CHINA BULL MEMORIES

Coach Ed Goss:

It all started for me in 1960. There was talk of this rivalry between Omro and Winneconne. I thought that they were talking about a "BOWL". I eventually found out that it was a red china BULL. I was told that if we won that game that my job was safe. We won the 1960 game 7-6. My job was safe. During that game I was constantly reminded to make sure that the captains exchanged the bull safely. It had been broken in the past. After the game I made sure that the exchange was made and I turned to shake hands with the Winneconne coach. I heard some cussing and scuffling behind me. I turned and the players were scrambling for a piece of the bull. I think that this was planned! Anyway, we were without the original china bull for a year. My wife finally found one in a ceramic shop someplace. Just a couple of years ago, one of the senior players from that 1960 team gave me a horn from that original bull that was broken.

Here it is in 2005 and the rivalry is still one of the best in the country. After 57 years the big game of the year for each of these communities which are only five miles apart is the China Bull game. Records are thrown out the window. The intensity level is sky high for both teams. Who knows who will win? In 1978 we defeated Winneconne to keep them from their share of the championship. In 1981, they returned the favor. The Wolves were having a bad year. We played in a snow storm and lost the game as well as the championship.

The rivalry has not been without some devilry. In 1962, we won 18-0 and some of the players decided to paint the score on the water tower in Winneconne. Those boys spent a big part of the next week repairing the damage. I believe that it was the next year when Winneconne burned a big "W" in the middle of our game field. They were never caught.

Since the 1960 game and the mutilation of the bull, the exchange has been made on the following Monday at an assembly program. The captains and the coach of the losing team presents the bull to the captains and coach who are getting the bull back in front of the entire student body of the winning team. During this time there is no heated rivalry, just a great display of sportsmanship and a big resolve from the losing to win it back next year.

During those years of china bull games I coached against some great coaches and they were good friends. Frank Crispigna was a long time friend and I never won a China Bull game against Frank. There was Roger Hoytink a real class coach and the present coach Bill Vander Velden who has had a lot of success. We won my first Bull game in 1960 and my last Bull game in 1996. I was 67 years old in that last game and had two grandsons playing. I really miss coaching and the relationship with the players. I especially miss the intensity and atmosphere of the China Bull game.