

FOOTBALL AND HOW TO PLAY IT

No 1—"THE ON-SIDE KICK" BY JOHN B. FOSTER.



KNOX, THE YALE BACK, WHO WAS ADEPT IN 1906 IN MAKING THE ON-SIDE KICK.

By John B. Foster

To be a good football player a pair of stout legs is necessary, a certain amount of agility and nimbleness, ability to endure, plenty of pluck and determination, quick judgment, a sound body and a brave heart. No boy should engage in the game without the consent of his parents, and if there is doubt as to the physical fitness of the ambitious youngster he should be examined by the family physician before he becomes a candidate for a team.

Many an accident on the football field has been attributed to the roughness of the game, when, as a matter of fact, the injured player never should have undertaken the sport, because they were suffering from maladies which were aggravated rather than ameliorated by football.

One death has been caused this early in the present season because a college football player, applied judiciously, not only will be found helpful physically—for there is no person who plays it but is exhilarated by the pastime, even if fatigued by the exertion—but will be found to be a mental tonic. These words of caution are not out of place before entering on a description of some of the methods of play. Football, applied judiciously, not only will be found helpful physically—for there is no person who plays it but is exhilarated by the pastime, even if fatigued by the exertion—but will be found to be a mental tonic.

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To be successful in football there must be perfect team work. All the units must combine into a harmonious whole working for one end and one purpose. There are occasional brilliant personal plays in the game, but they are usually the result of a successful football scheme and not due to extraordinary personal merit on the part of the player.

Fumbles and Muffs

Now and then a fumble or a muffed punt will give some player the chance of a lifetime in a game of importance. If he happens to be near the ball he may pick it up and run the length of the field, scoring a brilliant touchdown which shall become a matter of football history. These plays are the exception and not the rule.

Young players must not begin football with the idea that it is a hit and miss game. It is being advanced by his own team, and in addition to that must ward off the forwards and backs of the adversary in so far as it occurs to his part of the field to do so.

It is essential that he shall block the part of the defense which it is his duty to block, even if the opposing player is on the farthest side of the field from the ball. Coaches who handle young players frequently say one of the hardest tasks they have is to keep the boys from following on the heels of the ball. An end, for instance, whose business it is to look after the opposing end of the other team, will forget that part of his duty and the

moment the ball is put into play will rush in to catch the ball eager to be in the thick of the scrimmage, and not mindful of the fact that the end whom he should have blocked may be the very player who intercepts the ball.

Sometimes it is necessary for the ends to play well out or for the backs to shift so that they are at one side of the play, and when they trail the ball and forget they are as important as one piece as another when they have their man to block they jeopardize the possession of the ball by their own team.

Obedience Is Everything

Players who begin their football experience in school or college teams must obey implicitly the orders of the captains and coaches. In a large varsity team the player who would refuse to accept the orders of the captain or of one of the coaches would quickly be dropped from the football squad. It is not the personality of the football player which counts for so much as it is his disposition to become a very useful cogwheel on a big machine. The younger boys who play football the most obediently to the orders of their captains and coaches, and if he makes mistakes in delivering it to the quarter back it is more likely to be the result of his awkwardness than because there has been interference by the opposing side.

The players must keep within their line, as officials will not tolerate outside play and are quick to penalize it. There is nothing which is more demoralizing to a good eleven than to lose its benefit because some member, in his haste to get away with the ball, was far over the line when it was put into play. Young players are cautioned particularly to begin right when they start in the game—make a resolve not to be outside at any time. A little care in this respect in the beginning may save an important match for a team some day. There is a tendency on the part of some players to edge an inch or two over the line and then a few inches more, trusting to elude the eyesight of the umpire and beat the ball a foot or two as the play is begun.

That may sound clever to brag about, but it is not good football. The foot or two that may be picked up now and then because a player has deceived the umpire some day may be the fatal error which starts a disastrous defeat. Any team which had made a brilliant gain at the crucial point in a football contest would not be likely to be very happy because a penalty was enforced for being outside when the offending player deliberately stole ground, trusting to escape the umpire's vigilance.

New Plays in Vogue

Since the new rules have been in vogue there are certain plays in football which have come to have specific names. Four or five years ago almost everything calculated to advance the ball was referred to as a certain kind of formation. There were tackle back formations, the famous guards' back of Pennsylvania; before that the turtle back, the flying wedge and the Harvard tandem. The latter, by the way, is still used by the crimson and is not a bad ground gainer when a small distance is necessary to make the 10 yards.

Now we have the on-side kick, a play characteristic and fully developed as being somewhat different from other football formations; the forward pass, which is equally typical; the double pass, which has come into vogue again; the fake punt and the fake pass, plays which are deceptive and frequently well carried out, where three years ago there was little of such effort owing to

big teams and was by far the most successful with it because the men were coached to such great perfection. Almost all boys want to be backs. There is a position which appeals to the youngster, who sees possibilities of wonderful runs, plunges through a line in which a hole has been conveniently opened by the forwards, fine catches of long punts, an occasional kick perhaps and generally "something doing" all the time. The backs will always be spectacular in football, but in the new game they will have strong rivals in some of the linemen, more especially if the linemen happen to be active and fleet of foot themselves.

It is taken for granted that the football aspirants know all about the lineup and how to assume their positions. That is the very primary of the game. The lineup is not such a rugged affair as it once was, owing to the neutral zone which is now in existence. The center has a better chance to handle the ball accurately, and if he makes mistakes in delivering it to the quarter back it is more likely to be the result of his awkwardness than because there has been interference by the opposing side.

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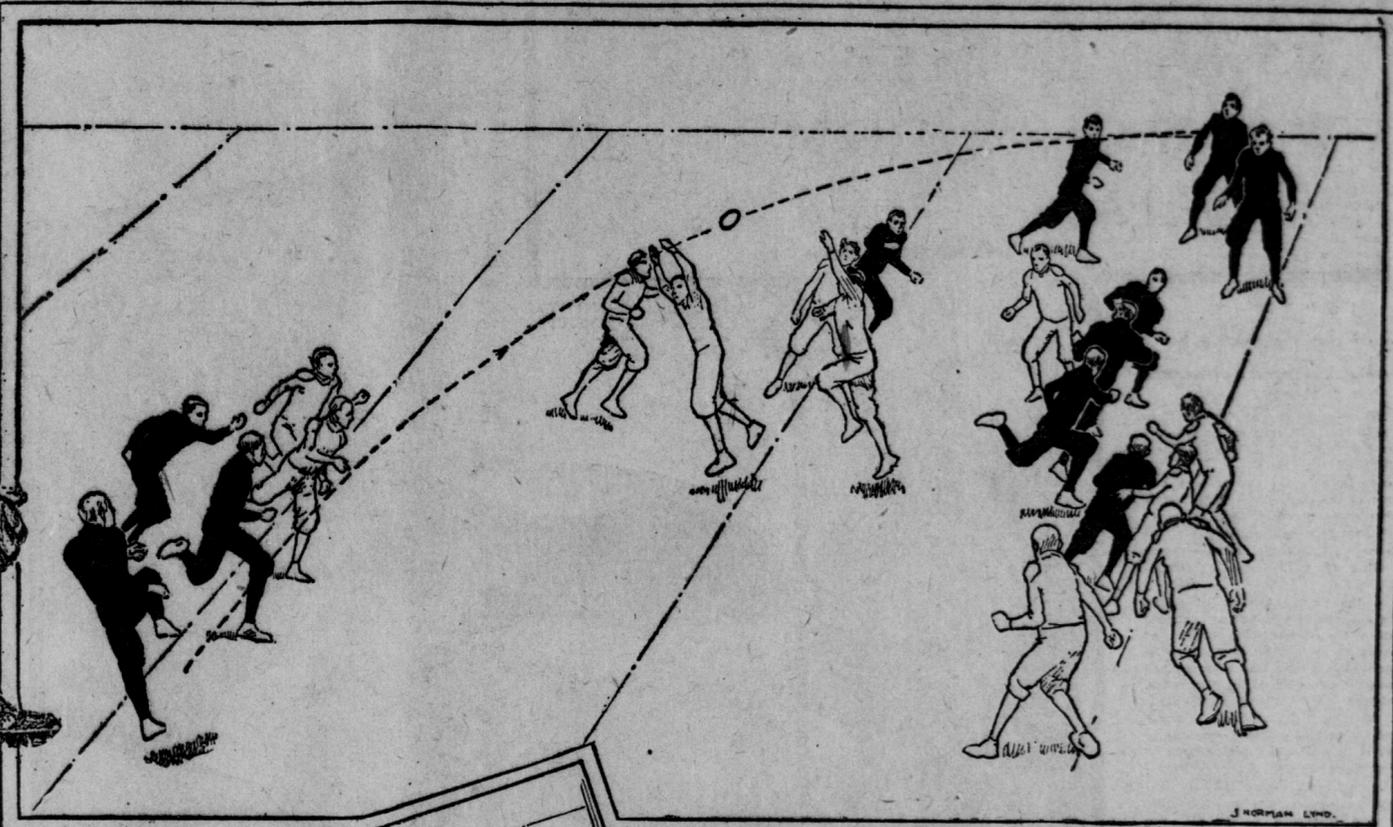


ILLUSTRATION SHOWING ACTUAL POSITIONS OF PLAYERS DURING ON-SIDE KICK IN THE GREAT YALE-HARVARD GAME OF 1906

players to a certain point on the right field of the defending team, where the ball is to be picked up by the left end or by any other player who may have been designated to get the ball.

Diagram No. 3 shows the positions of players in an actual on-side kick which took place in one of the greatest games of 1906—that between Yale and Harvard. The players of Harvard were fooled into believing an end run was to be attempted and were almost upon Knox when he kicked the ball directly over their heads at an angle to the left.

Two of the Harvard men, Parker and

The two most successful men in punting in 1906 for the on-side kick were Rourke and Knox of Yale. Both had the ability to shoot the ball just over the heads of the contending teams to a certain angle where it would be easiest for the man who was to follow it to pick it up without interference. There was no effort made to get away a long punt. All the attention of the kicker was directed toward placing the ball in readiness for the run which was expected to follow it.

So well did Yale have this play perfected that in at least three games of consequence the Yale end was on the ball the moment it touched the ground and off with a rush to the goal of its opponent. Yale usually sent an end after the ball. Some teams send a tackle. Whoever goes, however, must have protection from his team mates, for it is just as important that he get up to the ball as it is that the punter kick accurately and times his kick to the runner.

The more the on-side kick is practiced the more proficient a team will become in the play. It is well to remember that as much is lost in football many times by being overcautious as is lost in bad play. Hence teams which fear to try the on-side kick because it seems as if the ball is getting away from them are overconservative and not likely to pull out their games when under fire in a close battle.

Every player must know through the signal to what side the kick will be made and what player will be expected to get through the opposing line and pick up the ball. The eleven should bend every effort to make a clear road for the man after the ball, at the same time protecting the back who is making the kick, so that the ball shall not be blocked or he shall misdirect the punt because hurried by the charging enemy.

It is possible to vary the play before the kick is actually made in order to mislead the defense as much as possible.

DIAGRAM NO 1 LINE UP FOR ON-SIDE KICK

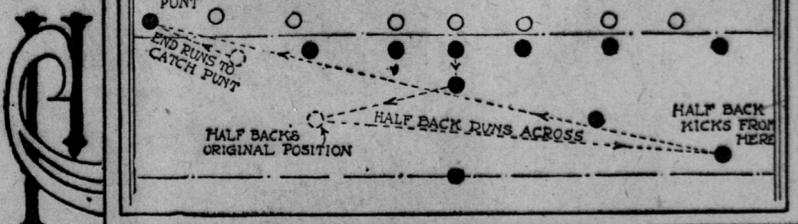


DIAGRAM NO 2 BALL PASSED TO LEFT HALF BACK WHO RUNS TO RIGHT AND KICKS FROM THERE

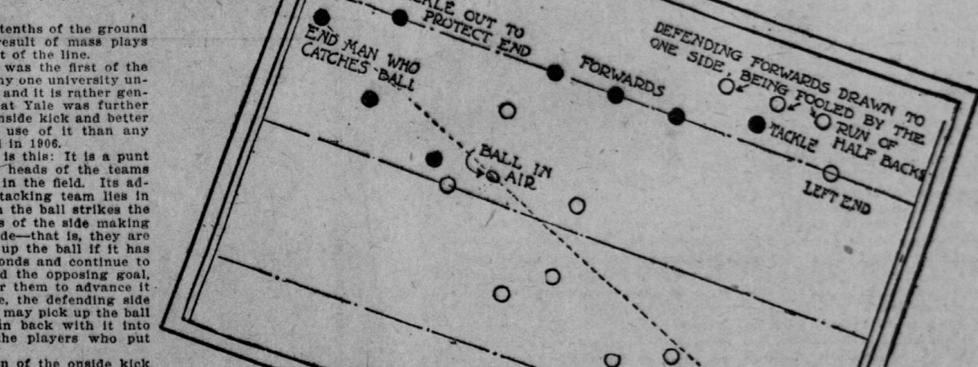


DIAGRAM NO 3 POSITIONS OF PLAYERS AFTER THE KICK HAS BEEN MADE

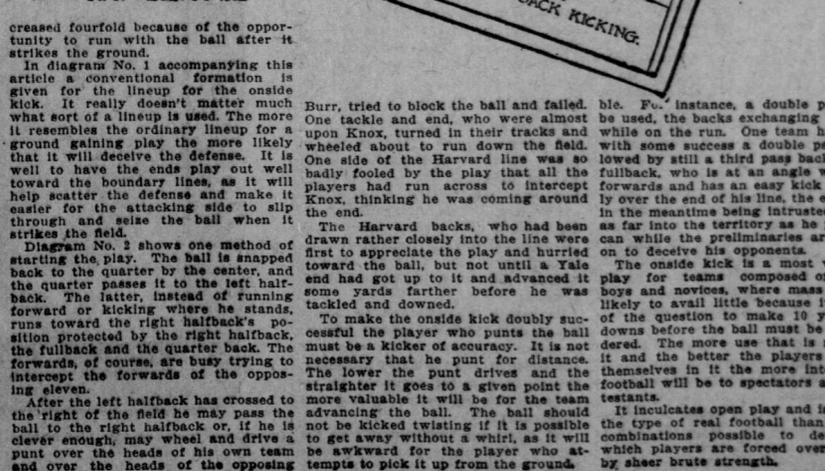


Diagram No. 1 accompanying this article is a conventional formation for the on-side kick. It really doesn't matter much what sort of a lineup is used. The more it resembles the ordinary lineup for a ground gaining play the more likely that it will deceive the defense. It is well to have the ends play out well toward the boundary line, as it will help scatter the defense and make it easier for the attacking side to slip through and seize the ball when it strikes the field.

Diagram No. 2 shows one method of starting the play. The ball is snapped back to the quarter by the center, and the quarter passes it to the left half-back. The latter, instead of running forward or kicking where he stands, runs toward the right half-back's position protected by the right half-back, the fullback and the quarter back. The forwards, of course, are busy trying to intercept the forwards of the opposing eleven.

After the left halfback has crossed to the right of the field he may pass the ball to the right halfback or, if he is clever enough, may wheel and drive a punt over the heads of his own team and over the heads of the opposing

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