

College Football Doc:

I. Origins of Football

A. People have been playing games with balls since the beginning of time.

- i. Harpastem – Ancient Roman keep-away/rugby
 - a) not much is known about the game besides pictures, which show that it was rather rough
 - b) “He (one of the players) seized the ball and passed it to a teammate while dodging another and laughing” - Athenaeus
- ii. Marn Grook – Aboriginal football
 - a) similar rules to modern Australian football
 - b) Involved people kicking a ball around, trying to catch the ball in the air, only to kick it again
- iii. Mob/Shrovetide football
 - a) Most direct ancestor to modern American football
 - b) played in Europe, with much of the action taking place in England
 - c) Generally, the main objective was for a team to move a ball someplace
 - Generally, the game was played between two towns, and you have to move the ball to the oppositions town.
 - d) Move the ball by any means necessary, as long as it doesn't kill anyone
 - e) Hundreds would take part in these games
 - f) There were many attempts to ban mob football
 - Banned in London in 1314
 - Banned by king Edward in 1363
 - First use of the term “football.” Usually referred to simply as “ball.”
 - Banned by Henry IV in 1404 and in Scotland in 1404
 - Final nail in coffin, Highway Act of 1835 banned (mob) football from being played on roads
 - iv. by the 1800s, mob football was being phased out in favor of new versions of football

B. Soccer and Rugby

- i. By the 1830s, there was a split between two major forms of football, that were created by the varying sets of rules played around the world.
 - a) Some games only allowed the ball to be kicked to the goal
 - This would eventually become Association Football (Soccer)
 - b) Other games allowed players to pick up the ball to be picked up and run with it
 - This would be called Rugby football
 - Rugby football gets its name from Rugby School in England, where (as the story goes) the game was invented when one kid decided to go against custom and run with the ball instead of kicking it
 - The rules of the game would be standardized in 1845, when the first written set of rules was created by three students
- ii. In 1860, the Football Association was founded
 - a) Intended to unify all the different versions of football played at different schools
 - b) Rules included the Fair Catch and tackling people if they ran with the ball, but these rules were not liked, so they were eventually dropped.
 - c) True beginning of Soccer

C. Football in the United States before 1869

- i. Like in England, many different versions of football were played at colleges around the

US

- a) "Ballown" was played by Princeton as far back as 1820
- b) A traditional football game called "Bloody Monday" was played at Harvard
- c) Dartmouth had "Old Division Football," which was played until 1948
 - Two teams try to move a ball past either the west or east fence, depending on which team you played for
 - no standardized teams, as players grouped together for games between science and humanities majors, even number graduation years vs odd number years, and even New Hampshire vs the world
 - Game included Umpires and fouls
 - The game involved kicking to people who were across a line that they could not cross, a prototype line of scrimmage
 - Usually "Turned into an excuse to fight over a ball"
- d) Running vs Kicking Games:
 - Rutgers, Brown, Yale, and other played games where you could only kick
 - The Montreal Club played a running/rugby style game

II. College Football begins: November 28, 1869

A. The Game

- i. Rutgers and Princeton play the first intercollegiate football game

a) Rules

- Rutgers was the home team, so they played by Rutgers' rules
- Only kicking allowed
- first to six goals wins
- 25 players per team
- lots of contact
- Based on football association's rules
- more like soccer than modern football

b) The Outcome

- Rutgers won the game 6-4
- First recorded use of a "Flying Wedge"
- After their victory, Rutgers' team and fans chased Princeton's players out of town

B. The Rematch

- i. Played at Princeton, so the game was played under Princeton's rules
 - a) Mostly like Rutgers rules, but allowed fair catches, which caused free kicks
- ii. Princeton won 8-0
- iii. Princeton and Rutgers retroactively split the national championship in 1869

C. Spreading of the game

- i. Rutgers and Princeton would spread the game to Columbia, who would spread it to Yale.
 - a) Each team would spread the game to other schools.
- ii. In 1873, representatives from Rutgers, Yale, Columbia and Princeton met to standardize the rules to this game.
 - a) 20 person teams
 - b) no throwing or carrying the ball
 - c) no pushing or tackling of players
 - d) first to six goals wins, unless game call before, than most points wins
 - e) This game is basically soccer
 - f) Not hard and fast rules- some variation between schools

III. Evolution

A. First Rugby Style football game: Harvard vs. McGill University

- i. Harvard's first intercollegiate football game
- ii. Played under "The Boston Game" rules
 - a) The Boston game was a form of football very different
 - 15 men per team on the field
 - Allowed the football to be carried
 - still involved kicking goals
 - b) Harvard continued to play under these rules while other schools move to a even more soccer-like rule system
- iii. The outcome
 - a) Harvard beat McGill 3-0, as the game was called off after 22 minutes of play
- iv. Rematch
 - a) The next day Harvard played McGill in a game of rugby
 - notable rule changes
 - Touchdowns scored points
 - Tackling stopped play
 - Rugby
 - The game ended in a 0-0 tie
 - Harvard loved rugby, and they eventually played more rugby than the Boston game

B. Harvard spread their new rugby version of football around

- i. Played Tufts in 1875, the first rugby football game between two US teams
 - a) Tufts won 1-0
- ii. Played Yale for the first time on November 13, 1875
 - a) Probably the most important game in Football history
 - b) Played under a mixture of Harvard's and Yale's rules
 - 15 players per team (Harvard's Rule)
 - Touchdowns don't count as points, only gives a chance at points (Yale's rules)
 - c) Harvard beat Yale 4-0
 - Just like when Harvard was beat by McGill, Yale loved the game, even in defeat
 - Yale started playing Rugby football

IV. Walter Camp

- i. Born April 7, 1859 in New Britain, Connecticut
- ii. Starting attending Yale in 1875
- iii. Played for the Yale football team from 1876 – 1882
 - a) Captained the team from 1878
 - b) Was a very good player
- iv. Heavily involved in various rule committees
- v. Major innovations:
 - a) Introduced in a convention at Springfield on October 12, 1880
 - Invented the Line of scrimmage
 - before every play began with a scrum, so no official offense or defense
 - 11 players on the field for each team
 - resembles Yale's favored amount of players
 - The Snap
 - relates to the line of scrimmage

- b) the quarterback
 - someone to receive the snap
- c) Safety
 - before the safety, instead of giving points to the team that managed to tackle the opposing team in the endzone, they awarded a scrum 5 yards from the goalline.
 - Also, before down and distance rules, teams would purposely take safeties, to gain the ball back, further down the field than where they started
 - Since there are no more scums, this makes sense
- d) Down and Distance
 - Princeton-Yale 1882: first Princeton then Yale holds onto the football for a whole half, leading to a tie
 - After the invention of the snap, teams would spend whole games gradually pushing the ball down the field, trying to hold onto the ball until the end of the game. Camp suggested that the team with possession of the ball should be required to gain 5 yards or lose 10 yards in three plays or else give the ball to the other team.
- e) Points 1883
 - before, teams won based on the amount of goals that were scored, after touchdowns or placekicks
 - now, points were awarded for touchdowns, goals, and safeties
- f) Signals
 - allowed the team to know which play to run
 - may have been stolen by Camp from Michigan in after a 1881 game between the two schools
- g) Selected the first All-American team in 1889
- h) These changes made football its own game, not just another version of Rugby or Soccer

vi. Became Yale's first "head coach" in 1888 till he became Stanford's coach in 1893

V. The West

- A. Football was primarily played by schools in the Northeast
 - i. Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Tufts to name a few
- B. Rugby brought west in 1876
 - i. Charles M. Gayley brought football to the University of Michigan
- C. May 30, 1879: First game in the west
 - i. Michigan played Racine and won 1 goal – 0
- D. Western Expansion 1882
 - i. Minnesota, Northwestern, Iowa, Hamline, and Cornell started football teams
 - ii. Many others followed
 - a) Chicago's football team was founded in 1892 by Amos Alonzo Stagg, who would become the winningest coach in college football history
 - b) Ohio State's football program was started in 1890
 - c) John Heisman began his coaching career at Oberlin in 1892
 - Defeated Michigan 24-22
 - more on Heisman after the invention of the forward pass
- E. The two powers of the pre-pass west: Michigan and Chicago
 - i. Michigan
 - a) Michigan was the first western team to beat a major eastern football power, when they beat Cornell 12-4 on November 23, 1894

- b) Fielding Yost became the head coach of Michigan in 1901
 - turned Michigan from a regional power to a national power
 - Point a Minute offense
 - ii. Chicago
 - iii. Michigan vs Chicago
 - a) Michigan vs Chicago was the biggest match up of the year in the west
 - Michigan and Chicago were major rivals
 - Traditionally, the Mich-Chicago game was played on Thanksgiving, with thousands turning out to watch the giants face off.
 - F. The Western Conference
 - i. Presidents of Chicago, Illinois, Lake Forest, Minnesota, Northwestern, Purdue, and Wisconsin come together in 1895 to form an athletic collective.
 - ii. Michigan joined in 1896, replacing Lake Forest
 - iii. Would go on to become the Big 10 conference
- VI. Style of play between 1880 and 1906
- A. No Forward pass
 - B. The Wedge/momentum plays
 - i. First used by Princeton in a game against Penn, October 25, 1884
 - ii. All linemen line up in a V, with the center as the point.
 - iii. The ball is snapped to a back in the center of the V, and all 11 men rush towards the line
 - a) The Ball carrier would be completely surrounded by blockers, making it nearly impossible to tackle him
 - “There were two approved ways of halting the wedge: 1) hit the apex man on the jaw with the heel of the hand and 2) to dive under the mass and pile it up” - The Saga of American Football
 - Basically, kill the lead man to stop the wedge
 - b) Linemen would grab each other, kinda like a game of red rover
 - c) originally, all the linemen would start rushing towards the line before the snap, but this was outlawed in 1894 when the rules committee outlawed more than two people motioning before the play began
 - d) very dangerous
 - iv. Not used every down, but when teams desperately needed to gain yards
 - a) Caspar Whitney, sports writer of the time, said that nearly all running plays were based on wedge plays
 - v. Yale was one of the last teams to adopt the wedge, taking it up in 1890
 - vi. The original style of the play was banned, but new forms were invented
 - a) Players would start spread out, but converge on the center, and the results would be the same. Pain
 - b) Now, the wedge could be directed in various directions, whether it be to the left, right, or center
 - c) The runner would still be surrounded by blockers
 - C. Mass plays
 - i. kinda like momentum plays, but no running start
 - ii. the goal, once again, was to push or pull your teammate down the field by any means necessary
 - D. Interference
 - i. Under the rules of rugby, players were not allowed to block the opposing players from tackling the ball carrier.

- ii. Interference was when a player ran in the way of tacklers, with technically blocking them in a modern sense

VII. Controversies

A. as the game evolved, the amount of controversy increased.

- i. Schools and the general public thought that the game was becoming too violent

- a) “It is more than a chance coincidence that this recent revival of brutality accompanies the over development of college athletics and the football craze.” - E.L. Godkin

- “To become brutal and brutalizing is the natural tendency of all sports which involve violent personal collision between the players, and the game of football is a nonexception to this rule.”

- b) Boston Globe - “Friends and Foes slugged each other and bruised faces and torn

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