

This should be sufficient. After all it was the old geezer's own dough and he winds up with a dud no one else will be called on to share in the grief. There's an old saying that you can't rule a guy off for trying and this would seem to apply to the case of Mr. McGillicuddy in the McCoy transaction.

Still, you'd be surprised how many baseball men think the old fellow made a bad deal. "Entirely too much dough," they say. Yet it should be kept in mind that at least 10 clubs were angling for the services of the young man who was taken away from the Detroit Tigers and made a free agent by Judge Landis because of certain irregularities in the original signing.

Some of the magnates who are criticizing Mr. McGillicuddy's business acumen undoubtedly are drawing a red herring across their own lack of daring and enterprise.

Bad Deal?

But there is one magnate who subscribes to this criticism and his opinion is important though he has no interest in the acquisition of McCoy from the beginning. Had no place for him and made no attempt to compete in the bidding. This gentleman calls it a bad deal, too.

"It's bad from the point of view of straight business but it may be all right as a gesture," he said. "There comes a time when club owners must make gestures to show they are trying to do something to improve their teams. Possibly this is what Connie had in mind."

But the magnate wasn't so sure even about that. Listening to him you could see he was trying to be charitable. He didn't say it in so many words but he has the feeling that Connie has lost some of his old time sharpness as a dealer.

There was the case of Bill Lillard, the San Francisco infielder, he pointed out. "A sports writer sold him to Connie in the lobby of a Cleveland hotel a year ago. Just said he was a great infielder and on this recommendation Connie bought him. Shelled out \$35,000, if my memory is right. Lillard was back in the minors before the season was over."

Well, it may be that Mr. McGillicuddy has become a soft touch for

Capitals to Meet Lowly Ramblers Tonight

Rain Clouds May Block Seabiscuit

Long-Idle Howard Horse May Be Taken Out Once Again.

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Bad weather and unfavorable track conditions already had caused Seabiscuit to be declared out three times within a week, twice because of mud and once because he drew a bad post position.

Seabiscuit was assigned 124 pounds for today's race, the Anita Ohiguita, heaviest impost in a field of six. The sturdy 7-year-old champion was spotting Heffly, a horse which dead-heated with Seabiscuit once in a mile race, 14 pounds. Heffly has been working well and ran third in the New Year Handicap.

In four other entries, there seemed to be plenty of able competition for the long-Idle Howard horse. They were Mrs. Teresa Loeff's Bubbling Boy, 104; Valinda Farms' Viscosity, 104; Circle S. Stable's Hysterical, 108; entry with Heffly, and Milledale Stable's Firezone, 102.

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Terms of the purchase were not disclosed but the previous owner, Hawthorne Stable, reportedly rejected an offer of \$15,000. A bay son of Mio d'Azezo, Milledale won an impressive mile run Saturday.

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Columbian Club, 12; State VanCamp, 10; International Printing, 10; Paddle Club, 8.

6 Schools Enter

Wrestling Meet

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