



HOW NEPSAC BEGAN

December 7, 1941, was a quiet Sunday. For New England independent schools the date fell in that relaxed time between athletic seasons with only examinations and Christmas holidays in the offing. The dramatic and shocking report of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, as carried on the radio, shattered the mood of the day and the season so drastically that it would be years before a comparable atmosphere would be recaptured. The news fell with special poignancy upon boys' schools. As faculty met their students for dinner that night or in their classes the next morning, they were profoundly aware that the news they had so recently heard had altered irrevocably the lives and futures of their students and of their younger colleagues.

School administrations turned at once to the great question as to how they best could prepare their students for the ordeals which these young men were likely to face and at the same time provide the conventional education which would permit them to take their place in society after the war. Confidence in the principles of a liberal education held. Except for a general policy of speeding up the educational process, few radical changes were made. However, since training programs in the armed services put great emphasis on physical fitness, directors of athletics and coaches had special responsibilities. They too, felt that team competition provided the best incentive to physical fitness; hence interscholastic competition should continue and indeed, be augmented if possible.

The dream of business as usual did not last long. In early April of 1942 Herbert G. Stokinger, Director of Athletics at Milton Academy, saw in a Boston newspaper a summary of governmental regulations applying to bus companies. To his consternation he learned that transportation companies could no longer charter buses for athletic trips without surrendering any right to replacement tires for buses so chartered. Since this regulation was a direct and obvious threat to all interscholastic athletic competition, Stoky acted promptly. He telephoned his opposite numbers, Martin W. Souders of Exeter, Eliot T. Putnam of Noble and Greenough, and J. Leo Foley of Roxbury Latin; they all agreed to meet at Stoky's house for a consultation. The four men at that meeting were of one mind: there was an urgent need for an immediate gathering of representatives of as many schools as possible to determine whether interscholastic athletics could indeed continue, how athletic programs could be modified under the circumstances, and how best to meet the inevitable shortages of equipment which loomed in the future. At the urging of this *ad hoc* committee, Stoky consulted the invaluable *Porter*

Sargent handbook and sent out an invitation to all schools within a reasonable distance of Boston to attend a meeting at the Harvard Club on Saturday, April 11, 1942.

Twenty-three schools sent representatives to the meeting, and five other schools expressed their interest by submitting written reports on how they proposed to adapt their programs to the stringent governmental regulations necessitated by the war effort. As the moving spirit behind the gathering, Herbert Stokinger presided with Eliot Putnam acting as secretary for the meeting. After a brief statement from a representative of each school present as to how it proposed to deal with interscholastic competition, Eliot Putnam reported these general conclusions:

- A. In any change of policy, first consideration should obviously be given to the *spirit* in which restrictions have been imposed.
- B. Attempt to go ahead with regular schedules, canceling such long trips as demand too great an expense (train, taxis, etc.) or which seem to call on an inadvisable and unwarranted demand on private cars.
- C. Bear in mind at all times the great value of interscholastic games, both from the competitive point of view, and as a pacesetter for school morale.
- D. Proceed cautiously as regards transportation by private cars, if not covered by proper insurance.
- E. Make every effort to strengthen the intramural program in the lower classes, canceling all interscholastic competition when there is any doubt as to its advisability.

Martin Souders then remarked on what he considered to be a long-felt need for a permanent organization among the independent schools, an organization which would meet periodically for discussion, legislation, and friendly interchange of ideas. He cited the advantages enjoyed by existing college and public school organizations. His suggestion was unanimously approved, and the following officers were elected:

President	Martin W. Souders	Phillips Exeter
Vice-President	J. Leo Foley	Roxbury Latin
Vice-President	Eliot T. Putnam	Noble & Greenough
Sec.-Treasurer	Herbert G. Stokinger	Milton

Excerpted from *The New England Preparatory School Athletic Council: A History*, by A. Macdonald Murphy