UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

“Animal Acts”:

How the National Football League Overcame Anti-Professional Football Sentiment and Became a Part of Americana

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL SATISFACTION OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HISTORY

by

Zachary Hager

Professor Jarett Henderson, Seminar Instructor

Lisa Jacobson, Mentor

March 2025

Abstract

"Animal Acts":

How the National Football League Overcame Anti-Professional Football Sentiment and Became a Part of Americana

by

Zachary Hager

Professional football and the National Football League(NFL) are a key part of American culture today. However, when the NFL was created in 1920 professional football was disrespected and irrelevant in American society. Professional football was disregarded by the majority of Americans due to the notions of amateurism, a Victorian ideal that college football claimed to embody during the 1920s and had ascribed a virtuous purpose to the sport. This thesis seeks to determine how professional football through the NFL overcame anti-professional sentiment from amateur college football to become the cultural force it is today. To answer this question, this thesis predominantly utilizes newspapers and periodicals from the 1920s and 1930s. News media is significant for insight into football history during this time as these sources were where sports news and opinions were shared among Americans across the country. Furthermore, this thesis utilizes sources from the Pro Football Archives, notably the game programs and NFL winter owner's meetings. Ultimately, this thesis determines the NFL's road to making professional football a legitimate sport was a twenty-year process that required pro football to become first

respected then beloved. The NFL overcame amateurism partially through self-regulation and the high-quality effort of its players, which improved the respectability of the sport to the public. External factors, such as the public's exposure to college amateur hypocrisy and the waning of Victorian ideals, also helped to legitimize professional football. By 1933, the NFL had largely overcome amateurism to be seen as respectable but was still not a significant part of American culture. The NFL and its teams had failed to create communal identity and bonding which had been the primary spectator appeal of football and made college football extremely popular. The NFL began to become popular and beloved by breaking away from collegiate football rules to create its own rules that improve the entertainment value and spectacle of the game of football itself. Most notably, it adjusted the legal forward pass line to behind the line of scrimmage which increased passing and scoring in professional football to make the game more exciting. These rule changes made NFL football increasingly popular among football journalists and fans as professional football became increasingly linked to thrills and spectacle. Professional football's rise in respectability and popularity reflects the broader American trend of social and cultural rejection of traditional values in favor of new forms of leisure and commercialization during the Roaring Twenties.

Contents

Introduction 1

Part 1: Overcoming Anti-Professional Amateur Sentiments 8

Part 2: The NFL Creates A New Football Spectacle 44

Conclusion 79

Appendix A..... 86

Appendix B.....87

Bibliography.....88

Figures

Figure 1.1. Walter Camp(second player top left) and the 1876 Yale football team 12

Figure 1.2. Cover of the Chicago Bears Official Game Day Program for Red Grange's NFL Debut. 29

Figure 1.3. California Memorial Stadium at 73,000 capacity for the rivalry game against Stanford, 1930. 52

Epigraph

Nobody who ever gave his best regretted it

George Halas, Chicago Bears player, coach, and owner

Introduction

In December 1925, the National Football League's Chicago Bears were in Washington D.C. to play an exhibition game. The Bears coach and owner George Halas and superstar player Harold "Red" Grange had the honor of meeting President Calvin Coolidge. Years later, Red Grange recalled his brief interaction with President Coolidge, remembering Coolidge having said to him, "Young man, I'm glad to know you, I always like animal acts."[1]

People have debated what Coolidge meant by "animal acts." Some say it was because he had no idea who the Chicago Bears were and assumed they were an animal circus. Others say he was mocking professional football. Either way, Coolidge's comment to Red Grange provides some indication of the irrelevance and disrespect professional football received from Americans during the 1920s, a sharp contrast to the league's standing in contemporary American culture.

Nothing quite captivates the average modern American male like a professional National Football League (NFL) football game. Every year on a Sunday in early February, millions of Americans take a break from their busy lives to gather with their friends and family and watch a professional football game, the Super Bowl. Super Bowl Sunday is the most important sporting event on the American calendar. The event's combination of football, junk food, half-time performances by leading popular musicians, and advertising makes the Super Bowl incredibly impactful to American culture and consumerism. According to *Deadline*, the 2024 Super Bowl

[1]Red Grange, "Pro Football Hall of Famer Red Grange on Meeting President Calvin Coolidge," *Pro Football Hall of Fame*, audio, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF73j3omBBg.*

was the most-watched television program since the Apollo 13 moon landing in 1969. After the moon landing, the other nine spots in the top ten were Super Bowls.[2] Americans' investment in NFL football extends beyond the Super Bowl. In 2023, 93 of the top 100 most-watched television programs were NFL football games.[3]

Although NFL professional football is a quintessential part of modern American life, just 100 years ago, the average American regarded professional football completely differently. Throughout the first third of the twentieth century, professional football and the NFL were largely irrelevant in American culture. It was rarely discussed in newspapers and magazines, and if it was, journalists often did so to mock or scorn the sport. In 1923, one of the most respected football coaches and inventors of the sport, Amos Alonzo Stagg, wrote an open letter published in major newspapers, urging readers not to patronize professional football. "To co-operate with Sunday professional football games," Stagg wrote, "is to co-operate with the forces which are destructive of the finest elements of interscholastic and intercollegiate football and to add to the heavy burden of the schools and colleges in preserving it in its ennobling worth."[4] Stagg's open letter reflected the sporting philosophy shared by many Americans during the 1920s: a belief that amateurism was the proper way to play sports. College football championed these amateur ideals, leading many football fans to see professional football as a threat to the noble pursuits of the college game.

Amateurism is the notion that athletes should not be paid for competing in a sporting event. Amateurism initially emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Victorian England before quickly spreading to the United States. Elite, white northern upper-middle-class men spread the amateur

[2]Katie Campione, "25 Most-Watched TV Programs of All Time: Moon Landing, Super Bowls & More." *Deadline*, February 13, 2024, https://deadline.com/gallery/most-watched-tv-shows-all-time/.
[3]Anthony Crupi, "NFL Swallows TV Whole, with 93 of Year's Top 100 Broadcasts," Sportico.com, January 5, 2024, https://www.sportico.com/business/media/2024/nfl-posts-93-of-top-100-tv-broadcasts-2023-1234761753/.
[4]"Pro Elevens Hurt Sport, Says Stagg." *New York Times*, November 2, 1923. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1923/11/02/106016292.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.

ideals of sport across America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in newspapers and magazines. Amateur sporting enthusiasts insisted that athletes should participate in sports purely for recreation and improving their physical and mental capabilities. To play sports for compensation was dishonest and a corruption of the game. Many early professional athletes who received direct or indirect payment faced scorn and punishment. Native Hawaiian swimmer and surfer George Freeth was not allowed to compete in the 1912 Olympics because he was a lifeguard. In 1913, Native American Jim Thorpe was stripped of his two Olympic gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon for having played two seasons of summer semi-professional baseball in 1909 and 1910.[5] As these two examples suggest, a majority of those who faced scrutiny for being pro athletes were working class and non-white. To a large extent, elites valorized amateurism because they wanted to preserve sports as a venue for bourgeois, white Americans. No sport was more tied to elite amateurism than football due to its origins on the campuses of America's elite universities.

The first generation of college football coaches were the biggest advocates of amateurism and critics of professionalism. As former players of 1870s and 80s football, they believed that the purpose of football was to prepare white upper-middle-class boys for manhood. Amateur players would learn teamwork and critical life lessons, develop physical as well as mental strength, and find a productive outlet for their energy. Boosters of amateur football also believed it would prepare young men to succeed in white-collar jobs and contribute positively to the United States as political or business leaders or soldiers. Many saw professional football as a threat to the existence of amateur college football and warned that its success would have dire consequences for the future of America. Many boosters of amateur football also believed that the

[5]James Ring Adams, "The Jim Thorpe Backlash: The Olympic Medals Debacle And the Demise of Carlisle," *American Indian*, 2012, https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/jim-thorpe-backlash-olympic-medals-debacle-and-demise-carlisle.

quality of professional football was inferior to the college game because professional players cared only about their compensation and did not work as hard.

Supporters of professional football and the NFL had to contend with the popularity of college football, a sport that proudly boasted its amateurism. Famously, the first football game was played between Princeton and Rutgers Universities in 1869; however, this game looked nothing like the football we know today. A cross between soccer and rugby, American Football became distinct from British Rugby through the efforts of undergraduate students at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton during the 1870s. No person was more significant in making American football what it is than Walter Camp. As a student and alumni of Yale, Camp developed fundamental football concepts like the line of scrimmage and downs, which remain part of the game to this day. Camp and his many football disciples such as Amos Alonzo Stagg and Pop Warner promoted the sport as a means to teach proper masculinity to young adult boys. Over the next few decades, football would expand to become a mainstay of campus life at universities across the country. The sport also spread to working-class communities, particularly in rural midwestern towns. Independent semi-professional teams originated during the 1890s.

This paper aims to show how the NFL, founded as the American Professional Football Association in 1920, overcame the righteousness many Americans ascribed to amateur college football during intercollegiate football's "golden age" of the 1920s to become the cultural force it is today. The NFL overcame amateurism partially through self-regulation and the high-quality effort of its players, which improved the respectability of the sport to the public. The NFL frequently insisted to the public that it did not wish to compete with college football or poach its athletes. Under the leadership of its President Joesph Carr, the NFL sought to regulate itself to ensure it did not infringe on college football's territory or rules. The professional players

overcame the negative assumptions about their ostensibly poor work ethic by demonstrating their supreme skill on the field. Spectators especially became aware of the quality of players in the pros when Red Grange, the most famous college football player, chose to go pro in 1925. External factors, such as the public's exposure to college amateur hypocrisy in the 1929 Carnegie Report and the waning of Victorian ideals in American society also helped to legitimize professional football. Most significantly, the NFL redefined several key football rules that enhanced the spectator's experience. In 1933, under the influence of team owners George Halas and George Preston Marshall, the NFL began to make rule changes that created more thrilling and exciting moments in NFL football games. Notably, the alteration of the legal forward pass rule was one change that gave NFL offenses a huge advantage, increasing the rate of thrilling touchdowns in football. By the end of the 1930s, the NFL had largely triumphed over its criticisms and laid the foundation for the sport's continued growth into a cultural phenomenon.

Sources and Significance

The majority of primary sources for this research are newspaper and periodical articles from the 1920s and 1930s. Being a sports fan during the 1920s and 1930s meant following daily sporting news and scores through the sports section of the newspaper, which grew immensely popular. According to Michael Oriard, sports coverage increased by fifty percent from 1900-1920 and then doubled during the 1920s as the sports section became a major selling point of newspapers. A 1929 survey found that one in four readers bought the newspaper specifically for the sports section.[6] Sports and newspapers developed a symbiotic relationship: sports news helped sell the paper and newspaper coverage of sports helped sports become even more popular. This paper especially utilizes the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. During the 1920s

[6]Michael Oriard, *King Football : Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & the Daily Press*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 25.

and 1930s the *New York Times* was a national newspaper that represented the establishment, a high percentage of its readers were white upper-middle class. That readership may have boosted the paper's anti-pro football slant during the 1920s. The *Chicago Tribune* was more willing to report on pro football because Chicago was home to two NFL teams–the Bears and Cardinals. Also, the biggest football celebrity Red Grange played for the Bears. Chicago was also the location of the Charities College All-Star games during the 1930s.

I also consulted local newspapers for their insight into the gameday perspectives of different types of football games and the opinions of the local community. College newspapers such as the *Yale Daily News* provide insight into the culture and opinions surrounding college football. Newspapers of small towns with pro football teams like the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* also provided good coverage of pro football. I also incorporate books and articles by football coaches that explain the rules and importance of their new sport to the American public. *Football(1896)* by Walter Camp, *Football and How to Watch It(1922)* by Percy Haughton, and *Touchdown!(1927)* by Amos Alonzo Stagg were all written by well-respected college football head coaches. From these books, we learn what football fans were taught to value about the sport.

My thesis explores an era in professional American football history that is not well understood by modern football fans. More is known about the Super Bowl Era, stretching from the first Super Bowl in 1967 to today. NFL history before 1967 might as well not have happened for the average modern football fan, as seen by the overall irreverence many fans show for NFL Championship teams from 1932 to 1966. However, this earlier era of professional football is important. Professional football and professional sports more broadly may have developed very differently without the efforts of NFL players, owners, and staff in the 1920s and 30s.

Many historians have researched amateurism in sports, college football, and professional football history. Scholars Anthony Rutondo, John Pettegrew, Julie Des Jardins, and Michael Oriard connect the development of the perceived virtues of amateur college football to shifts in elite white masculine values during the late nineteenth century. Carl Becker and Keith McClellan explore professional football before the NFL and detail the criticisms the NFL faced upon its creation in 1920. Further research from Oriard, Raymond Schmidt, John Carroll, Craig R. Coene, and Richard C. Crepeau has established the dichotomy between college and pro football during the 1920s and 1930s as well as the important events and perceptions that characterize this era in football history. Historian Craig R. Coenen and his book *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl* argues that the NFL became popular in the 1930s due to radio broadcasts of games, stable ownership, and the development of the NFL brand through NFL public relations.

My research adds to and complicates this rich scholarship. Unlike previous historians, I contend that the NFL's 1930s rule changes, which prioritized spectator enjoyment, contributed the most to football's growing popularity. Furthermore, Coenen rarely mentions how the valorization of amateurism blocked attention to pro football during the 1920s, a factor that other historians and primary source analysis have shown to be critical. This paper explores the less researched topic of how the NFL overcame anti-professional amateur sentiment during the 1920s.

Part 1: Overcoming Anti-Professional Amateur Sentiments

Late in his life, football legend Harold "Red" Grange reflected on his life in the sport in an interview. He remarked how much football had changed since his heyday in the 1920s. "In the 20s, pro football was not very important, it didn't mean anything. In fact, I've said many times that I probably would have been thought more of if I had joined the Capone mob in Chicago instead of professional football."[7]

Even decades later, Red Grange still vividly recalled the commotion he caused in the American sports world when he chose to go pro and join the NFL just days after his final college football game. During the early twentieth century, transitioning from college to professional football was not seen as a normal step in a football player's career as it is today. Once you played your last college football game you were expected to hang up your leather helmet and pursue a normal career. If you were lucky you could maybe put on your coaching hat and become a football coach. This mindset was informed by the principles of amateurism, which asserted that football should only be played for fun or physical and mental fitness. To play football with ulterior motives in mind such as compensation was essentially a sin. Red Grange was far from the first college football player to go pro, but he was the most significant football celebrity the sport had ever seen up to that point. Therefore his decision to join the NFL sent shockwaves in American sports and reignited the ongoing sporting debate of the decade: the validity of professional football.

[7]Red Grange, "Pro Football Hall of Famer Red Grange on Meeting President Calvin Coolidge."

When the American Professional Football Association (changed to the National Football League in 1922) was founded in 1920, it faced a difficult task. The league desired to spread the popularity of professional football across social classes and geography. However, to become popular, the league first had to become respected or, at the very least, tolerated.

To be respected, the league would have to overcome decades of anti-professional football sentiment that was informed by the philosophies of amateur sports. During the 1920s, the anti-professional amateur sentiment was embodied by the American Football Coaches Association. This organization was founded in 1921 with one of its expressed purposes being to eliminate the threat of pro football. Under Joseph Carr's leadership, the NFL did not try to compete with college football but sought to appease the amateurist collegiate coaches. The league created rules to prevent its teams from paying amateur players before their graduation and publicly claimed that the league did not intend to diminish amateur college football. These actions slowly improved the perception of the league throughout the 1920s. Yet, the league and pro football's occasional scandal continued to hamper professional football's reputation. Beyond the league's administration, the NFL athletes also played a significant role in overcoming their negative amateur reputation through their play on the field. This was amplified by the entry of Red Grange into the league in 1925 which momentarily increased the spotlight on the league and proved the quality of professional players to many people but ultimately did not end the disrespect to pro football.

The league's actions were gradually improving the reputation of professional football, however, two developments beyond the NFL's control significantly contributed to the NFL's triumph over amateurism. First, in 1929 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released its Bulletin Number 23 on American College Athletes. This document

thoroughly exposed college football's abuse and corruption of amateur principles to the American public. This development destroyed the credibility of college coaches' argument that their game was amateur and therefore undoubtedly superior to pro football. Furthermore, it forced college coaches to redirect their efforts to reform sports rather than dismantle professional football. Secondly, American culture as a whole grew more accepting of professional football in the early 1930s due to a general American transition away from the idealization of Victorian virtues such as amateurism and temperance to become a more pragmatic and commercialized culture.

Amateur Criticisms of Pro Football

To understand the actions of the NFL during the 1920s, we first need to understand the origins and justifications of amateurism and how this ideology impacted professional football.

Football developed on the campuses of America's elite northern universities during a time of anxiety over the masculinity of American men. Historian E. Anthony Rotundo's research on late nineteenth-century manhood establishes that white northern upper-middle class were concerned they were becoming too feminine. Rotundo asserts the perceived undermining of American masculinity was due to the developed connotations around the word *civilization* which had grown to be associated with femininity. As Rotundo explains, "While men were expected to toil in a cruel, barbaric marketplace, women were to maintain the moral values that kept men civilized. Thus, civilization developed female connotation."[8] Throughout the western settlement of the American continent during the nineteenth century, American men and women were functioning in entirely different spheres. During this time, a man's masculinity was tested

[8] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood : Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 252.

through exploring uncivilized land and making it settleable for women, or the defenders of civilization. However, by the late nineteenth century the American frontier was gradually disappearing as the United States became increasingly industrialized and urbanized. Men grew anxious that they were becoming "suffocated" by civilization which meant they were becoming too feminine.[9] Rotundo asserts that this fear of becoming feminine caused men to place value on traits that were uncivilized such as competitiveness, aggression, and toughness in a new masculinity Rotundo defines as *passionate manhood.*[10] Playing sports, in particular football, became seen as one of the best methods for men to achieve this new idealized masculinity.

Walter Camp dedicated his life to creating and spreading modern American football and was greatly influenced by Victorian sports ideals relating to amateurism and Muscular Christianity. According to his biography by Julie Des Jardins, Walter Camp embraced physical fitness and the growing Muscular Christianity movement as a young teen. Muscular Christianity was a religious movement that originated in Britain and grew in popularity in America as a solution to the anxiety surrounding masculinity. Muscular Christians asserted that through physical fitness, a person became both a better man and grew closer to Jesus. This movement caused the idea of sports to evolve from fun childish games to a form of competition that could both improve and test a man's fitness. As Des Jardins describes the Musclar Christian value of sports, "It was the entire experience of sport that made the morally and physically superior man."[11] In tandem with the emerging philosophy of Muscular Christianity in America was another British Victorian sporting ethic of amateurism. While Muscular Christianity encouraged men to play sports to become better men, amateurism taught men how to play sports in a proper gentlemen's conduct. Amateurism established a code of conduct of fair play for sports, in which

[9] Rotundo, *American Manhood,* 232.
[10]Rotundo, *American Manhood,* 5.
[11]Julie Des Jardins, *Walter Camp : Football and the Modern Man*. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.

playing a sport for compensation was believed to be unfair and therefore ungentlemanly. Many historians rightly assert that the amateur ethos was developed as a means to keep sports reserved for the elite gentlemen of America. Des Jardins claimed the function of New York's Amateur Athletic Union was to keep the sport for bourgeoisie men, "Gentlemen athletes were self-policing, the concept went, and their skill in sports purportedly came naturally, rather than being worked at. Perpetuating the English notion that lower-class men could never internalize their ethos of fair play, they were exclusionary in the name of purism."[12] This clear intention to keep sports amateur for the sake of maintaining sports for the wealthy led to sports writers of the time fear-mongering that professionalization of sports would limit the upper-middle class's ability to play sports and improve their masculinity. In 1893, sportsman Casper Whitney described amateur boxing as dead with gentlemen no longer able to participate in it as it had been overrun with "lower walks of life" who boxed for compensation.[13] The Victorian ideals of amateurism and its links to proper gentlemen were most significant in the developing sport of football.

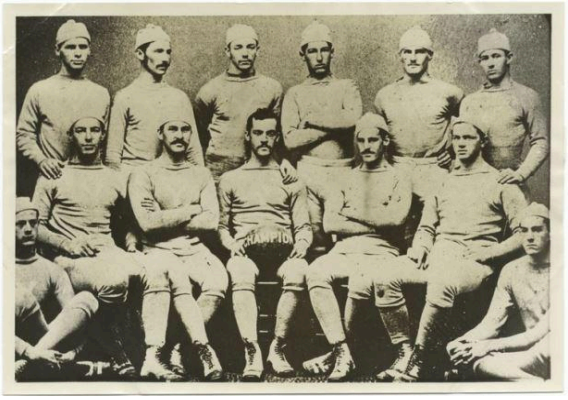

Figure 1.1. Walter Camp(second player top left) and the 1876 Yale football team[14]

[12]Des Jardins, *Walter Camp,* 51.
[13]Caspar Whitney, "Development of Athletics in the United States." *Fortnightly Review*, September 1893. https://www.proquest.com/historical-periodicals/development-athletics-united-states/docview/2435934/se-2.
[14]*1876 Yale Football Team*, 1876, picture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-68e8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

When Walter Camp arrived at Yale in 1876, football was unrecognizable to what it is today. The sport looked much more similar to rugby and its rules tended to vary from campus to campus. Walter Camp quickly became a leader of the Yale football team and was invited to join the football leaders of Princeton, Harvard, and Columbia to formalize the rules of the sport. Camp acquired a leadership role at these meetings and developed the rules that fundamentally differentiate American football from rugby to this day with legalizing blocking and tackles below the waste and the creation of the line of scrimmage. Julie Des Jardins asserts that these rules were a reflection of his ideal masculinity, an overtly physical masculinity that emphasized self-control.[15] Walter Camp remained a leader in forming the rules and identity of the sport for the remainder of his life. He continued to add rules that he believed improved the sport's ability to develop manhood. As he wrote in his 1896 book explaining the sport, "No game so thoroughly develops the man, when played properly."[16] He stated that the game and training required for football was a great way for a young man to develop physical and mental strength, self-control, discipline, courage, and willpower. It is clear that many agreed with Camp's notion of football's inherent manliness based on the number of periodicals that describe the masculinity of the sport. One such example can be found in a 1901 *Outing* magazine article, "The manly qualities which are necessary to the building up of a successful player call forth the best class of college men, and the wholesome attributes which the game promotes are shown in the splendid examples of mental and physical manhood to be found among football men."[17] By the 1920s, the narrative around amateur college football stressed its importance to the future of America. It was believed that the players of college football would develop into the future business and political leaders of

[15]Des Jardins, *Walter Camp,* 35.
[16]Walter Camp, *Football.* (Massachusetts: Houghton, Mifflin, 1896), 40.
[17]Michael Oriard, *Reading Football : How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 190.

the country due to the manly characteristics football developed. This notion is represented in Amos Stagg's attack on pro football, in which he concludes, "If you believe in perceiving interscholastic and intercollegiate football for the upbuilding of the present and future generations of clean, healthy, right-minded and patriotic citizens, you will not lend your assistance to any of the forces which are helping to destroy it."[18] Amos Stagg and other significant college coaches joined forces to defend the sport they had ascribed so many important values to from the incoming pro football threat of the NFL.

During the 1920s, pro-amateurism for football was represented by the emergence of the American Football Coaches Association. This association was created in 1921 and likely was developed out of response to the recently created NFL professional football league. The association was made up of over 100 coaches, including many of the most respected football coaches in the country. The *Chicago Tribune* notes the coaches association discussion on action to confront professional football. The coaches decided that, "professional football was detrimental to the best interest of American youth and that the football coaches lend their influence to discourage the professional game. This motion was adopted unanimously."[19] This formation of the American Football Coaches association in 1921 was essentially a declaration of war to professional football and the NFL. The collegiate coaches of America aimed to use the respect and influence they had in the football community to continue to discourage the continuation of what they perceived as a threat to the sacred principles of college football. These coaches received ammunition in their case when a major ringer scandal in semi-pro football made national headlines. In January of 1922, the Associated Press revealed that a professional

[18]"Pro Elevens Hurt Sport, Says Stagg."
[19]"Grid Pros Assailed as Coaches Organize," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 28, 1921, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/grid-pros-assailed-as-coaches-organize/docview/174863991/se-2.

football game between the Illinois towns of Taylorville and Carlinville had featured 17 college football players from Notre Dame and Illinois.[20] These two teams were not a part of the NFL. However, this scandal hurt the reputation of professional football as it was another instance of pro teams utilizing the hated practice of "ringers." During this time, professional football teams often tried to get a leg up on their competition by secretly recruiting active college players to play in a pro game for payment. This practice was despised by college football as it meant these players had violated their amateur principles and had to be banned from future collegiate athletics. From the Taylorville scandal, Illinois had to disqualify nine of its football players and Notre Dame also had to disqualify eight of its football athletes.[21] Amos Stagg, a prominent football head coach and member of the American Football Coaches Association referenced this ringer incident in his 1923 newspaper letter attacking professional football. He writes that professional football will commit this sin of amateurism again as "There is nothing a bunch of gamblers will not do for their purpose."[22]

These were the conditions the NFL had to contend with upon its creation. They had to overcome a narrative that had been established for decades which believed professional football to be a corruption of the noble amateur college football. Professional football was not associated with gentlemen and sportsmen, but rather with low-lifes, gamblers, and cheaters. College football for decades had established itself as the solution to the American crisis of masculinity and pro football's existence threatened the sports continuation of this important role. To legitimize professional football, the NFL first had to appease college coaches and the public that it would not threaten the importance of college football.

---

[20]Raymond Schmidt. *Shaping College Football : The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930*, (Syracuse University Press, 2007) 67.
[21]Schmidt, *Shaping College Football,* 67.
[22]"Pro Elevens Hurt Sport, Says Stagg."

1920s NFL Combat Amateurism Through Self-Regulation Under Joseph Carr

Upon the National Football League's creation in 1920, the league's administration held little central authority over its clubs. For its first season, the league essentially acted as a loose confederacy of teams which were each in charge of regulating itself. In 1921 the team owners quickly realized that this was not a sustainable approach to building a professional football organization. They elected one of thier owners, Joseph Carr of the Columbus Panhandles, to the role of league president. Joseph Carr was President of the NFL from 1921 to his death in 1939, under his leadership the league's popularity greatly expanded. Under Carr, the NFL worked to quell anti-professional football sentiment by repeatedly insisting that it was not trying to compete with the established college football, constantly writing to justify its existence, and seeking rules to appease the college football system. The league impeded rules and regulations that sought to eliminate the practice of ringers in professional football and ensure none of its teams violated a college player's amateur status. The league members also developed policies and Codes of Ethics and wrote to the media to try and assert their sport in the world of American sports ensuring they were not a threat to college football. Unfortunately these documents remained largely ignored by the general American public. While the league would continue to face scandal due to occasional violations of college amateur status, by the end of the decade it was becoming clear to many in the public that the NFL had cleaned up its act and successfully blocked ringers from the league.

Not long into Joseph Carr's tenure, the league faced its first significant ringer scandal. January of 1922 was a dark month for professional football's public image as two major ringer scandals came to light. The ringer incident occurred in a professional game between Taylorville and Carlinville, in which both teams' rosters featured so many collegiate players that it was said to have essentially been a Notre Dame vs Illinois college football game. The professional teams

involved in this scandal were not associated with the then NFL. Still, it exacerbated the league's reputation as the NFL had its scandal that was revealed around the same time. The *Chicago Tribune* exposed that the league's Green Bay Packers had played a game on December 4th, 1921 with three active Notre Dame football players on their roster who still had collegiate eligibility.[23] Joseph Carr and the league owners decided to punish the Green Bay Packers' ownership for using ringers and bringing scandal to the league. In an owners meeting on January 28 1922, the league decided to withdraw the Packers, as demonstrated by the meeting notes, "Again the matter of the Green Bay franchise came up and Mr. Clair of Green Bay, after a discussion with the club members, asked the association to consider the withdrawal of the Green Bay franchise with the apology to the Association. A motion to this effect was made by Mr. Halas and seconded by Mr. O'Toole. Carried."[24]

The league's choice to severely punish the Packers for their violation of amateur collegiate athlete status demonstrated to amateurist that professional football was putting forth the effort to regulate professional football's most despised practice. This self-regulation approach of the league to limit violations of eligibility was further solidified in the meeting that banned the Packers for their transgression. The league owners also agreed to deposit one thousand dollars each to Joseph Carr to prevent its clubs from using ringers in the future. It was agreed that future violations would result first in a heavy fine, and if a second incident occurred, the team would be expelled from the league. Furthermore, Carr also created a rule banning players under 18 from playing in the league. In addition, the summer owner's meeting developed a rule preventing players from playing under false names to conceal their identity. With all these new professional

[23]"$100,000 Suit Against Champ Jack Settled," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 29, 1922, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/100-000-suit-against-champ-jack-settled/docview/174910720/se-2.
[24]Notes of NFL Winter Owner's Meeting, January 28, 1922, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

football rules regarding player eligibility and transparency, the league hoped to appeal to amateur coaches and football fans and generate a level of trust between professional and college football. The NFL hoped to further garner trust and respect from American football fans through their efforts to promote and defend the league from anti-professional attacks.

Throughout the 1920s, the NFL's president, teams, and owners wrote documents that defended the existence of the league and professional football by developing different points to justify the existence of pro football and ensure it was not a threat to college football. However, these documents meant to generate validity for professional football struggled to find a scope beyond the areas in which professional football was already established, preventing these cases from reaching a national audience. For instance, beginning in the 1922 NFL season, NFL teams added a section to their official game programs that explicitly mention the purpose and policy of the team. Game programs have long been an important item for spectators at sporting events.uring the 1920s NFL game programs cost around 10 cents and included information on the players and teams involved in the game and featured advertisementsfor team sponsors. Based on archival readings of many 1920s NFL game programs, it seems most game programs, regardless of the team, featured the NFL code of ethics and similar team policies. The team policy document provided explicit justification for the existence of the professional team and the code of ethics maintained the league's policy regarding its relationship with amateur college football. For example, the description of the policy for the Chicago Bears remained the same throughout the decade and was other teams but with a different team name and city mention as evidenced by a Chicago Cardinals game program from 1925 which had the same policy as the Bears. The Chicago Bears Policy stated:

> "The policy of the Chicago Bears Football Club, Inc., is to promote clean, healthful sport; to maintain for the City of Chicago a football team that will be a leader in

> this great American out-door sport. This team is composed of American College stars and will have the leading football teams of the country as opponents. Our City will gain added publicity in supporting games that will attract nation-wide attention and be recognized as a promoter of clean sports and recreation."[25]

From this policy statement, we see the Chicago Bears organization justify the team's existence by stating the team is a leader in promoting "clean" and "healthful" professional football that will one day increase the fame of the city of Chicago. The policy statement of NFL teams asserts that its teams are making an effort to rebut the narrative that professional football played the game improperly by claiming that their goal was to play professional football in a clean manner. The policy also promises that the team's players are all college graduates and that the league is the leader in the development of pro football. It promises city residents that these teams will bring their cities fame and attention as the NFL continues to grow into a popular sport in America. Meanwhile, the Code of Ethics of the NFL in the official program further asserts the NFL has no ambition of competing with college football and states the rules the league has in place to ensure that fact.[26] From the Code of Ethics, it is clear a major goal of the NFL during this era was to change the reputation of professional football men as dishonest to instead fit in with amateur sport definitions of being gentlemen and sportsmen. To accomplish this, as the Code of Ethics lays out, the league implemented rules that it believes will be popular with the public and improve the public sentiment of the league. The NFL understood the weight public opinion had on the continuation of the league as seen by the multiple mentions of the importance of the American public and its desire for their confidence above all else. Other 1920s football game programs provide further NFL justification for the league's value to spectators, such as a Bears program from 1924 which states, "Hundreds of boys are attending the games each Sunday at reduced prices and are learning valuable points in football play, which may serve them well

[25]Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, December 9, 1923, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.
[26]See Appendix A for full copy of 1923 NFL Code of Ethics

when they play themselves on high school and college elevens."[27] Through this statement, the Bears attempt to overcome amateur talking points that professional football is destructive to youth by asserting the value boys can gain from watching experienced football players play the sport. Overall, these NFL game programs consist of great defenses and justifications for pro football to the American public. However, few Americans were ever able to read these documents in the game programs because people had to physically attend an NFL game to acquire a game program which many Americans refused to do in the 1920s. Yet game programs were still perhaps one of the best methods the NFL had during the 1920s of asserting its place in the world of sports as newspaper writings about the league from members of the NFL rarely were granted significant newspaper coverage.

Many large newspapers throughout the 1920s refused to publish sources written by those with NFL affiliation. Historian Craig R. Coenen claims that upon becoming NFL President, Joseph Carr gave out hundreds of press passes to media personnel and wrote a weekly newspaper column on the NFL titled, "Pro Football Notes" in the hopes that newspapers would pick it up for their sports sections.[28] Unfortunately, there is no evidence of Carr's articles being published in important newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, making it clear that his articles were rarely acknowledged by 1920s sports media. Further evidence of the media's inattention to pro football's perspective can be found in the lack of media attention an article countering Amos Stagg's letter received. As previously stated, in 1923 famous college head coach Amos Alonzo Stagg wrote a letter attacking the existence of professional football. This letter was published in newspapers such as the *New York Times* and others across the

[27]Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, November 16, 1924, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.
[28]Craig R Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl : The National Football League, 1920-1967*, (University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 22.

country which in turn spread anti-pro football narratives throughout the nation. However, Guy Hiner, owner of the NFL's Canton Bulldogs, quickly wrote a lengthy letter in response to Stagg's attack to defend professional football. In his letter, Hiner provides many counterclaims to Stagg's attack, including defending the masculinity and character of pro football players and audiences, "The majority of the players have always been fine types of American manhood, and have added much credit to our community. The spectators at these games have always been very fair, when-ever anything showed that was in any way off color, their disapproval was immediately shown."[29] This claim directly counters Staggs pro-amateur football claim that pro football players were not proper American men and the pro football spectator was a violent hungry roughneck. The claim defends that both the players and spectators who watch pro football are all-around proper sportsmen. However, this important letter never received any attention outside of Hiner's local *Canton Daily Press*. The letter was never published by any other large newspaper despite those newspapers having published Stagg's letter. This demonstrates the immense difficulty the NFL had in justifying itself as the league repeatedly found its attempts to publish its case for existence to the American public continually shot down by American media outside small local newspapers. This meant that the NFL had to largely rely on the rare positive attention it received from American media to build its national popularity. The most effective way to achieve that feat was to eliminate any scandal or violation against college football's demands. Unfortunately, the scandal reemerged during the 1925 NFL season.

The NFL managed to maintain its Code of Ethics for a few years without incident but had two major incidents at the end of the 1925 season. First, in late November the famous college football player Red Grange signed a professional football contract to play for the Chicago Bears in their remaining games of the season. This development infuriated college football coaches not

[29]"Guy Hiner Replies to Staggs Football Attack," *Canton Daily Press,* November 4, 1923.

only because of Grange's national fame but because he had yet to graduate from the University of Illinois. Grange had just played his final collegiate game days prior and was already playing pro football. College amateurists considered this a major professional football violation of amateur college football as they believed it was understood that college athletes were not eligible for pro sports until their class graduated. Second, a few weeks after Grange joined the league it was revealed that a game between the NFL's Chicago Cardinals and Milwaukee Badgers on December 10th had featured four high school boys playing for the Badgers.[30] With controversy surrounding the league on the rise, Joseph Carr stepped up to maintain his enforcement of professional football's regulations. In response to the Cardinals-Badgers incident, Carr fined both those involved, banned the player who recruited the high school boys from the league and forced Milwaukee ownership to sell the team. Furthermore, to appease the college football authorities for the Red Grange issue, Carr developed a new rule dubbed the "Grange Rule," stating that teams could not acquire college players before their college class's graduation.[31] With this new rule, the NFL adopted a new pledge at the February 26, 1926 owner's meeting.[32] This pledge from the NFL is significant as it reinstated the NFL's goal to appease college football and not violate any athlete's amateur standing. The pledge also serves to demonstrate to college football authorities and fans that the NFL was not interested in threatening the existence of college football. Rather the NFL desired to respect college football's rules so the two levels of football could exist in harmony. Furthermore, it also justifies the league's existence as it reinforces their claim that there is demand and public interest in pro football. On July 12, several NFL owners traveled to New York to meet the Intercollegiate Committee to appease the leaders of college football for the past year's transgressions and assert that it would never happen again. The

[30]Craig R Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 22.
[31]John M Carroll, *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*, (University of Illinois Press, 1999), 104.
[32]See Appendix B for full copy of the 1926 NFL Pledge

meeting was a success as the *New York Times* wrote that "harmony prevailed."[33] This meeting helped to ease tensions between college and professional football and the NFL's promise at the meeting proved to ultimately be true as the NFL did not have issues with violating amateur status again.

The NFL had successfully mitigated the hated professional football practice of ringers by developing rules to regulate itself from impeding amateur college players. By 1930, the league had not impeded on a college athlete's amateur status in years, which helped prove to some college football leadership that the NFL was not a threat to the sport and desired a peaceful co-existence between college and pro football. While the league's attempts to justify its existence through the writing it produced did not receive the publicity the league had hoped, these documents were likely still very important in helping to slowly cultivate positive pro-football sentiment among those who did happen to read these documents. Ultimately, it was action, not rhetoric that helped begin the process of making professional football more socially acceptable, a fact further proven by the actions of the NFL players on the field during the 1920s.

Red Grange-Challenging Anti-Professional Player Sentiment

On October 18th, 1924, Harold Grange became a national football hero with just one spectacular performance. On that day, much of the football world had its attention focused on the game between Michigan and Grange's Illinois. Many sports journalists were on the scene to report on the popular rivalry game and witness the dedication ceremony Illinois had planned for that game for their new 67,000-seat stadium. Instead, Harold Grange stole the show that day as he played the greatest football game any player could ever dream of. Within the first 12 minutes

[33]"Colleges Will Hear Pro Football Aims: Dr. March, on General Pierce's Invitation, to Attend Next Athletic Union Meeting," *New York Times,* July 13, 1926, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/colleges-will-hear-pro-football-aims/docview/103849451/se-2.

of the game Grange had scored four touchdowns with runs over 45 yards each and later scored two additional touchdowns to bring his total touchdown count to six. To a 1920s football fan who consistently witnessed the low-scoring defense dominate football that defined the era, this performance seemed impossible, even to the modern football fan Grange's stat line is unreal. Immediately after this game Harold Grange became one of the most covered athletes in sports media. Over the rest of his college career he would sell out massive stadiums and receive iconic nicknames from journalists, such as "Red" Grange, the Galloping Ghost, and the Wheaton Ice Man. To capitalize on his fame and his continued love of the sport, in 1925 Grange chose to go pro and join the NFL's Chicago Bears, a decision that opened a can of worms in the football world.

Red Grange's legacy and impact on college and professional football history is one of the most debated topics among football historians. He is undeniably one of the most significant people ever to put on a football uniform, but to what extent did he popularize professional football? John M. Carroll asserts in his book *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football* that Grange's fame brought significant newspaper attention to professional football and newspaper journalists continued watching and writing about the NFL even after "Grangemania" subsided. However, historian Craig R. Coenen in *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl* completely disagrees. He states that the NFL received virtually no press coverage from 1926 to 1930 and Grange did not bring continued money to help stabilize the struggling league. Michael Oriard focuses his analysis on the public fascination with the money he was now receiving as a professional. Headlines across the country proclaiming he had made 82,000 dollars in eleven days, making him, "a hero for the emerging age of consumption."[34] While Raymond Schmidt believes Grange's decision to go pro was a major blow to college Victorian principles, "Grange's

[34]Oriard, *King Football*, 103-105.

immediate turning away from school for the big money and the commercialized world of professional sport represented a tremendous blow to the Victorian principles of the American university, which regarded higher education, along with hard work, discipline, and patience, as the only sure and traditional path to success in life."[35] This assessment of Grange's legacy I find the most compelling.

Red Grange's transition to the NFL was significant to the development of professional football for two main reasons. The brief national platform Grange provided the NFL with his fame in late fall and winter of 1925-26 provided Grange and the professional players a chance to prove their skill and worth as football athletes. Amateur sentiment had long claimed that professional players were inferior to college amateurs because money had corrupted their spirit and quality of play. However, "Grangemania" sold out stadiums full of football fans and sports writers. Many received their first experience of watching professional football and came to realize that professional football players did play with exceptional effort and quality. Furthermore, Grange's decision to go pro began to slowly normalize elite college football talent choosing to go pro and create a career out of football. Grange began the process of destigmatizing playing professional football by firing back at detractors who disapproved of his professionalization by calling attention to the backwardness of the amateur football ideal, and many Americans found themselves agreeing with Grange. While this impact was not immediately felt, it is clear that throughout the 1930s top-tier football players were choosing to go pro with Grange inspiring that move as a hero to those players when they were boys. However, there were some drawbacks to Grange's entry into the league. Most significantly, the schedule of games Grange and the Bears played during their initial tour of America was suicidal, which inevitably caused Grange to be injured. Critics cited this as evidence that professional

[35]Schmidt, *Shaping College Football,* 75.

football cared more for its bottom line than the health and safety of its players. Ultimately, Grange's impact on improving the American respect and acceptance of professional football players is his legacy.

Red Grange walked so future professional football players could run. Upon his decision to go pro, Grange faced significant backlash not only from college coaches and fans but even from important figures in his life such as his coach. John M. Carroll recounted a conversation Red Grange said he had with his college coach, Bob Zuppke after he decided to go professional, "Zuppke said, 'Keep away from professionalism and you'll be another Walter Camp. Football isn't a game to play for money.' Grange replied that Zuppke made a living out of teaching and coaching football, 'so what's the difference if I make a living playing football.'".[36] Grange responded similarly to other people who lambasted or questioned his decision to join the NFL. He asserted that he was justified to be compensated for playing football just as college head coaches were paid to teach it and professional baseball players were respected for playing baseball. Importantly, a growing number of people and writers agreed that Grange was justified in his choice. Grange's decision to go pro had been such a big news story that it was reaching those outside of the football world, and many found Grange's case far more compelling. An anonymous *New York Times* article defended Grange's decision saying, "Grange accepts $10,000 for participating in a single game of football, he is doing well not only for himself but for the community at large. It would have been a distinct social waste if the greatest football genius of the year had set out to make himself a doctor a lawyer or a real estate agent...He has embraced a clean and sufficiently manly occupation."[37] This statement is significant as it is one of the first instances of a professional football player being considered a manly occupation. Football had

[36]Carroll, *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*, 93.
[37]"Grange Turns Professional," *New York Times,* November 24, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/grange-turns-professional/docview/103439803/se-2.

always been viewed as manly but amateur Victorian ideology had always claimed that to play a sport for money was inherently dishonest and unmanly. However, Red Grange and many others throughout the increasingly commercialized world of the 1920s were beginning to recognize that this Victorian mindset surrounding amateur sports was counterintuitive. Why should Grange throw away life-changing money and the opportunity to play the sport he loved just because some people said it was not proper? Why was it acceptable for the University of Illinois and coach Bob Zuppke to make boatloads of money off of his football talent but he could not do the same? It was the growing popularity of this line of thought, as well as Grange's time in the league proving the worthiness of professional NFL players that encouraged the future generations of football players to go pro.

During the 1930s, there was an increasing number of elite college football players who chose to play for the NFL after college. Each year, football journalists vote to determine the consensus All-Americans or the college players they believed to be the best in the country that year. For example, Red Grange was an All-American for three straight years between 1923-25. During the 1920s, only 32% of All-Americans chose to go pro, however during the 1930s this number jumped up to 45% with 1936-40 featuring 57% of the All-Americans joining the NFL.[38] The All-Americans of the 1930s were just young boys when Grange chose to join the NFL in 1925, they witnessed the fame and fortune Grange had secured in the NFL and aspired to be like him and create a career as a football player. This development was possible thanks to Red Grange, his challenge to the status-quo amateur sentiment by choosing to go pro helped many people begin to realize the absurdity of amateur ethics which normalized future college football players making the same transition as Grange.

[38]Sports Reference LLC, Pro-Football-Reference.com - Pro Football Statistics and History, https://www.pro-football-reference.com/.

The NFL desperately needed Red Grange to receive the media attention necessary to begin making changes to the reputation of professional football. Before Red Grange's arrival to the NFL on Thanksgiving 1925, the NFL had tried to promote stories to the press intended to demonstrate the quality of play present in the league. Canton Bulldogs owner Guy Hiner's 1923 response letter to Amos Stagg's attack on professional football featured a personal experience he had witnessed proving college amateur notions wrong. During a Milwaukee-Canton professional game, he sat by three men whom he overheard were college football coaches of big eastern schools, "'They expected to see much individual playing, men out of physical condition, and no teamwork. However, after the first quarter had been played, they began to sit up and take notice, and after the game was over they admitted to the writer they had seen one of the best exhibitions of modern football, if not the best, that they had ever witnessed.'"[39] This story demonstrated that there was undeniable quality present in NFL professional football in the early 1920s, but the league needed a larger platform to be able to prove their worth to the country.

Grange immediately provided the interest pro football needed. According to John M Carroll, Grange's debut Thanksgiving game sold twenty thousand tickets within three hours, the Bears, which had normally played in front of a crowd of around 5,000, jammed Cubs Park with 36,000 fans and thousands more outside attempting to scale the fence into the stadium.[40] However, Grange's first pro game ended 0-0. Those in attendance as well as perhaps Grange himself were surprised by how much the Chicago Cardinals were able to neutralize a player that had terrified elite college teams for years. *Chicago Tribune* reporter Irving Vaughan wrote that it was due to the strategic and quality play of Cardinals player Paddy Driscoll that prevented Grange from dominating, stating, "it was good football. The Cards were out there to win; not to

[39]"Guy Hiner Replies to Staggs Football Attack."
[40]John M Carroll, *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*, 107.

let Grange stage a Roman holiday at their expense."[41] Already from his first game, Americans were becoming increasingly aware that the NFL featured players of talent far better than they had been told by college coaches and football journalists. Football fans watched as the most phenomenal football player to ever grace a college gridiron was reduced to an average player on the professional field. There also is a clear increase in positive sentiments when it comes to discussing pro football players in newspapers. A few days after Grange's debut, *Tribune*

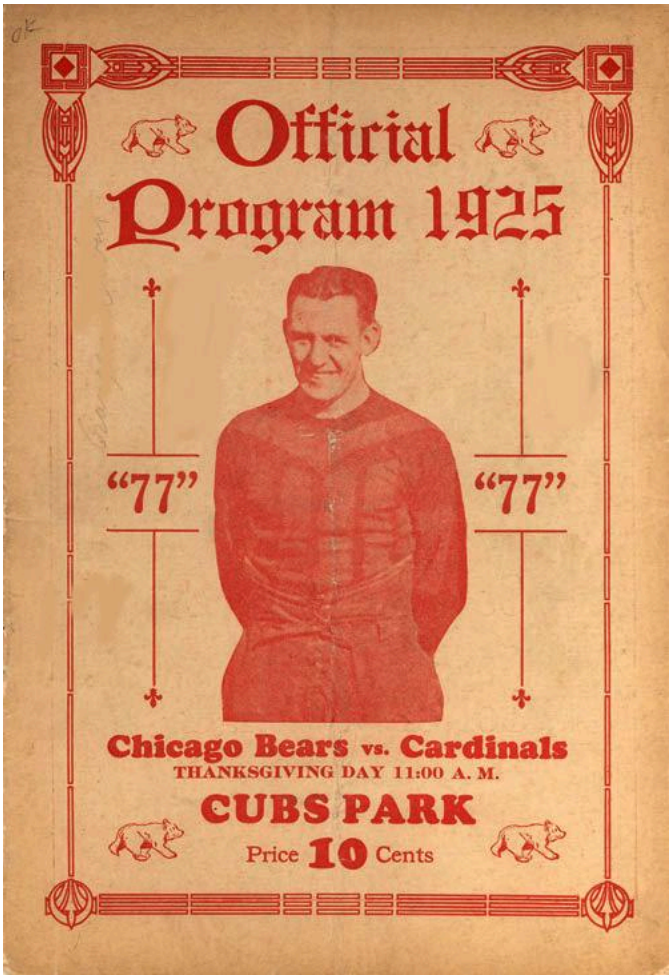

Figure 1.2. Cover of the Chicago Bears Official Game Day Program for Red Grange's NFL Debut.[42]

[41]Irving Vaughan, "36,000 See Cards Tie Bears, 0 to 0: Grange Gains 92 Yards For His Pro Debut Driscoll's Toe Keeps Bruins at Bay," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 27, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/36-000-see-cards-tie-bears-0/docview/180603353/se-2.
[42]Copy of Chicago Bears Offical Game Program, November 26, 1925, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

journalist Don Maxwell wrote an article titled "Watching Pro Gridirons," in which he defended that professional football players felt more desire to win than college players, "They play their best because their personal reputation is at stake. They play their best because they like the plaudits of the crowd. They play their best because its in 'em. Before a college game the coach usually delivers a do or die speech. Pro coaches don't. The players would resent it. They're experts and no amount of guff will make them play better."[43] This demonstrates a clear evolution in football supporter thinking regarding professional football players. They were beginning to be recognized for playing with the determination to win rather than playing for money as many had been taught to believe. In December, the largest pro football crowd ever seen of over 70,000 gathered at the New York Polo Grounds to see Grange and the Bears take on the NFL's New York Football Giants, a game John M. Caroll credits as saving the Giants from bankruptcy and keeping Giant's owner Tim Mara invested in the future of pro football.[44] This game also further proved to the influential New York sports media that professional football players exhibited far more spirit and skill than they had given them credit. NFL President Joesph Carr later quoted one New York writer's impression of the game he witnessed that day, "Never in my experience have I overseen so much spirit, so much perfect play, so sure tackling, and I came away from the game an avowed advocate of the Professional game, and you may expect to see me on the bench at every game the Giants play next season."[45] Anyone who witnessed a Grange professional football game during "Grangemania" generally came from the experience with a new perspective. Not only had amateur critiques of professional players' effort and skill been

[43]Don Maxwell, "Watching Pro Gridirons," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 9, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/watching-pro-gridirons/docview/180753849/se-2.
[44]John M Carroll, *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*, 112.
[45]Notes of NFL Winter Owner's Meeting, February 6-7, 1926, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

completely false but they also believed it to be better than what college athletes were capable of achieving. Over the next few weeks, Grange and the Bears embarked on a tour outside the NFL's dominion of the midwest as they further exhibited their skill to audiences in Florida, Texas, and California. Unfortunately, this tour of America meant to promote pro football may have strengthened some anti-professional football talking points.

While Red Grange's decision to join the NFL was a net positive for improvising the respectability of professional football, the scheduling decision made for Grange's barnstorming tour of America was idiotic and fed into anti-pro football sentiment. Barnstorming was a popular way for professional sports teams and athletes to make additional money after their season was over. They traveled to far-flung regions of the country without professional sports and played exhibition games. Barnstorming was a normal pro sports practice, what was not normal about Grange's tour was the frequency at which he played the game. Football is notorious for its rough nature, games are usually played once a week because players need a week to adequately rest and recover from a game to help mitigate injuries. However, Grange's manager C.C. Pyle and Bears owner George Halas, who should have known better, agreed to play eight games in eleven days, a decision Carroll described as, "suicidal. It had nothing to do with good football or competing for an NFL championship and everything to do with making money by exploiting the Grange phenomenon to its fullest."[46] Of course Grange was eventually injured, exposing to the American people the greed and incompetence still present in pro football. On December 11th, just two days after praising pro football, *Tribune* writer Don Maxwell's tone had shifted:

> "Professional football, given the biggest opportunity of its career, now faces a sorry situation…He[Red Grange] was presented to pro football as a Moses to lead it into the land of milk and honey…But pro football's bosses weren't satisfied. The management of the Bears had made more money in three weeks than it had made in many weeks last

[46]John M Carroll, *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*, 110.

> year. It wasn't enough. They weren't appeased with a square meal; they wanted to gorge."[47]

Maxwell's comment captures the football world's reaction to this tour, many were disgusted and infuriated with pro football for ruining such a golden opportunity to improve its reputation by succumbing to greed. To football amateurist, it demonstrated the inevitable issue of player safety that arises when a sport only exists for the bottom line.

With the end of Grange's barnstorming tour, "Grangemania" subsisted likely as a consequence of his reckless injury. However, it is undeniable that Grange's first few weeks in professional football left an impact on the dynamic between college and professional football. With Grange's entry into the league, Americans became more aware of the high quality and spirit of play present in professional football, college players would begin to join the pros in higher numbers, and most significantly, many people began to question the hypocrisy present in college football.

The Carnegie Report: College Football Amateur Hypocrisy

Five days before the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released its influential Bulletin number 23 on the conditions of college athletics. The 1929 Carnegie Report is significant to the relationship between college and professional football as it demonstrated that collegiate athletics had severely violated the tenets of amateurism. This was not the first time the professionalization of college football had been publicly reported, a 1905 muck-racking journalist had uncovered similar findings. However, no report had ever featured the level of research into college football commercialization as the 1929 Carnegie Report. The report exposed that amateurism in college football was a farce. The sport

[47]Don Maxwell, "A Tip to the Pro Grid Bosses," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 11, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/tip-pro-grid-bosses/docview/180725015/se-2.

had corrupted its amateur principle and had become as professionalized as professional football. As a result of this development, college coaches largely stopped publicly attacking professional football. College coaches redirected their amateur efforts to reform their sport rather than criticize pro football.

The 1929 Carnegie Report exposed amateur football's violations of the amateur code which had been quietly growing for decades. Henry Beach Needham, a muckraking journalist, wrote an article demonstrating the extent to which commercialization and breaking of the amateur code was already occurring in college football in 1905. Needham's article, "The College Athlete: How Commercialism is Making Him a Professional" explores how college's intense desire to win football games at any cost had resulted in the professionalization of college athletes. Needham particularly notes a Princeton alumnus, Charles E. Patterson, who scouted boys of elite academies, offering them scholarships and helping them cheat on Princeton entrance exams to bring glory to the Princeton football team.[48] Over the next twenty years college football continued to grow even more important in American sports and therefore also became more commercial. In 1925, an article written for the *New York Times* about the rise in professional football notes that some, such as Harvard University, believe that the rise of professional football can help remove the popularity and commercialization present in college football. "The Crimson said that 'pro' football should be encouraged, because, if it could be made to attain sufficient prominence, it would soon dwarf the college game and return it again to a strictly sport basis."[49] This opinion expressed by Harvard demonstrates a unique college take on the rise of professional football. Harvard is concerned about the rising popularity of college

[48]Henry Beach Needham, "The College Athlete: How Commercialism is Making Him a Professional," *McClure's Magazine,* June 1905, 8.
[49] "'Pro' Football is Coming in Favor: Colleges Cannot Supply The Public Demand, so League of Many Cities is Formed - Games Average 15,000 Attendance," *New York Times,* November 22, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/pro-football-is-coming-favor/docview/103460289/se-2.

football and realizes how its popularity and commercialism are hindering the sport's virtuous amateur purpose. It hopes that professional football can continue to grow and replace the current popularity of college football to allow college football to return to its amateur roots. However, the 1929 Carnegie Report demonstrated that college football was still a massive cultural phenomenon that had abandoned its core principles.

College football's claim to being inherently superior to professional football through its amateurism was demonstrated to be hypocritical by the Carnegie Report. The Carnegie investigation was led by Howard J. Savage and cost 100,000 dollars. The investigation studied 130 schools over three years and found that only 28 schools were found to be following amateurism.[50] The report was a huge news story that captivated the public as demonstrated by the fact that the *New York Times* reporting of the Carnegie Report made the front center of the October 24 paper.[51] The fact the Carnegie Report made the front page of the *Times* is significant during the 1920s as sports news, while popular, rarely escaped the sports section of the paper to be alongside other news. The *Times* article opens with the most important statistic for readers to know about the extent to which college athletics had violated amateurism, "One athlete out of every seven is engaged in intercollegiate is 'subsidized' to a point bordering on professionalism."[52] The 347-page report includes more details on the system utilized by colleges to recruit boys to schools which included the "demoralizing and corrupt" offering of money in exchange for a boy attending a college.[53] The report's research into collegiate athletic recruiting confirms the continuation and spread of recruiting techniques reported on by Henry Beach Needham. The Carnegie Report also explores the line between student and athlete at colleges,

[50]Schmidt, *Shaping College Football,* 219.
[51] "College Sports Tainted by Bounties, Carnegie Fund Finds in Wide Study: Survey of 130 Schools shows One in Seven Athletes Subsidized," *New York Times,* October 24, 1929, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/college-sports-tainted-bounties-carnegie-fund/docview/104898628/se-2.
[52]"College Sports Tainted by Bounties, Carnegie Fund Finds in Wide Study."
[53]Howard J Savage, *American College Athletics*, (The Merrymount Press, 1929), xv.

asserting that college football athletes in particular were pressured to prioritize training for football rather than study.[54] This finding demonstrates the extent to which college football had strayed from its amateur beliefs. Walter Camp and other coaches had stated that football alongside a college education would prepare boys for adult life but the developing priority of football hampered student-athletes'ability to benefit from their education. The Carnegie Report ultimately concludes that the faults of college athletics were a result of commercialism that had become commonplace in both college and American life:

> "The root of all difficulties with the amateur status touches the desires of certain athletes to retain the prestige that amateurism confers and at the same time to reap the monetary or material rewards of professionalism. The results ill college athletics and probably in other forms of competition have included equivocation, false statements concerning eligibility, and other forms of dishonesty, which are to be numbered among the fruits of commercialism."[55]

Savage and the Carnegie Foundation believed that college athletics and in particular college football wanted the best of both the amateur and professional values. They wanted the eliteness and prestige that had been attached to amateurism while also making significant profits as a professional sport. For decades collegiate football coaches had insisted on the merits of amateurism as the primary reason for their superiority over professional football. They had spread fear that professional football would destroy amateur college football, but the Carnegie Report revealed to the public they had already corrupted themselves. The Carnegie Report and the national press it received caused college officials to redirect their energies to attempt to reform the sport rather than attack professional football.

After the Carnegie Report's release, negative press and criticism of professional football largely ceased as now sports media was engaged in the college football amateur reform movement. Throughout the 1930s, the American Football Coaches Association shifted its focus

[54]Howard J Savage, *American College Athletics*, xiv.
[55]Howard J Savage, *American College Athletics*, 301.

away from one of its original goals of quelling professional football to instead limiting professionalization within college football. In 1934, Harvard University athletic director William J. Bingham delivered a speech to the Coaches Association that stressed the importance of reemphasizing amateurism in college sports, "We cannot compromise amateurism with professionalism. We cannot put a team on the field labeled with the name of a respectable college unless the players are truly representative of the scholastic standards of the college."[56] The American Football Coaches Association, which had once greatly threatened the continuation of professional football, had been exposed as liars by the Carnegie Report. Therefore, they began to move away from criticizing professional football as they now had to contend with their own professionalism. During the 1930s, colleges shifted from attacking professional football to attacking college teams they believed to be overtly professional. In 1931, the Columbia football team had a terrible season with only two wins, causing the school newspaper to retort that they had been the only amateur team in the country. "But we certainly had one of the best amateur teams in the land. And would it be overstepping the bounds of truth to say that the college had the only amateur team in the country?"[57] This became an increasingly common feature of student newspapers and alumni committees as these organizations often proclaimed other schools were still violating amateurism while they were not. In 1930, the University of Pennsylvania alumni committee claimed their alma mater was following the Carnegie Reports amateur guidelines while other universities were ignoring it.[58]

---

[56] Stanley Woodward, "Bingham Sees Football's Fall Unless Pro Trend is Checked: Harvard Athletic Director Warns Coaches to Clear College Game of Taint," *New York Herald Tribune,* December 29, 1934, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bingham-sees-footballs-fall-unless-pro-trend-is/docview/1243732275/se-2.

[57]"Ridicules Football Row: the Campus Says City College Had One of Best "Amateur" Elevens," *New York Times,* December 3, 1931, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/ridicules-football-row/docview/99215318/se-2.

[58]"Declare Football Verges on 'Racket,'" *New York Times,* November 8, 1930, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/declare-football-verges-on-racket/docview/98852396/se-2.

The college football reaction to the Carnegie Report demonstrates that many college sports administrators took the report seriously and sought to address it with reform. This development was significant for professional football as it improved the sport's legitimacy to the public. Professional football had at least been very honest and open about its professional nature and did not try and hide it like college football. Furthermore, the Carnegie Report importantly shifted amateur attention away from professional football as debates over college football's seeking of amateurism became center-stage. The Carnegie Report also shed light on the commercialization that was causing college football to become less amateur. It stated that this commercialization was not just an indictment of college football but of America as a whole as the country's broader commercialization had encouraged college football to do the same. This growing American pursuit of commercialization ties into the final development that secured professional football's overcoming of amateurism.

Broader American Social Trends: A Moving On From Victorian Virtues

The early 1930s signaled an American cultural shift away from Victorian values towards a distinct American appreciation for leisure and commercialism. The Victorian sporting ideal of amateurism was increasingly less relevant with Joseph Carr creating rules and legitimacy for the NFL, Red Grange destigmatizing professional football players, and the 1929 Carnegie Report demonstrating collegiate hypocrisy of its amateur principles. The factors within 1920s sports and football were important in causing amateurism to become less popular in American culture. Beyond the world of sports America was also changing as the country was embracing freedom socially and especially economically. The 1920s have become known as the Roaring Twenties in American history, a time in which many Americans were breaking away from traditional culture and forming new values. America's increasing rejection of many Victorian virtues which helped

professional football overcome amateurism is best represented by the 1933 Pennsylvania election. In this election, Pennsylvanians in similar voting turnouts repealed the Volstead Act, a law enforcing the Victorian virtue of temperance, and the state's Blue laws, which were hindering the development of professional sports in the state. This result in Pennsylvania is significant as even journalists at the time recognized the repeal of these laws signaled a major social shift in American life.

Amateurism and temperance are both similar in the fact that they are Victorian virtues with origins in Victorian religious movements. Prohibition stems from the temperance movement that emerged in rising American middle-class families during the 1830s and 1840s as a means of self-discipline and upward mobility.[59] Self-discipline was a critical Victorian virtue that correlated with Christian religious values of proper morality. There is plenty of interconnectedness between temperance and self-discipline with the ambition of amateur football. Amateurism is a concept rooted in the Victorian era, it was an idea popularized in nineteenth-century England through Muscular Christianity and became idealized by American sportsmen such as Walter Camp. Julie Des Jardins asserts that Camp began to associate with Muscular Christianity and amateurism from a young age after reading the 1857 English book *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, "Camp exalted the same concept of athletic amateurism preached at Oxford and Cambridge, formalized in Amateur Athletic Club of London, and popularized in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*."[60] Blue laws helped facilitate amateurism as these laws essentially made professional football illegal in the regions where these laws existed.

Pennsylvania's Blue laws were a major hurdle for the NFL to overcome as the laws were indirectly enforcing amateur football and hindering pro football's growth. Pennsylvania's Blue

[59]Lisa McGirr. *The War on Alcohol : Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*. (New York: W.W. NORTON & Company, 2016), 6.
[60]Des Jardins, *Walter Camp,* 27.

laws were not originally intended to hinder professional sports as the law was created in 1794.[61] However, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century many Americans rejected professional football due to the fact the sport was commonly played on the Sabbath. Pro football was played on Sundays due to it being the one day of rest for the majority of working-class Americans and because college football was played on Saturdays. The rejection of Sunday professional football for religious reasons caused many football players to either refuse to play pro football or play under assumed names. Early professional football historian Keith McClellan provides an example of football players hiding their identity for religious reasons, "David Reese and George Roudebush reported that their parents opposed Sunday football for religious reasons, and they often used assumed names to hide their activity."[62] Pennsylvania's Blue laws hindered the NFL's development since the laws made establishing pro football in the state very difficult. NFL teams in Pennsylvania were forced to play on Saturdays which was the day already firmly controlled by college football. NFL teams were never established in Pennsylvania's major cities such as Philadelphia as there was little chance a Philadelphian would choose to watch a pro football game when they could instead see the Temple or University of Pennsylvania football team. Therefore this Blue law was essentially enforcing amateur football, and in the early 1930s, many Pennsylvanians began to find this law unfair and outdated.

Throughout the 1920s Americans became increasingly disillusioned with the enforcement of Victorian virtues as people became more aware of the hypocrisy and corruption in enforcement of these virtues. Historian Lisa McGirr outlines the factors that caused Prohibition to become unpopular and repealed in the early 1930s. There was widespread ignorance of the law, a growth of cultural rebellion within illegal bars, and an obvious failure of enforcement of

[61]John M Cummings. "Blue Laws Foes Mass To Voice Protest," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 31, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/january-31-1933-page-12-28/docview/1831566009/se-2.
[62]Keith McClellan, *The Sunday Game : At the Dawn of Professional Football*, (University of Akron Press, 1998), 31.

the law in the upper echelons of society.[63] As Americans became more aware of the improper enforcement of Prohibition the ideals of temperance became viewed as impractical to force a society to follow. For amateurism, the public was growing aware that the ideal of amateur sports was likely a pipe dream since sports had become incredibly commercialized as demonstrated by the Carnegie Report's findings on college football amateur corruption. In the lead-up to the 1933 Pennsylvania election, the repeal of the Blue laws advocates called attention to the improper enforcement of the law in the state. "If the said 'Blue Laws' were strictly enforced a vast majority of the people doing business in this city are violators of the Sunday laws."[64] This statement acknowledges the improper enforcement of the Blue laws in the state. The laws were meant to limit sports and business on the Sabbath but by the 1930s these laws were essentially only impacting professional sports. The state had become extremely commercial which made it inconceivable for many businesses to sacrifice a day of the week for the sake of religion. With business being free to operate on Sundays many Philadelphians wanted the freedom to be able to seek leisure through activities such as professional sports.

The reports of the 1933 Pennsylvania elections demonstrate that Pennsylvanians who voted against the Volstead Act also voted to repeal the Blue laws which demonstrates a correlation between the two laws. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported, "Repeal carried the city by more than 8 to 1 and the Sunday sports bill was pushed across by a ratio of 5 to 1…The repeal vote ran far ahead of the sports referendum total, however, as thousands failed to record their vote on the anti-Blue law bill in wards using voting machines."[65] Both votes passed by relatively similar numbers and results likely would have been even closer if there had not been the voting

[63] McGirr, *The War on Alcohol*, 233.
[64]Cummings, "Blue Laws Foes Mass To Voice Protest."
[65]"Sunday Sports Repeal Vote Carried By Big Vote Here," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 8, 1933, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/november-8-1933-page-1-26/docview/1831566044/se-2.

machine issue for the anti-Blue law bill. Pennsylvania's vote in repealing the Volstead Act was a sentiment shared across America as the Twenty-First Amendment was ratified a month after this election on December 5, 1933. Americans had demonstrated their frustration with the government's attempt at enforcing the virtue of temperance upon the entire nation. Similarly, Pennsylvanians increasingly wanted to watch professional sports on Sundays but an over century-old state law was preventing this from happening. The anti-Blue law bill was not created until this time as it was not until the early 1930s that professional sports had come to be seen as legitimate thanks to the growing success of professional baseball and football. The Associated Press commented on the improved status of professional sports in 1933:

> "They consider it is not a case of standards necessarily being lowered, in times of depression, but that a 'saner, healthier, more open-and-above-board' attitude is being manifest toward conditions. Taboos no longer are being publicly posted. There exist instead, explains one observer, 'not only a common bond of economic necessity among the colleges, but the unpopularity of reformers as a whole, as best exemplified by the swift elimination of prohibition this year.'"[66]

This demonstrates that many Americans understood there to be a connection between temperance and amateurism. These Victorian virtues presented alcohol and professional sports as taboos forced upon average Americans by societal elites. These virtues had existed for decades but the 1920s resulted in many Americans recognizing these ideas as unhealthy and full of double standards. Despite some reformers in college sports trying to return to amateurism, many had begun to see this virtue as impossible to implement in the modern world. Furthermore, the repeal of the Volstead Act and the anti-Blue law bill reflected an American economic anxiety spawned by the Great Depression. These laws hoped that commercializing alcohol and further commercializing professional sports could stimulate economic growth to overcome the Depression. This reflects the broader American trends of the 1920s as seen from the history of

[66]"Grid Gate Increase Great 1933 Trend," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* December 23, 1933, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/december-23-1933-page-16-26/docview/1831587908/se-2.

professional football, increasing American drive for profit and leisure helped professional football overcome its negative associations.

Conclusion

By the early 1930s amateur criticisms of professional football were gradually disappearing from conversations surrounding the sport. The NFL's administration under Joesph Carr had eliminated professional football's harmful practices which appeased collegiate coaches and the public. Red Grange's entry into pro football in 1925 began to destigmatize amateur college athletes going pro and helped improve the reputation of the players in the league. Then in 1929, the public's disillusionment with amateurism was solidified by the Carnegie Report which outed college athletics as being hypocritical of amateur principles. In the early 1930s American society had moved on from prioritizing Victorian virtues due to the improved reputation of professional football and broader American social trends. However, an underlying factor in all these instances of pro football overcoming amateurism was the growth of American commercialism.

College football's initial philosophy was vehemently anti-commercial. The sports initial creators viewed the sport as a means of play and education for boys and rejected ideas of the sport existing for money as corrupting of its principles. However, the 1929 Carnegie Report demonstrated how far college football had strayed from its initial vision. Colleges had begun to prioritize victory and high-profit margins to such an extent that it negatively impacted the academic study of collegiate football players. Howard J. Savage importantly recognized that commercialization was not just a symptom of college athletics but of American society as a whole as sports news media had served to profit off college sports as well. Furthermore, news

reports of the absurd money Red Grange made by going pro helped justify his decision to the public that was increasingly prioritizing profits over supposed morals. Finally, with the economic hardships of the Great Depression, many Americans hoped that further growth of professional sports could help stimulate economic recovery as demonstrated by the Pennsylvania passing of the anti-Sunday sports bill in 1933.

All of these instances of commercialism in American sports served to help elevate professional football from the doldrums of sports. The NFL's self-regulation of its unethical practices such as ringers was an important first step in normalizing professional football but it needed elements outside of its control to help solidify itself in America. Ironically, in this age of commercialization, the NFL now stood as the honest sport as it was inherently open about its commercialism while college football had tried to hide it. In many ways, the improved status of professional football reflected the trend of professionalization and commodification of daily American life during the early twentieth century.

Part 2: The NFL Creates A New Football Spectacle

Entering 1933, the NFL had made major progress in improving the legitimacy of their professional football league through the gradual triumph of anti-professional football narratives. However, the league was nowhere close to being popular or even relevant in American culture. While many American football fans no longer felt prejudice against pro football they felt little incentive to seek out watching it. To transform the American public from simply tolerating NFL football to becoming passionate about the sport, the league's owners had to reflect deeply on the psychology of sports fandom to answer the question: Why do we watch sports?

The entertainment value of sports such as football is derived from two different factors that work in tandem with each other to provide the audience with spectacle. The joy of football is attributed to the community bonding that occurs among the audience watching the game as well as the spectacle of the action on the field during the game itself. Before 1933, football was primarily enjoyed as a ground of communal bonding with the audience providing most of the spectacle. This was a notion especially true for amateur college football but up to that point the NFL had completely failed to generate this social value. With this realization, the NFL owners chose to double down on turning the NFL's game of football into the most impressive spectacle in sports by changing the rules of football to prioritize the creation of excitement and drama within the game. The rule-change gambit proved to be immensely successful for the NFL; the public fell in love with the spectacle of professional football during the latter half of the 1930s.

With this public shift in sentiment towards the NFL, professional football had captured the zeitgeist of football fans as they had begun to place significant value on the spectacle of the game of football itself, forcing college football to gradually adapt some of pro football's innovations.

Football before the 1930s was rarely appreciated by spectators solely because of the entertainment of the game, rather it was the community and social values that football's gameday possessed that attracted spectators. Since football's early days in the 1870s, Americans understood that football was a measure of a team's collective strength and wits, reflecting the quality of men in the community the football team represents. To many Americans, their team's victory in football symbolized their communal identity was superior to the defeated team's community. This was particularly evident in amateur college football as the success of the school's football team legitimately became a source of pride and prestige for the university, as seen by the example that Stanford used its football team to establish its prestige in the 1890s. The intensity of pride that was at stake in a football game caused football fans to become extremely passionate about their team leading to part of the fun and spectacle of football being the audience's involvement in the game. Fans of college football created numerous football game rituals and traditions with marching bands, cheer songs, and cheerleaders which contributed to the communal bonding of football. Furthermore, by the 1920s college football had become so popular that colleges were building massive high-capacity stadiums which further added to the spectacle of the audience. Early 1900s football fans certainly did find some enjoyment in the events of the game itself, but it was not the main reason they patronized the sport. They were primarily there to witness and participate in the spectacle of the community cheering on the team and to experience the joys of victory.

One of the NFL's most significant shortcomings of the 1920s was its failure to create community support around the league's teams, often leading to a boring and lifeless gameday experience. Pre-NFL pro football had been a site of communal bonding just as it was for college football. Midwest rural working-class towns rallied around their local semiprofessional team to support the men in their community in their pursuit of triumph over a close rival town. However throughout the 1920s, the NFL was largely plagued with apathy not just from the upper-middle class who rejected pro football but also from many of the midwest working class that had grown the progame before the league. Many pro football fans lost interest in supporting NFL teams as the league's size made it hard for communities to maintain football rivalries with nearby towns as they tended to play teams from farther away than before the NFL. Furthermore, many working-class fans found their team becoming less relatable as NFL player rosters became increasingly full of upper-middle class college graduates which led to teams becoming even less important to their community. The league was unstable, and franchises were constantly being created and folded as many owners were not prepared for how expensive running an NFL team would be and could not find civic support. Without the potential of communal bonding NFL games lacked worthwhile meaning to attract an audience therefore they had to look to a different entertainment value to popularize pro football.

Beginning in 1933, the NFL found its niche by improving the entertainment value of professional football by turning the NFL football game itself into a spectacle. For the first time, the NFL created rules that differentiated the game from what was seen in college football. These rule changes were conceived by NFL team owners George Halas and George Preston Marshall as a way to combat the lack of entertainment present in the league at the time. These rule changes, most notably the alteration of legal forward passes being moved from having to be at least 5

yards behind the line of scrimmage to just the line of scrimmage, caused NFL games to feature more offense, scoring, and exciting plays than its college football counterpart. The changes the NFL made proved to be increasingly successful as they promoted sports writer coverage and public interest in the NFL. The new spectacle of NFL football led to the players in the NFL being regarded as not just sportsmen but showmen as well, an important development that helped destigmatize professional athletes in football and other sports. These rule changes ultimately revolutionized the way the game of football was played and in some ways resulted in pro football toppling amateur college football in the American football hierarchy.

The spectacle and fandom of football during the early twentieth century were discussed in the writings of influential football figures and sportswriters during the time and have continued to be analyzed by historians to this day. Historian Craig R. Coenen's 2005 book *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl* provides a narrative for the growth of the NFL from its inception to the 1960s, in which the first three chapters analyze the problems and successes of the league during its first two decades. Coenen provides a multitude of factors for why the early NFL struggled to gain popularity. However, with insight from primary sources it is clear that the league's lack of community ties was one of its most significant problems that was addressed with league rule changes that increased the spectacle of the sport. Furthermore, John Pettegrew's *Brutes in Suites* features a chapter on college football that analyzes Stanford's promotion of the school's hypermasculinity through its football team in the 1890s. This source provides tremendous insight into how football became a cornerstone of many football fans' identity, leading to football becoming immensely important to communal bonding during the early 1900s. Evidence of college football's social entertainment value is seen in sources written by college coaches such as Percy Haughton and college student newspapers, demonstrating the spectacle of

the pandemonious college crowd and the great enthusiasm students and alumni had for college football. While 1930s newspaper and periodical coverage of the NFL as well as articles written by NFL players and owners explore the growing importance and popularity the NFL was receiving with its recent rule changes as we see many people comment on how much the rule changes have radically increased the spectacle of the sport.

What Was The Entertainment Value of Football During the 1920s?

In 1927, Amos Alonso Stagg, one of the original creators and coaches of football in the early 1900s, recounted the history of the sport from his perspective in his book *Touchdown!*. Inevitably, he discussed the fledgling pro football scene in the book, which he believed would fail. He cited college football as providing a spectacle the pro game could never provide:

> "In the first place football is so indissolubly tied up with college life that I doubt that it can live in professional soil. The spectacle is as much a part of college football as the game itself, and the spectacle is the spontaneous product of the campus. It is youth, incarnate, dramatized. The synthetic counterfeits of collegiate enthusiasms which some professional clubs have been trying to manufacture have been as rollicking as a sinkful of dirty dishes before breakfast."[67]

Stagg's statement about the unique spectacle of the campus crowd found at a college football game reflects what the game was truly about to fans. During the 1920s, Americans were attracted to football because the game elicited strong communal identities and values, experiencing the community around the football game was often more entertaining to fans than the game itself. When going to a college football game during the 1920s, spectators saw more than just football, there were parades, marching bands, cheerleaders, and other traditions that varied from campus to campus. The spectacle of the large and passionate football audience is mostly associated with

[67]Stagg, Amos Alonzo. *Touchdown!*, (Longmans, Green and co., 1927), 294.

college football, however, it is clear that some independent professional football teams managed to rally their town around them in a similar vein as college teams excpet on a much smaller scale.

Football emergence out of elite northeastern universities occurred simultaneously with the increasing importance of college for upper-middle-class identity. Football grew to be incredibly popular in the 1890s, particularly on college campuses as the creators of football such as Walter Camp and magazine journalists promoted a connection between the sport and the masculinity of the college. Historian Daniel A. Clark argues that college was increasingly being viewed as a way for upper-middle-class men to build character that would assist them in their future corporate careers. "In the late nineteenth century an urban upper-middle class developed and established exclusive avenues of education to solidify their identity, creating boarding schools on the English model (like Groton) and patronizing Ivy League institutions…College education would emerge as the ideal site to cultivate 'Culture' and character, linked to the liberal arts and athletics."[68] Football became a way for college men to compete over which educational institution featured the men of better character.

With many Americans understanding football's masculine qualities from the writings of football men like Walter Camp, each university's football team grew to represent a collection of the most masculine men on campus. When college teams played each other, it was a battle of the masculinity of both campuses, with victory determining which school featured the better men. This meant that at each football game, there was significant pride and prestige on the line for the supporters involved, a poor result could feel emasculating for both the players and supporters. Historian of masculinity John Pettegrew wrote about how the performance of football and its growing importance in masculine identity contributed to the increasing hypermasculine values of

[68]Daniel Clark, *Creating the College Man : American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood, 1890-1915*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 7.

American upper-middle-class men. “Late nineteenth-century football, in particular, served as a vehicle for establishing pride in alma mater through ritualistic masculine display. The products of that display–hypermasculinity, the vanquishing of an equally matched opponent through combat over territory–folded into the corporate constitution of the university. It paid to produce brutes in suits; homosocial cohesion, identity, and prestige all hung in the balance.”[69] With the amount of pride at stake at a football game, it is not surprising that this resulted in students and alumni of colleges with teams often becoming incredibly passionate in their support of the team, creating a strong communal bond surrounding the team.

In historian John Pettegrew’s analysis of hypermasculinity in 1890s college football, he explores a case study into the Stanford football team and the growing importance the team meant to the students of the university. This case study is significant as it demonstrates the phenomena of college football teams becoming integral to their institution's identity and becoming a rallying point for students, alumni, and locals during the 1890s and early 1900s. Pettegrew argues that as a newly founded university in 1891, Stanford quickly viewed the football team as a way to generate prestige and legitimize the new school by beating its rival, the already established University of California. Pettegrew quotes a Stanford student newspaper article that provides insight into how he and his peers understood the meaning of Stanford’s rivalry game with the University of California, ‘“During the flight of a single hour this Thanksgiving Day we are to live all that we have spent months building for, we are to know, as nearly as anything save war may tell, of the comparative material fitness of our men.”’[70] From this quote we gain some idea as to what football symbolized for the student body of Stanford, the measure of the men of the school in comparison to their rival. To prove one’s masculinity was of great importance to

[69]John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits : Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 142.
[70]John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits,* 144.

American men at the turn of the twentieth century, and many collegiate men of this era put a level of value on the performance of the football team they shared an identity within informing their sense of manhood.

The effect the football team performance had on the psyche of the male student body of Stanford is demonstrated in an 1899 student newspaper article that Pettegrew quotes, "'One thing is for certain,' it concluded: 'the manly spirit of all associated with this year's team has spread like a contagion until, as a result, every fellow on the quad walks straighter and works harder.' In a word, football had a *spiritual* effect on them."[71] This passage shows the intense emotional connection Stanford students had developed towards their university's team. Through their team's victory in football, the average student felt more confident in themselves as perhaps the team symbolically proved what men of the university were capable of doing. By attending a football game, Stanford students could witness what Stanford men could achieve and feel connected to their success by cheering the team to victory. Over time the importance of a football team to a student's identity would grow beyond the confines of a college campus to become a part of many people's identity as the sport continued to grow into mainstream popularity which would further increase the spectacle of the spectators as new ways of expressing support emerged.

Throughout the early 1900s to the 1920s there was continual growth in the popularity of football leading to the continual development of new traditions that add to the fun and culture of a football game as well as the size of the audience increases to become an incredible spectacle. During this time, college marching bands began to incorporate song and music into the campus football gameday experience, further adding to the entertainment value of college football. Notre Dame claims the school's marching band has had a present at their football games since their

[71]John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits,* 147.

first game in 1887, and the first college marching band halftime show is credited to the University of Illinois marching band in 1907.[72] Many of these marching bands would write songs that fans would learn and sing together at games, such as the University of California's band developed "Fight for California" as a school fight song in 1909.[73] To help lead the crowd in cheering, designated cheerleaders began to make appearances at college football games. The University of Minnesota developed the first cheer squad in 1898, the group was a collection of men who led the crowd in chants and songs at football games. Cheerleading would spread to other schools and during the 1920s would develop to include acrobatics and tumbling in routines. Furthermore, at some schools, women began to join the cheer teams during the 1920s but the demographics of cheerleading remained predominately male until World War II.[74]

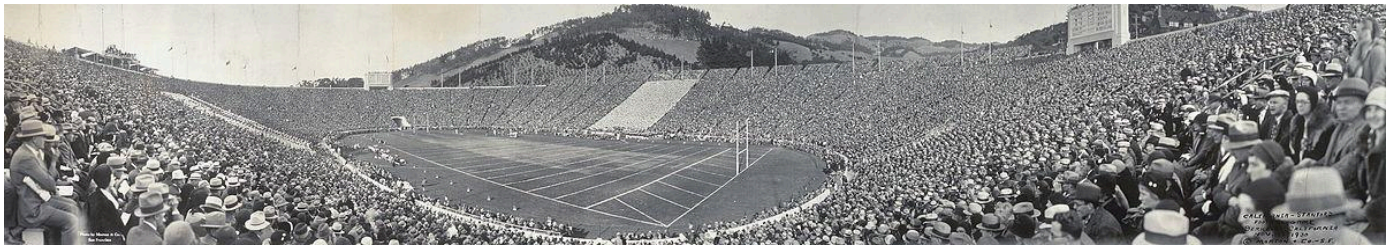

Figure 1.3. California Memorial Stadium at 73,000 capacity for the rivalry game against Stanford, 1930.[75]

The 1920s witnessed the massive expansion of collegiate football stadiums to have larger capacities than many American towns. Some of the most notable new high-capacity stadiums built during this era include Stanford's 65,000-seat stadium in 1921, University of Pennsylvania's 61,000-seat stadium in 1922, Ohio State's 63,000-seat stadium in 1922, Cal's 73,000-seat stadium in 1923, University of Illinois' 67,000-seat stadium in 1924, and the

[72]Lisa Fields, "College Firsts," *Halftime Magazine*, February 6, 2019. https://halftimemag.com/january-february-2019/college-firsts.html.
[73]"Cal Songs," University of California Marching Band, https://calband.berkeley.edu/media/cal-songs/.
[74]"Being a Cheerleader - History of Cheerleading," Varsity.com, April 12, 2018, https://www.varsity.com/news/cheerleader-history-cheerleading/.
[75]Morton and Company, *California - Stanford Football Game*, November 22, 1930, photo, Library of Congress, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/58/Cal%2C_Stanford_football_game%2C_Memorial_Stadium%2C_1930.jpg/1920px-Cal%2C_Stanford_football_game%2C_Memorial_Stadium%2C_1930.jpg?20080401222201.

gigantic 84,401-seat stadium built for the University of Michigan in 1927.[76] The impressive scale of these new college football venues demonstrates the drastic increase in football's popularity, resulting in college football becoming big business for these universities. By increasing the size of their stadiums, universities could draw more revenue from football and use the stadium as a source of prestige and comparison with other schools. For the spectator, the ever-increasing size of the football audience became a drawing point to attend games to witness the spectacle of the crowd. Football head coach and promoter Percy Haughton made sure to mention the spectacle of the large crowd as a point of emphasis for new fans of the game in his 1923 book *Football and How to Watch It*:

> "While the cheering sections have their turn, followed by a general settling down in anticipation of the game. Look about you in this interim. Behold the serried tiers of humanity, every seat occupied by an intensely partisan spectator. Observe the color effect of flags, ladies' hats and the flowers worn by both men and women slightly dimmed by a film of smoke from thousands of cigars and cigarettes. It is a most impressive spectacle…On the instant pandemonium breaks loose. In the midst of and above the tumult an organized cheer–the best of the whole afternoon, one that rakes the spine and vibrates in every nerve-center–is given for the heroes."[77]

Haughton captures in his description of a football game atmosphere how the energy of the crowd's cheers impacts an individual spectator, with the noise of thousands of people cheering in unison vibrating a person internally to their core. Haughton chose to describe the spectacle and emotion of the crowd at a college football game at the very beginning of his book before he began teaching the rules of football. This was done to entice readers to continue reading and learning about the sport as Haughton recognized that the fanfare surrounding football was one of the ways many people were attracted to the sport. Through reading Haughton's book, readers could become a part of the football culture and experience the excitement and emotion of the crowd present at a football game. Haughton also captures the spectators' unity while watching

[76]Schmidt, *Shaping College Football, 45*.
[77]Percy Duncan Haughton, *Football and How to Watch It*, (Little, Brown, and company, 1924), 8-9.

football: “Again, on what other occasions do hearts beat in such unison and such common impulses move the crowd? What is more effective to quicken in the veins of undergraduates a deep and lasting loyalty to his Alma Mater and to develop a spirit of kinship among men, who in the classroom, have gazed at each other almost as strangers.”[78] Haughton’s book identifies that the draw of football during the 1920s extended far beyond the limits of the game itself. The spectators watching the game provided passionate fanfare as they hoped to witness their team win glory for their community, which was emotionally fulfilling for the audience. By the 1920s, football had become beloved for its spectatorship; every Saturday in the fall, thousands became physically and emotionally connected in their shared viewing and participation of a football game, an experience that hooked millions of Americans to become fans of the sport.

Pro Football Struggles to Become a Part of Their Community During the 1920s

Throughout the 1920s, the NFL struggled not only to garner interest from the American upper-middle class with pro-amateurism sentiment but also from the working class as its teams struggled to integrate into communal identity. Before the NFL, pro football teams had been relatively successful at appealing to their local community by developing critical rivalry games with football teams from nearby towns that became a source of pride for the community. However, the NFL failed to maintain these rivalries as the expanded scope of the league meant that the pro teams in the league played their established local rival towns less frequently and played more games against out-of-state opponents with whom they had no established relationship. The NFL struggled to appeal to already existing pro football fans due to schedule mismanagement, and the players were increasingly becoming college graduates from far outside the team’s community, making the team unrelatable to working-class fans.

[78]Percy Duncan Haughton, *Football and How to Watch It*, 268.

Professional football was created out of rivalry. Initially, independent football teams comprised men of the town who did not play for money but for the love of the sport and their town. Eventually, an independent team would spark a rivalry with a team from another community, motivating the team and its community to seek out skilled college football players and recruit them to play for the team in the important rivalry game. Therefore, developing rival football games was crucial to transitioning football teams from independent to professional. The rivalry in one region, in particular, fueled three football teams to expand the professionalization of the sport further than had ever been seen before. The Northeastern Ohio working-class factory towns of Canton, Akron, and Massillon were less than 30 miles apart, and their community pro football teams developed significant rivalries during the 1910s. As historian Keith McClellan demonstrated, "In the Midwest, strong community rivalries fueled the change from independent to semiprofessional football…An avid football town, Canton would not tolerate losing to rival communities like Akron and Massillon. They demanded their local independent football team hire an even stronger core of former college all-stars to wrest the state championship away from Akron. In 1913, Canton added several college men to its roster…When Akron still beat them, they upgraded the team again."[79] These pro football teams had successfully created a communal entertainment value similar to what was being seen in college football simultaneously, on a much smaller scale. Local rivalry games would attract a large amount of the community to rally around the team, and the profits from those games could be reinvested into the players to improve the professional teams. The Canton Bulldogs and Akron Pros were among the founding teams of the NFL in 1920, with the creation occurring in Canton, Ohio, demonstrating the significant influence the Canton Bulldogs had on pro football at the time.[80] However, neither of these pro

[79]Keith McClellan, *The Sunday Game,* 4-9.
[80]Notes of NFL Formation Meeting September 17, 1920, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

teams nor many other Midwest working-class pro teams would last until 1930 as the new league failed to maintain these important community rivalries.

The NFL's effort to live up to its name as the National Football League ultimately hindered local rivalries. This, in turn hampered each club's community ties and resulted in the folding of many pro football teams. The league's first year featured pro teams from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and western New York, covering nearly 800 miles of the Midwest. This meant that the owners of these pro teams had to pay far more in travel costs to transport the more than 20 men on the team plus equipment to the other city than they did before the league. In 1917, the Canton Bulldogs only had to travel to Akron, Detroit, and twice to Youngstown, meaning the team had to cover travel for roughly 679 miles. Meanwhile, in 1920, as part of the NFL, the team had to travel to Akron, Dayton, Cleveland, and twice to Buffalo, a total of 1025 miles, an over 50% increase[81]. This required distance to travel would only continue to increase as new teams were created in places like New York City, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Connecticut, and Rhode Island during the decade.[82] This dramatic increase in the cost of travel meant that high game attendance was critical for the continuation of the team as that was how clubs made almost all their money. According to estimates from Craig R. Coenen, NFL teams needed paid attendance to range from 3,000 to 13,000 to break even from the rising costs of running a football team.[83]

However, many of these teams failed to generate excitement or interest in these games as the communities had no established history with the opponent. Furthermore, there was little chance of new rivalries being created as teams were constantly joining or folding, which led to little

[81]McClellan, *The Sunday Game,* 408.
[82]Sports Reference LLC, "1932 Green Bay Packers Rosters, Stats, Schedule," Pro-Football-Reference.com - Pro Football Statistics and History, https://www.pro-football-reference.com/.
[83]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 14.

consistency in opponents that was necessary for rivalries to form. For example, for the first three years of the league, the Canton Bulldogs played 17 different teams despite the season containing about 11 games, with teams they played, like the Chicago Tigers in 1920, folding weeks after their game. Professional football games needed meaning to stay relevant with the community, which generated revenue, and the schedule structure of the NFL during this era prevented these teams from being able to capitalize off the power rivalry held in fueling interest in football.

Working-class fans of professional football also found it difficult to find reasons to support their NFL team as the players on the team were becoming less relatable. NFL teams needed to be successful on the field to have any chance at drawing attention; teams that had losing seasons often folded not long afterward. Therefore, early NFL owners had to spend a lot of money to draw in college football graduates to stay competitive with the league. This meant the league's player base was comprised of middle- and upper-class college graduates who were often from far away from where the team was located. This meant that the players of the NFL shared very little in common with their working-class fans and, therefore, could not identify with the team that was supposed to represent them. When a community does not identify with its team, it no longer values it and its accomplishments, causing the team to become irrelevant and less interesting to watch as a spectator. As stated by Craig Coenen, "More than 80 percent of NFL players from 1920 to 1932 went to college, and most of them received a degree…Nationwide, only 5 percent of all young men attended college. Pro football found itself in an inevitable position. Unable to capture the middle-class market, the sport found itself losing the support of working-class patrons to local semi-pro and amateur teams because pro football players were not the best athletes, were relatively unknown to local audiences, and came from different socioeconomic backgrounds than blue-collar fans."[84] Coenen's research demonstrates

[84]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 17.

that the early NFL had to contend with pro football teams outside the league. These independent teams existed across the country and usually were more focused on featuring men of their community rather than buying college players. This attracted many blue-collar football fans to attend their games rather than NFL games with which they had no communal ties. With waning civic pride and participation with their team and mounting cost to run a franchise, the Canton Bulldogs left small-town Canton, the city of their identity for 20 years, to try and become popular in Cleveland.[85] This was the fate of dozens of NFL teams from 1920 to 1932, as the way the league operated was largely not conducive to forming the strong community identity that was necessary for football to be attractive to watch spectators.

Football was entertaining for spectators on a social level. The sport provided a means to rally a community together in support of their team, and through participation, fans felt a strong communal bond and identity. College football and some early professional football teams became popular weekly events to attend during the fall as a way to have fun and experience the spectacle of football. However, the NFL failed to create the same enticing atmosphere of civic importance due to a lack of rivalries and unrelatable teams. Therefore, there was little entertainment value left to be gained from watching NFL games. Beginning in 1933, the NFL would look in a different direction to try and attract football fans to their game as they changed the sport's rules to turn their football product into an entertaining spectacle.

[85]PFRA Research, "Goodby, Bulldogs, Hello." *The Professional Football Researchers Association.* https://web.archive.org/web/20101218173751/http://profootballresearchers.org/Articles/Goodbye_Bulldogs_Hello.pdf

1933: The Year The NFL Changes the Game of Football Forever

On December 17th, 1933, a crowd of 30,000 Chicagoans witnessed a football game the likes of which had never been seen before. The spectators witnessed the New York Giants and Chicago Bears combine for nearly 600 yards of total offense, five touchdowns, and three field goals in a 23-21 thriller. A close football game featuring so much offense and scoring had rarely been seen, not just in the NFL but in football as a whole. In the entire 48 games played in the 1932 NFL season, not once had both teams scored more than 20 points in a game. The spectacle of the 1933 NFL championship game provided such immense entertainment that those in attendance were in awe. Newspaper writer George Kirksey described the crowd as "on the verge of hysteria as one spectacular play followed another."[86] Furthermore, the Associated Press wrote of the game to a national audience, "In a sensational forward passing battle the Chicago Bears won the national professional football championship today by beating the New York Giants, 23 to 21… The game was a thrilling combat of forward passing skill, desperate line plunging, and gridiron strategy that kept the chilled spectator on their feet in constant excitement."[87]

The entertainment present in the game of the 1933 NFL championship stood in stark contrast to what was being witnessed in college football during the 1930s. A month before the NFL championship, the Associated Press reported that scoring in college football was at an all-time low since points per game began to be tracked in 1922. The article reports that college football games were, on average, featuring 12.09 points per game, with 164 teams scoring less than that average.[88] This low points-per-game average is reflected broadly in points-per-game

[86]George Kirksey, "Giants Fail to Stem Last Period Rush," *The Pittsburgh Press*, December 18, 1933, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8vAcAAAAIBAJ&sjid=iEsEAAAAIBAJ&pg=6445%2C6101693.
[87]"Bears Beat Giants For Title, 23-21: Forward-Lateral, Naguski to Hewitt to Karr, Brings the Deciding Touchdown. Air Duel Thrills 30,000 Manders Aids Victors With 3 Field Goals," *New York Times,* December 18, 1933, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/bears-beat-giants-title-23-21/docview/100811710/se-2.
[88]"Low Mark Set in College Football Scoring; Average to Date is 12.09 Points Per Game," *New York Times,* November 14, 1933, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/low-mark-set-college-football-scoring-average/docview/100836641/se-2.

averages in college football throughout the decade; the 1930s are the lowest-scoring decade in college football history, with teams scoring on average 12.86 points per game.[89] Less scoring means fewer exciting moments in a football game and fewer times when the crowd cheers and reacts excitedly. Followers of college football attribute this lack of scoring to defensive strategies becoming nearly perfect at minimizing offensive production within the current confines of football's rules. As the Associated Press article writes on the low scoring, "This adds weight to the arguments of coaches that the defense has gained the upper hand and, in effect, has pretty well throttled the offense."[90]

Despite some complaints about the limited scoring and offense, the American Intercollegiate Rules Committee was satisfied with the state of the game. In 1930, the chairman of the rules committee, E. K. Hall, wrote an article defending one of the new rules implemented that prevented defenses from taking offensive fumbles for touchdowns. Many felt this rule killed one of the most exciting plays in football. "As to the criticism that the rule deprives the spectator of one of the great thrills in the game, it might be appropriate to again restate the fact that the rules committee has always proceeded on the theory that the game is primarily to provide wholesome sport for the hundreds of thousands of boys who play it rather than to provide thrills for the tens of millions of those who watch them play."[91] These comments from the American Intercollegiate Rules Committee reflect a fundamental truth about the creed of amateurism: its purpose is to provide value to those playing the sport rather than to the spectators watching it. Amateur sports in principle should not need or care for an audience, they are played explicitly

[89]Zach Bigalke. "SMQ: A Century of Scoring Trends in College Football." Saturday Blitz, September 29, 2019. https://saturdayblitz.com/2019/09/29/century-scoring-trends-in-college-football/.
[90]"Low Mark Set in College Football Scoring; Average to Date is 12.09 Points Per Game."
[91]"Evidence Accumulated During Past Football Season That Rules Need No Changing—Hall," *The Yale Daily News*, January 10, 1930, https://ydnhistorical.library.yale.edu/?a=d&d=YDN19300110-01.2.6&srpos=40&e=------193-en-20--21--txt-txIN-%22thrill%22+AND+%22Football%22+AND+%22Game%22-------false.

for the benefit of the athletes. The rules committee understands this notion as seen by Hall's statement, "the theory that the game is primarily to provide wholesome sport for the hundred of thousands of boys who play." College football's commitment to amateurism in terms of rules during the 1930s led to an era in which the moments that made football exciting for audiences became more infrequent. There was plenty of spectacle to be found in social traditions surrounding college football, which is why the sport would remain incredibly popular despite the lack of entertainment on the field. Meanwhile, the NFL lacked exciting scoring football during its early years as it had the same rules as college football.

From the NFL's first season in 1920 through the 1932 season, the NFL had played by the same rules as college football. Low-scoring and defensive games were often even more apparent than in college football at the time. For instance, over the course of the first four games of the 1932 Chicago Bears season, a total of two points were scored by both teams combined. Their games against the Packers, Stapletons, and Cardinals all ended in a 0-0 tie, and their fourth game against the Packers ended in a 0-2 defeat. When the Bears finally scored their first touchdown five games into the season, Wilfrid Smith of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "[the touchdown] which caused no manner of rejoicing among the players, who had begun to think they never would cross an enemy goal line."[92] The NFL was plagued with 0-0 ties, a result that football fans were not enthusiastic about. Add in the fact that the NFL had little community identity, and it was clear the NFL did not have much to offer to audiences. The lack of entertainment in the league was realized by two NFL team owners who sought action in the 1933 Winter Owner's Meeting to change that problem for the league's benefit.

[92]Wilfrid Smith, "27,000 See Bears Defeat Stapletons, 27 to 7." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* October 24, 1932. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/27-000-see-bears-defeat-stapleton-7/docview/181409114/se-2.

The 1933 Winter Owner's Meeting on February 25th and 26th, 1933, is hugely important to the history of American football as it was the meeting where team owners George Preston Marshall and George Halas proposed drastic rule changes to the NFL's game that the other owners ultimately approved. Marshall and Halas were two men of very different backgrounds and relationships with football. George Halas' entire life was dedicated to football. A 1937 game program for a Chicago Bears versus College All-Star game in Minnesota featured an article on the history of pro football, in which it describes George Halas and his team's importance to the league: "The Chicago Bears football club has meant more to the National football league than just a headline attraction. The book on professional football might not yet be as far written had it not been for the Chicago organization and its founder and leader, George Halas, for not only the Bears' club the nucleus of the present league, but it has been the spark plug."[93] The narrative of Halas' importance to pro football in 1937 remains true to historians to this day. Many agree that without his commitment to the sport, the NFL would not exist. The street on which the Pro Football Hall of Fame is located is named in his honor.

Halas began his football career at the University of Illinois from 1915 to 1917; afterward, he, just like many other college football players at the time, thought his time playing football was over. However, with the U.S. entry into World War I, Halas would find himself playing football again for his naval training station. Journalist Chris Serb argues in his book *War Football: World War I and The Birth of the NFL* that World War I military training football teams gave Halas a renewed love of the game and opened him up to the possibility of continuing to play the sport professionally.[94] In 1920, while working for the A. E. Staley Company, he was also in charge of the company's football team, which it sponsored. In 1921, he assumed full

[93]Article on History of NFL in College All-Star Game in Duluth, September 21, 1937, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.
[94]Serb, *War Football : World War I and the Birth of the NFL*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

responsibility for the team and moved them to Chicago to become the Bears. Halas was simultaneously a player, head coach, and owner for the Bears throughout the 1920s and was the coach and owner during the 1930s. He consistently fielded one of the better and most popular teams in the league and was the man who signed Red Grange, the most important football player in the sport's history.

George Preston Marshall's relationship with football could not be more different from Halas'. He had never played the sport and had only recently become a pro football club owner of the Boston Braves in 1932. Marshall was a self-made millionaire who believed his business success was due to his natural showmanship and entertainer qualities. He wrote in an article for the *New York Post* in 1938: "I've been guilty of promotional ideas and being a showman ever since I can remember…My defense is that promotional ideas and showmanship never have done anybody any harm. Anyway, I know they haven't hurt my laundry or our football team."[95] As an outsider to football and a man who prioritized entertainment for business, it is no wonder that during the 1933 Owner's Meeting, Marshall motioned for four rule changes, more than any other owner, two of which were such departures from the game of football and were quickly rejected.[96] The other two rules, which Halas seconded, would be approved and would revolutionize the game.

The transcripts of the owner's meeting will forever give the impression that Marshall developed these rules single-handedly. The documents only report on the person who motioned and seconded the rule change and the result of the discussion. However, the previously discussed article on the Bears and Halas from 1937 further claims that Halas came up with the idea for the rule changes, "Realizing at the start that the postgraduate game could not compete with the

[95]George Preston Marshall, "Pro Football Is Better Football," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 1938.
[96]Notes of NFL Winter Owner's Meeting, February 25-26, 1933, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

college brand as regards sideline frills, for obvious reasons, Halas pointed out that the circuit must win followers by sheer excellence of play and a new type of fan was discovered."[97] Both men were critical to the creation and passing of the football rules changes; perhaps both of them had developed the idea simultaneously or previously discussed it. Marshall, with his lack of experience in football and his unique perspective on successful business strategies, was likely able to propose unconventional ideas that he believed would prioritize entertainment. Within the discussion of the rule change, Halas utilized his deep understanding of football, its fans, and his respect for the other owners to convince others of the validity and legitimacy of these rules. No matter which owner was more important in passing these rules, it is undeniable that these rules created a more entertaining and attractive brand of football that the public enjoyed.

Important New Rules For NFL Football

Football rule changes the NFL created before the start of the 1933 season led many people and sports writers to believe that the NFL pro football game was unique and better than what was seen in college football. The initial rule changes were designed to increase the amount of offense and the frequency of dramatic and thrilling plays.

The rule change that most drastically changed the look, spectacle, and strategy of football was the new forward pass rule. The forward pass rule was invented by Walter Camp in 1906 as a way to ideally limit the absurd death toll of football at the time.[98] With this rule, the quarterback can throw the football forward to a teammate rather than only being able to throw it laterally or backward. The forward pass opened up new opportunities for strategy and spectacular moments; however, from 1906 to 1933, football was still a game dominated by

[97]Article on History of NFL in College All-Star Game in Duluth, September 21, 1937.
[98]Jardins, *Walter Camp*, 177.

offenses running the ball instead of utilizing the forward pass. The offense's hesitancy to throw the ball was due to several rules in place that limited the potential of the forward pass. First, the person throwing the ball had to be at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage(the imaginary line separating the teams at the beginning of a play) for the pass to be legal. This aspect of the rule made utilizing the forward pass more difficult for offenses. The thrower had to be able to throw the football five or more yards and the larger size of the football contributed to make it more difficult to throw. In the February 1933 NFL owners meeting, they agreed to alter the forward pass rule to allow passing from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage, instantly opening up pro football to a new dimension of strategy and entertainment. The importance of this strategic rule change is best explained by famed football player Red Grange, who in 1934 wrote an article for *The Saturday Evening Post* about the impact the new forward pass had on football. He credits this rule change as giving the offense a slight advantage: "Under the former rules, the percentage was with the defense. Under the more open game, the offense has a shade the better of it, which, in my judgment, is as it should be. It's more fun for spectators and players alike."[99] The new passing rule forced NFL defenses to spread out to try and limit the threat of the passing game, thus allowing the offense a greater chance to find and exploit weaknesses in the defensive coverage. With the newfound "more open game" as Red Grange and other football writers described it, there was a greater frequency of exhilarating moments in pro football games for audiences to enjoy.

Another important rule change that occurred during the 1933 owner's meeting was moving the field goalpost from the back of the endzone to the front. This rule change was done as a solution to stop the plague of 0-0 ties that were all too frequent in the NFL. Moving the

[99]Red Grange, "Future Football," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 20, 1934, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rgr&AN=522429065&site=ehost-live.

goalpost 10 yards closer to the kicker increased the odds of the kick attempt being successful and adding 3 points to the score. The owner of the NFL's Washington Redskins, George Preston Marshall, in particular, liked this rule, "How often do you see a field goal kicked in college games? Unless you're especially lucky, you don't see this beautiful and highly dramatic play once a season in the big-time college stadia. You're likely to see pro kickers turn the trick two or three times in a single game."[100] The field goal had been a somewhat illusive play in football's history up to that point. The act of kicking the ball between uprights, often well over 15 to 20 yards away, was difficult in an era before players specialized as kickers. This robbed spectators of one of the most dramatic plays in football, especially if the kick seals a win, as everyone watches with bated breath for the outcome of the ball's flight towards the goal post.

Beyond just changes to football rules, the NFL also altered the league's structure to increase the drama at stake in an NFL football game. As previously noted, one of the NFL's biggest flaws of the 1920s was its inability to foster rivalries between its clubs. Rivalries have always been a core part of the appeal of football as they increase the weight of the stakes for victory in those games. The NFL took a page out of professional baseball's book and divided their clubs into two regional divisions, eastern and western, with the winner of the two divisions meeting in the NFL Championship game to determine the best team in the league. Coenen notes this action was a significant long-term investment in the league by the owners, which had been very uncommon during the 1920s. Coenen writes, "It would take time for regional rivalries to develop, but millionaire owners were in pro football for the long haul and favored a long-term investment over the short-term benefits of promoting heroes and gimmicks."[101] This investment paid off, as over-divisional rivalries would form and draw larger crowds to games that were

[100]Marshall, "Pro Football Is Better Football."
[101]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 86.

becoming increasingly sold out by the end of the decade.[102] Furthermore, the creation of the NFL Championship Game gave NFL teams something significant to play for during the season and became the one game that garnered national attention every year. The media paid special attention to the game, which helped spread the league's following nationwide, especially following the spectacle of the previously mentioned first NFL Championship game between the New York Giants and Chicago Bears. Coenen further writes, "National periodicals published articles and information about the contest, and newspapers from across the nation(but mainly from or near league cities) assigned reporters to cover the game."[103] The addition of rivalries and a championship game helped to further increase the entertainment value of a pro football game as these changes helped increase the magnitude of spectacle of a moment in a game. A big play in a football game becomes exponentially more thrilling and dramatic when the play leads to victory over a hated rival or seals a trip to the championship.

Football Fan Reaction to the Rule Changes

The effect of the newfound advantage the offense was granted with the forward pass rule and other rule changes can be traced both in football statistics and the positive reception fans and media had to the new pro football game. Historian Craig R. Coenen performed a quantitative analysis of NFL football statistics before and after the 1933 rule changes, from which he found:

> "In 1932, there were on average 27 forward passes each game. Within seven years, the number of passes increased by 53 percent to 41 per game… Furthermore, from 1932 to 1945, total yards gained shot up from 365 to 533 per contest… Prior to 1933, NFL teams averaged just over 8 points a game. Over the next twelve years, that number jumped more than 100 percent to 18.5. Shutouts fell from 64 percent of all games to about 13 percent by 1941, and 0-0 ties declined from more than 6 percent of all contests to about 1 percent."[104]

[102]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 86.
[103]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 86.
[104]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 86.

These statistics show that pro football offenses became more effective at moving the ball downfield and scoring with these rule changes. This increase in offense correlated with the increasing attention the league received from Americans. The league's game quickly became highly regarded as a spectacle that was more appealing to the spectator than the college game.

During the 1933 NFL season, some in sports media were already aware of the spectator improvements pro football had made to the sport. In the November 13, 1933 U.S edition of *Time* magazine reported on rule changes being suggested for the next college football season and made explicit reference to the impact the pro rules were having on the sport. "Professionals, one place where rules which slow up the game will not be tolerated, is in professional football, which is one reason (but not the prime one) why it is vastly more entertaining than the collegiate game."[105] The 1933 NFL Championship essentially served as the debut of this new, exciting brand of football, with the spectators and media in attendance being treated to a 5-touchdown 23-21 thriller. Fans and media immediately recognized why this game was such a spectacle, with the Associated Press writing for *The New York Times* on the game, "The struggle was a revelation to college coaches who advocate no changes to the rules. It was strictly an offensive battle, and the professional rule of allowing passes to be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage was responsible for most of the thrills."[106] The NFL championship game was reported by newspapers across the country, putting the league on the radar of Americans looking for quality and entertaining football that was actively lacking in the college ranks. The game encouraged many Americans to seek to witness NFL football in 1934. Every year, the Associated Press polled sports editors about the year's most important sports trend. In 1934, sports editors

[105] "Sport: Football: Midseason," *Time*, November 13, 1933, https://time.com/archive/6751891/sport-football-midseason/.
[106]"Bears Beat Giants For Title, 23-21: Forward-Lateral, Naguski to Hewitt to Karr, Brings the Deciding Touchdown. Air Duel Thrills 30,000 Manders Aids Victors With 3 Field Goals."

agreed that the growth of pro football was the of the year, “The spread and popularity of pro football was voted the most striking trend and led one sports editor to predict that the next five years would see a pro team in nearly every American city with a population of 250,000 or more.”[107] When sports editors were polled in 1937, they again determined that the growth of Pro Football was the year’s biggest trend.[108] The exploding popularity of the NFL during the late 30s is reflected in average attendance figures. According to newspaper data compiled by Craig Coenen, average NFL game attendance tripled from 1932 to 1945, with paid attendance surging from 6,997 in 1932 to 19,383 in 1939.[109] While the NFL would continue to evolve the game to become more entertaining throughout the rest of the decade by adding even more rule changes, collegiate coaches remained hesitant to make changes.

In December 1933, the collegiate coach's committee once again met and discussed rule changes, including the NFL’s forward passing rule, but ultimately declined to initiate it. When *Chicago Tribune* reporter Wilfred Smith asked chairmen of the committee and Michigan head coach Harry Kipke about the lack of offense and scoring in the league, similar to E. K. Hall in 1930, Kipke was satisfied with the state of rules, stating, “I believe that with proper publicity the football going public can be educated to such an extent that they can get a thrill out of tricky defensive maneuvers as they do out of fine offensive plays.”[110] Despite the less entertaining game, college football was still able to remain exciting and overall more popular than pro

---

[107]"Boom in Professional Football is Picked as 1934's Most Striking Trend in Sports: Pro Football Gain Feature of Year," *New York Times,* December 23, 1934, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/boom-professional-football-is-picked-as-1934s/docview/101210532/se-2.
[108]"Growth in the Popularity of Pro Football Voted as Year's Outstanding Sports Trend," *New York Times,* December 22, 1937, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/growth-popularity-pro-football-voted-as-years/docview/102125768/se-2.
[109]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 102-109.
[110]Wilfrid Smith, "Coaches Consider 7 Changes in Football Rules: are to Help Offense Committee Report Favors Alternations," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 27, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/coaches-consider-7-changes-football-rules/docview/181501043/se-2.

football for the rest of the 1930s due to the continuation of the social spectacle of fun traditions that had been a part of the sport for decades. However, by the 1940s, many coaches became concerned that college football would become less relevant than pro football, a stark contrast from how things were 20 or even 10 years prior. In 1944, journalist Allison Danzig reported that at the coach's committee meeting, “Lou Little of Columbia University, who initiated the discussion on the changes as chairman of Coaches’ Football Rules Committee and who warned his colleagues some weeks ago that college football was in danger of taking a back seat to the professional game unless Bingham’s committee brought the rules to date.”[111] Collegiate coaches’ concern regarding the rivaling growth of pro football in the 1940s sheds light on how much the dynamic between college football and pro football had changed throughout the 1930s.

Despite college coaches' best efforts to maintain the traditional rules of football, the zeitgeist of football had been moved towards the high-flying spectacle of the NFL. Pro football had gone from essentially being a parasite to the successes of college football to the innovator of the sport that college football had to copy to prevent itself from becoming outdated. In the latter half of the 1930s, many football fans’ expectations for football had been altered by the newfound offensive spectacle seen in the league. A crossroads of this development can be seen in the public’s disappointment with the lack of scoring from the first two Chicago Charities All-Star games.

Evidence of the NFL’s rule changes altering football fans’ expectations and desires when watching football is seen in the public reaction to the Chicago Charities All-Star games. The Chicago Charities All-Star games of 1934 and 1935 were played under college rules rather than

[111]Allison Danzig, "Two Changes in Football Rules Recommended by Coaches' Group: Heavier Penalty on Intentional Kick-Off and More Freedom on Forwards Desired -- Gentlemen's Agreements Expected," *New York Times,* May 30, 1944, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/two-changes-football-rules-recommended-coaches/docview/106908407/se-2.

the more entertaining NFL rules. Before the first Chicago Charities All-Star game, there was heated debate over which football rules the game should be played as they would significantly impact the strategy of both teams. The Chicago Bears had found tremendous success over the past season on the field through utilizing the league's new passing rule, while the College All-Star players had never played football under the pro rules. Therefore whoever won the debate over the rule system would have a significant advantage in the contest. Ultimately, Arch Ward, the creator and promoter of the game, sided with playing under the college rules despite knowing the spectators preferred the pro rules: "'It is our opinion that the professional forward pass rule increases scoring and adds to the game. We believe the spectators generally approve, certainly where it is employed by two professional teams. However, in this instance, our primary duty is to our guests, the university stars."[112] Ward recognizes how the newly implemented NFL passing rule had improved the offensive dynamics of the sport, a notion proven correct when the first two Chicago Charities All-Star games resulted in 0-0 and 0-5 games with zero touchdowns scored.

These results further proved to football fans that college rules made the game less exciting, and these football fans were increasingly wishing to see high-scoring games similar to what was being seen in professional football. From the public letters published in the *Chicago Tribune* article series, "In the Wake of the News," we see evidence of the entertainment focus of football fans that the NFL was actively catering to. A man created as Johnny Public wrote to the *Tribune* exclaiming, "The All-Star vs. Chicago Bears football game was a great spectacle…Yet there was something still to be desired. That was TOUCHDOWNS. For two years now, we have watched pros and All-Stars, and in two full games, there has not been a single touchdown… I

[112]Wilfrid Smith, "Bears All-Stars to Use College Pass Rule: All Throws to Start 5 Yards Back of Line Decision Terminates Coaches' Dispute," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1934. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bears-all-stars-use-college-pass-rule/docview/181572883/se-2.

don't care who is handicapped, just so we see some scoring. I want touchdowns."[113] The fact that this letter was published under the moniker Johnny Public by the *Tribune* captures the extent to which the public had been disappointed by the lack of offense and scoring in the first two All-Star games. In the past, the audience may have been more satisfied by a 5-0 result; after all, it was a critical game in the debate between pro and college football, but now the audience knew what football was capable of under the NFL's rules. The public now had higher expectations for entertainment at a football game; they did not only want to see their team win but to do so with touchdowns and thrilling plays. Thus, the 1935 Chicago Charities All-Star game captured how far the NFL had come in both a competitive and entertainment facet. With the American public taking notice, the league would continue to gradually grow into a role as the leading voice of the sport. While college football was still overall more popular than the NFL by the end of the 1930s, the foundation for pro football's growth to surpass college football had been established through the league's innovations to cater to the football fan looking for spectacle and entertainment in football games.

NFL Professional Players as Showmen

For generations, the payment of athletes had been criticized as a violation of sportsmanship. Influential sportsmen such as Casper Whitney wrote profusely against commercialization in sports, believing that there was no place for it, "Sport is not a business; money as money does not belong with sports, and when it comes debasement of the standard and decay of the game follow."[114] This sentiment surrounding sports had been draining in relevance

[113]"In the Wake of the News: Wake Mail Box," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* September 3, 1935, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/wake-news/docview/181670490/se-2.

[114]Caspar Whitney, "Expediency in Sport: What is an Amateur?" *Outlook,* September 19, 1917, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/expediency-sport/docview/136647688/se-2.

throughout the early 1930s, but the NFL's efforts to make pro football a source of tremendous entertainment had changed how people understood the purpose of professional sports. Based on periodicals written by journalists, athletes, and sports business owners, professional sports were beginning to be justified as a business, show business. With the increasing spectacle seen in professional football and other pro sports such as Major League Baseball, Americans were recognizing that professional sports had a distinct role to play as entertainment, with the pay of athletes justified as these athletes were more than sportsmen; they were showmen.

The development of professional football players being viewed as showmen was an idea likely developed by NFL owner George Preston Marshall and supported by many of the players of the time, such as Red Grange. As previously discussed, George Preston Marshall was a rather eccentric new NFL franchise owner, he was a man who relished in the spotlight and loved to put on a good performance. Coenen believed his desire for attention is what drew him to becoming an NFL team owner in the first place, "Despite losing over $100,000 in his first five years in pro football, Marshall never thought of abandoning the NFL, because he reveled in the attention and publicity(although limited) he received from the press, political figures, and the general public, all from owning an NFL team."[115] As a new owner, Marshall had played a role in convincing the other NFL owners to break away from the college game to create a more spectacle-driven brand of football. In 1938, Marshall wrote an article for *The Saturday Evening Post* titled "Pro Football is Better Football". The article reads like a victory lap for Marshall where he celebrates the tremendous success his Washington Redskins and the NFL had experienced over the past few years. His thesis in this article is that the success of pro football can be credited to the showmanship of its professional athletes:

[115]Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl*, 82.

> "Showmanship, the showmanship of Sammy Baugh on the gridiron and the showmanship of our management in offering the Sunday-afternoon crowds plenty of added attractions, made Washingtonians feel that their Redskins are 'their team.' And I believe that the professional showman's touch, could not only be added to baseball teams, mostly pretty colorless, with profit, but to college football teams as well, with more pleasure and profit, too, for everybody."[116]

Slingin' Sammy Baugh was a breakout superstar player for Washington in the late 30s. The new passing rules catered perfectly to his throwing abilities, making him one of the first famous passing quarterbacks in the sport's history. Many NFL players found greater opportunity within the NFL's rules to impress spectators with their footballing skills, thus elevating men like Sammy Baugh from a sportsman to a showman renowned for his ability to entertain audiences. NFL players quickly recognized the opportunity the game provided them to put on a show with their perfected abilities. In 1934, a wise and experienced player, Red Grange, began an article exploring the recent changes to pro football by placing football within the framework of show business, "FOOTBALL, collegiate or professional, is a branch of the show business. In the professional game, however, we've lacked the props—that is, bands, organized cheering, mass meetings and football girls—which make college football a pageant. Hence, we've been striving to give the crowds a spectacular show—exciting, but without sham. We've simply opened up the game several notches."[117] Red Grange and other pro football players recognized that for professional football to be successful, it was on them to win games but to do so in an impressive and entertaining fashion to keep spectators interested. The pros did not have the luxury of bands and cheerleaders to entertain audiences as college football did; the pros provided the showmanship themselves. With their years of experience in football, many NFL players were successful as showmen, which expanded their national fame and wallets. This understanding of

[116]George Preston Marshall, "Pro Football Is Better Football," 2.
[117]Grange, "Future Football."

professional football as a part of show business expanded beyond the players and owners; sports journalists similarly recognized this development and believed it legitimized professional sports.

Throughout the 1930s, sports writers were altering their view on the relationship between the amateur and professional game to see them as specializing in different values of entertainment rather than viewing pros as inherently inferior to amateurs. Through the newfound value of showmanship in pro football, journalists believed the pros provide the audience with exceptional athleticism. In contrast, amateurs provide viewers with the raw emotion of sport. This dichotomy of sports perspective is seen in a *New York Times* magazine article written by Frank Ernest Hill in 1934, in which the subtitle states, “The Zest of Play for the Game’s Sake and the Skill of Play for Money Both Have Appeal for the Crowd.”[118] He concludes by expanding on the role of amateur and pro sports, "amateur sport will find an adequate protection in its own character… But professional sports has a glory and thrill also. The seasoned, supremely skilled performer gives the spectator a performance that the amateur can match only in moments.”[119] Hill’s differentiation of the entertainment value demonstrates a significant development in people’s beliefs regarding pro and amateur sports. Rather than seeing pro athletes as corrupting sports just as Casper Whitney did, they acknowledge that pros are skilled and talented athletes who are experts at wowing and inspiring crowds with their performances. Through demonstrating the different appeals of the two types of athletic performances, Hill justifies pro sports' existence as fulfilling a growing demand to witness spectacular performances in sports. This understanding of the skillful show professional football players provide is further emphasized by literary critic Christian Gauss, who described the quality performance produced by the NFL and its players as being worth the price of admission, “The professionals are putting

[118]Frank Ernest Hill. "Amateur and ‘Pro’ Divide the Glory in Sports," *New York Times,* July 22, 1934, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/amateur-pro-divide-glory-sports/docview/101233482/se-2.
[119]Frank Ernest Hill. "Amateur and ‘Pro’ Divide the Glory in Sports."

on a game that provides the spectators with their money's worth in thrills and spectacular marches down the field and are changing their systems of play, and even the rules of the game, to do this in larger measure."[120] This assessment justified the payment of professional football players. Gauss believed that through their showmanship, pros could satisfy audiences with spectacular performances and keep them coming back for more. Therefore, they deserved compensation as showmen.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the significance of the National Football League's choice to make alternations to the game of football to provide fans with greater entertainment value. This development began in 1933, and over the next few years allowed pro football to transform from the fringes of the public to a nationally recognized institution. The NFL had to cater to the spectacle of football because they had been largely unsuccessful at establishing the entertainment value American football fans expected to find at football games. Since football's inception, spectators have primarily found value in the significant community and social bonding that occurred while watching a football game. Football teams, especially in the case of college football, were intrinsically linked to their community's identity; the teams represented an ideal form of a town's masculinity, and victory in football proved communal superiority to the competitor. This caused many college campuses to passionately rally around their football team and develop cheer and song traditions to support the teams and create fun for the audience. In many ways, the jubilant crowd at a football game was more of a spectacle than the game itself.

[120]Christian Frederick Gauss, "Will the Football Bubble Burst?" *Saturday Evening Post*, September 14, 1935, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rgr&AN=522480049&site=ehost-live.

The NFL of the 1920s struggled to facilitate relationships between their pro teams and their community due to the league's inability to maintain important local rivalries that were important to communal identities, as well as the roster's largely featuring white-collar college graduates that were unrelatable to many working-class pro football fans. However, in the early 1930s, the NFL saw an opportunity since football games at both the college and professional level were typically low-scoring games with thrilling moments few and far between. College coaches had no ambition to change this fact as they believed their amateur principles meant they should not cater to the spectators. Under the vision of NFL team owners George Halas and George Preston Marshall, the NFL changed their football rules for the first time to increase the spectacle entertainment value of the league's product. The most influential of these rule changes was moving the legal line to pass the ball forward to the line of scrimmage, which made throwing the ball a more reliable strategy for the offense and opened up the game for more scoring and exciting plays. Not only did these rule changes revolutionize football's offensive strategy, but they also intended to attract significant attention to the league from the football and general American sports community, as people loved the newfound football spectacle the NFL had created. For the first time, professional football was becoming respected and popular within the American sports canon, with many daring to say that they preferred the game of the professionals to the collegians. This era also redefined pro football players as both sportsmen and showmen. Professional football players became renowned for their ability as performers to provide the desired spectacle for audiences, and therefore, they deserved compensation due to their abilities to perform as showmen.

The NFL's decision to cater to the spectator was the decision that allowed professional football to begin to become important in American culture. The previous chapter explored pro

football's success in overcoming anti-professional sports sentiment during the 1920s. While that development was extremely important to establishing pro football, it did not correlate with the NFL becoming relevant throughout America. Up to 1933, the NFL was tolerated and nowhere near popular; however, its stadium viewership and newspaper coverage notably increased through the newly added spectacle of professional football. Furthermore, this era also saw a shift in the dynamic of the relationship between amateur college and professional football. For the first time, pro football became the leading influencers and innovators in football strategy, rules, and performance, with college football suddenly becoming followers of the trends in pro football. This trajectory of the hierarchy between pro and college football would continue to grow and become more apparent in the Cold War era and beyond.

Conclusion

National Football League's road to establishing professional football as a legitimate and popular American sport was a twenty-year process. When the NFL was formed in 1920 professional football was both disrespected and irrelevant to the average American. From 1920 to 1933 the NFL worked to change its low reputation by overcoming the stigma of anti-professional football presented by college football amateurists. As the NFL became tolerated around 1933 it began to change the rules of football to become one of the most entertaining spectacles in sports, cementing its place in American culture.

The principles of amateurism were the primary factor that was hindering professional football from becoming established in American sports. Football was deeply tied to American universities and the popular Victorian sporting philosophy of amateurism which insisted that to play a sport for compensation was ungentlemanlike. The importance of manhood became greatly associated with amateur football as it was seen by many as a game to instill proper masculinity during a time when many were concerned with American masculinity. Upon its creation in 1920, the NFL had to overcome the virtuosity of amateur college football. NFL president Joesph Carr began to improve pro football's image through the creation and enforcement of rules to prohibit its pro teams from violating college football's principles. In 1925, football celebrity Red Grange joined the league which caused many to realize the quality of professional football

players and the counterintuitiveness of amateurism. The Carnegie Report of 1929 helped the NFL overcome amateurism as it exposed that college football had lied about its amateur nature and was as commercial as professional sports. The challenge to amateurism culminated with the broad American shift away from Victorianism as exemplified by the repeal of the Volstead Act and the legalization of Sunday professional sports in Pennsylvania in 1933.

With amateur sentiment subsiding, the NFL could shift its attention to become popular among American football spectators. The NFL had struggled to become popular not only because of anti-professional football sentiment but also because the league's football games did not provide the entertainment value fans of football had come to expect from the sport. Football's entertainment value before 1933 was mostly associated with its role in facilitating social identity and bonding. This was particularly true in college football, as the men on the football team represented the ideal men of the campus and community. Students, alumni, and locals became very passionate supporting their football teams leading to the creation of cheers and traditions that promoted social bonding among the spectators. Often, the spectators provided more entertainment than the football game did. However, on the other hand the NFL had completely failed to create an identity with its community due to its inability to foster rivalries between its teams. The NFL chose to address this issue by breaking away from college football's rules for the first time to create its own rules. The new passing and field goal rules provided offenses an advantage which drastically increased the rate of scoring. These rule changes turned football itself into a spectacle that was highly attractive to football fans who craved high-scoring and entertaining football. This development led to many football journalists and fans regarding NFL football as a more quality spectacle than college football. Furthermore, it led to NFL players receiving greater praise for their showmanship capabilities which thoroughly wowed spectators.

As the United States entered World War II, the NFL was still less popular than the older and well-established sports of professional baseball, college football, and professional boxing. Regardless, the NFL had successfully created its foundation in American sports. The league has continued to strengthen its image by constantly evolving the rules of football to improve the entertainment value of NFL football. Today, the National Football League has by far the highest revenue of any sports league,not just in America, but in the world.

This research builds upon the already existing research surrounding amateurism and the meaning of American sports in the early twentieth century. There is plenty of historiography that explores amateurism and its association with proper manhood. These sources also explore how amateurism impacted how people viewed professional sports and especially pro football negatively. However, these sources provide limited analysis of how professional sports changed their negative image. This research focuses on the question of overcoming amateur sentiment to provide a more complete history of the relationship and dichotomy of amateur and professional football during the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, this research also adds to the significance of the 1933 NFL rule changes by connecting it with pro football's journey in overcoming amateurism. It also adds new, interesting newspaper journalist perspectives to the new NFL spectacle from the rule changes to build upon the significance of these rule changes in football history.

Professional football's entrance into the American cultural mainstream encapsulates the broader American historical narrative of the Roaring Twenties. 1920s America has been credited as a time of rising consumer culture, new pursuits of leisure, and a relaxing of traditional values. 1920s American football history reflects these trends. College football became a commercial beast for its universities as the sport abandoned its virtuous principles. Professional football

existed in the backdrop of American sports throughout the 1920s. However, pro football's eventual success shortly into the 1930s demonstrates it benefited from the continued commercialization of the sport as football became a mainstay of American leisure. Professional football is contented with those who denounced the sport due to the Victorian virtue of amateurism. This thesis demonstrates that at the turn of the decade, these Victorian virtues were becoming unpopular to proclaim and enforce in a similar nature as temperance with Prohibition.

This research also has implications for the origins of the American sports fan culture we see today. Globalization and the internet have made it clear that American sports fans generally act far differently at professional sporting events than fans in Europe or Latin America. Professional soccer fans around the world are typically far more passionate in their support of their club than American sports fans. Many global soccer fans clearly show such dedication to their professional sports teams since their teams offer far more social identity and bonding. This research demonstrated that American sports fan culture used to be more similar to this culture when American football was still primarily about community to fans. As America commercialized sports to cater to their inherent entertainment fans began to view sports in a similar vein to theater. Nowadays, Americans typically do not attend professional sports directly to support their community but mainly to seek entertainment and fun. This led to American sports culture being far more neutral at sporting events. There are likely dozens of other reasons to explain the differences between American and Global professional sports fan culture that could be explored in future research. However, the unique 1920s American commercialization of sports is certainly an important factor in creating these differences.

Questions for Future Research

There are several shortcomings in my thesis that I want to investigate further in the future. I struggled to find time to adequately research and account for the extent to which professional baseball impacted the public's perception of professional football. I make occasional reference to baseball's influences but I believe it is likely more significant than my thesis demonstrates. In a similar vein as professional football, professional baseball also had to contend with amateur sentiment. The debate over the professionalization of baseball occurred decades before the inception of the NFL due to baseball being far older than American football. The first openly professional sports team was a baseball club in 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stocking, seven years before Walter Camp joined the Yale football team and began creating the rules of modern football.[121] The timeline of pro baseball's struggle with amateurism is unclear to me as it was beyond the scope of my research. What is clear is that pro baseball entered the American mainstream and became the defining professional team sport of America during the 1920s. The success of professional baseball in the 1920s may have improved the public image of professional football. However, I am unsure if 1920s Americans generally believed baseball and football to be similar or if these sports were regarded as completely distinct from each other. The NFL also created policies that were similar to those seen in professional baseball. It is not definitive if the league was consciously following the example set by pro baseball or if it was a coincidence.

Early in my research, I was also curious to explore the extent to which the demographics of college football players were shifting throughout the 1920s. From the 1929 Carnegie Report, it is clear there was an extensive system of scouting and recruiting high school boys for college football. I speculate this system may have begun recruiting an increasing number of boys with

[121]Matt Rothenberg, "Pro Baseball Began in Cincinnati in 1869," Baseball Hall of Fame, https://baseballhall.org/discover/pro-baseball-began-in-cincinnati-in-1869.

blue-collar backgrounds which would shift the primary demographics of college football away from being predominantly white-collar. This potential shift could be significant as blue-collar Americans were more willing to go professional as they were less inclined to anti-professional sentiment. Red Grange was blue-collar, and he played a key role in destigmatizing college athletes joining the NFL. Finding evidence of this demographic shift would continue to build a case that college football indirectly helped build professional football through its own commercialization. To study this debate would likely require extensive qualitative analysis and could be a thesis topic all on its own.

If this undergraduate thesis has taught me anything, it is that sports history is far more complex than I had initially anticipated. I have appreciated the opportunity to explore this history and I hope to continue to add nuance to this topic in the future.

Football Played for Football's Sake

Throughout my research, one sentence I read struck a particular chord with me. A 1939 *New York Times* article comments on the recent rise of professional football from being considered disreputable to a major sport. While contemplating the factors for this change, author Robert F. Kelly considers why football fans say they are watching professional football. He writes, "The enthusiastic among them proclaim that what they see is football played for football's sake."[122] In a modern lens, this statement seems obvious, of course, people watch football because they enjoy the sport. Nevertheless, the fact that Kelly wrote this statement suggests he thought the perspective of these fans was important.

To play and watch football for fun has always been a founding principle of both American amateur and professional football. Yet, over the course of the late nineteenth and early

[122]Robert F Kelly, "Pro Football: It's Different," *New York Times*, October 15, 1939, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/10/15/113365530.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.

twentieth century football grew to represent considerably more. The sport became the teacher and measure of masculinity for the future generations of American men. Playing the sport for money was seen as something to be ashamed of. To watch the professionals play was seen as unpatriotic. This intense meaning of football was deemphasized as the sport commercialized throughout the 1920s. Americans wanted football, but not for the sake of a virtue, they wanted football for the sake of football. They wanted football's thrill, spectacle, drama, entertainment, social bonding, and fun. Professional football helped Americans find this enthusiasm for the sport and has continued to embrace the sport's fun into modern Americana.

Appendix A

Copy of NFL Code of Ethics statement as seen in the Chicago Bears Offical Game Program for their game against Rock Island on December 9, 1923:

CODE OF ETHICS

Members of this League are expected to conduct themselves as gentlemen and sportsmen. Any flagrant violation of this principle may subject the offending member to suspension or expulsion.

No member shall knowingly make false representations through advertising as to the personnel of his or a competitive team to deceive the public for his own financial betterment. The confidence of the public is to be desired above all else.

No member shall have a player on his team under an assumed name.

Tampering with players on College teams shall not be tolerated by this League. The same creates much unfavorable public sentiment against professional football and is deplored and discouraged by this League. An adequate supply of football players who have completed their academic status exist and by confining ourselves to these men much favorable public sentiment shall be ours.[123]

[123]Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, December 9, 1923, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Appendix B

Copy of NFL Pledge as seen in the back of the 1926 Rule Book:

OUR PLEDGE

The National Football League, assembled in Annueal meeting at Detriot, Michigan, the 6th day of Febuary, 1926, places itself on record as unalterably opposed to any encroachment upon college football, and hereby pledges its hearty support to college authorities in maintaining and advancing the interest in college football and in preserving the amateur standing of all college athletics.

We believe there is a public demand for professional football as has been clearly demonstrated by the wide interest manifested and, to the end that this League may not jeopardize the amateur standing of any college football player, it is the unanimous decision of this meeting that every member of the National Football League be positively prohibited from inducing or attempting to induce any college player to engage in professional football until his class at college shall have graduated, and any member violating this rule shal be fined no less than One Thousand Dollars, or lose of its franchise or both.[124]

[124]NFL Pledge, 1926, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

"$100,000 Suit Against Champ Jack Settled." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* January 29, 1922. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/100-000-suit-against-champ-jack-settled/docview/174910720/se-2.

1876 Yale Football Team, 1876, picture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-68e8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

Article on History of NFL in College All-Star Game in Duluth, September 21, 1937, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

"Bears Beat Giants For Title, 23-21: Forward-Lateral, Naguski to Hewitt to Karr, Brings the Deciding Touchdown. Air Duel Thrills 30,000 Manders Aids Victors With 3 Field Goals." *New York Times,* December 18, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/bears-beat-giants-title-23-21/docview/100811710/se-2.

"Boom in Professional Football is Picked as 1934's Most Striking Trend in Sports: Pro Football Gain Feature of Year." *New York Times,* December 23, 1934. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/boom-professional-football-is-picked-as-1934s/docview/101210532/se-2.

Camp, Walter. *Football*. Massachusetts: Houghton, Mifflin, 1896.

"College Sports Tainted by Bounties, Carnegie Fund Finds in Wide Study: Survey of 130 Schools shows One in Seven Athletes Subsidized," *New York Times,* October 24, 1929. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/college-sports-tainted-bounties-carnegie-fund/docview/104898628/se-2.

"Colleges Will Hear Pro Football Aims: Dr. March, on General Pierce's Invitation, to Attend Next Athletic Union Meeting." *New York Times,* July 13, 1926, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/colleges-will-hear-pro-football-aims/docview/103849451/se-2.

Cummings, John M. "Blue Laws Foes Mass To Voice Protest." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 31, 1933.

https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/january-31-1933-page-12-28/docview/1831566009/se-2.

Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, November 16, 1924, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, November 26, 1925, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Copy of Chicago Bears Official Game Program, December 9, 1923, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Danzig, Allison. "Two Changes in Football Rules Recommended by Coaches' Group: Heavier Penalty on Intentional Kick-Off and More Freedom on Forwards Desired -- Gentlemen's Agreements Expected." *New York Times,* May 30, 1944. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/two-changes-football-rules-recommended-coaches/docview/106908407/se-2.

"Declare Football Verges on 'Racket.'" *New York Times,* November 8, 1930. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/declare-football-verges-on-racket/docview/98852396/se-2.

Ernest Hill, Frank. "Amateur and 'Pro' Divide the Glory in Sports." *New York Times,* July 22, 1934. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/amateur-pro-divide-glory-sports/docview/101233482/se-2.

"Evidence Accumulated During Past Football Season That Rules Need No Changing—Hall." *The Yale Daily News*, January 10, 1930. https://ydnhistorical.library.yale.edu/?a=d&d=YDN19300110-01.2.6&srpos=40&e=------193-en-20--21--txt-txIN-%22thrill%22+AND+%22Football%22+AND+%22Game%22-------false.

Gauss, Christian Frederick. "Will the Football Bubble Burst?" *Saturday Evening Post*, September 14, 1935. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rgr&AN=522480049&site=ehost-live.

Grange, Red. "Future Football." *Saturday Evening Post*, October 20, 1934. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rgr&AN=522429065&site=ehost-live.

Grange, Red. "Pro Football Hall of Famer Red Grange on Meeting President Calvin Coolidge," *Pro Football Hall of Fame*, audio, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF73j3omBBg.

"Grange Turns Professional." *New York Times,* November 24, 1925, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/grange-turns-professional/docview/103439803/se-2.

"Grid Gate Increase Great 1933 Trend," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 23, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/december-23-1933-page-16-26/docview/1831587908/se-2.

"Grid Pros Assailed as Coaches Organize." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 28, 1921. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/grid-pros-assailed-as-coaches-organize/docview/174863991/se-2.

"Growth in the Popularity of Pro Football Voted as Year's Outstanding Sports Trend." *New York Times,* December 22, 1937. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/growth-popularity-pro-football-voted-as-years/docview/102125768/se-2.

“Guy Hiner Replies to Staggs Football Attack.” *Canton Daily Press,* November 4, 1923.

Haughton, Percy Duncan. *Football and How to Watch It*. Massachusetts: Little, Brown, and company, 1924.

"In the Wake of the News: Wake Mail Box." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* September 3, 1935. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/wake-news/docview/181670490/se-2.

Kelly, Robert F. “Pro Football: It’s Different.” *New York Times*, October 15, 1939. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/10/15/113365530.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.

Kirksey, George. “Giants Fail to Stem Last Period Rush.” *The Pittsburgh Press*, December 18, 1933. https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8vAcAAAAIBAJ&sjid=iEsEAAAAIBAJ&pg=6445%2C6101693

"Low Mark Set in College Football Scoring; Average to Date is 12.09 Points Per Game." *New York Times,* November 14, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/low-mark-set-college-football-scoring-average/docview/100836641/se-2.

Maxwell, Don. "A Tip to the Pro Grid Bosses." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 11, 1925. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/tip-pro-grid-bosses/docview/180725015/se-2.

Maxwell, Don. "Watching Pro Gridirons." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 9, 1925. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/watching-pro-gridirons/docview/180753849/se-2.

Morton and Company, California - Stanford Football Game, November 22, 1930, photo, Library of Congress. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/58/Cal%2C_Stanford_football_game%2C_Memorial_Stadium%2C_1930.jpg/1920px-Cal%2C_Stanford_football_game%2C_Memorial_Stadium%2C_1930.jpg?20080401222201.

Needham, Henry Beach. “The College Athlete: How Commercialism is Making Him a Professional.” *McClure’s Magazine,* June 1905.

NFL Pledge, 1926, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Notes of NFL Winter Owner’s Meeting, February 6-7, 1926, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Notes of NFL Winter Owner’s Meeting, February 25-26, 1933, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Notes of NFL Winter Owner’s Meeting, January 28, 1922, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

Notes of NFL Formation Meeting September 17, 1920, Ralph Wilson Jr. Pro Football Research and Preservation Center, Canton, Ohio.

“Pro Elevens Hurt Sport, Says Stagg.” *New York Times*, November 2, 1923. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1923/11/02/106016292.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.

Marshall, George Preston. “Pro Football Is Better Football.” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 1938. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rgr&AN=522466382&site=ehost-live.

"'Pro' Football is Coming in Favor: Colleges Cannot Supply The Public Demand, so League of Many Cities is Formed - Games Average 15,000 Attendance." *New York Times,* November 22, 1925. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/pro-football-is-coming-favor/docview/103460289/se-2.

"Ridicules Football Row: the Campus Says City College Had One of Best "Amateur" Elevens." *New York Times,* December 3, 1931. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/ridicules-football-row/docview/99215318/se-2.

Savage, Howard J. “American College Athletics.” Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1929.

Smith, Wilfrid. "27,000 See Bears Defeat Stapletons, 27 to 7." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* October 24, 1932.

https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/27-000-see-bears-defeat-stapleton-7/docview/181409114/se-2.

Smith, Wilfrid. "Bears All-Stars to Use College Pass Rule: All Throws to Start 5 Yards Back of Line Decision Terminates Coaches' Dispute." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1934. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bears-all-stars-use-college-pass-rule/docview/181572883/se-2.

Smith, Wilfrid. "Coaches Consider 7 Changes in Football Rules: are to Help Offense Committee Report Favors Alternations." *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 27, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/coaches-consider-7-changes-football-rules/docview/181501043/se-2.

"Sport: Football: Midseason," *Time*, November 13, 1933, https://time.com/archive/6751891/sport-football-midseason/.

Stagg, Amos Alonzo. *Touchdown!*. New York (State): Longmans, Green and co., 1927.

"Sunday Sports Repeal Vote Carried By Big Vote Here," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 8, 1933. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/november-8-1933-page-1-26/docview/1831566044/se-2.

Vaughan, Irving. "36,000 See Cards Tie Bears, 0 to 0: Grange Gains 92 Yards For His Pro Debut Driscoll's Toe Keeps Bruins at Bay." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 27, 1925. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/36-000-see-cards-tie-bears-0/docview/180603353/se-2.

Whitney, Caspar. "Development of Athletics in the United States." *Fortnightly Review,* September 1893. https://www.proquest.com/historical-periodicals/development-athletics-united-states/docview/2435934/se-2.

Whitney, Caspar. "Expediency in Sport: What is an Amateur?" *Outlook,* September 19, 1917. https://www.proquest.com/magazines/expediency-sport/docview/136647688/se-2.

Woodward, Stanley. "Bingham Sees Football's Fall Unless Pro Trend is Checked: Harvard Athletic Director Warns Coaches to Clear College Game of Taint." *New York Herald Tribune,* December 29, 1934. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bingham-sees-footballs-fall-unless-pro-trend-is/docview/1243732275/se-2.

Secondary Sources

Becker, Carl M. *Home and Away : The Rise and Fall of Professional Football on the Banks of the Ohio, 1919-1934*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998.

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness & Civilization : A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

"Being a Cheerleader - History of Cheerleading." Varsity.com, April 12, 2018. https://www.varsity.com/news/cheerleader-history-cheerleading/.

Bigalke, Zach. "SMQ: A Century of Scoring Trends in College Football." Saturday Blitz, September 29, 2019. https://saturdayblitz.com/2019/09/29/century-scoring-trends-in-college-football/.

"Cal Songs." University of California Marching Band. https://calband.berkeley.edu/media/cal-songs/.

Campione, Katie. "25 Most-Watched TV Programs of All Time: Moon Landing, Super Bowls & More." *Deadline*, February 13, 2024. https://deadline.com/gallery/most-watched-tv-shows-all-time/.

Carroll, John M. *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Clark, Daniel A. *Creating the College Man : American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood, 1890-1915*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.

Coben, Stanley. *Rebellion against Victorianism : The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Coenen, Craig R. *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl : The National Football League, 1920-1967*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005.

Crepeau, Richard C. *NFL Football A History of America's New National Pastime*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021.

Crupi, Anthony. "NFL Swallows TV Whole, with 93 of Year's Top 100 Broadcasts." Sportico.com, January 5, 2024. https://www.sportico.com/business/media/2024/nfl-posts-93-of-top-100-tv-broadcasts-2023-1234761753/.

Des Jardins, Julie. *Walter Camp : Football and the Modern Man*. Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2015.

Fields, Lisa. “College Firsts.” *Halftime Magazine*, February 6, 2019. https://halftimemag.com/january-february-2019/college-firsts.html.

Furst, R. T. “Social Change and the Commercialization of Professional Sports.” International Review of Sport Sociology, 6(1), 1971. 153-173.

Goldstein, Warren. *Playing for Keeps : A History of Early Baseball*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Jayasena, Nalin. *Contested Masculinities : Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America : A Cultural History*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

McClellan, Keith. *The Sunday Game : At the Dawn of Professional Football*. 1st ed. Akron, OH: University of Akron Press, 1998.

McGirr, Lisa. *The War on Alcohol : Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*. First edition. New York: W.W. NORTON & Company, 2016.

Oriard, Michael. *King Football : Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & the Daily Press*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Oriard, Michael. *Reading Football : How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

PFRA Research, “Goodby, Bulldogs, Hello.” *The Professional Football Researchers Association.* https://web.archive.org/web/20101218173751/http://profootballresearchers.org/Articles/Goodbye_Bulldogs_Hello.pdf

Pettegrew, John. *Brutes in Suits : Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

Pope, S. W. *Patriotic Games : Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Ring Adams, James. “The Jim Thorpe Backlash: The Olympic Medals Debacle And the Demise of Carlisle.” *American Indian*, 2012. https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/jim-thorpe-backlash-olympic-medals-debacle-and-demise-carlisle.

Ross, Charles Kenyatta. *Outside the Lines : African Americans and the Integration of the National Football League*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Rothenberg, Matt. “Pro Baseball Began in Cincinnati in 1869.” Baseball Hall of Fame. https://baseballhall.org/discover/pro-baseball-began-in-cincinnati-in-1869.

Rotundo, E. Anthony. *American Manhood : Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. New York: BasicBooks, 1993.

Schmidt, Raymond. *Shaping College Football : The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930*. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

Serb, Chris. *War Football : World War I and the Birth of the NFL*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

Smith, Ronald A. (Ronald Austin). *Sports and Freedom : The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Sports Reference LLC. “1932 Green Bay Packers Rosters, Stats, Schedule” Pro-Football-Reference.com - Pro Football Statistics and History. https://www.pro-football-reference.com/.

Sports Reference LLC. Pro-Football-Reference.com - Pro Football Statistics and History. https://www.pro-football-reference.com/.

Susman, Warren. *Culture as History : The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

Wenner, Lawrence A., ed. *Media, Sports, & Society*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications, 1989.