



THE PHABULOUS PHIL CONLEY

by MARTY TANGORA

STUDENT-BODY president, three-year varsity football letterman and all-conference quarterback, three-year varsity basketball letterman and all-conference center (and high scorer), baseball letterman, red-headed, pleasant, honor grades.

Sounds like about how many guys?

Well, these are just a few of the *minor* virtues of Caltech's Phabulous Phil Conley. His real distinction is in track and field, and he does so well in his specialty—the javelin throw—that he is planning on a trip to Australia this fall for the 1956 Olympics.

Because it has been three blue moons and a month of Sundays since the last Caltech man went to the Olympics (Glenn Graham was second in the pole vault in 1924, and Folke Skoog ran the 1500 meters for Sweden in 1932), it is worthwhile investigating just how Phil got to be that way.

To clear up the last part, this "red-headed, pleasant, honor grades" bit was hung on Phil by *Sports Illustrated* after Phil took first place in the National Collegiate Athletic Association annual meet last June. Nobody questions the "pleasant," but there might be some doubt as to his being "red-headed." As for getting "honor grades," Phil himself asks, "3.51 is A-average, isn't it?" However, this was Phil's grade-point average in the third term of his senior year and should not be considered entirely typical.

Athletically, just how did this phenomenon come about?

Well, it all started back in Madera, California, on August 17, 1934. From there until Phil entered high school, historical facts are lost in a wealth of hazy legend sprinkled liberally across the countryside by his friends and his Fleming House brothers. The stories which these "friends" use to explain Phil's birth and childhood are generally facetious and probably do not have their place in a dignified magazine such as this.

When Phil entered Fresno High School in 1948 his promise was not unusually great. He played the piano but gave up lessons to go out for B football. He didn't make the team. Wiping the tears from his eyes, he proceeded to make a comeback, and by graduation from high school he had won A letters in basketball and tennis and B letters in football and track. (No javelin throwing.) In tennis he achieved significant stature; in his senior year he played first man on the varsity and was runner-up in the San Joaquin Valley in singles.

Besides this, he made grades which were so good that Caltech admitted him in spite of his being a four-sport letterman.

So he came to Pasadena and went out for football, basketball, baseball and track. This time he didn't miss any teams, standing out in his frosh year in all four sports. In the javelin throw, which Coach Bert La-Brucherie tried him in on one of those luckier hunches, he was good enough to break the school freshman record with a throw of 176' 9½".

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Soph year he picked up varsity letters in all four sports, the first Techman to win four letters in one year since 1933. The javelin responded so well to practice and coaching that Phil broke the Southern California Conference record as a sophomore with a throw of 199' 2½".

Records and honors and assorted awards showered upon him in his junior and senior years, and Mr. Hal Musselman of the Caltech Athletic Department now needs five pages to give a detailed account of them. But being all-conference in three sports, team captain in the same three, and ASCIT President to boot sounds pretty impressive, doesn't it?

Phil's record in the javelin throw is the most impressive of all. In four years at Tech he was never defeated in a dual meet. In his senior year he was never beaten by another college man. He broke the varsity conference record over and over again. In February of this year his throw of 237' 11½" was the farthest ever recorded in a college dual meet. (It was Caltech's only first place in that meet with Occidental.) On June 15 his throw of 239' 11" in the NCAA meet made him official collegiate champion of the United States.

And finally, climatically, he threw 244' 1" in the U. S. Olympic Trials to win second berth on the javelin team for the Melbourne Games. Incidentally, that's about 30 feet better than anyone else in this conference has ever thought about.

It would be trite to say that "in spite of all this, Phil remains his true modest self." However, in spite of all this, Phil remains his true modest self. After all, you have to be neat to be President; and if Phil hadn't been "pleasant," *Sports Illustrated* could have used some other words, like "tall," or "bashful."

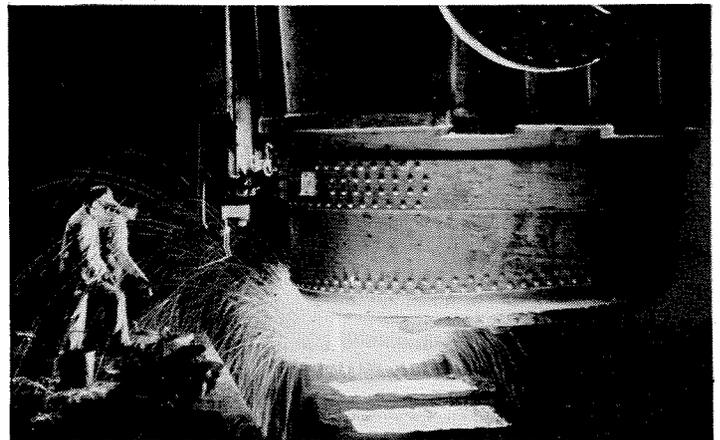
Seriously, Phil is as nice a guy as you'll ever hope to meet—which doesn't keep him from being ambitious about the Olympics, of course. His training schedule is well under way; and early in September he threw 251' at a pre-Olympic meet in Eugene, Oregon, to give notice that he's ready for the big competition. Phil will get a ten-week leave of absence from Procter & Gamble, where he has been working since graduation, in order to finish training and ship out for the Games.

What's his goal? "I think I'll hit 255' in the Olympics or before," Phil says. His practice throws have been encouraging.

Anybody wanna bet he can't?

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