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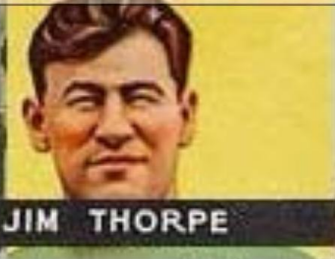
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NFL's All-Decade Team

BRIAN W. KELLY



JIM THORPE

Knute  
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1906

# THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN FOOTBALL

FROM THE FIRST COLLEGE GAME  
IN 1869 TO THE LAST SUPER BOWL



# The Birth of American Football

**From the first college game in 1869 to Super Bowl of 2017**

This book is written for those of us who love football. Those of us who enjoy the teams coming out every week in the fall know that it was because many schools in the 1800's had the guts to form teams and begin playing American football. Even though the rules were not complete, sometimes, 25, sometimes 20, sometimes 15, and then finally eleven men came out every Saturday to meet an opponent and fight for a victory.

Then, when these men graduated, they wanted to keep playing and / or coaching so we saw many small independent teams and small leagues for before the coming of the powerful NFL, the greatest Pro-league ever. Soon players were getting paid and then after time went on, great players were paid and then all players and coaches were paid handsomely for playing the game they love. This book tells the story of how we got from there to here.

It offers great insights into the struggles your favorite teams had when most officials would have preferred they continue to play more docile ball games such as association football and soccer.

There are 774 NCAA college teams today that send about 50,000 players at the college level onto the gridiron each Saturday. There are 1696 men in total who take the field each Sunday, Monday and Thursday playing for 32 professional teams.

Players, at all levels of the American football game, bring us much enjoyment through their victories and the sheer excitement of their playing the game. Coaches get these teams together to face off each week using discipline, conditioning, and the notion that there is honor in winning. It just does not happen. It was a lot of hard work from some great coaches who got American football going strong at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and on to today. That evolution is what this book is about.

Starting with the first bona fide football game in America in 1869, this book moves to the transition of this style football through a scrimmage-less rugby period all the way to American College Football and further on to NFL football as it is played today.

We cover the early teams, the outstanding players, the football innovators such as Walter Camp, John Heisman, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Knute Rockne, Eddie Cochems, and others. We look at the great football players of this formative era and we look at many of the great schools and pro teams and how they formed their teams when a lot of guts mattered in a lot of different ways.

We tell the fascinating story of how the ball, the oval football, was invented and how it was actually dangerous to make. This is the book you need to learn about how your favorite sport, American Football came into being. You won't want to put this book down.

## Brian Kelly



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Editor: Brian P. Kelly

**The Birth of American Football**

Author Brian W. Kelly

# From the first college game in 1869 to the last Super Bowl

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# Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Patricia, and  
our three wonderful children—  
Brian, Michael, and Kathleen.*

*Additionally, I recognize the great help from two furry  
friends, Angel Ben, and Buddy Kelly.*

# Acknowledgments:

I appreciate all the help that I received in putting this book together, along with the 133 other books from the past.

My printed acknowledgments were once so large that book readers needed to navigate too many pages to get to page one of the text. To permit me more flexibility, I put my acknowledgment list online at [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com). The list of acknowledgments continues to grow. Believe it or not, it once cost about a dollar more to print each book.

Thank you all on the big list in the sky and God bless you all for your help.

Please check out [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com) to read the latest version of my heartfelt acknowledgments updated for this book. Thank you all!

In this book, I received some extra special help from many avid football supporters including Bruce Ikeda, Dennis Grimes, Gerry Rodski, Wily Ky Eyely, Angel Irene McKeown Kelly, Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Sr., Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Jr., Ann Flannery, Angel James Flannery Sr., Mary Daniels, Bill Daniels, Robert Garry Daniels, Angel Sarah Janice Daniels, Angel Punkie Daniels, Joe Kelly, Diane Kelly and Benjamin Kelly.





# Preface:

This book goes back to the first time a football was ever thrown on this planet and it moves from there to eventually discuss early football seasons of some of the most significant football powerhouses in the nation at the college level first and then at the professional level.

We look at how soccer, rugby, and association football morphed into American style football over fifty years. Ewe discuss the formation of football teams, great coaches, great players and the long-lasting impact of American College & Pro Football on American life.

Those who read this book are either curious or like me, they simply enjoy the teams coming out every week to engage in real battles in which nobody gets killed as in the early days of football – before all the great rules. For many, there is no better day than a football day.

We are able to watch these games because of the many schools of higher education in the 1800's that had the guts to form teams and begin playing American football. Even though the rules were not complete, sometimes, 25, sometimes 20, sometimes 15, and then finally eleven men would come out every Saturday and sometimes more than Saturdays, like clockwork to meet a rival or just an opponent and fight for a victory for the sake of their school.

This book offers great insights into the struggles your favorite teams – Alabama, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Notre Dame, Penn State and others had when most of the school administrations and officials would have preferred they hang up their spikes rather than engage in what was perceived to be a violent game.

Because the students and the coaches and the football lovers, including Teddy Roosevelt endured, today there are 774 NCAA college teams and 32 Pro teams that send about 50,000 players in total onto the gridiron each Saturday and Sunday in the fall. These players, at all levels of the American football game, bring us much enjoyment through their victories and the sheer excitement of their playing the game.

The coaches get these teams together to face off each week using discipline, conditioning, and the notion that there is honor in winning. It just does not happen. Nothing in life worth having is easy. It was a lot of hard work from some great coaches and innovators to get American football going strong and that is what this book is all about.

Starting with the first bona fide football game in America in 1869, this book moves to the transition of early style football through a scrimmage-less rugby period all the way to American College Football, a special brand of football, as it is played today. From here we show how players graduated and formed independent teams and leagues culminating in the greatest league ever, the National Football League. It is a fun read and you will definitely learn things that you never knew before.

Supporters who love their own particular college or pro teams will read the book to get an immediate burst of emotion, such as warmth and love for their favorite team. You can't help but love this book.

This book walks you through the whole American football journey through periods where the fatality rate of players was increasing so dramatically that there were calls to stop football at all-levels immediately. Thankfully notions such as the legal forward pass and Walter Camp's many rules helped bring the game back under control so that it could thrive as it is today.

We cover the early teams, the outstanding players, the football innovators such as Walter Camp, John Heisman, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Knute Rockne, Eddie Cochems, and others. We look at the best coaches of all time who were part of this formative era and we look at many great schools and how they formed their teams at time when a lot of guts mattered in a lot of different ways.

Before we even get there, we talk about football as a sport played from the beginning of time in one civilization after another. We also tell the fascinating story of how the ball, the oval football, was invented and how it was actually dangerous to make. This is the book you need to learn about how your favorite sport, American Football as played at the College and Pro level came into being.

Americans have been playing American football for about 150 years. One hundred fifty years is a long time for a country's colleges to be playing football. But, most fans cannot get enough and from January to August, they wish that there were some good American football gridiron moments to be had. In such times, it is good to have a great football book to read, and that is one of the reasons why this fine book is now available to you.

You are going to love this book because it is the perfect read for anybody who loves American football but wants to know more about its founding, as well as the origins of the finest American College Football programs and the great NFL league.

Few sports books are a must-read, but Brian Kelly's *The Birth of American Football* will quickly appear at the top of Americas most enjoyable, must-read books, about sports. Enjoy!

### **Who is Brian W. Kelly?**

Brian W. Kelly is one of the leading authors in America with this, his 133rd published book. Brian is an outspoken and eloquent expert on a variety of topics and he has also written several hundred articles on topics of interest to Americans.

Most of his early works involved high technology. Later, Brian wrote a number of patriotic books and most recently he has been writing human interest books such as [The Wine Diet](#) and [Thank you, IBM.](#) His books are always well received.

Brian's books are highlighted at [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com). Brian works with Amazon and Kindle to produce his books as they are ordered. You can find Brian's books at [amazon.com/author/brianwkelly](http://amazon.com/author/brianwkelly).

Sincerely,

Brian P. Kelly, Editor in Chief  
I am Brian Kelly's eldest son.



# Table of Contents

Chapter 1	The First American College Football Game .....	1
Chapter 2	The Expansion of American Football .....	13
Chapter 3	Moving Closer Towards American Football .....	25
Chapter 4	Miscellaneous American Football Notions .....	37
Chapter 5	Origin of the Oval-Shaped Sports-Ball .....	57
Chapter 6	Did Rugby Dominate the Early American Football Scene? ..	67
Chapter 7	Walter Camp and 1870 Style American Football (Rugby) ...	73
Chapter 8	Walter Camp Invented American Football .....	79
Chapter 9	Innovations by Great Coaches of the Era .....	91
Chapter 10	The Best Players in Early American Football .....	103
Chapter 11	The Michigan Football Legacy .....	123
Chapter 12	The Rock and Early Notre Dame Football.....	131
Chapter 13	Great Football at the University of Pennsylvania .....	141
Chapter 14	One Hundred Thirty-One Years of Penn State Football ..	147
Chapter 15	Does Alabama Have the Best Football Program?.....	157
Chapter 16	Pro Football Before 1920.....	171
Chapter 17	The Birth of Play with Pay.....	177
Chapter 18	Snapshots of Early Pro Football 1900-1922.....	183
Chapter 19	Snapshots: Next 60 years of the NFL 1920-1979 .....	191
Chapter 20	Steelers, 49ers, Cowboys, & Patriots 1980-2017.....	203
	Other books by Brian Kelly: (amazon.com, and Kindle).....	220



# About the Author



Brian Kelly retired as an Assistant Professor in the Business Information Technology (BIT) Program at Marywood University, where he also served as the IBM i and Midrange Systems Technical Advisor to the IT Faculty. Kelly designed, developed, and taught many college and professional courses. He continues as a contributing technical editor to a number of technical industry magazines, including "The Four Hundred" and "Four Hundred Guru," published by IT Jungle.

Kelly is a former IBM Senior Systems Engineer. His specialty was problem solving for customers as well as implementing advanced operating systems and software on his client's machines. Brian is the author of 132 books and hundreds of magazine articles. He has been a frequent speaker at technical conferences throughout the United States.

Brian was a candidate for the US Congress from Pennsylvania in 2010 and he ran for Mayor in his home town in 2015. This is his 134<sup>th</sup> book overall and tenth book about college sports. Brian loves high school, college, and professional football and has been a fan all his life.





# Chapter 1 The First American College Football Game



Early American Football

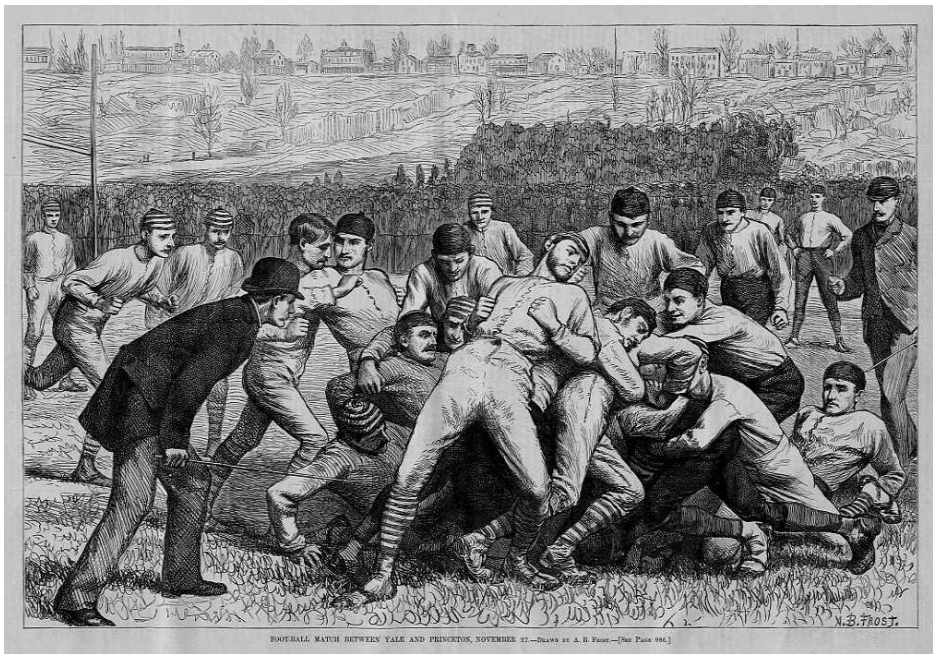
We can all read Walter Camp's books about how the rules of American football came about. We can also learn a lot from the writings of the day. However, since nobody alive today was alive back when, it is safe to say that nobody actually knows. But from all the accounts, we do have a pretty good idea.

There are a lot of guessers and some wrong readers out there because nobody from November 1869, of which I am aware can refute anything via an eye-witness account. So, there are a lot of great stories, some duplicated many times over. Some are right on the money and others are inexact. We'll do our best to bring you the story as it really happened in this book.

Nonetheless, it has been almost 150 years since the first American College Football game. Therefore, it helps to recall the old schoolroom exercise of whispering into a person's ear a little passage

and thirty students later seeing what comes back. The good news is that the further back that you get from the time of Walter Camp, the stories are all similar and there are fewer and fewer of them. Eventually, in the 1870's, less than ten years after the very first recognized collegiate football game in America the great Walter Camp began to get really interested and he wrote a lot of football history and football rule books. These are trusted implicitly today by most experts.

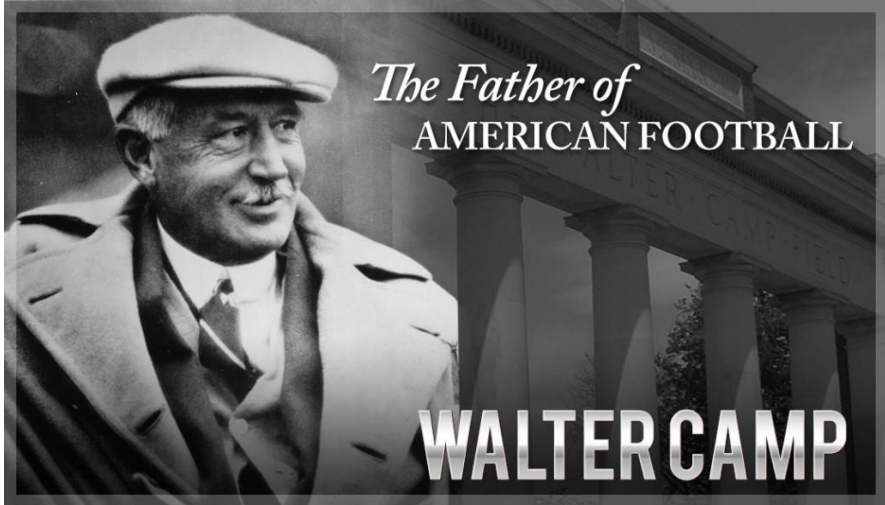
One of the few things about early football that we do know with reasonable certainty is that professional football was non-existent until long after collegiate football was established. It can also be said with certainty that if it were not for the colleges and Walter Camp, in particular, there probably would be no American football today at any level. Of course, more than likely there would still be rugby and soccer.



1879 Football Game Depiction

We also know that there was a great gifted athlete who played every sport imaginable including soccer and rugby and then American football. His name is Walter Camp. He is universally recognized as the Father of American Football.

There is some irony in putting this out as a two plus two equals four story, however. You see, Walter Camp, as noted, widely considered the most important figure in the development of American football, was not playing organized football when the first football game took place in 1869. So, who gave them their football rules. Voila, a conundrum!



As a youth, we know that Camp excelled in sports such as track, baseball, and association football, and after enrolling at Yale in 1876, he earned varsity honors in every sport the school offered. But, what about 1869 which is the consensus origin date for the beginning of American football in the US?

Many apologists have written about this period from 1869 onward as if it were the beginning of American football that, at the time was played only at the collegiate level. In essence, the true beginning of college football was in fact, the beginning of American football. However, the rules of the game began more as rugby rules than football rules but over the years, changes were made. Today, no other country plays the type of football played in America. America created its own game of football and it is unique.

There were other rough games out there at the time and they still exist across the world. One might conclude that football was unnecessary as those who played soccer and rugby could be maimed

or killed in a contest without needing Camp's American football rules.



Scenes from First Football Game

Considering that the centennial of the US was approaching in 1869, the year of the first game, some feel there was a need to create a game besides the American past-time of baseball, that was a cool-weather sport. Yes, there was soccer and rugby, but these have a European or English heritage, from whom America had declared independence about 100 years prior. England for the most part owned the rules of soccer and rugby for some time.

Nonetheless, historians trace the roots of American football to early versions of rugby football and association football. Both games have their origin in varieties of football played in Britain in the mid-19th century, in which a football is kicked at a goal or kicked over a line. These varieties of style in England were based on the various English public school football games.

It helps to be reminded in this story that our nation's birth date is July 4, 1776 and so 1869 was just 93 years from the founding.

There are lots of stories about the evolution towards American football, and much of this book discusses the many ideas Walter Camp supplied for the transition. American football resulted from several major modifications from association football and rugby football, most notably the rule changes instituted by Camp a Yale University and Hopkins School graduate. To repeat Camp is significant as he is attributed as being the designated "Father of American Football."

One of the changes not attributed to Walter Camp was the shape of the ball. As you will see, the forward pass did not become legal until 1906 and so the spherical shape of modern footballs was not required until passing became a bigger part of the game.

The football was evolving steadily from the first game. But, it was not completely perfected until 1935. The ball used in the very first game was round, like a soccer ball and like early rugby balls. It was tough to carry, and awkward to throw. In 1874, in a McGill and Harvard game, they used a ball that looked like a watermelon. Over time, balls became more plum-like and easier to throw. The problem was that pigs' bladders, not balloons were used and they by definition were inexact. We refine this study of the ball later in this book so please hang on. For now, know that Walter Camp was not involved.

Among these important changes to rugby that Camp brought into American football were the introduction of the line of scrimmage, of down-and-distance rules. He also introduced the notion of legal interference, which today is called blocking. Camp was the rules guy but before he went to Yale, like most New Englanders of the day, he played soccer, which was the preferred cool-weather fall sport of the day. He did not play much rugby football until his time at Yale University from 1876 to 1881.

Camp was not the first person to play football—any kind of football—be it soccer, rugby, or Harpastum. Some joke that Adam and Eve may have played football with a round fruit. Most of us would hope it was an orange or a grapefruit.

## A sport called Harpastum and others

You can go back through history and find sports that had some of the roughness and rudiments of soccer, rugby, and American football but the games they played were not very rule-based.



In a “sport” called <<< *Harpastum*, a form of ball game played in the Roman Empire, for example, the Romans enjoyed their own form of football.

There have been many forms of traditional football that have been played throughout Europe and beyond since the beginning of mankind.



We have already discussed the possibility that there may have been nicht verboten round or oval fruits in the Garden of Paradise used for football.

From the beginning of antiquity, knowing man’s propensity to exercise, have fun and use various shaped balls in so doing, if not in the

garden, then one can bet it was not long after Paradise that ancient forms of football abounded.

Many of these ancient matches would involve handling of a ball, and scrummage-like formations. Several of the oldest examples of



football-like games include the Greek game of *Episkyros* and the Roman game of *Harpastum* (both pictures on prior page).

Over time many countries across the world developed their own national football-like games. For example, New Zealand has Ki-o-rahi, Australia has Marngrook, Japan has Kemari, China has Cuju, Georgia has Lelo Burti, and the Borders have Jeddart Ba' and Cornwall Cornish have Hurling.

The pictures below of balls and balls in play are interesting and make the point. Left to right, Ki-o-rahi ball, Marngrook ball, and a snap of a game of Kemari in process. None of these forms appear to have a direct link to American football but they surely are forerunners.



There is also an often-told story about a ship in 1586, almost 100 years after Columbus, in which the men from the ship wanted to play a little sport. The ship was reportedly commanded by an English explorer named John Davis. The young crew would go ashore to play a form of football with the Inuit (Eskimo) people in Greenland. There are other later accounts of an Inuit game played on ice, called Aqsaqtuk.

This game had a similarity to football in that each game, which was called a match, began with the two teams facing each other in parallel lines. The objective was to kick the “ball” through each other team's line and then kick it at a goal. Moving along in time, it is recorded from 1610 that William Strachley from Jamestown Virginia, an English Colonist, wrote the account of a game played by Native Americans. They called the game Pahsaheman.

Though there are stories of Native Americans playing games, a variety of American football historians agree that the game has its roots from the traditional football games played all over Europe in villages, towns, and schools for centuries before Columbus.

The scuttle on those is that the early games appear to have had much in common with what has been called "mob football" from England. There were typically no uniforms or coaches nor hard and fast rules.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intramural games of rugby, soccer, and association football began to be played on college campuses. There were no rules committees and no Walter Camp at the time and so each school played its own variety of football with its own rules.

Princeton University students are reported to have played a game called ballown as early as 1820. Harvard had its own tradition known as "Bloody Monday," which began in 1827. This was all about a mass ballgame between the freshman and sophomore classes. In 1860, both the town police and the college authorities agreed the Bloody Monday had to go. There was too much blood for the good of the game.

The gendarme would not permit "football" for well over twelve years. Then the game was played again. Dartmouth had its own version which they called "Old division football." Its rules were first published in 1871, though it is said they played the game from the 1830's.

There were commonalities in all these games Yet, they remained largely "mob" style games, with huge numbers of players on the "field" or whatever makeshift was available. All players were on the field at the same time. There was a little rhyme and some reason as the objective seemed always to be to advance the ball into a goal area, quite often by any means possible and necessary.

There were no complicated rules as the games were played for sport—just for fun. Rules were simple, and so without protection by rules, violence and injury were common. There was supposedly no beer drinking at the games, but plenty was consumed shortly thereafter by the young adult participants.



Yes, to be sure, the games were often heated as no group wanted to lose. Some games were actually violent. Yet, afterwards, sometimes after beating each other to a pulp, both squads normally would choose to gather together from their rivalry for some post-game revelry that often included the singing of songs, awarding of small prizes, and of course lots of beer-drinking.

There is an old football / rugby saying that parallels the US Las Vegas slogan: "What happens on the pitch, stays on the pitch." "This is an oft-quoted rugby truism.

The brutality and frequent bloodshed of these mob-style games led to widespread protests and there were many separate decisions from cities and schools to abandon the games. Yale, for example, under pressure from the city of New Haven, banned the play of all forms of football in 1860. Eventually because of popular pressure, the games would be brought back in one form or another.

From 1854 to 1882, there was a variant of the mob football style that was once again played at Yale in the form of bladderball. The objective, of this "game" was to gain control of an oversized inflatable ball and bring it through the gates of the residential college represented by an on-campus intramural team.

As one would expect, this game was eventually banned by school authorities for a number of reasons, not the least of which was alcohol fueled violence. The violence and the alcohol were most often precipitated by the game. Revival games were played in 2009 and 2011, and very briefly, in 2014. The revivals are most often scripted though the grog surely flows.

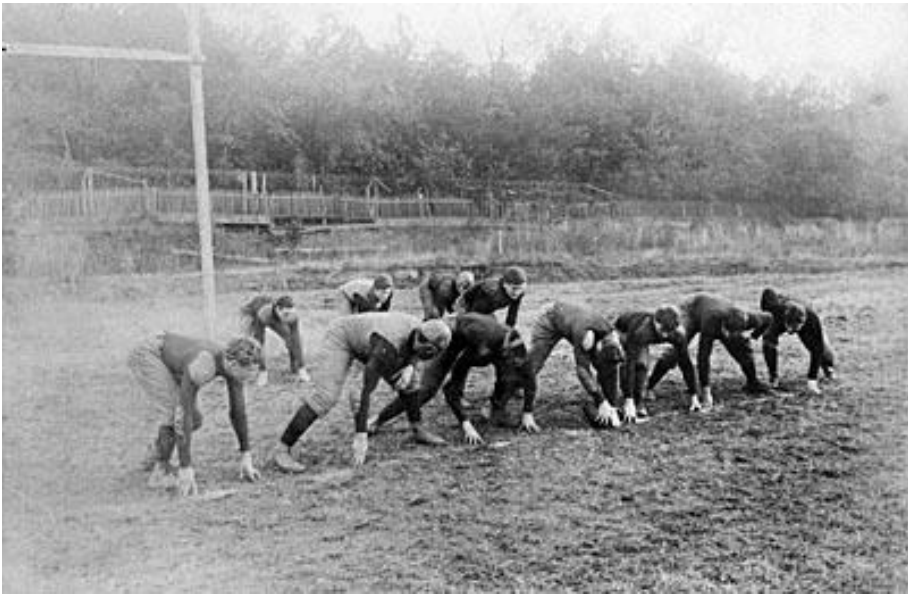
Eventually, the informality of the matches gave way to formality as bona fide institutions began to sponsor collegiate level teams. The 1869 college football season is recognized as the first season of intercollegiate football in the United States, though at the time, there were only two teams in the league – Rutgers and Princeton.

The rules were not refined and so the teams used agreed-upon improvised rules resembling soccer and rugby as much as the modern American sport. 1869 is considered by historians as the inaugural college football season.

This 1869 football season consisted of only two total games and as noted, there were just two teams – Rutgers University and Princeton University; The first game was played on November 6 at Rutgers' campus, and the second was played on November 13 on the Princeton's campus.

## 1869–1875

As noted, the November 6, 1869 football game between Rutgers and Princeton, which by the way was then known as the *College of New Jersey*, was played with a round ball. The rules were provided by Rutgers captain William J. Leggett. They were based on the Football Association's first set of American football rules.



Rutgers Scarlet Knights practice 1869

Walter Camp did not write the first set of rules, but he made them all better. These rules were an early attempt by those who had studied football in England's public schools, to codify the rules and create what hopefully would become a universal and standardized set of dictates for the game. Let me posit an analogy of the *evolution* of American Football Rules.

I remember back in the late 1980's when Windows 2.0 came out and it was a major improvement on DOS and the prior Windows. I am sure if the hardware were capable then, the Bill Gates led Microsoft team would have built Windows 10 or Windows 11 instead of going through all the iterations to make the program better over the next thirty years. But, for lots of reasons, they could not. Rules changes work well through an iterative process of testing new rules, introducing them to the "game," and then removing objectional parts. In the process, some rules are enhanced; others eliminated; awhile still other rules are added.

The 1869 football games bore little resemblance to the American game, which would be developed slowly in the following decades. Nonetheless, it is still regarded as the first game of Intercollegiate American Football.

Think of the mob playing this first game at a Rutgers field. It could have been worse. Two teams of 25 players lined up and attempted to score by kicking the ball into the opposing team's goal. Throwing or carrying the ball was not allowed, but there was plenty of physical contact between players. The first team to reach six goals was declared the winner. Rutgers won by a score of six to four.

A rematch was played at Princeton a week later under Princeton's own set of rules. There was a major difference in the rules as a team was awarded a "free kick" when any player caught the ball on the fly. This feature had been adopted from the Football Association's rules. The fair catch kick rule has survived through to our modern American game.

Princeton won the second game with home field advantage by a score of 8–0. More teams began to play each other in 1870. Columbia was next to join the series and then by 1872 several other schools began to field intercollegiate teams, including Yale and the Stevens Institute of Technology.



# Chapter 2 The Expansion of American Football

## Street Football in England – Rugby Precursor



## Rutgers v Columbia

Rutgers decided their school would extend the reach of the game. So, they scheduled a game against Columbia. An intercollegiate game was thus played in the state of New York as the Rutgers Scarlet Knight took on the Columbia Lions in American football on November 2, 1872.

This game resulted in the first scoreless tie in the history of the fledgling sport. Yale football began the same year and had its first match against Columbia, the nearest college to play football. It took place at Hamilton Park in New Haven and was the first game in New England.

The game used a set of rules that were based on association football with 20-man sides. The game was played on a field of 400 by 250

feet. Yale won this game 3-0, Tommy Sherman scored the first goal and Lew Irwin got the other two.

By 1873, the college students playing football had made significant efforts to standardize their fledgling game. Teams had been scaled down from 25 players to 20. The only way to score was still to bat or kick the ball through the opposing team's goal, and the game was played in two 45-minute halves on fields 140 yards long and 70 yards wide.

American football was still like Windows 1.4 and had not reached 2.0 capabilities. On October 20, 1873, representatives from Yale, Columbia, Princeton, and Rutgers met at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City to codify the first set of intercollegiate football rules. It was the to-be Ivy League and Rutgers. The Ivy League eventually became a sport conference for eight schools: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton, and Yale. Neither Rutgers nor William and Mary made the cut and was not an Ivy League school. Ivy League institutions are very highly ranked academically—usually in the top 10 to 15 academic range. Rutgers is no slouch ranked as a top 80 school while William & Mary is top 40.

Before this meeting of the schools, each school had its own set of rules and games were usually played using the home team's own particular codification. In the rules meeting, a list of proposals, based more on the Football Association's rules rather than the rules of the recently founded Rugby Football Union, was drawn up for intercollegiate football games. American football was making its departure from rugby and soccer.

After the meeting, these American universities, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, and Rutgers published their first draft of American Football Rules. This almost-new game, simply known as football in the United States, evolved mostly from the sport rugby.

Rutgers was part of the group in the beginning and reportedly has been asked several times to join the Ivy League? If you are from Pennsylvania like me, you might ask, "Why turn it down?" There are two plausible answers, and none have to do with a nose in the air. If Rutgers had accepted, they would apparently have to become a

private university, and this would mean giving up money from the state.

One reason New Jersey students choose Rutgers is because it has a relatively low tuition. There was concern that if Rutgers hiked tuition to say the Harvard level, many deserving New Jersey students would be forced to choose other schools. Another reason is that Rutgers also needs money for research. Its endowment is nothing like Harvard's or other Ivy League schools.

Why would the Ivy League invite Rutgers? That question also has an easy answer. Rutgers to say the least is a research powerhouse. Their New Brunswick campus has over forty thousand students, and they say a good number of the people of NJ have probably done some sort of research there. It is not that the Ivy League is hard pressed for additional schools; but they also offered membership to William and Mary, which also turned down the offer.

Regardless, Rutgers is a great school despite not being in the Ivy League. As we move on in this book, because it did not sign up with the Ivy schools, there is not much news about Rutgers and Walter Camp and the formation of football as the news of the day was gobbled up by Yale and Walter Camp.



The Harvard vs. McGill game played in 1874.

## Lots of playing before playing became official

Before playing became official anywhere, a lot of football playing was going on beginning with the agreed upon date for the first American-style college football game--November 6, 1869. If you can find a replay of this game someplace in the heavens, however, you would also find that it would not look much like American football as we know it. But, it was not completely soccer or rugby either.

By the way, "rugby" is named after a town on the Avon River in Warwickshire, central England with a population of about 71,000.

The Rutgers v Princeton game was a big deal because at the time it was not only the first official game, the two games played represented the entire football season of all of the colleges in the United States. The publicity factor for both schools was huge.

We all know that Harvard University, founded in 1636, claims itself to be "the oldest institution of higher education in the United States." Harvard was not first in sports, however, but it soon caught on.

Before this game, as we have previously discussed, teams were playing a rugby style like that played well in Britain in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At the time in the US, there was a derivative known as association football that was also played. In both game styles, a football (oval or round ball) is kicked at a goal or run over a line. Over time, as you will see, the style of "football" play in America continued to evolve.

Going back just a bit for clarification, before the Nov. 6, 1869 game, and before the teams even took the field, this game was being plugged across America as the first college football game of all time.

The first game of intercollegiate football was a sporting battle between two neighboring schools on a plot of ground where the present-day Rutgers gymnasium now stands in New Brunswick, N.J. As noted, Rutgers won that first game, 6-4.





**1<sup>st</sup> Game Rutgers 6 Princeton 4 College Field, New Brunswick, NJ**

Filling the playing field with players, it helps to recall that there were two teams of 25 men each and that the rules of football had not yet been well defined, so they used rules that were rugby-like, but different enough to make it very interesting and enjoyable.

Like today's football, there were many surprises; strategies needed to be employed; determination exhibited, and of course the players required significant physical prowess.

At 3 p.m. on November 6, the 50 combatants (That's what they called them!) as well as 100 spectators gathered on the field. Most sat on a low wooden fence and watched the athletes discard their hats, coats and vests. The players used their suspenders as belts. To give a unique look, Rutgers wore scarlet-colored scarfs, which they converted into turbans. This contrasted them with the bareheaded boys from Princeton.

Two members of each team remained stationary near the opponent's goal in the hopes of being able to slip over and score from unguarded positions. Thus, the present day "sleeper" was conceived. The remaining 23 players were divided into groups of 11 and 12. While

the 11 "fielders" lined up in their own territory as defenders, the 12 "bulldogs" carried the battle.

Each score counted as a "game" and 10 games completed the contest. Following each score, the teams changed direction. The ball could be advanced only by kicking or batting it with the feet, hands, heads or sides.

Rutgers put a challenge forward that three games were to be played that year. The first was played at New Brunswick and won by Rutgers. Princeton won the second game; but cries of "over-emphasis" prevented the third game in football's first year when faculties of both institutions protested on the grounds that the games were interfering with student studies.

This is an excerpt of the Rutgers account of the game on its web site. A person named Herbert gave this detailed account of the play in the first game:

"Though smaller on the average, the Rutgers players, as it developed, had ample speed and fine football sense. Receiving the ball, our men formed a perfect interference around it and with short, skillful kicks and dribbles drove it down the field. Taken by surprise, the Princeton men fought valiantly, but in five minutes we had gotten the ball through to our captains on the enemy's goal and S.G. Gano, '71 and G.R. Dixon, '73, neatly kicked it over. None thought of it, so far as I know, but we had without previous plan or thought evolved the play that became famous a few years later as 'the flying wedge'."

"Next period Rutgers bucked, or received the ball, hoping to repeat the flying wedge," Herbert's account continues. "But the first time we formed it Big Mike came charging full upon us. It was our turn for surprise.

The Princeton battering ram made no attempt to reach the ball but, forerunner of the interference-breaking ends of today, threw himself into our mass play, bursting us apart, and bowing us over. Time and again Rutgers formed the wedge and charged; as often Big Mike broke it up. And finally, on one of these incredible break-ups a Princeton bulldog with a long accurate, perhaps lucky kick, sent the ball between the posts for the second score.

It was at this point that a Rutgers professor could stand it no longer. Waving his umbrella at the participants, he shrieked, "You will come to no Christian end!"

Herbert's account of the game continues: "The fifth and sixth goals went to Rutgers. The stars of the latter period of play, in the memory of the players after the lapse of many years, were "Big Mike" and Large (former State Senator George H. Large of Flemington, another Princeton player) ...

By the way, the quote before the year part of the date back then meant 18, as in 1871. Not 19 or 20.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, gameplay developments by those today recognized as the great formative college coaches such as Eddie Cochems, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Parke H. Davis, Knute Rockne, and Glenn "Pop" Warner helped take advantage of the newly introduced forward pass. We will discuss their advances in later chapters.

The popularity of college football grew as it became the dominant version of the sport in the United States for the first half of the 20th century. Bowl games, a college football tradition, attracted a national audience for college teams.

Boosted by fierce rivalries and colorful traditions, college football still holds widespread appeal in the United States.

The origin of professional football can be traced back to 1892, with William "Pudge" Heffelfinger's \$500 contract to play in a game for the Allegheny Athletic Association against the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. In 1920 the American Professional Football Association was formed. This league changed its name to the National Football League (NFL) two years later, and eventually became the major league of American football. Primarily a sport of Midwestern industrial towns in the United States, professional football eventually became a national phenomenon.

# PENN STATE BEATS PENN 22 TO 6

Quakers Overwhelmed by Superior Play of Blue and White—Miller Star of Game—Captain Very, Harlow, Engle and Mauthe Play Great Ball.



Penn State Advancing Toward Penn's Goal—Barry Carrying Ball

## Early PSU football game circa 1911

Many fine football powers of today such as Penn State University did not get into the football act until the late 1880's. At this time, the rules of rugby kept changing to accommodate the infatuation for the Americanized style of "football" play that would ultimately become the American game of football.

## Introduction to Walter Camp

We will be taking an exhaustive look at the rugby influence and Walter Camp in later chapters, so this is to serve as an introduction.

Walter Camp was a very well-known rugby player from Yale. Rugby has characteristics of both football and soccer. In today's world, Camp would have been characterized as a rugby hero. It was his love of the game, his knowledge of the game as it was played, and his innovative mind that caused him to take the evolution of American football even further. He pioneered the changes to the rules of rugby that slowly transformed the sport into the new game of American football.

The rule changes that were introduced to the rugby and association style of play were mostly those authored by Camp, who was also a Hopkins School graduate. As noted and as will be noted a number of times in this book and many others, for his original efforts, Walter Camp today is considered to be the "Father of American football".

Among the important changes brought to the game were the introduction of a line of scrimmage; down-and-distance rules; and the legalization of legal interference, which today we would call blocking.

There was no such thing in Camp's early days as a forward pass and so the legalization of interference (blocking) in 1880 football permitted blocking for runners. The legal forward pass, when it came in 1906, would add another dimension to the game that made it much different than rugby or association football. In the early days of American football before the forward pass was legalized, it was OK to throw a pass laterally or backwards but if it went forward, the attacking team would be penalized.

## Association Football

Let's back track again and fill-in some blanks.

You may be asking yourself "What is association football?" It is a style of play that was coming into its own as American football was literally being created.

For some, Association football is more commonly known as football or soccer. The Germans call it futsal and it also exists on a table v a field. Foosball or Fußball (if the German letter ß is used) may refer to: Table football, also known as foosball or table soccer, a custom-table game loosely based on association football with figures on rods representing the players. In an open field, it is the German name for football (or soccer).

Association football can be traced way back to the Medieval period in Britain (medieval football). The modern game of association

football originates from the formation of The Football Association in London, England in 1863 based on multiple efforts to standardize the varying forms of the game.

This effort permitted clubs to play each other without dispute of the rules. It specifically banned handling of the ball (except by goalkeepers) and hacking during open field play. It was a lot like soccer.

After the fifth meeting of the association, a schism emerged between association football and the rules played by the rugby school, later to be called rugby football. At the time, football clubs had played by their own rules. They created their own individual codes and game-day rules usually had to be agreed upon before a match could commence.

For example, the Sheffield Rules that applied to most matches played in the Sheffield area were a different code than others. Soccer has been an Olympic sport ever since the second modern Summer Olympic Games in 1900. But, nobody from a soccer association would ever play with an oval ball or a line of scrimmage. The great Penn State players from the first team are shown above.

Penn State played its first unofficial football game November 12, 1881 against Lewisburg University in Lewisburg, PA. There apparently are no public pictures from this game. It would be nice.

The Nittany Lions were not yet the Nittany Lions; yet they played like they were. Penn State won the makeshift game with rules that were partly American football, partly rugby, and partly soccer as the rules were being incrementally formed. The score was W (9-0).

It was six years later in September (1887) that the school administration had given its approval under President George Atherton. With the top brass's OK; a group of Penn State freshmen organized its first official football team. The architects were freshman George "Lucy" Linsz along with classmate Charles Hildebrand.

Just a month later the storied Penn State tradition began putting notches in its history. Penn State played its first official game November 12, 1887 against Bucknell (formerly Lewisburg) at

Lewisburg winning, 54-0. The rules had improved somewhat since 1881 but they were still not the rules of which we are familiar today.

To make it a season and not a shot-in-the dark on-time game as in 1881, Penn State engaged again just one week later on November 19). A mascot-less Penn State played its first home game using a makeshift field on the Old Main Lawn. Penn State won the game 24-0 over "rival" Bucknell. Penn State finished its first competitive football season with a 2-0 record. Wins have been the big story in the Penn State football adventure from 1887 onward, and if I may be so bold, unofficially the wins began in 1881.

The notion of American College Football was just beginning as other Eastern teams such as Harvard and Princeton were also just getting it going. Notre Dame also had its first game in 1887. In 1881, there was a national desire among colleges to play the evolving game of American football and so the students did it themselves in much the way teams play sandlot football today.

Penn State Students organized a football team without administration support and as noted they scheduled and played a game against a close-by school that at the time was known as the University of Lewisburg (renamed Bucknell University in 1896). The "kids" had to do some research just to know the rules and Penn State learned quite well as it defeated Lewisburg 9-0, in a cold, sleet-like drizzle.

As time moved on from this first encounter with football, there were no more formal games until September 1887 when George "Lucy" Linsz arrived on campus as a freshman and, with the help of a fellow freshman Charles Hildebrand, he managed to get approval from President George Atherton to organize the first official football team for Penn State College. There was no coach and there would be no coach for this team until 1894.

As hard as it is to believe back in the fall 1887, Penn State chose Pink and Black as the team colors. They changed the colors to blue and white the following year.





## Chapter 3 Moving Closer Towards American Football

### Nothing happens overnight



Soon after the early football changes, in the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, more game-play type developments were introduced by college coaches.

The list is like a who's who of early American College Football. Coaches, such as Eddie Cochems, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Parke H. Davis, Knute Rockne, John Heisman, and Glenn "Pop" Warner helped

introduce and then take advantage of the newly introduced forward pass.

In later chapters, we will look at the enhancements attributed to these football greats.

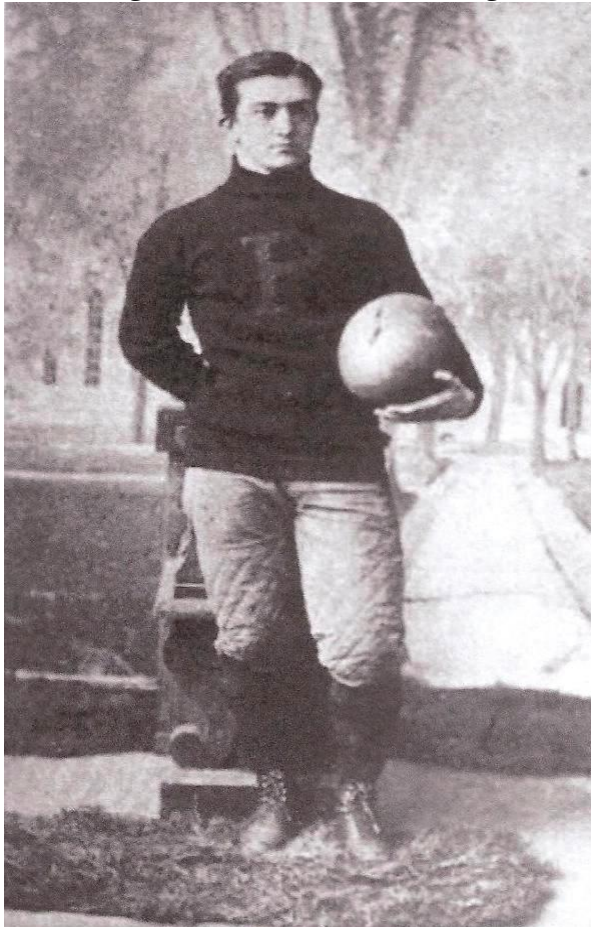
We have learned that American College football as well as professional football, were introduced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pro football remained ragtag until 1920 when the American Professional Football Association was formed. Fans were lured into watching

again and again once they saw the game played. How could we not love American football?

American college football especially grew in popularity even after the beginning of professional football. It became the dominant version of the sport of football in the United States. It was this way for the entire first half of the 20th century. For many fans, it still is this way. There are pro football fans who do not enjoy college football and vice versa.

Bowl games made the idea of football even more exciting in the college ranks. Rivalries grew and continued, and the fans loved it! This great football tradition brought a national audience to college football games that still dominates the sports world today.

Edgar Allan Poe – No kidding!



In researching this chapter, I found that some players with some great names played football in the early years. For example, Edgar Allan Poe was an All-American for Princeton in 1889. Additionally, in 1889, first-year players were permitted to wear numbers representing their names in college football games.

This particular Edgar Allan Poe was also a great historical figure. He served as Attorney General of the State of Maryland from 1911 to 1915. Born in Baltimore, Poe was named for his second cousin, twice removed, the celebrated author & poet, Edgar Allan Poe, who died in 1849.

The great athlete Poe attended Princeton University, where he played quarterback on the 1889 varsity football team, which finished with a perfect 10-0 record. Poe was named the quarterback of the very first 1889 College Football All-America Team.

A cute anecdote of the season was that After Princeton beat Harvard, 41–15, a Harvard man is said to have asked a Princeton man whether Poe was related to the great Edgar Allan Poe. According to the story, "the alumnus looked at him in astonishment and replied, "He is the great Edgar Allan Poe."

## What number is he?

Another interesting tidbit on the formation of football is that teams played without uniform numbers. Nonetheless somehow the players were identified. Just two years after Penn State as well as Notre Dame formed their teams and played their first official football games in 1887, the first All-America team was named in 1889.

There is some scuttle about that as Walter Camp and some others with mostly Eastern College roots were accused of picking players from the big Eastern Colleges almost exclusively and so there were few All Americans at Notre Dame or Penn State or Alabama in the early years.

Seventeen years after the first all-American for example, W. T. (Mother) Dunn was Penn State's first All-American in (1906). He was named by Walter Camp. He was both a linebacker and a center. The next All-American for PSU was Bob Higgins, the long-time PSU football coach who, as an End, gained the honor both in (1915 & 1919). The PSU football program has produced 88 consensus all-Americans in total. Notre Dame has 90. Alabama has 68.

Notre Dame had two All-Americans in 1913 – Knute Rockne, an End, and Gus Dorais, a quarterback. By 1913, the forward pass was legal and that is how ND was winning its games in this undefeated season.

As touched on in this section. in 1889, numbers to identify individual players were permitted but not recommended. It took until 1915 that they were recommended. But, it wasn't until 1937 that numerals were required on both the front and back of game jerseys. In 1967 this rule was further modified to require numbering according to position, with offensive players ineligible to receive forward passes assigned numbers in the 50-79 range.

## **Pro football came from American college football**

This book wraps up with a history of pro football from its beginnings in 1920 until the last Super Bowl. Since most of the rules of American football come from the college experimentation long before the Pros got in the game, that is the concentration of most of this book.

Moreover, there is no denying that the greatest college football players more often than not eventually find their fortunes in professional football. Pro football can be traced back to 1889, just a few years after Penn State and Notre Dame rolled out their programs, and just before Alabama got in the game.

As previously noted, it was 1892 when William "Pudge" Heffelfinger signed a \$500 contract to play for the Allegheny Athletic Association against the Pittsburgh Athletic Club.

Twenty-eight years later, the American Professional Football Association was formed. This league changed its name to the National Football League (NFL) just two years later.

Eventually, the NFL became the major league of American football. Originally, pro football was just an unaffiliated sport played in Midwestern industrial towns in the United States. Yet, professional football eventually became a national phenomenon.

We all know this because from August to February, in America, every year, many of us are glued to our TV sets or chained to our seats in some of the most intriguing pro-football stadiums in America—mostly on Sundays.

## Rules and penalties

The big problem that players from different teams and different geographies had when playing early American-style football in college was that the style of play was not standardized. The rulebooks were not yet written or were at best incomplete and disputable.

A rule over here, for example, would be a penalty over there. And, so in the 1870's there was a lot of work to try to make all games to be played by the same rules.

There were minor rule changes such as the team size was reduced from 25 to 20 but of course over the years, this and all other rules continued to evolve. For years, there was no such thing as a running touchdown. The only means of scoring was to bat or kick the ball through the opposing team's goal. That had to change.

Early rugby rules were the default. Rugby guys were very physical compared to the more finesse-oriented soccer contingent.

The field size in the early days was almost always rugby style at 140 yards by 70 yards v 120 yds. X 53 1/3 yds. (including end zones) in today's football game. There was plenty of room to huff and puff and almost get lost. There were no breaks per se for long periods. In other

words, the notion of strength at the line by huge human beings with fifteen-minute quarters was not the standard fare. Instead, early on, the game was more like rugby and soccer with 45-minute halves played continuously. Big strong tackles would find no place on such a team as they would huff and puff out in minutes.

In 1873 to put some order to the game, as we intimated earlier in this book, Columbia, Princeton, Rutgers, and Yale got together in a hotel in New York City and wrote down the first set of intercollegiate football rules. They changed a few things along the way, but the end product was a much more standard way of playing football games. Rather than use the home team's rules, all teams then were able to play by the same rules. Without these innovations, American football would never have been. That does not mean that all schools even in the same "league" would abide by the league rules

## **Harvard did not to comply with rules**

For its own reasons, Harvard initially chose not to attend the rules conference. Instead, it played all of its games using the Harvard code of rules. After all, it was the first university in America. Harvard thus had a difficult time scheduling games.

In 1874, to get a game, Harvard agreed to play McGill University from Montreal Canada. They had rules that even Harvard had never seen. Ironically sports historians suggest McGill's rules were more similar to Walter Camp's American football rules than they were to rugby. For example, any player could pick up the ball and run with it, anytime he wished.



Harvard v McGill Match 1874

Another McGill rule was that they would count tries (the act of grounding the football past the opponent's goal line.) Since there was no end zone, which technically makes a football field of today 120 yards long, a touchdown gave no points. Instead, it provided the chance to kick a free goal from the field. If the kick were missed, the touchdown did not count.

In 1874 McGill and Harvard played a two-game series. Each team could play 11 men per side. This was in deep contrast to the even earlier days of college football before standard rules when games were played with 25, 20, 15, or sometimes even 11 men on a side.

The first game was played with a round ball using what were known as the "Boston" rules (Harvard). The next day, the teams played using the McGill rules, which included McGill's oval ball which was much like an American football, and it featured the ability to pick up the ball and run with it.

Harvard enjoyed this experience especially the idea of "the try," which had not previously been used in American football. Eventually, *the try* evolved into the American idea of a touchdown and points were given when a try was successful.

Not all the rules lasted the duration of a full season and some were very strange by today's standards. One of the most perplexing rules

was that a man could run with the ball only while an opponent chose to pursue him. When a tackler abandoned the ball-carrier, the latter had to stop, and was forced to kick, pass or even throw away what was called "his burden."

McGill has a great account of their match with Harvard on their web site. Just type *McGill web site football against Harvard* into your search engine.

Their players wore no protective pads. This was common. Woolen jerseys covered the torso, while white trousers encased the players' legs. Some trousers were short, and some were long. It did not seem to matter for the game. A number of the men wore what they called black "football turbans" which were the ancestors of the modern helmet; others chose to wear white canvas hats.

## Catch a Harvard guy if you can!

The Harvard players wore undershirts made of gauze. Think about that for a while. They also wore what were called *full length gymnasium costumes*. They also wore light baseball shoes. Most of the team wore handkerchiefs, which were knotted about their heads.

The gauze undershirts were a trick. There was strategy in this choice of top uniform. When a player was first tackled, the gauze would be demolished, and the next opponent would have nothing to grab other than "slippery human flesh." Harvard won the game: score = 3-0.

The next go at playing by the rules was when Harvard took on Tufts University on June 4, 1875. This was the first American college football game played using rules similar to the McGill/Harvard contest. Tufts won this game. Despite the loss, Harvard continued pushing McGill style football and challenged Yale.



## Yale accepts Harvard's challenge

The Yale Bulldogs team accepted under a compromise rule set that included some Yale soccer rules and Harvard rugby rules. They used 15 players per team. It was November 13, 1875 for this first meeting of Harvard v Yale. Harvard won 4-0. Walter Camp attended the game and the following year he played in the game as a Yale Bulldog. Camp became a Yale and he quickly entered the rules foray.

Camp was determined to avenge Yale's defeat. Onlookers from Princeton, who saw this Harvard / Yale game loved it so much, they brought the style back to Princeton where it was quickly adopted as their preferred version of football.

Once Walter Camp caught onto the rugby-style rules, history says he became a fixture at the Massasoit House conventions. Here the rules of the game were debated and changed appropriately. From these meetings, Camp's rule changes as well as others were adopted. Camp, as a recent player was well respected by the consortia.

In 1892, Camp penned one of his most famous of his 30 books. It was the most read football book of the day titled: Foot-Ball Rules and Referee's Book.

## Eleven players instead of fifteen

Having eleven players instead of fifteen aided in opening the game and it emphasized speed over strength. When Camp attended in 1878, this motion was at first rejected but it passed in the 1880 meeting. Camp is responsible for many of the sane rules of American football.

The line of scrimmage rule and the snap from center to the quarterback rule also passed in 1880. Originally the snap occurred by a kick from the center, but this was later modified so the ball would be snapped with the hands either as a pass back (long snap) or a direct snap from the center.

It was Camp's new scrimmage rules, however, which according to many, revolutionized the game, though it was not always to increase speed. In fact, Princeton was known to use line of scrimmage plays to slow the game down. They would make incremental progress towards the end zone much like today during each down.

Camp's original idea was to increase scoring, but in fact the rule was often misused so that a team in possession would be able to maintain control of the ball for the entire game. The negative effect of this before it was modified was that there were many slow and unexciting contests. This too would be fixed with the idea of the first down coming into play.

In 1882, at the rules meeting, Walter Camp proposed that a team be given three downs to advance the ball for five yards. These rules were called the down and distance rules. Along with the notion of the line of scrimmage, these rules transformed the game of rugby into the distinct sport of American college football.

Among other significant rule changes, in 1881, the field size was reduced to its modern dimensions of 120 by 53 1/3 yards (109.7 by 48.8 meters). Camp was central to these significant rule changes that ultimately defined American football.

Camp's next quest was to address scoring anomalies. His first cut was to give four points for a touchdown and two points for kicks after touchdowns; two points for safeties, and five points for field goals. The notion of the foot in football /rugby explains Camp's rationale. His intent was not to minimize the role of accurate kicking in football.

In 1887, game time was fixed at two halves of 45 minutes each. Quarters and Half's would come later. Additionally, college games would have two paid officials known as a referee and an umpire, for each game. In 1888, the rules permitted tackling below the waist and then in 1889, the officials were given whistles and stopwatches to better control the game.

An innovation that many suggest is the most significant to making American football uniquely American was the legalization of

blocking opponents. Back in Camp's day, this would be a penalty known as "interference."

This tactic had been highly illegal under the rugby-style rules and in rugby today, interference continues to be illegal. That which once was interference, today of course means that you are permitted to block somebody willing to tackle the person with the ball. It has nothing to do with the modern interpretation of pass interference.

The more players and fans know both soccer, rugby, and football, they are prone to find rugby to be more like a rougher form of soccer.

## Let's look at multi-sport offsides

Though *offsides* is a penalty infraction today in football and soccer, the meaning is much different. *Offsides* in the 1880's in rugby was very much the same as *offsides* in soccer. The prohibition of blocking in a rugby game is in fact because of the game's strict enforcement of its *offsides* rule.

Similar to soccer, this rule prohibits any player on the team with possession of the ball to loiter between the ball and the goal. Players must operate behind the ball as the team is attacking or in front of the last defender. Otherwise, the offsides penalty flag is shown. Blocking continues as a basic element of modern American football, with many complex schemes having been developed and implemented over the years, including zone blocking and pass blocking.

Camp stayed active in rule making for most of his life. There is little written about Camp and the legalization of the forward pass.

Besides rule-making, Walter Camp took the lead in personally selecting an annual All-American team every year from 1889 through 1924. Camp passed away in 1925. The Walter Camp Football Foundation continues to select All-American teams in his honor.

With many rule changes as noted, as American style rugby became more defined as American college football, more and more colleges

adopted football as part of their sports programs. Most of the schools were from the Eastern US. It was not until 1879, ten years after the first intercollegiate game, that the University of Michigan became the first school west of Pennsylvania to establish a bona-fide American-style college football team.

Back then, football teams played whenever they could in the fall or the spring. For example, Michigan's first game was in late spring, near the end of what we would call the academic year. On May 30, 1879 Michigan beat Racine College 1–0 in a game played in Chicago. In 1887, Michigan and Notre Dame played their first football game. It was a makeshift game and Michigan prevailed over the Irish in an away game and the priests made sure all the lads got a fine meal for their efforts.

## Chapter 4 Miscellaneous American Football Notions

### The first night time game

It was not until September 28, 1892 that the first nighttime football game was played. Mansfield State Normal as it was called, a state College, played Wyoming Seminary a high school and prep school. The game was played in a field in Mansfield, Pennsylvania where there was electrical power.



Both of these schools are close to the town in which I live. The game ended at a "declared" half-time in a 0–0 tie. It had become too dark to play.

Wyoming Seminary was not a college and to this day it is not a college. I live about five miles from the school. It is a private college preparatory school located in the Wyoming Valley of Northeastern Pennsylvania. During the time-period in which the game was played, it was common for a college and a high school to play each other in football—a practice that of course has long since been discontinued.

The reason that it got too dark to play, ironically was not because the game began at dusk. Mansfield had brought in a lighting system that was far too inadequate for game play. This historical game lasted only 20 minutes and there were only 10 plays. Both sides agreed to end at half-time with the score at 0-0. Though it may seem humorous today, for safety reasons, the game was declared ended in a 0-0 tie after several players had an unfortunate run-in with a light pole.

Mansfield and Wyoming Seminary are thus enshrined in football history as having played in the first night game ever in "college football." History and football buffs get together once a year to celebrate the game in what they call "Fabulous 1890's Weekend."

This historic game is reenacted exactly as it occurred play by play just as the actual game is recorded in history. Fans who watch the game are sometimes known to correct players (actually actors) when they deviate from the original scripted plays. Now, that shows both a love of the game and a love of history.

Mansfield and Wyoming Seminary's game added additional fame to both schools when the 100th anniversary of the game just happened to occur on Monday, September 28, 1992. Monday Night Football celebrated "100 years of night football" with its regularly scheduled game between the Los Angeles Raiders and the Kansas City Chiefs at Arrowhead Stadium. The Chiefs won 27-7 in front of 77,486 fans. How about that?

More football history was recorded when Army played Navy in 1893. In this game, we have the first documented use of a football helmet by a player in a game. Joseph M. Reeves had been kicked in the head in a prior football game. He was warned by his doctor that he risked death if he continued to play football. We all know how tough the Midshipmen and Black Nights (Cadets) are regardless of who they may be playing. Rather than end his football playing days prematurely, Reeves discussed his need with a shoemaker in Annapolis who crafted a leather helmet for the player to wear for the rest of the season.

## Football conferences

Things were happening very quickly in the new sport of football. Organization and rules became the mantra for this fledgling sport. It was being defined while it was being played. Formal college football conferences were just around the corner. In fact, the Southeastern Conference and the Atlantic Coast Conference both got started in 1894.



1895 football game between Auburn and Georgia

## The forward pass

None of Camp's rules for American football included the most innovative notion of them all – the forward pass. Many believe that the first forward pass in football occurred on October 26, 1895 in a game between Georgia and North Carolina. Out of desperation, the ball was thrown by the North Carolina back Joel Whitaker instead of punting it. George Stephens, a teammate caught the ball.

Despite what most may think or surmise, it was Camp again when he was a player at Yale, who executed the first game-time forward pass for a touchdown. During the Yale-Princeton game, while Camp was being tackled, he threw a football forward to Yale's Oliver Thompson, who sprinted to a touchdown. The Princeton Tigers naturally protested and there appeared to be no precedent for a referee decision. Like many things in football including a game-

beginning coin-toss, the referee in this instance tossed a coin, and then he made his decision to allow the touchdown.

## Hidden ball trick

Some one-time tricks have not survived football. For example, on November 9, 1895 Auburn Coach John Heisman executed a hidden ball trick. Quarterback Reynolds Tichenor was able to gain Auburn's only touchdown in a 6 to 9 loss to Vanderbilt. This also was the first game in the south that was decided by a field goal.

### 1895 Auburn Tigers football

The team executed a "hidden ball trick" in the game against Vanderbilt



Coach John Heisman is in the second row in the middle wearing glasses.

The trick was simple but would be illegal today. When the ball was snapped, it went to a halfback. The play was closely masked and well screened. The halfback then thrust the ball under the back of the quarterback's (Tichenor) jersey. Then the halfback would crash into



the line. After the play was apparently over, the quarterback Tichenor in this case, "simply trotted away to a touchdown."

## **The end of college football?**

Football was never a game for the light of heart. You had to be tough physically and tough mentally to compete. Way back in 1906, for example complaints were many about the violence in American football. It got so bad that universities on the West Coast, led by California and Stanford, replaced the sport with rugby union rules.

At the time, the very future of American college football, a very popular sport enjoyed by fans nationwide was in doubt. The schools that eliminated football and replaced it with Rugby Union believed football would be gone and Rugby Union would eventually be adopted nationwide.

Soon other schools followed this travesty and made the switch. Eventually, due to the perception that West Coast football was an inferior game played by inferior men when compared to the rough and tumble East Coast, manhood prevailed in the West over the inclination to make the game mild.

The many tough East Coast and Midwest teams had shrugged off the loss of the few teams out West and they had continued to play American style football.

And, so the available pool of Rugby Union "football" teams to play remained small. The Western colleges therefore had to schedule games against local club teams and they reached out to Rugby Union powers in Australia, New Zealand, and especially, due to its proximity, Canada. America at the time was almost exclusively playing American football.

## **American football OK without the west**

The famous Stanford and California game continued as rugby. To make it seem important. The winner was invited by the British

Columbia Rugby Union to a tournament in Vancouver over the Christmas holidays. The winner of that tournament was rewarded with the Cooper Keith Trophy. Nobody in the American football America cared. Eventually the West Coast came back to American-style football ala Walter Camp.

Nonetheless the situation of injury and death in football persisted and though there was a lot of pushback, it came to a head in 1905 when there were 19 fatalities nationwide. Nobody wanted this.

President Theodore Roosevelt, a tough guy himself, is reported to have threatened to shut down the game nationwide if drastic changes were not made. Sports historians however, dispute that Roosevelt ever intervened with any wielded power.

What is certified, however, is that on October 9, 1905, the President held a meeting of football representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The topic was eliminating and reducing injuries and the President, according to the record, never threatened to ban football.

The fact is that Roosevelt lacked the authority to abolish football but more importantly, he was a big fan and wanted the game to continue. The little Roosevelts also loved the sport and were playing football at the college and secondary levels at the time.

This was over 110 years ago, a century plus. That is why they say football was an even more brutal sport then, than some believe it is today. There are accounts of games that left dozens of dead on college and prep school gridirons. Though I have the reference, I cannot find any of the games in which such carnage may have occurred.

Many in the country were asking for action from politicians. With the very existence of the sport in jeopardy, President Theodore Roosevelt, who actually loved the sport, entered the fray and urged the schools noted above to institute some radical reforms that according to observers at the time saved the sport and gave another birth to the modern game of American football.

Here is a picture of a Teddy's Nephew being carried off the field after an injury in the brutal game of football.



One of the Roosevelt offspring carried off after injuring his ankle.

There are those who went as far as calling the turn of the 20th century America's football gridirons killing fields. College games drew tens of thousands of spectators and had even more fan appeal than professional baseball, the national pastime.

Baseball was a gentle sport compared to football. American football in the early 1900s was lethally brutal. It was a grinding, bruising sport that required major physical contact on each play. In 1905, the forward pass was still illegal and, so it was sheer brute strength that was required to move the ball.

Huge players were permitted to lock their arms in mass formations and they would use their unprotected helmetless heads as battering

rams. Gang tackles routinely buried ball carriers underneath a ton and a half of “tangled humanity.”

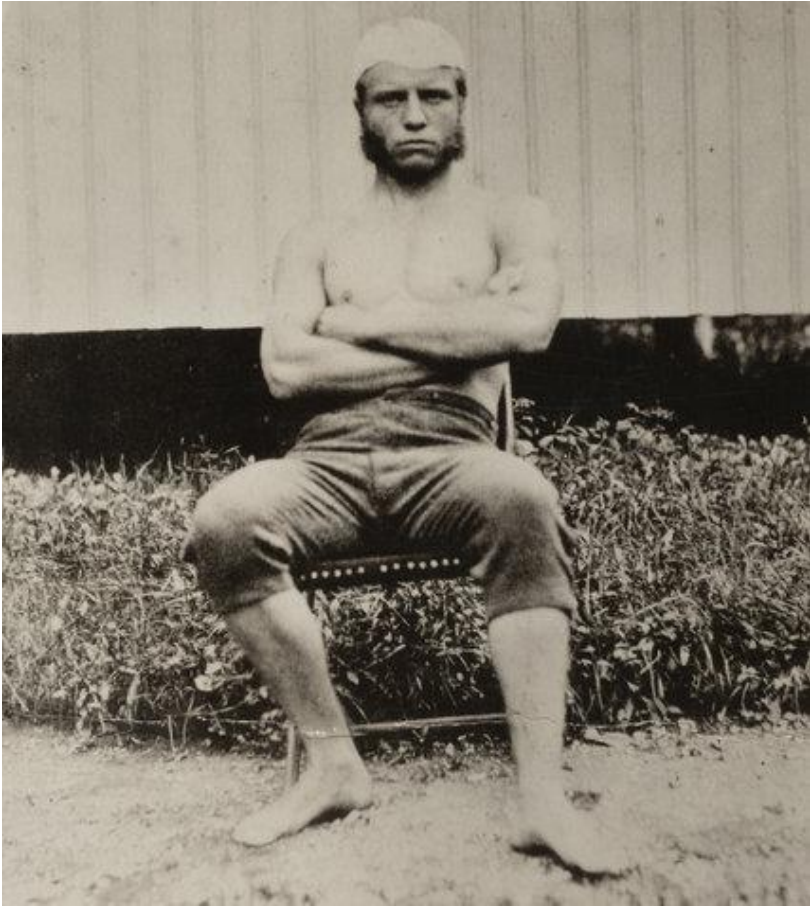
## Football players fought like gladiators



A look at tangled humanity

There was little in the way of protective equipment. Apparently, nobody had ever thought of pads and helmets. Players would often sustain gruesome injuries such as wrenched spinal cords, crushed skulls and broken ribs that were sometimes so severe they pierced their hearts. It did not go unnoticed.

The Chicago Tribune wrote a piece that in 1904 alone, the year before Roosevelt’s involvement, there were 18 football deaths and 159 serious injuries, mostly among prep school players. It was sad.



TR as a college undergraduate; Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

There were obituaries of young pigskin players on a near-weekly basis during the football season. The carnage appalled America. Everybody loved the sport but not the maimings. The Newspapers did not take it easy on the game. Editorials called for the outright banishment of college and high school football.

Football was often compared to the Roman Gladiators: “The once athletic sport has degenerated into a contest that for brutality is little better than the gladiatorial combats in the arena in ancient Rome,” opined the *Beaumont Express*. The sport had reached such a crisis that one of its biggest boosters—President Theodore Roosevelt—got involved.

Roosevelt's glasses gave away his nearsightedness. But, as a youth in college he did not wear them. This, however, was more than enough to keep this tough man from making the Harvard varsity squad. Yet, he was always a vocal exponent of football's contribution to the "strenuous life," both on and off the field.

When "Teddy" was New York City police commissioner, he helped bring back the old Harvard-Yale football series after it had been canceled for two years following the violent 1894 clash that was labeled "the bloodbath at Hampden Park."

He believed that the football field was more or less a proving ground for the battlefield. This was validated by the performance of his fellow Rough Riders who were mostly former football standouts. "In life, as in a football game," he wrote, "the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard; don't foul and don't shirk, but hit the line hard!"

## **Teddy Roosevelt liked football**

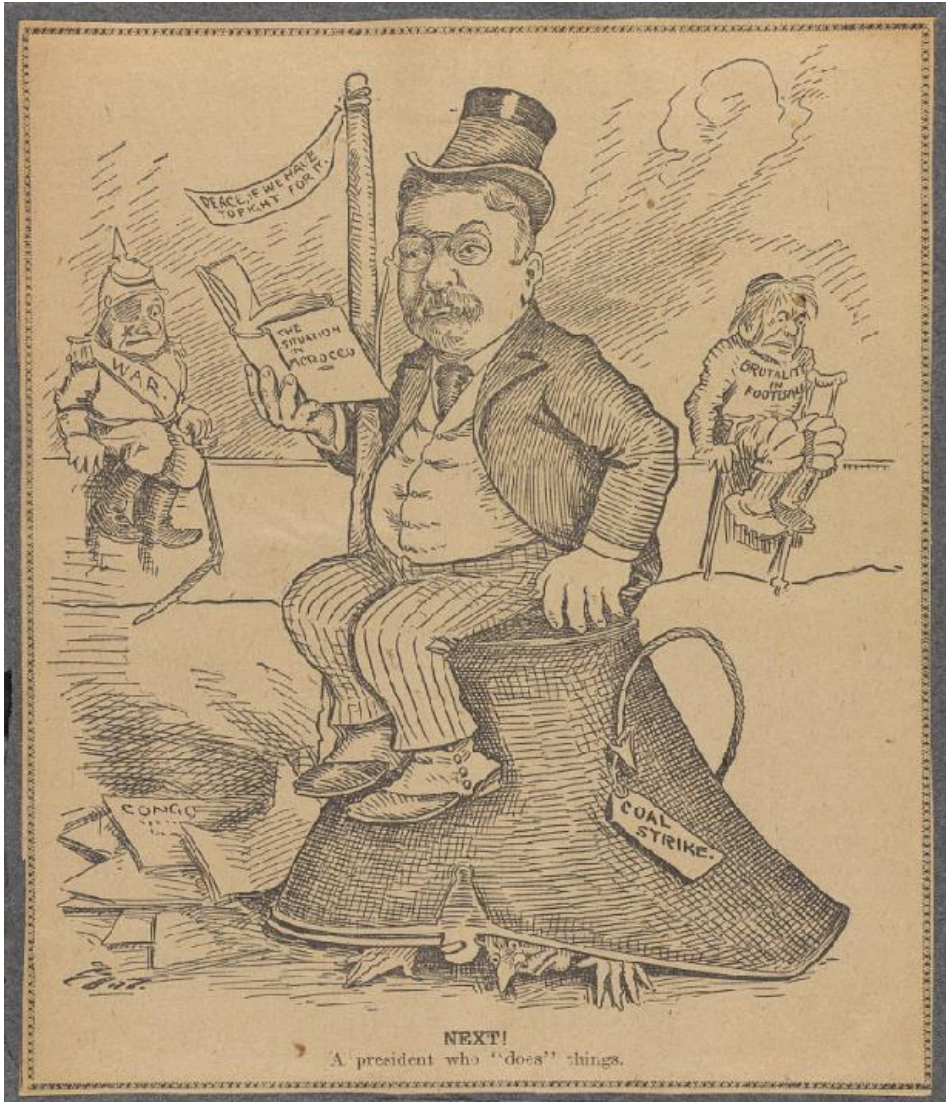
In 1903, the president told an audience, "I believe in rough games and in rough, manly sports. I do not feel any particular sympathy for the person who gets battered about a good deal so long as it is not fatal." Unfortunately, in 1904-1905, football injuries were too often fatalities, and it was not improving.

Yes, even the President knew that football had become fatal, and he acknowledged that it needed reform if it were to be saved. With his son, Theodore Jr. who had begun to play for the Harvard freshman team, he had a major league paternal interest in reforming the game as well.

Roosevelt was the guy to negotiate with the foot-ballers for sure. He was straight from having negotiated an end to the Russo-Japanese War. He sought to end violence on the football field as well as the battlefield. Using his "big stick," the gentleman known as the "First Fan" brought the necessary parties together—especially those from the premier collegiate football powers of the day—Harvard, Yale and Princeton—to the White House on October 9, 1905.



Roosevelt made no threats. But, he did urge them to curb excessive violence and set an example of fair play for the rest of the country. The schools responded with a heartfelt and effective press release condemning brutality and pledging to keep the game clean.



Ironically, Roosevelt, in taking on the problem of football fatalities, learned that real war may be even easier to gain peace than getting this new American sport to clean up its act. Fatalities and injuries continued and in fact increased during the 1905 season. In the

freshman tilt against Yale, the president's son was bruised and his nose broken—some say quite deliberately. This would not do. Yet, it continued

The following week, Harvard's entire varsity were ready to leave the field of play against Yale, after their captain was felled by an illegal hit on a fair catch. His nose was broken and bloodied. Union College halfback Harold Moore suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died the same afternoon after being kicked in the head while attempting to tackle a New York University runner.



THE TWELFTH PLAYER IN EVERY FOOTBALL GAME.



It was a grim and savage season and it finally ended. There was work to be done. The Chicago Tribune saw the senseless deaths as a “death harvest,” The football season had brought about 19 player deaths and 137 serious injuries. Newspaper artists had a field day creating “cartoons” of figures such as the Grim Reaper on a goalpost surveying a twisted mass of fallen players. It was similar to the cartoon on the prior page.

It was so tough that some tough schools such as Stanford and California switched to rugby while Columbia, Northwestern and Duke dropped football all together. Harvard president Charles Eliot, who considered football “more brutalizing than prizefighting, cockfighting or bullfighting,” warned that Harvard would be next. This would be a totally crushing blow to the college game and the Harvard alum, President Roosevelt who worked every day in the Oval Office.



Helmet testing was quite animated in the early 1900's

Roosevelt appreciated the need for men to play men sports and he captured his views in a letter to a friend. He stated that he would not permit the Harvard College president Elliott to “emasculate football,” and that Roosevelt hoped to “minimize the danger” without football having to be played “on too ladylike a basis.”

Roosevelt was a tough man and, so he again used his bully pulpit. He urged all parties from the Harvard coach to other leading football authorities to quickly adopt radical rule changes. He invited other school leaders and football aficionados to the White House in the offseason for productive discussions.

## Good rules made football even better

Many good rules were put forth at an intercollegiate conference, which would become the forerunner of the NCAA. The “radical” rules were approved for the 1906 season. They would have a very positive effect on the game and eventually would substantially reduce injuries.

The rules legalized the forward pass, abolished the dangerous mass formations, created a neutral zone between offense and defense and doubled the first-down distance to 10 yards, to be gained in three downs. The rule changes did not completely eliminate football’s dangers, but fatalities declined—to 11 per year in both 1906 and 1907—while injuries fell sharply. A spike in fatalities in 1909 led to another round of reforms that further eased restrictions on the forward pass and formed the foundation of the modern sport.

So, the rule changes were good. There were others such as the notion of reducing the number of scrimmage plays to earn a first down from four to three in an attempt to reduce injuries. The LA Times reported an increase in punts in an experimental game and thus considered the game much safer than regular play. Football lovers did not accept many of the new rules because they felt they were not “conducive to the sport.” There was a period when rapid rule changes interfered with coaching strategies as a favored play in early season might be illegal before the season ended.

Because nobody wanted players injured or killed in a game, on December 28, 1905, to be sure the rules were put out for 1906, a

group representing 62 schools met without the president in New York City to discuss the proposed major rule changes to make the game safer. From this meeting, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, later named the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), was formed.

## The forward pass is legalized

One particular rule change that was introduced in 1906 was devised to open up the game and thus reduce injury eventually gained favor with the coaches, players, and fans. This new rule introduced the legal forward pass. Though it was underutilized for years afterwards, this proved to be one of the most important rule changes in the establishment of the modern game. Those coaches, such as Eddie Cochems, who adopted the pass early, had a major advantage in winning games.



Because of these 1905-1906 reforms, mass formation plays in which many players joined together became illegal when forward passes became legal.

Bradbury Robinson, playing for visionary coach Eddie Cochems at St. Louis University, is recorded as throwing the first legal pass in a September 5, 1906, game against Carroll College at Waukesha.

Later changes were in the minutia category, but they added discipline and safety to the game without destroying its rugged character.

For example, in 1910, came the new requirement that at least seven offensive players be on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap, that there was to be no pushing or pulling (holding), and that interlocking interference (arms linked or hands on belts and uniforms) was not allowed. These changes accomplished their intended purpose of greatly reducing the potential for collision injuries. There was a lot of tweaking to come.

As noted previously, great coaches emerged in the ranks who took advantage of these sweeping changes. Amos Alonzo Stagg, for example, introduced such innovations as the huddle, the tackling dummy, and the pre-snap shift.

Other great coaches over the year, such as Pop Warner and Notre Dame's Knute Rockne, introduced new strategies that still remain part of the game. These are discussed in later chapters.

Many other rule changes and coaching innovations came about before 1940. They all had a profound impact on the game, mostly in opening up the passing game, but also in making the game safer to play without diminishing its quality.

For example, in 1914, the first roughing-the-passer penalty was implemented. In 1918, the rules on eligible receivers were loosened to allow eligible players to catch the ball anywhere on the field.

The previously more restrictive rules allowed passes only in certain areas of the field. Scoring rules also were changed, which brought the scoring into the modern era. For example, field goals were lowered

from five to three points in 1909 and touchdowns were raised from four to six points in 1912.

## Star Players



**Jim Thorpe, Circa 1915**

Star players emerged in both the collegiate and professional ranks including Jim Thorpe, Red Grange, and Bronko Nagurski were also big stars. These three in particular were able to move from college to the fledgling NFL and they helped

turn it into a successful league. Notable sportswriter Grantland Rice helped popularize the sport of football with his poetic descriptions of games and colorful nicknames for the game's biggest players, including Notre Dame's "Four Horsemen" backfield and Fordham University's linemen, known as the "Seven Blocks of Granite."

## The Heisman

Jay Berwanger (above) was the 1st Heisman Winner. In 1935, New York City's Downtown Athletic Club awarded its first Heisman Trophy to University of Chicago halfback Jay Berwanger.

**Jay Berwanger, 1<sup>st</sup> Heisman Winner below:**



He was also the first ever NFL Draft pick in 1936. The trophy continues to this day to recognize the nation's "most outstanding" college football player. It has become one of the most coveted awards in all of American sports.

Penn State University is very proud that all-time great player John Cappelletti won the Heisman in 1973 with Joe Paterno as his coach. I can't figure it out why, but he is the only PSU player to have won a Heisman, but many came close.

New formations and play sets continued to be developed by innovative coaches and their staffs. Emory Bellard from the University of Texas, developed a three-back option style offense known as the wishbone. Bear Bryant of Alabama became a preacher of the wishbone.

The strategic opposite of the wishbone is called the spread offense. Some teams have managed to adapt with the times to keep winning consistently. In the rankings of the most victorious programs,

Michigan, Texas, and Notre Dame were ranked first, second, and third in total wins until the NCAA recently took two seasons worth of wins from Notre Dame recently for a player violation.

And so, that is as far as we will take it in this chapter about the moving miscellaneous evolution of football. With so many conferences and sports associations as well as pro, college, high school, and mini sports, something tells me we have not yet seen our last rule change.

## **Moving along quickly**

The modern era of American football can be considered to have begun after the 1932 NFL Playoff game, which was the first American football game to feature hash marks, the legalization of the forward pass anywhere behind the line of scrimmage, the first indoor game since 1902, and the movement of the goal posts back to goal line.

Other innovations to occur immediately after 1932, were the introduction of the AP Poll in 1934, the tapering of the ends of the football in 1934, the awarding of the first Heisman Trophy in 1935, the first NFL draft in 1936 and the first televised game in 1939. Another important event was the American football game at the 1932 Summer Olympics, which combined with a similar demonstration game at 1933 World's Fair, led to the first College All-Star Game in 1934, which in turn was an important factor in the growth of professional football in the United States.

American football's explosion in popularity during the second half of the 20th century can be traced to the 1958 NFL Championship Game, a contest that has been dubbed the "Greatest Game Ever Played".



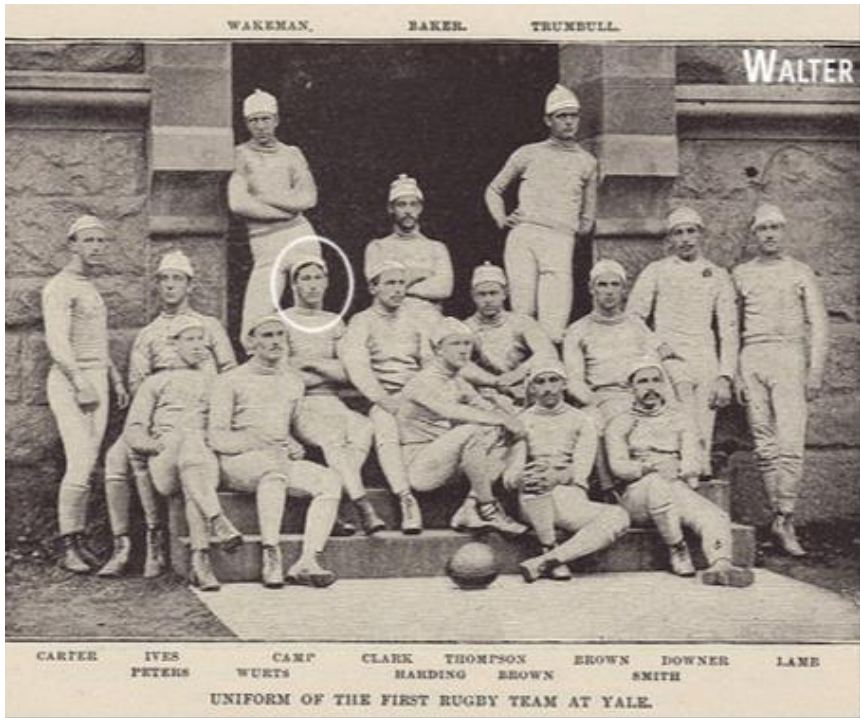
Let's talk about this game just a bit. Notice above Johnny Unitas getting ready to connect. Known by many as "The Greatest Game Ever Played," the duel between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants was the first NFL title game to extend to sudden-death overtime. Baltimore's Raymond Berry caught 12 passes for 178 yards for the Colts in their 23-17 victory. His 15-yard touchdown reception in the second quarter was followed by a conversion kick, and the ball was caught by a fan in the stands. There were no nets

The Duke, named in honor of football legend Wellington "Duke" Mara, is the "official" game ball of the NFL. Wilson has been the "official" game ball provider for NFL since 1941. You get one online today at Amazon for \$99.00. No wonder they brought in the big nets.

A rival league to the NFL, the American Football League (AFL), began to play in 1960; the pressure it put on the senior league led to a merger between the two leagues in 1969 and the creation of the Super Bowl, which has become the most watched television event in the United States on an annual basis.



## Chapter 5 Origin of the Oval-Shaped Sports-Ball



Walter Camp, Yale University, circled

We have already discussed many of the attributes of American football that distinguish it from football that is played outside the original Garden of Paradise and all paradises outside of the United States. We also discussed the impact of the games of soccer and especially rugby on American football and we discussed the positive role of Walter Camp, the designated Father of American Football.

In this chapter, we briefly discuss Camp's influence on American football even more and in the next chapter we discuss his role at Yale University as a player and as a rules broker.

We already know that at Rutgers, Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Columbia, rugby was all that mattered in the late 1870s as the

transition was being made to American football. Soccer aka association football had its place, but rugby was taking over.

Early American football was much like rugby, but better. Increasingly it made its impact to the point that rugby is a second-class sport today played only on college campuses. Ironically over 900 colleges are registered to play rugby whereas 774 teams play football.

We already discussed the evolutionary birth of American football from 1869 and the birth of the intercollegiate connection of the Ivy League teams in the 1880's long before the union was formalized in the 1950's.

What we have not yet discussed is the incessant lobbying in the 1880's that Walter Camp imposed on "the Ivies," and how he succeeded first in changing the game from 15-a-side to 11-a-side and how he continued through his death to make American football the game that it is today. That is coming soon in the next chapter.

## The coming of the sports-ball!

Before we move on to all the great Walter Camp material in subsequent chapters, let me digress for a brief period. One of my great curiosities in researching this book is who would have ever thought of using an oval ball shaped like today's modern football? Secondly, why don't we all know that answer?

To answer the question, I got some help from the people at Inventors-Handbook as surely the oval football was a key invention for the game of football.

Please note that the folks from the Inventor's handbook have a different interest than I in pursuing this information. They use the invention of the football as a reason why inventors should patent their works while I am merely interested in learning who the inventor was and how he came about inventing the football.

The invention of the *football*, the ball used in the popular team game is not necessarily attributed to one inventor. But most historians

agree that one English shoe maker is more than likely responsible for the way footballs look today.

This description is not for the faint of heart, and in fact, there is a death reported in this account.

Early footballs were essentially pig's or other animals' bladders which were inflated by the power of the human lungs (blowing hot air into them). They were then tied and sealed, much like balloons would be sealed – knotted at the end.

As a result, they were often plum, or pear shaped, and not round, depending on the size of the individual animal's bladder.

Before the invention of football as we know it, balls were often prone to exploding while in use. This led to shoemakers selling leather cases to protect the inflated bladders. Shoes and boots makers used leather on a daily basis and were the most appropriate people to be able to sew the ball's leather cases around the bladder.

You may ask why rubber was not used instead of animal bladders. It took a while to be able to work rubber into all the uses we have today. Rubber was invented in 1839 by Charles Goodyear. He accidentally dropped Sulphur and white latex from a rubber tree onto a hot stove. This resulted in the formation of a dark elastic substance which came to be called vulcanized rubber, and the rest is history but not yet for football.

Until the 1860's, football, soccer and rugby were all played with a plum or pear-shaped ball made of leather, encasing an inflated animal bladder.

In Europe, the first proper football invention is attributed to two shoemakers: Richard Lindon and William Gilbert who invented round and oval shaped balls. Lindon is credited for inventing the rubber inflatable bladder.

In 1849, at the age of 33, Lindon, who worked just in front of the rugby school in Rugby England, was constantly asked to create footballs for the school's boys.

As a shoemaker, he was regularly receiving leather supplies for making shoes and, so he used some of this supply to also create balls for the boys' teams by covering the pig's bladders with leather.

Both Lindon and his wife worked at the craft and prepared the balls when requested. Because she was not a craft shoemaker and yet wanted to help with the many orders, Lindon's wife took on the additional responsibility of inflating the bladders by blowing air into them.



This was not as simple and innocuous as it sounds. In many ways, it was downright dangerous as many bladders were infected, having originated from diseased pigs.

It was around 1862 that Lindon had begun looking for an alternative to inflated pig's bladders that would be safer than the current

practice. For his wife, those efforts came way too late. She eventually died by falling ill from inflating too many infected pig's bladders.

Lindon invented an inflatable inner tube made of natural rubber, instead of the existing animal bladders. Because of the newly understood pliability of rubber, the shape of the footballs was able to be molded to the shape of a perfect round sphere.

His first prototype was made from such a rubber inflated tube covered with 7 strips of leather, stitched at the end with "bottoms" on both sides. The ball was almost spherical. This design gained popularity and became the one he used for all of the "footballs" that he sold.



Lindon's Brass Pump Invention

Since he found inflating the rubber that he used too hard to do by hand, Lindon also invented a brass pump, inspired by a simple ear syringe. This could be used to inflate his footballs without the need to blow them up with one's mouth. Thus, he is also credited not only

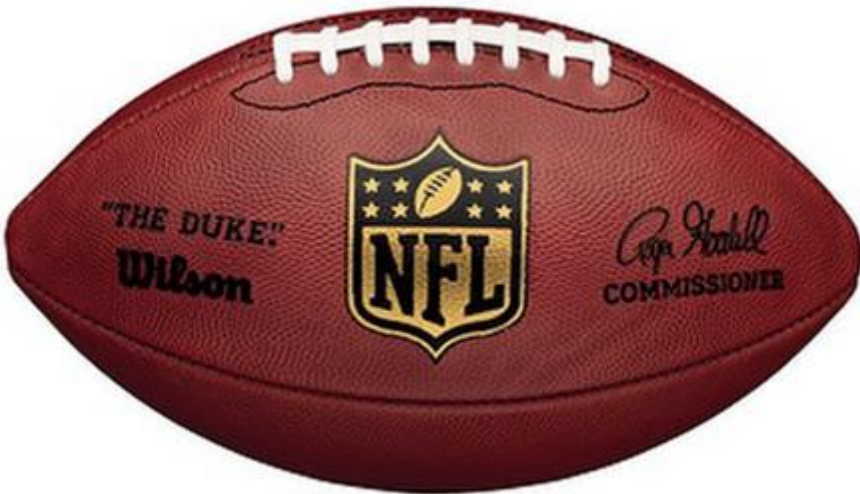
for the invention of the football but also for the invention of the air pump.

Until his death, Lindon had never patented the bladder, ball or air pump, which he invented. Yet, these were key inventions for football. The moral of the story for the invention people is that he could have made a ton of money, which could have been passed on to his family on his death if he had only patented his invention.

## The shape of the football

On October 5, in 2012, Jimmy Stamp of Smithsonian Magazine wrote an expose on how the “pigskin” for modern football got its shape. “How Did the Pigskin Get Its Shape?”

Stamp put forth that even though American football may have evolved from soccer and rugby, the football was never truly designed; it just sorta happened.



Like the shoemaker’s invention, Stamp also points out that the “pigskin” is not made of pig skin or pig’s bladders but is, in fact, made from cowhide, aka leather, and not the tanned skin of a pig.





He cites that the shape is mysterious, but we know it is because of the inexact shape of the original pig's bladder. He asks, "If the sport evolved from soccer and rugby, how and when did the football gain its distinct shape – technically known as a prolate spheroid?" Stamp answers:

"Well, it turns out that the football was never truly designed, it just sorta happened." This fact comes from one Henry Duffield, a man who happened to be a spectator at the Princeton and Rutgers American Football Game in 1869, which as we know is considered the first intercollegiate game ever:

"The ball was not an oval but was supposed to be completely round. It never was, though — it was too hard to blow up right. The game was stopped several times that day while the teams called for a little key from the sidelines. They used it to unlock the small nozzle which was tucked into the ball, and then, the players took turns blowing it up. The last man generally got tired and they put it back in play somewhat lopsided."

This would surely indicate that the football that bounces erratically all over a field and can fly through the air in a perfect spiral is not, in fact, the product of a grand design. According to Stamp, it is simply the result of a leaky sphere and some lazy inflators.

Rugby balls had been constructed long before this game but for some time, the round ball dominated the scene in soccer style / association football. The rugby balls were always in the shoemakers for repair because of their pointy ends.

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Mr. T. W. Sherrin.

Melbourne, 17th February, 1909

Dear Sir,—During the contests, held in celebration of the Jubilee of the game, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in August last, in which teams from New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and West Australia competed, the only footballs used were those of your manufacture. I heard nothing but praise of the excellence of your workmanship, and it must give you much satisfaction to know that your goods command everywhere the highest reputation.—  
Yours faithfully,  
(Signed), E. L. WILSON, Secretary.

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## Sherrin's "Kangaroo" Brand

In 1879, Thomas Sherrin, from Australia took the point off the ends of the rugby balls and made his own design. His nephew noted that "He made a ball and created the ball that had less pointy ends. It was still able to bounce unpredictably but it was a little more consistent in its movement." Sherrin also made leather punching bags.



Stamp wraps up his Smithsonian article with an interesting summary:

“Initially, football was a very different game – or perhaps I should say games. There were kicking games and running games, but as those two games began to merge together, as rules began to standardize, the ball began to slightly stretch out in order to accommodate more types of use. The unique shape of the ball was somewhat formalized in the early 20th century and that form was exploited to great success when the forward pass was introduced to football in 1906.”

I will begin the next chapter with this same Stamp summary and continue from there.



## Chapter 6 Did Rugby Dominate the Early American Football Scene?



Harvard v McGill Football/Rugby

### **We promised continuation and we deliver**

Stamp wraps up his Smithsonian article with an interesting notion. We promised in the last chapter to deliver the what's next from Mr. Stamp's Smithsonian Article. Here we go:

“Initially, football was a very different game – or perhaps I should say games. There were kicking games and running games, but as those two games began to merge together, as rules began to standardize, the ball began to slightly stretch out in order to accommodate more types of use. The unique shape of the ball was somewhat formalized in the early 20th century and that form was

exploited to great success when the forward pass was introduced to football in 1906.”

If we read between the lines of any explanation of the origin of American football in any article, we would conclude that it was rugby that was predominantly played in the second half of the 1870s, even though the game was beginning to be shaped like American football through the efforts of Walter Camp and others. This brand of football was played at Rutgers, Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Columbia.

The excerpt below, with some titling and text editing by your author, was originally published in *The Journey to Camp: The Origins of American football to 1889*. You can get this book for a \$10 donation at Professional Football Researchers Association Books Yale's *Walter Camp and the Birth of Modern Football* by PFRA Research (Professional Football Researchers Association). It would be well worth your efforts to keep such living tributes alive.

Walter Camp was born in New Haven Connecticut on April 17, 1859. He was the son of Leverett L. and Ellen Cornwell Camp. After attending Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Camp entered Yale in the Centennial Year of 1876 and he graduated in 1880.

## **Camp the clock man**

He planned to be a doctor but was lured to the family business after two years at Yale as a graduate student in the Medical School. He finally gave up that dream and entered the business world at the New Haven Clock Company and worked successfully through the positions of Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer, General Manager, President, and finally Chairman of the Board.

Camp matched his business acumen and success with his leadership and generosity as a proud member of the New Haven community. He was revered by many and respected by all. Walter Camp went on to his eternal reward while sleeping peacefully on March 14, 1925.

It was not his stewardship of a business enterprise nor his civic-mindedness in life that caused the degree of national mourning that

came with his passing. Americans recognized his many accomplishments in football as a player, a student of the game, and as an agent for change.

Walter Camp was a natural athlete, and he loved the sport of rugby. He was perhaps the best athlete in the history of Hopkins Grammar School, excelling at track and water sports. In baseball, he was a star pitcher, with enough savvy to teach himself how to throw curveballs.

When the summer heat died down, Camp stood out as a soccer player among his New England peers. When he stayed in New Haven and attended Yale, naturally he tried out for the football team. His timing could not have been better.

## **Rugby was the name of the game at Yale**

When the leaves were about to fall in 1876, Yale was just beginning to learn this new game. The football team had taken a big whooping the year before by Harvard, and the story was that it still smarted. The Yale Eli's were determined to see that it didn't ever happen again.

They had compromised in 1875 but this coming year, the centennial of the USA, there would be no more halfway, concessionary rules! Yale planned to engage in straight rugby and they planned to beat the tar out of Harvard.

Rugby was catching on in the pre-Ivy-League and with state teams such as Rutgers who enjoyed the tussle with the "Smart People." It was becoming a big deal at Princeton, too. In fact, the Tigers were very instrumental in helping most of New England convert nearly overnight from other sports such as soccer to rugby and American football as their favorites.

Two Princetonians, a W. Earle Dodge and a Jotham Potter had enjoyed the game the year before watching Harvard lick Yale. Together, they succeeded in selling the idea of the evolving rugby game to their own campus. Some claimed this was a feat just slightly inferior to selling refrigerators to Eskimos.

As Princeton went, so would everybody else, figured Messrs. Dodge and Potter. They quickly invited Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, to Springfield, Massachusetts, so they could all sit down and decide to play the game the way Princeton wanted to have it played.

Yale and Harvard, already had their hearts and souls set for rugby, so they were easy pickings. Columbia came, having won more games than they lost in 1875 -- a rare feat for the Lions during the next century. They too signed up.



1876 Yale Bulldogs, national champions. Walter Camp is standing with arms crossed. Gene Baker is seated with the football.

On November 23, 1876, with the season far along, each Ivy League school sent two representatives to the Massasoit House in Springfield: H.C. Leeds and C.S. Eaton from Harvard, E.W. Price and C.D. Brewer from Columbia, Eugene V. Baker and J.B. Atwater from Yale (plus Camp, of course), and, then again there would be Dodge and Potter from Princeton.

**Rule changes in the offing: Let touchdowns count as points**

Yale had its agenda as did everybody else. They lobbied for eleven men on a side -- the complement they'd learned from Eaton in 1873 -- but, generally, everyone was OK with the notion for eleven. The group also adopted nearly verbatim the Rugby Union Code used in England. This made the formulation of rules lots easier than writing them from scratch.

There was one serious bone of contention regarding touchdowns. Columbia and Yale objected. They did not like the idea of counting touchdowns in the score. They preferred the Rugby Union Rule which states: "A match shall be decided by the majority of goals alone." However, Princeton thought touchdowns ought to count, and Harvard was adamant about it.

Harvard had a very good reason to be adamant. Just days before the Massasoit House Conference, they played their second game against Yale. Before the game, Harvard bowed to Eugene Baker's request to play only eleven men on a side and to ignore touchdowns in the scoring. It did not work out well for Harvard.

As bad luck, would have it, Harvard had pushed over three touchdowns but missed each of the following kick attempts. Think about this. The idea was that only "extra points" counted but you had to get a zero-point-worth touchdown before you had a chance to kick the extra point. Only the extra points counted and not the touchdowns. Now, you know why the rules continued to evolve.

Yale made just one successful kick to win the game, 1-0. After a prior loss, they considered contrived because of bad rules, Harvard would not concede to a rule that would throw touchdowns out the window without getting any points for them.

Finally, a compromise was worked out. The adopted rule reads as follows: "A match shall be decided by a majority of touchdowns. A goal shall be equal to four touchdowns, but in the case of a tie, a goal kicked from a touchdown shall take precedence over four touchdowns."

Soccer and rugby are lively kicking games and the people shaping the rules for American football wanted the ability to kick the ball to be a big part of the ball-game. Soccer as we know is almost continuous

play, where a hand can never touch a ball, whereas rugby does not penalize hand actions as much and with the idea of the scrum, it is not continuous action like soccer (American Association Football).

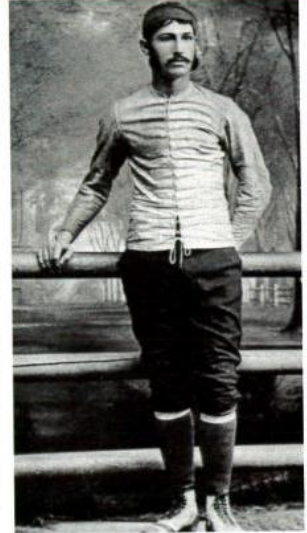
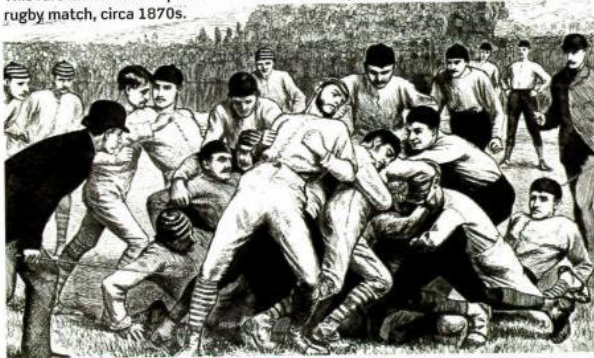


## Chapter 7 Walter Camp and 1870 Style American Football (Rugby)

### AMERICA'S FIRST RUGBY GAMES

RUGBY'S BEGINNINGS IN THE US DEVELOPED IN THE 1870s FROM A HYBRID OF ENGLISH SOCCER AND RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL, BUT ITS EARLY STAY IN THIS COUNTRY WAS A BRIEF ONE.

This rare illustration depicts the action at an early American rugby match, circa 1870s.



In the 1880s, Yale rugby player Walter Camp's rules changes transformed rugby into what became American football.

### The Intercollegiate Football Association.

Because of their desire to continue consensus rule setting, the conferees decided to keep meeting. So, at the groundbreaking conference, some of the attendees--namely, Princeton, Harvard, and Columbia formed what they called the Intercollegiate Football Association. Yale chose not to join for a few more years so they could play other opponents who would play eleven men, ignore touchdowns, or do whatever they thought might help Yale. By 1879, that had become more trouble than it was worth, and Yale also joined the membership.

## Princeton had dominated the 1870s

If one school led the pack in these efforts, it was Princeton. The Tigers clearly were the dominant team during the 1870s. Historian and a recognized selector, Parke H. Davis declared them the "National Football Championship" or a share for every year with the exception of 1871 (when there were no official games played) and 1876. With only a small group engaging in conference football, of any kind, the national championship lacked the luster of today with most colleges vying for the big prize. Despite this, there were few arguments that the Princeton 23-3-2 record from 1869 through 1879 was quite impressive.

## Along comes Walter Camp

Walter Camp was a busy person during this period and maintained a major role in the rules process until his death in 1925. In a 1904 issue of *The New Haven Independent*, Walter Camp submitted an article that was written from his perspective as a former Yale halfback. Camp decided the best players in the game should be recognized. In this submission, Camp named names. He listed the following "leading players of the game" for the period 1876-1879:

Forwards - J.S. Harding, Yale; John Moorehead, Yale; Bland Ballard, Princeton; J.E. Cowdin, Harvard

Halfbacks- W.D. Hatch, Yale; Oliver D. Thompson, Yale; W. Earle Dodge, Princeton; Theodore M. McNair, Princeton; R. Winsor, Harvard  
Backs - Eugene V. Baker, Yale; Robert Bacon.

Harvard Oliver Thompson and John Moorehead, both from the Pittsburgh area, would later be instrumental in creating professional football. With admirable modesty, Camp did not include himself among the leading players, although, by many accounts, he was the best of the lot.

Writing in the 1925 *Football Guide*, the last year of Camp's life. Parke H. Davis, a lifetime friend of Walter Camp's, chose to recount Camp's career at Yale. Some of his jottings are included below:

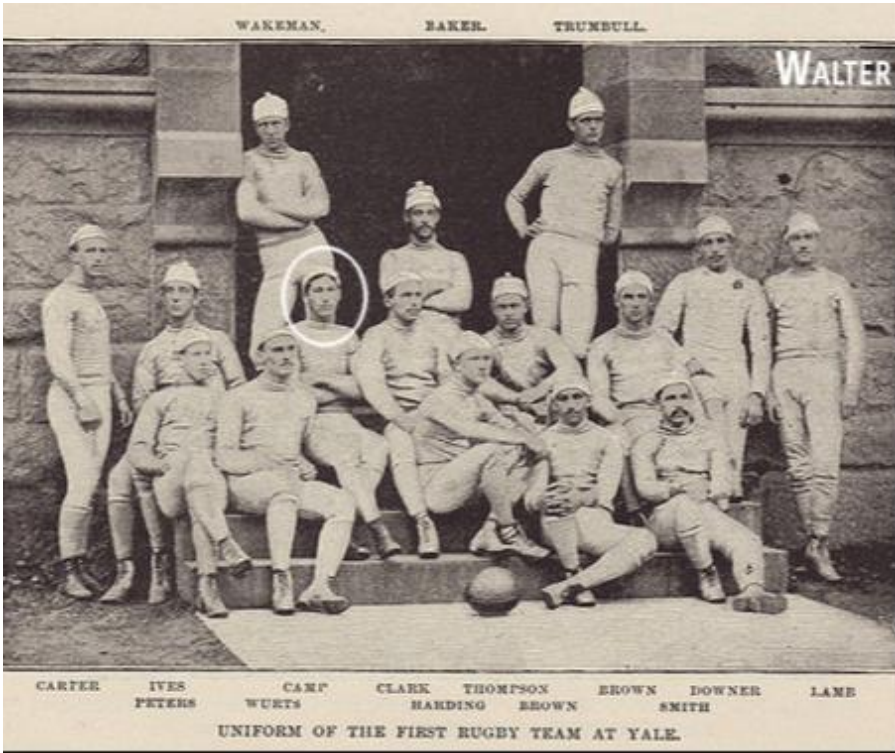
When Walter Camp became a freshman at Yale in 1876 he instantly rose to become one of the best all-around athletes in the university, if not the entire Ivy league. As an undergraduate, Camp made every Yale varsity team in every sport that the institution officially offered.

For example, Camp was a fine pitcher and the captain of the baseball team. He was halfback and captain of the football (rugby) team. He ran the hurdles in track and is credited at Yale with having invented the present hurdle step. In swimming. He was a standout, winning many races from short distances up to five miles. In the newly rising game of tennis. Camp was also a leader. On top of all that, he rowed on his class crew team. Walter Camp literally was great at whatever sport he played.

Rugby may have been first for Camp when he answered the first call. In 1876, Captain Eugene V. Baker called for candidates for the Yale rugby team. Understandably, the new freshman, Walter Camp signed right up. Within a day or so, as a newbie freshman, the young Camp won a regular halfback position.

Walter Camp was exceptionally fast and extraordinarily strong. More importantly for a competitive rugby player, he was a great kicker. He was good at both styles-- punting and dropkicking. Camp was also very smart and would have been successful in rugby from his physical abilities, even if he could not add two plus two. But, of course Yale might have had to let him go if he could not make the grade. There was no problem for Walter Camp on the intelligence front.

Despite his physical prowess, his contemporaries recognized Camp as a brilliant thinker. Considering that the game of rugby, was still new at Yale and knowing the future, Camp would eventually convert this game via creating understandable and proper rules into the game of American college football that we know and love today.



Without hard and fast, crisp and understandable rules, in the early days, new problems would arise, just about every time that a team went on the field. It could be in a real game or it could be in a practice session. Camp, who became the great football teacher always credited Eugene Baker with teaching him more about the game than anyone else, but it did not take long, according to teammate accounts for Baker to begin to treat Camp as an equal.

In Davis' words, Camp was "resourceful, courageous, thinking continually in terms of football, swiftly solving new situations, and indomitable." Despite his outstanding physical abilities, Davis noted that Camp was not very lucky as a player. As an example, Davis detailed several "breaks" that went against him. Although the stories told by Davis lose much of their tragic quality to a modern reader, they are worth recounting so that we can show how the game was played in Camp's day: It is said that no player in the history of the game of rugby football faced greater misfortune in his scoring plays than Walter Camp.

As a perfect example, there were four times in Camp's playing career that he actually made great scoring plays, which were later nullified. Let's look at these:

The first occurred in the Princeton v Yale game of 1877. In the preliminaries to the game, Captain Eugene V. Baker of Yale used the special rule that touchdowns should not count at all in determining the score, but that the latter should be based upon goals alone. As the playing went on, Walter Camp, in the first half, caught a long, sailing punt, and then dashed 80 yards up the field. He went through the entire Princeton team and made a touchdown.

In the second half, getting the ball out of "scrum", Camp again dashed up the field, fifty yards. As he was crossing Princeton's line, he was sharply tackled by McNair, Minor, and Clarke. Camp then rose to his feet, shook off his tacklers and by his great strength forced his way over the line for a second touchdown. In both instances, the goal try (kick) was missed. No score by either side occurred and the game technically thus ended in a draw, 0-0.

FYI, in rugby union a scrum is a means of restarting play after a minor infringement. It involves up to eight players from each team, known as the pack or forward pack, binding together in three rows and interlocking with the free opposing team's forwards.

Walter Camp's third misfortune came in the Harvard-Yale game of 1878. It occurred near the end of the first half. Wetherbee of Harvard had carried the ball almost to the Yale goal line, where he then lost the ball. Watson and Camp of Yale, alternated carrying the ball down the field. Finally, Camp burst away and carried the ball to a point that was thirty-five yards from Harvard's goal line. At this point when he was just about to be tackled, he suddenly stopped dead, dropped the ball, and, with a drop kick, lifted it high into the air.

It looked really good to become a score. The ball spun directly towards Harvard's goal. While it was in the air, however, the whistle sounded to end of the half. The ball continued on its way and split the posts high above the cross-bar. The rule in that period of the formation of game was that a whistle would immediately terminate

the half, the very instant the whistle was sounded. Thus, Walter Camp's brilliant goal was nullified.

The fourth of these negative bad-luck happenings occurred in the Harvard-Yale match of 1879. Action was progressing, and it got very close to halftime. The ball was forty-five yards away but centered on Harvard's goal. Camp came up with the ball out of "scrum" and because of time. Chose to kick a goal from the field, despite the great distance. He dropped the ball, and lifted it with a powerful kick. The ball was spinning and tumbling, and advancing on the goal. It went the whole long flight and crossed perfectly between the posts.

The referee, Bland Ballard of Princeton, however, had called a holding penalty. Thus, this fantastic goal which would have won an otherwise scoreless game did not count at all.

## Who could play rugby?

Eligibility requirements were different in Camp's day from today's four-year maximum. Some contend that there simply were no eligibility requirements at all except what was a generally accepted idea that a player on a college team should at least in some way be connected with the school. Technically, that might mean that a maintenance person or administrator might be called upon to play.

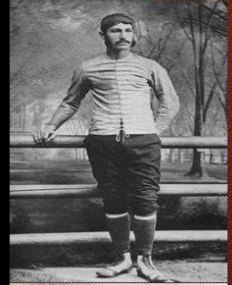
By 1880, Camp had already graduated from Yale with his degree. However, he loved the game so much that while continuing his studies in the Yale Medical School, he also continued playing halfback for the rugby team in both 1880 and in 1881. It was in 1880, during the Yale-Harvard game that he made another big scoring play and this time, his goal counted.

With less than five minutes to play, Camp sent a 35-yard placekick through Harvard's goal posts for the first score of the game to lead to a sensational Yale win.

# Chapter 8 Walter Camp Invented American Football

## CHANGING TO THE MODERN GAME

- Walter Camp - coach of Yale Univ.  
“Father of American Football”
- Camp + IFA rules committee made the following changes...
  1. 15 players down to 11 players
  2. Playing field size (110 yards)
  3. “Downs” system
    - 1882 (3 downs/5 yards)
    - 1906 (3 downs/10 yards)
    - 1912 (4<sup>th</sup> down is added)



### Camp played rugby at Yale at first

We are beginning to see that the game of football was mostly rugby oriented from the first game in 1869 through Camp’s undergraduate Yale days from 1876 through 1879. There is no doubt that the game was rugby, with just a few minor American enhancements.

We have discussed already in this book how rugby was merely a transplanted English game. Ironically an English sport was hardly a pastime to gain widespread popularity in a young US, which was just celebrating its centennial and beginning to view itself in many ways as superior to its European, including English origins.

In addition to what might be called American chauvinism, rugby suffered from a couple of other issues over this time. Arguments continued over the proper number of players and the scoring system



despite many attempts to codify the rules. Camp felt that the most critical problem was that, rugby allowed little room for planning or tactics. The rapidity of the game in many ways like soccer, and the constant flux of the scrum, in which the ball was dropped between the teams to be scrambled for, did not lend itself to well-thought strategies.

For example, a player never really knew from moment to moment whether he would be trying to score a goal or prevent one. American folk hero Davey Crockett had lived by the motto "Be sure you're right; then go ahead." The rugby player had to "go ahead and then find out if you're right."

And, so while camp was still playing at Yale, during the next four years (1880-1883), all this would change. Under the leadership of Walter Camp, English rugby made the slow transition to become American football. Parke Davis took the time to explain this:

## The Architect of American Football

Great as he was as a player, Walter Camp was still greater as an architect of the American intercollegiate game.

Sitting as Yale's representative specifically, but of intercollegiate and interscholastic America generally, in every session of football's legislature from 1878 to 1925, it was his resourceful mind that conceived and constructed the majority of the basic changes which made (it) a distinctly American game.

Walter Camp was still a junior at Yale when he launched his long and brilliant career. He was instrumental in the game's second "convention", as the rule making sessions of Columbia, Harvard, Princeton and Yale were called, held in the old Massasoit House in Springfield, October 9, 1878.

Camp promptly and aggressively took a position of leadership by moving to abolish the rugby institution of fifteen players upon a side and change the number of players on the field to eleven. The convention quickly rejected this proposal.



And, so, with the persistency that often displays as a mark of genius, in 1879 Walter Camp renewed the motion. Again, it was rejected. However, in this convention he set in motion his second reform, which was to count safeties as scoring plays, against the side that made them. This suggestion also at the time was rejected. Camp kept at it.

At the next intercollegiate football convention, convened at Springfield October 12, 1880, Camp came "loaded for bear." Other representatives at this major historic meeting were W.H. Manning and T.C. Thatcher of Harvard, Edward Peace and Francis Loney of Princeton, Robert H. Watson and W.B. Hill of Yale.

To begin, Camp renewed his motion to reduce the number of players on a side from fifteen to eleven, and this time the motion passed. Yale finally had its eleven-man sides, perhaps, some say, because they had an extra man (three representatives in total) at the meeting.

Parke Davis gave Camp credit for "inventing" the idea of playing eleven men on a side, but it was not just his idea. Yale had been attempting to change the # to eleven before Camp had even matriculated. But to give him his due, he pushed hard for the idea through years of Yale frustration.

The change was very important to the American game. Today, football is a more open game with twenty-two men running around than it would be with a chorus of thirty to fifty or more out there, clogging things up.

Camp had another ace up his sleeve for the rules committee. Some say that compared to this next ace Camp had up his sleeve, the reduction of four players per side was only cosmetic. For several years, Camp had been studying the possibilities of rugby, and his dissatisfaction had increased.

Camp was convinced that the rugby "scrum" gave neither side an orderly possession of the ball nor the right to put it in play and to execute the ensuing maneuver with much more than a helter-skelter tactic.

That sort of sloppiness was foreign to Camp's whole way of thinking. Walter Camp was not the only one to see the vast improvement which could be obtained by establishing a method of putting the ball in play without a disorganized "Scrum."

The idea put forth would be to give one side an undisturbed possession, thereby permitting a strategic and tactical preparation to advance the ball. It was a nice idea, but nobody knew how to actually do it. Walter Camp solved the problem as he was the one who figured out how to accomplish the goal.

## Scrimmage line & quarter back

Camp had already written the revolutionary change in the rules: "A scrimmage takes place when the holder of the ball puts it on the ground before him and puts it in play while on-side either by kicking the ball or by snapping it back with his foot. The man who first receives the ball from the snap-back shall be called the quarter-back and shall not rush forward with the ball under penalty of foul."

In one brilliant move, Walter Camp had created the notion of a "scrimmage" line and the "quarter-back." In this way, he created a means for one side to hold possession of the ball and a way to then put the ball in play. When this proposition was accepted unanimously, American football truly began. There were still more rules required to make the new unique game of American college football even better.

The quarterback in this context as games began to be played was often called the "blocking back" as their duties usually involved blocking after the initial handoff. The "fullback" was the furthest back behind the line of scrimmage. The "halfback" was halfway between the fullback and the line of scrimmage, and the "quarter-back" was halfway between the halfback and the line of scrimmage. Hence, he was called a "quarter-back" by Walter Camp.

Most of the major thinking about American football at the time was coming from Eastern Universities, especially the Ivy League. Meanwhile, the game of American college football was really taking

off in colleges across the United States. It still was not close to being perfect.

Like Walter Camp, Amos Alonzo Stagg contributed much to the development of the sport and to this day remains a football legend. He was another Yale who came to Yale in 1884 as a divinity student. This qualified him for a reduction in tuition from \$50.00 to \$39.80 per semester. Like Camp, Stagg was a natural athlete, whose skill on the baseball diamond was a major factor in his admission to Yale.

He joined the fledgling football team and after graduation in 1888 became football coach at Springfield College in Massachusetts. In 1892, the year Camp published his definitive book about American football rules for referees, Stagg became the athletic director and football coach at the University of Chicago. His teams are legendary.

He stayed there for the next 41 years. His age forced him to retire, but he was not done coaching or advising. In 1933 he became a coach at the College of the Pacific and left that post in 1947 at the age of 85. Stagg still was not finished. In that same year, he became an assistant coach at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania. Stagg did not choose final retirement until 1952 at the age of 90.

## **It was not rugby any longer.**

He lived lots longer than Walter Camp and in his long career, Coach Stagg helped codify the rules of football. He introduced several innovative plays such as the lateral pass and the man in motion. He was elected to the Football Hall of Fame as a player and a coach in its inaugural year.

It would take a couple of more Camp-rules to make it all work in harmony. In many ways, the new rules put the game being played in limbo. What game was it? It was not rugby anymore, but it wasn't quite what we know of as American football either. More adjustments needed to be made. Yet, the game was played every fall while the rules were being debated.

The idea of snapping the ball back with the foot proved to be both awkward and often erratic. At first, some centers created a notion called "inch-kicking." In this way, they got rid of the erratic bounces of a kicked ball and made it more certain with the handoff. They would nudge the ball a very short distance backward with their foot, then they would pick it up and hand it to the quarterback, who was waiting a few yards behind.

Sometimes a fluke gets adopted because it is better than the chosen method. For example, in 1889, Bert Hanson, the Yale center, bent over and bounced the ball back between his legs.

The following year, a rule change officially made snapping the ball using the hands between the legs legal. Several years later, Amos Alonzo Stagg at the University of Chicago invented the lift-up snap. We might call this a long snap as is used for punts today or it could be a shorter snap to the QB. The point is the ball could be "lifted" to make the snap.

Stagg's idea was that the center would pass the ball from the ground and between his legs to a standing quarterback. A similar set of changes were later adopted in Canadian football as part of what have been called *the Burnside rules*, a set of rules proposed by John Meldrum "Thrift" Burnside, the captain of the University of Toronto's football team.

The change from a "Scrum-scrummage" to a "scrimmage" made it easier for teams to decide what plays they would run before the snap. At first the captains of college teams were put in charge of play-calling, indicating with shouted codes which players would run with the ball and how the men on the line were supposed to block.

## Informal innovations were common

Yale later used visual signals, including adjustments of the captain's knit hat, to call plays. Centers could also signal plays based on the alignment of the ball before the snap. In 1888, however, Princeton University began to have its quarterback call plays using number signals. That system caught on, and quarterbacks began to act as directors and organizers of offensive play.

Early on, quarterbacks were used in a variety of formations. Harvard's team put seven men on the line of scrimmage, with three halfbacks who alternated at quarterback and a lone fullback.

Princeton put six men on the line and had one designated quarterback, while Yale used seven linemen, one quarterback and two halfbacks who lined up on either side of the fullback. This was the origin of the T-formation, an offensive set that remained in use for many decades afterward and gained popularity in professional football starting in the 1930s.

The T formation solved the question about how to disperse the eleven men on offense. As noted, Harvard came up with its formation and Princeton its own. Meanwhile, at Yale, Captain Camp came up with the definitive formation: seven on the line, the quarterback a few yards behind the center, the halfbacks further back and spread to either side, and the fullback set deep behind the quarterback. And so, now we know who created the famous T-formation.

## Naming the positions

The names of the eleven positions originated with the reduction of players from fifteen. The players at the extreme end of the line had been called "end men" all along, and this naturally evolved to "ends". The player at the middle of the line was called, with equal thought, the "center." The players on the center's left and right were at first cleverly known as the "next-to-centers", but because they guarded the center during the snap back they eventually became known as "guards".

While the rule makers were looking to make sense of the names, it was noted that the temporary name of the "next-to-ends" was misnamed as they made more tackles on defense than anyone else. And, so, they became known as "tackles."

Some think that the next rule step was predictable and necessary because the idea of no scrimmage was not completely a blessing by

itself. There was a time until this was straightened out but for a while it almost took the good out of football.

Walter Camp on paper had assumed that the ball would continue to change hands at a fairly rapid clip. He did not foresee teams delaying the game for their own reasons. His original notions were based on teams running a few downs and then punting. Up until then, they'd kicked whenever the scrum gave them a poor field position. The game strategy had to change now with the notion of the scrimmage.

Some wondered why the strategy of the game should change with a scrimmage? Princeton showed them exactly why. The Princeton Tigers were doing some of their own thinking and not relying solely on Walter Camp. Their thinking team, namely Edward S. Peace, John S. Harlan, and P.T. Bryan very quickly realized that the scrimmage opened up a realm of new possibilities for playing tactics.

For example, they figured out that if a team wanted to do so—it could sit on the ball until the cows came home and never once permit its opponent to have a chance to score. And, Princeton found several times when it wanted to do exactly that.

For example, when they got ahead in a game, they figured there would be no risk to merely mark time with the ball and never relinquish it. Thus, the opponent could not score as the opponent would not be able to gain access to the ball. If they played someone who they figured would beat them, they might not ever advance the ball to risk giving it up. To some if playing an advanced opponent, a tie was a great victory.

## **No game that day – new rule needed**

There was such a situation that came up in the Princeton-Yale game of 1881. Yale was undefeated and probably was the better team at the time. However, Princeton was also undefeated and wanted to stay undefeated.

And, so, the Tigers spent the first half fiddling around, gaining no yardage, but holding onto that football while Yale and the spectators who'd paid good money to watch the game got upset to the point of

anger. Think about both boxers in a boxing match choosing not to throw punches—ever—in any round. Would that be a draw?

Then, in the second half, when Yale under Captain Camp decided it was to their advantage to also not risk a miscue, there was no game that day. Yale chose to sit on the ball while Princeton got angry and the spectators considered attacking the teams in a form of jockicide. What had become known as the "block game" had quickly become the most unpopular football game ever held.

## When rugby became American college football

After the travesty of the Princeton – Yale game, all of those connected with football knew something drastic was necessary. Some called for junking the whole notion of the scrimmage-line idea and going quickly back to scrums and rugby.

Again, it was Walter Camp to the rescue with another new rule: "If on three consecutive fails [plays -- no fouls or penalties] and downs, a team shall not have advanced the ball five yards, nor lost ten, they must give up the ball to opponents at the spot of the fourth down." It was a great rule and all of a sudden, delays were no longer permitted.

This, in its original form, was known at the time as the famous "yards to go" rule. Naturally, with all the measuring that became necessary it was required to line the field off in five-yard segments. Rumor has it somebody with a good eye was heard remarking: "By gum! It looks just like a gridiron!" From the day that this rule was accepted -- October 12, 1882 -- we can say that the game became American football, and the slang for the field became the gridiron.

Scoring was still a little weird if you are looking back from modern days. For example, in the 1882 version, it took four touchdowns to top one goal kicked from the field (field goal) and two safeties equaled one touchdown. Confusing though that may sound, it worked right for fans and players and teams most of the time. But there were exceptions.

Let's look at the Harvard-Princeton game of 1882. Harvard scored a touchdown, missed the goal but later kicked a goal from the field.

Meanwhile, Princeton scored a touchdown and successfully negotiated the goal after the touchdown. The referee, who was in fact, a Yale man, awarded the win to Harvard. Princeton, claimed the rules did not justify that determination and they refused to accept the referee's verdict and they claimed a victory for years afterward.

## The new points scoring system

Walter Camp immediately went to work to solve this new *rules-dilemma*. In order to avoid such messes in the future, Camp came through with another ace. At the assemblage of October 17, 1883, he introduced the point system of scoring and it was quickly adopted. The original values were one point for a safety, two for a touchdown, four for a successful goal after a touchdown, and five for a goal from the field.

Though the idea was right on the money, the point values of the mix was wrong. Two months later, at another convocation, the values were changed: Touchdown = 4 points, Safety = 2 points, Goal following a touchdown = 2 points. The goal from the field (or, as we would say, a field goal) remained at five points.

These values proved to be much more workable and were retained until 1897. The only rule addition became an 1885 codicil, which awarded two points to the offended side in the event of intentional off-side and slugging the referee. Had Walter Camp turned his back on the game after 1883, his place as "Father of American Football" would have been secure. But, as a matter of fact, he remained American football's most respected authority and prime mover for over forty more years.

In his 1925 memorial to Walter Camp, Parke Davis rhapsodized and lamented at the same time:

It has been said that it is as glorious to have written a country's songs as to have fought a country's wars or to have formulated a country's laws. Walter Camp performed an equally large and useful public service by establishing the amateur sports of the country upon a sound and wholesome basis.



As the leader of Yale in the years when Yale was the leader of the colleges of the country Walter Camp stood forth so vividly and so correctly for the best in intercollegiate sport that he deeply impressed his ideals upon the outdoor games of the country. His standard, full high advanced, was ever the standard of honor, nobleness and manliness.

Several other important rule changes were made during the 1880s. Some have already been noted. In 1881, the size of the field was reduced from a monstrous 140 yards long by 70 yards wide to more playable 110 yards by 53 1/3 yards. Goal posts were specified as exceeding 20 feet. The length of a game had been set in 1887 at two halves of 45 minutes each with a fifteen-minute intermission.

Through the 1880's, various codicils allowed for ending the game because of darkness (1882), taking time out for all necessary delays (1883), limiting delays to no longer than five minutes (1885), and taking time out after scoring plays (1889).

After several interesting small changes concerning officials, including the dictum that the referee "shall be paid", the "crew" was settled at one referee and one umpire in 1887. In 1889, the officials were empowered to use whistles to indicate cessation of play and the referee was given a stopwatch. Things were shaping up to look like today.

The most important rule change of the latter 1880's seemed like a minor addition at the time. In 1888, at the urging of Camp, tackling below the waist was made legal. According to Parke Davis: "It apparently was only a slight change in the rule, but a slight change in the rule can make a profound alteration in the practice of play. Against the sure and deadly low tackle, the best backs no longer could gain consistently in an open field."

To meet this reinforcement of the defense, the offensive line of scrimmage was contracted until the players stood shoulder to shoulder .... The backs were drawn in and also stationed close to the line. Open field running disappeared and in its place, came heavy interference (aka blocking), line bucks and plunges, boxed on the tackle, flying wedges, turtle backs, mass play, momentum plays, flying interference, revolving wedges, tandems, guards back, tackle

tandems and the scores of other ingenious attacks which characterized football from 1888 to 1895."

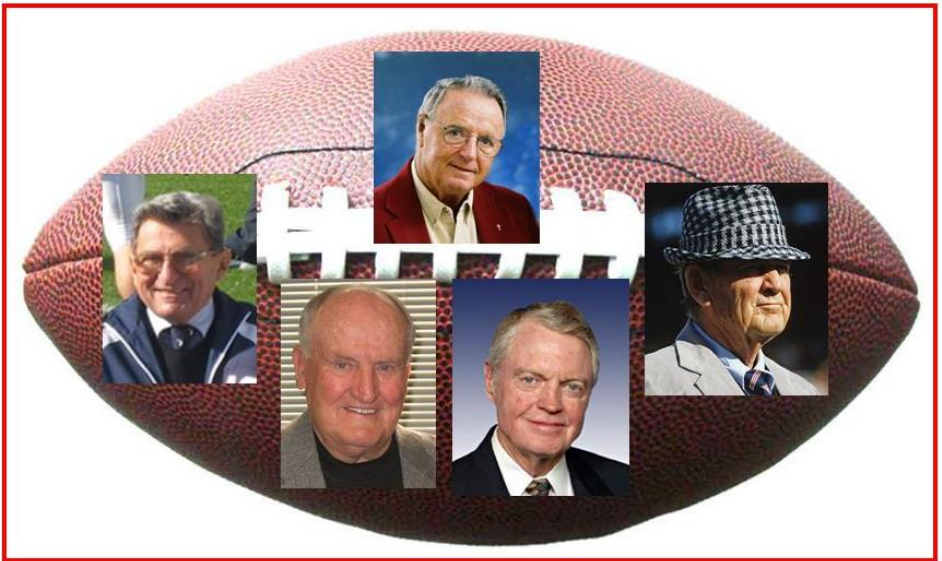
In effect, the legalization of the low tackle, along with the rule that linemen could not extend their arms, eliminated the last vestiges of rugby. The game that was played for the next several years would appeal to very few modern fans. It was grunt, groan, brute force, and a cloud of dust -- but it was definitely American.

The Americanization of football helped spread its popularity through the 1880s, as more and more schools gave it the old college try. By the 1890s, football fever was raising temperatures on nearly every campus in the nation. Outstanding players were receiving accolades, and by 1892, some were even receiving pay. Eventually that too would become illegal by ever-sharpened rules.

After leaving Yale in 1882, Camp was employed by the New Haven Clock Company, his family's business, until his death in 1925. Though he was no longer a player, he continued to be a fixture at annual rules meetings for most of his life. As time went by he began to personally select an annual All-American team every year from 1889 through 1924. Today, The Walter Camp Football Foundation continues to select All-American teams in his honor.

## Chapter 9 Innovations by Great Coaches of the Era

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in addition to tweaking by Walter Camp, gameplay developments by college coaches such as Eddie Cochems, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Parke H. Davis, Knute Rockne, John Heisman, and Glenn "Pop" Warner helped take advantage of the new rules especially the newly introduced forward pass.



The popularity of college football grew in the United States for the first half of the 20th century. Bowl games, a college football tradition, attracted a national audience for college teams. Boosted by fierce rivalries and colorful traditions, college football still holds widespread appeal in the United States.

### Eddie Cochems, an innovative coach

Edward Bulwer "Eddie" Cochems (February 4, 1877 – April 9, 1953) played American football for the University of Wisconsin from 1898 to 1901.



### <<< **Eddie Cochems**

He immediately became the head football coach at North Dakota State (1902–1903), later he coached at Clemson (1905), Saint Louis University (1906–1908), and Maine (1914).

During his three years at St. Louis, he was the first football coach in the country to build an offense around the forward pass. This had become a legal play in the 1906 college football season. Cochems used the forward pass for his 1906 team which compiled an undefeated 11–0 record, led

the nation in scoring, and outscored opponents by a combined score of 407 to 11. Eddie Cochems is considered by many to be the "father of the forward pass" in American football.

## **Amos Alonzo Stagg—Athlete, Coach & Innovator**

Amos Alonzo Stagg (August 16, 1862 – March 17, 1965) was a great American athlete and pioneering college coach in multiple sports, especially American football. Picture below:



He was the head football coach at the International Young Men's Christian Association Training School (now Springfield College) (1890–1891), the University of Chicago (1892–1932), and the College of the Pacific (1933–1946), compiling a career college football record of 314–199–35.

### <<< **Stagg in 1899**

His Chicago Maroons teams of 1905 and 1913 have been recognized as national champions. He was also the head basketball coach for one season at the University of Chicago (1920–1921), and the head baseball coach there for 19 seasons (1893–1905, 1907–1913). He was a great

athlete and a great teacher of athletes.

A few years after Walter Camp graduated from Yale, Stagg played football as an end at Yale University and he was selected to the first College Football All-America Team in 1889. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame as both a player and a coach in the charter class of 1951. He was the only individual honored in both roles until the 1990s.

Stagg loved tinkering with the rules and was influential in other sports besides football. He developed basketball as a five-player sport. This 5-man concept allowed his 10 (later 11) man football team the ability to compete with each other, and to stay in shape over the winter. Stagg was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame in its first group of inductees in 1959.

During his career, Stagg developed numerous basic tactics for the game (including the man in motion and the lateral pass), as well as some equipment innovations.

Stagg also forged a bond between sports and religious faith early on in his career that remained important to him for the rest of his life.

## Parke Davis, Athlete, Coach, Selector, Historian,



**<<<Parke Hill Davis**  
(July 16, 1871 – June 5, 1934)  
played American football player, coached at the college level, a rules writer, and served as a historian who retroactively would certify national championship teams in American college football from the 1869 through the 1932 seasons. He also named co-national champions at the conclusion of the 1933 season. Davis' selections are included in the NCAA's official football record books, as the only championship teams chosen on the basis of research.

Davis served on the Rules Committee from 1909 to 1915, playing a key role in shaping the evolution of the game. Among the innovations with which he is credited are the division of the game into quarters, numbering of players, abolition of inter-locked interference and the creation of end zones.

Davis was a friend and long-time admirer of Walter Camp, "Father of American Football." In a 1926 authorized biography of Camp, author Harford Powel, Jr. turned to Davis for historical perspective, including accounts of Camp's "heavy disappointments (which) should be mentioned, for fear it might be thought that Camp was one of those players who do not know the feeling of failure."

Davis reviewed the sport's first half-century in "Fifty Years of Intercollegiate Football," which appeared in the 1926 edition of Spalding's Official Football Guide. His description of football's earliest years paints an image of a sport very different from the game as it became known in the 20th century:

“The tactics of the times made the play essentially a kicking game. The backs kicked punts, drop kicks, and place kicks... Not only was the ball kicked as at present, but it was kicked, and cleverly kicked, while bouncing upon the ground.

The game was opened, as now, by a kick-off. The player of 1880 might, if he chose, drive the ball far down the field. “Or, technically kicking the ball by merely touching it with his toe, he might pick it up and run with it. Players when tackled invariably endeavored to pass the ball back to another member of their side for a further advance, a method of play so highly developed that it was not infrequent to see a ball passed as many as five times during a single play.”

In addition to his work on the Guide, Davis authored articles on football for the Encyclopedia Britannica and compiled a glossary of football terms.

## **Knute Rockne Great Player, Coach & Innovator**

The game of football can thank former Irish coach Knute Rockne for an awful lot, especially the perfecting of the passing game. Over one-hundred years ago, in the 1913 season, Rockne was the captain of the Fighting Irish and he also was the co-coach of the team led by Jesse Harper. For the game on November 1, 1913, with a total roster of 18 players, he and the others left South Bend via train and proceeded to take down an Army team by using the perfected forward pass as an offensive weapon, not just a last-ditch effort.



<<< **Rockne**--Undermanned and physically inferior, the passing game shocked Army. Rockne played end and along with quarterback Gus Dorais, he shocked the Cadets 35-13.

Rockne biographer Jim Lefebvre takes us back to the seminal moment in football, giving us this excerpt from his book *Coach For A Nation*.

Over the next few years, rules and strategies changed, and gradually more colleges played an “open game.” One element of change, the forward pass, was attempted by a handful of schools, most notably by Coach Eddie Cochems at St. Louis University in 1906. But passing, by rule, was a risky proposition, and seen more as a desperation move than a means of consistently advancing the football.

Until that November day on the Plain of West Point. Rockne and his pal, senior Notre Dame quarterback Charles “Gus” Dorais, operated as coaches on the field for Irish boss Jesse Harper. And when Dorais declared, “Let’s open it up,” his teammates were ready. The 5-foot-7, 150-pound Dorais began flinging a series of passes, increasingly longer, to receivers running defined pass routes. When he let loose a spiral that followed a long arc into the arms of a racing Rockne, who finished the 45-yard-play in the Army end zone, the crowd—yes, the crowd at West Point—roared.

“Everybody seemed astonished,” Rockne would later write. “There had been no hurdling, no tackling, no plunging, no crushing of fiber and sinew. Just a long-distance touchdown by rapid transit.”

Dorais and Rockne, who had practiced their pitch-and-catch routine on the Lake Erie beach while working at Cedar Point resort in Ohio that summer, led Notre Dame to a shocking 35-13 upset of the Army.



*Notre Dame, and college football, would never look back.*

The tradition of the Fighting Irish Football team at Notre Dame was built from moments like these. It was Rockne as a player first, then as a coach, who was one of the game's first stars and one of its pioneering innovators. He spread his system across the country and changed football forever.

His changes were hardly limited to X's and O's. As Lefebvre recounts, Rockne helped bring into play home-and-away colors for jerseys, numbers on uniforms, loud speakers in stadiums and game programs, a large factor in the game's spreading popularity after it was nearly shut down by the government for its danger.

## John Heisman, Great Player & Innovator



John William Heisman (October 23, 1869 – October 3, 1936) was an athlete as a player and coach of American football, basketball, and baseball. He was also a sportswriter and actor.

**<<< John Heisman** when at Georgia Tech

As American football was being formed, he first served as the head football coach at Oberlin College (1892, 1894), Buchtel College (now known as the University of Akron)

(1893–1894), Auburn University (1895–1899), Clemson University (1900–1903), Georgia Tech (1904–1919), the University of Pennsylvania (1920–1922), Washington & Jefferson College (1923), and Rice University (1924–1927). He compiled a career college

football record of 186–70–18. His 1917 Georgia Tech Golden Tornado were recognized as the national champions.

Heisman was the head basketball coach at Georgia Tech (1908–1909, 1912–1914), tallying a mark of 9–14, and the head baseball coach at Buchtel (1894), Clemson (1899–1904), and Georgia Tech (1904–1917), amassing a career college baseball record of 219–119–7. He served as the athletic director at Georgia Tech from 1904 to 1919 and at Rice from 1924 to 1927. While at Georgia Tech, he also was president of the Atlanta Crackers baseball team.

Fuzzy Woodruff nicknamed Heisman the "pioneer of Southern football". Heisman was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame as a coach in 1954. His entry there notes that Heisman "stands only behind Amos Alonzo Stagg, Pop Warner, and Walter Camp as a master innovator of the brand of football of his day". One writer says Heisman, Stagg, and Warner constitute the "Football Trinity". The Heisman Trophy, awarded annually to the season's most outstanding college football player, is named after him.

In his book, Principles of Football, John Heisman described his coaching strategy in these words: "The coach should be masterful and commanding, even dictatorial. He has no time to say 'please' or 'mister'. At times, he must be severe, arbitrary, and little short of a czar." Heisman always used a megaphone at practice.

Under John Heisman, the center began tossing the ball to the quarterback, rather than kicking it. This practice evolved into the snap that today begins every football play. Heisman also used the hidden and the hurry-up offense.

John Heisman was a great coach. His teams won 77% of their football games and put together 16 consecutive non-losing seasons, including three undefeated campaigns and a 32-game undefeated streak. Georgia Tech is where Heisman first utilized the idea of the jump shift.

It was Heisman who developed one of the first shifts in which he had both guards pull to lead an end run. In 1906 Heisman was on the rules committee that legalized the forward Heisman pushed for its adoption.

Other Heisman innovations included the "hike" or "hep" shouted by the quarterback to start each play. He led the effort to cut the game from halves to quarters, and he is credited with the idea of the scoreboard and of putting his quarterback at safety when playing on defense.

## Pop Warner, Athlete, Coach, Football Innovator

Glenn Scobey Warner (April 5, 1871 – September 7, 1954), was almost always referred to simply as Pop Warner. He as an athlete, a football player. And an American football coach at multiple institutions. Warner is responsible for several major of the modern game of American football.



Pop Warner Coaching the Carlisle Indians football team

Included in the list of his innovations are the single and double wing formations (precursors of the modern spread and shotgun formations, the three point stance and the body blocking technique.

Fellow pioneer coach Amos Alonzo Stagg thought well of Warner and called him "one of the excellent creators."

Warner was inducted as a coach into the College Football Hall of Fame as part of its inaugural class in 1951. He also contributed to a junior football program which became known as Pop Warner Little Scholars, a popular youth American-football organization.

In the early 1900s, Warner created a premier football program for the Carlisle Indian Industrial School—a federally-funded, off-reservation Indian boarding school.

He also coached other college teams to four national championships:

Pittsburgh in 1915, 1916, and 1918 and Stanford in 1926. In all, Warner was head coach at the University of Georgia (1895–1896), Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm (1895–1899), Cornell University (1897–1898 and 1904–1906), Carlisle (1899–1903 and 1907–1914), Pittsburgh (1915–1923), Stanford (1924–1932) and Temple University (1933–1938), compiling a career college football record of 319–106–32.

Predating coaching legends Bear Bryant, Bobby Bowden, and Joe Paterno, Pop Warner he once had the most wins of any coach in college-football history.

Pittsburgh remembers “Pop” as one of the best. Glenn Scobey “Pop” Warner coached at Pitt from 1915 to 1923. Under his command, the Panthers quickly burgeoned into a national power in college football.

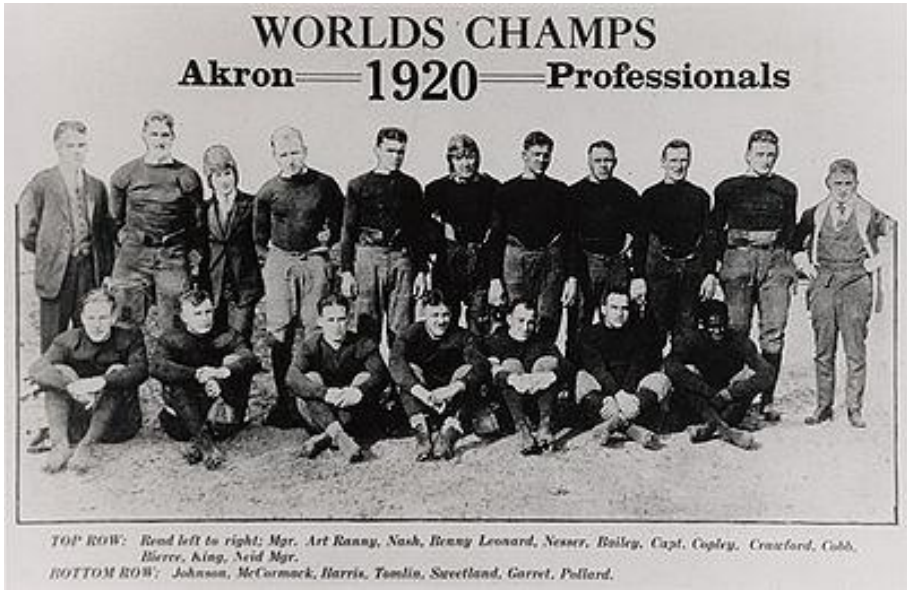
Few college coaches have influenced their players and peers as significantly as Warner. His Pitt teams were 60–12–4 and were recognized as national champions in 1915, 1916 (unanimously), and 1918 (unanimously). Warner won his first 30 games as Pitt’s head coach. His unbeaten 1916 squad was one of the greatest in college football history and became known as “the Greatest 11 in the World.”

Warner’s teams operated from both the single wing and the double wing, formations that sprang from his imagination. His other creations included the practice of numbering plays, teaching the spiral punt (Warner also was among the first to advocate the spiral pass), huddling before plays, and the use of an unbalanced line for more blocking strength.

A national network of football leagues for junior players was named for him. In 1997, the U.S. Postal Service issued a 32-cent Pop Warner stamp. He was well-loved and well respected. Everybody has heard of Pop Warner.



# Chapter 10 The Best Players in Early American Football



## The best of the best all-time greats

In this book, we are not looking for voting or pre-ordained feelings about fan favorites. Instead we are presenting the four greatest football players always mentioned in the same breath in any special order by the analysts and historians.

This book is about the beginning of football when it was much easier for brave, strong, courageous football players to assert themselves as strong and forceful without fear that somebody who did not ever play the game might declare them ruffians.

These men would not have cared. They were ruffians and they were proud of being men and proud if being tough men and great football players. .

Just remember, when the pundits and the greatest sports fans talk about the greatest players, Glenn Davis, Doc Blanchard, Jim Thorpe,

Red Grange, and Bronko Nagurski, they are all mentioned in the same sentence in no particular sequence.

Glenn Davis deserves the nod because he is in that sentence. Doc Blanchard was his partner in crime. No, neither of them played in the 1890's but nobody writes as much about anybody from the 1890's as they did about Glenn Davis, Doc Blanchard, Jim Thorpe, Red Grange and Bronko Nagurski.

It is just the way it is.

## **Glenn Davis-- Words cannot describe his abilities**

Glenn Davis and his teammate Doc Blanchard are the most modern of the four football actors who appear in almost everybody's best football sentence. He belongs there.

Glenn Davis is in this chapter because he is always mentioned in the one sentence answer to the question, "Who are the best football players of all time?" You bet he is there. So is Doc Blanchard, his buddy and teammate. I heard it myself.

## **Glenn Davis, one man in Army's best duo ever!**

The bulk of the facts in this section were put forth by Matt Schudel, a Washington Post Staff Writer on Friday, March 11, 2005; Page B06. It is a tribute to Glenn Davis on his death. Nobody could write about Glenn Davis however, without mentioning Doc Blanchard.

Davis was a Heisman Trophy-winning football star with Army in the 1940s. His exploits on the field helped buoy the spirits of Americans on the front lines and on the home front during World War II.

A halfback with the speed of an Olympic sprinter, Mr. Davis teamed with fullback Felix "Doc" Blanchard for three years to form what is widely regarded as the greatest backfield duo in college football history. The 210-pound Blanchard was called "Mr. Inside" for his punishing runs through the middle of opposing lines. Mr. Davis was



dubbed "Mr. Outside" for his end sweeps and his fleet open-field running.



In three seasons, together at the U.S. Military Academy, from 1944 to 1946, their Army teams, coached by Earl "Red" Blaik, were undefeated. The only blemish on their 27-0-1 record was a scoreless tie in 1946 with Notre Dame.

Blanchard won the Heisman Trophy, awarded to the top player in college football, in 1945. Mr. Davis won the Heisman in 1946 after finishing second the two previous years. Together, they hold the record for most touchdowns by a pair of college teammates in a career, with 97. Mr. Davis scored 59 of those touchdowns, a record that was not matched for 30 years.

"Anybody who ever saw Davis carry the football," Blaik once said, "must realize there could not have been a greater, more dangerous running back in the history of the game. He was emphatically the greatest halfback I ever knew."

A blond, blue-eyed Californian with movie-star looks, Mr. Davis was a true golden boy of the gridiron. He received 13 letters in four sports in high school in La Verne, Calif., and agreed to attend the Military Academy at West Point only if his twin brother, Ralph, was admitted as well.

In the academy's demanding physical fitness tests, the 5-foot-9, 170-pound Mr. Davis had the highest score ever recorded. He didn't do quite as well in the classroom, though. After leading the football squad to a record of 7-2-1 during his freshman season in 1943, he was dismissed for failing a math class. Reinstated after doing remedial work, Mr. Davis became, in his final three years at West Point, perhaps the best-known athlete in America.

He and Blanchard were on the covers of Time and Life magazines, and highlights of Army football games were shown on newsreels nationwide. In 1944, the team's games were broadcast on the radio to military units abroad and became symbolic of America's military might. When Army ended its perfect season with a 23-7 victory over Navy, Blaik received a telegram from the South Seas:

"The greatest of all Army teams.

"We have stopped the war to celebrate your magnificent success.

"MacArthur."

During that season, Mr. Davis scored 20 touchdowns -- a collegiate record at the time -- and gained an average of 11.5 yards every time he carried the ball. His career rushing average of 8.26 yards per carry is the NCAA record. He also was a talented passer and kick returner and played safety on defense. He still holds the Army record for career interceptions, with 14.

His teammate, Bill Yeoman, who later coached the University of Houston, once said, "There are words to describe how good an athlete Doc Blanchard was. But there aren't words to describe how good Davis was."

Mr. Davis was a three-time all-American in football and also starred in baseball and basketball. As a centerfielder on Army's baseball team, he batted .403 and stole 64 bases in 65 attempts. At an indoor track meet in 1947, he ran the 60-yard dash in 6.1 seconds, beating the man who would win the silver medal in the 100-meter dash the following year in the Olympics.

He and Blanchard were offered record-breaking contracts to play professional football with the San Francisco 49ers, but when Mr. Davis petitioned for an early release from his military commitment, his request was denied by the secretary of the Army. He served three years as an infantry officer.

In 1947, while making the movie "The Spirit of West Point," Mr. Davis tore ligaments in his knee and was never the same as an athlete. He finally played professionally with the Los Angeles Rams in 1950 and 1951 but could not equal the spectacular heroics of his West Point years.

A native of Claremont, Calif., Mr. Davis lived in Southern California for most of his life. In the late 1940s, he had a highly-publicized romance with Elizabeth Taylor and, from 1951 to 1953, was married to actress Terry Moore.

He spent most of his career as an executive in the promotion department of the Los Angeles Times before retiring in 1987. His teammate, Blanchard, became an Air Force officer and lives near San Antonio.

Mr. Davis's wife of 42 years, Harriet Slack Davis, died in 1995. His twin brother died in January.

Survivors include a son and stepson from the second marriage. In 1996, Mr. Davis married Yvonne Ameche, the widow of Alan Ameche, who won the 1954 Heisman Trophy at the University of

Wisconsin and later played for the Baltimore Colts. Mrs. Davis, who survives her husband, is the only woman to have married two winners of the Heisman.

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## Doc Blanchard, A phenomenon

Ed McKeever was the Notre Dame coach in 1944. When he first observed Doc Blanchard, he was in awe. "I've just seen Superman in the flesh. He wears number 35 and goes by the name of Blanchard." McKeever similarly extolled Glenn Davis. "He's better than Grange," said Steve Owen, coach of the NFL New York Giants during the Blanchard-Davis years. "He's faster and he cuts better."



Felix "Doc" Blanchard, Running as Usual

Bill Yeoman, the former University of Houston coach and a Blanchard-Davis teammate, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "There are words to describe how good an athlete Doc Blanchard was. But there aren't words to describe how good Glenn Davis was."

Blanchard and Davis were consensus All-Americans in 1944, '45 and '46, the only three-time All-America backfield teammates. They won the Heisman Trophy in successive years, Blanchard in '45, Davis in '46—again the only members of the same backfield to achieve that distinction.

In 1945 alone, they scored 37 touchdowns—19 by Blanchard, 18 by Davis—and since Army beat opponents by an average score that year of 45.8-5.1, they played barely half the time; Davis averaged only nine carries a game and Blanchard slightly more than 11.

Their skills were hardly defined by their appellations. Mr. Inside had the speed to run outside, and he frequently did. As many have observed, "Davis was so fast he made the rest of us look slow, so people forget how fast Doc was."

Blanchard ran 100 yards in under 10 seconds. He was also a superb pass receiver who, though Army seldom threw, caught seven touchdown passes (five from Davis) in his three-year career.

Blanchard also punted, kicked off and occasionally kicked extra points. On defense (Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside were two-way players), he was a punishing tackler as a linebacker.

Doc Blanchard still holds the Academy three-year record for yards returned on intercepted passes (189), and he ran back two interceptions for touchdowns.

Blanchard also returned two punts for touchdowns. The year he won his Heisman, he averaged 7.1 yards on a mere 101 carries. He also won the Maxwell Trophy, and he became the first football player to win the Sullivan Award as the nation's finest amateur athlete. Blanchard is the only man ever to win the Heisman and the Sullivan.

Blanchard was a consummate athlete. He dabbled in track and field his senior year and, with no previous experience in the event, was putting the shot close to 54 feet at a time when the world record was not yet 60 feet.

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## Jim Thorpe Great Olympian & Football Player

It has been said that describing Jim Thorpe as a great athlete would be doing him a severe injustice. A better description would be calling him the greatest athlete of the 20th Century. This label can surely be debated by many, but Thorpe's accomplishments speak louder than words. King Gustav V of Sweden told Thorpe: "Sir, you are the greatest athlete in the world."



James Francis Thorpe came from extremely modest means. He was born on May 28, 1887, when Walter Camp was a sophomore at Yale, in a one-room cabin near Prague, Oklahoma. There is much confusion on Thorpe's date of birth, this is the official date according to his estate.

James was born to Hiram Thorpe, a farmer, and Mary James, a Pottawatomie Indian and descendant of the last great Sauk and Fox chief Black Hawk. The chief was a noted warrior and athlete. Jim was born a twin, but his brother Charlie died at the age of nine. His Indian name, Wa-Tho-Huk, translates to "Bright Path", something that Thorpe definitely had ahead of him. His story is inspiring.

In 1904, Thorpe began to attend school at Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the school was to offer Native Americans the opportunity to gain practical training in over

20 trades. The school also arranged off-campus employment at local farms, homes, and industries.

Jim Thorpe began his athletic career at Carlisle, both playing football and running track. He was triumphantly selected as a third-team All-American in 1908, and in 1909 and 1910 he made the first team. Iconic football legend Glenn "Pop" Warner coached Jim Thorpe at Carlisle and was able to see the young phenomenon evolve in his pursuant excellence with athletics.

At the tender age of 24, Thorpe sailed with the American Olympic team to Stockholm, Sweden for the 1912 Olympic Games. Remarkably, he trained aboard the ship on the long journey across sea. Thorpe literally blew away the competition in both the pentathlon and the decathlon and he set records that would stand for decades.

King Gustav V looked upon Jim Thorpe's athletic accomplishments in awe and presented Thorpe with his gold medals for both accomplishments. Bob Berontas wrote the following in his book "Jim Thorpe, Sac and Fox Athlete":

"Before Thorpe could walk away, the king grabbed his hand and uttered the sentence that was to follow for the rest of his life. 'Sir,' he declared, 'you are the greatest athlete in the world,' Thorpe, never a man to stand on ceremony, answered simple and honestly, 'Thanks King.'"

Thorpe's glorious Olympic wins were jeopardized in 1913 when it came out that he played two semi-professional seasons of baseball. The Olympics Committee had strict rules about Olympians receiving monetary compensation for participating in professional athletics. Thorpe, who stated he played for the love of the game and not the money, was put under the microscope. Ultimately, it was decided that his baseball experience adversely affected his amateur status in the track and field events. His name was removed from the record books and his gold medals were taken away.

Thorpe moved on after the Olympic ordeal and signed to play baseball for the New York Giants. He played outfield with New York

for three seasons before relocating and playing with the Cincinnati Reds in 1917. He played 77 games with the Reds before finally returning to the Giants for an additional 26 games. In 1919 he played his final season in major league baseball, ending on the Boston Braves team.

During much of his baseball years, Thorpe was also immersed in professional football. He played for the Canton (Ohio) Bulldogs from 1915 until 1920 and the Cleveland Indians (Indians) in 1921. In the years following, he organized, coached and played with the Oorang Indians, a professional football team comprised completely of American Indians.

Additionally, he was instrumental in forming the American Professional Football Association, and eventually became the president of the group. Through the years, the association evolved into today's NFL. In all, Thorpe played with six different teams during his career in pro football, ending with a stint with the Chicago Cardinals in 1929.

Life after professional athletics was exciting for Thorpe. He worked as an extra in movies, served as superintendent of recreation in the Chicago Park System and was also quite vocal with matters of Indian affairs. He also had stints as a public speaker/lecturer and even led an all-Indian song and dance troupe entitled "The Jim Thorpe Show." The Merchant Marines even had the honor of Thorpe's presence, as he served with them beginning at age 58.

Two monumental honors were bestowed unto Thorpe in 1950 when he was named "the greatest American football player" and the "greatest overall male athlete" by the Associated Press.

Thorpe died on March 28, 1953 of a heart attack. The New York Times ran a front-page story, remembering the athlete, stating that Thorpe "was a magnificent performer. He had all the strength, speed and coordination of the finest players, plus an incredible stamina.

The tragedy of the loss of his Stockholm medals because of thoughtless and unimportant professionalism darkened much of his career and should have been rectified long ago. His memory should be kept for what it deserves--that of the greatest all-round athlete of



our time." Thorpe's medals were finally restored to him posthumously in 1982. In addition, and most importantly to his family, his name was put back into the record books.

Thorpe had married three times and was blessed with eight children. In 1913, he married Iva Miller. Their first son, James Jr., died at age three from an influenza epidemic during World War I but their three daughters, Gail, Charlotte, and Grace, lived into the 1990s. He married Freeda Kirkpatrick in 1926 and they had four sons, Carl Phillip (deceased), William, Richard, and John (Jack). Jack Thorpe, the youngest, became principal chief of the Sauk and Fox in the 1980s. At the time of his death, Thorpe had been married to Patricia Askew for almost eight years.

In 1950, the nation's press selected Jim Thorpe as the most outstanding athlete of the first half of the 20th Century and in 1996-2001, he was awarded ABC's Wide World of Sports Athlete of the Century. He was quite an athlete to say the least.

Every year for about the last twenty or more years, my siblings and I and are families make a trek from Northeastern PA to the Hometown Flea Market and then a trip to Jim Thorpe PA. Jim Thorpe is a marvelously quaint town that was the site for the filming of the movie *The Molly Maguire's* with Sean Connery and Richard Harris. We typically end our day in Jim Thorpe with a few Harp Lagers at the Molly Maguire's Pub along with a nice dinner. In the last several years as the family squabble over the Jim Thorpe monument was in full coverage, we would also visit Jim Thorpe himself and say a prayer at the monument.

When I was in first grade at St. Boniface School, the town of Mauch Chunk changed its name to Jim Thorpe (pop. 4,804) in 1954 at the request of the famous athlete's widow. Thorpe, who had a very large family died penniless in 1953 and his widow offered to bury his remains in any town that would memorialize him with a name change. About 50 miles down the road from my home town is Jim Thorpe, PA.

When Jim Thorpe was penniless, Mauch Chunk gave him and his family a great honor. Sometimes things change over time. In this

case, despite his family making overtures to move his remains back to his boyhood home, the remains of the athlete Jim Thorpe will remain in Jim Thorpe, Pa.

The United States Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal from the tribe and Thorpe's family asking to have his remains returned to his boyhood home in what is now Oklahoma.

Two very small Pennsylvania towns of Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk had agreed to build a monument for Thorpe and rename the merged borough in his honor. Since then there is a law from 1990 known as the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

In 2013, a United States District Court judge in Pennsylvania ruled that Jim Thorpe, Pa., essentially served as a museum and must return the remains if asked to do so by direct descendants.

A federal appeals court overturned the decision in 2014, which led Thorpe's tribe and family to appeal to the Supreme Court. The court did not elaborate on its decision Monday not to hear the case. Those who felt strongly enough to bring the suit feel aggrieved and those who may now sustain the status quo have received some relief.

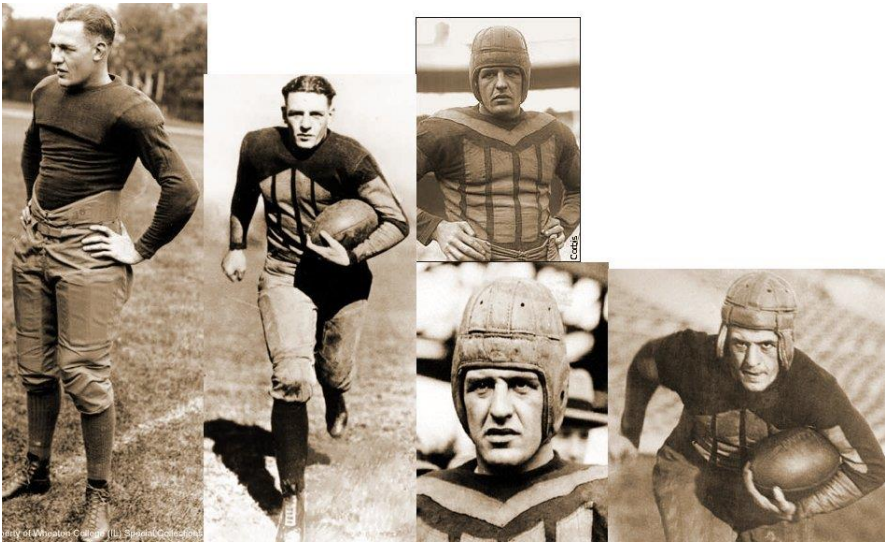
Kay Rhoads, principal chief of the Sac and Fox Nation in Oklahoma, said in a statement. "For now, it appears we will have to continue living with this memory, and without tools under the law to remedy this abuse of our human and religious rights."

God bless Jim Thorpe, one of America's finest athletes of all time. May God grant him eternal rest.

## **Red Grange Illinois Best; Great Football Player**

Harold Edward "Red" Grange was nicknamed "The Galloping Ghost." He lived from June 13, 1903 – January 28, 1991). He was born in Forksville, Pennsylvania. He and his dad moved to Wheaton Illinois after his mom died when he was five years old.

He was a college and professional American football halfback for the University of Illinois, the Chicago Bears, and for the short-lived New York Yankees.



His signing with the Chicago Bears helped legitimize the National Football League. He was a charter member of both the College and Pro Football Hall of Fame. In 1924, Grange received the honorable Chicago Tribune Silver Football Award denoting the Big Ten's MVP.

In 2008, he was named the best college football player of all time by ESPN, and in 2011, he was named the Greatest Big Ten Icon by the Big Ten Network.

Growing up in Wheaton, Grange received the nickname “Red” because of his flaming red hair. He loved playing sports with his friends, despite having a heart murmur. In Wheaton, there was no YMCA, so basketball was out as a choice in his early years. So, he played football in local vacant lots and when he could he played basketball in converted barn lofts.

The family had a rough time with money and his dad had to move from job to job to maintain the household. There was so little that the children also had to get jobs. Red delivered ice during the summer. It helped with the bills and also helped him build his muscles. He earned the nickname “The Wheaton Iceman.”

Red went to Wheaton High. at a time when his father became a local policeman and started to do reasonably well. Red continued to work as the ice man in the summer and during the school year he would attend class. He went to class, studied, and played sports. He did not date because of being low on money and not owning suitable clothing.

Grange was always an athlete. He proved his ability at Wheaton High by earning sixteen letters in four sports consisting of football, baseball, basketball, and track. He was a four-time sprint champion and scored 75 touchdowns during his four years playing high school football.

When he graduated in 1922, he enrolled at the University of Illinois. His intention was to play track and basketball. His fraternity brothers encouraged him to join the football team.

Not only did Grange make the team, but he was soon playing with the first string. In his first scrimmage as a varsity player, he scored two touchdowns, one of which was a punt-return. During his first game during his sophomore year, he wore the number 77 and scored three touchdowns against Nebraska. The rest of this year he scored 12 additional touchdowns and he led the unbeaten Illinois team to the national championship. He was leading scorer in the Western Conference (now the Big Ten) and was named an All-American halfback.

On October 18, 1924, Grange reached legendary status against the University of Michigan, which had not been beaten in 20 straight games. Within 12 minutes, he scored four touchdowns. Later in the game, he scored his fifth touchdown and threw a 23-yard touchdown pass. Illinois won this game 39-14. Even though Red ended his season injured, he was again selected as an All-American.

Senior year was Grange's best year, though he was still not fully recovered. The coach moved him to quarterback for the last few final games of the season. He was a phenomenon.

On October 5, 1925, he was honored by being on the cover of Time Magazine. Now, he was in the public eye. His best game was against

a tough University of Pennsylvania team in Philadelphia on a muddy field. He scored three touchdowns and gained 363 yards on 36 carries. Illinois won the game 24-2 and Grange was the featured player in a wonderful article by New York World.

Before his final game, there were lots of rumors that he would turn pro. He finished the year with a big win over Ohio State and again he was an All-American. His stats are amazing, having played in 20 games as a college football player, running 388 times for 2071 yards, catching 14 passes for 253 yards, completing 40 of 82 passes for 575 yards, and scoring 31 touchdowns. As we noted in the beginning of this writeup, during his college years, Grange earned the nicknames “the Galloping Ghost,” (coined by Warren Brown). He also had the moniker, “Illinois Flash.”

Illinois retired his # 77 number while Red Grange went off to play pro ball with the Chicago Bears. He was given a contract of \$100,000 by promoter Charles C. “Cash and Carry” Pyle, a Champion theater owner and promoter. He was the one who helped Red get the salary he earned. It is said that Red Grange brought respectability and popularity to the sport of professional football.

Red Grange got to play only one year with the Football Yankees due to a crippling knee injury. The trauma forced him to sit out the 1928 season.

From 1929 to 1934, Grange went back to the Chicago Bears and finished his career there. Though he lost some speed and cutting ability due to his injuries, he was still a good player and amazing defender. In the 1932 and 1933 seasons, Grange contributed to two Championship wins in the NFL. In 1932, he scored the only touchdown on a pass from Bronko Nagurski against the Portsmouth Spartans (now the Detroit Lions), and in 1933, he made a touchdown-saving tackle against the New York Giants. In 1934, Grange was injured for the championship game and had to sit out. The next post season he was knocked down by a hard hit and decided that it was his time to retire.

Grange played a role in a film called One Minute to Play, and he performed in a movie serial called The Galloping Ghost. He was very

successful post football. He even had products named after him such as teddy bears, candy bars, and even meatloaf. He always remembered who he was, and he stayed humble and kept on his path to achievements.

In 1941, he married his wife Margaret, whom he met on a plane while she was working as a flight attendant. They did not have any children.

During his life, he received many awards, starting off in college as a three-time All-American halfback. Then in 1931 and 1932 he was named to an official All-Pro team. In 1963, he was inducted into the professional football Hall of Fame.

He was also inducted into the College Hall of Fame. In 1969, college football's 100th anniversary, the Football Writers Association of American chose an all-time All-American team and Grange was the only choice that everyone agreed on. These awards and honors were all received before his death at the age of 87 from pneumonia on January 28, 1991, in Lake Wales, Florida.

In 1999, 65 years after his last game Grange was ranked number 80 on The Sporting News' list of the top 100 Greatest Football Players. No matter where they place him he is one of the football greats that are listed together in one sentence.

## **Bronko Nagurski--always among the greats**

Though Bronko Nagurski played a little bit later in the formative years of American football, in my research whenever a pundit was reaching back to name the notable great players in American football, Nagurski was one of three or four that were always listed. When I look for information about particular teams or coaches or players, it is easy to go to the Wikis and the sites of other information aggregators to find some words that are most often very accurate.



But, when I want a little more, such as a perspective of the overall impact of a player or coach upon an institution, I go to the college or university site and I look for student newspaper articles or biographies or special tributes that may have been given to their greats and greatest's.

I was heartened to find the piece that I am sharing with you all below about the Minnesota Gophers own Bronko Nagurski. Minnesota put together a wonderful tribute for Nagurski on October 27, 1977 and they included the article below in the game program. You can tell how proud the Gophers are of their Bronko. Here it is. It tells it all:

This feature story appeared in Minnesota's official game program on October 27, 1979. Bronko Nagurski's number was retired at halftime.

For the second time in the University of Minnesota's long and glorious intercollegiate football history, a jersey number will be retired ... a number never to be worn again by a Gopher gridder after this season.

On June 27, 1977, in a ceremony at Faribault, Minnesota, #54, the jersey worn by Minnesota's only Heisman Trophy winner, Bruce Smith (1939-40-41), was placed in permanent retirement. Today at halftime, appropriate ceremonies conducted by Paul Giel, director of men's intercollegiate athletics, will be held to retire a second jersey number.

The number? ... 72. Who wore #72? Perhaps the greatest individual athlete who ever donned the maroon and gold of Minnesota ... Bronislav "Bronko" Nagurski.

Unfortunately, due to illness, the Bronk cannot be with us this afternoon, so accepting on behalf of his father will be Bronko Nagurski, Jr.

Anyone who has ever shown the slightest interest in the great collegiate game can't help but have come across the name "Bronko". He is still the greatest living legend the game has ever known.

Evidence of this comes from volumes of copy written about his exploits. To this day, the International Falls, Minnesota resident is the only man to have been elected to two positions on the same All-America team.

In 1929, his senior year at Minnesota, the Bronk was voted to the first team at both tackle and fullback. In addition, he was named to some All-America teams as an end.

When it came time to name the all-time greatest football team ever at a special gathering in New York City on September 13, 1969, famed All-America fullback Ernie Nevers from Stanford possibly said it best:



"I haven't seen all of the college greats of the last 50 years, but I defy anyone to name a player who was a better all-around performer than Bronko Nagurski of Minnesota.

"Any time a man can play tackle, end and fullback and be as outstanding as Bronko was, I can't see for one second how anyone can vote for anyone else."

Maybe the man called the dean of all sportswriters of any age, Grantland Rice, had even a keener look at the power, might and skills of this legendary man from the north woods of Minnesota. In September of 1947, Rice wrote from the Polo Grounds in New York City:

"Several must be given serious consideration when you fell in rather moonstruck mood of picking the best all-time college football player. Who are the leaders belonging to the slim list that might be called 'challengers of the best?'

"In my book, there is only one when it comes to the best all-around player ... Bronko Nagurski of Minnesota (1927-28-29).

"First of all, Nagurski was a great tackle - one of the best ever. He was an all-America. Then the Bronk became a brilliant end. Also, all-America. Later he was one of the most devastating fullbacks the gridiron has ever seen.

"As Steve Owen of the New York Giants once said: 'Nagurski is the only football player that ever lived who ran his own interference. And don't forget the Bronk could pass, too.'

"In my opinion," Rice continued, "the final answer seems to lie in this question: Who would you pick to win a football game - eleven Jim Thorpe's - eleven Glen Daveses - eleven Ernie Nevers - eleven Red Granges - or eleven Bronko Nagurski's?

"I honestly don't think there would be any contest. The eleven Nagurski's would be a mop-up. It would be something close to murder and massacre. For the Bronk would start at any position on the field - with 228 pounds of authority to back him up."

Already a permanent resident of the College Football Hall of Fame, and several other national Hall of Fame institutions, the Bronk today resides outside International Falls on the shores of Rainy Lake near the mouth of the Rainy River which marks the Canadian-American border. Ontario, Canada, his birthplace, is visible across the lake.

Crippling arthritis forced him to sell his gasoline business several years ago, and, for the most part, keeps him confined. But his spirit and massive body, the same one that carried him to international athletic fame at both Minnesota and with the NFL Chicago Bears remains, is topped by the keen royal blue eyes that once peered out those Gopher and Bear football helmets.

Bronko is a content family man. When asked recently if he could pick one way to be remembered, the Bronk pondered a moment and then said: "As a good husband and a good father." He and his lovely wife, Eileen, have been married 43 years and reared six children. Add in nine grandchildren and you could have a football team. "No, most of them are girls," the Bronk roared.

Minnesota was blessed with three great years when Bronko was in the lineup. In 1927-28-29, the Gopher teams were 18-4-2. The four losses, two to Iowa (6-7, 7-9), one to Michigan (6-7) and one to Northwestern (9-10) came by the total of five points.

The final two games of the 1929 season tell the true story of what Bronko Nagurski was made of. In the Iowa game, Bronko suffered two broken vertebrae, but remained in the game, and then played the season final wearing a cumbersome back brace. Against Wisconsin, he carried the ball almost the length of the field on scoring drives and hit for both touchdowns as the Gophers edged Wisconsin 13-12.

Greatest is an often-used term in athletics. This time there is no mistake that it is the very best term possible to describe the exploits of a living legend. Indeed ... Bronko Nagurski ... a legend in his own time!

## Chapter 11 The Michigan Football Legacy



Michigan's First Football Team 1879

### University of Michigan Early Football

Even before Walter Camp had all the rules buttoned down, colleges across the country were playing what was known as an evolving game of American football.

In 1879 the Michigan Wolverines football team was formed, and it played its first intercollegiate football game on behalf of the University of Michigan. They played two games in this inaugural season, winning one and tying the other.

In its first intercollegiate football game, Michigan defeated a team from Racine College. Irving Kane Pond scored the first touchdown,

and team captain David DeTar scored the first point and the first field goal. In the second game of the season the Wolverines tied the University of Toronto.

The Michigan roster was pleased to have nine players from the state of Michigan (six from Ann Arbor) and one each from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota and Texas. The team photo shows 13 handsome gentlemen with team captain Dave N. DeTar standing in the back row with his mates. Like many teams in these early football days, the football team did not have a head coach when it played its first game. Michigan got its coach in 1891. Hand written notes on the back of the team picture read:

"All except Collins H. Johnson were in Chicago for the game with Racine College on May 30, 1879. Petit was substitute and did not get into the game. Touchdown by Pond. Field goal by DeTar."

## Touchdown by Pond

Pond referred to Irving Kane Pond, an Ann Arbor native and a halfback on the first-ever U-M football squad. Pond had the honor of scoring the first touchdown in Michigan football history, though he did not self-identify as much of a football player.

Pond recalled the milestone touchdown run in his autobiography, which involved running over bleachers and vaulting his tacklers like a superhero:

"I am not a modern footballist (sic) if indeed I were ever any kind of footballist. I played only for the fun of it! ... My touchdown was made towards the end of the first half and involved a long-distance run to where the ball must be grounded directly behind and between the goal posts ... To Avoid being tackled I was forced to mount the bleachers and run eastward along them until I was opposite the goal when I stopped suddenly and -- fearing that a touchdown in the bleachers would not count-- jumped over the heads of my pursuers to the ground."

## The Pond & Pond Legacy

The Pond legacy stretches far outside the boundaries of the gridiron. He graduated with a degree in civil engineering and formed his own architectural firm in Chicago, Pond and Pond, in partnership with his brother Allen Bartlett Pond (also a U-M graduate).

The brothers collaborated for more than 40 years, championing the Arts and Craft style of architecture, which advocated simple forms and medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. The Michigan Union was actually constructed on the site of the brothers' boyhood home and the Pond brothers also designed the Michigan League, the Student Publications Building on Maynard and the old YMCA Building on Fourth Street.

The 1880 Michigan Wolverines football team played one less game than in 1879. They played just one game, defeating the team from the Toronto Lacrosse Club. Michigan scored one goal; Toronto scored three safety touchdowns. John Chase was the captain. Although the 1880 season featured only one inter-collegiate game, that game was preceded by a series of inter-class football games.

The inter-class game was a multi-day game between the freshman and the sophomores that stretched across three Saturdays. The game began with John "Tubby" Chase serving as the referee.

The game was resumed two weeks later, on October 9. The game was completed on October 23. Having won "innings" played, the freshman team was declared the winner. It would have been more to the point if the freshmen had displayed their muscle in the ring."

A game was also played every Saturday morning in which those more proficient in the game were invited to participate. The Chronicle also reported that rugby had not yet been introduced there and we know that American football was still rules challenged at the time.

## Before the first Game

The following information is from the U-M Web site, <http://bentley.umich.edu/>

Irving Pond's first touchdown was not the first touchdown scored on the Michigan Campus, but it was Michigan's first intercollegiate touchdown. Racine played the game at White Stockings Park in Chicago in May 1879, but U-M students had already been playing "football" for at least 15 years at the intramural level.

During U-M's formative years, football was a mob game with as many as 80 players on a side. We have been through this discussion about early football in this book. In Michigan's Oct. 7, 1876 issue of its the student newspaper, *The Chronicle* wrote that 42 freshmen had defeated 82 sophomores by a score of 5-0. The mob football game was also a kicking game, that was closer in flavor to "association football" (soccer) than it was to rugby football or to American football.

The two sides squared off on an open field and the objective of the game was to kick a ball over a goal line. The reporters noted that the ball was not the only thing kicked around the field. Players had bruised shins, bloody noses caused by major collisions with opponent's feet. Their games were contests between classes in which just about everybody could and would play.

The 1874 issue of the U-M yearbook known as *Palladium*, depicts the clash in a cartoon showing inept freshman competing against skilled sophomores.

After a student displaying some pages of *The Chronicle* in 1871 to complain that the notion of "rushing" was "unbecoming a gentleman" and a stain on the University, a defender replied:

"A rush is the incarnation of energy in its most playful mood. The spectator must profoundly respect the supreme good-nature and hearty enjoyment in both giving and receiving the severest bruises."

The first football game had already taken place in 1869 and Michigan students were well aware that new versions of football were

becoming popular in the East. The new game was partly to stop the “rush” type mob games on campuses across the East. Shortly after Princeton v Rutgers there was Harvard v McGill University in 1874 under the Canadian school’s version of rugby rules. Variations of the rugby rules were sweeping the East.

Charles Mills Gayley, was U-M student who had learned the English version of rugby football in London and Belfast, worked to introduce the game to classmates before he graduated in 1878. In the early spring of 1877, *The Chronicle* delivered a three-part series showing the 59 essential rules of rugby, contrasting it with what they saw as the “chaotic traditions such as the beloved rush.

The *Chronicle* concluded that “even the dullest aspirant to football honors” could master the 59 rules.” Football Associations were formed, and captains named each year from 1873 to 1878. They called them “University elevens,” because they had adopted the Walter Camp style of 11 on a team.

Nonetheless outside games were almost impossible to arrange. U-M played a campus match under the rugby rules on May 17, 1877, and it was quickly observed that the boys were catching on to the new game, but even then, he preferred “the old rushing, shin-kicking rabble.”

When the October 1878 a challenge came in from Racine College, it was to be played under the rugby rules from Chicago, and so they got White Stocking Park to be the site and Michigan got two-thirds of the advertising and gate proceeds. The school also provided a copy of the new and modified rugby rules that were looking more like American football.

Michigan was unprepared as it had not yet organized a team that fully understood the rugby rules. So, they put off their match until spring. When the U-M Football Association was reorganized in mid-November as a more inclusive Student Athletic Association, *The Chronicle* urged the new group to form a “football eleven” while the weather was still good enough to allow it. This would permit U-M “to become familiar at least with the new rules.”



Oh, see the big ball --- A game of pushball on U-M's campus circa 1918.

The student newspaper editors were pushing the game. But, they warned “that a defeat at the hands of Racine would be a pretty hard ‘grind’” but they thought such a loss was “by no means an impossibility.”

It was late April before the Athletic Association finally got a team together and moved the goal posts to a new practice field. A committee of three was picked to select the team. The team would then choose its own captain. Final arrangements for the Racine game were not settled until May 17.

The opposition players, meanwhile, had been practicing in their gymnasium for months and even had put together a team song to cheer them on. The chorus of their song goes like this:

“The foot-ball now goes round/  
The sides begin to kick/  
Ann Arbor’s team will surely see/  
Our men are awful quick.” And there you have it!

Finally, the day of the long-awaited game arrived. It was May 30, 1879. The two teams had been preparing for the very first intercollegiate football game west of the Allegheny Mountains. We have discussed some of the play action, but it would be fun to go over it again.



Irving Pond claimed the first touchdown on a long run, and Michigan's fans bellowed out an impromptu chant: "Pond forever." Next it was captain David DeTar's precise "kick for goal," that ultimately gave the Wolverines a 1-0 victory. You may remember from our rugby lessons that (no points were awarded for touchdowns, only kicked goals. Captain DeTar led a triumphant return to Ann Arbor, and a team photo was taken at the Revenaugh Studio. It is shown below



The notion of the rush from mob football was gradually suppressed at least in its more violent forms and replaced by milder forms of hazing. The idea called "Over the Fence" disappeared along with the old campus picket fence in 1890, the old-style football morphed into a new game called "pushball" while American football was evolving.

With "pushball, as many as 100 men would gather on a side and they would try to push a huge inflated ball over the opposing class's goal.

Pushball hung around for a while into the 1920's as it was a nice intramural way of having non-varsity athletes getting exercise and fun.

The U-M students also engaged in tug-of-war, wrestling, obstacle courses, and other contests. Meanwhile, rugby football evolved into football and it would continue to be enhanced.

From the beginning, various regions and schools would adopt their own versions of rugby as the masters were making major attempts at standardization of the rules. We know of the series of innovations and rule reforms led by Walter Camp of Yale included the notion of a line of scrimmage, three downs to make five yards, and more.

Each time there was a change, the game diverged from its rugby football roots and became more American and was called simply football—an American college game.

Michigan got very good at this new football game. It scored wins over Toronto in the fall of 1879 and again in 1880. In 1881, a long-cherished student dream came to pass. Michigan traveled east to play against the big three: Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The Wolverines had just 14 players and they engaged in three games in their five days east. They lost all three games, but they played well enough to show that western football—and Michigan football—was on the rise and ready to play with the big boys from the East.

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## Chapter 12 The Rock and Early Notre Dame Football

### Notre Dame gets help from Michigan

Michigan had been out there for almost ten years during the formation of American football. Notre Dame in those ten years, was a non-participant. Students from both universities wanted ND to play Michigan in an American football game even though ND had not yet learned the art.

Michigan got stronger and stronger as an American football team. On November 23, 1887, the Wolverines were at peak. They were in their eighth year of playing real American college football and Notre Dame was about to engage in its first encounter. Michigan was doing very well and exhibited a championship caliber team. In an act of pure kindness, they agreed to teach the new football lads from Notre Dame some American football. Notre Dame was most appreciative.



First Notre Dame Football Team – Ready for Michigan

When I was writing another book in which this game is featured, I found an article in the Notre Dame student newspaper (Scholastic) discussing the first get-together of the two “to-be” great football teams—Michigan and Notre Dame.

Without helmets, it actually mattered that the players on game day combed their hair.

On Nov. 23, 1887, nearly 45 years to the day after Rev. Edward Sorin, C.S.C., arrived in Northern Indiana to found the school, the University of Notre Dame fielded its first collegiate football team.

Originally published in Scholastic, the University’s student magazine, the following article describes the scene of the inaugural contest. The photos are among the earliest athletics images of football in the Notre Dame Archives.

For some days, previous to Wednesday, great interest had been manifested by our students in the football game which had been arranged between the teams of the Universities of Michigan and Notre Dame. It was not considered a match contest, as the home team had been organized only a few weeks, and the Michigan boys, the champions of the West, came more to instruct them in the points of the rugby game than to win fresh laurels.

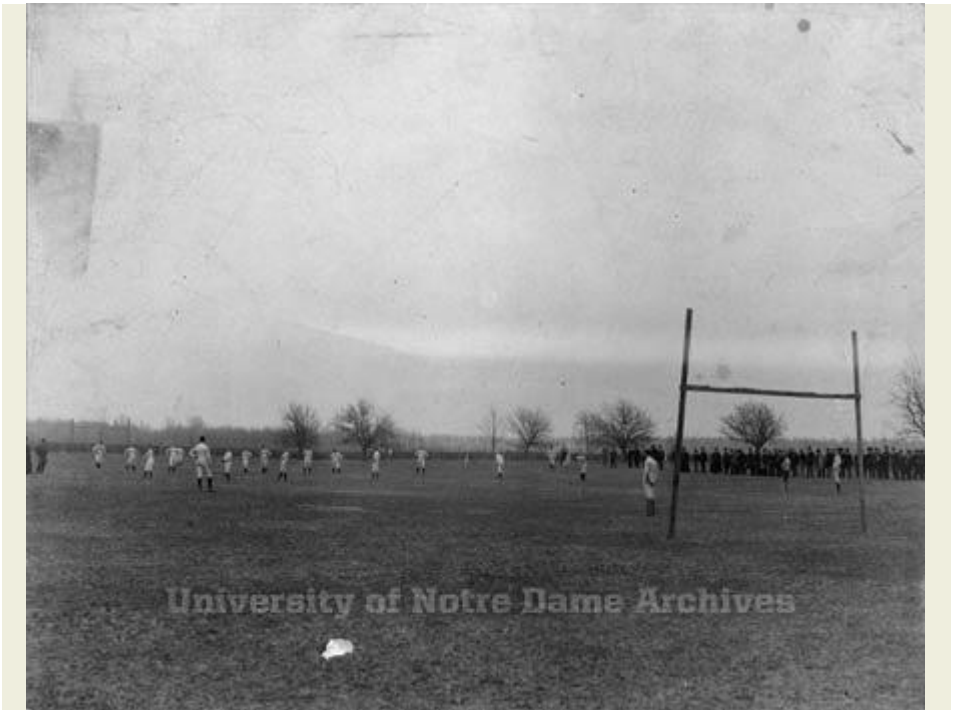
The visitors arrived over the Michigan Central RR., Wednesday morning, and were at once taken in charge by a committee of students. After spending a few hours in “taking in” the surroundings, they donned their uniforms of spotless white and appeared upon the Seniors’ campus. Owing to the recent thaw, the field was damp and muddy; but nothing daunted, the boys “went in,” and soon Harless’ new suit appeared as though it had imbibed some of its wearer’s affinity for the soil of Notre Dame.

At first, to render our players more familiar with the game, the teams were chosen irrespective of college. After some minutes’ play, the game was called, and each took his position as follows:

Univ. of M. – Full Back: J.L. Duffy; Half Backs: J.E. Duffy, E. McPheran; Quarter Back: R.T. Farrand; Centre Rush: W.W.

Harless; Rush Line: F. Townsend, E.M. Sprague, F.H. Knapp, W. Fowler, G.W. De Haven, M. Wade.

Univ. of N.D. – Full Back: H. Jewett; Half Backs: J. Cusack, H. Luhn; Quarter Back: G. Cartier; Centre Rush: G.A. Houck; Rush Line: F. Fehr, P. Nelson, B. Sawkins, W. Springer, T. O'Regan, P.P. Maloney.



On account of time, only a part of one inning was played, and resulted in a score of 8 to 0 in favor of the visitors. The game was interesting, and, notwithstanding the slippery condition of the ground, the Ann Arbor boys gave a fine exhibition of skillful [sic] playing. This occasion has started an enthusiastic football boom, and it is hoped that coming years will witness a series of these contests.

After a hearty dinner, Rev. President Walsh thanked the Ann Arbor team for their visit, and assured them of the cordial reception that would always await them at Notre Dame. At 1 o'clock carriages were taken for Niles, and amidst rousing cheers

the University of Michigan football team departed, leaving behind them a most favorable impression.

Amidst melting snow and muddy conditions, the entire Notre Dame student body showed up for the game that was played on "senior campus field."

The first Notre Dame program featured team rosters and a rules explanation of the "American college game of football."



I then went to the Michigan web site and found an article written in 2013 that tells how this first match between ND and Michigan came about.

The Wolverines sure love the fact that they taught Notre Dame how to play football.

## Teaching Notre Dame Modern Football (1887)

Originally posted Sep 4, 2013.

<http://mvictors.com/teaching-them-modern-football-1887/>

Thank you to the Michigan Athletic Association for making this piece, shown in its entirety below, publicly available:

"With all the talk on the historical significance of the Michigan-Notre Dame rivalry, I'd thought I'd share a little bit on the original meeting in 1887. Women, prepare to swoon.

### DeHaven and Harless

So, you've heard that Michigan taught Notre Dame how to play this game. This is true of course, and the details of that meeting are chronicled up front in John Kryk outstanding book *Natural Enemies*.

Kryk explains that the origins of the fateful meeting in South Bend over 125 years ago, can be attributed to three men: students George DeHaven, Billy Harless and Notre Dame's prefect Patrick 'Brother Paul' Connors.



**DeHaven and Harless (via the U-M Bentley Library)**

In a nutshell, DeHaven and Harless were former Notre Dame students in the mid-1880s who, in 1886, enrolled at Michigan. Both were exceptional athletes and suited up for the U-M 1887 varsity football squad...aka Team 8. While at ND DeHaven had become friendly with Brother Paul, who was a popular administrator on campus and helped run the intramural athletics program.

In South Bend they did have an IM sport which was something like football...but not really. Kryk described it this way: “A hundred boys to a side, all scrambling to get a round ball over the opponent’s fence by any means. Kick it, toss it; slap it – whatever. If you want to get technical it was part soccer and part rugby, but mostly it was pure pandemonium.”

Michigan didn’t play many actual games against opponents back in those days, but they had an appointment for a Thanksgiving Day trip to Chicago to face against Northwestern (FWIW before the game NW would cancel; U-M ended up playing a Chicago-area prep school). In mid-October DeHaven wrote to Connors, shared a few details about this awesome new game and let him know they’d be heading his direction in late November. The



missive caught the attention of the sports-loving Brother Paul. Kryk explains what happened next:

Brother Paul wrote back to his friend at Michigan and asked if DeHaven and Harless could convince the Wolverines to make a stop at Notre Dame, on their way to Chicago, and teach some seniors this rugby brand of football. DeHaven said he'd try, and this morsel of hope thrilled the Notre Dame campus.

"If matters can be properly adjusted," the student newspaper, *The Scholastic*, announced on Oct. 29, "a match game of football will take place on the senior campus about the 27th of next month... The Ann Arbor boys hold the championship of the West, and are such fine players that they will probably contend with the leading Eastern teams next spring for the college championship of the United States. However, there is good material here for a fine team, and the boys will undoubtedly give the Michigan players a hard 'tussle.'"

Eventually a date was set for a meeting and a game. Brother Paul snagged a copy of a football rule book and shared it with a group of seniors who tried, for the most part unsuccessfully, to get a handle on the new sport. Making a stop on their way to Chicago, Michigan arrived at Notre Dame on Wednesday November 23rd at around 9am. After a 2-hour campus tour the Michigan men tossed on their lily-white uniforms and readied for battle. Here's what happened next, as described in *Natural Enemies*:

At about 11 o'clock the elevens trotted onto the slop, which we can only assume was somehow marked to proper proportions. Before the players were set to have at it, Brother Paul informed DeHaven that the Notre Dame boys – several of them former classmates of De Haven's and Harless's – had had trouble playing by the book. Brother Paul then suggested the teams at first be mixed for a brief period of hands-on instruction. The Wolverines agreed.

"So, we played gently with them that day," DeHaven recalled, "...and carefully taught Notre Dame how to play modern football."

When the Notre Dame players learned just how physical this brand was, they took to it with reckless abandon. Too reckless, actually. One student in attendance recalled DeHaven and company having to caution their eager pupils against playing too violently.

After this brief tutorial, the players segregated into their proper squads and played a 30-minute game. When both sides finished slipping, rolling, and tumbling in the mud, Michigan tallied two touchdowns (worth four points each) to win 8-0. It was said the Notre Dame players, as well as the students in attendance, appreciated the fact the Wolverines did not try to run it up on their disadvantaged hosts.

So, there you have it. Want this and more? Put Natural Enemies on your shelf.

Now, go impress your friends at your respective tailgates / viewing parties on Saturday night.

And that is it for Michigan and Notre Dame

## Notre Dame's First few Seasons

After its football startup, for five years, Notre Dame had no coach. In 1890, and 1891, there were not enough Notre Dame resources to field a team. Notre Dame had to make up its mind if it would proceed with football as a college sport.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Record</u>
1887	No coach	0-1
1888	No coach	1-2
1889	No coach	1-0
1890	No team	
1891	No team	
1892	No coach	1-0-1
1893	No coach	4-1
1894	J.L. Morison	3-1-1
1913	Jesse Harper	7-0-0



Circa 1890 Notre Dame Football Team

**1887:** As we have discussed, Notre Dame's football program began in 1887 with an unofficial match against Michigan, a reasonably close team by geography. Michigan is credited with coming to Notre Dame for the purpose of teaching Notre Dame how to play football. It was a most gracious act; most appreciated by Notre Dame, and highly enjoyed by Michigan.

Using mostly rugby with some Walter Camp slants, not unexpectedly Michigan prevailed in the 30-minute contest L (0-8). From the moment that Michigan appeared on the field with their spanking new white, almost glistening uniforms, they looked every part the champs that they were that year.

In 1887, football as we know it was not completely defined. Association football, rugby, and even soccer, were having a major influence at the time on the college football rules and game play. For its first seven years, the "fighting Irish" football team had no coach. In fact, the whole idea of Notre Dame Football was so tentative that there were two years, 1890, and 1891, which should have been Notre Dame's fourth and fifth seasons, but they did not even field a team.

**1888:** Record 1-2; without a coach, Notre Dame sported its own brand-new uniforms of brown and black. In muddy terrain, it was hard to tell the players from the ground. That season, the ND team of young men cheered: "Rah, Rah, Rah, Nostra Domina!" They

finished the season with two more losses to Michigan L (6-26); L (4-10). The Michigan weekend was special. Michigan looked forward to coming to Notre Dame from how well they had been treated the year before. Notre Dame was a tough team and had just one year of football in them when Michigan came back.

Michigan had kept all of its opponents scoreless until ND scored a total of ten points in two days. Though Michigan won both games handily, the reports of the day say that it was a badly battered team that landed in the crowded Ann Arbor, Michigan train depot coming back from its weekend with Notre Dame. The team "received a proper razzing for breaking a four-year record" No Michigan football team returned again to play at Notre Dame until 1942.

### **First Football Victory Ever for ND**

Notre Dame managed to win its first game ever against a Harvard derivative school located in Chicago. The Harvard line was no match for Notre Dame's players, who outweighed their opponent by an average of 23 pounds. Halfback Harry Jewett and captain fullback E.C. Prudhomme helped Notre Dame to a win W (20-0). It was the first football victory in school history. Little did anyone know at the time, that this was the beginning of a storied football program with many victories to come.

### **The Birth of the Rock**

Irishlegends.com says that something else of major proportion was going on far from the football field. In Voss, Norway, Mr. and Mrs. Lars K. Rockne had a new baby named Knute. Notre Dame fans well know that Notre Dame Stadium of today is the "House that Rockne Built." Well, the house building actually began in Norway.

# Chapter 13 Great Football at the University of Pennsylvania

## University of Pennsylvania Football Program

Having written nine sports-books prior to this, I have always been impressed when one of the football teams I would be featuring played against the University of Pennsylvania or as we call it, Penn. Though Penn lost its dominance in the sport of football years ago, its record is still very impressive. I suspect that a push towards the academic side with reduced scholarships as many other universities suffered through over the years, ultimately pushed Penn into a lesser brand / level on football.

By playing in the Ivy League Division I, Penn does not offer athletic scholarships today as all other 1A teams do and so the school and in fact the league does not get the best players to matriculate. Additionally, Penn's academic standards, and the rest of the Ivy League, are so high that it would be tough for average athletes to pass the acceptance criteria.

In their day, during the formative years of football, the Penn Quakers were not a team which any other team could take lightly. Nobody tells the Penn football story from its roots better than Penn.

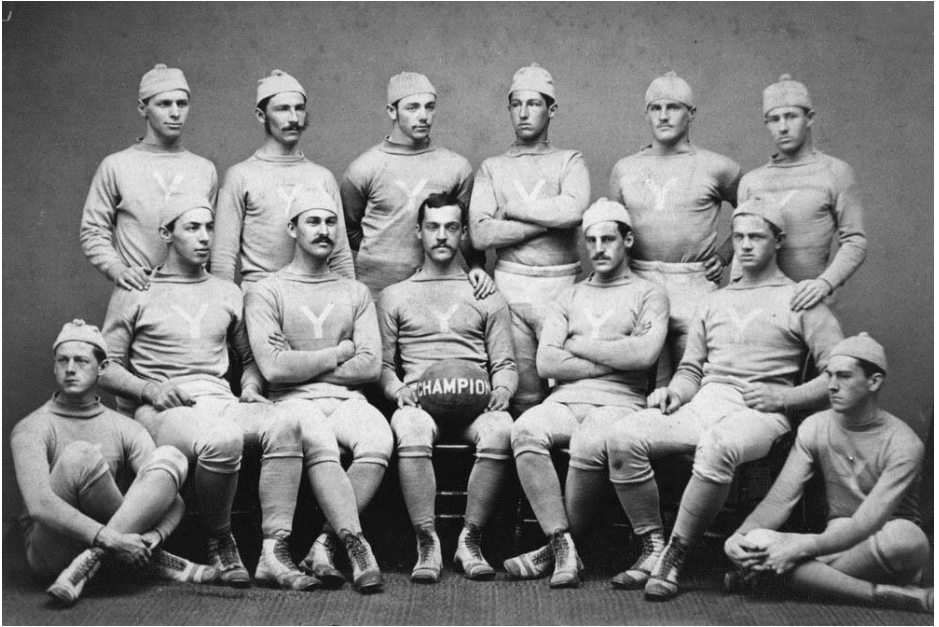
They have a five-piece web exhibit, which was written by Nicholas Gutowski, from the Penn Class of 2009. It is very well done as it stands. I would recommend that all Penn football lovers take a run out to their web site to enjoy this great piece of history. Enjoy

<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/sports/football/1800s/sources.html>

The Penn Quakers football team is the college football team at the University of Pennsylvania, located in the City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Penn Quakers have competed in the Ivy League since its inaugural season of 1956. In 2015, the University of Pennsylvania defeated Cornell, 34-21 to claim its 17th Ivy title, first since 2012 and fourth in seven years. Penn is a Division I Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Here is a picture of the team followed by an early championship team:





Penn has a long and storied record having played in 1,364 football games, the most of any school in any college football division. Penn plays its home games at historic Franklin Field, the oldest stadium in football. All Penn games are broadcast on WNTP or WFIL radio.

Penn bills itself as "college football's most historic program". The Quakers have had 63 First Team All-Americans, and the college is the alma mater of John Heisman (the namesake of college football's most famous trophy). The team has won a share of 7 national championships (7th all-time) and competed in the "granddaddy of them all" (The Rose Bowl) in 1917.

Penn's total of 837 wins puts them 11th all-time in college football (3rd in the FCS) and their winning percentage of 62.9% is 21st in college football (7th in the FCS). 18 members of the College Football Hall of Fame played at Penn (tied with Alabama for 14th) and 5 members of the College Football Hall of Fame coached at Penn.

Penn has had 11 unbeaten seasons. The team plays at the oldest stadium in college football, Franklin Field, at which they once had a 35-game home winning streak (1896–1899). This is the 15th best in

the country from a collection of almost 800 college football teams. Penn has 23 unbeaten home seasons.

Penn is one of the few college football teams to have had an exclusive contract with a network for broadcasting all their home games. For the 1950 season, ABC Sports broadcast all of Penn's home games. The only other teams to have exclusive contracts are Miami and Notre Dame. The Quakers competed as a major independent until 1956, when they accepted the invitation to join the Ivy League.

In my first sports book about Notre Dame, and in subsequent books about the programs at other colleges and universities, I can recall that few teams, even great long-time programs, won many games when they Penn showed up on their schedules. I love old football team pictures and here is one of Penn's first football team. I want that hat.



Penn's first Football Team

Penn, of Pennsylvania is the premiere football team in the nation with a history to prove it. The university began playing intercollegiate football in 1876. Before this Penn students, like the many students enthralled with the changing of rugby rules to become something more American than English, had played football amongst themselves.



But, as the Penn experts suggest, since the sport developed later than cricket, baseball and rowing, it did not have as consistent a campus presence as these other sports in its formative years.

The first football teams on campus were class teams, but these teams developed later than did the teams in cricket, baseball and rowing. The first student publication to mention football at Penn was the 1872 yearbook. The brief description of football contests between Penn classes in the fall of 1871 includes the comment that football had existed at the College before then, but not for a while. Recognizing the first football game in the nation has its date cast in concrete as 1869, Penn was as early as most large colleges to engage in this new American-only sport.

As a Pennsylvanian but 100 miles north of Philadelphia, I am proud of the University of Pennsylvania's reputation in medicine and its great history in football when it once kicked butt against the finest schools in America.



# Chapter 14 One Hundred Thirty-One Years of Penn State Football

## Penn State University's Football Program

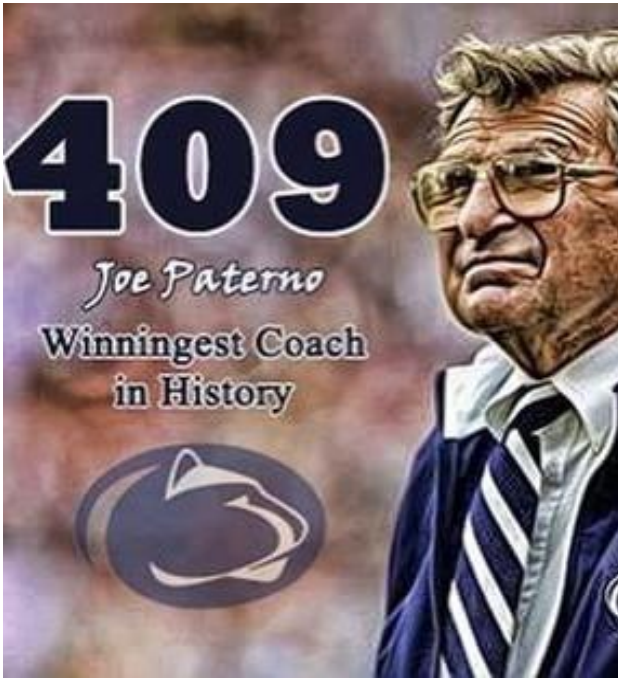
Penn State has a great football legacy.

Penn State football celebrated its 131<sup>st</sup> year in 2017! The below picture shows the PSU team preparing to take the field against a recent opponent with coach James Franklin at the helm.



The Nittany Lions played Ohio State just last weekend and the Buckeyes came back to defeat the Nittany Lions by one point. Penn State is a great University and it sports a great team and it has a legacy of great coaches. James Franklin is surely no slouch and he has brought a program that was in a rut into a dignified position of prominence. As I write this paragraph, PSU is 7-1 and heading for another great season. Kudos to the team and to coach Franklin.

## We Are... Penn State!



“We Are...Penn State!” These words are what PSU fans hear loud and proud during the whole game. As one side of Beaver Stadium exclaims “WE ARE,” the other side responds, “PENN STATE!” Some say that this chant, which has become the emblem that embodies Penn State, began in 1948 when the Penn State football team was set to play against the

Southern Methodist University at the Cotton Bowl.

Captain Steve Suhey met the challenge of the day with these words: “We are Penn State. There will be no meetings.” Today, the slogan is everywhere in the Penn State community as a sign of strength and pride.

## Penn State: A great legacy from 1887

Established in 1887, the Nittany Lions football teams have achieved numerous on-field successes; the most notable of which include four consensus national championships (in 1911, 1912, 1982 and 1986); four Big Ten Conference Championships (in 1994, 2005 and 2008, and 2016); and 46 appearances in college bowl games, with a postseason bowl record of 29–15–2. You cannot get much better than that.

The team is also #8 in all-time in total-wins, at the end of 2016, this put the Nittany Lions one game behind Oklahoma and Alabama. The Nittany Lions play their home games at Beaver Stadium, which is located on-campus in University Park, Pennsylvania. With an official seating capacity of 106,572, Beaver Stadium is worth talking about all by itself. It is a fitting playing venue for a great football program, and a great university. The team is currently coached by James Franklin, who is doing just fine according to the street talk in Penn State venues.

## **Summary of PSU football:**

Penn State's intercollegiate football team was established at a time that American football was just being shaped. A lot of the work had already been done.

The first official PSU football game was played in 1887 but unofficially, the students had managed to slip in an intercollegiate game of their own in 1881. Football became a permanent part of Penn State life in 1887 but the student players had no coaches. They relied on team captains. The desire to play football helped make all the seasons successful.

Like all other teams at the time. Penn State was learning how rugby kept changing on its way to becoming American football.

The first of seventeen Penn State football coaches was George Hoskins, who was hired in 1892. Having been undefeated in its first unofficial season (2-0), the Penn State team soon became a collegiate powerhouse and football became a part of campus life.

The team made numerous bowl appearances and came to national prominence in the 1950s and 1960s under Coach Rip Engle. Joe Paterno took over as coach in 1966, and in 46 great years, he guided the Nittany Lions to the most wins by any coach in Division I football history, as well as the most bowl appearances, and most bowl wins.

Under Coach Paterno, the squad won two consensus national championships, in 1982 and 1986, three Big Ten titles, and they completed five undefeated seasons. Penn State competed as an independent before joining the Big Ten in 1993. On November 22, 2008, Penn State became the sixth Division I program to win 800 games. Four Penn State coaches -- Dick Harlow, Hugo Bezdek, Bob Higgins, and Joe Paterno -- are in the Football Hall of Fame. Unless he gets sick, I have a feeling Coach James Franklin will one day be in the Hall with a ton of great seasons.

Penn State played its first unofficial football game November 12, 1881 against Lewisburg University in Lewisburg, PA. The game at the time still smelled a lot like rugby. The Nittany Lions were not yet the Nittany Lions, but they played like they were. Penn State won the makeshift game with rules that were part American football, part rugby, and part soccer. As we have learned, the rules were being incrementally formed. The score was W (9-0).

It was six years later in September (1887) that the School administration gave its approval under President George Atherton. With the top brass's OK; a group of Penn State freshmen organized its first official football team. The architects were freshman George "Lucy" Linsz along with classmate Charles Hildebrand.

Just a month later the storied Penn State tradition began putting notches in its story. Penn State played its first official game November 12, 1887 against Bucknell (formerly Lewisburg) at Lewisburg winning, 54-0. The rules had improved somewhat since 1881 but they were still not the rules of which we are familiar today.

To make it a season and not a shot-in-the dark one-time game as in 1881, Penn State engaged again just one week later on November 19). A mascot-less Penn State played its first home game using a makeshift field on the Old Main Lawn in front of the School's Main Building.

Penn State won the game 24-0 over eternal "rival" Bucknell. Penn State finished its first competitive football season with a 2-0 record. Wins have been the big story in the Penn State football story from 1887 on, and if I may be so bold, unofficially the wins began in 1881.

The notion of college football was just beginning as other Eastern teams such as Harvard and Princeton were also just getting it going. Notre Dame also had its first game in 1887. In 1881, there was a desire to play the evolving game of American football and so the students did it themselves in much the way teams play sandlot football today.

Penn State Students organized a football team without administration support and as noted they scheduled and played a game against a close-by school that at the time was known as the University of Lewisburg (renamed Bucknell University in 1896). The "kids" had to do some research just to know the rules and Penn State learned quite well as it defeated Lewisburg 9-0, in a cold, sleet-like drizzle.

As time moved on from this first encounter with football, there were no more formal games until September 1887 when George "Lucy" Linsz arrived on campus as a freshman and, with the help of a fellow freshman Charles Hildebrand, he managed to get approval from President George Atherton to organize the first official football team for Penn State College. There was no coach and there would be no coach for this team until 1894.

As hard as it is to believe back in the fall 1887, Penn State chose Pink and Black as the team colors. They changed the colors to blue and white the following year.



Penn State of course won its first game W (54-0) at Bucknell on the Lewisburg campus. It was the Penn State's first official game. A week later, with no field to speak of, Penn State hosted a home game on the Old Main Lawn. Team Captain and quarterback Lucy Linsz scored three second-half touchdowns to lead Penn State to a 24-0 win over Bucknell. And thus, this ended Penn State's first football season.

### **From the lawn to the field to the stadium**

Beaver Stadium, the home of the Nittany Lions, is one of the nation's premier football venues. An expansion and renovation prior to the 2001 season added more than 12,000 seats, increasing the stadium's capacity to 106,572 and easing the waiting list for season ticket requests from Penn State fans.

When you graduate more than 13,500 students per year university-wide, all of whom love Penn State, is it possible that a stadium holding as many as 500,000 might be insufficient? There are a lot of students and each year, the alumni pool increases by about 13,500. PSU's stadium must be big enough to fit huge crowds

In early 2016, while I was writing another book in which Penn State was featured, the school expected to award over 13.500 diplomas to students University-wide, who were completing over 500 associates,



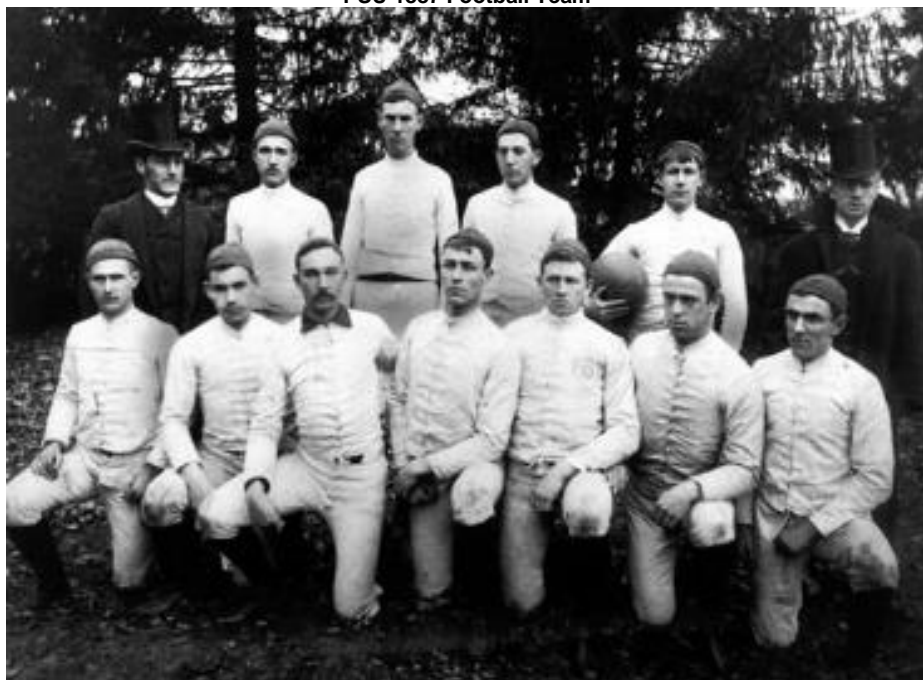
over 11,000 baccalaureates, over 1,500 masters', over 200 law, over 275 doctoral and about 150 medical degrees, bringing the University's total number of graduates to an estimated total of more than 23,000 degrees in one year.

### **Penn State's First Few Seasons**

PSU had six years with no coach.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Record</u>
1881	Unofficial	1-0
1887	No Coach	2-0
1888	No Coach	0-2-1
1889	No Coach	2-2
1890	No Coach	2-2
1891	No Coach	6-2
1892	George Hoskins	5-1

**PSU 1887 Football Team**



**1887: PSU's first year of football No coach**

Though PSU likes to have its official and unofficial football notions kept separate, the fact is the first game was played against the University of Lewisburg at Lewisburg in 1881. No, it was not official,

but it was played and played well by PSU. Additionally, the 1881 team in retrospect, has taken credit for the blue and white uniforms, not the pink and black worn by the 1987 team. Ivan P. McCreary made a difference

In 1881, this all got started because a determined student, Ivan P. McCreary decided to set up the game, put a team together, and manage the Penn State boys to victory. Since Walter Camp had not yet formed all of the real rules of American football, the 1881 lads played by a mixture of rules that were part rugby and what at the time was known as American football.

McCreary did not play in the game, but he did umpire (The term used at the time for football officials.) At the end of the game as the story goes, he sent a telegram 50 miles away to Penn State friends that read "we have met the enemy and they are ours, nine to nothing."

Over time as documents were found that chronicled the day, such as the 1882 edition of the University of Lewisburg Mirror, more information was gleaned about the game. "The State College Team was well uniformed and disciplined whereas our boys ... were up to their dodges."

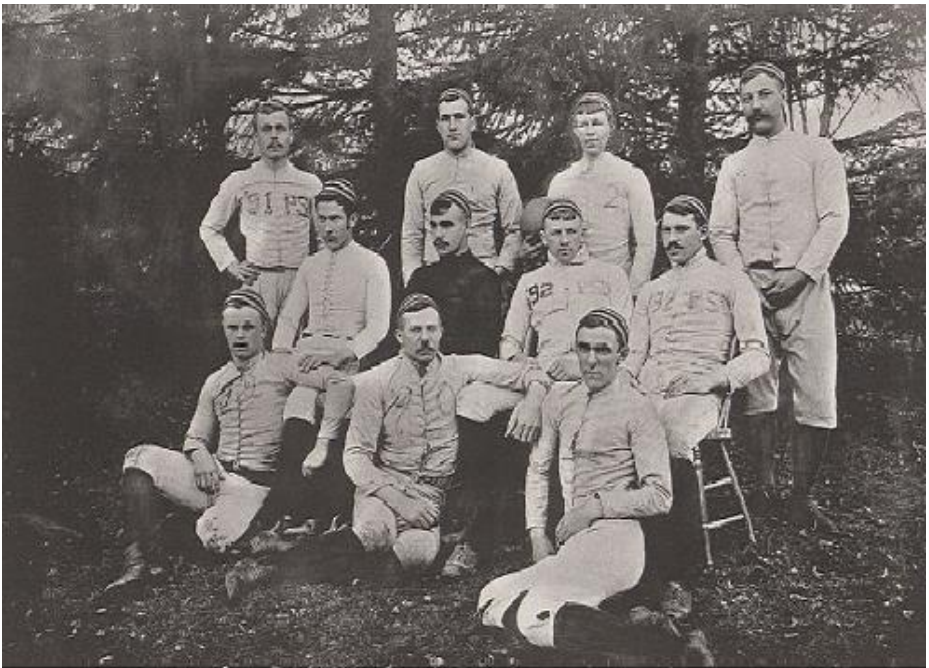
When the official 1887 team was formed, they had a copy and, so they studied the American Football Rulebook. This had been written by the great Walter Camp in 1886 and refined for the 1887 season. The official PSU team was not taught by any other team or organization, and so they gained their knowledge of the game from Camp's writings. They had a lot of mettle for sure.

Camp's rule book from 1887 is still available in a reprint. Walter Camp is known as the Father of American football. He described in this booklet, the transition of rugby to American football showing the rules dating to 1876 and the then the current Rules for the 1887 season.

Penn State had a great team but who would have supposed otherwise. They won both games in 1887, one at Lewisburg, 54-0, and the other on the Old Main Lawn on the State College campus, 24-0. The old main lawn was just that, a huge lawn in front of the

main building. Thus, from the outset Penn State fielded great teams that gave lickings rather than take them. The 1887 team was one of 13 Penn State teams over the years that were undefeated.

In 1887, football as we know it was not completely defined. Association football, rugby, and even soccer was having a major influence at the time on the college football rules and game play. For its first five years, the soon to be "Nittany Lions," football team had no coach. In fact, the whole idea of Penn State football was so tentative that there was a five-year gap from when the first unofficial season occurred until football was "resumed" in 1887. Once PSU's President made it official, the count to 130 successful seasons began.



**Penn State 1888 Football Team**



# Chapter 15 Does Alabama Have the Best Football Program?

## University of Alabama's Football Program

Don't worry folks, this is not that kind of book. We will not attempt in any way to determine if Alabama was, is, or will be the best football team in the nation. That would be unfair. Having said that, there is no question that Alabama has a great football program.

Even the "Go Tide" crowd may not know, however, that the Alabama program did not start as early as many other universities. They were early enough, however, to play a rugby-type football on the way to playing pure American football. The Alabama program, young as it is finds itself envied and emulated everywhere. Alabama, with today's great coach, Nick Saban, as a football team are so good, all other football programs want to beat them by using their strategies.

## Alabama is today's target team for all coaches in college football, even Dabo Swinney

Among the greatest teams at the time in the early 1890's, few sportscasters included Alabama in their list yet look at who proved them wrong. They say that Alabama football began with a game in Birmingham on a Friday afternoon in November of 1892. But, there was more to the story for Alabama than just showing up for the game.

One of my favorite sayings in life is that "nothing worth having in life is easy." Even something as simple as forming a football team at a premiere university that had little knowledge or inclination of the

game. Sometimes, a little help from the outside is all that is needed to start a tide rolling.

## Alabama: Go Tide!



Alabama Cadets First Football Team – 1892

### **In 1892, Alabama launched its first football team**

It happens that for the University of Alabama, all the historical logs suggest it was not the President or Board of Directors or an Athletic Director or a local sports club that got the Tide rolling for Alabama Football. No, it was none of those. It was a law student William G. Little of Livingston, Alabama.

He had learned how to play American football as it was evolving in the US, while he was attending prep school in Andover, Massachusetts. Little was smitten by the game and he soon began teaching the sport to fellow Alabama students in early 1892.

For full context, there was no football at Alabama in 1891. From then to now, it was a rarity when there was no football season for the

University of Alabama. Only an event such as a poor administrative decision or a World War would stop Alabama's great football teams from playing their seasons every season. In most seasons, football was played to perfection.

Later that year (1892), thanks to Little and a dedicated crew of fellow American football lovers, the school put together an official team of 19 players. Across the country, more and more colleges and universities were beginning to officially get on board with American football, so this was not exactly new but it sure was groundbreaking for the University of Alabama.

It is said that when Little arrived on campus, he was "carrying his uniform and a great bag of enthusiasm for the game in 1892." A number of students joined in with him when the season began in October 1892 after a lot of time spent on team formative activities. There is an account in the Crimson White Student Paper from Nov. 25, 1926 that chronicles this trailblazing experience.

Little became the captain of the fledgling group and E. B. Beaumont was the first official head coach. The Collegiate newspaper remarked that Beaumont was fired at season end because he knew too little about the game. But, he was man enough to help the Crimson White when it needed it the most.

The history for this time is not perfect but it is known that among others on the team was William B. Bankhead, future U.S. Speaker of the House, and Bibb Graves, future governor of Alabama. This first team was referred to as the "Cadets", the "Crimson White", or simply as "the varsity. The guys on this team had one heck of a love for the game.

The 1892 Alabama Cadets football team represented the University of Alabama in the 1892 college football season. The Crimson Tide moniker had not yet been applied. The team was led by their head coach E. B. Beaumont and they played their home games at Lakeview Park in Birmingham, Alabama.



Alabama's First Football Coach E. B. Beaumont

In what was the inaugural season of Alabama football, the team finished with a record of two wins and two losses (2–2). For this game, since Walter Camp's rules had not all been formed or implemented, the point values were different from those used in contemporary games. In 1892, for example, a touchdown was worth four points, a field goal was worth five points and an extra point was worth two points. One can tell from that—American football began as a kicking game from its soccer and rugby roots.

Back to William Little of Livingston, Alabama. He is credited with being responsible for the introduction of football at the university. After playing the game in 1891 while in attendance at a northern prep school. This young man, an adventurer much like both Lewis



and Clark, played a huge role in establishing the first team and making them ready for the 1892 season.

The first game in Alabama football history was played on November 11, 1892, against Birmingham High School and was won by the Cadets 56–0. They then split a pair of games with the Birmingham Athletic Club, and closed out the season with a 22-32 loss in the first Iron Bowl against Auburn on February 22, 1893. After the season, Beaumont was fired as head coach and replaced by Eli Abbott for the 1893 season.

After Beaumont's departure, William G. Little continued the training of the team until Abbott was formally brought-in to serve as head coach for the 1893 season.

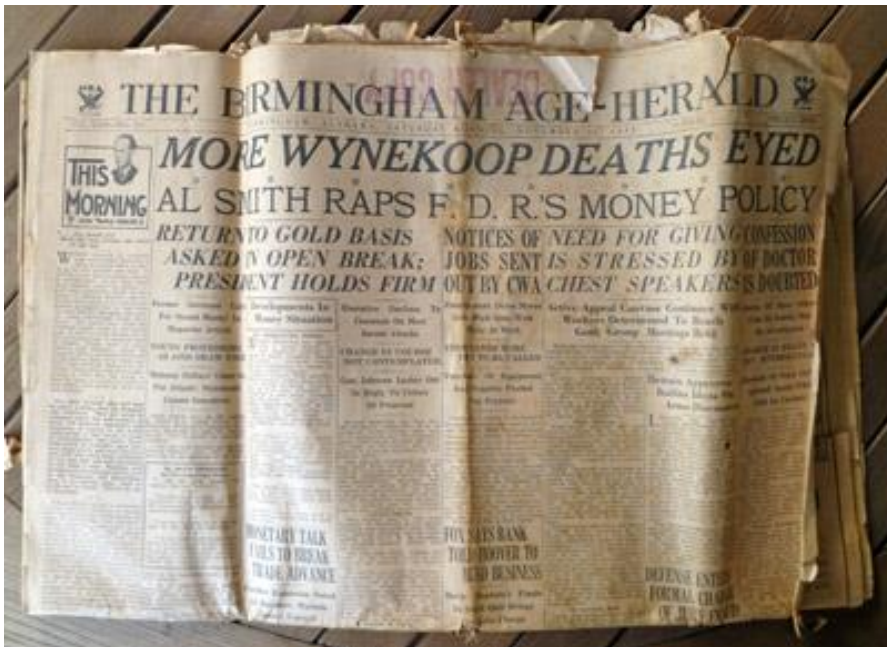
In early newspaper accounts of Alabama football, the team was often simply listed as the "varsity" or the "Crimson White" after the school colors.

The first nickname to become popular and used by headline writers was the "Thin Red Line." The nickname was used until 1906.

Folklore is sometimes lore, but it sometimes is mixed with all the facts needed. The name "Crimson Tide" is supposed to have first been used by Hugh Roberts, former sports editor of the Birmingham Age-Herald. He used "Crimson Tide" to describe an Alabama-Auburn game (Iron Bowl) played in Birmingham in 1907.

This ironically was the last football contest between the two schools until 1948 when the Iron Bowl series was resumed. The 1907 game was played in a sea of mud and Auburn was a heavy favorite to win.

But, evidently, the "Thin Red Line" played a great game in the red mud and held Auburn to a 6-6 tie, thus gaining the name "Crimson Tide." Zipp Newman, former sports editor of the Birmingham News, is credited with popularizing the name more than any other writer. Everything that is has a beginning and often beginnings recounted from times past are a little murky if not downright muddy.



Birmingham Age Herald Front Page Circa 1933 (Last Edition in 1950)

In 1930, Everett Strupper of the Atlanta Journal described the team as ‘elephants’ when they stomped over Ole Miss, and the mascot stuck. This is a fitting sized animal to describe a program with a successful history of mammoth proportions.

The football team didn’t garner national acclaim until a game in Philadelphia in 1922, where Alabama defeated the vaunted University of Pennsylvania 9-7. Wallace Wade became the coach the following season. The University of Pennsylvania, as you know from a prior chapter, was an early football powerhouse and had enjoyed prominence trouncing the better teams of the day, including Notre Dame and Penn State.

Let me tell you all how much of a big win this was. Penn still was a tough team when Coach Wade took them on and won. Looking back, the Quakers have had 63 First Team All-Americans, and the college is the alma mater of John Heisman (the namesake of college football's most famous trophy).

The team has won a share of 7 national championships (7th all-time) and competed in the "granddaddy of them all" (The Rose Bowl) as

far back as in 1917. Penn's total of 837 wins puts them 11th all-time in college football (3rd in the FCS). Most would not know this.

<http://bryantmuseum.com/page.asp?ID=19>

**The Bryant Web Site offers this account of the early goings:**

“Alabama's first game was played in Birmingham on Friday afternoon, Nov. 11, 1892, at the old Lakeview Park. Opposition was furnished by a picked team from Professor Taylor's school and Birmingham high schools, with Alabama winning, 56-0.

Early teams were a bit tougher than current squads, it seems, as the following afternoon, Alabama played the Birmingham Athletic Club, losing 5-4 when Ross, of B.A.C., kicked a 65-yard field goal. Impossible though it may seem, this field goal was listed as a collegiate record at one time and Birmingham papers of the day featured its distance in writeups of the game.

“The gridiron sport rapidly caught the students' fancy and the game became a favorite with University athletes. In 1896 the University's board of trustees passed a rule forbidding athletic teams from traveling off the campus. The following season only one game was played and in 1898 football was abandoned at Alabama. Student opposition to the ruling was so strong that the trustees lifted the travel ban and football was resumed in 1899, to continue without interruption until the First World War forced cancellation of the 1918 games.”

“Alabama first gained national recognition in 1922 when the University of Pennsylvania [a well-known major powerhouse at the time] was defeated, 9-7, in Philadelphia. The following season Wallace Wade became head coach and in 1925 led the Crimson Tide to its first undefeated and untied season and its first Rose Bowl invitation. On Jan. 1, 1926, an unheralded, underrated team from Tuscaloosa came from behind to upset Washington, 20-19, in the Rose Bowl and established a precedent of colorful play that Crimson Tide teams have continued to uphold.”

Additional Crimson Tide information can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama\\_Crimson\\_Tide\\_football](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama_Crimson_Tide_football)

## Crimson Tide football through the years

The Alabama Crimson Tide football team continues to be the name used to represent the University of Alabama (aka Alabama, UA, or 'Bama) in the sport of American football. Alabama today competes in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Western Division of the Southeastern Conference (SEC). Currently coached by Nick Saban, UA is one of the most storied and decorated football programs in NCAA history.

Having begun play about 125 years ago in 1892, the program boasts of 16 national championships. These have been coming for a long time—over and over and over again...and they are still coming today.

Ironically, as good as Alabama's program has been since its first Championship in 1925, and despite numerous other national and conference championships, it was not until 2009 that an Alabama player received a Heisman Trophy. It was running back Mark Ingram. He became the university's first winner. In 2015, Derrick Henry became the university's second Heisman winner.

When the 2015 season was completed, Alabama had amassed 864 official victories in NCAA Division I and for those counting at home folks, there were an additional 21 victories that were vacated and another 8 victories and 1 tie that were forfeited for various reasons over the years. We won't go here but somebody should!

The Crimson Tide today plays its home games at Bryant–Denny Stadium, located on its campus in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It is a huge stadium. With a capacity of 101,821, Bryant-Denny Stadium is the 8th largest non-racing stadium in the world and the seventh largest stadium in the United States.

## Head football coaches

Since 1892 when the program was formed and 1893, when the first game was played, Alabama has played 122 seasons with 30 head coaches. This includes a 1918 coach in a season in which no games were played and a temporary coach who coached one bowl game after his predecessor was fired.

Like all teams of the era save a few from the East, football, in the early years, was not such an easy college sport in which to form a competitive program.

Soon after the true beginning of play and after a shutdown of the 1898 season due to a ban on away games. The "Crimson Tide" picked up its cherished nickname after the 1907 season. Overall, UA has played more than 1,200 games in its 125 seasons.

In that time, 12 coaches have led the Crimson Tide in postseason bowl games: Wallace Wade, Frank Thomas, Harold D. "Red" Drew, Bear Bryant, Ray Perkins, Bill Curry, Gene Stallings, Mike DuBose, Dennis Franchione, Mike Shula, Joe Kines, and Nick Saban. Eight of those coaches also won conference championships: Wade, Thomas, Drew, Bryant, Curry, Stallings, DuBose, and Saban. During their tenures, Wade, Thomas, Bryant, Stallings, and Saban all won national championships, totaling 16 with the Crimson Tide.

Of the 30 different head coaches who have led the Crimson Tide, Wade, Thomas, Bryant, and Stallings have been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. The current head coach is Nick Saban. Saban was hired in January 2007, and he fits the Alabama tradition like a glove. With the 2015 Championship season in the bag, and a 14-1 record in the 2016 season, Saban has amassed 120 victories which includes the great SEC Championship game and the 2016 Peach Bowl.

## **Alabama National Championships**

Alabama is generally credited with 16 national championships though not all have been of the consensus variety. Most universities today give themselves the benefit of the doubt when there is doubt on a championship in a given year.

National Championships before the CFP bowls were hotly contested. National championships in NCAA FBS college football are debated but the NCAA does not officially award the championship. However, it does provide lists of championships awarded by organizations that it does recognize.

There is an official NCAA 2009 Division I Football Records Book, and this states that: "During the last 138 years, there have been more than 30 selectors of national champions using polls, historical research and mathematical rating systems. Beginning in 1936, the Associated Press (AP) began the best-known and most widely circulated poll of sportswriters and broadcasters. Before 1936, national champions were determined by historical research and retroactive ratings and polls.

The criteria for being included in this historical list of poll selectors is that the poll be national in scope, either through distribution in newspaper, television, radio and/or computer online.

Since World War II, Alabama only claims national championships awarded by the final AP Poll or the final Coaches' Poll. This policy is consistent with other FBS football programs with numerous national title claims, including Notre Dame, USC, and Oklahoma.

All national championships claimed by the University of Alabama were published in nationally syndicated newspapers and magazines, and each of the national championship selectors, and are cited in the Official 2010 NCAA FBS Record Book.

In addition to the championships claimed by the university, the NCAA has listed Alabama as receiving a championship for the 1945, 1966, 1975, and 1977 college football seasons.

In Alabama's own 1982 media guide, the last for Coach Bryant, 1934 is listed as the only national championship before Coach Bryant in a small footnote about the school's SEC history.

In the 1980s, Alabama's Sports Information Director Wayne Atcheson began to recognize five pre-Bryant national championship

teams (1925, 1926, 1930, 1934, 1941). He added them to the University's Football Media Guide.

Atcheson said that he made the effort in the context of disputed titles being claimed by other schools, and "to make Alabama football look the best it could look" to compete with the other claimants. Atcheson believes that the titles are the school's rightful claims.

And, so the UA 2009 Official Football Media Guide states that Alabama had 12 national championships prior to winning the 2010 BCS National Championship Game. The 2009, 2011, 2012, and 2015 titles extend the total number of national championships claimed by Alabama to 16. Eleven of Alabama's national championships were awarded by the wire-services (AP, Coaches' Poll) or by winning the BCS National Championship Game.

In January 2013, CNN suggested that Alabama was college football's new dynasty, and in May 2013, Athlon Sports ranked Alabama's ongoing dynasty as the fourth-best since 1934, behind Oklahoma (1948–58), Miami (1986–92), and Nebraska (1993–97). Watch out to the top three for sue as Alabama is not done yet.

## Conference Championships

Alabama has a winning tradition. A gambler can get rich betting on Alabama games. The teams over the years have won a total of 30 conference championships; this includes 4 Southern Conference and 26 SEC Championships.

UA captured its 4 Southern Conference titles in 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1930. Alabama captured the first SEC title in 1933 and the team has won a total of 26 SEC Championships (1933, 1934, 1937, 1945, 1953, 1961, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1989, 1992, 1999, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016).

The school has won more SEC football titles than any other school, including seven since the conference split into separate divisions and added the Championship Game in 1992. Alabama is the only SEC school to win an SEC Championship in every decade since the

conference was founded in 1933. Alabama is synonymous with winning. Bear Bryant fit the Alabama winning tradition 100%. Nick Saban looks like a Bear Disciple.

## **Divisional Championships**

Since the 1992 season, the SEC has been split into two divisions. Alabama competes in the SEC West. Alabama has won or shared 12 division titles, and has posted a 7-4 record in the SEC Championship Game as of 2016.

Those of us who root always or often for Alabama are seldom disappointed. What a football tradition. Roll Tide.

## **Heisman Trophy**

One can certainly make the case that with such a phenomenal record, Alabama is either fully team-oriented and consistently lack individual talent; have been victimized by a biased voting system; or a simply victims of circumstance. No Alabama Heisman's during Bear Bryant's storied career? It just does not seem right.

There is always irony in every story. Bear Bryant did coach one Heisman winner, John David Crow. However, Crow played for the Texas Aggies when the Bear coached there. Bryant then moved on to Alabama and the Crimson Tide are quite pleased that he did.

I must admit, I scoured for sources that could explain the lack of Heisman Trophies at Alabama. If you are reading this and you know, let me know, and in a future update to this book, I will more than likely include your perspective.

On December 12, 2009, the Heisman drought ended. Mark Ingram became Alabama's first Heisman Trophy winner. In the closest race, ever, he edged out Stanford running back Toby Gerhart by 28 points. The previous best finish for an Alabama player occurred in 1993, when David Palmer finished 3rd in the Heisman voting. AJ McCarron finished as runner-up for the 2013 season. Derrick Henry



became Alabama's second Heisman trophy winner on December 12, 2015.

## **Alabama fans are typically very happy**

Overall, those who root always or often for Alabama are seldom disappointed. What a football tradition. Roll Tide.

In 2016, with a depleted team, Coach Nick Saban of Alabama almost brought home a national championship. How about that?

Any former coach or player from Alabama can attest to the fact that despite all the great coaches and players perhaps no Alabama jerseys could be retired because with all of the history of this great program, there would be no numbers left.

When asked to define a great coach, great Alabama fans need only flip out the Time edition shown on the next page. Who else owns a “Bear” in their legacy.

## **Alabama – A look at its first few seasons**

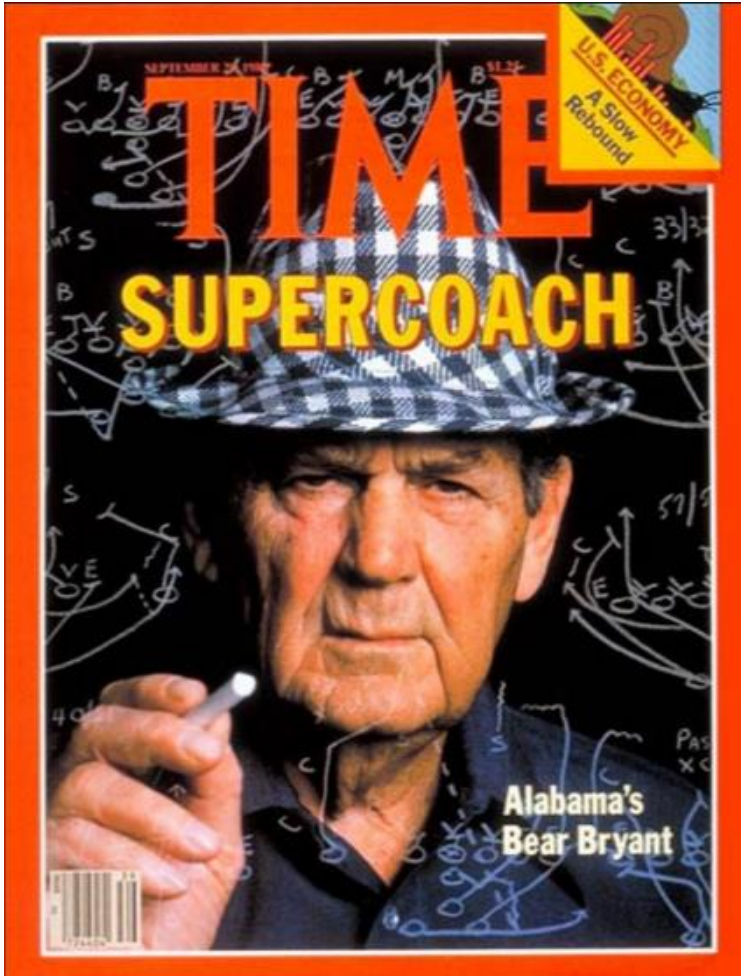
As discussed, the Alabama Cadets football program began its 1892 football season on November 11 with a game against Birmingham High School. The Cadets won the game 56-0.

Alabama was led by head coach E. B. Beaumont and played their home games at Lakeview Park in Birmingham, Alabama. In what was the inaugural season of Alabama football, the team finished with a record of two wins and two losses (2–2).

William Little of Livingston, Alabama is credited with being the driving force for the introduction of football at the university. Little served as captain of the team in 1892.

After the 56-0 win, the team then split a pair of games with the Birmingham Athletic Club, and it closed out the season with a L (22–32) loss in the first Iron Bowl against Auburn on February 22, 1893.

Think of how long the Iron Bowl has been going on! After the season, Beaumont was fired as head coach and replaced by Eli Abbott for the 1893 season.



In 1892, football as we know it was not completely defined. Association football, rugby, and even soccer was having a major influence at the time on the college football rules and game play. Unlike other startup teams its early years, UA was blessed with a coach. There were teams competing at the college level that had no coach other than some players who stepped up to the plate. Alabama has done just fine on its way to today

## Chapter 16 Pro Football Before 1920



The Columbus Panhandles playing a game at Indianola Park, circa 1910. Not much protection—few helmets -- Photo courtesy Ohio Historical Society

### College football was king!

As we have already captured the beginning of football in 1869, there are few surprises left as to the origins of Professional Football. College football players, who loved playing ball had to get jobs in their chosen professions in the days before pro football. They were actually looking for a way to get that job while continuing to play football on Sundays to make a few bucks at the same time. Knute Rockne, the fabled coach of Notre Dame was one of those guys who when college was over, wanted to continue playing some football, and perhaps even more, he wanted to be able to support himself.

In this book, we differentiate college and professional sports by just one factor. The term professional is used to indicate that somebody gets paid for what they do, and the term college football simply means the college or university sponsors the team and pays the freight for all the players. Technically college players are amateurs. But the term amateur would also apply to a post-collegiate football player who is not paid for playing.

Professional football had its origins in the 1890s. Pennsylvanians engaging from local athletic clubs played in increasingly intense competition. Former Yale football star William “Pudge” Heffelfinger comes up in every conversation about early professional football. Nobody disputes that he was the first-ever professional football player.

Pudge was hired in Pennsylvania by the Allegheny Athletic Association to play in a game against their rival the Pittsburgh Athletic Club in November 1892. By 1896, the Allegheny Athletic Association was made up entirely of paid players, making it the sport’s first-ever professional team.

As football became more and more popular, local semi-pro and pro teams were organized across the country. Professional American football, not the soccer or rugby style played in Europe, was taking off and getting ready to make it big in the US.

Though PA got it going, Professional football first proved itself as a viable spectator sport in the 1910s with the establishment of The Ohio League. Canton, the premiere team in that league, featured legendary decathlete and football star Jim Thorpe, who today is a Pennsylvanian, having been buried in his monument in Jim Thorpe, PA.

From his play with the great football powerhouse, the Carlisle School to his gold medal in the decathlon in Stockholm in 1912 and his time in the outfield with John McGraw’s New York Giants, Thorpe was an international star. This great athlete and great man brought legitimacy to professional football as he had to every sport in which he ever played.

The crowds that Thorpe and the Canton team drew created a market for professional football in Ohio and beyond. Still, the league was struggling due to escalating player salaries, a reliance on college players who then had to forfeit their college eligibility and a general lack of organization.

Knute Rockne was playing and coaching football in this era. As a college coach, Knute Rockne had five unbeaten, untied seasons and he had produced a lifetime college winning percentage of .881. This ranks at the top of the list of both college and professional coaches and that is why Rockne to this today is so well revered in all sports.

He is featured in a book I wrote in 2017 titled, Great Coaches in Notre Dame Football, available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other fine booksellers. As a football player, the Rock was All-American, and he played for Coach Jesse Harper. The Rock then succeeded Harper as ND Head Football Coach.

Before he even played football at ND, Rockne joined the Barefoot Athletic Club and played. It was the first time he received money from a pool to which he did not have to contribute. The big game for the district championship pitted the Barefoot A.C. against the Hamburg Athletic Club.

Rockne's team was subsidized by a Logan Square saloon keeper and also a butcher. Each player of the Barefoot team was to receive five dollars, win or lose. Today, the NCAA would not have permitted Rockne to play College ball since he had accepted some money to help get him by in life before he attended college.

Rockne worked four years in the U.S. Post office in Chicago and saved a thousand dollars to attend the University of Illinois, but his friends, Johnny Devine and Johnny Plant, persuaded him to enroll at Notre Dame.

Rockne's teammates made him their team captain even before Jesse Harper took over in 1913. Harper coached Notre Dame to another undefeated season after one in 1913 with the help of Captain Knute Rockne and an All-American quarterback named Gus Dorais.

In the pre-NCAA and pre-NFL days, the independent teams as "pros" of that era would hire a college star to play in a particular must-win game or some area championship contest. There were no computers to do background checks.

There were a lot of college ringers playing clandestinely on a given Sunday. Most used assumed names so they had no traceability back to their schools. They thought it was picking up some extra cash.

Rockne did just that. He was good enough to offer himself for service, and he needed to live. Being an athlete presented monetary opportunities for the better players.

Rather than rake leaves or cut grass in the off-season, Rockne also made some money as a boxer, who at one time used the alias of Frank "Jab" Brown. Then, when he boxed sub rosa again, in the Gary-Hammond area in the summer, he was known as Kid Williams.

When he was hired as the ND coach after a great football career as a player, and some clandestine pro-activities in multiple sports, Rockne knew he would be able to get some square meals from his ND salary and he gave most of the other stuff up.

His first coaching job however, was not at Notre Dame, but was with a South Bend pro team. Rock was not sure he would take it. It was with the Muessel Brewers who had put their own football team together. That was where Rockne began developing his coaching techniques.

Few know exactly what the stipend was Rockne received from the Muessel Company, but there is documentation from old Muessel players in a long-ago interview, who speculated that Rock received anywhere from \$10 to \$25 per coaching session. He had talent and they needed talent.

The point is that before the real pro-leagues began in 1920, players would peddle their abilities where they could make a buck and thus, they were professionals.

As we covered in this book so far, football rules were well refined by 1913 when Rockne played his last season. After that, they kept being refined after the process that was begun in the 1880s.

We have all learned that the great Yale coach Walter Camp helped introduce some key concepts that made the game of football look less like rugby and more like what we would recognize as football today – things like the line of scrimmage and the idea of requiring a team to gain a certain amount of yardage within a fixed number of plays.

Things were different then. You could be the best player in the world or the best coach in the world, and for all your talent, if you did not find a way to leverage your skills, you could also starve.





## Chapter 17 The Birth of Play with Pay



When you look at the records of the college teams in the early years of their sports programs, you find they did not always play other colleges. Sometimes they played powerful high school powerhouses and they did not always win those games. Football was no different in its growth as a respected sport than other sports.

It was very popular with the many athletic clubs that proliferated in the late 19th century. Just like high school teams and prep schools and junior colleges, full four-year colleges often played athletic clubs from their area to get a good football game on a Saturday afternoon.

These clubs were formed to compete against one another, but they had no problem saying yes to play Notre Dame or Penn State, or Alabama or any great team of the day. Soon, the players were making real money.

The first documented professional football player was Pudge Heffelfinger. He broke the bank on November 12, 1892, when he received \$500 for just one game with the Allegheny Athletic Association. There were no easy ways to record information other than pencil and paper back then, so a lot of stories and their history did not make the newspapers and, so they are lost forever. The Pudge Heffelfinger story is the exception.

It is a safe bet that many other athletes played for money but managed to keep their earnings a deep secret. In 1893, the Pittsburgh Athletic Club signed one of its players to a contract to play for the entire season. By 1896, several of the clubs from the Pittsburgh area were openly professional.

For years after college football took off, there were attempts by graduates and coaches and others to create leagues with rules and better opportunities for players and fans. The first documented attempt came in 1902 with a Pennsylvania league known as the National Football League (NFL) with no relationship to the modern-day league. A lot of the action in these endeavors came about in Pennsylvania and then later, Ohio.

John Rogers, who owned the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team, founded a football team called the Phillies in 1901. This prompted another man with some extra change in his pocket, Ben Shibe, who owned the Philadelphia Athletics to create another new team in 1902. The baseball rivals tried to get other teams to join with them to compete for a self-proclaimed “football world championship.” Great ideas, however, are easier to conceive than to implement.

There was just one taker, a promoter in Pittsburgh. Out of nowhere, the National Football League was conceived, and it got a bump start. It was also a bumpy start. The three teams enjoyed being THE National Football League and they went ahead and played each other in a round-robin tournament.

The beauty of a “league” without rules is that each team, though each finished with a 2-2 record, could claim the national

championship. Who could cast aspersions on three teams with equal records?

I surely do not want to make light of this effort as many of the best football players of the day participated in this league, as did three well-known baseball Hall of Famers who happened to love the emerging sport of football. Christy Mathewson, ace pitcher for the New York Giants played halfback and punter for the Pittsburgh Stars. Connie Mack, manager of the Athletics baseball team also managed the Athletics football team, and Rube Waddell one of the best left-handed pitchers in history, was a reserve lineman for Mack's squad.

Waddell put his weight in each pitch and it was enough weight for him to change sports at will, and block for the backs in this pro-league or tackle as many opponent backs as may have made the mistake of running his way.

Think about how exciting those days had to be. There was no real NCAA and there was no real NFL to tell the players or the organizers that they needed to behave one way or another. Nobody said they had to wear stuff under their eyes during games or that they could not have a beer after practice. There was no bureaucracy with which to deal.

Nothing good happens overnight. Nothing worth having in life is easy. And, so players and investors with a lot of chutzpah chose to face the difficulties and they took up the challenge of making football, which was beginning to be very successful in American colleges, into a professional sport. Players, other than twenty-year old college kids could compete and could earn a few dollars on Sunday after they passed the hat.

The "NFL" three teams played a yearly football tournament in New York in 1902 and 1903. It was dubbed the "World Series of Football." With less than 2000 tickets sold for each game, there wasn't much evidence that there was much money to be made by running a football team. But, somehow Baseball teams were making it but then again, baseball teams played a lot more games.

Baseball teams played games every day for six months, and that produced enough revenues that teams could afford to travel from New York to Chicago, Boston to Cincinnati, or St. Louis to Philadelphia. The pageantry of college football drew fans in droves, and it wasn't unusual for crowds of 60,000 to see a matchup between rival schools when they could book a big stadium. That helped colleges pay to build their own stadiums and eventually pay coaches handsomely.

It was tough to do when everybody had to reach into their pockets in order to be able to put something into their pockets from pro-football. The pro game did not draw the numbers of college games with ardent fans. It was just a passing interest, so teams were forced to minimize costs in whatever ways they could.

There was no concentration on player safety in the early days so that cost nothing. The best way to reduce expenses was to limit team travel. Consequently, big entrepreneurs, who knew how to make a buck, were not stepping quickly into unorganized pro-football so they could make a killing. There was no killing to be made.

There was not much of an incentive for a nation-wide league of professional football teams in the 1910s. It made more sense to stay closer to home, with teams sponsored by local businessmen, whose chief interest was promoting their company. If local businesses were not gaining sales, they too would have abandoned pro-football in its infancy, in a heartbeat.

Over the next few years, the center focus of pro football moved from Pennsylvania to central Ohio. By 1905 there were at least seven pro teams playing in Ohio. They had great names such as the Massillon Tigers and the Canton Bulldogs. There was no really organized league, so these were independent teams. They had to fend for themselves. Though some were more successful than others, they all faced the same challenges.

## Pro football needed to be profitable

Prior to television and the phone technology revolution, fans looked upon football as a great form of entertainment, even better, say some, than movie theatres. World War I soured a lot of people on life and everybody in the second decade of the twentieth century needed a pick-me-up. Football and the movies often lifted their spirits.

Nonetheless, it was tough for pro football teams to generate revenues without really good players. Since such players cost pro-teams big money, it became tougher for small football enterprises to make ends meet. Besides player raiding, steadily rising salaries made it difficult for many teams who wanted to win games and not be also-rans, to continue operating.

Finding and signing players was tough enough, but keeping them was even tougher. There were no rules for players having to stay with a team and their major opponents would often snatch players by offering bigger paydays. The poorly financed teams just as today did poorly in the standings.

There were also issues with what were known as “ringers.” Knute Rockne was a ringer in his day. There were lots of other college athletes who either coached or played while still enrolled in school. The pros were offering them comparatively big bucks to move out and join them. Certain teams with lots of cash were “stockpiling” college stars to make sure their teams won. If your team could not afford the going rate, your team’s talent level was at a major disadvantage.

Cooperation of the teams without a formal league framework could have resolved most of these issues in the twenty-years from 1900 to 1920 but it did not happen. The teams were more concerned about winning than cooperating.



## Chapter 18 Snapshots of Early Pro Football 1900-1922



### Former college players and coaches wanted to keep playing football

There were no million-dollar players in the professional football ranks at the beginning of the twentieth century, but there were a lot of players and coaches who wanted to play football and hoped to get paid to play their favorite sport. Just like there are social clubs, dart clubs, shuffleboard clubs, rod and gun clubs, and a host of other clubs, before the NFL pro football league, there were a lot of athletic clubs that focused on football as it was evolving into American football.

The current NFL compiled a brief snapshot of what was going on in these early football days from 1900 to 1909 and then the Football Hall of Fame continued their work from 1910 to 2012. It is nice work and I hope the Hall of Fame picks it up again and keeps it current. We thank these groups for putting together this very brief compendium that takes us through the Early Pro Football period

right up until the formation of a league that lasted, the NFL. And, so the rest of this chapter is courtesy of the NFL and the Pro football Hall of Fame:

### **1900**

William C. Temple took over the team payments for the Duquesne Country and Athletic Club, becoming the first known individual club owner.

### **1902**

Baseball's Philadelphia Athletics, managed by Connie Mack, and the Philadelphia Phillies formed professional football teams, joining the Pittsburgh Stars in the first attempt at a pro football league, named the National Football League. The Athletics won the first night football game ever played, 39-0 over Kanaweola AC at Elmira, New York, November 21.

All three teams claimed the pro championship for the year, but the league president, Dave Berry, named the Stars the champions. Pitcher Rube Waddell was with the Athletics, and pitcher Christy Mathewson a fullback for Pittsburgh.

The first World Series of pro football, actually a five-team tournament, was played among a team made up of players from both the Athletics and the Phillies, but simply named New York; the New York Knickerbockers; the Syracuse AC; the Warlow AC; and the Orange (New Jersey) AC at New York's original Madison Square Garden. New York and Syracuse played the first indoor football game before 3,000, December 28. Syracuse, with Glen (Pop) Warner at guard, won 6-0 and went on to win the tournament.

### **1903**

The Franklin (Pa.) Athletic Club won the second and last World Series of pro football over the Oreos AC of Asbury Park, New Jersey; the Watertown Red and Blacks; and the Orange AC. Pro football was popularized in Ohio when the Massillon Tigers, a strong amateur team, hired four Pittsburgh pros to play in the season-ending game against Akron. At the same time, pro football declined in the



Pittsburgh area, and the emphasis on the pro game moved west from Pennsylvania to Ohio.

### **1904**

A field goal was changed from five points to four. Ohio had at least seven pro teams, with Massillon winning the Ohio Independent Championship, that is, the pro title. Talk surfaced about forming a state-wide league to end spiraling salaries brought about by constant bidding for players and to write universal rules for the game. The feeble attempt to start the league failed. Halfback Charles Follis signed a contract with the Shelby (Ohio) AC, making him the first known black pro football player.

### **1905**

The Canton AC, later to become known as the Bulldogs, became a professional team. Massillon again won the Ohio League championship.

### **1906**

The forward pass was legalized. The first authenticated pass completion in a pro game came on October 27, when George (Peggy) Parratt of Massillon threw a completion to Dan (Bullet) Riley in a victory over a combined Benwood-Moundsville team. Arch-rivals Canton and Massillon, the two best pro teams in America, played twice, with Canton winning the first game but Massillon winning the second and the Ohio League championship.

A betting scandal and the financial disaster wrought upon the two clubs by paying huge salaries caused a temporary decline in interest in pro football in the two cities and, somewhat, throughout Ohio.

### **1909**

A field goal dropped from four points to three.



1909 Shibe Park Opened – which became Connie Mack Stadium, Philadelphia

### **1912**

A touchdown was increased from five points to six. Jack Cusack revived a strong pro team in Canton.

### **1913**

Jim Thorpe, a former football and track star at the Carlisle Indian School (Pa.) and a double gold medal winner at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, played for the Pine Village Pros in Indiana.

### **1915**

Massillon again fielded a major team, reviving the old rivalry with Canton. Cusack signed Thorpe to play for Canton for \$250 a game.

### **1916**

With Thorpe and former Carlisle teammate Pete Calac starring, Canton went 9-0-1, won the Ohio League championship, and was acclaimed the pro football champion.

**1917**

Despite an upset by Massillon, Canton again won the Ohio League championship.

**1919**

Canton again won the Ohio League championship, despite the team having been turned over from Cusack to Ralph Hay. Thorpe and Calac were joined in the backfield by Joe Guyon.

Earl (Curly) Lambeau and George Calhoun organized the Green Bay Packers. Lambeau's employer at the Indian Packing Company provided \$500 for equipment and allowed the team to use the company field for practices. The Packers went 10-1.

**1920**

Pro football was in a state of confusion due to three major problems: dramatically rising salaries; players continually jumping from one team to another following the highest offer; and the use of college players still enrolled in school. A league in which all the members would follow the same rules seemed the answer.

An organizational meeting, at which the Akron Pros, Canton Bulldogs, Cleveland Indians, and Dayton Triangles were represented, was held at the Jordan and Hupmobile auto showroom in Canton, Ohio,

The meeting was on August 20, 1920. Just seven men, including legendary all-around athlete and football star Jim Thorpe, met with the purpose as noted above of organizing a professional football league. The meeting led to the creation of the American Professional Football Conference (APFC), the forerunner to the hugely successful National Football League.

The APFA began play on September 26, with the Rock Island Independents of Illinois defeating a team from outside the league, the St. Paul Ideals, 48-0. A week later, Dayton beat Columbus 14-0 in the first game between two teams from the APFA, the forerunner of the modern NFL.

The teams were from four states-Akron, Canton, Cleveland, and Dayton from Ohio; the Hammond Pros and Muncie Flyers from Indiana; the Rochester Jeffersons from New York; and the Rock Island Independents, Decatur Staleys, and Racine Cardinals from Illinois.

Hoping to capitalize on his fame, the members elected Thorpe president; Stanley Cofall of Cleveland was elected vice president. A membership fee of \$100 per team was charged to give an appearance of respectability, but no team ever paid it. Scheduling was left up to the teams, and there were wide variations, both in the overall number of games played and in the number played against APFA member teams.

Four other teams-the Buffalo All-Americans, Chicago Tigers, Columbus Panhandles, and Detroit Heralds-joined the league sometime during the year. As noted, on September 26, the first game featuring an APFA team was played at Rock Island's Douglas Park. A crowd of 800 watched the Independents defeat the St. Paul Ideals 48-0.

A week later, October 3, the first game matching two APFA teams was held. At Triangle Park, Dayton defeated Columbus 14-0, with Lou Partlow of Dayton scoring the first touchdown in a game between Association teams. The same day, Rock Island defeated Muncie 45-0.

By the beginning of December, most of the teams in the APFA had abandoned their hopes for a championship, and some of them, including the Chicago Tigers and the Detroit Heralds, had finished their seasons, disbanded, and had their franchises canceled by the Association.

Four teams-Akron, Buffalo, Canton, and Decatur-still had championship aspirations, but a series of late-season games among them left Akron as the only undefeated team in the Association. At one of these games, Akron sold tackle Bob Nash to Buffalo for \$300 and five percent of the gate receipts. It was the first APFA player deal.

## 1921

At the league meeting in Akron, April 30, the championship of the 1920 season was awarded to the Akron Pros. The APFA was reorganized, with Joe Carr of the Columbus Panhandles named president and Carl Storck of Dayton secretary-treasurer. Carr moved the Association's headquarters to Columbus, drafted a league constitution and by-laws, gave teams territorial rights, restricted player movements, developed membership criteria for the franchises, and issued standings for the first time, so that the APFA would have a clear champion.

The Association's membership increased to 22 teams, including the Green Bay Packers, who were awarded to John Clair of the Acme Packing Company.

Thorpe moved from Canton to the Cleveland Indians, but he was hurt early in the season and played very little.

A.E. Staley turned the Decatur Staleys over to player-coach George Halas, who moved the team to Cubs Park in Chicago. Staley paid Halas \$5,000 to keep the name Staleys for one more year. Halas made halfback Ed (Dutch) Sternaman his partner.

Player-coach Fritz Pollard of the Akron Pros became the first black head coach.

The Staleys claimed the APFA championship with a 9-1-1 record, as did Buffalo at 9-1-2. Carr ruled in favor of the Staleys, giving Halas his first championship.

## 1922

After admitting the use of players who had college eligibility remaining during the 1921 season, Clair and the Green Bay management withdrew from the APFA, January 28. Curly Lambeau promised to obey league rules and then used \$50 of his own money to buy back the franchise. Bad weather and low attendance plagued the Packers, and Lambeau went broke, but local merchants arranged a

\$2,500 loan for the club. A public nonprofit corporation was set up to operate the team, with Lambeau as head coach and manager.

The American Professional Football Association changed its name to the National Football League on June 24. The Chicago Staleys became the Chicago Bears.

The NFL fielded 18 teams, including the new Oorang Indians of Marion, Ohio, an all-Indian team featuring Thorpe, Joe Guyon, and Pete Calac, and sponsored by the Oorang dog kennels. Canton, led by player-coach Guy Chamberlin and tackles Link Lyman and Wilbur (Pete) Henry, emerged as the league's first true powerhouse, going 10-0-2.

Thank you to the NFL and to the Football Hall of Fame.

# Chapter 19 Snapshots: Next 60 years of the NFL 1920-1979



## **1920 American Professional Football**

### **Association (1920 - 1922)**

#### **Consisting of 12 Teams:**

<b>Canton Bulldogs</b>	<b>Dayton Triangles</b>
<b>Cleveland Indians</b>	<b>Akron Professionals</b>
<b>Rochester Jeffersons</b>	<b>Rock Island Independents</b>
<b>Massillon Tigers</b>	<b>Muncie Flyers</b>
<b>Decatur Staleys</b>	<b>Racine Cardinals</b>
<b>Hammond Pros</b>	<b>Buffalo All-Americans</b>

## **NFL growth: One thing right after another**

Americans and in fact the whole world sports community know that the National Football League today is a multi-billion-dollar enterprise. Few know the early history provided by the NFL et al in Chapter 18. We just learned that its origins as the American Professional Football Association were much humbler than today's millionaire players and billionaire players and luxury-box stadiums with capacities over 100,000 fans.

Pro-football lovers look back at the league's inaugural 1920 campaign, which we know featured its birth in an Ohio auto dealership. They see strange teams such as Decatur and Muncie and the crowning of a champion that was not immediate as today in the middle of the Super Bowl Field. Instead, it took four months after the last snap was taken to get it right—back in 1921.

As promising as the pro-football scenario was in 1920, even though things looked good for the future of the pro sport, just like today, College Football dominated. Pro football remained completely overshadowed by the college game. This was tough for team owners,

as we discussed. Most were in it for the profits and there were few to none.

They owners were almost literally bleeding cash because of soaring player salaries and intense bidding wars as they poached players from other squads. The owners of these independent pro teams desired a strong league using the baseball model which had worked so long. They wanted to gain more control over the sport—and their finances. The NFL was right around the corner and it would eventually provide this stability.



As we learned in other chapters in the book, the field size in early American football was changing regularly but by 1920, the size was stabilized. The gridiron dimensions were the same in 1920 as today. However, the game of professional football was much different. There were no Johnny Unitas's, Charley Conerly's, Norm Van Brocklin's, Bart Starr's, Joe Namath's, or Tom Brady's.

The Quarterback as we know it today was often a running position. Forward passes were rare. Even things we take for granted today



were prohibited. Can you imagine that coaching from the sidelines was not permitted?



When the pass was legalized in 1906, it still was not like today. It was not readily accepted by “real teams.” Established coaches in the elite Eastern schools like Army, Harvard, Pennsylvania and Yale did not embrace the pass. It was also a gamble. You had to be pretty darn good to not lose more than the potential gain.

Here are some of the stipulations. Passes could not be thrown over the line on five yards to either side of the center. An incomplete pass resulted in a 15-yard penalty, and a pass that dropped without being touched meant possession went to the defensive team. According to Kent Stephens, a historian with the College Hall of Fame in South Bend, “Because of these rules and the fact coaches at that time thought the forward pass was a sissified type of play that wasn’t really football, they were hesitant to adopt this new strategy.”

Each athlete played on both offense and defense. The late great Chuck Bednarik was the last consistent two-way player in the NFL, Bednarik played center and linebacker for a franchise-record 14

seasons with the Eagles from 1949 to 1962. In 1920, just about every player competed on both offense and defense. Money was so tight that the great coach of the Bears, George Halas carried equipment, wrote press releases, sold tickets, taped ankles, played and coached for the Decatur club. Having two platoons would cost twice as much.

Today the league has a standard 16-game schedule, all nice and tidy and made up by the NFL itself. Back then, in 1920, the teams scheduled their own opponents and could play nonleague and even college squads if they chose and it all counted toward their records.

There simply were no established guidelines. Everything was ad hoc—the number of games played, and the quality of opponents scheduled. The league did not even maintain official standings in its fledgling years.

By 1925, it looked like the NFL was going to make it. Late in the season, it pulled off its greatest coup in gaining national attention. The University of Illinois season ended in November, and that made All-America halfback Harold (Red) Grange eligible conflict-free to do as he wanted with his life.

Grange signed a contract to play with the Chicago Bears. On Thanksgiving Day, a crowd of 36,000, which was the largest in pro football history at the time watched Grange and the Bears play the Chicago Cardinals to a scoreless tie at Wrigley Field. At the beginning of December, the Bears hit the jackpot when they went out on the road playing all around the country in 12 days.

They actually played eight games in 12 days, in St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, Boston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago. A crowd of 73,000 watched the game against the Giants at the Polo Grounds.

This helped assure the future success of the troubled NFL franchise in New York. The Bears then played nine more games in the South and West, including a game in Los Angeles, in which 75,000 fans watched them defeat the Los Angeles Tigers in the Los Angeles

Memorial Coliseum. Owners, players, and coaches were ready to do anything to make sure the new league was a success.

In 1930, the league had changed its whole complexion, literally. Dayton was one of the NFL's original franchises. In 1930, it became the last of the NFL's original franchises when it was purchased by William B. Dwyer and John C. Depler, and the whole team was moved to Brooklyn, and renamed the Dodgers. They were a football team, none the less even with the Dodgers name. The Portsmouth, Ohio, Spartans also entered the league at the same time. Things were changing rapidly

Other things were happening such as the Packers edged the Giants for the title, but the most improved team was the Bears. George Halas retired as a player and replaced himself as coach of the Bears with Ralph Jones. Jones refined the T-formation by introducing wide ends and a halfback in motion. He also brought in rookie All-America fullback-tackle, the great Bronko Nagurski.

Anybody would still play anybody. The Giants whooped a team of former Notre Dame players coached by Knute Rockne 22-0 in a successful match before 55,000 at the Polo Grounds on December 14. This was a charity game as the proceeds went to the New York Unemployment Fund to help those suffering because of the Great Depression. The easy victory helped the NFL's credibility with the press and the public. Everybody likes an act of kindness.

## **Carl Storck takes over the NFL as 2nd commissioner**

In 1939, as the league was moving closer to 20 years in operation, Joseph Carr, who had been NFL president since 1921, died in Columbus on May 20. Carl Storck was named acting president of the NFL on May 25. Technology was about to help the NFL. The first televised NFL game saw NBC broadcast the Brooklyn Dodgers v Philadelphia Eagles game from Ebbets Field to the approximately 1,000 TV sets that were known to be in the New York Area.

Championships were beginning to be a big thing in pro-football as Green Bay defeated New York 27-0 in the NFL Championship Game, December 10 at Milwaukee. This was the first year that NFL attendance exceeded 1 million in a season, reaching 1,071,200.

## **Pro Bowl gave football an All-Star Game**

In 1939, The New York Giants defeated the Pro All-Stars 13-10 in the first Pro Bowl. It was played in Chicago at Wrigley Field on January 15. The NFL also decided to change the format of the field, but not the dimensions. Each field would need just a paint job. The inbounds lines or hashmarks were moved from 15 yards away from the sidelines to nearer the center of the field-20 yards from the sidelines.

Funny things were happening that were unexpected. For example, Brooklyn and Boston merged into a team that played home games in both cities and was known simply as The Yanks. Additionally, George Halas rejoined the Bears late in the season after service time with the U.S. Navy during World War II. He took over much of the coaching duties, but he kept the prior coaches throughout the season. Steve Van Buren of Philadelphia led the NFL in rushing, kickoff returns, and scoring.

Rookie quarterback Bob Waterfield led Cleveland to a 15-14 victory over Washington in the NFL Championship Game,

At the end of World War II, after the Japanese surrender, 638 players had served in the Armed forces and 21 of them had died in action.

After the 1942 Pro-Bowl game, during the war period, the game was not played again until 1951. This classic contest was revived. On January 14, the American Conference defeated the National Conference in a nail-biter 28-27.

More rules were passed including some we might think were in the rulebook forever. For example, no tackle, guard, or center would be eligible to catch a forward pass.

The 1951 NFL Championship Game was televised coast-to-coast for the first time. The Rams defeated the Browns 24-17.

Ted Collins sold the New York Yanks' franchise back to the NFL in 1952 and a new franchise was awarded to a group in Dallas after it purchased the assets of the Yanks on January 24. The new Texans went 1-11. This of course was not too good for the new owners. At the end of the season the franchise was canceled. It was the last time that an NFL team would fail.

The Pittsburgh Steelers abandoned the Single-Wing for the T-formation, the last pro team to do so. The Detroit Lions won their first NFL championship in 17 years in 1957 defeating the Browns 17-7 in the title game, played before New Year's on December 28.

In 1953 the Old Yanks came back to life again as a Baltimore group headed by Carroll Rosenbloom got the franchise and the holdings of the defunct Dallas organization. The new team became The Baltimore Colts. It was the product of the largest trade in league history, acquiring 10 players from Cleveland in exchange for five. In a cosmetic name change, American and National conferences were changed to the Eastern and Western conferences.

Another major happening was that the immortal great Jim Thorpe died on March 28. Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania agreed to terms with Thorpe's widow to build a memorial and change the town's name to Jim Thorpe. Thorpe's bones are buried in this beautiful memorial, which I visit every year on my annual visit to this wonderful town where Sean Connery and Richard Harris tipped a few in the filming of the Molly Maguires.

In 1956 the NFL Players Association was founded to give players a bigger voice in what was going on in the NFL. In 1959, the immortal Vince Lombardi was named coach of the Green Bay Packers and Tim Mara of New York Giants fame passed away.

## The NFL was so successful, it spawned the AFL

The American Football League (AFL) was formed as a major professional American football league in 1960 and it was very successful. It was a lot of fun watching all the new teams in action.

The teams included the Dallas Cowboys, Houston Oilers, New York Jets, Kansas City Chiefs, Boston Patriots, and even John Madden's Oakland Raiders. It operated for ten seasons from 1960 until 1969, when it merged with the older National Football League (NFL), that had been established in the 1920-1922 period.

The first AFL-NFL World Championship Game in professional American football was dubbed retroactively as Super Bowl I. It had been referred to in some contemporaneous reports, including the game's radio broadcast, as the Super Bowl. The name stuck. It was played after the 1966 season on January 15 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. In this game, NFL Green Bay Packers defeated the AFL champion Kansas City Chiefs by the score of 35–10.

John Madden is still a people's favorite at 81 years of age. He was hired by Al Davis when the AFL was in its primes as the linebackers coach for the AFL's Oakland Raiders. This was in 1967 and the league would last only two more seasons. He helped the team reach Super Bowl II that season. A year later, after Raiders head coach John Rauchleft, John Madden stepped in to become the Raiders' head coach. This made Madden professional football's youngest head coach at the age of 32.

Former Raiders coach Dennis Allen in interviews noted that John Madden was arguably the best Oakland Raiders coach in the history of the team. His Raiders reached but lost five AFC Title games in seven years. This left the Raiders with the same image that the Dallas Cowboys had previously had—as a team unable to "win the big one."

Despite a 12–1–1 mark in 1969, for example the team lost 17–7 to the Kansas City Chiefs in the final American Football League championship game. The next year, the Raiders would be in the AFC Division of the NFL as the AFL lost its identity.

## Was the AFL Any Good? See Super Bowl III

Super Bowl III was the third AFL–NFL Championship Game in professional American football, and the first to officially bear the name "Super Bowl". It was not AFC v NFC. It was the last interleague Super Bowl and the AFL did not win either of the first two games.

This game was played on January 12, 1969, at the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida. Everybody over five years old at the time remembers Broadway Joe Namath, cocky as can be, making a prediction that the AFL's Jets would win the game.

This game is still regarded as one of the greatest upsets in American sports history. The heavy underdog American Football League (AFL) champion New York Jets, led by former Alabama QB Joe Namath defeated the National Football League (NFL) champion Baltimore Colts by a score of 16–7. I was a senior in College at the time. What a great football game. I watched it from pre-game through post-game.

This was the first Super Bowl victory for the AFL. Though the AFL had been in existence ten years, before the start of this game, most sports writers and fans had written off the AFL teams as being less talented than every one of the NFL clubs. There were few who expected anything less than the Colts to whoop the Jets by a wide margin.

Baltimore had posted a 13–1 record during the 1968 NFL season before defeating the Cleveland Browns, 34–0, in the 1968 NFL Championship Game. The Jets finished the 1968 AFL season at 11–3, and defeated John Madden's great Oakland Raiders, 27–23, in the 1968 AFL Championship Game. Darryl Lamonica had a poor game and Kenny, the Snake Stabler who took Oakland to Super XI had just joined the Raiders.

After beating the Raiders and despite the hype saying the Jets did not have a shot, Joe Namath was undaunted. This unafraid Jets quarterback made an appearance three-days before the Super Bowl at

the Miami Touchdown Club and brashly guaranteed a victory. The Jets could not have been more pleased with the prediction and they backed up Broadway Joe's words by controlling most of the game. They built a 16–0 lead by the fourth quarter off of a touchdown run by Matt Snell and three field goals by Jim Turner.

Colts quarterback Earl Morrall threw three interceptions before being replaced by the great Johnny Unitas, who then led Baltimore to its only touchdown during the last few minutes of the game.

With the victory, the Jets remain the only winning Super Bowl team to only score one touchdown (either offensive, defensive, or special teams). Namath, who completed 17 out of 28 passes for 206 yards, was named as the Super Bowl's Most Valuable Player, despite not throwing a touchdown pass in the game or any passes at all in the fourth quarter. The recap of the game is not as exciting as its reality.

## Wrapping up the 1970's

By the time the 1970's came to an end, Pittsburgh was making itself known across the world. In the last Super Bowl of the decade, the Steelers defeated Dallas 35-31 in Super Bowl XIII at Miami on January 21. They became the first team ever to win three Super Bowls. TV revenue was making the NFL owners very rich. The NBC telecast was viewed in 35,090,000 homes, by an estimated 96.6 million fans. I was one of them.

The owners met on March 13, and awarded three future Super Bowl sites: Super Bowl XV to the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, to be played on January 25, 1981; Super Bowl XVI to the Pontiac Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan, to be played on January 24, 1982; and Super Bowl XVII to Pasadena's Rose Bowl, to be played on January 30, 1983. Every few years they would meet and announce where the Super Bowls would be over a short horizon.

As usual the meeting brought some rules changes. These emphasized additional player safety. The changes prohibited players on the receiving team from blocking below the waist during kickoffs, punts,



and field-goal attempts; prohibited the wearing of torn or altered equipment and exposed pads that could be hazardous; extended the zone in which there could be no crackback blocks; and instructed officials to quickly whistle a play dead when a quarterback was clearly in the grasp of a tackler.

On April 2, 1979, Carroll Rosenbloom, the president of the Rams, drowned at 72 years of age. His widow, Georgia, assumed control of the club. The New York Times wrote the following about the incident and about Rosenbloom's unfulfilled dream:

Mr. Rosenbloom's death came with one goal still unrealized for this successful sports magnate. His team, the Rams, had failed to reach the Super Bowl during his almost seven years of stewardship. The club had made the playoffs leading to that championship game of the National Football League the last six seasons.

The persistent failure was a nagging one because he was the kind of person who set goals and then tried to achieve them regardless of the obstacles. There were few who missed the grasp of Mr. Rosenbloom, who inherited modest wealth from his father, a Baltimore clothing manufacturer, and increased the fortune many times through shrewd transactions, in and out of sports.



## Chapter 20 Domination Steelers, 49ers, Cowboys, & Patriots 1980-2018



### Pittsburgh continued to dominate

In 1980, Terry Bradshaw led the Pittsburgh Steelers to its fourth Championship. They defeated the Los Angeles Rams 31-19 in Super Bowl XIV at Pasadena to become the first team to win four Super Bowls, January 20. The TV audience was unbelievable, with the game being viewed in record 35,330,000 homes.

That was just thirty-seven years ago so there are some not quite fifty-year-olds and older bucks out there who may remember the excitement in Super Bowl XIV. The RAMS were looking more and more like they were going to end Pittsburgh's dynasty.

Ferragamo was driving the Rams toward a potential go-ahead score with 5 1/2 minutes left in the fourth quarter when, from the Pittsburgh 32-yard line, he threw a pass over the middle toward Ron Smith. It did not seem like a bad pass yet, out of nowhere, or so it seemed to Ferragamo, Jack Lambert, the toothless linebacker who was the iron ore of Pittsburgh's Steel Curtain defense, stepped in for an interception. It was Ferragamo's only major mistake in an otherwise brilliant performance. His teammates still reflect to this day what might have been.

Moving on with the game, Terry Bradshaw threw a 45-yard pass to John Stallworth, and a Pat Thomas pass-interference penalty in the end zone gave Pittsburgh the ball on the one-yard line. Franco Harris scored to seal up a nail-biting 31-19 victory and put the Steelers' fourth Super Bowl trophy in six years into the record books for keeps.

In other great happenings in the post season, The NFC won the AFC-NFC Pro Bowl 37-27. This game was again played before the 48,060 fans at Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was a vacation and a relatively nice game. It was the first time in the 30-year history of the Pro Bowl that the game was played in a non-NFL city.

Rules changes continued in 1980, as the NFL placed greater restrictions on contact in the area of the head, neck, and face. Under the heading of "personal foul," for example, players were prohibited from directly striking, swinging, or clubbing on the head, neck, or face. Starting in 1980, a penalty could be called for such contact whether or not the initial contact was made below the neck area.

The NFL was knocking the finances out of the park. Its regular-season attendance shot up to a whopping 13.4 million, setting a record for the third year in a row. The average paid attendance for the 224-game 1980 regular season was 59,787. This was the highest in the league's 61-year history. NFL games in 1980 were played before 92.4 percent of total stadium capacity. You can bet that Pete Rozelle, Commissioner at the time, was trying to figure out how to get the attendance up that extra 7.6%.

Rozelle was doing fine as television ratings in 1980 were also terrific and second-best in NFL history. All three networks posted gains. Things were even great on the radio as the audience came in at 7 million for Monday night and special games.

## Montana and San Francisco

Joe Montana and I were both watching Pittsburgh in the Bradshaw heyday. Montana had a shot at out-Bradshawing Bradshaw. On January 20, 1985, With Notre Dame's Joe Montana at the helm and Jerry Rice at the other end of his precision passes, San Francisco walloped Miami 38-16 in Super Bowl XIX at Stanford Stadium in Stanford, California, January 20. The game was viewed on television by more people than any other live event in history.

President Ronald Reagan had just taken his second oath of office before tossing the coin for the game. He was one of 115,936,000 total viewers. The game drew a 46.4 rating and a 63.0 share. In addition, 6 million people watched the Super Bowl in the United Kingdom and a similar number in Italy. Super Bowl XIX had a direct economic impact of \$113.5 million on the San Francisco Bay area.

Norman Braman, in partnership with Edward Leibowitz, bought the Philadelphia Eagles from Leonard Tose on April 29. Bruce Smith, a Virginia Tech defensive lineman selected by Buffalo, was the first player chosen in the fiftieth NFL draft, April 30.

Pete Rozelle was making more and more happen. A group headed by Tom Benson, Jr., was approved to purchase the New Orleans Saints from John W. Mecom, Jr. This took place on June 3. Things were going great for Pete Rozelle, a guy most liked, in the NFL. The League set a single-weekend paid attendance record when 902,657 tickets were sold for the weekend of October 27-28. Paul Tagliabue took over for Pete Rozelle as Commissioner in 1989.

On January 28, 1990, Montana and San Francisco were at it again, defeating Denver 55-10 in Super Bowl XXIV at the Louisiana

Superdome. San Francisco joined Pittsburgh as the NFL's only teams to win four Super Bowls. The fans loved this kind of action.



Shown above, 49ers quarterback Joe Montana raises his football helmet toward the crowd

Montana is shown on the prior page leaving the field following the team's 55-10 victory over the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXIV in New Orleans, La. Montana set five Super Bowl career records, including his third Super Bowl Most Valuable Player award, and San Francisco's point total was the most ever. (AP Photo/Lennox McLennon, File) (The Associated Press)

As noted previously, this year, the NFL Tagliabue announced that NFL teams would play their 16-game schedule over 17 weeks in 1990 and 1991 and 16 games over 18 weeks in 1992 and 1993, There are still just sixteen games but there are 18 weeks of NFL revenue.

The NFL also changed the way it does the playoffs. As of 1990, there would be two additional wild-card teams (one per conference), which raised the total to six wild-card teams.

For the fifth straight year, NFL owners voted to continue a limited system of Instant Replay. Beginning in 1990, the replay official will have a two-minute time limit to make a decision. The vote was 21-7, March 12. Instant Replay continues to get better.

NFL total paid attendance of 17,665,671 was the highest total in League history. The regular-season total paid attendance of 13,959,896 and average of 62,321 for 224 games were the highest ever, surpassing the previous records set in the 1989 season.

## **More Super Bowls-Dallas & SF**

Troy Aikman was setting records at Dallas in the early 1990's and the Cowboys won three Super Bowls in four years during this period. Additionally, as the Cowboys were a great team, Aikman was getting lots of credit, deservedly.

Troy was the Super Bowl XXVII MVP. The Dallas Cowboys defeated the Buffalo Bills 52-17 in Super Bowl XXVII to capture their first NFL title since 1978. The game was played before a crowd of 98,374 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

The NBC broadcast of the game was the most watched program in television history and was seen by 133,400,000 people in the United States. The rating for the game was 45.1, the tenth highest for any televised sports event. The January 31, 1993 game also was seen live or taped in 101 other countries.

## **Steve Young this time – not Montana**

In 1995, San Francisco got another Super Bowl victory but this time it was by Joe Montana's former understudy Steve Young. On the strength of a six-touchdown performance that surpassed the previous Super Bowl record of five, a record owned by the man Young replaced, Joe Montana, Steve Young was named the MVP of Super Bowl XXIX

The 49ers defeated the San Diego Chargers, 49-26. Young also threw for 325 yards and rushed for 49 yards in this great SF game, making

him the first player ever to finish a Super Bowl as the game's leader in both rushing and passing yards.

## One record after another

In 2001, The Baltimore Ravens won their first Super Bowl by defeating the NFC champion New York Giants 34-7 in Super Bowl XXXV at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa. Notice how all the XXXs have shown up in the Super Bowl Roman numerals. We started counting at III with Joe Namath.

This game was witnessed by 131.2 million viewers, the fifth most-watched program in U.S. television history, January 28. I wish I got a commission for all the revenue the NFL was bringing in as they were selling a product –great football, that the people liked.

The NFL was killing it at the gate and on the TV screens across the nation and the world. It set an all-time paid attendance record in 2000 for the third consecutive year, reaching the 20-million paid attendance mark for only the second time in league history.

Regular-season paid attendance was 16,387,289 for an average of 66,078 per game, which was also an all-time record for the third consecutive season. The Washington Redskins set an all-time NFL regular-season home paid attendance record with a total of 656,599 for eight games, breaking the record of 634,204 held by the 1980 Detroit Lions.

We began this section of the book wondering if the NFL could make it through all the obstacles to success. Today, everybody seems to love Major League Baseball, and few care that colleges even play baseball.

Yet, the folks I know in football, still prefer college over pro. I sure hope that some dumb acts by the players or the management of the NFL do not push the fans into asking for College Football on Sundays. Nobody has a problem with the great success of the NFL as



long as they put fans first, and all aspects of their business and issues in their business last.

NFL owners have always been trying to improve the league. They unanimously approved a realignment plan beginning in 2002. With the addition of the Houston Texans, the league's 32 teams were divided into eight four-team divisions. Seven clubs change divisions, and the Seattle Seahawks change conferences, moving from the AFC to the NFC. A new scheduling format ensured that every team would meet every other team in the league at least once every four years. Good work!

In 2002, For the first time, the NFL season kicked off on a Thursday night in prime-time as the San Francisco 49ers were defeated in a close match by the New York Giants 16-13 at Giants Stadium.

Johnny Unitas, who had the face of an NFL quarterback and who was a master of the game, a legendary quarterback for the Baltimore Colts and a Pro Football Hall of Famer, died of a heart attack at the age of 69 on September 11.

On September 29, Oakland Raiders wide receiver Jerry Rice, who caught most of Joe Montana's passes while at San Francisco, became the all-time leader in yards from scrimmage, surpassing Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Walter Payton (21,281 yards).

Also in 2002, Baltimore Ravens cornerback Chris McAllister set an NFL record for the longest scoring play with a 107-yard touchdown return of an errant 57-yard field goal attempt by Denver Broncos kicker Jason Elam. This NFL record would not last very long.

Dallas Cowboys running back Emmitt Smith became the NFL's all-time rushing leader, surpassing Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Walter Payton.

The New England Patriots were just beginning a major dynasty. They won their second Super Bowl in three years on Feb 1, 2004 by defeating the NFC champion Carolina Panthers 32-29 in Super Bowl XXXVIII at Reliant Stadium in Houston.

There were a lot of half-bitten finger nails reported by the cleanup crew. The game was witnessed by 144.4 million viewers, making Super Bowl XXXVIII the most-watched program in U.S. television history. The NFL was making tons of money thanks to its fans. Fans of course were concerned that they would not get full credit for the major revenues.

Always a big threat, Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning set the NFL single-season record in 2005 with 49 touchdown passes,

The New England Patriots in 2005 went on to become the second team in NFL history to win three Super Bowls in four seasons by defeating the Philadelphia Eagles 24-21 in Super Bowl XXXIX at ALLTEL Stadium in Jacksonville. The game on Feb 6, was seen by 133.7 million viewers, making Super Bowl XXXIX the fifth-most watched program in U.S. television history, February 6.

The Chicago Bears cornerback Nathan Vasher was oblivious to what was happening elsewhere, He set an NFL record in 2005 for the longest scoring play with a 108-yard touchdown return of an errant field goal by San Francisco kicker Joe Nedney in Chicago, November 13. I told you the 107-yard record would not last long. Amazing! The fans love the playing and not the whining.

Seattle Seahawks running back Shaun Alexander set the NFL single-season record for touchdowns with 28 in **2006**. The Pittsburgh Steelers, without Terry Bradshaw at QB, but he was in the TV Broadcast booth went on after their season to win their fifth Super Bowl, defeating the Seattle Seahawks 21-10 in Super Bowl XL at Ford Field in Detroit, Michigan.

This Feb 3 game was watched by 141.1 million viewers, making it the second-most watched program in U.S. television history. The revenue associated with this eventually arrived in the NFL treasury.

The Indianapolis Colts won their second Super Bowl on Feb 4, **2007**, by defeating the Chicago Bears 29-17 in Super Bowl XLI at Dolphin Stadium in South Florida. Both teams were coached by African-

Americans, which was significant at the time. Tony Dungy of the Colts and Lovie Smith of the Bears were the coaches. Both are great guys but sometimes the blacks or the whites, goaded by the media, do not hear that. Both are great guys! I'd like to meet them both.

The New York Giants scored with 35 seconds remaining to win their third Super Bowl, defeating the New England Patriots 17-14 in Super Bowl XLII at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, February 3, **2007**.

The NFL set an all-time paid attendance record in 2007 for the sixth consecutive season. Attendance for all 2007 games was 22,256,502, an increase of 56,790 over the previous mark. The Washington Redskins set an all-time NFL regular-season home paid attendance record of 711,471 for eight games, breaking their own record of 708,852 from 2006. The NFL is doing well. Long live the NFL as long as they choose to treat their fans well.

Then came Super Bowl XLII on February 3, **2008**. This was between the National Football Conference (NFC) champion New York Giants and the American Football Conference (AFC) champion New England Patriots. The Patriots have not been known to lose since Tom Brady signed up. Nonetheless, Eli Manning and the Giants defeated the Patriots by the score of 17-14. The game was played at Stadium in Glendale, Arizona.

The Pittsburgh Steelers scored a touchdown with 42seconds remaining in **2009** to claim their NFL-record sixth Super Bowl title, defeating the Arizona Cardinals 27-23 in Super Bowl XLIII at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay, February 1. Terry Bradshaw was not operating as a player on the field, but he was offering commentary, which always helps.

On January 31, **2010**, the day after my birthday, for the first time, the Pro Bowl was played in the Super Bowl city the week before the Super Bowl.

In this *first of*, the AFC All-Stars beat the NFC All-Stars 41-34 at Sun Life Stadium in South Florida. The game attracted 70,697 fans – the highest attendance for a Pro Bowl since 1959.

A week later on Feb 7, the big game came with typical fanfare. The New Orleans Saints won their first Super Bowl title by defeating the Indianapolis Colts 31-17 in Super Bowl XLIV at Sun Life Stadium in South Florida.

The Green Bay Packers won their fourth Super Bowl title, defeating the Pittsburgh Steelers 31-25 in Super Bowl XLV at Cowboys Stadium in North Texas on Feb 6, **2011**. The game was viewed by 162.9 million people, making it the most-watched program in U.S. television history, February 6. The NFL seemed to be able to do no wrong.

On Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>, **2011**, The NFL Head, Neck and Spine Committee announced a new standardized sideline concussion assessment protocol for team medical personnel. The new protocol includes a symptom checklist, limited neurologic examination and balance assessment.

On January 25, **2012**, NFL clubs extended Commissioner Goodell's contract through March 31, 2019. Some today in 2017, question Goodell's fan loyalty and the ratings today are dropping but they were fine when Goodell served the fans and not the players.

Everybody, including minor authors like myself, who labor over their views on things, have opinions we want to express, and the NFL has told us that expressing opinions is good regardless. Yes, our opinions matter even if NFL ratings go down and they force their fan base to ask for College Football games to be played on Sunday.

The New York Giants had a great season this year and they went on to win their fourth Super Bowl title, defeating Tom Brady and the vaunted New England Patriots 21-17 in Super Bowl XLVI at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, February 6.

Life goes on as the Baltimore Ravens won Super Bowl XLVII in 2013, They were declared champions after beating the San Francisco 49ers by the score of 34-31. It was a game that could have been the biggest comeback in NFL history, but for the 49ers, it was too little, too late even though this fine squad had dominated the second half.

At one point the 49ers were down 22 points, but with less than five minutes remaining, it was anyone's game. Games are not measured in inches but sometimes it seems they should be so measured.

The Seattle Seahawks won their first Super Bowl (XLVIII) Title in February 2014. They crushed the favored Denver Broncos 43-8. It was an exciting game until Linebacker Malcolm Smith returned an interception of a Peyton Manning pass 69 yards for a touchdown late in the first half, and after Percy Harvin returned the opening kickoff of the second half 87 yards for another TD.

That's what one might call a back-breaker. The Seahawks led 36-0 before Denver finally scored on the last play of the third quarter, giving them a reason for just a small shot of Champagne.

Super Bowl XLIX on Feb 1, 2015, found the AFC champs, the New England Patriots defeating the NFC champion Seattle Seahawks, 28-24, to earn their fourth Super Bowl title. The game was played at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. It was the second time the stadium had hosted a Super Bowl, and the third one held in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

With the loss, the Seahawks joined the 1978 Dallas Cowboys, and the 1983 Washington Redskins and the 1997 Green Bay Packers as the only defending Super Bowl champions to lose in the following year's game if they were fortunate enough to get in the game.

## 2016 Super Bowl

Super Bowl 50 played on Feb 7, 2016 found the AFC champion Denver Broncos defeating the NFC champion Carolina Panthers 24-

10 in a game played at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California (located in the San Francisco Bay Area).

As this was the 50th Super Bowl game, the league made a big deal out of the "golden anniversary," with various gold-themed initiatives during the 2015 season. Additionally, this year, they suspended the tradition of naming each Super Bowl game with Roman numerals (under which the game would have been known as "Super Bowl L"). Maybe the NFL was worried about fans saying, "What the 'L?'" For the sake of PR, the NFL wanted the game to be known using prominent Arabic numerals 50. aka Five-OH!

The Panthers finished great in the regular season with a 15–1 record in the 16-game NFL season. They compiled the league's top offense. Quarterback Cam Newton was as good as it gets—actually spectacular during the season and he was responsible almost single-handedly for their good record. Cam, a humble man, would not say he was responsible for their great run. Nonetheless, he was named the NFL Most Valuable Player (MVP).

The Panthers devastated the Arizona Cardinals 49–15 in the NFC Championship Game and they advanced to their second Super Bowl appearance since the Panthers were recognized as a functional team in 1995. The Broncos had finished the regular season with a 12–4 record, bolstered by having the league's top defense and the veteran presence of starting quarterback and Super Bowl XLI winner Peyton Manning. It is tough to lose when Peyton Manning is on **your** side.

The Panthers had a great year at 15–1 record, racking up the league's top offense. QB Newton was named the NFL Most Valuable Player (MVP). The team whooped the Arizona Cardinals 49–15 in the NFC Championship Game and moved on to their second Super Bowl appearance since the franchise began playing in 1995.

Denver had finished the regular season with a 12–4 record with a great star on the team. In this action filled game, Peyton Manning. And the Broncos defeated the defending Super Bowl champion New England Patriots 20–18 in the AFC Championship Game joining the

Patriots, Dallas Cowboys, and Pittsburgh Steelers as one of four teams that have made eight appearances in the Super Bowl.

This record would later be broken the next season, in 2017, when the Patriots advanced to their ninth Super Bowl appearance in Super Bowl LI. But, who is counting?

The Broncos took an early lead in Super Bowl 50 and never trailed after that Denver recorded seven sacks and forced four turnovers. Carolina with Newton at the helm on offense, likewise kept pace by recording five sacks and forcing two turnovers.

In the game, Denver linebacker Von Miller was named Super Bowl MVP. Everybody was rooting for Manning, a do-nothing-bad kind of guy who had made a great football comeback. This game was the final game of Peyton Manning's career as he had announced his retirement on March 7, 2016.

This was the third most-watched program in American television history with an average of 111.9 million viewers. The network charged an average of \$5 million for a 30-second commercial during the game. It remains the highest-rated program in the history of CBS. The Super Bowl 50 halftime show was headlined by Coldplay, with special guest performers Beyoncé and Bruno Mars. Not many football fans care about that but [15  
2017 Super Bowl

## The 2017 Super Bowl

The 2017 Super Bowl looked like it was Boston College's Matt Ryan stealing the show from the eternally great Michigan QB, Tom Brady of the Patriots. Nobody would have believed how this game began and kept beginning until almost the end when it appeared to stop beginning and it finally moved on to completion. But was it too late for the old Boston Patriots?

The history of the Falcons shows that they were an AFL team from inception, having been in existence for 51 years. On SB Sunday, it

was just their second Super Bowl appearance in team history. Checking the statistics, it is clear that for 59 minutes, the Falcons were leading, and there were at least 45 minutes in which they absolutely dominated what appeared to be a team of current-aged Boston Patriots, pre-New England.



The Falcon opponents, according to many fans, seemed as helpless as if they had employed the older and former Boston guys in their retirement years, for just this one game. Maybe New England was that confident. There were few New England fans who actually believed that their beloved team could pull it off as the lock continued to tick and the lopsided score favored the Falcons.

They Pats looked too much like the old huffing and puffing Boston Patriots crew, just back from a few spiritual nips at Flann O'Brien's Irish bar before game time. They saw the Boston Patriots, not their New England favorite team. But, nonetheless, they could not deny what they had been watching on the field. Maybe Ghostbusters could help bring the real New England Patriots.

So many were rooting for their team, the good vibes were hoping to help. But, the honest in the stands who loved the Patriots told people after the game that in their hearts, they had given up at half-time.



They had no major expectations after the old Boston Patriots had done their best.

Yet, as if John Jameson himself entered Coach Belichick's heart, the Patriots began to play inspired and they overcame a 25-point deficit to take the game to overtime. They then won it, 34-28, on the very first series after James White dived in from two yards out.

The 31 unanswered points in the thrilling comeback cemented the Patriots' legacy as the greatest NFL franchise this century. And, the future of course is tomorrow.

Somehow nobody, who loves the Patriots, expected at the beginning of this game that New England, or Boston, on this particular day, would not be celebrating a victory for the Patriots. It was New England's ninth Super Bowl appearance in team history, and the seventh in the Bill Belichick-Tom Brady era.

And the truth is that if not for Eli Manning and the Giants, Bill and Tom would have been 7-0 in the championship game. New England is simply Amazing. And then again, those who pay close attention know that 2 fluke catches of passes, thrown by Eli Manning of the NYG snatched these 2 additional super bowl rings from the Pats!! It had to be said so I said it!

New England fans are not lying. They were convinced this game was over at halftime when the Falcons led 21-0 late in the second quarter, and then a slightly better but not good, 28-9 to start the final quarter, and then again 28-20 at the two-minute warning.

The great orators of sports have suggested that NE and Atlanta fans might notice that with each update, the Patriots crept closer while the Falcons went from confident to hopeful to apprehensive to dejected as Brady commandeered New England down the field again and again and again and again, until the they had even out-Patriots'd the Patriots. They actually out falconed the Falcons or none of the celebrating would have occurred.

Not only did New England overcome the largest deficit in Super Bowl history, they won in the first overtime game in Super Bowl history.

Yes, though Pats fans may not be able to digest these stats 100%, Tom Brady was not sitting on the sidelines during the game, he was playing one of his best games. He played great. He set a Super Bowl record for passing yards. (And before you say, yeah, but he had the benefit of overtime, we'll kindly point out that he managed the feat before the end of regulation.) How about that as a remedy for the old Boston Patriots naysayers.

And, so, until next year after the pro schedule and we have another Superbowl, let's all revel in the fact that from 1920 until today. The NFL made it and pro-football made it.

In order for the NFL and pro-football to continue to make it, of course everybody, players, owners, and fans must remember that without the fans, there are no positive revenue prospects.

Amen!

Hope you enjoyed looking back over 150 years. I sure did!



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