

What Football Players May And May Not Do

Every Young Athlete Thoroughly to Grasp
The New Game Should Understand, as
Explained Below, Why the Rules Were
Completely Revised for the Season of 1910.

NOTE THIS WELL.

ALL players of the side in possession of the ball must learn to let the runner with the ball severely alone. He is not to be pushed, pulled, dragged on the ground or be encircled in the arms of his team mates and crowded over the field with the ball in his arms. This is the year of the "individual" in football.

PART I.

By John B. Foster.

AMERICAN football paid the penalty of popularity by becoming impossible from the viewpoint of more communities and interests than one. It is without much question the only one of our sports which has demanded a reconstruction because of its unsuitability to all ages, and a persistence on the part of all ages to take part in it.

Had it been possible to restrict the game to those who were its original progenitors and who, from the game of Rugby, devised a sport which was better adapted to the American temperament than the English pastime, with its less clearly defined characteristics, it is with reason to believe that American colleges would be playing much the same game to-day as was played ten years ago. The sport has too much fascination. It got completely away from the "older boys" and was picked up by the younger generation. They were not fitted for it physically. Yet in spite of admonition from parents and teachers the smaller boys would play football, and they would be satisfied with no other game than that which was played at Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Pennsylvania.

Unsuitable for All Ages.

Five years ago the writer called attention to the fact that the spread of football would bring its revision. Some agreed with him. Some did not. The latter element could not conceive that a sport which was absorbing the attention of millions more of persons than it had in 1889 by its own publicity and growth was more likely to invite restriction than a sport which was the pastime of a few colleges. Indeed, there were not a few who failed to realize the growth of football, and there are some to this day who have no conception of the hold which the pastime has attained with young America. There is no other sport in the country, with the exception of baseball, which has such a firm grasp on the boys from fifteen to twenty years of age.

One may liken football and its American career to that of some of our public men. In early youth, isolated in their own immediate neighborhood, they have been admired by their friends and companions for their good qualities. In later years with vast attainment in letters and knowledge, they have become the target for the criticism of a nation. Increasing popularity not only has gathered them friends but has created their enemies.

No American sport has been obliged to undergo so much reconstruction as football. Its first overhauling was due to an endeavor to get rid of mass play. This was the outcome of the attack of two forces moving from two different standpoints but both having a common purpose.

Reasons for Attitude.

The smaller colleges attacked the game because men had been hurt and killed. Critics attacked the game, not only because of the injuries which had arisen in playing it, but for the reason that it had resolved itself into a stupidly slow pushing match.

It is to be doubted whether it will ever be possible to play football without injury. It is certainly never likely to become a game feasible for grammar school boys, unless the boys are of exceptionally good physique, and to my mind much of the criticism of football is due to the fact that young boys have tried to play the game who had no place on the football field. Some of them who have tried to play football should have had no place on any athletic field where violent exertion was essential to play perfectly.

In attempting to open the game and at the same time obviate the possibilities of injury to players, the committee of rule makers introduced into the sport at least one play which is ever likely to be a bone of contention. That is the forward pass. It is the hobby of certain college men, but it is not a football play, nor is it ever likely to become a football play. It belongs to basketball, which is a game entirely apart from football, and it is one of the plays of the new football which were responsible for the revision of the rules which has been made within the last year.

It was the possibility of the forward pass which so scattered the line of defense in the game that the style of attack was devised to overwhelm and embarrass opposing tackles, and so much of the play centered around the tackles that it was only the giants who were able to stand up under the strain.

First Practical Use.

In the first year of introduction of the forward pass, before its future had been worked out to any extent, or before any one had grasped how much of an element it might be toward the winning of football games, little was seen of it in a satisfactory way until almost the close of the season, when Yale started the football world with the long forward passes which settled in the hands of Alcott and went far toward turning the tide in favor of the Elis in important games.

The suggestion which was carried in these plays was so much elaborated another year that almost every football eleven had its system of forward passes set work at the very beginning of the season.

Some of them were successful and some of them were not worth much.

Another season found the forward pass still in popularity among colleges, because it was incorporated in the rules, and in order to make it effective not one coach but several had devised plays by which the defending tackle was to be driven in and overwhelmed, so that passes could be made in safety while the end was "boxed," or put so far out of play that he could be of no assistance. This constant wear and tear of heavy lines against the tackles of eleven constituted an assault which was too much for one man to bear. The marvel is that the tackles stood up under it so well as they did. In the opinion of more than one they strain which was put on the tackles played in the eleven of 1909 was about as severe a test as ever football players were asked to undergo, and personally it seems to me that the tackles of last season deserve to go on record as A. No. 1 for holding up as they did.

Still in the Rules.

It will not do any good to rebel at the forward pass this year. Whether it is good football or bad football or not football, it is in the rules again, and it must be considered with all the possibilities which make for it as a part of football strategy.

The story is told that football politics kept the play in the rules. It is asserted that for the first time in the history of the American college game a rules committee was swayed by the manoeuvre so common in politics of A voting for B's plan if B will vote for A's system. When the personnel of the football rules committee was changed it was suggested that perhaps that would be one of the first changes most in evidence because, with a bulkier organization and the whims to be considered of men who had never played football, and who knew little about the fundamentals of the game, there was no telling how many experiments might be proposed or how far the members would go.

There were two fatalities in the football season of 1909 which were more effective than almost all other reasons for bringing about this year's revision. There were other fatalities ascribed to football for which the game was not responsible. That has been the case every year. In making lists of football injuries and fatalities the best of care is not always exercised. For instance, it is hardly fair to ascribe the death of a player to football when the player has been warned never to try to play the game. Such an instance happened under my immediate observation. A young man, with a weakened system, was warned not to play football and not to undertake violent exercise of any description. He disregarded the injunction, played football against the advice of his physician and died from the illness to which he was subject. It is unjust to insist that football was primarily responsible for his death, as baseball would very likely have produced the same result.

Evils To Be Overcome.

The evils which the present revision of the rules have endeavored to overcome are what might be called contributory causes to injury of light or serious character. For example, effort has been made to do away with the diving tackle—a dangerous and harmful play. For a young man to launch himself headlong at a running adversary may be thrilling and heroic, but it is fraught with grave possibilities. Players have been seen to precipitate themselves into an onrushing line as if they were diving from the ocean sand into an oncoming breaker. In so doing they were wholly without protection to themselves, for the very method of their plan of defence left them without power to care for their own safety in a mass of players in steady motion and on their feet.

The revision of the rules this year has also forbidden and penalized the helping of players who are on the ground. The committee has defined as "crawling" any attempt of the man with the ball to wriggle ahead after fairly down. It was wise legislation. A player pulled or pushed too often is in position where muscles are contracted or limbs so turned that joints are likely to be misplaced and bones broken. An effort has been made to bring all players to a thorough understanding of the fact that when the ball is once down it is "down," and the more rigidly the officials enforce that doctrine the less liability there will be of injury to the player stopped or tackled, and the quicker the game will be rid of the desire to beat the actual stopping of the ball with a foot or two of gain by "crawling" over the surface of the field.

It would appear that both of these reforms, which have been introduced into the rules, are to result more efficaciously among the younger players of the game than their elders.

Youngsters Like to "Pile Up."

There has always been a temptation among players in grammar and preparatory schools to "pile up" on the man who is down with the ball. Everybody who has had to do with youngsters knows the pulse of the boy to throw himself into the heap when there is a general mix-up on the ground.

No better instance can be cited than the frolics of a crowd of healthy young Americans in a field of newly cut grass or hay. There may be half a dozen heaps of grass or hay on a lawn or field, but if one boy in a spirit of healthy activity pitches headlong into one of them the other boys, instead of pitching into the other haycocks, will, nine times out of ten, heap themselves into a squirming mass on top of the one boy and into the soft pile in which he first threw himself.

In football games among the younger players this practice has always to be dealt with. If a player is downed with the ball, first one boy, who has no reason to become involved in the play, will jump on the prostrate youth to assist in holding

"JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE."



SOME TIMELY ADVICE.

MERELY because the rules in football have been changed, do not sit dejectedly in a corner and insist that football cannot be played and no good come out of the rules because they revolutionize some of the theories which have been held as to the sport.

Football will be played and a game will be evolved from the present rules which sooner or later will find its advocates and admirers as previous changes in the fall sport have found their advocates and admirers.

The coaches and players who go to sleep over the new game, or those who stubbornly refuse to accept its changes will be hardest hit at the end of the season, and negligence on their part in taking advantage of all that is offered to them in 1910 may set their teams back to great disadvantage in 1911.

After working through the rules carefully it would appear that the game which must first be tried under the new code will have to deal largely with attempts to circle the ends and plunge through the

lines for sharp gains. Some have confused the rule in regard to assisting the man who is carrying the ball and imagine that it will curtail line work.

On the contrary, the game is exactly as it always was in that respect, except that the runner must not be assisted by being grabbed, as it were, by his own teammates. Openings may be made for him to get through the line. Interference may be employed to assist him in getting around the line, but the other players must keep their "hands off" his body. So far as the actual fact of advancing the ball is concerned, the runner must act upon his own individuality.

In the early part of the season it is the expectation that more running plays will be employed by coaches than has been customary in three or four seasons. Seven men on the scrimmage line may mean a strong primary defense, but it must not be forgotten that the attack can scatter and still be more effective than it was in former days, because the ball can be snapped directly back from

centre to any one of the backs. The first coach to develop a first class centre who is proficient in snapping back the ball as well as at an angle as in a straight line, and who is equally good in holding his own in defense, will pave the way for a system of attack which shall be as diversified as there are men in the back field, increased four fold by reason of the changes which may be effected by alternating the plays.

Teach every player on the eleven the cardinal principles of blocking runners by the use of the body. Teach systems whereby the man running with the ball may not only be attended with good interference, but may learn to follow his interference. The backs who are fleet and agile and who can dodge well are apt to make trouble in the new game.

Unquestionably there will be a great use of the forward pass, because it has been almost placed on a par with punting the ball. The forward pass will be discussed in the next article and something of its value estimated.

him; then another and another, and I have seen even the fullback running the whole length of the field to throw himself on top of all, with no more reason for doing so than that he wanted to show that he was in the game.

Will End These Plays.

The strict enforcement of this rule should drive from the game all mass plays based on concerted effort to advance the ball after it has once been checked in progress by the defending side. The player who has the ball in his possession must rely upon his individual effort to penetrate the defense and when finally stopped through the efforts of the side not in possession of the ball or because the referee is satisfied that the progress of the ball has been stopped within the provision of the rules, there should not be found such sights as have been common on the football field when ten or fifteen players have slowly disentangled themselves from a disorganized mass to discover that the player with the ball, who was beneath all of them, is senseless from injury or almost powerless from exhaustion.

The abolition of interlocked interference in more ways than one reaches to the very root of the cancer of unnecessary mass play against which critics and anti-football advocates have inveighed for years.

Individuality of action on the football field, so far as it does away with mass play, should serve to make the game brighter, cleaner and more interesting. Concerted football, in which different individuals play their part in blocking or eluding the defence, or separating the attack, is purely within the strategy of the game, but concerted football in which players assemble in masses to advance the ball by sheer force of strength or weight resolves itself too much into push ball, which is foreign to football.

The acme of football strategy is where one individual matches his brains, speed and skill against another or against a sequence of individuals as he meets them one at a time, but not where the individual is compelled to defend himself against the mass or where the individual becomes the centre around which two masses revolve in conflicting effort, one with the purpose to force the individual player forward and the other with the purpose to force the individual player to retreat.

Individual Effort.

We have team play in baseball. All of our American athletes can tell what it is and define it, but team play in baseball invariably depends upon the individual effort of three or four. When we can fully devise in football team play in which the individual shall stand out as strongly as he does in baseball the great autumn

sport of the United States will be nearer its highest development than it ever has been in the past, and to the mind of the writer the intent of the section of the rules which has just been commented upon is a longer step in the right direction toward bringing about such a condition than has been taken at any conference of the rules committee since the beginning of the readjustment of the game.

There has been some legislation in the past directed against the "piling up" of players, but, in a way, it was ineffective, owing to the lax manner in which the officials enforced the rules. It is not probable that the officials were so violently opposed to the rules that they tempered justice with too much mercy for the mere satisfaction of killing the legislation, but they have been slow to act on the ground that it might not always be possible to prevent "piling up."

There need be no reason for delay in enforcing penalties this year, for the rule is plain and mandatory, and there is no football player who is intelligent enough to take part in the game who can plead ignorance where the path to knowledge is so well lighted.

New Playing Time.

The division of the playing time into quarters is a concession to the speed of the game and borrowed from Canadian football.

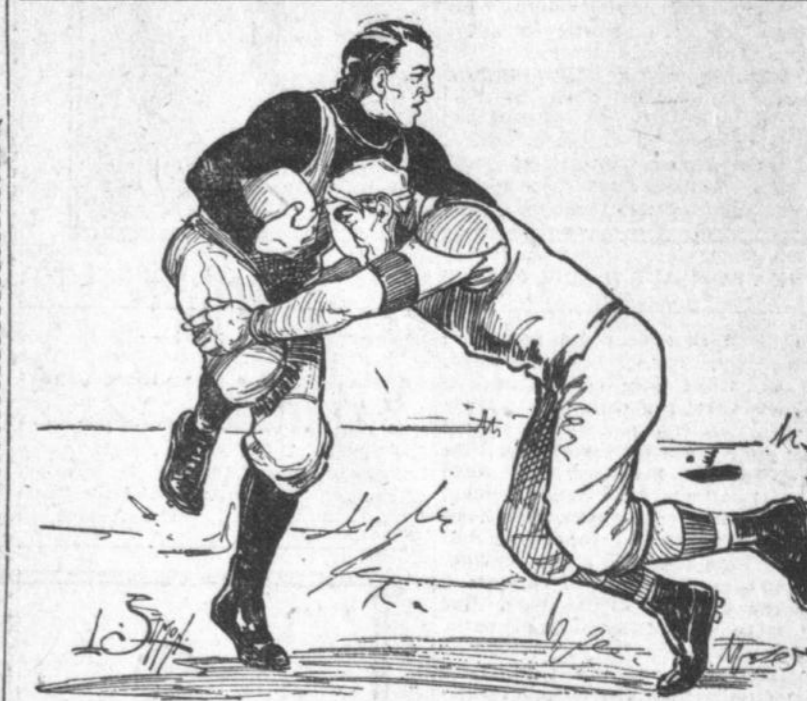
It is not an easy matter to reckon with safety just what effect this will have on football. It is true that the primary motive is to afford rest for the players. Canadian football is so much closer to Rugby than the American game that the subdivision of the halves is almost imperative to give the players a moment to recuperate.

Our game has not always required the high pitch of energy that is necessary in the Canadian game. Some of the players have been compelled to work at top speed and others have not. As a rule the more important American games have been steady developments of a system of play to accomplish a certain purpose.

Whether there is expected to be such change in football this year that a rest will be required in the middle of one of the halves of a game I am sure it is difficult to imagine. It would appear that such might be considered to be the case. The question as to whether this period of rest will work to advantage in the American game devolves greatly on what is made out of football in the season at hand.



Illustrating Methods Which Must Prevail in the Coming Game



hand. For instance, if a team were making slow but certain progress toward the goal of an adversary, and it was evident that the defending team was slowly weakening it seems that it may be taken for granted that the attacking side would care little for that interposed rest of three minutes.

The difference of three minutes for rest might upset the effort of the first fifteen minutes. The attack might not go right after the intermission. Players act of unity and a tremendous amount of end result in the three minutes of rest, and when they take the field again their game may develop just enough raggedness to put it off color.

On the other hand the defending side, at the very moment when it is about to totter and crumble under the assault of the attack, may have the three minute respite thrust upon it just long enough to reassemble its strength and return to the field in condition to offset further advancement of the ball and to turn back the advance of its opponents.

Likely To Be Criticized.

Unquestionably the subdivision of the halves was made with much the same motive in view as were other changes of the season—that is, to render the game less arduous for all ages and classes which seek to play it, but until it adjusts itself to the three minutes of rest in the middle of the half it need occasion no surprise if the question as to whether this period of rest will work to advantage in the American game devolves greatly on what is made out of football in the season at hand.

If the attacking side is within five yards of the goal line when the whistle blows for the end of the first quarter, and if when play is resumed the defending side has regained its strength and composure to such an extent that it is able to prevent a touchdown from being made, rest assured there will be some rather harsh words now and then for the changes in the time divisions. A substitute may enter the game in baseball, but the player whose position he took may not play again.

Back to the Old Field.

Once again it is a gridiron and not a checker board. Inasmuch as the man to whom the ball is snapped may run it through the scrimmage line at any point, there is no longer necessity for dividing the field into squares. Lines at intervals of five yards from end to end will make the green look a little more familiar than it has in recent years.

To what extent this increase of the power of attack will assist the quarter back is

to be learned in the next six weeks. It looks very much as if the back field play will become more diversified and more spectacular than it ever has been. As for every eleven to have four active backs at work instead of three, and an assistant, as has been the case in the past. Add to this the increased value of the forward pass, in that it may be thrown over the line at any point, and it will be apparent that four backs, if they are sufficiently clever, can baffle a wise opponent by their adroitness in manipulating the ball behind the line.

If a team finds itself sufficiently smart and with a good snapper back it may lead up to the point where two-thirds of the plays will be started at the five yard line. If the reading of the rules is clear, that four backs, if they are sufficiently clever, can baffle a wise opponent by their adroitness in manipulating the ball behind the line, and that they stipulate that a back on yard behind the scrimmage line is eligible to receive a forward pass, even the quarter back, if he gets the ball from the snapper, may be started at the five yard line. If the reading of the rules is clear, that four backs, if they are sufficiently clever, can baffle a wise opponent by their adroitness in manipulating the ball behind the line, and that they stipulate that a back on yard behind the scrimmage line is eligible to receive a forward pass, even the quarter back, if he gets the ball from the snapper, may be started at the five yard line. If the reading of the rules is clear, that four backs, if they are sufficiently clever, can baffle a wise opponent by their adroitness in manipulating the ball behind the line, and that they stipulate that a back on yard behind the scrimmage line is eligible to receive a forward pass, even the quarter back, if he gets the ball from the snapper, may be started at the five yard line.

Regarding Substitutes.

Any player who has not been disqualified or suspended may be removed from the game and then returned to it once at the end of any subsequent period. That rule will not work well. It is wrong in theory and will be worse in practice. A time may arrive in a game when a good kicker is needed to score a point for a team. There may be one player on an eleven who is a good kicker and not much of anything else. One player is dropped out of the team and the kicker comes in and does his work. Under the rule he may be dropped at once for another man and yet be eligible to enter the game later at the beginning of a period and repeat the performance when a perfect kick is needed. This is specializing players with a vengeance. Not even our baseball rules have gone that far, in spite of the fact that they permit substitution. A substitute may enter the game in baseball, but the player whose position he took may not play again.

Another fault about the permission clause, in regard to substitutes, is that the player who goes out for a brief rest is likely to acquire information concerning the game from the side lines. No matter how faithfully this may be guarded against, and no matter how unprofessional it may be, it is almost out of the question to believe that effort will not be made in some way to impress upon the resting player the weak points of the opposing team. I don't believe that the rules will be found to work well and it will not be surprising if it is done away with at the end of this season. It is right enough to permit substitutes when a man is out of the game let him stay out.