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## Sports Commentary: The Rules of the Games

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# The RULES of the GAME

BY CHARLES ANGELL

The next Saturday afternoon that you venture to Swenson Field to cheer on the Bears against one of their New England Conference rivals, recall for a moment that small college football in New England and the East has had long and vigorous tradition. Even the cheerleading goes way back to the days of the first contests between Princeton and Rutgers. Back in 1869 Princeton played a rematch against Rutgers. The Tiger team hoped to disconcert the Rutgers' offense by screaming rebel yells whenever Rutgers tried to advance the ball. The Princeton defense only winded itself trying to run and yell at the same time. Rutgers won. True cheerleading began at their next meeting when Princeton brought classmates to produce coordinated shouting. All the traditions in Eastern football have a long colorful history that go back to when the game more resembled today's soccer or perhaps rugby.

In fact, football as we know it began at Harvard. Other schools—Princeton, Rutgers, Columbia, and Yale—played the soccer-like game which prohibited the ball carrier from running with the ball when pursued. Harvard played by the so-called Boston rules which allowed the ball carrier to run with the ball until pursued. Harvard's style of play developed from its traditional 'Bloody Monday' scrum between upperclassmen and freshmen in the Yard. This loosely played football game saw more freshmen kicked than the ball, a style of play which lingers in some intramural play here at Bridgewater. Other schools refused to compete against Harvard as long as the Boston rules were used, and not until 1874, when McGill University in Canada came to Cambridge, did the Crimson find an opponent. Now McGill played according to Canadian rugby rules which allowed the ball carrier to pick up the ball and run whether pursued or not. Harvard liked this style of play, adopted the Canadian rules, and thus formed the essentials of what we know as football. Yale, in 1875, followed Harvard's lead and their great rivalry began.

And what a rivalry it's been. We all

remember the Harvard-Yale game of a decade or so ago when the teams played to a 17 all tie, Harvard coming from way behind in the second half, allowing fans on both sides of the gridiron to claim the victory. One of the greatest Harvard-Yale games was fought on a beautiful November Saturday in 1913. Harvard

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prevailed 15-3 on the strength of five Charles Brickley field goals, drop kicked, as they were then, from behind the line of scrimmage. Harry Cross, sportswriter for The New York Times wrote of the Harvard team: "The 'newsies' here tonight are not screaming about Harvard's triumph. They are yelling 'Wuxtra! Wuxtra! All about the New Haven wreck!' The New wreck is Captain Ketcham's team, exhausted, played out to the last ounce of

human strength, and beaten decisively by Percy Haughton's big Crimson team, which showed itself to be one of the best-drilled football machines ever to tread a gridiron."

Percy Haughton of Harvard established himself as one of the game's finest coaches. But it was Walter Camp, coach at Yale in those early days, who developed many of the rules that make football familiar to us. Camp proposed the scrimmage which allowed one side control of the ball and permitted planning offensive movements. The ball would change sides whenever one team scored. Princeton, the first school to try the scrimmage, quickly understood that retaining possession of the ball meant retaining an undefeated record. Against Yale in 1881 Princeton played the famous 'block' game. Yale controlled the ball for the entire first half, Princeton for the second; this boring stalemate allowed both teams to claim championship seasons and sent Camp back to his innovation book. What he proposed was a series of downs during which the offense had to move the ball or lose possession. After some trial and error, the 'down' system stabilized into the familiar ten yards in four downs.

Faced now with the necessity of advancing the ball or losing it, Princeton — sometime in 1888 — introduced the U-formation, a moving triangle of players



with the ball carrier in the middle. Princeton prospered with this deployment until, again in a game against Yale, the Eli's legendary guard, W. W. "Pudge" Heffelfinger, broke the U by running headlong at the formation, leaping the leading blockers with a single bound and landing—all 200 pounds and knees first—on the ball carrier. Yale, so long as Heffelfinger remained conscious and unbroken, managed some success using this technique. Other defensive teams, lacking Yale's heft and suicidal impulses, bounced off the blockers and were left standing toe-to-toe with the offense, pummeling away. Football became footbrawl.

Swarthmore star Bob Maxwell. A famous photograph, snapped at the height of one of the game's roughest plays, showed Maxwell being gang tackled by the Quaker players. He had to be helped from the field, definitely bloodied and bowed. President Theodore Roosevelt saw the photo and announced to football's ruling hierarchy that they either bring the mayhem under control or he would ban the game by presidential edict. Big sticks were (and are) OK in the White House but not on the gridiron.

Camp, whose innovations had inadvertently caused the mayhem, campaigned for the rule changes. Finally,

Watching Warner's team practice the day before their game with the Crimson, Haughton protested the fairness of the pads. "It's not against the rules" was Warner's smug response. Next day Haughton and Warner met at midfield to select the game ball from the bag of balls. Warner pulled from the bag a football, dyed crimson. "No rule says footballs must be brown," said Haughton whose team defeated Carlisle 17-0.

But don't waste too much pity on Carlisle, for that small college fielded one of football's greatest players, Jim Thorpe, perhaps the first of the modern running backs. Thorpe possessed speed and quickness



*One of Bridgewater's first football teams — the Normal School boys of 1893. They played with neither helmets nor shoulder pads.*

The U was a slow-moving formation. Harvard speeded it up and perfected it by developing the flying wedge, a great advantage to the heavier team. Alonzo Stagg, another great coach and working at Springfield College at the same time, saw that by placing his ends in the backfield to block, he could achieve flexibility and speed of ball movement. Stagg's innovation quickly caught on everywhere, most especially with George Woodruff's Pennsylvania Quaker teams, which used massed formations to compile an almost perfect winning record. But, the flying wedge also increased football's violence to the extent that most teams believed that by pounding the opposition's best player, the weaker players would lose heart. During Pennsylvania's 1905 meeting with Swarthmore, the Quakers committed what amounted to aggravated assault on

on June 12, 1906 in New York, the leading coaches met to form the Football Rules Committee, the precursor to the present NCAA Rules and Competition Committee. Among the rule changes recommended and ultimately adopted were legalizing the forward pass, limiting mass formations and interference, and establishing a neutral zone at the line of scrimmage.

These rule changes brought football into its maturity. What could no longer be accomplished by violence had to be done with guile. Speed and deception became the rule, causing some coaches to mount new heights of ingenuity. "Pop" Warner, coach at Pennsylvania's small Carlisle College, attached pads to his player's uniforms, the precise size, shape, and color of the football. The deception confused every opponent and angered many, particularly Percy Haughton of Harvard.

in abundance. Let *The New York Times* reporter detail Thorpe's dismantling of Army, led by halfback Dwight D. Eisenhower one November 1912 Saturday. "Thorpe went through the West Point line as if it was an open door; his defensive play was on a par with his attack and his every move was that of a past master. ....His catch [of a kickoff] and his start were but one motion. In and out, zigzagging first to one side then to the other, while a flying cadet went hurling through space. Thorpe wormed his way through the entire Army team. Every cadet had his chance, and every one of them failed. It was not the usual spectacle of the man with the ball outdistancing his opponents by circling them. It was a dodging game in which Thorpe matched himself against an entire team and proved the master. Lines drawn parallel and fifteen feet apart



would include all the ground that Thorpe covered in his triumphant dash through an entire team." Thorpe went on to an equally brilliant professional career.

But don't feel too badly for Army either. Earl "Red" Blaik coached his share of Army powerhouses. And he was a disciplinarian. The story's still told

about how Army during one contest was decimating its opponent in every phase of the game. Blaik sent in his third string with orders to take it easy and not humiliate the opponent. Even so, a cadet gathered in a fumble and raced unopposed for the goal line. Suddenly, remembering Blaik's orders, the cadet stopped and

carefully placed the ball on the one yard line.

Football, in its early years, holds so many memories of great Eastern teams, their players like "Ducky" Pond of Yale and "Swede" Oberlander of Dartmouth who single-handedly wrecked the until then undefeated 1925 Cornell eleven.

# Small College FOOTBALL in NEW ENGLAND

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BY PETER MAZZAFERRO

**W**hat is small college football?

Small college football was clearly defined by the NCAA in 1973 with the establishment of NCAA Division III. Colleges in NCAA Division III are not allowed to give athletic scholarships and must schedule and play more than 50 per cent of their football games against other Division III members.

However, small college football in New England and rivalries among nearby colleges started many years before the NCAA established divisions in college football. Amherst and Williams for example have been playing each other since 1884. In 1885, Trinity and Wesleyan started their rivalry on the gridiron. Up to 1987, the Connecticut small college rivals have opposed each other in 87 football contests. The Trinity Bantams won the national small college title in 1911, 1934 and 1949.

Wesleyan University's greatest gridiron period was from 1945 to 1948 when Coach Norm Daniels' teams won twenty-five consecutive games. In 1969 Coach Don Russell's Wesleyan team had an 8-0 record and shared the Lambert Cup with Delaware. The Lambert Cup is presented to the outstanding small college football

team in the East.

In 1893 the Maine Series was started. The Maine or State series consisted of Bates, Bowdoin, Colby and the University of Maine. In 1964, the University of Maine dropped out of the series. Although the remaining three schools are not an official conference, the location of the schools has created a fierce intra-state rivalry. In 1946, Bates College had an undefeated team coached by Raymond "Ducky" Pond, the ex-Yale athlete and coach, and traveled to Toledo, Ohio, to play in the Glass Bowl. Bates lost to the University of Toledo, 21-12.

In 1910, another unofficial league was started. The league was called the Little Three and consisted of Amherst, Williams and Wesleyan. Through the years there have been some great battles between these small college rivals. The Little Three proves that you can have more than two to make a good rivalry.

The Norwich-Middlebury College football rivalry started in 1893. The teams have met 93 times. The Norwich Cadets and the Middlebury Panthers are the only colleges in Vermont playing football, thus the game draws a great deal of media and fan attention. In 1980, ABC televised the

## *New England Small College Players Who Participated in National Professional Football League:*

Jack Maitland - Running Back - Williams College, Baltimore Colts; Curtis Perry Defensive Back - Williams College, Cincinnati Bengals; Gene Fugert - Tight End - Amherst College, Dallas Cowboys; Doug Swift - Linebacker - Amherst College, Miami Dolphins; Fred Scott - Flanker - Amherst College, Baltimore Colts; Sean Clancy - Linebacker - Amherst College, Miami Dolphins; Mark Buben - Defensive Tackle - Tufts University, New England Patriots; Roger LeClerc - Linebacker, Kicker - Trinity College, Chicago Bears; Milt Kobroski - Running Back - Trinity College, New York Giants; Joe Shields - Quarterback - Trinity College, Green Bay Packers

## *New England Small College All-Americans*

John Hubbard, Back - Amherst, 1905; Ben Boynton, Back - Williams, 1917-1919 Little All-Americans (selection started in 1934)

### **AMHERST**

Adrian Hasse, End, 1942; Richard Murphy, Quarterback, 1972; Fred Scott, Flanker 1973

### **BATES**

Larry DiGrammarino, Wide Receiver, 1981



It's a game; it's fun. And I like to think that what it's all about is how the Times reporter summed up a 1907 Yale defeat at the hands of Princeton. "Each and every [Yale player] left the field feeling no disgrace in such a defeat, for Yale had proved herself made of the sternest stuff, had produced an eleven that every

American can be proud of as an example of the highest type of young manhood, which in the face of every discouragement refuses to accept defeat while there is strength to fight, and by pure merit won over every obstacle, when experienced football men saw no chance of the Blue gaining victory."

Of course, if you don't like high sentiments about football, there's always the coach who said to his players "OK guys, line up alphabetically according to height." ■

CHARLES ANGELL, *Professor of English*

## BOWDOIN

Steve McCabe, Offensive Lineman, 1977

## NICHOLS

Ed Zywiec, Linebacker, 1981

## NORWICH

Milt Williams, Running Back, 1979; Beau Almodobar, Wide Receiver, 1984

## PLYMOUTH STATE

Robert Gibson, Defensive Back, 1974; Mark Barrows, Linebacker, 1981; Joe Dudek, Running Back, 1983, 1984

## TUFTS

William Grinnell, End, 1934; Tim Whelan, Running Back, 1976; Mark Buban, Defensive Line, 1978; Chris Connors, Quarterback, 1979; Mike Brown, Offensive Line 1980

## WESLEYAN

Bert Vanderclute, Guard, 1946; Jack Geary, Tackle, 1948; Bert Hellar, Center, 1972, 1973; John McVicar, Defensive Line, 1976, 1977

## WILLIAMS

Charles Salmon, Defensive Guard, 1946; Jack Maitland, Halfback, 1969; John Chandler, Linebacker, 1974; Greg McAleenan, Defensive Back, 1978

## TRINITY

Micky Kobrosky, Back, 1935, 1936; Charlie Sticka, Back, 1955; Roger LeClerc, Center, 1959; David Kiarsis, Back, 1970; Pat McNamara, Flanker, 1978

39-8 Middlebury win. Since 1979, the game has been played for the Wadsworth Trophy. The trophy is named for a former Norwich Vice President and Commandant of Cadets, Colonel John B. Wadsworth, Jr.

In 1919 New England started its own Army-Navy series when the cadets of Norwich faced the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. They have opposed each other fifty-one times on the gridiron—series record—C.G.A. 27, NU 23, Ties-1. This contest is played for a prize called "The Mug." The rivalry is best known as the "Little Army-Navy" Series.

The United States Coast Guard Academy fielded its first team in 1922. Coast Guard's 1951 team coached by Nelson Nitchman was undefeated. Hall of Famer Otto Graham took over coaching reigns in 1959. Otto's 1963 team went undefeated

and went to the Tangerine Bowl. The Bears were defeated in their own bowl appearance by the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers, 27-0.

In 1960, several small college's started football and were having difficulty finding a schedule. Athletic Directors, Hal Chalmers of Nichols College, Ed Swenson of Bridgewater State College and Dave Wiggins of Maine Maritime got together and organized the New England Football Conference. By 1987, the Conference has grown to twelve teams. The members are Curry College, Bridgewater State, Framingham State, Nichols College, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Worcester State, Westfield State, Western New England College, Maine Maritime Academy, Fitchburg, Plymouth State and the University of Lowell. The twelve teams have been organized into two divisions, North and South, and a

championship game between the two first-place finishers is scheduled for November.

Perhaps the highlight of the New England Football Conference was in the 1985 season when Little All-American running back Joe Dudek of Plymouth State broke Walter Payton's NCAA all-time touchdown record with 79 touchdowns. Plymouth State and Western Connecticut State were co-champions of the conference. Plymouth played in the ECAC playoffs, and Western Connecticut earned a berth in the NCAA tournament. One of the traditional rivalries which has

developed in the conference is the annual battle for the Cranberry "Scoop" between Bridgewater State and neighboring Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

The most recent conference was formed in 1965

when the New England Small College Athletic Conference was created. This conference is run by the college presidents. The coaches in this conference are not allowed to go on the road recruiting and the teams are not allowed to participate in NCAA tournaments. The members are Tufts, Williams, Trinity, Wesleyan, Amherst, Hamilton, Middlebury, Bowdoin, Bates, and Colby.

Small college football continues to grow in New England with many new teams joining the NCAA division III such as Worcester State and Fitchburg State. But the old traditional rivalries between Amherst-Williams, Trinity-Wesleyan, Norwich-Middlebury continue to flourish proving that college football can blend the old with the new. ■

PETER MAZZAFERRO,  
*Associate Professor of Physical Education*



Heisman Trophy candidate Joe Dudek versus Bridgewater State in 1985 contest