THE BIRTH OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL:
PITTSBURGH ATHLETIC CLUBS
RING IN PROFESSIONALS IN 1892

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Victory, long equated with success in America’s competitive business world, played a similar role on the football field during the late nineteenth century. In order to win, a football team had to secure the best players. Football teams at athletic clubs resorted to clandestine practices to attract players. The most successful way to bring in athletes, however, was to pay them for their services. Upon receipt of payment these players became professionals. The first known instance of professionalism in football occurred in November 1892, when the Allegheny Athletic Association (AAA) of Pittsburgh brought in and paid superior players from the outside, commonly known as ringers, to play for its football team. AAA used William W. “Pudge” Heffelfinger, the greatest player of his time, and other ringers to strengthen its team against all opponents, but uppermost was the association’s desire to defeat its fiercest rival — the Pittsburgh Athletic Club (PAC).1 This article examines the forces which caused professionalism in football to infiltrate athletic clubs in Pittsburgh in the 1890s.

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1 For years nearly every history of professional football has mistakenly credited John K. Brailler of the Latrobe, Pennsylvania, YMCA football team as the first professional football player. He received $10 to play against the Jeannette, Pennsylvania, team on September 3, 1895; most sources report that this game was held on August 31, 1895. Since the 1940s, neighboring Greensburg, Latrobe’s fiercest football rival during the 1890s, has laid claim to having the first professional in Lawson Fiscus who received $20 per game during the 1893 season. Not until 1963 when Dick McCann, first director of the Professional Football Hall of Fame, began to corroborate the earlier findings of Nelson Ross, was William W. “Pudge” Heffelfinger correctly identified as the first professional football player. See Donald R. Smith, “Heffelfinger, Not Brailler, No. 1 Pro Football Player,” Super Bowl IV Program, January 11, 1970, and “National Football League Professional Football Synopsis 1863-1920,” unpublished manuscript, Professional Football Hall of Fame, Canton, Ohio (hereafter cited as PFHF).

The athletic club appeared in American cities after the Civil War. Its emergence was one outcome of America’s transformation from an agrarian to an urban-industrial society. Sprouting within the industrial city was a new aristocracy — one built on capital, the *nouveau riche*. Its ranks produced such industrial and corporate giants as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, Charles Schwab, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and J. Pierpont Morgan. This new social class also found itself with increased amounts of leisure time. With these newly acquired resources of wealth and leisure, the *nouveau riche* enjoyed sporting events and patronized athletic clubs.

Besides enjoying athletic contests, the New Rich had an ulterior motive for joining athletic clubs. This class of socially-conscious businessmen strived to reach society’s highest echelon, and club memberships were a stairway to the top. Athletic clubs were on the lowest rung of the social club ladder. Membership in them was generally the first step toward gaining admission in the more exclusive Union Leagues and University Clubs or the top-level Metropolitan Men’s Clubs. Members of the latter tended to dominate the economy and social life of their respective urban areas. Eager to join society’s elite, the New Rich sought admission to the exclusive clubs. These social aspirants realized that “proper club affiliation was the final and most important stage in an exclusive socializing process.”

The New York Athletic Club, while not quite the equal of exclusive Metropolitan clubs, reflected the *nouveau riche*’s intent to create an exclusive organization. Because the New York Athletic Club was the prototype of American athletic clubs and could have influenced Pittsburgh athletic clubs, its course during the post-Civil War years is worthy of consideration.

Organized in 1866 by three young athletes, the New York Ath-
letic Club (NYAC) came under the rein of wealthy businessmen by 1880. In an effort to make the NYAC more socially prominent, Colonel William Van Wyck, the club's second president, solicited members from New York City's social register. William Travers, an affluent stockbroker with a penchant for horse racing and yachting, and other newly rich joined. Travers soon became president; under his tenure the NYAC changed its focus from athletic competition to social events. With the change in emphasis came membership quotas and other restrictions which gave the club elite status and kept all but the wealthy out. As a result, the club's athletic prowess declined, and after 1880 the NYAC no longer dominated amateur athletics in the New York City area. In 1890, however, NYAC adopted practices to regain its former athletic supremacy. It modified its admission policy to bring in athletes. "The desire to win and the pursuit of success which the New Rich had experienced in business was apparently carried over into sport." By creating "special athletic memberships," the club could sponsor as many as 100 athletes. They could use the club's facilities but could not vote or hold office. While the athletes contributed to the NYAC's visibility, they were unable to influence its policies.

Initially, athletic competition at the New York Athletic Club and most other athletic clubs consisted of track-and-field events. Later the competition expanded to boxing, wrestling, and football. The latter, popular on college campuses, spread to athletic clubs during the 1880s when college graduates, familiar with football, took out memberships.

The game of football, among other sports, reflected the values of Victorianism — a prominent nineteenth-century motif which the New Rich embraced. Through football, the nouveau riche carried its quest

5 Ibid., 47.
7 Wettan and Willis, "Social Stratification in the New York Athletic Club," 48-49. In order to limit memberships to the wealthy, NYAC raised its initiation fee from $10 in 1882 to $50 in 1885 and added yearly dues of $40. Interesting enough, the number of memberships increased to 2,000 in 1885 with a waiting list of 300. As the wealthy gained control of the NYAC, they emphasized social functions rather than athletics. In moving in this direction, NYAC built opulent clubhouses with lavish trappings. While NYAC satisfied its members' thirst for extravagant social functions, its reputation for athletic prowess dwindled. For a detailed account of NYAC's transition to a social club, see J. Willis and R. Wettan, "Social Stratification in New York City Athletic Clubs, 1865-1915," Journal of Sport History 3 (Spring 1976): 45-63, and Lucas and Smith, Saga of American Sport, 154-56.
8 Lucas and Smith, Saga of American Sport, 156.
9 Wettan and Willis, "Social Stratification in New York City Athletic Clubs," 50.
for a structured and orderly society to sport. The game became regimented. Football’s well-defined line of scrimmage replaced the scramble for a free ball of the rugby scrum. Compared to the unpredictable heel-out from scrummage, play from scrimmage was orderly, beginning with the center snap. For success, coordination, precision, and timing were necessary among all the players; each player had to perform a specific task at the proper moment, whether it be centering the ball, blocking an opponent, or running with the ball. Regimentation on the gridiron mirrored the division of labor of the business and industrial world.

Football also satisfied another Victorian value — the competitive urge. Victorians were highly competitive, not only in their economic system, but in such other aspects of their lives as party politics, religious denominationalism, and emulation of prestigious educational institutions. Football was a manifestation of their competitive nature in sport. Football’s spartan nature exposed another side of the *nouveau riche*’s urge for competition. The game’s intensive training regimen called for self-denial and self-control — two virtues in the Victorian mind. These two virtues had direct bearing on the daily lives of Victorians, for they were essential for the “intra-personal” self-mastery of one’s “bad passions.” Competition within oneself enabled a person to conquer his inner drives.

The aggressive and violent nature of football also reflected components of Victorian ideology. During the late nineteenth century, America pleaded for muscular virility. In calling for strife, hard work, and dangerous endeavors, Theodore Roosevelt’s *Strenuous Life* and Jack London’s tales, for example, echoed the Victorian principles of self-sacrifice and self-confidence. Even the vernacular mimicked this urge for vigor as “sissy” and “pussy foot” were common derogatory terms. Football counteracted this aura of delicacy and refinement of Victorian society and satisfied America’s need for physical prowess.

Though aggressive and competitive football manifested certain

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10 Robert H. Wiebe argues that America shifted from a society controlled basically by local autonomy to a new system of bureaucratic order in an attempt to manage its unwieldy growth of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. See his *Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967).


13 Ibid.

facets of Victorian ideology, social Darwinism was another postbellum force equally influential in justifying competition in American society and sport. Social theorists such as Herbert Spencer in England and William Graham Sumner in the United States applied the principles of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to society. Survival in society, similar to survival in the animal world, was a "struggle for existence." Survival depended upon "winning the means of subsistence from nature" (survival of the fittest) and competing with others for the prizes of life (competition of life). Sumner believed that the progress of civilization depended upon "unrestricted competition." From his faculty post at Yale, he glorified competition, praising the strong and condemning the weak. Unrestrained competition made society strong because it eliminated the weak. Amplifying this supposition, Sumner wrote: "... we cannot go outside the alternative: liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest; [or] non-liberty, equality, survival of the unfittest. The former carries society forward and favors all its best members; the latter carries [society] downward and favors all its worst members." Sumner's logic enabled such industrial capitalists as Andrew Carnegie to justify their positions in society. "Wealthy men," wrote Carnegie, "represented the survival of the fittest." It is the "price society pays for the law of competition." Darwinian principles spread easily from the social and economic world to the football field. Nowhere was this more apparent than at Yale.

While Sumner extolled the doctrine of laissez-faire and social Darwinism in the classroom, Walter Camp, the father of American football, applied the Darwinian dogma on the gridiron. To Camp, winning was imperative. It was the culmination of hard work, self-sacrifice, and a rigorous training regimen. Reminiscing about his early football days at Yale, Camp remarked: "There were two things for which we were remarkable, ... our toughness and our tackling. No wonder we were tough, for it had been a general killing off and survival of the fittest, both through the medium of our training and also the ground upon which we practiced."
Camp's philosophy, no doubt, brought success to Yale football. During the period from 1875 to 1911, Yale defeated Harvard, its chief rival, twenty-seven times, while losing but four games.20 Yale's success on the gridiron inspired Harvard and other colleges to consider football in a similar light. A winning football team brought visibility to a college and nourished the conception of alma mater among its alumni. This notoriety, in turn, brought the college additional revenue from the pocketbooks of its proud graduates.21

The importance of winning and the delight of intense competition spread during the 1880s from the colleges to athletic clubs which the sons of the New Rich joined after graduation. Espousing the win-at-all-cost attitude of their Victorian upbringing, these new members began to influence club policies. To be competitive and successful, the athletic club turned to the established athlete from the outside, forcing many of its own active members to the ranks of spectators. They accepted their new role, however, and welcomed and cheered for the highly-recruited players who replaced them.

By turning to superior players who could be secured only with financial inducements, the athletic club changed the nature of football in principle and in practice. Talented players replaced the mediocre, upgrading football competition at athletic clubs. But in hiring the gifted player or professional, the athletic club shattered the amateur ideal upon which it was founded — that is, participation for sheer love of the game. The athletic club could easily rationalize its action. Talented athletes produced victory, and victory did more for the athletic club than any idealistic amateur principle. It meant fame, glory, and increased income for the athletic club. Although the publicity generated by a successful football team swelled the club’s gate receipts and increased memberships, the big money was made by those club members who wagered heavily on their club’s eleven. From this atmosphere at the athletic club, professionalism crept into football as the Allegheny Athletic Association and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club vied for notoriety, prestige, and profits.

Athletic clubs, rather than the colleges, popularized football in Pittsburgh. Although several local colleges fielded football teams, they generated little support because they could not compete for talented athletes with Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and other college football powers. Moreover, the procurement of seasoned college players

brought excitement as well as experience to the athletic club football teams. Already in 1890, the two athletic clubs in Pittsburgh played football. The Alleghenys were the first to organize a team, largely through the efforts of two local businessmen — Oliver D. Thompson and John Moorehead. Graduates of Yale, both had played football while attending that institution. Thompson, who had played in the same backfield with Walter Camp on the 1876 Yale team, brought the Yale football tradition to Pittsburgh. Later in 1890, the Pittsburgh Athletic Club formed a team under the direction of Professor William Kirchner, the club’s physical director. Both clubs experienced difficulty in arousing the public’s interest in football at first, though in 1890 football received an unexpected boost due to the poor records of Pittsburgh’s two baseball clubs. Disenchanted baseball fans stopped patronizing the local teams and “clamored for some other outdoor amusements.” As interest in football spread from the leading amateurs of the Pittsburgh area to the public at large, the game caught on and grew steadily.

AAA was clearly the superior team in 1890. During October, it had defeated the Western University of Pennsylvania (presently the University of Pittsburgh), the Shady Side Academy (a local college preparatory school), and a Pittsburgh all-star team. The all-stars consisted chiefly of members of the East End Gymnasium, later to become the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. The high point of the season occurred in early November when the Alleghenys paid the Princeton University preparatory team $150 to come to Pittsburgh. The Princetoners aroused considerable interest in football but dampened the spirits of the Pittsburgh rooters when they overwhelmed the hosts by a forty-four-to-six score. AAA ended the season with a six-six tie against a strong team representing the Detroit Athletic Club.

The year 1891 marked the beginning of the AAA-PAC rivalry. AAA fielded a respectable team with Grant Dibert of Swarthmore. Dr. George Proctor of the University of Pennsylvania, and the Fiscus brothers, Ross and Lawson, among its ranks. Lawson Fiscus’s brief, but admirable, career at Princeton earned him the title, “Titan of Princeton.” The Pittsburgh Athletic Club, still known as the East

22 Pittsburgh Dispatch, Jan. 1, 1893.
24 Pittsburgh Press, Oct. 4, 5, Nov. 30, 1890.
25 Ibid., Oct. 19, 26, 1890; Pittsburgh Post, Oct. 24, 1890.
26 The Princeton preparatory team consisted of second- and third-string players.
27 Pittsburgh Press, Oct. 31, Nov. 2, 1890; Pittsburgh Post, Oct. 25, 1890.
End Gyms, came on strong under the guidance of Professor Kirchner. Undefeated in 1891, the Gyms challenged the Alleghenys to a contest that would decide the local football champion. So earnest were the Gyms in their challenge that they offered "to play for fun or money on any day or grounds that Allegheny people may elect." Rather than risk embarrassment by refusing outright to play the game, the Alleghenys attempted to avoid the issue by not responding to the Gyms' challenge at all. AAA's evasive strategy not only aroused the ire of the East End players who publicly condemned such inaction, but it opened a rift between the two athletic clubs. Adding to the breach and even more upsetting to the East Enders was the Alleghenys' tactic of luring away four of the Gyms' best players. Because the AAA successfully avoided the challenge from the East End Club, Pittsburgh had to wait another year before local football superiority was decided.

Both athletic clubs anticipated a brighter season in 1892 as football became increasingly popular among Pittsburgh residents. The East End Gymnasium, changing its name to the Pittsburgh Athletic Club, began the 1892 season in early October. The Alleghenys did not begin to practice until mid-October.

The two clubs, setting aside past differences temporarily, agreed to meet each other in a football game set for Columbus Day, Friday, October 21, at the PAC field in Pittsburgh's East Liberty section. Big businessmen holding memberships in AAA were largely responsible for bringing about this contest. They asked PAC officials to cooperate with them in scheduling the game between the two clubs "to settle this alleged ill-feeling and discuss plans for cooperation in the future to advance all kinds of amateur sport." In spite of the animosity maintained by the conservative members of each club, the game was played as scheduled.

Both teams were evenly matched. PAC had fleet players who already had played three or four games together; no opponents had scored against them. The AAA, however, had the superior talent. Led by fullback Norman McClintock of Yale, the Alleghenys were well-stocked with college players, but they had not yet played as a team this season. Neither team revealed its lineup beforehand. Bettors gave

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28 *Pittsburgh Press*, Nov. 3, 18, 1891.
29 It appears that Grant Dibert and Dr. George Proctor were among the four players pilfered by AAA. Both had been mainstays of the PAC during the 1891 and 1892 seasons. *Pittsburgh Press*, Nov. 3, 18, 22, 1891.
30 *Pittsburgh Post*, Oct. 21, 1892.
31 *Pittsburgh Press*, Oct. 23, 1892.
a slight edge to the Pittsburgh team because it had previous playing experience this season and the home field advantage.\textsuperscript{12}

On Columbus Day, more than 3,000 spectators flocked to Pittsburgh's East End in drags, tallyhos, dog carts, streetcars, and railroad cars. They packed PAC Park to capacity. Hundreds more jammed the surrounding buildings and viewed the game at no expense. They enjoyed the vicarious experience of competitive and aggressive football as an antidote to the delicate and refined side of Victorianism. The crowd was evenly split between the two teams; each faction, though, could be distinguished by the colors it wore. PAC rooters wore red and white ribbons, while the AAA followers donned blue and white colors.\textsuperscript{13}

The enthusiastic crowd witnessed ninety minutes of football — two forty-five minute halves — and when it was over each team had scored six points. Taking advantage of the Alleghenys' sloppy play due to the lack of practice, PAC scored first. Dr. George Proctor, in a Pittsburgh uniform this year, picked up an Allegheny fumble and raced in for the only touchdown of the first half; he also kicked the goal, giving his team a 6-0 lead.\textsuperscript{14} Sitting on a six-point lead, PAC became overconfident and let down its guard during the second half. AAA blocked a Pittsburgh punt which Norman McClintock recovered for the tying touchdown. His goal after the touchdown tied the score at six.\textsuperscript{15}

Gate receipts totaled $1,200 which the teams divided evenly. Of greater importance, however, was the public's response to the game which firmly established football in Pittsburgh.\textsuperscript{16} Football's acceptance and support by the Pittsburgh public increased the number of applicants seeking membership to the two athletic clubs. Taking an interest in football, local rooters applied for membership in the athletic clubs in order to identify more closely with their favorite team. In the weeks following the AAA-PAC contest, PAC admitted 100 new members to its organization, while AAA acted on a comparable number of applications. Then, too, newly-rich businessmen aspiring to advance up Pittsburgh's social ladder were only too eager to join an organization in the public spotlight. They gladly paid the nominal initiation fee and monthly dues of one dollar or more in order to belong

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Pittsburgh Post}, Oct. 21, 1892; \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, Oct. 22, 1892.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, Oct. 22, 1892.
\textsuperscript{14} Touchdowns counted as four points, and goals kicked after touchdowns were counted as two points.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, Oct. 22, 1892.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Pittsburgh Press}, Oct. 23, 1892.
to an association that had stature and had received public acclaim.\textsuperscript{37}

The tie game did not settle the issue of local football supremacy, so a second game was scheduled for November 12. In the meantime, the revelation that PAC had played a ringer in the Columbus Day game destroyed the temporary truce and reignited hostile feelings between the two athletic clubs. Charles Aull, the Pittsburgh captain, had replaced his regular center with A. C. Read, captain of The Pennsylvania State College football team and a formidable shot-putter. Aull, Penn State's captain in 1891, brought in Read to bolster the center rush of the PAC line. Resorting to chicanery, Aull played Read under the name of "Stayer." He led the Alleghenys to believe that Stayer was an old friend whom he chanced to meet on the street. Furthermore, he convinced them that Stayer's presence in the PAC lineup was essential due to a disabling injury sustained by his regular center.\textsuperscript{38}

When the truth surfaced following the Columbus Day game, AAA angrily denounced Aull and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club.\textsuperscript{39} It sought revenge and pursued a course of action designed to beat PAC at its own tactics.

In preparation for their next meeting, both clubs began to search for highly talented football players. Prevailing rumors had the Alleghenys and the Pittsburghs battling to secure the services of ex-Yale great, Pudge Heffelfinger, currently playing for the Chicago Athletic Club. The \textit{Chronicle-Telegraph} of Pittsburgh carried one report on October 26 which revealed that AAA had elected Heffelfinger to its organization in order to make him eligible for its football team.\textsuperscript{40}

Other stories hinted that the Alleghenys were also seeking the services of Edward Malley, a heavyweight shot-putter from Detroit.\textsuperscript{41} AAA officials denied these rumors. Meanwhile, similar rumors plagued the PAC. The \textit{Pittsburgh Press} reported an incident in which the PAC had made earlier overtures to get Heffelfinger and ex-Princeton running back, Knowlton "Snake" Ames. According to the \textit{Press}, George Barbour, an officer of the PAC, accompanied by a Yale alumnus, approached Heffelfinger and Ames in Cleveland on October 22 following the Chicago Athletic Club's victory over the Ohio club. Barbour allegedly offered Heffelfinger $250 and Ames $100 to play for the

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Pittsburgh Press}, Oct. 30, 1892; \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, Dec. 18, 1892. Membership at the PAC doubled from 300 to 600 in the two-month period from mid-October to mid-December. In a drive to raise its memberships to between 800 and 1,000, PAC temporarily dropped the initiation fee.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Chronicle-Telegraph} (Pittsburgh), Oct. 22, 1892.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Pittsburgh Post}, Oct. 25, 1892.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Chronicle-Telegraph} (Pittsburgh), Oct. 26, 1892.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Pittsburgh Press}, Oct. 30, 1892.
Pittsburgh club. Barbour emphatically denied the story, charging one of the PAC members with inventing it. He did acknowledge, however, that the PAC was seeking out new talent. Among those under consideration was "Rags" Brown of the Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Athletic Club whose football team had recently folded.

It was apparent to most football fans that both clubs were engaged in covert negotiations with outside players, though the two clubs repeatedly refuted such hearsay. Each insisted that it would field the same team it had played in the first contest. When queried about the ringer issue, football manager Bill Kountz of the AAA replied:

Why shouldn't we have the same team. All the men who lined up at the East End grounds on Columbus Day are anxious as can be to try it over again. . . . In fact, I think we will play about the same team as we did before, and if the East Enders play the same team, I think we will be able to beat them without any trouble. Our boys are getting stuck on themselves, and you may be sure we will not put up an easy team on that day. We want the game and will not neglect any precaution to win the same.

Only the naive believed manager Kountz, for signs everywhere pointed to subterfuge. As November 12 approached, PAC rooters refused to bet even money on the game. The Allegheny followers, however, backed their team $5,000 to $1,000 in "secret betting." When several football players of the Chicago Athletic Club appeared in town, PAC supporters cancelled all bets and refused to make any new wagers until they saw the teams line up on the field.

Reacting to the presence of the Chicago football players, each club once again charged the other with importing ringers. PAC accused the Alleghenys of hiring Ames, Heffelfinger, and Malley to play for their team. Quick to retort, the AAA described the Pittsburghs as a greedy club which not only went after Ames but also asked "any college that could spare a player of any ability . . . to let him do duty for them [PAC] today and that a lot of famous recruits will confront their team [AAA] in consequence."

Pregame publicity and the ringer fanfare stimulated great interest in the contest. Five thousand spectators were expected to fill Allegheny's Recreation Park on what is now Pittsburgh's North Side. Inclement weather, however, kept the crowd down to 3,000 who

42 Ibid.
43 Chronicle-Telegraph (Pittsburgh), Oct. 31, 1892.
44 Pittsburgh Press, Oct. 30, 1892.
45 Pittsburgh Post, Nov. 12, 1892.
46 Pittsburgh Press, Oct. 30, 1892.
47 Ibid., Nov. 13, 1892.
48 Pittsburgh Post, Nov. 12, 1892.
49 Pittsburgh Times, Nov. 12, 1892.
braved the cold and snow to see for whom "Snake" Ames would play. Because each club was weak at the halfback position, the team that corralled Ames would have a decided advantage.\(^5\) As it turned out, Ames did not play, but Pudge Heffelfinger, Ed Malley, and Ben "Sport" Donnelly, the former Princeton Stalwart, lined up with the Alleghenys. At the sight of these behemoths from Chicago, the shocked Pittsburgh team retreated to its horse-drawn omnibus. The Pittsburghs protested the presence of the Chicago players and immediately declared all bets off. They offered to play an exhibition game. The Alleghenys rejected the offer and took the six-zero forfeit awarded to them by the referee. The AAA then retired the Chicago stars and organized a scrub game between its second-line players and the Western University of Pennsylvania.\(^5^1\)

After ten minutes of the scrub game had elapsed, PAC officials reopened negotiations with the Alleghenys. PAC again offered to play the AAA in an exhibition game with all bets cancelled. At first, Oliver D. Thompson of AAA refused to call off the bets. A tough competitor schooled in Darwinian doctrines at Yale, Thompson argued that the Alleghenys simply beat PAC at its own game. "The Allegheny management," he continued, "had been successful when the East End manager had failed." He claimed to have "positive evidence" that PAC had tried to get Heffelfinger and Ames for the AAA game.\(^5^2\)

What Thompson carefully avoided in the discussion, though, was the large number of Yale graduates holding memberships in the Allegheny Athletic Association. This fact, coupled with Thompson's previous relationship with Yale football coach Walter Camp, made it exceedingly difficult for PAC to corral Heffelfinger and other prized Yale players. Continuing his assault against PAC's surreptitious recruiting, Thompson revealed that he had in his possession a letter from Jesse Riggs who had been approached by the Pittsburghs. Riggs, a former Princeton standout with a national reputation, rejected the Pittsburghs' offer. Thompson next cited the presence of Clarence Lomax, formerly of Cornell, and Simon Martin, the ex-Lehigh player currently playing for the Steelton, Pennsylvania, Athletic Club, as ringers in PAC uniforms. Referring to the ineligibility of the Pittsburghs' "Rags" Brown and A. C. Read, using his real name for this game, Thompson concluded his argument and ordered the scrub game to continue. Con-

\(^{50}\) Pittsburgh Post, Nov. 12, 1892.
\(^{51}\) Commercial-Gazette (Pittsburgh), Nov. 14, 1892; Pittsburgh Press, Nov. 13, 1892.
\(^{52}\) Pittsburgh Press, Nov. 13, 1892.
stant pressure from the team managers of both clubs who were anxious to reach a settlement along with the crowd's disenchantment with the scrub game forced Thompson to reverse his position. Reluctantly he consented to an exhibition game with all bets cancelled. 53

After a delay of nearly one hour, AAA and PAC lined up to play. The teams agreed to play two thirty-minute halves due to the rapidly approaching darkness. The Chicago players made the AAA a heavy favorite, though they had not practiced with the Allegheny team and consequently committed many errors. The well-disciplined Pittsburgh team kept the AAA at bay throughout the contest by repulsing repeated attacks of the opposition in its own territory. The game's only score came midway through the first half when Pudge Heffelfinger picked up a fumble by one of his teammates, skirted the end, and scampered twenty-five yards for the touchdown. 54 Ed Malley missed the goal and the score remained 4-0. The game continued as a defensive stalemate until darkness halted it prematurely after eighteen minutes of play in the second half. 55

The low score and stalwart defenses reflected the ferocity with which the game was contested. Pudge Heffelfinger led the way with his vicious method of breaking the wedge. "... when PAC wedged down the field, he [Heffelfinger] ran and jumped at it with full speed, bringing his knees against the mass. The wedge didn't hold long." 56 Captain Charley Aull and his brother, Burt, received severe injuries. Aull left the game with a badly injured back after he was crushed beneath a pile of several opponents. Earlier in the game, Burt Aull fell victim to a fierce blow to the head, causing him to retire. 57 "Sport" Donnelly of AAA received "a terrific smash in the eye," and PAC offered no sympathy, contending that Donnelly had played dirty football. Expressing disappointment to the officials for halting the game at the onset of darkness, Donnelly pleaded: "Oh, I wish this game would last just two minutes longer. I just want two minutes to get even." 58

Following the game, AAA secretly paid Heffelfinger $500 for playing plus $25 for expenses. Malley and Donnelly each received $25 for travel. 59 The $500 payment to Heffelfinger made him the first paid

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53 Ibid.; Chronicle-Telegram (Pittsburgh), Nov. 14, 1892.
54 Pittsburgh newspapers did not agree on the distance of Heffelfinger's run. The Dispatch reported a run of fifteen yards, the Press indicated it was twenty-five yards, and the Chronicle-Telegram had it at thirty yards.
55 Pittsburgh Press, Nov. 13, 1892; Pittsburgh Dispatch, Nov. 13, 1892.
56 Chronicle-Telegram (Pittsburgh), Nov. 14, 1892.
57 Pittsburgh Press, Nov. 13, 1892.
58 Chronicle-Telegram (Pittsburgh), Nov. 14, 1892.
59 "Expense Sheet of Allegheny Athletic Association," PFHF. The $500 payment to Heffelfinger for playing one game was more than the average
football player on record and thus the game's first professional. The hiring of Heffelfinger was a profitable venture for the AAA. Gross gate receipts for the Pittsburgh game totaled $1,683. After paying Heffelfinger his fee, the visitors their guarantee of $428, and miscellaneous expenses, the AAA netted a profit of $621.60

Money was the chief force behind the recruitment of Heffelfinger and other ringers. Club members of each organization won substantial amounts on bets they placed on their own team. Ringers greatly improved a team's chances of winning the contest. Knowledge of their availability, moreover, gave informed bettors a marked advantage in the wagering. The Alleghenys, for instance, stood to win most of the $10,000 bet on the AAA-PAC contest.61 Little wonder, then, that the AAA management opposed the Pittsburghs' proposal to play an exhibition game with all bets cancelled. The interrelationship between betting and the recruiting of ringers was captured by an editorial in the Pittsburgh Times:

There was reported to be large sums of money bet on Saturday's game, and much offered and it will be believed that it was for the sake of winning these wagers that each side tried to substitute expert players from East and West. The substitutes could have won nothing but money for either side. . . . As part of the betting transaction this affair of Saturday approached the level of ringing in loaded dice or marked cards. Both sides let their desire to win run away with their judgment.62

AAA denied making any payments to Heffelfinger or anyone else, but PAC was too perceptive to accept the Alleghenys' explanation. Each club chastised the other in public for its misdeeds, widening the chasm between the two clubs beyond the point of reconciliation. Each club vowed never to play the other again.63 As emotions began to temper and the ringer issue subsided, members and officials of both athletic clubs made overtures for a possible third football game between the two clubs. The Alleghenys saw it as a source of additional revenue, while the Pittsburghs promoted it, hoping to retrieve some of their lost prestige. The game, however, did not materialize, and the


Heffelfinger's payment, however, is not so surprising and is quite comparable with the payments modern-day professional football players receive for one game. In 1976, the median yearly income was just above $14,000. The winners of the 1977 Super Bowl received in excess of $15,000.

60 "Expense Sheet of Allegheny Athletic Association," PFHF.
61 Pittsburgh Times, Nov. 14, 1892.
62 Ibid.
63 Chronicle-Telegraph (Pittsburgh), Nov. 14, 1892.
1892 season drew to a close with the Alleghenys reigning as Pittsburgh's football champions.

Football mirrored American society during the late nineteenth century. The game changed from the loosely structured game of rugby to the highly regimented and disciplined game of American football. This transition brought order to the gridiron just as division of labor brought order to the industrial world. While the mechanics of the game reflected America's trend toward industrialization, victory on the football field symbolized other prominent phases of American life. It represented the triumph over an adversary comparable to the consummation of a successful business deal in the world of enterprise. Winning also tested the Darwinian hypothesis of survival of the fittest, giving much credence to the social Darwinists' belief that the strong survive and the weak die. The large number of AAA members, schooled in social Darwinism at Yale, ascribed to this doctrine of competition and stimulated the Alleghenys' winning spirit. Furthermore, victory represented the successful outcome of tough, rigorous competition characteristic of Victorian ideology. At the same time, however, the rough and aggressive nature of football negated the fragile and delicate properties of Victorianism and satisfied America's craving for vigor and physical prowess.

American football spread from the colleges to athletic clubs during the 1880s. College graduates, upon joining athletic clubs, introduced and popularized the game there. Athletic clubs were first to publicize football in Pittsburgh because colleges in the area had not yet given it emphasis.

In the setting of the athletic club, conditions were ripe for professional football to emerge and grow. As clubs organized football teams and rivalries developed, winning became important. In order to win, particularly against strong rivals, athletic clubs went after the best players, using financial inducements to secure their services. The Allegheny Athletic Association, anxious for victory over its chief rival, the Pittsburgh Athletic Club, christened professional football when it paid $500 to William W. "Pudge" Heffelfinger to play for its football team in November 1892. The Alleghenys' desire for victory on the football field, therefore, produced the professional game.

Football victories generated revenues for the athletic club. Winning gave its football team visibility. Immediate public attention produced economic benefits in the form of increased gate receipts and new memberships. Although some spectators attended football games to satisfy their whims of curiosity, others developed a strong affinity
for an athletic club's football team and patronized its games on a regular basis. Dozens of the regular patrons identified so strongly with their team that they applied for membership in the athletic club. The success of an athletic club's football team also attracted society's status seekers. Newly-rich businessmen joined primarily for the social and business contacts they could make in aspiring to reach society's upper level. Joining the AAA or PAC was a step toward Pittsburgh society's inner circle just as joining the New York Athletic Club brought young aspirants closer to New York City's elites. Whether they joined for social advancement or group companionship, new members produced additional revenue in the form of initiation fees and monthly dues.

Although victory generated income through publicity and prestige, the largest financial gains were made by those wagering on the football contests. This was clearly evident in the second AAA-PAC game in which the Alleghenys and some of its members were in a position to win most of the $10,000 wagered. Due to the large amounts of money involved in the betting, the athletic club, encouraged by its members, looked outside its own organization for the best football players available. Talented football players sold their services to the highest bidder. In order to attract talented players from the outside, athletic clubs had no choice but to pay them. Both the ringers and athletic clubs profited, though the clubs and club members reaped economic benefits in excess of their expenditures. Ringers greatly improved a team's chances of winning, and knowledge of their availability gave informed bettors a decided advantage. Only by knowing that Heffelfinger and other ringers would play for their team could the Allegheny bettors have risked so much money and offered the Pittsburgh followers five-to-one odds.

In pursuing opportunities for financial gain through victory on the football field, athletic clubs in Pittsburgh resorted to the professional and disregarded the amateur code of participating for pleasure. The quest for money by both players and the athletic club undermined the principles of amateurism to which they supposedly ascribed. In the choice between money and amateur ideals, athletic clubs and players pragmatically chose money; in doing so, professional football was born.

This study of the birth of professional football has revealed the close interrelationship among money, victory, and the professional athlete. The professional produced victory, and victory generated money — a basic need and desire in American society. This revelation
is important because, in showing the base upon which professional football was founded, it provides us with a better understanding and appreciation for the game which, in recent years, has become one of America's foremost spectator sports.
IN COMMEMORATION

GIFT

IN MEMORY OF

MRS. GRETCHEN ROSE KNOWLES

FROM

MR. AND MRS. FRANK E. RICHARDSON, JR.