

# Football Chronology II

## The First Pros: 1884 to 1903

With rule changes that produced the scrimmage, downs and yards-to-go, and numerical scoring, Americans were playing a game that we today can recognize as football.

In addition to the famous eastern college teams of Yale, Harvard and Princeton, athletic clubs developed football and other sports teams. To a great extent, the membership of these clubs was dependent on having successful teams. Outstanding athletes were recruited by offering free memberships, jobs, expenses, and probably pay, but, despite allegations, professionalism went unproved through the 1880s. This was important because a team proved to use professionals could be barred by the American Athletic Union from participation in all sports with AAU members – nearly all colleges and athletic clubs.

### 1884

Yale and Princeton were both undefeated but played a scoreless tie against each other.

### Rule Change

Games were to be officiated by referee alone.

### Strategy

Origin of V-trick credited to both Lehigh and Princeton.

Origin of interference, called "guarding", in which two players ran alongside ball carrier to make tackling from the side more difficult.

### 1885

Princeton won all nine of its games.

In England, Football Association passed rules restricting pro players.

### 1886

Once more Yale and Princeton went undefeated but played a scoreless tie with each other .

### 1887

Yale won its nine games.

### Rule Change

Office of umpire created and given jurisdiction over players.

### 1888

William "Pudge" Heffelfinger entered Yale and immediately began starring at guard. The Elis went 13-0-0.

### Rule Change

Prohibition of blocking with extended arms and legalization of tackling below the waist bring era of mass and momentum play.

Uniforms: "Moleskin" trousers replace those of canvas.

### 1889

Princeton defeated Yale 10-0 to finish the season undefeated.

First All-American Team was named by Caspar Whitney in consultation with Walter Camp. Pudge Heffelfinger is chosen as one guard.

### 1890

In western Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Athletic Association, a new athletic club, took up football largely to give them a recruiting edge over the established Pittsburgh Athletic Club. The team was led by O.E. Thompson, a former teammate of Walter Camp at Yale, who had become a successful Pittsburgh lawyer.

### 1891

Heffelfinger finishes his career at Yale with his third straight All-America selection.

In Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Athletic Club completes an undefeated season. The Allegheny Athletic Association, though playing a harder schedule, is accused of avoiding a showdown game with the PAC.

### 1892

In an era in which football was a major attraction of local athletic clubs, an intense competition between two Pittsburgh-area clubs, the Allegheny Athletic Association (AAA) and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club (PAC), led to the making of the first proven professional football player. Former Yale All-America guard William (Pudge) Heffelfinger was paid \$500 by the AAA to play in a game against the PAC, becoming the first person known to be paid to play football, November 12. The AAA won the game 4-0 when Heffelfinger picked up a PAC fumble and ran 35 yards for a touchdown.

The following week, Ben "Sport" Donnelly, a former Princeton end who had played against the PAC for "expenses" was paid \$250 for the AAA's game against Washington and Jefferson.

### 1893

The Pittsburgh Athletic Club signed one of its players, probably halfback Grant Dibert, to the first known pro football contract, which covered all of the PAC's games for the year.

At the same time, the AAA paid at least three players \$50 a game all season. They were James M. van Cleve, Ollie W. Rafferty, and Peter Wright. When the team started slowly, Sport Donnelly was brought in as player-coach, the first man to coach a known pro team.

### 1894

Lawson Fiscus, an outstanding player who had performed earlier with the AAA, was paid \$20 a game to play for the Greensburg (PA) Athletic Association.

The AAA won two out of three games with the PAC.

### 1895

John Brallier became the first football player to openly turn pro, accepting \$10 and expenses to play for the Latrobe YMCA against the Jeannette Athletic Club. Latrobe's team was managed by local newspaperman Dave Berry .

After leading Latrobe to victory, Brallier went off to attend and play football for Washington & Jefferson.

The AAA, under investigation for professionalism by the AAU, did not field a team this year.

### 1896

Knowing that it will soon be barred from competition by the AAU, the Allegheny Athletic Association defiantly emptied its treasury to import a team of all-stars, including Heffelfinger. The team – the first completely professional team – defeated the PAC and the Duquesne Country and Athletic Club on consecutive days, both games by shutouts. Then, after its abbreviated two game season, the AAA disappeared forever.

### 1897

The Latrobe Athletic Association football team went entirely professional, becoming the first team to play a full season with only professionals.

Although Latrobe's pros produced a strong 10-2-1 record, archival Greensburg A.A. was recognized as area "independent" champions with a 10-1 mark including a 6-0 victory over Latrobe in the season finale.

### 1898

Greensburg and Latrobe continued their heated rivalry, but the area's champions were the undefeated Duquesne Country and Athletic Club. The DC & AC's payroll was so high that eventually steelman William C. Temple took over the team payments becoming the first known individual club owner.

At season's end Latrobe's Dave Berry organized a team of local stars to play the DC & AC champions. The Duquesnes won 16-0.

### **Rule Changes**

A touchdown was changed from four points to five.

### **1899**

On the south side of Chicago, Chris O'Brien formed a neighborhood team which played under the name the Morgan Athletic Club. The team later became known as the Normals, then the Racine (for a street in Chicago) Cardinals, the Chicago Cardinals, the St. Louis Cardinals, the Phoenix Cardinals, and, in 1994, the Arizona Cardinals. The team remains the oldest continuing operation in pro football.

### **1900**

William Temple left the chairmanship of the DC & AC and became the chairman of the Homestead Library A.C. Several prominent DC & AC players jumped to the HLAC which became the foremost area team, winning all ten of its games and allowing only one touchdown on the season.

Despite its fine record, the team lost money when poor weather all season severely hurt attendance.

### **1901**

The HLAC won all eleven of their games to continue as area champions, but the weather continued to spoil attendance.

### **1902**

One battlefield in baseball's war between the National and American Leagues was Philadelphia where the Philadelphia Athletics, managed by Connie Mack, and the Philadelphia Phillies formed professional football teams. They were joined by the Pittsburgh Stars, probably sponsored by the Pittsburgh Pirates in the first attempt at a pro football league, named the National Football League. The Stars, managed by Dave Berry, who was elected league president, were made up of many former HLAC stars, suggesting that William Temple was also sponsoring the team.

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 on the basis of a late-season win over the Athletics. 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 pro football game before 3,000, December 28. Syracuse, with Glen (Pop) Warner at guard, won 8-0 and went on to win the tournament.

### **1903**

With baseball's peace between the American and National Leagues, the baseball-sponsored football teams disappeared leaving many of the best pro players without teams. Because of bitter competition and a sizable bet with archrival Oil City, the Franklin (PA) Athletic Club stocked up on all-star players. Oil City refused to play, but Franklin won ten games by a cumulative score of 438-0. Then Franklin went to New York and 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.