

THE PALIMPSEST

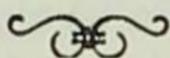
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Historical Background

The game of football has developed slowly through Greek, Roman, and Medieval days to modern times. In England James I barred the sport from his court, but James II looked with sympathy on all popular diversions, even the "murdering practice" of football. The sport was originally largely a kicking game; then Westminster developed the idea of "off-side" play, Eton formulated the idea of an eleven-man team, and a Rugby student was the first to run with the ball, causing a mighty furor back in 1823.

In Colonial America football on the village green was likened to a "friendlie kind of fyghte" which later developed into inter-class conflicts at such schools as Yale and Harvard. The first intercollegiate football game took place in 1869 between Rutgers and Princeton, with twenty-five men lined up on each side. A change began in 1876 when Walter Camp entered Yale. Camp became so proficient at football that while still a player he became a member of the intercollegiate

rules committee in 1878, serving for forty-eight years as adviser to all groups on revision of grid-iron rules.

In 1880 Camp persuaded the rules committee to agree that the number of men on a team should be reduced from fifteen to eleven. Out of this convention also grew such words as "scrimmage," the "quarter back," and the "eleven." When Princeton played Yale in 1884 football was still an open game with the line stretched across the field, and the backs receiving the ball on a lateral from the quarterback. Tackling below the waist was illegal until permitted by the 1888 rules convention. Thereafter the mass attack developed, from which sprang such terms as the "wedge" and the "tackle tandem," momentum plays leading to such brutality that Army and Navy abandoned the game and Yale and Princeton parted company from Harvard, Pennsylvania, and Cornell.

Meanwhile, Michigan became interested in the sport and in 1879 played its first collegiate game with Racine College in the White Stocking (Cubs) Park in Chicago. Soon Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa were manifesting an interest in football. Although football officially dates back to 1889 the University played interclass games, as well as varsity contests against Iowa City town teams, neighboring colleges, high schools, and academies before that date. On October 23, 1886, the *Vidette-Reporter* noted: "Next Saturday, if

nothing prevents, Cornell's foot-ball team will visit Iowa City, to meet the S.U.I.'s, its old-time antagonists. Let's give them a warm reception all round." Unfortunately the game was postponed, apparently because Cornell found several University players were "from town." The exact implication of this may be gleaned from the fact that the Iowa City town team had beaten the University previously, although both teams had played without their "full number of men."

On October 22, 1887, the *Vidette-Reporter* listed members and substitutes of the team. The following week the University team, accompanied by a "much smaller crowd than usual" made the trip to Mt. Vernon. The game commenced at 2:10 P.M. The Hawkeyes first goal was "rather hotly contested," and Cornell "nearly succeeded" in getting a goal, largely because it played under different rules. The "better discipline" of the University team finally prevailed, as it scored its first goal after an hour of play. Two more goals were made by the University in less than thirty minutes. According to the *Vidette-Reporter*: "The most notable feature of the game was the perfect harmony and understanding which prevailed between the two teams during the entire contest. . . . Everyone was well satisfied with his Cornell visit, and wishes to perpetuate the friendly feeling between the two colleges."

The University team also played home-and-

away games with Tipton in 1887. Transportation was by train and "ten or fifteen rooters" accompanied the team. Upon arriving at Tipton several players disappeared and did not show up until game time. Most of the others went to the beautiful farm home of a Mr. Aldrich where they were hospitably entertained before the game. According to the *Vidette-Reporter* of November 12th:

And the dinner! They evidently knew our weakest point in setting before us a dinner which defies description. There was terror pictured on every countenance when soon after dinner football was mentioned. We were almost disposed to acknowledge defeat and not go to the foot-ball grounds; but as no good excuse could be found to offer on our return to the city we proceeded to the fair grounds and in 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours won three straight goals. They are good players but seem not to have had enough practice. A noticeable feature of the game was the best of good feelings on both sides.

The return engagement was played on the new Johnson County fairgrounds and was won by the University.

The first football game officially recognized in the University records was played in 1889 with Grinnell, then known as Iowa College. The University lost its opening and only game of the season 24-0 to the Grinnellians. The following year Grinnell again humbled the University football team 14-6. In the only other game played in 1890 the University crushed Iowa Wesleyan 91-0.

The year 1891 ushered in the first real season

of football at Iowa. The University vanquished Cornell 66-6 but lost to its arch-rival Grinnell by a 6-4 score. Three out-of-state schools were played. Nebraska was trounced 22-0 while Kansas was eclipsed 18-14 in a tight battle. The Hawkeyes fared badly in their first encounter with the Minnesota Gophers, losing by a score of 42-4 in their initial skirmish with their oldest Big Ten foe. After the game, which was played at Iowa City, the *Vidette-Reporter* chronicled a banquet at the St. James Hotel tendered the Minnesota players by the Iowa team. It was a "splendid affair" and apparently "accomplished its object" of proving that Iowa was "as good as any State University" even if "she couldn't play football." Toasts and responses, a few brief talks, and a dance were enjoyed by members of both teams. Before departing the Minnesota boys resolved that the "most hospitable entertainment they ever received" was given them by the State University of Iowa.

The Western Conference or Big Ten was organized in 1896, but Iowa was not invited to become a member until the close of the 1899 season. The Hawkeye football team played its first official Conference games in 1900 and ended the season by sharing the title with Minnesota. Meanwhile, Iowa had accumulated valuable experience in those eleven years between 1889 and 1899. The Hawkeyes had played a total of 72 games during

this period, or over six games a season. Its over all record was 38 wins, 28 losses, and 6 tie games. During the first seven years the team had no paid coach. Finally, in 1896, A. E. Bull of Pennsylvania was hired with good results, the team winning six, losing one, and tying one. T. Wagonhurst of Pennsylvania coached in 1897 and A. A. Knipe of Pennsylvania was coach in 1898 and 1899.

The Hawkeyes met five teams later associated with the Big Ten but played only eight games with them during this eleven-year period. All five of these teams were among the seven charter members of the Western Conference. After losing to Minnesota in 1891, the Hawkeyes tied Chicago 18-18 and lost to Wisconsin 44-0 in 1894. One half of the University's Big Ten games were played against Chicago during this period. Two of these were tie games — 18-18 in 1894 and 5-5 in 1899, and two were losses — 6-0 in 1896 and 36-0 in 1898. Only two victories were registered by the Hawkeyes against Big Ten opponents during these historic years. Northwestern was edged out 12-6 in 1897 while Illinois was crushed 58-0 in 1899.

Judging by the number of times they met, it might appear that Iowa would have gravitated into what later became the Big Six or Big Seven. Twenty-six games were played with future members of this Conference between 1889 and 1899 —

ten with Nebraska, seven with Kansas, five with Missouri and four with Iowa State College. That competition was rugged with these foes is attested by the fact that Iowa won ten, lost fourteen, and tied two against future Big Seven schools. The large number of games played with these teams is due to the fact that Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska formed a Western Interstate Football Association during the 1890's.

During this eleven-year period the Hawkeyes played twelve Iowa colleges for a total of twenty-eight games, winning 21, losing 6, tying 1. Their traditional foe during this period was Grinnell College and their record against this worthy opponent was 5-4-1. Drake and Iowa State Teachers were the only other teams to beat the Hawkeyes in this period, the losses being sustained in 1898 when Drake won 18-5 and Teachers eked out an 11-5 victory. Iowa won its two other games with Drake and trounced State Teachers 22-0 in 1899. Coe, Cornell, Penn, and Wilton were beaten twice during this period. Iowa Wesleyan suffered a humiliating 91-0 defeat in 1890. Luther, Parsons, Simpson, Upper Iowa, and Des Moines Y.M.C.A. were all defeated prior to 1900.

Since football was in its infancy at Iowa during the 1890's it is not surprising that some out-of-state opponents humbled Iowa. The Denver Athletic Club administered a 58-0 defeat in 1893, little Doane College of Lincoln, Nebraska, outclassed

Iowa 10-0 in 1895, and the Chicago College of Physicians and Surgeons won by a score of 14-0 in 1897. In commenting on the latter game an Iowa City paper noted there were "several accidents during the game but no fatalities." One "P & S" player, however, paid a five dollar fine in a Justice of the Peace Court for "brutality" on the field. Rush Medical College of Chicago won 15-11 in 1898 but was defeated 17-0 in 1899 by Coach Knipe's famous warriors. Knox College lost to Iowa 40-0 in 1892 and 33-0 in 1899, but held the Hawkeyes to a scoreless tie in 1898. Iowa whipped its only other out-of-state opponent, Augustana, 34-0 in 1894.

Iowa was completing its eleventh season in 1899, on the eve of its admission into the Western Conference. Under Coach Knipe the 1899 team had swept through its season of nine games with an 8-0-1 record, the tie being a 5-5 game with Chicago. The Hawkeyes had scored 221 points against 5 for their opponents, the latter a field goal by Chicago. Two opponents were Western Conference members, one of which, Illinois, had been crushed 58-0. Two others were Nebraska and Iowa State, both strong teams, the latter losing to Iowa by a 5-0 score. With growing interest being manifested by students and faculty alike, the Hawkeyes stood poised for an outstanding performance when they joined the Big Ten in 1900.

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