

The long journey



by Lou A. Kirkpatrick

The bantam team from the American Youth Activities set out for the finals of the USAREUR football competition in Stuttgart last weekend. The team, comprised of boys aged 9-12, is the first Berlin AYA team ever to make it to the finals.

The boys hitched a ride on the duty train Thursday night to take them into Frankfurt where an Army bus stood ready. The drive to Stuttgart was expected to take about two and a half hours, but actually lasted four. A bit of unexpected excitement delayed their arrival. The bus had been cruising steadily down the autobahn to the tune of 34 happy young men when the driver began to look a little worried. It seems he was getting no response from the gas peddle. Forced to pull over, it was discovered that the engine was on fire. After 45 minutes and the help of an Army truck, Berlin's team was back in the competition.

Once in Stuttgart the boys settled down in the auditorium of the AYA house. Cots were brought out for the boys to sleep on. When everyone finally got settled, a trip to the Kelly Barracks Dining Facility was in order.

The day of truth finally arrived and the tension could be felt in the air. A parade of players and cheerleaders formed in the main street of Kelly Barracks. Preceded by an Army band, the column made its way to the football field.

The Berlin Bears played the second game of the day. Their opponents, the Pattonville Jets, were anxious to get the game underway and ended it easily putting our boys under 20-6.

Slightly disappointed at their loss, the team headed back to their quarters where they made ready to head back home. Everyone loaded back on the bus an hour after the game was over. In Stuttgart, they transferred to a train that took them to Frankfurt and the return ride on the duty train. Resting in the AYA trophy case is the second place trophy, enough reason to make the long trip.

Photos
by
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ABOVE — LOOKING SLIGHTLY anxious, the Berlin Bears line up and wait for the pre-game parade to begin. The Bears were situated right behind the team they were to play for the leading position in the playoffs.

LEFT — THE BUS RIDE to Kelly Barracks was interrupted by a bare battery cable in the engine of the bus. Everyone evacuated the vehicle and formed an assembly line to get the luggage out.



LOUIS PICKETT, NUMBER 40, displayed typical Jets style as he broke tackle after tackle. The momentum of the Jets

was a little too much to handle for the Bears.