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Games That Will Pay:  
College Football and the Emergence of the Modern South

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctorate of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Mississippi

MATTHEW BAILEY

December 2011



## **Abstract**

It is often said the college football in the South is a religion. While it may be hyperbole to equate college football with religion, a visit to a southern campus on game day affirms that football is an important aspect of southern society. How did this happen? In other words, how did college football in the South become big-time? This dissertation seeks to answer that question. Focusing on the advent of football on campuses in the early 1890s until the construction of large capacity campus stadiums in the 1930s and 1940s, I argue that although football initially burst onto campuses with a groundswell of student support, the support was ephemeral. By the turn of the century, support had dwindled and athletic associations were perpetually insolvent. Despite the dearth of interest, a handful of football enthusiasts worked diligently to insure survival of the sport. Operating within a network that relied heavily on personal relationships, these football enthusiasts scouted opponents, selected officials, and scheduled games that would pay to keep their struggling programs afloat. To insure adequate gate receipts, athletic directors jockeyed to secure contests in growing cities, especially Atlanta. The competition for these cities, however, caused tensions within the personalized sporting community and a severance of athletic relations between universities occasionally occurred.

The formation of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) in 1894 to govern eligibility rules, and its ultimate dissolution over the application of the one year rule, marks a turning point for southern football. Disagreements over the one year rule, whereby players had to wait one year before playing, between larger universities who favored the rule and smaller universities who opposed it, led to a splintering of the SIAA. Breaking away from the

smaller programs, the larger and more successful programs formed the Southern Conference, the precursor to the current Southeastern Conference. In doing so, they laid the foundation for the rise to prominence of big-time football. Progressive college presidents also played a crucial role in the development of the modern football spectacle. Recognizing that football was an effective “public relations weapon” to promote their school, secure needed alumni support, and ultimately increase state appropriations, they encouraged the development of strong football programs. Their support was paramount for the growing success of football. The construction of modern, large capacity stadia on campuses marks the final step in the development of modern football. By constructing these cathedrals to football, which necessitated a high level of student, alumni and community support, universities were announcing that their programs had come of age and achieved big-time status.

A recurring theme throughout this study is how football illustrates the gradual emergence of the modern South. After the Civil War, the South underwent a series of economic and social changes. A self sufficient agricultural economy was replaced with a market economy based upon the production of cash crops—primarily cotton and tobacco. Cities like Atlanta, Nashville and Birmingham blossomed into centers of commerce. Despite these changes, the South remained an economic colony of the North and mired in crippling poverty. Using football as a lens to examine southern society highlights how the South from the 1890s until World War II, was a region in transition, a blend of old and new, modern and traditional. The protracted development of big-time football programs reinforced the slow emergence of the modern South.

## **Acknowledgements**

Although researching and writing is largely a solitary process, I have been fortunate to receive countless help along the way. I would like to first thank my advisor Ted Ownby for his support, guidance, patience and understanding throughout this project. I would also like to thank the other members of the dissertation committee, Charles Wilson, Charles Ross and Marvin King, for their time, assistance and insights. It is humbling to work with such eminent scholars. I am in their debt. I must also thank the people, especially Craig Pascoe, John Fair and Martha Kebler, at Georgia College and State University for the support they provided and confidence they instilled.

This project would not have been possible without financial support from the History Department and Graduate School at the University of Mississippi. Like all historians, I am also in the debt of the archives and archivists who make it possible to practice our craft. The entire staff at the University of Clemson Special Collections Library deserves all the praise in the world. They made my stay enjoyable and expeditiously made the countless copies I needed. The staff, especially Mary Linneamann, at the University of Georgia Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library was also very helpful. I would also like to thank the staff at the interlibrary loan at the University of Mississippi.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the friends I left behind in Georgia and the new ones I made in Mississippi. Your support, laughs and friendship made this possible. I am blessed. My sincere thanks to Jessie Dunbar, Jen Case, Tony Klein, Evan Noe, Amanda Nagel, Jeff Bourdon, Trey Leeke and Mary Deason. I am also grateful to Rebecca Richie, Hasib

Rasoul, Ryan Eddy and Roscoe Smith for literally handing me the keys to their houses and giving me an open invitation to visit them anytime I needed to make a research trip, attend a football game or just hangout. I can never repay you, so please accept my heartfelt thanks.

Completing this project has been a bittersweet experience since my dad passed away one day after my defense. I miss you Pops, but I know you are proud of me. Finally, I must thank my mom, sister and other family members for all of their love and support.

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## Introduction

It is common cliché that football is a religion in the South, and like all clichés, it contains an element of truth. A veteran sportswriter writes that while fans outside of the South love college football, “in the South, love just ain’t good enough.” In the South, he continues, “the operative word is *passion*.” Numerous stories—like the Tennessee coach who found a moving van parked in his driveway after a loss, or the wife of a Clemson coach who had labor induced to prevent the birth from conflicting with a game—reflect the passion and importance southerners place on college football.<sup>1</sup> Statistical evidence also reveals the passion for football. From 1998 to 2010, the Southeastern Conference led all other conferences in attendance, with an average of 76,844 fans attending each game in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since the advent of the Bowl Championship Series in 1998 to determine the national champion, Southeastern Conference teams have won a total of seven championships and five straight from 2006 to 2010. If you include all schools located in the former Confederacy, southern universities have won ten national championships since 1998. While it may be hyperbole to equate college football with religion, a visit to a southern campus on game day affirms that football is an important aspect of southern society.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Barnhart, *Southern Fried Football: The History, Passion, and Glory of the Great Southern Game* (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2000), 2-4.

<sup>2</sup> Attendance figures are from the NCAA’s website, [http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/c4/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gjX29XJydDRwP\\_wGBDA08Df3Nzd1dXQwMDA\\_2CbEdFALxFcuk!/?WCM\\_PORTLET=PC\\_7\\_2MKEBB1A0OQS10I0O77GEE10G3000000\\_WCM&WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/resources/latest+news/2011/february/ncaa+football+attendance+reaches+new+heights](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gjX29XJydDRwP_wGBDA08Df3Nzd1dXQwMDA_2CbEdFALxFcuk!/?WCM_PORTLET=PC_7_2MKEBB1A0OQS10I0O77GEE10G3000000_WCM&WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/resources/latest+news/2011/february/ncaa+football+attendance+reaches+new+heights).

Although numerous non-scholarly works examine the history and cultural significance of collegiate football, only a handful of scholarly works address the topic.<sup>1</sup> Given the popularity and appeal of college football, the scant attention is surprising. A pioneering work on intercollegiate athletics is Ronald A. Smith's *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics*. In his monograph, Smith develops two arguments that also influence his later works. He argues that from the onset, intercollegiate athletics were commercialized affairs that jeopardized the academic integrity of universities. Due to the popularity and commercial appeal, Smith also asserts that students quickly lost control of athletics as faculty and college administration usurped power. The faculty reign was short-lived, however, as alumni and organizations like the NCAA became the dominant force in athletics.<sup>2</sup> Developing this theme in his subsequent work, Smith contends that radio and television "created symbiotic relationships with intercollegiate athletics" in the 1920s and 1930s. As broadcasting games generated more widespread interest in athletics, which in turn generated more revenue and prestige, universities allowed and encouraged increased commercialization.<sup>3</sup> Another important work on college athletics, John Sayle Watterson's *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* also focuses on the commercialism prevalent in college football. In his sweeping analysis spanning the late nineteenth century to the present day, Watterson argues that since its inception, controversy, scandals, and professionalism have plagued big-time college football. Although he identifies

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of these include Barnhart, *Southern Fried Football*; Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football is King: A History of the SEC* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006); Richard Ernsberger Jr., *Bragging Rights: A Season Inside the SEC, College Football's Toughest Conference* (New York: M. Evans and Company, 2001); Clay Travis, *Dixieland Delight: A Football Season on the Road in the Southeastern Conference* (New York: Harper Entertainment, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Ronald A. Smith, *Play by Play: Radio, Television and Big-Time College Sport* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 2

three periods of reform, Watterson contends that the reforms failed to curb college football's popularity or restore amateurism to the college gridiron.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Oriard, another leading scholar in collegiate athletics, examines the development and popularity of college football in *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*. Chronicling football from its origins in 1876 to World War I, Oriard argues that press coverage in major northeastern newspapers caused football's popularity and propelled it into a mass spectator sport. In addition, Oriard asserts that the narrative of the newspaper accounts reflects the cultural values of turn-of-the-century America.<sup>5</sup> In his subsequent work, Oriard examines football from the 1920s to the 1960s and concludes that by the 1930s, all "major media became saturated with football during the fall months."<sup>6</sup> Due to this saturation, the media constructed a football culture that reflected middle class values. Adopting a more narrative approach, Raymond Schmidt observes that college football underwent several transformations during the 1920s. These transitions include the shift of power to the South, Midwest and West, a more open and fluid style of play, the commercialization of football into a big business, the construction of large stadiums to increase revenues and satisfy popular demand, and the rise of intersectional contests. Schmidt asserts that these changes laid the foundation for the modern football spectacle.<sup>7</sup>

While insightful, the works cited above are predominately rooted in the North and seldom focus their attentions below the Mason-Dixon Line. As a result, college football in the South remains largely unstudied. One of the earliest scholarly discussions on southern football is

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<sup>4</sup> John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created and an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport & Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio & Newsreels, Movies & Magazines, The Weekly & The Daily Press* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Schmidt, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created and an American Spectacle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

Patrick B. Miller's article, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient: College Sport in the New South." Exploring the cultural context of college sports, with an emphasis on football, Miller argues that the sport reflected two differing yet related cultural ideals. On one hand, football reflected traditional values of honor, masculinity, and rugged recreation. A physical, often violent sport, football provided a means for southern youth to simulate hand-to-hand combat. Moreover, the mass formations prevalent in early football resembled an infantry charge on a battlefield. On the other hand, football symbolized the South's reunion with national ideals and values—a creed espoused by New South advocates. A northern invention that emphasized precision, football provided a venue for southern youth to develop the skills deemed necessary for survival in an increasingly industrial and urban society. Miller argues that fusing these two seemingly contradictory cultural ideals gave southern identity a new focus.<sup>8</sup>

In his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-1983," Andrew Doyle also examines the cultural meanings of football from a southern perspective. Although focusing almost exclusively on the University of Alabama and Auburn University, Doyle's unpublished dissertation remains the most comprehensive work on the subject. In the first half of his work, Doyle explores how southerners wove football into the fabric of their culture. Echoing Miller, he argues that football, although a northern invention, developed a following in the South because it appealed to both New South boosters and Lost Cause adherents. New South boosters proclaimed that the modern sport of football taught southerners the traits and skills necessary for success in the industrial world. Moreover, they argued that success on the gridiron would overcome negative stereotypes and promote industrial development. Adherents to the Lost Cause also embraced football for it provided a venue to

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<sup>8</sup> Patrick Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient: College Sport in the New South," *Journal of Sports History* 24 (Fall 1997): 285-313.

restore southern honor and masculinity. The football field thus became a battlefield where the sons of the South could avenge Lee's defeat at Gettysburg.<sup>9</sup>

Arriving in the 1890s, football slowly gained ground and spread to universities throughout the South. The growth, however, was not inevitable. Doyle notes that traditionalists, spearheaded by the clergy and a handful of educators, opposed football and fought to ban it from campus. Despite their objections, football gained a wider following each successive generation. By the 1920s, football had firmly ingrained itself into southern culture. Doyle argues that the University of Alabama's 1926 Rose Bowl victory represented a significant step in this process. He demonstrates how southerners transformed this victory into a symbolic revenge over past humiliations. Afterwards, college presidents increasingly employed football as a public relations vehicle to increase student enrollment and secure financial support.<sup>10</sup>

More recent works emphasize the role of religion in southern sports. For example, William J. Baker argues that religious organizations, retaining a traditional and conservative Protestant hostility towards sports, attacked and shunned them until the 1920s. The societal changes after World War I, including the erosion of the private sphere for women, allowed sports to become respectable and gain clerical approval.<sup>11</sup> Also analyzing football from a religious perspective, Eric Bain-Selbo argues that football is an integral part of southern society and "is a form and expression of religious life."<sup>12</sup> Using football to examine sectional reconciliation, David Turpie argues that the nationwide excitement for a 1939 contest between two unbeaten teams, the University of Tennessee and the University of Alabama, demonstrates "the increased

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-1983," (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1998), 1-63.

<sup>10</sup> Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost," 64-219.

<sup>11</sup> William J. Baker, *Playing With God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 85-107.

<sup>12</sup> Eric, Bain-Selbo, *Game Day and God: Football, Faith, and Politics in the American South* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 213.

inclusion of the South into mainstream American society.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, Charles Martin examines the slow erosion of the color line in collegiate sports in his monograph.<sup>14</sup>

Lacking in the recent scholarship, however, is a discussion on how southern college football developed into its current cultural phenomenon. In other words, how did college football in the South become big-time? This dissertation seeks to answer that question. Focusing on the advent of football on campuses in the early 1890s until the construction of large capacity campus stadiums in the 1930s and 1940s, I argue that although football initially burst onto campuses with a groundswell of student support, the support was ephemeral. By the turn of the century, support had dwindled and athletic associations were perpetually insolvent. Despite the dearth of interest, a handful of football enthusiasts worked diligently to insure survival of the sport. Operating within a network that relied heavily on personal relationships, these football enthusiasts scouted opponents, selected officials, and scheduled games that would pay to keep their struggling programs afloat. To insure adequate gate receipts, athletic directors jockeyed to secure contests in growing cities, especially Atlanta. The competition for these cities, however, caused tensions within the personalized sporting community and a severance of athletic relations between universities occasionally occurred.

The formation of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) in 1894 to govern eligibility rules, and its ultimate dissolution over the application of the one year rule, marks a turning point for southern football. Disagreements over the one year rule, whereby players had to wait one year before playing, between larger universities who favored the rule and smaller universities who opposed it, led to a splintering of the SIAA. Breaking away from the

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<sup>13</sup> David Turpie, “From Broadway to Hollywood: The Image of the 1939 University of Tennessee Football Team and the Americanization of the South” *Journal of Sports History* 35, (Spring 2008): 120.

<sup>14</sup> Charles H. Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

smaller programs, the larger and more successful programs formed the Southern Conference, the precursor to the current Southeastern Conference. In doing so, they laid the foundation for the rise to prominence of big-time football. Progressive college presidents also played a crucial role in the development of the modern football spectacle. Recognizing that football was an effective “public relations weapon” to promote their school, secure needed alumni support, and ultimately increase state appropriations, they encouraged the development of strong football programs. Their support was paramount for the growing success of football.<sup>15</sup> The construction of modern, large capacity stadia on campuses marks the final step in the development of modern football. By constructing these cathedrals to football, which necessitated a high level of student, alumni and community support, universities were announcing that their programs had come of age and achieved big-time status.

A recurring theme throughout this study is how football illustrates the gradual emergence of the modern South. After the Civil War, the South underwent a series of economic and social changes. A self sufficient agricultural economy was replaced with a market economy based upon the production of cash crops—primarily cotton and tobacco. The New South message of industrialization and reconciliation resonated throughout the region and a host of textile factories dotted the Georgia and Carolina piedmont. Cities like Atlanta, Nashville and Birmingham blossomed into centers of commerce. Railroads proliferated and linked once isolated communities to the market economy. With the advent of the automobile, states developed the necessary infrastructure to sustain an automobile culture. Despite these changes, the South remained an economic colony of the North and mired in crippling poverty. Using football as a lens to examine southern society highlights how the South from the 1890s until World War II,

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Dyer in, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 152-174, introduced the idea of football as public relations weapon.

was a region in transition, a blend of old and new, modern and traditional. The protracted development of big-time football programs reinforced the slow emergence of the modern South.

Except for the occasional visit to the University of Mississippi for context and comparison, the University of Georgia and Clemson University predominate this study. Their proximity to Atlanta, the epicenter of the New South Movement, provides an excellent vantage point to study the emergence of the modern South. In addition, the rich and largely untapped archival collections available at their respected libraries allow for a detailed, thorough and original examination. The emphasis on the University of Georgia and Clemson University also necessitate that African Americans are excluded from the narrative. It has become a standard caveat in the scholarly literature on college football that African American colleges and universities need their own study. Unfortunately, I must continue this trend and implore that somebody please produce this much needed volume.<sup>16</sup> Although far from a comprehensive study on southern college football, this project contributes to the scholarly literature on southern football and provides a stepping stone for additional inquiries into this exciting and overlooked field.

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<sup>16</sup> The best works on collegiate football at African America college and universities are, Patrick B. Miller, “To ‘Bring the Race Along Rapidly’: Sport, Student Culture, and Educational Mission at Historically Black Colleges during the War Years,” in *The Sporting World of the Modern South*, ed. Patrick B. Miller (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 129-152; Robert Christopher Fink, “Black College Football in Texas,” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 2003). For the integration of the National Football League, see Charles K. Ross, *Outside the Lines: African Americans and the Integration of the National Football League* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).



## Chapter One

### **A Sound Mind in a Sound Body: The Origins of College Football in the Deep South**

On Saturday November 11, 1893, a large crowd gathered at the Athletic Park on the University of Mississippi's campus to witness a football contest between the University and the Southwestern Baptist University—the first intercollegiate contest in the state. In the days leading up to the event, the campus buzzed with excitement. The campus literary magazine noted, “all of our attention is directed toward football.” To celebrate the occasion and support the local team, businesses in Oxford decorated their storefronts with ribbons and bunting in the home team's red and blue colors. On game day, players from the home team met the visitors from Jackson, Tennessee at the train station and drove them in “gaily decorated” hacks through town and to campus. Eager for the contest, spectators “vigorously applauded” as players from both team entered the playing field. Finally, at three o'clock in the afternoon, play began and the University of Mississippi squad trounced the visitors 56-0. Football had arrived.<sup>1</sup>

The University of Mississippi's football program, like other collegiate programs throughout the Deep South, was initially organized, managed, and supported by students. Influenced by the Muscular Christianity movement, and seeking to emulate a sporting culture prevalent on northern campuses, southern students deemed athletics, especially intercollegiate football, as a means to practice the Greek ideal of a strong mind within a sound body. During

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<sup>1</sup> J.W. Collier, “Athletics,” *The University Magazine*, 18 (November 1893): 13; *The Oxford Eagle*, 16 November 1893; *The Daily Mississippian* 6 October 1915; Lawrence Wells, *Ole Miss Football* (Oxford: Sports Yearbook Company, 1980), 2; David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 170-1.

the 1890s, athletic associations and football squads blossomed onto southern campuses amidst a groundswell of support and fanfare. The popularity was ephemeral, however. As the nineteenth century faded and the twentieth century dawned, student support of college football dwindled. Dependent upon student contributions, athletic associations were perpetually insolvent and students displayed apathy towards their football programs.

The relative apathy towards football stemmed from the severe economic depression which engulfed the nation, and especially, the region throughout the 1890s. Despite significant movement towards industrialization, the New South vision of a vibrant, diversified, and dynamic economy remained more vision than reality at the turn of the century. As a result of crippling poverty and stagnant economy—caused by a heavy reliance on cotton production and low cotton prices—southern students, colleges and communities were unable to develop the necessary infrastructure necessary to develop, field, and support successful football programs. The meteoric rise and equally rapid descent of college football during its formative years highlights how the emergence of the modern South was an evolutionary and non-linear process. The embrace of a northern sport by a new generation of southerners demonstrates that new and modern values were taking root in the South. Economic conditions, however, prevented modern ideals from blossoming and modernizing the region. Thus, the South at the turn of the century combined old and new values.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a synthesis on the industrialization of the South, please see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. chapters 1-5; For the development of southern cities, see Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990); For the development of mills and mill towns, see Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 9-120; The importance of urbanization in the development of modern sports is an important theme in sport history. See, Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1988; Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Steven A. Reiss, *Sport in Industrial America, 1865-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995);

Evolving from the traditional English folk game of soccer, football originated on college campuses in the Northeast during the 1870s and 1880s. Emulating a sporting culture prevalent in England, elite Northeastern colleges hosted intramural and intercollegiate athletic contests. Initially the contests lacked formal rules, so contestants agreed upon the rules before the game. In 1876, students from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia formed the Intercollegiate Football Association (IFA) to regulate the sport. Led by Walter Camp, known as the father of American Football, the IFA, between 1876 and 1882, initiated a series of rule changes that laid the foundation for modern college football. The new rules created a line of scrimmage, a system of downs and allowed blockers to advance ahead of the ball carrier. This created a more complex, less fluid game, which emphasized teamwork and precision— traits Camp deemed necessary for success in an increasingly complex industrial society. Spurred by student and alumni interest, football quickly spread to colleges throughout the Northeast. With an increase in disposable income and leisure time, many Americans embraced football and transformed it from a collegiate pastime into a form of entertainment for the masses. To increase circulation, newspapers began covering football games. This in turn generated more interest in the sport.<sup>2</sup>

College football rapidly spread across southern college campuses. By 1892, colleges in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama fielded teams that followed IFA rules. Deemed a modern and “scientific” sport, football was from the onset a vehicle of the New South Movement. As historian Andrew Doyle illustrates, New South proponents encouraged the development of football to incorporate the South into the social, cultural, and economic

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Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ. (1990).

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough discussion on the origins of football see Ronald A. Smith. *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67-98; Andrew Leo Doyle, “Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-1983” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1998), esp. Chps. 1-2; and John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 9-64. On the role of newspapers see Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

mainstream. Doyle also notes that southern graduates of northern colleges were primarily responsible for football's growth south of the Mason-Dixon. These "football evangelists" from various fields of study were "determined to inject a more progressive world-view into their provincial campuses." John Franklin Crowell, a graduate of Yale and an avid follower of football, implemented the sport at Trinity College (now Duke University). Collins Denny, a Princeton alumnus and professor of moral philosophy at Vanderbilt, was instrumental in founding Vanderbilt's football program. Ph.D. graduates in Chemistry from Johns Hopkins University, Charles Holmes Herty and Charles Petrie, initiated football at The University of Georgia and Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University).<sup>3</sup>

One of Petrie's students, Walter Merritt Riggs, was instrumental in the development of athletics and football at Clemson University. Graduating from Auburn with a Masters in Engineering, Riggs accepted an assistant faculty position in mechanical and electrical engineering in 1896. Within months of his arrival, Riggs helped launch Clemson's first football team. In an undated essay, Riggs chronicled his involvement with collegiate athletics and promoted their importance. Attending the first football game played in the Deep South—a contest that pitted Auburn against the University of Georgia at Atlanta's Brisbane Park—Riggs left the field convinced that the game of football "had done more to unify the Auburn student body, more to arouse college spirit and college pride than all the athletic events in Auburn's history put together." Vowing to "resent any imputation on its character," he proclaimed football "the greatest man-making game on the American continent." He asserted that athletic sports have an important and "legitimate place in every college course" for football "trains the mind and muscles together." Comparing football to a more robust and physical game of chess, he contended that a football player must be "supreme in mind and muscle to his opponent" to defeat

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<sup>3</sup> Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost," 1-65.

him. Countering claims that football detracted from academics, Riggs stated that football players made better grades during the season due to the “regular habits required by the training code, and the activity of mind that accompanies activity of body.” He also attacked critics who denounced the rough and violent nature of early football by highlighting accidental deaths in other, more respectable and acceptable, sports such as sailing, bicycling, ice skating, and alpine skiing. He argued that accidents and even deaths occurred “almost daily in almost every department of sport or pleasure.” Riggs concluded his essay by stridently proclaiming that as long as football helped students become “stronger in body, more active in mind,” while giving “zest and pleasure to college life,” he would proudly bear the title “foot ball enthusiast.”<sup>4</sup>

Another football enthusiast and professor of classics, A.L. Bondurant, initiated, coached, and managed the University of Mississippi’s first football squad. Like other “football evangelists” in the South, Bondurant graduated from a northern institution and brought new ideals southward. A Harvard graduate, he strove to emulate Harvard’s athletic culture at Mississippi. Prior to forming a football team, Bondurant also promoted the benefit of athletics in the student literary magazine, the *University Magazine*. In the article, he stated “no phase of college life has had a more rapid development in American institutions than athletics.” Although some traditionalists railed against student sports, he concluded that when “kept within proper limits” athletic sport benefited students. Inspired by the Latin maxim *Sana mens in sano corpore*, Bondurant argued that “the ideal University” should promote athletics because it had a “beneficial effect upon the physique of the student body as a whole.” To achieve this ideal, he praised the renovation and improvement of the school’s gymnasium and urged students to spend

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<sup>4</sup> C. Alan Grubb, “The Master Executive Walter Merritt Riggs, 1910-1924,” in *Tradition: A History of the Presidency of Clemson University*, ed. Donald M. McKale and Jerome V. Reel Jr. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 99-100; William Merritt Riggs, “The Game of Football,” no date, Folder 11, Box 5, Athletic Council Records 1899-1996 (hereafter ACR) in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL). The essay was probably written in 1901-2.

one to two hours a day exercising. This would enable a student to “do much harder mental work than he could otherwise accomplish.” To foster an athletic spirit, Bondurant also implored students to form an athletic association to develop tennis, football, and baseball teams. Commenting that the “cost will be comparatively small when divided over a large number” he urged that association funds be used to construct tennis courts and improve the baseball park.<sup>5</sup>

Arriving on their new campuses, the faculty football enthusiasts found students willing converts to their cause. Since the antebellum era, students at southern colleges had displayed a fondness for vigorous, athletic endeavors. A student at the University of Georgia prior to the Civil War, Junius Hillyer described the athletic activities students enjoyed. He noted that students swam in the nearby Oconee River and challenged each other to maintain possession of a submerged rock. The occupiers battled both a strong current and students who swam with the current and “threw themselves with great force upon those on the rock and endeavored to push them off.” The struggle to maintain possession of the rock provided “one great source of amusement.”<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the advent of organized sports like baseball and football, students also played games like catball, hare and hounds, leapfrog, and shinny on campus. Hillyer also described the daily games of shinny that occurred on Georgia’s campus. Described as a “very rough athletic game,” players divided themselves into two teams numbering between fifty and seventy-five students each. Played on a field approximately two hundred yards in length, the game resembled modern hockey. Wielding curved sticks about four feet in length, players battled to move a

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<sup>5</sup> A.L. Bondurant, “Athletics in the University,” *The Mississippi University Magazine* 14 (April 1890), 6-7. For a discussion on the development of football in relation to the University of Mississippi, see David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 169-75.

<sup>6</sup> Unpublished memoir of Junius Hillyer, pages 175-6, Hillyer Family Papers, Folder “Transcript of Memoirs p. 1-124,” Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, hereafter Hillyer Memoir, UGA.

wooden ball across their opponent's goal line. "Exciting in the extreme," the contests unleashed the "utmost activity and strength of those engaged." The game was also dangerous, for every day, at least one player sustained serious injuries. Despite the danger, or because of it, shinny "was the favorite amusement of the boys of Athens."<sup>7</sup>

After the Civil War, students maintained a high interest in athletics, with the games becoming more structured and organized. The 1886 edition of the *Pandora*, a yearbook at the University of Georgia, noted a growing interest in athletics among the student body. Overseen by a student run athletic association, each class featured both baseball and football teams with "well patronized" intra-class contests. Students also exhibited an awareness of athletic rituals at northern institutions. In 1890, a student publication at the University of Mississippi printed "the very latest thing in College cheers" that originated from the Yale-Harvard football game. In addition, cheers from Princeton and Cornell were also printed, revealing that southern students were looking northward and willing to embrace northern sporting ideals. A long history of athleticism, a movement towards organized sports, and an awareness of football rituals on northern campuses provided fertile ground for intercollegiate football to take root.<sup>8</sup>

The Muscular Christianity movement also helped paved the way for southern collegiate football. Originating in England in the 1850s as a means to infuse health and manliness into Anglicanism and make it suitable agent for British imperialism, the movement soon spread to the United States and initially took root in the northeast. Historian Clifford Putney argues that Muscular Christianity gained influence because older stock Anglo Saxons feared that America was becoming over-civilized and effeminate. Forces such as industrialization, urbanization, new immigration and the women's movement exposed and highlighted these fears. To combat these

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<sup>7</sup> Hillyer Memoir, pages 178-9, Folder "Transcript of Memoirs p. 125-234," UGA.

<sup>8</sup> University of Georgia, *Pandora* 1886, 5. Hereafter, *Pandora*; "Exchange Department," *Mississippi University Magazine* 14 (April 1890), 20-1.

changes, and inject a jolt of manliness, progressive elites advocated a life based upon aggressive exercise to reassert their dominance and preserve their place in the social order.<sup>9</sup>

Spreading onto southern campuses, Muscular Christianity manifested itself in the motto a sound mind in a sound body. During the fin de siècle, students, recognizing the importance of exercise, pled for campus gymnasiums. At the University of Georgia, a yearbook editorial lamented the absence of a gymnasium for student use. Jestingly noting that the current gymnasium “consists of a horizontal bar and a trapeze erected in the open air,” the editor hoped that “when old foggy notions have given away to modern ideas and the Trustees are guided by the motto, ‘*Mens sana in corpora sano*,’” then funding will be allocated for a modern gymnasium. One year later the plea for a gymnasium continued. Proclaiming that “nearly every first-class college in the United States, except the University of Georgia possesses a gymnasium of some kind,” the editor encouraged the formation of a University Gymnasium Fund since the state government was neither able nor inclined to provide funding. Alumni and “friends of the University” should be solicited in order to build “a respectable building.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1893, an editorial in the student newspaper, the *Red and Black*, continued the plea for a new gymnasium. Commenting on the “growth of interest in outdoor games and athletics generally among our students,” the editor complains that the current gymnasium was “incomplete and inadequate.” In an appeal to school pride, every student of the University was requested “to do something towards fitting up a gymnasium that will do credit to such an institution.” Indicating the influence of Muscular Christianity, the editorial concluded that “with the broadening of college work a well-filled gymnasium is no longer a thing to be desired, but is

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<sup>9</sup> Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), .See also, Tony Ladd and James A. Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> *Pandora* 1886, 5; *Pandora* 1887, 11.



an absolute necessity.” A year later, another article appeared in the *Red and Black* arguing for a modern campus gymnasium. Also appealing to college pride, the writer stated that “athletics would take a new and lasting bound,” more students would “seek the beloved halls of our Alma Mater, and she would be respected more” if a gymnasium was available. Deeming recreation “an imperative necessity,” the article asserted that the knowledge acquired in studies “will be of very little service” if their health has failed “for not having taking sufficient exercise.”<sup>11</sup>

At Mercer College, a Baptist denominational school in Macon, Georgia, students also echoed the need for a gymnasium to promote Muscular Christianity ideals. An editorial in the student literary magazine described the school’s current “gym” as “an ‘acting pole’ and a shred of decayed rope suspended from the gallows.” With this scant equipment, students were expected to develop “that robust physical manhood which should accompany a growing mind.” The editorial further argued that “the health of the entire student body” depended upon regular exercise for “mental gymnastics without corresponding physical exercise prove disastrous.” Complaining that Mercer lagged behind other colleges in Georgia in athletics and physical development, the editorial urged the Board of Trustees to prioritize construction of a gymnasium. The following year, another editorial decried a “crying necessity for a gymnasium.” Employing Muscular Christianity ideals, the writer stated that “‘a sound mind in a sound body’ is composition of Locke’s ideal man.” Deeming physical culture “a necessity in our colleges,” the editorial hoped to see a gymnasium “erected on our campus within the next two years.” By basing their arguments for the construction of gymnasiums on the necessity and importance of physical culture, students revealed the influence of Muscular Christianity. This strong desire to promote the ideal of a sound mind in a sound mind explains why students initially embraced the formation of intercollegiate football programs. The adoption of the northern based ideal also

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<sup>11</sup> *The Red and Black*, 2 Dec. 1893; 6 Oct. 1894.

illustrates how a new generation of southerners was willing to shed vestiges of the past and modernize the region.<sup>12</sup>

Due to a chronic shortage of state funds, the pleas for state supported gymnasium went unanswered. The University of Georgia, for instance, did not receive any consistent funding for general expenses from the state legislature. In a typical year in the 1890s, the federal government, via the Morrill Act, provided approximately 65 percent of the operating budget. Interest on private endowments provided the balance. With nearly 60 percent of the budget devoted towards salaries, the remainder covered miscellaneous expenses like building maintenance, fuel, stationery, and postage. While the state legislature occasionally appropriated funds for the construction of a new building, alleviating overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms and dormitories took priority over a gymnasium.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the economic hardships, Charles Herty, a chemistry professor at the University of Georgia, tapped into the movement towards increased exercise when he brought football to the Deep South in the fall of 1891. While pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry from Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Herty became so enthralled with football that one professor criticized him for “having his interests divided by ‘extracurricular activities.’” After completing his degree, Herty returned to his alma mater to teach chemistry and bring football to the Deep South. Carrying a Walter Camp rulebook, he walked onto to Georgia’s athletic field, determined to establish a football squad at Georgia. Thin and wearing glasses, the twenty-four year old Herty scarcely resembled a football coach. Gathering students around him, Herty regaled the students with stories of games he had witnessed at Johns Hopkins and gained their support. Under Herty’s supervision,

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<sup>12</sup> Brantly M. Callaway Jr., “Athletics,,” *The Mercurian* (May 1897); John Roach Straton, “Our Greatest Need,” *The Mercurian* (March 1897).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Preston Brooks, *The University of Georgia Under Sixteen Administrations, 1785-1955* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1956), 87-9; The figures presented were calculated by Brooks and are based upon the 1897 Budget Report to the Board of Trustees.

students laid out a gridiron, erected goal posts, and prepared the field for play. The Glee Club contributed \$50 dollars, money that would have normally gone to fund their traditional beer party, to have rocks removed and holes filled.<sup>14</sup>

Similar scenes occurred throughout the South during the 1890s as students, guided by a faculty member familiar with football, formed football teams. At the University of Mississippi, an editorial in the student publication, *University Magazine*, noted “the athletic season of the University has opened with more interest and enthusiasm than ever before.” The recently formed athletic association contained “a number of very active members” and the baseball team was poised for play. In addition, A.L. Bondurant was conducting practices for the University’s inaugural football team. The editorial praised Bondurant’s zeal and predicted that his “skillful management will soon make a magnificent team out of the good material now on hand.” Hoping for a match against another college to “prove our metal [sic],” the editor concluded “everything is in our favor now, and it rests with us alone as to whether we will make athletics a success or failure.” Another editorial further demonstrates that students embraced the athletic spirit espoused by Bondurant. “Athletic fever has now taken full possession of the University. The long-faced, sallow-complexioned, dyspepsia cursed student has been relegated to the shadows of the past, and the time is already here when, in order to rank high in college or in society, one must...join the running crowd and play upon football teams.”<sup>15</sup>

Although students were enthusiastic in their support of athletics, the implementation of football proved to be a difficult task. Plagued by inexperience, insufficient funds, and hostility, these first teams were crude and amateurish affairs. The manner in which Herty, at Georgia, selected and trained his team illustrates the crude nature of nascent Southern football. To select

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<sup>14</sup> John F. Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field: Early Days on a Southern Gridiron* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 3-5.

<sup>15</sup> J.W. Collier, “Athletics,” *The University Magazine* 18 (November 1893), 13-17.

players, Herty simply tossed a football into the air and watched the students scramble for it. The strong who managed to keep the ball were awarded positions on Georgia's first football team. Thereafter, Herty roused the players out of bed for a daily three-mile jog and a cold shower for conditioning before breakfast. Players spent afternoons learning the rules and rudiments of football from Herty, who lectured from his rulebook. Unable to find competition, the team did not play a game that fall.<sup>16</sup>

W.M. Riggs encountered similar problems while organizing and coaching Clemson University's inaugural football team. Formed in 1896 after approximately thirty students met in a barrack room to discuss the "advisability of organizing a foot ball association," Clemson's first football team "never set foot on a regulation size field until their first game" in Greenville, South Carolina. The team practiced on a field measuring approximately 50x200 square feet and "studded with electric light polls." Deeming football a means to promote discipline, good health, and morality Riggs implemented a strict training code for the team. Players were to "report promptly to all practices" unless they were "physically disabled" or college duties interfered. Players were also prohibited from eating anything "at anytime except at training table, and were strictly forbidden from drinking "alcoholic or spirituous liquors or soda water." Unless a prior permission was received, players were to retire no later than 11:00 P.M. and under no circumstances was tobacco usage or "engaging in any form of dissipation" allowed.<sup>17</sup>

At Mississippi, Bondurant faced similar challenges and enacted similar codes of conduct. Only a handful of students had ever witnessed a contest and none had ever played the sport. The fledgling athletic association lacked the funds to purchase uniforms or secure a coach. Moreover, Bondurant had to overcome hostility from parents and faculty members. Due to the

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<sup>16</sup> Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 3-5; *Atlanta Constitution* 10 Jan. 1892.

<sup>17</sup> The Football Aid Society. *Clemson Football: A Historical Sketch of Foot Ball at Clemson College* (Charlotte: Queen City Printing, 1900), 13-4.

sport's reputed violence "many parents were unwilling for their sons to participate in the dangerous sport and several faculty members deemed the sport "unsafe and unsound." Despite the obstacles, the students were thoroughly "determined to launch the sport." The manner in which Bondurant trained the team also demonstrates the crude nature of early football.

Recognizing that the students lacked the necessary conditioning, Bondurant implemented a vigorous and strict training routine. Players assembled at the gymnasium every morning at 6:15 for twenty minutes of bodybuilding. Afterward, Bondurant led the team on three to four mile runs through the streets of Oxford. After taking a cold shower, the players then assembled for a specially prepared breakfast. Under Bondurant's watchful eye, players were "dieteted so as to keep them in good conditioning." To further promote good health, Bondurant required the team to retire at 10:00 P.M and sign a pledge that included "the abstaining of from all intoxicants, tea, coffee, and the use of tobacco."<sup>18</sup>

In the afternoon, the team met again for two hours of "vigorous" practice on the campus athletic field. On a field in "poor condition," the team practiced the "rudiments of the game: tackling, running low, falling on the ball, goal kicking, punting and passing the ball." Practice concluded with a "hard scrimmage" against each other. Lacking the funds to hire an experienced coach, Bondurant persuaded J.W.S. Rhea from the Memphis University School to travel down to Oxford several times to "aid in coaching the men." Although faculty, students, and townspeople donated money to purchase uniforms "of a cheap kind," the players purchased their own shoes and headgear. The dearth of funds also necessitated that injured players pay their own medical bills. Despite the financial hardship, the team proceeded "forward undismayed," and by the

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<sup>18</sup> *The Daily Mississippian*, 6 October 1915. The student newspaper republished a history of the football program that Bondurant had written previously.

middle of October, sixteen men were selected to the first team and a “strong reserve team was developed.”<sup>19</sup>

The organization of football teams ignited a keen interest in football on campuses and communities throughout the South. While teams practiced, anticipation built for the first intercollegiate contest. The initial contests were heralded with almost excessive fanfare and boundless support. The excitement over the contest between Georgia and Mercer University highlights the support and initial popularity of football. On January 30, 1892 the Deep South’s first intercollegiate football game was played on Georgia’s athletic field. The Mercer team, accompanied by students and citizens of Macon, arrived in Athens at noon. By three o’clock, a large crowd had already gathered around the playing field. Students shouted their school’s cheers and Georgia’s mascot, a goat, was paraded onto the field. Because there were no grandstands, over a thousand spectators assembled along the sidelines and made frequent trips across the street to the dispensary for alcohol. On the field, Georgia prevailed 50 to 0, although one Georgia player later commented that Georgia scored two additional touchdowns while the official scorer was at the dispensary.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of the Mercer game, football fever spread throughout the university and city. Almost immediately excitement began to build for a contest against Auburn at Atlanta’s Brisbane Park scheduled for February 20. Dr. J.S. McPherson, a professor of history at Georgia, stated “Athens is glowing with red-hot interest and enthusiasm over this great game.” Herty’s friendship with Auburn’s coach, George Petrie, prompted the contest between the schools. Both men had simultaneously earned doctoral degrees and developed a passion for football at Johns Hopkins. A special train transported the Georgia football team, approximately two hundred

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 31 Jan. 1892; Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 5-7.

supporters and Georgia's goat mascot to Atlanta. The boisterous crowd cheered and sang Georgia's fight song the entire trip. The train's engineer timed his whistle to Georgia's fight song and received permission from Atlanta's mayor to blow the whistle all through the city limits. The *Atlanta Constitution* and *Atlanta Journal*, newspapers that frequently touted the New South vision in their editorials, extensively promoted the game. Due to the coverage, each team arrived by train to a city excited over the contest. Despite the damp, chilly weather over two thousand paid to see Auburn prevail over Georgia 10-0.<sup>21</sup>

Similar enthusiasm and excitement surrounded the inaugural football season at the University of Mississippi in 1893. After six weeks of intense practice and training, the team, campus, and town of Oxford eagerly awaited the University of Mississippi's first football contest against Southwestern Baptist University (SBU). Almost immediately after defeating SBU, excitement began to build for Saturday's contest against the Memphis Athletic Club (MAC) in Memphis. Prior to the game, the *Oxford Eagle* commented that the University's "Athletic star is on the ascendancy" and encouraged citizens to witness the team's evening scrimmages. The *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* encouraged "all lovers of outdoor sports" to patronize the contest for "it abounds with excitement." Motivated by rumors of MAC's experience, prowess, and size, the Mississippi team reported to the gym "bright and early" every morning. In the afternoons, the team assembled on the athletic field for additional instruction on the "A.B.C's of the game."<sup>22</sup>

On a sunny Saturday morning, Mississippi's team arrived in Memphis and the "whole city rang with the yells of the collegians." After establishing the length of the halves and

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<sup>21</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 9, 14 Feb. 1892; *Atlanta Journal*, 19, 20 Feb. 1892; Stegeman, 7-13; Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost," 1-12.

<sup>22</sup> *The Daily Mississippian*, 6 October 1915; W.A. Henry, Jr., "History of the Football Team," *The University Magazine* 26 (Commencement Number 1903), 32-4.

agreeing upon referees, play began. In a game marked by “pretty rough playing,” and punctuated with deafening cheers of university students, the University prevailed 16-0. In Oxford, fans assembled at a bookstore on the downtown square where they received periodic telegraphic updates of the game. The local newspaper reported, “each bulletin brought forth greater crowds and louder yells. Nothing has created such excitement since Cleveland’s election. Bonfires were lit and crowds paraded into the streets.”<sup>23</sup>

After defeating the Memphis Athletic Club, the University traveled to Jackson, Tennessee for a rematch with SBU. In a hard fought, but lopsided contest, the University defeated SBU 36-0. Flushed with success, the team began preparations for the upcoming contests in New Orleans against the Southern Athletic Club (SAC) and Tulane University. A semi-professional team comprised of former college players, SAC proved to be Mississippi’s greatest challenge to date. On an unseasonably warm Thanksgiving Day, an enthusiastic crowd of approximately 3,000, festooned with ribbons displaying their team’s colors, witnessed the contest between the University and the SAC. In a competitive first half, Mississippi trailed the more experience SAC squad 6-0. Although the Mississippi team played with “pluck” during the second half they “were constantly playing an uphill game.” As a result, SAC defeated Mississippi 24-0—their first defeat of the season. Although defeated, the team’s spirit remained high, for nobody expected the University to defeat the semi-professional squad. Bondurant commented, “the most exacting alumnus of the University was satisfied with the showing his team had made” against the SAC. The following day, the visitors toured New Orleans and “many loyal alumni of the University called on the team during the day and gave added courage

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<sup>23</sup> *Oxford Eagle* 16, 23 November 1893; *The Memphis-Commercial Appeal* 5, 19, November 1893; Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 170-1.



by their faith and enthusiasm.” The team then retired early in anticipation for a contest against Tulane University the following day.<sup>24</sup>

On an “ideal day for football,” a large crowd once again assembled in New Orleans to watch the University of Mississippi and Tulane University compete on the gridiron. Followers of Mississippi deemed this game the most important of the year. The *New Orleans Times-Democrat* noted “the Mississippi team played with steadiness and never fumbled and showed excellent team work.” The newspaper also praised the team’s conditioning describing them as “fresh at every stage of the game.” The players from Tulane, however, “seemed weakened at the end of the forty-five minute half.” Due to their superior play and conditioning, the University ended their inaugural season on winning note—defeating Tulane 14-4.<sup>25</sup>

During the game, students and townspeople of Oxford, “ablaze with excitement,” received frequent telegraphic accounts of the game. The *Oxford Eagle* reported “the excitement knew no bounds when the victory of the Oxford boys flew over the wire.” Citizens relinquished control of the town to students who “were wild with enthusiasm” over the victory. Students fired cannon shots to honor their victorious team and “college yells and songs fill[ed] the air from all sides.” By all accounts, the University’s inaugural season was a rousing success. Bondurant later reflected “a body of men new to the football field had been developed into one of the strongest teams in the South.” Moreover, the team “had won golden opinions on the field for their courtesy, and love of fair play.” He also praised the team’s spirit and ability to “endure hardness” and lauded the “faithful and earnest attention that they gave to the minutest details in their training.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Daily Mississippian* 6 October 1915.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 172; *The Daily Mississippian* 6 October 1915.

The furor over football, and athletics in general, carried over to the following season. At the beginning of the fall semester in 1894, the *University Magazine* reported “a very active interest is manifested in athletics. We shall have a football and baseball team in the field this session of which we may justly feel proud.” Anticipating another successful season, students again selected Bondurant to manage the team and the athletic association secured funds to hire a coach, C.D. Clark. Numerous players from the 1893 squad returned for a second season and Bondurant again led the team’s conditioning program. On the gridiron, the 1894 team proved successful. After opening the season at home with a 62-0 victory over a prep school, St. Thomas Hall, the University then defeated the University of Alabama in Jackson, Mississippi, the Memphis Athletic Club, Tulane, and Louisiana State University. The only blemish on an otherwise perfect season was a loss to Vanderbilt University.<sup>27</sup>

After two seasons, the nascent football program appeared poised for enduring success. The program had only suffered two losses and seemingly enjoyed the support of the student body and the citizens of Oxford. The support, however, was short lived. Following the 1894 season, students exhibited tepid support for their football program and athletics in general. Wholly dependent upon student contributions, the athletic association was barely solvent during this period. Mired in poverty, the athletic association lacked the funds to hire a qualified coach, equip the team, or develop modern facilities.

At first glance, it would appear that the momentum from the previous two seasons carried over to the 1895 squad. Mississippi began the season with a 16-0 victory over St. Thomas Hall. The team then traveled to Memphis to play the Memphis Athletic Club. In an exciting, low scoring contest, the University eked out a 2-0 victory. The team then returned to New Orleans for a Thanksgiving rematch against Tulane. Although Mississippi played with “dash and

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<sup>27</sup> *The University Magazine* 19 (October 1894), 43; Henry, “History of the Football Team,” 34-5.

determination,” Tulane defeated the University 28-4. To end the season, the University expected a home contest with the University of Louisiana. The game, however, never materialized as Louisiana canceled the contest.<sup>28</sup>

Although the program closed the 1895 season with a winning record, the season began under a cloud of uncertainty. Many of the former players failed to return and W.H. Cooke replaced Bondurant as manager. Unable to afford travel expenses, the athletic association could not secure attractive contests with the University of Alabama and Vanderbilt. As a result, the team had to “be content playing games that would pay.” In addition, the bankrupt athletic association could not afford a coach. Lacking a coach and the leadership of Bondurant, interest in the team waned and some feared that the “foot-ball team of ’95 would exist only as a figment of the imagination.” To revive the moribund program, the athletic association held a rally and encouraged students to donate money for a coach. Answering the call, students, faculty, and citizens of Oxford contributed enough to hire H.L. Fairbanks, a recent graduate from Bowdoin College who served as captain on his college team, to coach the team. Under Fairbanks’s leadership, “the work on the field showed decided improvement.” While the hiring of Fairbanks provided a temporary spark, it failed to re-ignite football fervor.<sup>29</sup>

An editorial in the *University Magazine* demonstrates the declining interest in football on campus. The editorial complained that the “interest taken thus far in athletics is not by any means what it should be” and implored students to support the reorganized athletic association. Appealing to regional and state pride, the editorial noted “foot-ball is absorbing the attention of collegians” and demanded that “We must be up and doing, or else we must submit to the humiliation of seeing the University of Mississippi take a very low stand in the department of

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<sup>28</sup> “The Football Season of ’95,” *The University Magazine* 20 (January, 1896), 2-15.

<sup>29</sup> “Football Season of ’95,” 2-3; Henry, “History of the Football Team,” 34-5; “College Topics,” *The University Magazine* 20 (December 1896), 22.

athletics.” Due to the “abundance of good material on hand” and alumni interest, the editorial urged students to “infuse into our veins that proper spirit” and field a team. If not, the school would lose the “enviable reputation which the University eleven won for us last season on the gridiron.” Student apathy toward football also extended to athletics in general. The editor of the student magazine, blaming the disinterest on the lack of a gymnasium, proclaimed that the campus “should have a building built and fitted solely for a gymnasium.” To encourage athletics, and presumably assist the football program, he requested that the Board of Trustees “see fit to make an appropriation for the construction of this necessary adjunct to every first class collegiate institution.”<sup>30</sup>

Contributors to the student magazine also provided suggestions for improving the team’s fortunes and building support for the upcoming 1896 season. Recognizing that the program lacked immediate funds to secure another coach, a contributor argued that a coach was not necessary for success. To fill the leadership void, the athletic association should elect next year’s team captain and manager in January to implement an off-season training regiment and practice schedule. Thus “when the session of ’96 opens a team will not have to be made—it will already be made.” Another contributor urged the athletic association to schedule more contests on the home field. Praising the “students and citizen of Oxford who have for three years nobly and patriotically supported the team,” the writer asserted it is only just that they be “given the pleasure of a game or two on the home field.” This would generate additional support for the program and insure “the future success of foot-ball at the University of Mississippi.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> G.G. Lyell, “Editor in Chief’s Quill,” *The University Magazine* 20 (November 1895), 21. G.G. Lyell, “Editor in Chief’s Quill,” *The University Magazine* 20 (December 1895), 20.

<sup>31</sup> Henry, “History of the Football Team,” 16; G.G. Lyell, “Editor in Chief’s Quill,” *The University Magazine* 20 (January 1896), 25.

The advice went unheeded for the team played two games in 1896 without a coach—winning one against St. Thomas Hall and losing the annual Thanksgiving contest to Tulane. The following years were equally lean for the football program. An outbreak of yellow fever in 1897 delayed the opening of the University for several months and prevented the program from fielding a varsity team. Yellow fever struck again in 1898 and the college did not open until the middle of November. Despite the delay, the team played two games—defeating St. Thomas and losing again to Tulane. In 1899, interest in the program appeared to be on the upswing. The campus opened on schedule, the athletic association secured a coach, and the team played a six game schedule against quality opponents. In their first game of the season, the University played Kentucky’s Central University in Memphis. To everyone’s surprise, the University defeated Central 13-6. Excited over the victory, students and the Oxford band met the team at the Oxford train depot. A procession of students then “marched through the streets of Oxford, giving college yells” and displayed “more genuine college spirit” for the first time in years. The euphoria, however, proved to be short lived. The team lost four out of the last five games and student support ebbed.<sup>32</sup>

The 1900 season opened with the *University Magazine* pledging to “promote the growth of a *healthy* college spirit, something in which we are sadly deficient.” Students were also encouraged to join the athletic association and support their football team. Once again, the appeal fell upon deaf ears, as the athletic association was unable to secure a coach until late in the season. Fraternity politics further weakened the team as several players resigned midway through the season. As a result, the team failed to win a game. After the season, the editor of the student magazine once again encouraged the athletic association to schedule more home games to combat a “deplorable lack of athletic enthusiasm.” Echoing previous arguments, the editor

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<sup>32</sup> Henry, “History of the Football Team,” 36-7.

argued it behooved the University to reward citizens of Oxford with inter-collegiate contests for their unyielding financial support. In addition, the dearth of home games prevented new students from developing a passion for the sport. Subsequently, they were less likely to contribute to the athletic association.<sup>33</sup>

In the ensuing years student apathy and chronic debt continued to plague the University's athletic association. In 1901, the team suffered another disastrous season. Unable to acquire a coach until late in the season, the team suffered several defeats. Student support had diminished to the point that the team had difficulty in "getting enough men out to give the team practice."<sup>34</sup> A 1903 editorial railed against the lack of school spirit and attacked student apathy towards football. Rhetorically asking if college spirit was "afloat among the student body," the editor replied, "Most emphatically it is not." The editor demanded that "spiritless" students "demonstrate your college spirit by becoming a member of the [athletic] Association, and contribute freely to a cause that stands for the institution." In a particularly harsh indictment, the editor described the student apathy towards football as "detestible [sic], and in his cranium there is something sadly lacking."<sup>35</sup>

Another 1903 editorial complained about the athletic department's debt that resulted in coaches not being paid and poorly equipped teams. The editor blamed the insolvency on the small population of Oxford and the college community. Labeling the situation a "matter of humiliation for everyone connected with the University," the editor requested that the Board of Trustees follow the lead of other universities and "appropriate three or four hundred dollars each year towards the support of athletics." This would "place athletics at the University of

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<sup>33</sup> T.D. Davis, "Athletic Department," *The University Magazine* 24 (October 1900), 47. Italics in original; T.D. Davis, "Athletic Department," *The University Magazine* 24 (December 1900), 39-43.

<sup>34</sup> M.H. Brown, "Athletic Department" *The University Magazine* 25 (Nov. 1901), 39.

<sup>35</sup> "Athletic Department" *The University Magazine* 27 (Nov. 1903), 35.

Mississippi upon a sound and permanent basis, and thus take the burden from the shoulders of a few faithful ones, who for many years have labored earnestly and tirelessly against great odds for our athletic standing.” Although the Board of Trustees refused to support athletics, the athletic association started the 1904 season with a “flattering surplus.” Still wary of student apathy, however, the *University Magazine* extolled the student body “not to sit down on the stool of contentment” and urged them to join the athletic association and contribute to a “glorious cause.” A month later, editors reiterated “that the athletic association cannot flourish unless it has a financial basis.” With the surplus nearly exhausted, the athletic association needed more student members to prevent the dismissal of the coach.<sup>36</sup>

The appeals seemingly worked, for the athletic association reported a \$664.18 surplus at the conclusion of the 1905 season. The surplus, however, resulted from a skilful management of funds, not a groundswell of student support. The athletic association saved several hundred dollars by not employing a coach during the 1905 season and netting \$594 in gate receipts from a clash with the University’s in-state rival Mississippi A&M in Jackson. The *University Magazine* continued to upbraid students for not contributing to the athletic association. In one scathing editorial, the magazine remarked that only thirty-eight students joined the association and labeled this low number an embarrassment to the University. To shame the students, the editor proclaimed “there is not a prep school in the United States that doesn’t do better.” Students who utilized athletic facilities for tennis, field sports or baseball without paying their dues were also targeted. In a militant tone, the editorial thundered, “Do not presume to engage in any of these sports until you can show your gate receipt.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *University Magazine* 27 (Commencement Number 1903), 28-9. *University Magazine* 28 (October 1904), 28-30; *University Magazine* 28 (November 1904), 73-4.

<sup>37</sup> A.P. Todd, “Athletics,” *University Magazine* 29 (December 1905), 84-6; (February 1906), 161-2.

The harsh economic conditions in Mississippi explain the lack of financial support for the fledgling football program. Mississippi, like most of the South, was dependent upon the fluctuations of the cotton market. A nationwide depression during the 1890s dropped cotton prices to historic lows and the state's economy suffered accordingly. Almost two-thirds of Mississippi farmers were tenant farmers caught in a vicious cycle of poverty. The state also suffered from the highest illiteracy rate in the nation and the lowest per capita income. This stagnant economy produced, in the words of historian David Sansing, "years of entrenchment" in higher education. Although a new breed of leaders valiantly worked to improve, reform and modernize higher education in the state in the decade after Reconstruction, economics stymied the progress. The explosion and decline of the modern sport of football, a vehicle to enact social change, reflects the larger changes in higher education and society.<sup>38</sup>

The sudden explosion of enthusiasm for football, with an equally sudden decline in student support, was not exclusive to the University of Mississippi. Launched with extravagant fanfare, football programs throughout the South soon suffered from student apathy and insolvency. At the University of Georgia, student interest in football noticeably waned and the Athletic Association struggled to survive almost immediately after the first season in 1892. In 1894, the student newspaper, the *Red and Black*, questioned why the Athletic Association was in debt after playing three games. Although opponents profited by receiving travelling expenses and half the gate receipts, Georgia only secured expenses. The writer urged the program to "pull up" in the upcoming games lest they sink into "considerable debt." At the start of the 1895 season, the *Red and Black* encouraged students "to pull together for a successful season" and

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<sup>38</sup> David Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 72-77.



requested that every enrolled student join the Athletic Association. Stating that “everyone is able,” the editor dismissed any notion that the fee was price prohibitive for students.<sup>39</sup>

In 1896 the situation had not improved, as the *Red and Black* highlighted that “it is a well-known fact that the Athletic Association is deeply in arrears.” To help alleviate the debt, a local restaurant, The Varsity Place, agreed to donate a portion of one day’s proceeds to the Athletic Association. The editorial, in a bombastic appeal to institutional pride, pled with students to “liberally patronize” the establishment to free the Association from a “debt, which if not soon cancelled, will forever be a stain on the fair name of the University as well as the Athletic Association.” The debt following the 1896 season is especially revealing since the football team had completed its most successful season to date. Coached by Glen “Pop” Warner, Georgia’s team finished the season a perfect 4-0. Included in the victories was one over an undefeated Auburn team coached by John Heisman. During the contest, an estimated 8,000 people, advertised as the “largest crowd ever to witness a game south of Philadelphia,” crowded around Brisbane Park in Atlanta and watched Georgia defeat Auburn 12-6. Record crowds and an extremely successful season could not, however, reverse the Athletic Association’s financial shortfall. The shortfall continued through the 1899 season. An editorial gravely stated that without a change in the system of athletic management, “our inter-collegiate athletics are doomed.” To increase profits, the writer suggested that the team play multiple away games in a single week to minimize expenses and thus maximize gate receipts. Adopting an alarmist tone to further encourage student support, the editorial warned students to realize “the serious danger that confronts our inter-collegiate athletics.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *The Red and Black*, 10 Nov., 1894, 28 Sept. 1895.

<sup>40</sup> *The Red and Black*, 2 May 1896; Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field*, 36-6; *The Red and Black* 20 Dec. 1899.

As 1900 dawned, the athletic association owed an alarming \$554.12. Until this amount was significantly reduced, the faculty prohibited any inter-collegiate athletic contests. In an effort to alleviate the debt, female students at the nearby Lucy Cobb Institute proposed and organized a fundraising bazaar. Attacking the honor of the male students at Georgia, an editorial praised the women for supporting athletics and shamed students “who grumble over paying \$2.00 a year to the Athletic Association and not have enough spirit to support their own organization.” Maintaining a militant tone, the editorial proclaimed that the bazaar provides “a golden opportunity” for students to demonstrate support for athletics. Should the bazaar fail, the editorial lamented, “it will be abundant proof that the college is willing to see athletics driven to an untimely death.” As the event approached, articles in the newspaper begged students to attend and “show what stuff your college spirit is made.” The bazaar proved to be financially successful, garnering over \$250.00 for the beleaguered Athletic Association. The newspaper, however, credited the female organizer’s “unselfish labors” towards an “object in which they can have no direct interest” for the success. Students, on the other hand, were castigated for their deplorably small attendance. Student apathy remained throughout the fall football season. After a disappointing 2-4 season, culminating in a 44-0 drubbing by archrival Auburn, the *Red and Black* reflected on student “indifference.” The writer again berated students who “lacked sufficient loyalty to spend a dollar and join the athletic association” and lamented that “not half the students attend games.” Since athletics depended wholly on student contributions and gate receipts, the editorial especially condemned students “who watched the games from surrounding buildings” because they avoided paying.<sup>41</sup>

A subsequent article in the student newspaper speculated that politics, or lack thereof, caused student apathy towards football and athletics in general. Initially the student body voted

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<sup>41</sup>*The Red and Black*, 27 Jan., 10 Feb, 17 Feb., 15 Dec. 1900.

for officers to serve on the athletic association and team managers. This practice was abandoned, however, as “the authorities in control” deemed the emergence of political schisms detrimental to the program. The article questioned the wisdom of the new policy because it denied students a voice in athletic affairs. Without a voice, “the support of the college men is weakened, and the interest in athletics is lost.” Stating that only a third of the student body contributed to the athletic association, the editorial rhetorically asked why students should invest their money in “an association that has no control over the affairs it is suppose to manage?” Countering criticisms that a democratic process would hasten a return to divisive politics, the editor contended that since elections are the backbone of our national system of government, the same process should be sufficient for a simple athletic association. Allowing student participation would “add great popularity to athletics.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the suggestion, athletics remained unpopular and appeals to join the Athletic Association filled the *Red and Black* in the ensuing years. In 1903, the newspaper again urged students to join the athletic association for “the success of our football team depends greatly on the backing up given by students.” Three years later, a student suggested making the athletic fee mandatory for all students since athletics “benefit the whole college.” The same year, the editors attempted to shame the student body by highlighting how only 132 out of over 400 students had joined the athletic association. Deeming the fee nominal, the editor confidently stated that “there is not a man in college who cannot afford the one dollar necessary to join.” To support the football team and add to the prestige of the university, the editorial proclaimed that “we must have at least three hundred fifty members of the Athletic Association.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Red and Black*, 10 June 1901.

<sup>43</sup> *The Red and Black*, 19 Sept. 1903, 2 June 1906, 17 Nov. 1906.

Due to the unreliability of student support, the athletic association underwent a transformation and became a corporation in 1907—a topic discussed in the subsequent chapter. This change wrested control of athletics from students and placed it into the hands of the faculty and prominent alumni. As a result, the financial situation improved and athletics gained firmer financial footing and appeals to support athletics largely disappear from the *Red and Black*. Prior to this development, however, students at the University of Georgia, like those at the University of Mississippi, remained indifferent towards football and the athletic association remained insolvent throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. The insolvency and apathy was unexpected given the enthusiasm that heralded football's arrival on southern campuses. Motivated by Muscular Christianity, southern students embraced the northern sport as means to develop a sound mind in a sound body and tap into ideals prevalent on northern campuses. This represented a shift in southern thought and a step towards the development of the modern South. Almost immediately, however, the support waned and athletic associations and football programs were barely solvent due to the poor economic conditions throughout the region. The clashing of new ideals with economic realities provides a backdrop to demonstrate how the emergence of the modern South was a complex and evolving process.

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## Chapter Two

### **The Personal Element and the Profit Motive: The World of Early Southern College Football**

In February 1909, W.M. Riggs, the faculty athletic advisor at Clemson University, received a letter from the University of South Carolina's football manager, Charles Simpson. In the letter, Simpson requested permission for South Carolina to schedule a Wednesday football contest during the annual Georgia-South Carolina Fair Week held in Augusta, Georgia. Since the University of Georgia and Clemson were already under contract to play a Thursday contest during the Fair, Simpson needed Clemson's and Georgia's consent to stage another contest. Riggs refused. In his reply to Simpson, Riggs stated that fair attendees "are not yet educated on football, so they are unable to enjoy a game on its merits." Subsequently, football was "more of a curiosity than anything else, and one game is as good as another" to the fair patrons. As a result, Riggs believed that allowing a game on Wednesday "would be to practically break our crowd in two" since attendees would probably only attend one game. Riggs also informed Simpson that after a series of negotiations involving Clemson, Georgia, and the Fair Association, the Georgia Medical College was granted permission to play a game on Monday during Fair Week. Since the Medical College was located in Augusta, Riggs "felt that they had really strong grounds" for playing during Fair Week and refusing the school's request would "put the Fair Association in a rather embarrassing position."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W.M. Riggs to Charles T. Simpson, 8 Feb. 1909, Folder 1, Box 5, Athletic Council Records 1899-1996 (hereafter ACR) in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL).

The exchange between Riggs and Simpson offers insights into the nature of nascent southern football. During this early period, football was largely confined to college campuses and almost non-existent in local high schools. As a result, the sport was either ignored, or at most, a curiosity for the masses. As football programs struggled to survive and gain solvency due to the popular indifference, a dedicated group of football enthusiasts, dubbed a sporting fraternity by Andrew Doyle, diligently worked to insure the survival of the sport. Comprised primarily of faculty athletic directors and prominent alumni who were often former players, the sporting fraternity utilized a network of personal relations to organize and promote football contests. Word of mouth, friendships, and alliances were the foundations upon which the sporting fraternity, and subsequently football, was built in the South. Through these relationships, programs scouted opponents, selected game officials, hired coaches and scheduled contests with an eye towards maximizing profit to keep their struggling football programs afloat. Examining the inner workings of this world reveals just how impoverished, unorganized, and unstructured early southern football was.<sup>1</sup>

While the sporting fraternity demonstrates the primitive nature of football, the formation of an incorporated Athletic Association at the University of Georgia during the same time period demonstrates that football was both a vehicle for, and a product of, modernization in the South. Formed in response to the perpetual insolvency of the student managed athletic association in 1907, and mirroring similar organizations developing at universities in the Northeast and Midwest, the new athletic association was comprised of several faculty members, prominent businessman and alumni. Emulating a modern corporation, the association featured a hierarchal structure with a board of directors responsible for all decisions relating to athletics at the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-1983" (Ph.D. diss. Emory University, 1998), 119-65.

university. Wielding complete control, the board of directors, among other things, approved the scheduling of games and dictated how much should be spent on feeding the student athletes, all with an eye towards maximizing profit. Under the careful watch of faculty and businessmen, Georgia's athletic association quickly paid off all outstanding debts and stood on firmer, albeit still shaky, financial footing.<sup>2</sup>

Studying the world of early southern football, with its elements of old and new, traditional and modern, also provides insights into the development of the modern South. In his landmark monograph *The Search for Order*, Robert Wiebe argues that prior to Reconstruction, America was a nation of "island communities" rooted upon personal relations. Technological advances, industrialization, urbanization, and immigration after Reconstruction, however, eroded this world-view and middle class Americans created a new social order based upon bureaucracy, hierarchy, and corporate structure. This transformation from a personal to an impersonal society marked the origins of modern America. Examining the world of southern college football after the fin de siècle provides a window into this transformation. Although faculty directors employed the personal touch to organize and promote football contests with the sporting fraternity, the emergence of corporate Athletic Association to oversee football programs exemplifies the shift toward a more structured and impersonal society. Southern football during this era, like southern society, was a mixture of old and new world views. It was this combination that led to emergence of the modern South.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of the athletic association, see "Management of Athletics in the University," *Georgia Alumni Record* (Vol. 9, April 1921), 206-8; For minutes of the Georgia Athletic Association see, Minute Book, Board of Directors, Athletic Association, University of Georgia (hereafter UGA Athletic Association Minutes), Box 32, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1865-1970, MS 1578, (hereafter Sanford Personal Papers) Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries (hereafter UGA); For the rise of faculty control of athletics see, Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118-34.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), xiii-xiv.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, athletic programs remained mired in poverty. Continued student apathy towards football and athletics in general exacerbated the financial straits that programs faced. Replying to a letter from John McConnell, the faculty advisor to athletics at Davidson College, a denominational school in South Carolina, Riggs of Clemson admitted that “we have had no better experience in collecting membership fees to our Association than you have.” Although Clemson only charged a one dollar membership fee to students, Riggs speculated that “only one-fifth of our students enrolled.” Citing “the experience of fifteen or twenty years in athletics,” Riggs was convinced that voluntary student contributions “cannot be depended upon to run an Athletic Association.” Riggs also recognized that for “political reasons” he could not implement a mandatory student athletic fee at a state supported school to generate much needed revenue. Subsequently, Riggs was forced to rely on gate receipts to support collegiate athletics. With athletics costing “about \$3000 per session,” Riggs estimated that \$2500 of this, at least, comes from gate receipts.” Facing constant budget shortfall, student apathy and lacking popular support, faculty advisors to athletics, the cornerstone of the sporting fraternity, developed a network of personal connections to preserve and maintain intercollegiate football.<sup>4</sup>

The friendships and alliances forged between faculty advisors to athletics illustrate how the personal network operated. These friendships cemented good relations between programs and facilitated the exchange of personal favors. Facing a difficult season with no home games, the faculty athletic advisor at Auburn University, Thomas Bragg, implored Riggs to move their previously scheduled contest from Clemson to Auburn. After “carefully considering the matter, and talking it over with our Coach,” Riggs agreed to “accommodate you by changing the place of our game from Clemson to Auburn.” Although this meant Clemson would have “no

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<sup>4</sup> W.M. Riggs to John W. McConnell, 9 May 1910, Folder 5, Box 6, ACR, CUL.



championship game on campus,” Riggs was “in full sympathy with you in your hard schedule” and wished “to do everything in my power to favor you personally.” Acknowledging that moving the game would disappoint the student body and friends of Clemson, Riggs confessed that the “personal element is the principal incentive for me to make this change.” Several years later, ties of friendship prevented Clemson from hosting a home contest. Despite generating “quite a large bill telegraphing around,” Riggs was unable to secure a home opponent. When his football coach, C.R. Williams, suggested that the Davidson-Clemson game be moved to Clemson, Riggs bristled at the notion. Informing Williams that Davidson wanted the game on their home ground, Riggs “did not for a moment think of suggesting that we do otherwise than to acquiesce with their wishes.” Since Davidson “played at Clemson this last year,” Riggs deemed only fair to “reciprocate with teams that play on our campus.”<sup>5</sup>

Through these friendships, coaches and athletic directors also formed alliances to glean information about common opponents. Prior to playing the University of South Carolina in 1909, Riggs asked his friend and former Clemson coach John Heisman, now the coach at Georgia Tech, if “I can depend on you to give me all the dots you can on the S.C. University team, which I understand you play on Oct. 16.” Riggs made this request assured that “you must have a personal interest in our licking this aggregation.” To get the inside information, Riggs offered to visit “Heis” in Atlanta on his return from a game against the University of Alabama in Birmingham. One year later, Heisman wrote to Riggs to gain information about a common opponent. He began by expressing his sorrow at Clemson’s loss to Mercer—a team Heisman professed “to certainly despise.” Recalling “our plan of reciprocity in the past,” Heisman then offered to provide “the inside dope on any teams that you will meet after I have met them.” He

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<sup>5</sup> W.M. Riggs to Thomas Bragg, 22 Sept. 1910, Folder 6 Box 6, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 15 Jan. 1914, Folder 7 Box 7, ACR, CUL.

then requested that Riggs have Clemson's coach, Frank Dobson, "see if he will not be willing to give a little dope on that Mercer outfit." To further persuade Riggs, whom he affectionately dubbed "the old man," Heisman claimed that it was in Clemson's best interests for Georgia Tech to beat Mercer since a loss would mean that "we might as well shut up shop so far as receipts on Turkey Day are concerned." Having justified his position, Heisman then strongly suggested that Riggs "tell Dobson to write me fully at once, while things are still fresh in his mind, just what he can about their offense and defense, and any special plays. Heeding the request, Riggs forwarded the letter to Dobson and demanded that he "return when you have finished this." Armed with the information gained due to an alliance within the sporting community, Georgia Tech trounced Mercer, 46-0.<sup>6</sup>

The sporting community also developed a personal and informal network to select game officials. The manner in which coaches and athletic directors selected referees illustrates how this personal network functioned and rendered early football a pre-modern affair. In 1904, Riggs inquired if George Butler, a member of the Georgia's inaugural football team, would be available to referee an upcoming contest between Clemson and Sewanee. Butler replied that "Mr. Williams of Sewanee had already written me and I have answered that I could not serve" due to teaching obligations at the Academy of Richmond County. Butler then offered his opinion on George Stephens and Louis Guyon's abilities as game officials. Regarding Stephens, Butler wrote that "I can hardly speak too highly of my estimate of his fairness and good judgment." As a player, Stephens was "thoroughly conversant with the game" and should therefore "be familiar with the rules." Subsequently, Butler had "the utmost confidence in him." His opinion on Guyon, however, was more guarded since "I do not know him so well, but I have heard of his

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<sup>6</sup> W.M. Riggs to J.W. Heisman, 1 Oct. 1909, Folder 9, Box 5, ACR, CUL; John Heisman to W.M. Riggs, 3 Oct. 1910 Folder 7 Box 6, ACR, CUL; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 16 Oct. 1910.

serving as an official in football games.” Although Butler thought Guyon would “make you a good man,” he regarded “Stephens as first choice.”<sup>7</sup>

Butler then expressed his desire to officiate future games and touted his expertise. Professing a love for the game, Butler had “made a close study of it for thirteen years” and took “great pride” in his “thorough knowledge of the rules and customs of the game.” Serving as an official, however, frequently interfered with his “other work and sometimes resulted in financial loss.” As a result, Butler “resolved to follow the custom generally adopted in the North, by requiring in addition to actual expenses a fee for expert services rendered.” In return for a ten dollar fee, Butler vowed “to follow the ball as closely as any player, to know the rules by heart, and to regard the work of officiating as a business engagement.” Due to his expertise, the University of Georgia has “asked for my services at all games this season, within reach of Augusta.” Having one or two Saturdays free, Butler then expressed willingness to “to serve you in case you play on those dates within reach of my home.”<sup>8</sup>

An opportunity did arise for Butler to officiate the Clemson-Georgia Tech contest later that year. His selection, however, posed problems for Heisman. Since Butler was also scheduled to referee the Georgia-Georgia Tech contest the following week, Heisman feared that Butler would give Georgia, his alma mater, inside information on Georgia Tech’s playbook. In a letter to Riggs, Butler deemed Heisman’s objections “rather peculiar,” especially since Heisman had previously expressed “confidence in my fairness.” Defending himself, Butler proclaimed that any information obtained while refereeing was “confidential.” He also questioned how an official had the “time or special opportunity to note the style of play.” Although he could not see how Heisman could question his fairness, he preferred “not to serve in a game if there is the least

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<sup>7</sup> George Butler to W.M. Riggs, 11 Oct. 1904, Folder 15, Box 3, ACR, CUL.

<sup>8</sup> George Butler to W.M. Riggs, 11 Oct. 1904, Folder 15 Box 3, ACR, CUL.

shadow of suspicion or distrust on part of either team.” Butler, however, personally stressed to Riggs that “if it is necessary in order to secure you an official in whom you have confidence, I shall be willing to give my word that no communication regarding Tech’s style of play or other suggestion in regard to the Tech-Ga. game shall directly or indirectly come from me.” Butler’s direct and personal appeals to Riggs apparently worked, for despite Heisman’s objections, he served as “umpire” for the contest.<sup>9</sup>

Several years later, Heisman again offered his opinions on potential referees for a Clemson-Georgia Tech Thanksgiving Day contest in a letter to Riggs. Riggs suggested the aforementioned Butler, but Heisman replied that while “Butler is all right,” his prior engagements meant that “we stand no chance whatever of getting him.” Heisman then suggested other candidates. Having witnessed Innis Brown, a former captain on Vanderbilt’s football team, officiate a previous Georgia Tech contest, Heisman opined that Brown “made a capital official.” Heisman also thought highly of his former assistant coach, “Dunbar of V.M.I.,” after witnessing him officiate as well. Professing that “I never before saw him officiate before,” Heisman was “much amazed at the quality of his work.” He was also equally impressed with the field judge, Wahoo, a former student and player at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Heisman deemed the “work of these three men decidedly above par” and considered it “almost criminal” to not immediately secure them for the Thanksgiving game. Although Dunbar might “be sore at us for not reengaging him this year,” Heisman believed that “he seems to be much too broad for that and too fine a sportsman.” Further demonstrating the intimacy of the sporting fraternity, Heisman commented that “the old V.P.I. Carpenter” and a former Yale player “by the name of Nadell” are also living in Atlanta. While Heisman had yet to see them officiate in person, he

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<sup>9</sup> George Butler to W.M. Riggs, 25 Oct. 1904, Folder 15, Box, ACR, CUL; for a thorough account of the game including a listing of officials, see *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 Nov. 1904.

posited that “we should really try to bring out some of these new invaders from the North, for Goodness knows that competent officials are few and far between down here.”<sup>10</sup>

Securing competent officials was an ongoing concern within the sporting community. Prior to playing Clemson, the athletic director at Virginia Polytechnic Institute sought Riggs’s approval for Frank Shaughnessy and Baird to serve as game officials. In his reply, Riggs expressed that Shaughnessy, Clemson’s former coach, “will be satisfactory to us, but I am not sure that Mr. Baird will be.” Before making a decision, however, Riggs wished to confer with Clemson’s current coach C.R. Williams, for he believed that “Williams may know something of this gentleman that will cause us to accept him.” Stressing his desire to “get competent men,” Riggs expounded that “while there are comparatively few men who will swindle a team, there are a great many whose incompetence greatly mars the game.”<sup>11</sup>

Personal relations within the sporting community occasionally allowed programs to consent to game officials without any firsthand knowledge. Prior to playing Davidson College, Riggs and coach Williams “decided to accept Mr. Donnelly for the other official,” despite having no “knowledge either of his ability as an official or his character as a man.” Since the relationship between Clemson and Davidson have “always been so pleasant and pitched on a high plane,” Riggs was “assured that you would not recommend Mr. Donnelly unless he was qualified in every way as an official.” Riggs, however, later regretted the decision to accept Donnelly. Writing to the head of the athletic department at the Citadel, Riggs stated that “he was unwilling to have him officiate in any of our other games.” Although Riggs “could see nothing wrong in his officiating,” he was troubled by rumors that Donnelly was “drunk the night before” the Clemson-Davidson contest and “gave out considerable advice regarding bets on the game.”

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<sup>10</sup> John Heisman to W.M. Riggs, 3 Oct. 1910, Folder 7, Box 6, ACR, CUL.

<sup>11</sup> W.M. Riggs to Hugh S. Worthington, 15 Sept. 1909, Folder 7, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

As a result, Riggs did not “believe in having such a man as this, and if further inquiries show that these reports are correct, I think it would be better for us to get somebody else.” Donnelly’s perceived moral flaws disappointed Riggs, for he “had sized him up as being a good official—fearless and competent.” The rumors surrounding Donnelly illustrate how the sporting community valued both competency and character when selecting officials. The manner in which coaches and athletic director selected officials also demonstrates how primitive college football was.<sup>12</sup>

Personal recommendations were also used when selecting officials for intersectional contests. Prior to playing Georgia in Atlanta, the graduate manager at Dartmouth College and Sanford reached an agreement regarding the regional identities of the four referees. Under the compromise, each school suggested a pool of four regional candidates and then each school could choose two from the list. This insured that neither region had an advantage. The four men selected by Dartmouth were “particularly well known all through the north and serve in the most important games.” In the absence of a governing body or professional organization to certify referees, programs in both regions relied on the traditional word of mouth method to insure accuracy.<sup>13</sup>

The personal network within the sporting community also played a pivotal role in the hiring of coaches. Similar to selecting referees, athletic directors sought the opinions of their colleagues on potential candidates’ ability and character. Seeking a baseball coach, Riggs informed Rick Lanham of the opening and requested that he provide three references. Upon receiving the references Riggs confessed to Lanham “that I have little confidence” in the men you mentioned. Demonstrating his candor and revealing the intimacy of the sporting

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<sup>12</sup> W.M. Riggs to D.A. Lynch, 28 Sept. 1909, Folder 8 Box 5, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to John W. Moore, 9 Nov. 1909, Folder 11 Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>13</sup> Horace G. Pender to S.V. Sanford, 1 Nov. 1921, Folder 26, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

community, Riggs advised Lanham that McMacon, one of the references, “is a fellow who would not be likely to give me an opinion that I would value.” Although McMacon was “perfectly honest,” Riggs believed that he was also “timid and not unusually bright.” As a result, Riggs made his own inquiries into Lanham’s character and heard “disturbing rumors to the effect that your habits are not what they should be.” He was “shocked and surprised” to learn that Lanham drank and indulged in “other forms of dissipation.” Informing Lanham that if the rumors were true, “it would put you entirely out of the running for a place at Clemson,” Riggs then requested that he provide “references to some men of standing in the communities in which you have played” in the earnest “hope that you can disprove these statements.”<sup>14</sup>

In his reply to Riggs, Lanham adopted an adversarial tone and thundered, “I did not run you down about coaching the boys next spring. You asked me to send in my application.” Highlighting that he has “always been popular” where he played and “always on the job and in every game in good condition,” Lanham informed Riggs that he had “just entered into business associations that would prevent my accepting your position.” Lanham also refused to address the rumors regarding his personal habits and stated that “he was well aware who your main informant concerning me” was. Attacking Riggs and defending his references, Lanham stridently proclaimed that he was “very surprised to that you don’t know enough about baseball to know that Moffett is the best judge of a baseball player in the South.” Lanham also defended McMacon’s “intellectual strength,” by noting “that there are a great many of the best masters of baseball science that do not know how to write their everyday correspondence.” Replying to Lanham’s letter, Riggs concurred that “you applied for the position here upon my invitation”—an invitation offered due to “my high opinion of you as a man, and my appreciation of your qualities as a baseball player.” Adopting a conciliatory tone, Riggs reiterated that “it was hardly

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<sup>14</sup> W.M. Riggs to Rick Lanham, 5 Oct. 1909, Folder 9 Box 5, ACR, CUL.

just for me to accept statements which I had heard derogatory to you without giving you an opportunity to meet them.” Although Riggs regretted that Lanham was “unwilling to meet the issue,” he believed that “the tone of your letter tends to confirm some of the opinions” expressed by others. The exchange between the two demonstrates the importance the football sporting elite placed on character and how they utilized a personal network to garner information.<sup>15</sup>

The University of Georgia’s Athletic Director, S.V. Sanford, also utilized the personal network to gain information about a football coaching candidate’s competency and character. Seeking “a good football coach” in 1908, Sanford requested Riggs’s opinion on C.R. Williams, the former coach at Clemson. Writing that “many of our Savannah Alumni have gone crazy over” Williams, Sanford wanted to know “what kind of a coach” and “what kind of man” he was. After inquiring “what did you pay him,” Sanford revealed that Williams sought \$2500 for his services. Sanford, however, deemed this amount exorbitant, noting that the powerful Vanderbilt program “doesn’t pay any such sum.”<sup>16</sup>

A little over a decade later, Sanford again tapped into the personal network in an effort to locate a head coach. While visiting the Midwest, an unknown member of the Georgia Athletic Association acted as Sanford’s liaison and met with Alonzo Stagg, the coach of the then powerful University of Chicago, for suggestions. Stagg “highly recommend” an “Iowa man” for Georgia to contact regarding the coaching vacancy. Unfortunately the Iowan had already secured another position. Unsuccessful in Chicago, the liaison then offered to write “Messrs Zupke of Illinois or Williams of Minnesota, both of whom might be able to recommend a man.” The liaison’s efforts proved to be fruitless, for Georgia ultimately turned to their assistant coach,

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<sup>15</sup> Rich Lanham to W.M. Riggs, 8 Oct. 1909, Folder 9 Box 5, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to Rick Lanham, 11 Oct. 1909, Folder 9, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>16</sup> S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 9 Jan. 1908, Folder 10, Box 4, ACR, CUL.



Herman Stegeman who coincidentally played under Stagg several years earlier, to fill the head coaching void.<sup>17</sup>

Due to chronic insolvency, selecting a coach within the personal network was only half the battle. With coaching salaries occupying a significant portion of athletic budgets, faculty advisors to athletics actively negotiated coaches' salaries to keep their athletic programs afloat. In 1908, Clemson's baseball coach, Robert Lynch, wrote to Riggs and requested a pay raise and shorter contract period. Riggs tersely replied that "it is totally out of the question for us to offer you the figure you name." With football "not panning out as well as we had hoped," and having "lost a good deal of money" during the previous baseball season, Riggs informed Lynch that "we cannot increase one dollar over what we paid last year." Since baseball "proves a losing proposition financially," Riggs curtailed any future negotiations by bluntly stating, "if you decide that you cannot make us a proposition based upon the same salary as last year, and for the longer time, and we have to get somebody else, we will not pay him as much as we paid you." Lynch opted to resign.<sup>18</sup>

Financial constraints also limited Clemson's ability to secure a football coach for the 1908 season. In early 1908, Riggs contacted C.R. Williams, an attorney in Roanoke, Virginia and former Clemson coach, regarding the coaching vacancy. Williams expressed an interest in the position, but demanded a \$2900 salary that Riggs deemed an "extravagant absurdity." Offering his "personal views" of Williams's proposition, Riggs confessed that "I esteem you most highly as a football coach, and not only because of your football prowess, but because of the fine effect which your examples and teachings have on the boys." Although he recognized that coaching was a "great sacrifice for you in a business way," Riggs did not believe "than any

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<sup>17</sup> Unknown to S.V. Sanford, 28 June 1920, Folder 12, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>18</sup> W.M. Riggs to Robert Lynch, 18 Nov. 1908, Folder 15, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

coach is worth that amount of money to us.” On principle, Riggs opposed such a high salary “even if we had the money on hand to back it up,” for he felt that “there must be some limit” on the price of athletic teaching. Moreover from a practical standpoint, football gate receipts and “the usual small contributions from students” would not even cover the amount suggested by Williams without forcing the student body to contribute \$1000, something Riggs was “totally opposed to doing.” Riggs then informed Williams that \$1500 was the “maximum which we could pay for our football coaching, whether it be done by one man or two.” While Riggs and the students, were “so anxious for [Williams] to come,” he could not “conscientiously advocate” going over this limit. Despite the pleas, Williams rejected the offer and Clemson hired John Stone instead.<sup>19</sup>

After a disappointing 1-6 season in 1908, Clemson again sought the services of Williams, this time offering him \$1550 plus expenses. Williams again rejected this amount and again negotiated for a higher salary. In his reply, Riggs informed Williams that “it would not be right for our Association to assume an obligation without the necessary means in sight to meet that obligation.” Therefore the amount offered represented “the very limit of our resources, reserving nothing for an assistant coach.” Riggs did, however, call a student meeting and asked “if they were willing to make a small additional amount on the side.” The students “unanimously agreed.” This allowed Riggs to offer \$1700 and expenses. In addition, Riggs would allow Williams “the privilege of being absent on the dates indicated in your letter, and such other dates that you might desire to act as an official, when in your judgment the team could be left without harm.” Stressing the insolvency of the athletic committee, Riggs also informed Williams “that we cannot now make any promises to an assistant coach, as this will depend on how our baseball

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<sup>19</sup> W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 5 Feb. 1908, Folder 11, Box 4, ACR, CUL; *2008 Clemson Football Media Guide*, 170, available online from the Clemson Athletic Department.

season turns out financially.” Riggs, however, assured that “we will certainly get some member of our faculty, or some old student to assist with the scrubs.”<sup>20</sup>

Applying some leverage in the negotiations, Riggs then confidentially apprised Williams that Clemson could “get a man, who is, next to you, the best man available for \$1200 and expenses.” It was therefore imperative that Williams “immediately upon receipt of this letter, to wire me whether or not you accept the proposition stated.” As a final appeal, Riggs invoked empathy and flattery by noting that “it is a sacrifice for you to give up your law practice for the football season, but at the same time, we feel that we too are making every sacrifice in our power to get you.” The additional student contribution was apparently the difference maker, for Williams accepted the position four days later. Although Clemson secured the coach they wanted, it came at a price. Just prior to assuming his duties as football coach, Williams inquired about hiring an assistant coach and somebody to coach the second, or scrub, team. Riggs informed Williams that the program “was practically without resources” since “the baseball season did not turn out well financially.” Needing to “economize in every possible way,” the school had “made no arrangements regarding an assistant coach.” Although somebody would be hired to “handle the scrubs,” they could only get somebody “at a nominal figure.”<sup>21</sup>

Constantly battling financial shortfalls, athletic associations, athletic directors and football managers relied heavily on football gate receipts to fund their programs. As a result, they vigilantly worked to schedule contests that would generate profit. With an eye towards the bottom line, schools typically negotiated three types of football contracts. In the most common contract, the host team provided the visiting with travelling and lodging expenses. For example, Vanderbilt provided Clemson with “necessary and usual expenses of a party of eighteen men to

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<sup>20</sup> W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 14 Jan. 1909, Folder 17 Box, ACR.

<sup>21</sup> W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 14 Jan. 1909, Folder 17 Box, ACR, CUL; C.R. Williams to W.M. Riggs, 18 Jan 1909, Folder 19, Box 4, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 6 Sept. 1909, Folder 7 Box 5, ACR, CUL.

and from Nashville, and local expenses while in Nashville.” Another type of contract simply provided the visiting team with a guaranteed amount of money. The University of Tennessee, for instance, provided Clemson with a “guarantee of \$275.00” for a contest in Knoxville. For contests played at neutral sites, usually larger cities or at state fairs, contracts stipulated that gate receipts be divided after expenses. For a contest against Davidson College, played in Columbia, Clemson guaranteed their opponent’s travel and lodging expenses. In return, Davidson only received “10% of the net proceeds of the game, after deducting for the expenses of the Davidson team, ground rent, advertising, etc.” For their annual season finale game against Georgia Tech in Atlanta, Clemson received 45 percent of the gate receipts, while Georgia Tech received 55 percent. Expenses, “including 10% of gross receipts for part rent” were deducted from Clemson’s total. All contracts also contained a forfeiture fee. Developed through the network of personal relationships, with a keen eye on the bottom line, the scheduling of contests reflected the informal manner in which southern football operated.<sup>22</sup>

Georgia’s efforts to secure a last minute opponent reveal the informal, personal and unstructured nature of scheduling contests. After Mercer abruptly and unexpectedly cancelled a contest with the University of Georgia, Georgia’s team manager, J.M. Hull, desperately sought a replacement home contest. Writing to his Clemson counterpart, Hull explained the situation with Mercer and lamented that “it is impossible to get a game for Athens.” Noting that Clemson had two home games that year, Hull then requested that Clemson “help us out” by moving their scheduled game from Clemson to Athens. To induce Clemson into sacrificing a potentially profitable home game, Hull offered “\$100 and local entertainment” and vowed “to do all in our power to make the trip a pleasant one for you.” To further persuade, he highlighted how Georgia had originally agreed to play at Clemson “as a return courtesy for your visits to Athens and also

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<sup>22</sup> Abstracts of Football Contract, 1908, Folder 10, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

in acquiescence to Mr. Riggs' request" to give Clemson a home game. Hull also appealed to a sense of friendship by proclaiming that this "favor" would be "an act of true sportsmanship" and "will evoke the sincerest appreciation and gratitude of all of Georgia." Echoing the importance of friendship, Hull concluded that should Clemson ever need Georgia's help, "we will be glad of the opportunity to assist you, for we never forget our friends." Although Clemson denied Hull's impassioned request, the exchange illustrates how personal relations and profit margins were the bedrock upon which southern football operated.<sup>23</sup>

Scheduling a Georgia-Auburn contest also highlights the importance of friendship and profit. Writing to Sanford, Roy Dimmitt, the Director of Student Activities at Auburn, remarked that "our gate receipts will be materially cut down if we continue" to schedule games in the middle of November. Due to the number of other "big games" played then, Dimmitt considered it "suicide for both teams" to keep playing then. Due to the number of "big games" on that date, railroads were considering discontinuing special trains to Columbus, Georgia, the neutral site for the game. This would further "divide the crowd" and reduce attendance. Reflecting the spirit of camaraderie prevalent within the sporting fraternity, Dimmitt praised Georgia's showing and remarked that "if we cannot be first, we would like Georgia to be first." The "friendly relations" between the institutions made them "like twin brothers." As a result of their close bond, the friendly rivals were easily able to arrange an earlier meeting.<sup>24</sup>

Few scheduling arrangements, however, were that easy. More frequently, cash strapped athletic directors and student managers jockeyed to secure the most favorable contest terms for their programs. In 1908, for instance, Georgia Tech offered Clemson a five year contract for a Thanksgiving contest in Atlanta. After reviewing the terms, Riggs rejected the proposal, fearing

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<sup>23</sup> J.M. Hull to H.H. Keyser, 11 Sept. 1904, Folder 15, Box 3, ACR, CUL.

<sup>24</sup> Roy Dimmitt to S.V. Sanford, 29 Oct. 1924, Folder 10, Box 8, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

that it “would cost us \$300 and we are simply not able to afford this next year.” The association’s financial prospects were “in a hole on account of misfortunes in baseball.” Having rejected the contract, Riggs then demonstrated the personal nature of early college football by stating his appreciation for the “courteous treatment which yourself and the Tech athletic authorities have extended to Clemson. Although Riggs preferred “to play Tech on Thanksgiving day to any other team in the South, regardless of the monetary side,” he recognized that in order to field competitive teams, Clemson “must have the necessary money.”<sup>25</sup>

A brief exchange between Riggs and the University of North Carolina’s football manager also indicates the difficulty involved in scheduling mutually profitable games. Having played and defeated North Carolina at the South Carolina state fair in 1907, Riggs requested another contest the following year. North Carolina’s manager, McRae, responded that “since we played you in South Carolina, we think you ought to play us in Chapel Hill this time” and offered Clemson a \$300 guarantee. Riggs declined the offer and insisted that the game be played at the state fair in the middle of the week and offered to pay North Carolina’s expenses. McRae responded that North Carolina could not make the trip for expenses alone, for last year “we lost money on the game,” but “if you will agree to give us fifty or even forty percent of the gate receipts I would be very glad to arrange the game with you.” Riggs again refused McRae’s terms and the contest never materialized.<sup>26</sup>

The chaotic nature of scheduling and the need for profit is also evident in Clemson’s efforts to secure a contest with either Virginia Polytechnic Institute or the University of North Carolina for the 1909 season. While awaiting a reply from North Carolina, Riggs learned that V.P.I. was also available on the same date. Riggs immediately wrote to V.P.I.’s team manager to

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<sup>25</sup> W.M. Riggs to W.N. Randle, 19 Dec. 1908, Folder 16 Box 4, ACR, CUL.

<sup>26</sup> McRae to W.M. Riggs, 18 Dec. 1907 and 20 Dec. 1907, Folder 9, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

inquire if they could save that date for a few days while he awaited North Carolina's reply. Riggs then explained the situation to Clemson's coach, C.R. Williams and sought his advice. Riggs preferred playing V.P.I. because they would "treat us better on their home grounds" than North Carolina. He believed, however, that North Carolina "may offer us better financial inducements" and would probably "be easier to lick." In his reply, Williams noted that "either team would be entirely satisfactory," but he believed Clemson "can make better arrangements with University of North Carolina." He also suggested that the game be played in Charlotte since North Carolina "has a large following" there. Subsequently, the game "should draw well." On the other hand, if Clemson elected to play V.P.I in Blacksburg, they could "expect to only receive expenses." Williams therefore suggested a contest in Norfolk, a neutral site. Regardless of foe, Williams recommended that Riggs "get a guarantee for a sufficient sum to allow you ample amount for expenses, with an option of a certain percentage of the gate receipts." Clemson ultimately travelled to Blacksburg, the home of V.P.I., and were rewarded with a 6-0 defeat.<sup>27</sup>

Financial constraints and the need to generate profit also caused Riggs to decline a contest against North Carolina State in 1909. The manager of State's football team had previously requested a game between the two schools to be played in Charlotte, North Carolina. In his reply, Riggs shared his belief that "Davidson is the only college which can draw a respectable following" in Charlotte; however, "the times that we have played them there, we have barely come out, despite the proximity of Davidson to Charlotte." Having thus deemed Charlotte "a very poor town in which to play football," Riggs stated "we could not consider

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<sup>27</sup> W.M. Riggs to C.P. Miles, 27 Jan. 1909; W.M. Riggs to C.R. Williams, 27 Jan. 1909; C.R. Williams to W.M. Riggs, 29 Jan. 1909, Folder 19, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

playing in Charlotte under the terms you suggest, because I am sure we would both lose money.”<sup>28</sup>

Financial woes almost prevented Clemson from scheduling a contest with United States Marine officers stationed at Port Royal, South Carolina. In 1909, Lieutenant Clarence Alger, “manager of a football team composed of student officers” stationed at Port Royal, wrote Riggs. In his letter, Alger sought to “arrange a game for the upcoming season” to be played at Clemson, Charleston, or Port Royal. In his reply, Riggs stated it was impossible for Clemson to play elsewhere since “we already have too many long trips on our schedule.” He did, however, indicate that an open date was available on October 23, and “if this date suits you, and if you could come to Clemson on reasonable terms, we might consider a game.” To reduce costs, Riggs suggested that Port Royal schedule a contest with the University of South Carolina in Columbia on the way up to “make the expenses lighter on us.” After further reflection on the financial costs involved in scheduling the contest, Riggs then concluded that “I do not think we could afford to pay your expenses from Port Royal to Clemson, but I think we could from Columbia to Clemson.” Eager for the game, and having more resources at his disposal, Alger eliminated the financial roadblock by agreeing to pay his team’s travelling expenses. As a reward for their efforts, Alger and the Port Royal Marines were soundly defeated 19-0. Clemson’s victory over an inexperienced non-collegiate team also highlights the primitive nature of early southern football.<sup>29</sup>

The annual Georgia-Clemson contest at the Georgia-Carolina State Fair, in Augusta, Georgia, further demonstrates how informal, personalized relations converged with an overarching need to generate gate receipts to render southern football a primitive affair. Since

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<sup>28</sup> W.M. Riggs to L.P. McClendon, 18 Jan. 1909, Folder 18, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

<sup>29</sup> Lt. Clarence Alger to W.M. Riggs, 18 Aug. 1909, Folder 6, Box 5, ACR, CUL.



1902, Clemson and Georgia game rotated between each school's campuses, usually early in the football season. After the 1906 season, however, Riggs and Sanford discussed scheduling the game later in the season. After "thinking the matter over seriously," Sanford concluded that the game "would be a very attractive game, especially in a financial way." "Willing to do whatever is right in the matter," Sanford suggested that the two teams play in Atlanta in 1907 and "share and share alike" the gate receipts. In return, the following year's game would be played in Columbia under the same the financial terms. Sanford then expressed his willingness to explore other alternatives, but stressed that "Georgia and Clemson must arrange games from a financial standpoint as far as possible." Sanford's suggestion never materialized, for the next seven games between the rivals were played at the Georgia-Carolina State Fair, in Augusta, Georgia. Under the terms of the contract signed by the three parties, Clemson and Georgia both agreed to "pay their own expenses, and the two teams jointly to pay for the officials and the laying off the grounds." Establishing a minimum admission fee of fifty cents, the universities then equally divided the gross receipts between themselves and the Fair Association. The football contest pitting Clemson and Georgia was the fair's Thursday highlight. Problems, however, arose over this arrangement.<sup>30</sup>

Arranging a football schedule around an uncertain fair date was one obstacle that nearly derailed the arrangement in 1909. In January, the secretary of the Georgia-Carolina Fair Association, Frank Beane informed Riggs that a fair date had not yet been established, in part because Beane was waiting for fairs in Atlanta and Columbia to set their dates to avoid conflict. Beane also stressed to Riggs that it would be impossible schedule another "championship" football game that week, other than the previously agreed to Monday game featuring the Medical

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<sup>30</sup> S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 22 Dec. 1906, Folder 3, Box 4, ACR, CUL; Abstracts of Football Contract, Folder 10, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

College of Georgia, “as we will have to cut the races out on that day for the game”—a strong indication that football lacked widespread popular appeal. In his reply to Beane, Riggs regretted the uncertainty of the Fair date and asserted that “we will be seriously embarrassed if it does not take place as usual the first week in November, as the rest of our schedule is arranged upon that presumption.”<sup>31</sup>

The issue was seemingly settled until Sanford wrote to both Riggs and Beane and vented that the Fair’s change of date “is giving me a great deal of trouble and inconvenience.”

Assuming that the Fair would again be held the first week of November, and “hearing nothing to contrary,” Sanford “perfected” his football schedule. Having arranged a game with Georgia Tech on the thirteenth, he was dismayed to learn that Georgia now had to play Clemson on the eleventh. Sanford claimed it would be “utterly impossible” to adhere to that schedule and further doubted that the Georgia Tech game could be moved to the twentieth. Moreover, rescheduling the Georgia Tech game would place Clemson in a bind “as that is too near your Thanksgiving game” with Georgia Tech. Sanford then implored Riggs to “co-operate with me to your fullest extent in having the Fair authorities” change the date to the first week of November. If this that was not possible, Sanford then suggested, also “at great sacrifice,” moving the game to Monday. Sanford concluded by stressing his extreme desire to play Clemson and “build up a large patronage in Augusta,” but reiterated that “important games such as Clemson and Tech cannot be played with only one day interval.”<sup>32</sup>

Receiving Sanford’s letter, Riggs replied that he read it with “a great deal of concern,” but could not assist in moving the Fair back a week “as we have scheduled a game with South Carolina University to be played during the Columbia Fair, which precedes the Fair in Augusta.”

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Beane to W.M. Riggs, 10 Jan. 1908, Folder 10, Box 4, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to Frank Beane, 29 Jan. 1909, ACR, CUL.

<sup>32</sup> S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 9 March. 1909, Folder 3, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

Riggs also rejected rescheduling the contest till Monday, as “that would throw the game too close to the game with Carolina.” Nor did Riggs believe it was even possible to change the Fair’s date since “these fairs take place in a kind of circuit.” He then suggested that Georgia should reschedule the Georgia Tech game to the sixteenth or seventeenth—in the middle of the week. Riggs also stressed that “we are anxious to do anything in the world that we can to help you out, but it looks as if we are both up against the same proposition.” Deeming the matter sufficiently “important for us to meet and discuss it fully,” Riggs suggested that they meet with Fair officials in Augusta to resolve the dilemma.<sup>33</sup>

Also receiving Sanford’s letter outlining his problems with Fair’s schedule, Beane informed Riggs that he was “surprised and greatly annoyed” and demanded to know “at once” why the Fair “could not have the best teams that Georgia and Clemson can put out.” Asserting that correspondence in February settled the matter, Beane also recounted how Riggs “stated it made no difference about the dates, provided we followed Columbia.” Acting on this, Beane scheduled the Fair the second week of November and assumed that Riggs and Sanford were in conjunction. Beane encouraged Riggs to “use your efforts to have Prof. Sanford arrange his schedule so as not to conflict with our Annual Football day Thursday of Fair Week.” If not, he hinted that “it would be too bad to break up our pleasant associations” and threatened that “if we make other contracts of course Clemson and Georgia could not expect us to favor them at future fairs that we will hold.”<sup>34</sup>

Several days later, Sanford wrote to Riggs and informed him that he was unable to meet in Augusta on the date Riggs suggested. Sanford also informed Riggs that he was meeting with Georgia Tech’s Athletic Director to discuss rescheduling Georgia’s contest with Georgia Tech

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<sup>33</sup> W.M. Riggs to S.V. Sanford, 12 March 1909, Folder 3, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Beane to W.M. Riggs, 13 March 1909, Folder 3, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

and “hopefully come to some definite conclusions.” This would then allow Sanford to “act positively when we meet in Augusta.” He also lamented that “if Capt. Beane had written me the same information that he did to you, then I would not be in my present situation.” Striking a positive note, Sanford hoped “that matters will adjust themselves to our satisfaction” and concluded by affirming that “I am optimist and for that reason I can see a solution many vexing problems.” Replying to Sanford’s letter, Riggs regretted that they could not meet in Augusta to “straighten out the tangle with the Fair Association” and reiterated that “the sooner we can get to Augusta and straighten out the matter, the better it will be for all parties concerned.” Riggs also vowed that in the future, “we must require some definite information regarding the State Fair earlier than we have heretofore required it.”<sup>35</sup>

Ten days later, Sanford informed Riggs that Georgia Tech seemed “unwilling” to reschedule the game with Georgia. Sanford also attempted to reschedule with Auburn, “but as they have a game with Sewanee it is impossible to do so.” Clearly exasperated, Sanford lamented that “I don’t know what to do.” While he wanted to play Clemson in Augusta, he did not “want to play or rather can’t play Tech with credit immediately thereafter.” Nor could he “afford to send a second team against Clemson for I can’t beat Clemson with the best team that I can muster in Georgia.” Facing a “hard proposition,” Sanford rhetorically asked “what is to be done” and deemed it “an outrage that no notice was given me of a change in dates.” Clearly disgusted with the situation, Sanford fumed “we can’t afford to fool with a fair under such conditions.” Agreeing that it was “important to settle the Augusta matter,” Sanford requested that Riggs “decide the date and inform both Beane and me by wire” for a meeting in Augusta.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 19 March 1909, Folder 4 Box 5, ACR, CUL; W.M. Riggs to S.V. Sanford, 20 March 1909, Folder 4, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>36</sup> S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 29 March 1909, Folder 4, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

After contemplating the dilemma, “and realizing the difficult situation in which the contract places you, and being desirous of helping you all I can,” Riggs presented Sanford with a potential solution a week later. Riggs suggested that “we leave out of the Augusta game the four back field men who represent us in the game against the South Carolina University, and you leave out the four back field men who are to represent you in the game with Tech.” Recognizing that the South Carolina and Georgia Tech games were “unquestionably the most important from the standpoint of winning,” Riggs believed that his plan would “equalize our strength, and give a definite basis to act upon.” Countering any potential criticisms, he asserted that “the public would have no right to criticize such an arrangement, because it cannot be reasonably expected that the same backfield can play two games inside of four days.” Riggs was certain that this “would satisfy any reasonable minded person” and would also “relieve you of any criticism that might be directed at your schedule.” Although he was not “wedded” to the potential solution and was “willing to accept any better solution,” Riggs presented it to Sanford so that he “may use it in reconciling the higher authorities to our contract.”<sup>37</sup>

It is unlikely that the game was played under the conditions suggested by Riggs. Newspaper accounts of the contest do not mention any changes in the line ups. Moreover, Georgia and Georgia Tech ultimately played their game a week later on the twentieth of November, thus nullifying Sanford’s scheduling dilemma. Although satisfactorily resolved, the experience, combined with a disagreement over the distributions of gate receipts, persuaded Sanford and Riggs that other options should be explored. Writing to Riggs, Sanford concurred that “unless the Fair Association will agree to give us the entire proceeds with the exception of the expenses incidental to the game that it is almost useless to play there again.” If the Fair Association agreed to those conditions, Sanford was “inclined to believe that before long it will

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<sup>37</sup> W.M. Riggs to S.V. Sanford, 5 April 1909, Folder 5 Box 5, ACR, CUL.

be a splendid paying proposition.” Seeking to strengthen their position when negotiating with the Association, Sanford recommended that the schools “show them that we are independent and try to arrange to play that game on some vacant date of Tech’s in Atlanta.” Having recently played Alabama in Atlanta, Sanford deemed it “a good game financially speaking,” but assured Riggs that a “game with you in Atlanta would be far better.” Revealing the importance faculty athletic directors placed on profit when scheduling games, Sanford direly predicted that “unless we can arrange some schedule by which we can make money instead of losing money from year to year, I cannot see how we can maintain foot-ball in Georgia.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite the dire predictions and resolve to explore other options, Georgia and Clemson continued to field football teams and play their annual contest at the Georgia-Carolina State Fair for four more seasons. After the 1913 season, however, the universities finally severed their relationship with the Fair. In a letter, Riggs informed Beane that “for personal reasons I regret to say that Clemson and Georgia have positively decided not to play their games in Augusta in the future.” Riggs was discouraged “with the usual disappointing financial results” and “the great loss of time from College necessitated by playing in the middle of the week.” As a result of the two grievances, Riggs emphatically informed Beane that “Clemson and Georgia have agreed to play their next game in Athens on November 7, and I am sure that neither of us will be willing to change that decision.” Reaffirming how personal relations converged with profit motives within the sporting community, Riggs concluded by thanking Beane “for the many courtesies you have shown us” over the years and expressing “our regret that financial conditions as well as other objections to that arrangement will not justify us in continuing our game longer.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For an account of the Clemson-Georgia contest, see *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11 Nov. 1909; For an account of the Georgia Tech-Georgia contest, see *The Atlanta Constitution* 21 Nov. 1909; S.V. Sanford to W.M. Riggs, 10 Dec. 1909, Folder 13, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>39</sup> W.M. Riggs to Frank Beane, 10 Dec. 1913, Folder 6, Box 7, ACR, CUL.

The problems between the two schools and the Fair Association illustrate how a reliance on personal networks, combined with a need to turn contests into profitable ventures, rendered early football an informal yet commercialized affair. Assumptions and errors within the personal network led to a scheduling conflict. At the same time, contacts and friendships within the sporting community created an atmosphere conducive to a satisfactory resolution. In addition, the problem originated because Sanford and Riggs opted to play the contest at a state fair to increase gate receipts. Had they not involved Beane and the State Fair Association, it is doubtful these problems would have arisen.

Examining the inner workings of the sporting fraternity and the manner in which early football operated provides a window to view the erosion of “island communities” and the creation of a modern interconnected society. While the manner in which athletic directors selected referees, hired coaches, and scheduled contests was chaotic, primitive and predicated on personal relations, they were nonetheless transforming southern society. By fostering the growth of intercollegiate versus intramural football, members of the sporting fraternity created a network that united and linked colleges together. Through their efforts, colleges were no longer isolated islands. This marked an important step towards the development of the modern South.

Another step in this process was the formation of an athletic association to manage and oversee the football program at Georgia. An incorporated body, the association featured a board of directors who wielded complete control over football operations. The negotiations over the contract extension for Georgia’s coach W.A. Cunningham illustrate how the board managed the football program and existed within the sporting fraternity. After two successful seasons with Cunningham at the helm of the football team, the athletic association claimed a \$788.99 profit. Due to the gridiron success, the athletic board sought to renew and extend Cunningham’s

contract. During the negotiation, Cunningham stated “that he would accept nothing less than \$3000 dollars per annum.” After speaking personally to Cunningham, however, faculty and board member C.M. Snelling reported that Cunningham would accept a contract for “\$2,700.00 the year 1912-1913 and for \$3,000.00 for subsequent three years.” With this concession, the board “authorized the Physical Director to sign up a four year contract under the terms heretofore stated.” The contract negotiations reveal the interplay of old and new values in the South. As a result of a personal conversation, an agreement was brokered. The contract, however, required the approval of a corporate board for it to become official.<sup>40</sup>

The scheduling of a contest with the University of Alabama also demonstrates how the bureaucratic athletic board functioned within the personal world of the sporting fraternity. Since the 1917 season, a contest with Alabama was a constant on Georgia’s schedule. Played in Atlanta, the game was a highlight of Georgia’s football season. In 1921, the graduate manager of football at Alabama broached scheduling a “two or three year contract” with Sanford. Although the manager considered this “a trifle early to broach the subject,” he nonetheless suggested that the “logical” game for both schools “is a Thanksgiving game at Birmingham.” To induce Georgia officials into changing the venue, the manager wrote that the game “would be a money maker sure enough” and rhetorically asked “what’s the need losing all of that Thanksgiving receipts when you can boost up your treasury.”<sup>41</sup>

After considering the proposal, Georgia’s athletic board authorized playing the game in Birmingham, but on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This decision caused problems. Birmingham Southern College and Howard University had already reserved the park for that date and were unwilling to change the date. Subsequently, Thanksgiving was the only date

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<sup>40</sup> UGA Athletic Association Minutes, 17 June 1912, Box 32, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>41</sup> V.H. Friedman to S.V. Sanford, 8 Oct. 1921, Folder 25, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.



available. Writing again to Sanford, Alabama's football manager employed personal pressure to induce Georgia into playing on Thanksgiving by deeming it "unfortunate for both Institutions if we cannot play each other." He also incorporated financial pressure in his appeal by noting how the Birmingham newspapers have been touting the game "and the financial return would far outrank the Atlanta gate, you may be sure." While the board refused to budge on the date, they were apparently amenable to the location, for the two foes met in Montgomery that year.<sup>42</sup>

One year later, the issue of scheduling a contest around the Thanksgiving holiday arose again for Georgia's athletic board. During their meeting, Sanford advised the board that Centre College in Kentucky offered Georgia a Thanksgiving game in Athens in 1923 and one in Kentucky the following year. Board member Harold Hirsch, a Georgia alumnus and prominent attorney for Coca-Cola, opposed the game and spoke "at length on the subject." A fellow board member advocating the game called a motion for Georgia to accept the contract, which was carried. With the motion carried, Sanford then read a "long letter from Dr. Denny of the University of Alabama" that discussed establishing "permanent athletic relations" in the form of an annual Thanksgiving game between the two schools. After a "general discussion" of the proposal, Hirsch moved that the motion to approve the contract with Centre College be reconsidered. The board again denied Hirsch's motion, but did approve a motion for Sanford to explain to Denny why Georgia opted to play Centre College instead. Sanford was also instructed to advise Denny of "Georgia's willingness to schedule a permanent Thanksgiving game with Alabama as soon as feasible."<sup>43</sup>

The brief glimpse into the inner workings of the Georgia athletic board provides insights into the interplay between pre-modern and modern values prevalent in southern collegiate

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<sup>42</sup> V.H. Friedman to S.V. Sanford, 5 Dec. 1921, Folder 25, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>43</sup> UGA Athletic Board Minutes, 5 Dec. 1922, Box 32, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

football. On one hand, Sanford worked within the informal, unstructured and personal network to negotiate and broker deals. Yet on the other hand, Sanford did not enjoy complete autonomy. Answerable to a bureaucratic board that rendered all decisions, he was in essence a cog in a corporate machine. The juxtaposition of a personal network developed by the sporting fraternity, and the presence of bureaucratic organization designed to oversee athletics illustrates how the construction of a modern South was a work in progress during this time period. Exploring how intercollegiate football operated provides a unique venue to view this transformation.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Honor, Markets, and Feuds: The Severance of Athletic Relations Between The University of Georgia and The Georgia Institute of Technology**

In the autumn of 1902, excitement filled the air in South Carolina for the “big game” between Clemson College and South Carolina College. A part of the festivities for the annual South Carolina State Fair, the football contest pitted the two unbeaten instate rivals. In a well played game, the South Carolina Gamecocks defeated their rivals 12-6. Clemson’s coach, John Heisman, remarked afterward that “Carolina simply outplayed us.” The goodwill and sportsmanship exhibited by Heisman was not, however, shared by Clemson students. Witnessing a South Carolina banner depicting Clemson’s tiger mascot in a subservient position with a gamecock perched atop of his head, a group of angry Clemson students tore the banner down and accosted South Carolina students after the game. During the melee, several South Carolina students were injured and Clemson students warned their rivals that a similar fate awaited them if they displayed the banner again. Undeterred by the threats, South Carolina students stubbornly displayed the banner the following day. In response, Clemson students swarmed en masse around a smaller group of South Carolina students and demanded the banner be destroyed. Several students were reportedly armed and bloodshed seemed inevitable until Christie J. Benet Jr., a recent South Carolina graduate, offered to represent his alma mater against any individual Clemson student. No Clemson student accepted the challenge and a compromise was reached, whereby the banner, which now represented the two mascots, was burned. Although peacefully settled, the incident sparked outrage throughout the state and

tensions ran high. To quell the controversy and calm hostilities, the colleges severed athletic relations and did not meet on the gridiron again until 1909.<sup>1</sup>

Similar scenes of tensions, hostilities, and the severance of athletic relations occurred frequently in early southern collegiate football. Chronicled by Andrew Doyle, the forty year dispute between the University of Alabama and Auburn was the longest and most publicized feud between programs. A lesser known, but equally important, feud developed between the University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology. From 1919 to 1924 the two colleges formally severed athletic relations. Examining the events leading up to the discontinuance of athletics, the act which triggered the formal cessation, and the manner in which it was ultimately resolved, provide insights into the process by which the modern South emerged. At its core, the Georgia-Georgia Tech dispute was a fight for control over the Atlanta sporting market. The home of the New South Movement, and the site of rapid industrialization, transportation networks, and a burgeoning population, Atlanta provided the infrastructure necessary to sustain a modern sporting culture. Subsequently, both institutions vied for control of this market to sustain their fledgling athletic programs.<sup>2</sup>

The lingering persistence of antebellum values of a society based upon personal relations and the importance of preserving ones honor, however, cannot be overlooked when examining

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<sup>1</sup> Robert P. Green Jr., "A Scholar's Turmoil: Patrick Hues Mell, 1902-1910" in Donald M. McKale, ed. *Tradition: A History of the Presidency of Clemson University* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 81-4.

<sup>2</sup> See Andrew Leo Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-983" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1998), 220-301, for the Alabama-Auburn feud. The importance of urbanization in the development of modern sports is an important theme in sport history. See, Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1988; Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Steven A. Reiss, *Sport in Industrial America, 1865-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995); Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ. (1990). On the growth and industrialization of Atlanta, see Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), esp. 136-59; Steve Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies, and Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880-1930* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2002); Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

the Georgia-Georgia Tech feud. In many respects, the hostility between the colleges was an affair of honor. Defined by historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown, honor is “the cluster of ethical rules, most readily found in societies of small communities, by which judgments of behavior are ratified by community consensus.” Simply stated, one’s self worth and social standing was determined by how their peers viewed them in an honorific society. In a society based upon perceptions, public humiliations were to be avoided at all costs for they equated into a loss of one’s honor, or standing, within the community. Any perceived slight or humiliation had to be addressed in order to avoid a loss of honor. A foundation of antebellum society, honor slowly dissipated from southern society as the region slowly adopted modern values. The Georgia-Georgia Tech feud demonstrates how gradual this process was and how the southern society in the early twentieth century was a confluence of old and new values. Football provides a means to study this confluence firsthand and gain insights into the process by which the modern South emerged.<sup>3</sup>

An exchange of letters between W.M. Riggs, the faculty director of athletics at Clemson University, and the student football manager at Mercer over the cancellation of a scheduled football game reveals how personal relationships within the small southern sporting community fostered the continuation of honor. Within this community, severing athletic relations was the appropriate response to any perceived threat an individual’s or institution’s honor. After seemingly agreeing to a contest with Mercer College on October 2, Riggs received notification from Mercer’s student football manager, C.W. Coleman, that they could not honor that date. Astonished that Mercer was unable to sign the contract, Riggs belligerently announced to

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<sup>3</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), xv; See also Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Coleman that “we do not propose to tamely submit to such treatment and we demand that you carry out the obligation which was incurred by your telegram of Jan. 12 accepting our proposition.” Infuriated because he had rejected a contest with V.P.I on that date to accommodate Mercer, Riggs demanded that the contract with Mercer be “carried through in accordance with our understanding, and your telegraphic promise.” Otherwise, he proposed “to sever our athletic relations for good” with Mercer and “let the public know fully what our reasons are.” Riggs was in essence vowing to publically shame Mercer. Recalling a prior incident in which Mercer forfeited a game with Clemson, Riggs reminded Coleman that Mercer had yet to pay the forfeiture fee and indemnify Clemson “for the inconsiderate way in which we were treated.” Deeming the affair a personal insult, Riggs stated that “we do not propose to be made a convenience of, and have our schedule upset when after a full and fair discussion, a game has been agreed upon.” If Mercer still refused, Riggs vowed to “take such steps as the circumstances seem to admit, in order to get satisfaction for the damage which has been done to our schedule.”<sup>4</sup>

Still seething, Riggs also wrote to the faculty advisor to athletics at Mercer, E.T. Holmes, to further express his outrage. Recounting what had transpired, Riggs informed Holmes that “we do not propose to tamely submit to any such treatment.” Reminding Holmes that “we have had a taste of this sort of thing before,” he decried Mercer’s refusal to honor obligations and insinuated that “Clemson is not the only College who has been subjected to just treatment as this.” Riggs again demanded that Mercer adhere to the verbal agreement agreed to by Coleman. Believing that he had “definitely closed the deal with your manager to such an extent” that signing the contract was “a mere formality,” Riggs again demanded and expected that the verbal agreement

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<sup>4</sup> W.M. Riggs to C.W. Coleman, 29 Jan. 1909, Folder 19, Box 4, Athletic Council Records 1899-1996 (hereafter ACR) in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL).

“which Mr. Coleman has made with us be carried out.” Proclaiming that we “do not treat other Colleges in this way,” Riggs vowed that Clemson “would not suffer imposition at the hands of others.” He concluded with a direct request that Holmes “use your kind offices to see that this matter is adjusted at once.”<sup>5</sup>

Replying to Riggs, Holmes calmly noted that “your boisterous letter came duly to hand.” He then revealed his displeasure by informing Riggs that “if you have many more like it to send in this direction, I am inclined to think that your suggestion with reference to the severance of athletic relations between Mercer and Clemson is a good one.” Requesting that Riggs “stop and consider a little,” Holmes opined that “you will find the situation is not nearly so horrible as you intimate.” Explaining his reasoning for not wanting to play on October 2, Holmes advised Riggs that Mercer agreed to the game solely because it was the only date that Clemson offered. Agreeing to play Clemson on this date, however, necessitated that Mercer eliminate another game and “seriously interfere with our schedule.” Upon learning that Clemson “had another date that was open which we might get if we took the matter up with you,” Holmes instructed Coleman to “hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> for Vanderbilt” in the hopes that “we would be able to secure another date from you.” Holmes then beseeched Riggs to move the contest to Clemson’s open date on the thirteenth, for “it will help us very materially in arranging our schedule in a fairly satisfactory way.”<sup>6</sup>

Holmes then addressed the accusation that Mercer had a history of renegeing on contracts. Decrying such statements to be “entirely gratuitous,” Holmes reminded Riggs that “you are perfectly aware that our failure to meet you on the occasion mentioned was absolutely beyond our control.” Denied access to the city-owned playing field and forbidden by faculty regulations

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<sup>5</sup> W.M. Riggs to E.T. Holmes, 29 Jan. 1909, Folder 19, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

<sup>6</sup> E.T. Holmes to W.M. Riggs, 2 Feb. 1909, Folder 1, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

from leaving the city, Mercer was forced to cancel the game. Holmes did concede that “if it be a crime not to be able to meet one’s obligations the day they are due, then your vituperative expressions with reference to us may be partially justified.” Holmes vowed to pay the forfeiture fee “with interest,” but being “a little unfortunate in our finances” they have been unable to do so. While the insolvency was “an inconvenience” to Riggs, it was a “great embarrassment” to Mercer. Holmes concluded his letter, and expressed his disgust at Riggs, by simply stating “I do not like at all the tone of your letter.”<sup>7</sup>

Replying to Holmes, Riggs adopted a less militant, but still hostile tone. Writing that “I have neither the time nor inclination to answer in detail your letter,” Riggs bluntly informed Holmes that “we are unable to offer you the Nov. 13, and have never been in a position to do so.” Riggs then insulted the Mercer program by stating that “if we had Nov. 13 open, we would not feel justified in meeting Mercer on this the second most important date of the season.” Assuming a more conciliatory posture towards Holmes, Riggs blamed Coleman for “attempting to get what he considered a better date” and posited that Holmes would not condone such actions. Reaffirming that the second of October was the only date available, Riggs instructed Holmes to “notify me at once whether or not we are to play or not.” If Mercer declined the second, Riggs requested “that you wire me at my expense, so that our schedule may not suffer any more than is absolutely necessary.”<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to diffuse the tensions, Mercer’s student manager expressed to Riggs his “regret” over the “unfortunate situation which has developed from our recent correspondence.” While Coleman contended that Riggs’s attitude exacerbated the situation, he confessed that he did not harbor any “ill will” towards Riggs and would “regret to see any breach between the two

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<sup>7</sup> E.T. Holmes to W.M. Riggs 2 Feb. 1909, Folder 1, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>8</sup> W.M. Riggs to E.T. Holmes, 3 Feb. 1909, Folder 1 Box 5, ACR, CUL.



colleges.” In an effort to absolve Holmes, Coleman stated that he “was not concerned in this” until Riggs thrust him into the scheduling disagreement. Seeking a harmonious resolution and the preservation of his honor, Coleman requested that Riggs “acquit me of the charge of using you as a ‘convenience’” and maintained that Mercer would reserve November 13<sup>th</sup> for Clemson for one week. To preserve his honor, Coleman concluded that unless Clemson filled the thirteenth with “some more important team, I would be pleased to receive any communication.” Although the colleges were unable to resolve their differences and schedule a contest for the 1909 season, athletic relations were not severed. For the next four years, Mercer and Clemson routinely scheduled contests. Nonetheless, the exchange of letters illustrates the volatile and personal nature of early contests and the importance of preserving one’s honor.<sup>9</sup>

The confluence of the Old South value of honor with the importance of controlling markets in the emerging modern South is evident in the prolonged cessation of athletic relations between the University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology, commonly referred to as Georgia Tech, or just Tech. Founded in 1888, Georgia Tech, taught, promoted and provided a technical education in manufacturing and engineering. A vehicle of the New South Creed to increase industrialization in order to transform and revitalize a stagnant southern economy, Georgia Tech rapidly developed into a leading industrial college in the South. Georgia Tech’s growth, however, created tensions with the older University of Georgia as both schools vied for financial support from a stingy state legislature. From the onset, football became another battleground in this competition between the institutions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> C.W. Coleman to W.M. Riggs, 4 Feb. 1909, Folder 1, Box 5, ACR, CUL.

<sup>10</sup> See Robert C. McMath, Jr. and others, *Engineering the New South: Georgia Tech, 1885-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 3-67 for the development of Georgia Tech and the importance of the New South Creed in its development; Also see Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 136-141, 169-170 for relations between the institutions.

Playing Thanksgiving contests in Atlanta quickly developed into area of contestation between the rival institutions. As early football developed on college campuses throughout the South, the annual Thanksgiving contest became the highlight of the season. In dire need of funding, athletic programs sought attractive matchups in large cities throughout the South. Atlanta, the epicenter of the New South Movement, with its burgeoning population and railroad hub became the most desired location to host a Thanksgiving game. Subsequently, programs in neighboring states jockeyed for position and resented other colleges staging competing contests that threatened to cut gate receipts. Although an upstart college compared to the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech's location in the heart of Atlanta provided a distinct advantage in this scramble for public attention. Hostilities soon erupted between the two state schools over access to the Atlanta sporting market. This constant battle over staging contests in Atlanta reveals the interplay of old and new values in the early twentieth century South.

Since their inaugural game in 1892, the first interstate contest in the Deep South, Auburn University and Georgia routinely scheduled contests in Atlanta, often on Thanksgiving. For nearly a decade, the game was an important event on the Atlanta sporting calendar and an important revenue generator for the insolvent Georgia program. After hiring John Heisman from Clemson for an unprecedented salary in 1902, Georgia Tech was determined to break Georgia's monopoly in their home city. In 1903 Georgia Tech played a Thanksgiving game against the University of South Carolina that coincided with the annual Georgia-Auburn game. This act, which jeopardized Georgia's gate receipts, angered athletic officials at Georgia and inflamed the already intense football rivalry between the schools.

Since the inception of the series, violence often accompanied the Georgia-Georgia Tech football rivalry. In their first meeting, Georgia Tech players, led by war hero Leonard Wood,

were assaulted with thrown rocks and sticks during and after the contest. By 1902, relations had deteriorated to the point that newly hired Heisman sought to eliminate the rancor and instill a “more healthy spirit of rivalry.” Despite his efforts, the intensity remained undiminished a year later. After eight current Georgia Tech students, four of whom were graduates of Georgia, attended the Georgia-Auburn game instead of the Georgia Tech-South Carolina contest, three hundred Georgia Tech students convened and denounced the eight students in a strongly worded resolution. The offending students were deemed “parasites” and asked to resign from Georgia Tech within 48 hours or “accept the consequences.” Despite the implicit threat of bodily harm, the eight students refused to comply with the request. Published in Atlanta newspapers, the resolution generated a mild controversy. In a letter to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Judge Nash Broyles considered the situation “a very serious one.” While he recognized the “intense rivalry” between the two schools, Broyles rallied to the defense of the offending students by denouncing Georgia Tech’s student body for overstepping “all bounds of right, law and reason.” By adopting the resolution, the student body had become “tyrants,” “persecutors” and “a revolutionary mob ready for anarchy.”<sup>11</sup>

In the wake of the outcry against the resolution, the student manager of Georgia Tech’s football team refused to sign the resolution and resigned from his position. Although he supported the condemnation of the eight men, he could not “be a party to a set of resolutions that imply a threat.” To quell the controversy, Heisman met with students and urged them to remove the incendiary language. As a result of the meeting, student leaders publically announced that “there is no intention, nor has there ever been any intention, to do any bodily harm to any man who attended the Georgia-Auburn game.” A day later, the president of Georgia Tech outlined his actions regarding the resolution in a statement to the press. Upon learning of the

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<sup>11</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1-3 Dec. 1903.

unauthorized actions of the student body, he met with the leaders and instructed them that “nothing could be done to interfere with any young man’s education.” He also stressed to class presidents that the eight students “should not be molested.” Considering these actions sufficient, the president considered the matter resolved.<sup>12</sup>

Although Georgia Tech officials considered the matter resolved, athletic officials at Georgia continued to harbor animosity toward Georgia Tech for intruding on their Thanksgiving contest and jeopardizing Georgia’s gate receipts. In a personal letter to his friend W.M. Riggs, the faculty advisory of athletics at Clemson and president of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association, A.H. Patterson, Georgia’s faculty manager of athletics, fulminated against Georgia Tech’s actions. Stating that the Georgia-Auburn game is “well established” and vital to the finances of both schools, Patterson proclaimed that “Tech would be very glad to see the game smashed to pieces and has done all in her power to do it.” Patterson also railed against a history of “unfriendly” acts committed by Georgia Tech against Georgia. In addition to the treatment of the eight students, Patterson outlined how Georgia players endured “hissing” from “a crowd of Tech men” while walking to the team hotel and “a procession of Tech students” dragged Georgia’s colors through the mud after a resounding 38-0 victory the year before. Most galling was Georgia Tech’s refusal to meet with Patterson prior to scheduling the conflicting Thanksgiving Day contest. Seeking a conference with Georgia Tech’s athletic authorities in Athens, Patterson offered to share traveling expenses. Despite the offer, Georgia Tech representatives, Frank Turner and Jackson, refused, on the grounds that “they had no proposition to make to Georgia” and were “perfectly satisfied with things as they are.” Deeming this refusal a “slap in the face,” Patterson denounced Turner as “unreliable” and Jackson a “crank.” As a

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<sup>12</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2-3 Dec. 1903.

result of these attacks on his and Georgia's honor, Patterson vowed to sever athletic relations with Georgia Tech until "she" agreed to not interfere with the Georgia-Auburn game.<sup>13</sup>

To the chagrin of Atlanta sports fans and newspaper editors, Patterson adhered to his word. Refusing to schedule a football contest with Georgia Tech the following year, Georgia also signed a three year contract with Auburn to play their annual Thanksgiving game in Macon, Georgia. A writer for the *Atlanta Constitution* considered Georgia's actions to be shortsighted and unwise due to the large number of alumni living in Atlanta. By giving up contests in Atlanta "without a fight," the university was denying alumni an opportunity to support their alma mater. In addition, Georgia risked losing the "patronage" of sporting fans who eagerly anticipated the annual contest with Auburn. Denied an opportunity to cheer for Georgia, fans would soon swap their allegiance and become supporters of Georgia Tech. As a result, the newspaper predicted that Georgia's athletic coffers would suffer.<sup>14</sup>

Several days later, another editorial criticized Georgia officials for severing athletic relations with Georgia Tech. Claiming that Georgia Tech authorities and the public at large desired a football game, the editorial dismissed Patterson's argument that Georgia Tech was conspiring to prevent Georgia from playing in Atlanta on Thanksgiving. The newspaper also asserted that renewing the rivalry would promote "the spirit of sportsmanship and true fellowship." To further encourage the contest, the editorial touted the economic advantages by noting that the game would draw a large crowd and "would aid greatly the flabby pocket books" of the two athletic associations. Due to the public pressure, Patterson agreed to meet with Georgia Tech's faculty athletic manager, Frank Turner. Prior to the meeting, he informed the *Atlanta Constitution* that he had "always been willing" to meet with Turner, but stressed that a

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<sup>13</sup> A.H. Patterson and W.M. Riggs, 5 May 1904, Folder 15, Box 3, ACR, CUL.

<sup>14</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2 Oct. 1904.

game remained an uncertainty. Denying reports that Georgia's students and faculty favored a contest, Patterson contended that a "fair basis" must be established before Georgia would consent to playing Georgia Tech. The meeting and subsequent negotiations were successful. An undisclosed contract was signed and Georgia agreed to meet Georgia Tech on the gridiron that season. The fate of Georgia's annual Thanksgiving contest, however, remained unresolved.<sup>15</sup>

In an effort to resolve their differences over access to Atlanta, the Georgia Tech athletic association proposed a contract with Georgia in 1906. Under the terms of the contract, the two schools would work mutually to end "bitter and wholesome rivalry" and promote a spirit of "athletic friendship and cooperation." The schools would also play an annual football game in Atlanta each fall and at least one baseball game in spring. To resolve the Thanksgiving Day game dispute, the contract stipulated that Georgia's football teams "shall not schedule or play football games in the city of Atlanta or in parks adjacent on Thanksgiving Days." To compensate Georgia for giving up a lucrative game in Atlanta on Thanksgiving, Georgia Tech would not play a game in Atlanta "on one Saturday of November preceding Thanksgiving Day each year." The parties apparently never agreed to the contract. Although the two schools routinely met on the gridiron and the baseball diamond, Georgia ceased playing football games in Atlanta for several years. After Georgia's capitulation, tensions eased between the in-state rivals. Access to the Atlanta sporting market, however, remained a point of contention.<sup>16</sup>

Tensions again heightened over Georgia Tech's rental of Ponce de Leon Park for the 1912 football season. The home of the Atlanta Baseball Association, Ponce de Leon Park featured grandstand seating and convenient streetcar access. As a result of these amenities, it

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<sup>15</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2, 10, 27 Oct.; 4 Nov. 1904.

<sup>16</sup> Handwritten contract, 26 Nov. 1906, Folder 18, Box 6, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1865-1970, MS 1578, (hereafter Sanford Personal Papers) Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries (hereafter UGA).

was the primary venue for major football contests in Atlanta. Monopolizing the location, Georgia Tech rented the facility for the 1911 season for a nominal \$150 fee. Georgia Tech, however, charged opponents 10 percent of gate receipts to supposedly cover their rental costs. Learning of the chicanery in June the following year, the Georgia athletic association launched an investigation and determined that Georgia Tech pocketed an additional \$694.00 at Georgia's expense. Claiming this was a breach of contract, the Georgia athletic association requested that Chancellor David Barrow file a personal complaint with president of Georgia Tech, K.G. Matheson, to recover the funds. After meeting with president Matheson, Barrow reported that Georgia Tech was unwilling to consider the matter until their director of athletics returned to campus in late September.<sup>17</sup>

As word spread that Georgia Tech profited from their nominal rental fee, the Atlanta Baseball Association demanded that Georgia Tech's rental fees for Ponce de Leon Park be increased to 10 percent of gate receipts for the 1912 football season. Refusing to pay the increase, Georgia Tech officials announced they would play all of their scheduled games on their home field, the Flats. Weighing in on the announcement, the *Atlanta Constitution* predicted that Georgia Tech's athletic coffers would suffer due to the lack of street car service to the Flats and the venue's smaller capacity. Evaluating the impasse over the rental of Ponce de Leon Park, the sports editor deemed the 10 percent of gate receipts rental charge "outlandish" and the annual \$150 fee "a joke." Seeking a compromise for the benefit of the fans and the "good of the game," the newspaper suggested a fee of \$200 per game. Despite the urgings of the newspaper, the two sides remained firm in their positions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Minute Book, Board of Directors, Athletic Association, University of Georgia, (hereafter UGA Athletic Association Minutes), 6 June, 17 June, 18 Sept. 1912, Box 32, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>18</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17-20 Sept. 1912.

A planned renovation of The Flats contributed to Georgia Tech's reluctance to pay the increased rental fees. Announced in newspapers, the renovated stadium would feature a "new modern grand stand, built of reinforced concrete and seating 5,000." The architectural plan also included "auto parking spaces" and "ample standing room for those who prefer to stand along the side lines at football." Seeking to diffuse the controversy over rental payments, the director of athletics praised the Atlanta Baseball Association for providing the facility for a "nominal" fee. The proposed "1,000 per cent" increase in rent, however, made it "unwise to continue football at Ponce de Leon." Instead of paying rental receipts, Georgia Tech officials deemed it "best to invest the money in permanent improvements" at their own grounds. Due to its location in the heart of Atlanta, the hub of the New South complete with the necessary infrastructure and population to sustain a sporting environment, Georgia Tech, unlike most southern programs of the time, could finance the modern stadium. The completion of the stadium would allow Georgia Tech to become both a regional and national power in collegiate football.<sup>19</sup>

While the Georgia Tech's decision to play all games at their home facility became public fodder in newspapers, athletic officials at Georgia were publicly silent, yet privately concerned. Playing contests at Georgia Tech's home field, instead of a neutral venue, would further solidify the university's grip on the Atlanta market and place Georgia in a subservient position. To avoid this, Georgia's athletic association empowered the physical director to settle the location of the annual contest and make every effort to "bring about the playing of this game at Ponce de Leon Park." The treasurer of the association also affirmed "that a distinct verbal agreement" between the two institutions mandated playing games at Ponce de Leon because it was "deemed neutral ground." During the negotiations, park rental fees and the division of gate receipts continued to be a point of contention between athletic officials at Georgia and Georgia Tech. With athletic

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<sup>19</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 22 Sept. 1912.



officials unable to reach an agreement, trustees from each college requested that Chancellor Barrow and President Matheson meet to resolve the issue. As a result of the conference, the two sides reached an agreement to play the football game in Ponce de Leon Park. Unresolved, however, was the money Georgia Tech pocketed from the previous year's contest. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported there was "agitation" over the restoration of this amount, but "nothing definite was done."<sup>20</sup>

With the location agreed upon, tensions eased and a spirit of cooperation reappeared. Working in unison, the colleges protested poor police protection at prior games and requested "Atlanta authorities to either furnish ample protection by its regular police force or allow the University to employ deputized officers to take charge of the grounds at the Tech-Georgia game." In Athens at least, the spirit of cooperation continued after the game, no doubt assisted by Georgia's 20-0 blanketing of Georgia Tech. The Georgia student newspaper, the *Red and Black*, observed that "true sportsmanship prevailed" and there was "nothing sneaking, mean, underhanded or dirty about it." The student paper also praised the cheering ability of Georgia Tech supporters, proclaiming that "the general rooting of the Tech boys was the best ever displayed." The good feelings continued in the weeks leading up to the 1913 contest. The *Red and Black* reported that several Georgia Tech students attended a Georgia pep rally and even donated to Georgia's athletic fund. A speaker at the pep rally proclaimed that the "bitter hatred" had "passed forever" and predicted that "the two schools would continue as friendly rivals." The *Atlanta Constitution* also announced that "better feelings" existed between the rivals and hoped for its continuance.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Athletic Association Minutes, 18 Sept., 1 Oct. 1912, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 9 Oct. 1912; Hugh H. Gordon to S.V. Sanford, 1 Oct. 1912, Folder 24, Box 6, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>21</sup> Athletic Association Minutes, 24 Oct. 1912, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; *The Red and Black*, 18 Nov. 1912, 4 Nov. 1913, *The Atlanta Constitution* 14 Nov. 1913.

Although the bitterness had subsided, tensions still existed over the location for the upcoming contest. With renovations completed on their home field, now christened Grant Field, Georgia Tech demanded that the contest be staged there. To support their position, Georgia Tech cited correspondence between their athletic director, R.N. Randle and Georgia's interim athletic director. The correspondence revealed that both parties agreed to play the contest at Grant Field, provided the seating capacity was ample. Unwilling to concede control of the Atlanta market to their instate rivals, S.V. Sanford, Georgia's faculty athletic director, argued that seating capacity at Grant Field was insufficient and insisted that the game be played at neutral Ponce de Leon. Rebutting Sanford's argument, Randle asserted that with the construction of additional bleachers, seating capacity would exceed Ponce de Leon Park. Siding with Randle and Georgia Tech, the sporting editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* joined the debate and concurred that Grant Field contained more seats, and more importantly, the seats were better arranged for football viewing. Unlike Ponce de Leon Park, which was designed to host baseball games, the grandstands at Grant Field provided unobstructed views along the sidelines. With public sentiment against him, Sanford conceded defeat. In a telegram to Randle that was published in the *Atlanta Constitution*, Sanford announced that due to pressure from students and alumni and "after conference with university authorities, I have decided to waive our rights in the premises and to play the scheduled game at Grant Field." Seeking to salvage some measure of victory from the defeat, Sanford stubbornly insisted that "the contract evidently contemplated that the scheduled game should be played as usual at Ponce de Leon and the correspondence referred to does not attach the suggestion condition to same." Nonetheless, a defeated Georgia ceased requesting a neutral venue for games, and in fact, periodically played important games at

Georgia Tech's superior football stadium. With Georgia Tech firmly in control of the Atlanta market, a brief détente developed between the rivals.<sup>22</sup>

America's involvement in the First World War contributed to the détente. As the nation mobilized for war in 1917, the University of Georgia suspended all intercollegiate athletics for two years and most of the football team volunteered for military service. Georgia Tech, on the other hand, continued to field highly competitive football teams, highlighted by the 1917 squad that secured a perfect 9-0 season and claimed a share of the mythical national championship. After the German defeat, America slowly returned to normalcy and intercollegiate athletics resumed on Georgia's campus in 1919. In May of that year, record crowds flocked to Atlanta to see a two game baseball series between the rival institutions—their first meeting since the 1916 football game. With the grandstands overflowing, spectators witnessed Georgia defeat Georgia Tech in both games. With sporting appetites whetted, excitement quickly grew for another two game series to be played in Athens two weeks later. When the series resumed in Athens, crowds once again overflowed the grandstands and spilled out onto the grounds surrounding the ballpark. In a thrilling contest, Georgia again prevailed 7-5. The next day newspapers reported that an even larger crowd jammed into Georgia's baseball stadium to witness the final contest in the series. In another close game, Georgia defeated Georgia Tech 5-2 to sweep both series. Events on the field, however, were overshadowed by the pregame activities—activities which caused a six year severance of athletic relations between the instate rivals.<sup>23</sup>

Prior to the second series in Athens, student representatives from each school agreed to “conduct themselves as true gentleman and sportsmen” and not “disparage the colors of their adversary.” The students also agreed that Georgia could host their annual senior parade

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<sup>22</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 12, 14 Nov. 1913.

<sup>23</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8, 11, 17, 18 May 1919.

unmolested. With the gentleman's agreement in place, the entire senior class of Georgia, bedecked in "clever costumes," paraded through downtown Athens and around the playing field for the first time since the Great War. A car decorated to resemble a tank bearing a sign "Georgia in Argonne" led the parade. Following the faux tank was a flivver driven by Georgia students wearing Georgia Tech sweaters and hats. Banners proclaiming "1917 Georgia Tech in Atlanta" and "Georgia in France" adorned the car. The vehicles and banners were an obvious jab at Georgia Tech's playing football contests during the war while Georgia's team disbanded and entered into military service.<sup>24</sup>

Upon seeing the tank, Hugh Gordon Jr., a member of Georgia's athletic board, later recalled that he immediately realized it "was the fool action of some college boys...calculated to offend the Tech boys" and sought the aid of Georgia's Dean, C.M. Snelling, to have the students remove the banner from the tank. After Snelling informed the students "that their action was ill advised," they promptly removed the sign. In addition to the signs on the two vehicles, Georgia Tech supporters were also offended over an apparent insult to one of their female sponsors during the parade. While marching in the parade, a Georgia senior wore Georgia Tech colors with the female's name inscribed on his back. Georgia Tech supporters considered this act an insult to the reputation of the female sponsor. Despite these insults, Gordon recalled that while sitting with Georgia Tech's director of athletics J.B. Crenshaw during the game, Crenshaw "entertained no bitter resentment" and attributed the sign to "the impulsiveness and 'ragging' propensities of young college boys."<sup>25</sup>

Gordon either misjudged Crenshaw's reaction or Crenshaw changed his mind during the drive back to Atlanta. The next day Crenshaw informed Sanford, via letter, that Georgia Tech

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<sup>24</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11, 17, 18, 22, 23 May 1919.

<sup>25</sup> Hugh H. Gordon Jr. to C.M. Snelling, 19 Nov. 1921, Folder 55, Box 1, The Charles Mercer Snelling Papers, 1904-1950, UGA.

was severing all athletic relations with Georgia. The “occurrences” before the baseball game, “in which the patriotism of the Georgia School of Technology was impugned, one of its sponsors caricatured” and the violation of the gentleman’s agreement by Georgia students, caused the decision. After considering the “matter from every standpoint,” school authorities determined that “from sad experience the life of athletics at Georgia Tech requires this drastic action.” Although “regrettable,” severing athletic relations was “absolutely necessary” and “final.” After receiving the letter from Crenshaw and deliberating with Georgia’s athletic board, Sanford issued a terse reply. He informed Crenshaw that Georgia’s athletic board regrets “that your athletic authorities should have taken this action without having first advised with them” and that “the statements in your letter are not supported by the facts in the case.” Moreover, Georgia’s athletic board deemed any additional statement “unnecessary” since “the action by your board is final.”<sup>26</sup>

The cessation of athletic relations spawned a series of editorials and statements in the Atlanta newspapers. The language and tone of the reports reveal the personalized nature of the dispute and the lingering importance of honor in a modernizing southern society. The sporting editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* lamented that “it is time to call a halt and give the matter mature consideration.” Both student bodies were encouraged to “declare against rowdiness in every form and strive to promote gentlemanly, sportsmanlike athletic contests without the aftermaths which have characterized recent meets.” The editor wished the colleges would reestablish relations because “it means much to the college sporting life of Georgia.”

Responding to the editorial, the senior class president of Georgia Tech offered his reasons for the severance. Stating that students at Georgia Tech entered into a gentleman’s agreement designed

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<sup>26</sup> J.B. Crenshaw to S.V. Sanford, 19 May 1919, S.V. Sanford to J.B. Crenshaw, 22 May 1919, UGA Athletic Association Minutes, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

to foster cordial relations, the president blamed Georgia students for breaking the agreement. Losing sight “of their training as gentleman,” the students in Athens committed a “calumnious aspersion” on Georgia Tech’s patriotism—an act “entirely unworthy of their fellow Americans.” Since Georgia “forgot her obligations as hosts and gentleman in her slanderous assault on the patriotism, chivalry, and spirit of her guests,” Georgia Tech had no choice but “to no longer continue athletic relations with an adversary so fickle of purpose and so malicious of intent.”<sup>27</sup>

In a statement submitted to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Crenshaw also elaborated on what precipitated the decision. Countering Gordon’s version of what occurred during the parade, Crenshaw stated that upon witnessing the banners on the tank and car, a Georgia Tech professor and team manager asked a student parade leader to remove them. Ignoring the request, the student replied, “Oh hell, we got the Georgia spirit, go on” and the vehicles circled the field once again. Only then did Sanford step in and force the students to remove the offending signs. Crenshaw also stated that the parade was a planned and deliberate attack on Georgia Tech’s patriotism, bravery, and honor. Since Georgia students knowingly and willfully violated the gentleman’s agreement, Crenshaw and Georgia Tech students would not request nor accept an apology for it would “call for more of the same medicine next year.” As a result, Georgia Tech students vowed “never again” upon returning from Athens.<sup>28</sup>

Seeking to vindicate “the good name of our class and student body from the unjust charges” levied against them, the senior class president at Georgia also submitted a statement to the *Atlanta Constitution*. Addressing the three charges levied against his college, the president first commented on the assertion that Georgia violated the gentleman’s agreement. Since the agreement allowed the winning school to host a parade without interference and only prohibited

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<sup>27</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 21, 22 May 1919.

<sup>28</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23 May 1919.

the “snatching of Freshman caps,” the parade floats were permissible. Rhetorically questioning how “the pranks of a circus parade” could be construed as “an insult to their institution,” the writer concluded that Georgia Tech supporters “wore their ‘honor’ on their sleeve.” After arguing that Georgia did not break in the agreement in “letter or spirit,” the president then focused on the caricature of the female sponsor charge. He contended that the sponsor, a guest of a Georgia student, challenged her host to wear her first name on his back during the parade. When trouble ensued over the dare, the sponsor “had courage enough to take her share of the blame.” Georgia Tech officials, however, were not “manly enough” to accept their defeats on the baseball diamond, and instead, hid “behind the skirts of one of their loyal sponsors.” As a result, the charges were merely an unmanly effort “to put Georgia in the wrong.” The claim that Georgia “impugned” Georgia Tech’s patriotism was then addressed. The parade floats and their banners were never intended to offend and Georgia Tech “misconstrued” their meaning. The floats stemmed from a desire to honor the three members of Georgia’s 1916 football team who were killed in action in France. Devised by a Georgia student who had a brother at Georgia Tech, the banners “were only another little ‘family row’ injected into our annual senior parade.” Due to the harmless nature of the floats, Georgia’s student president concluded that four straight defeats in baseball explains “Tech’s grievances against Georgia.” Due to the “childish absurdity of the charges,” Georgia’s student body deemed the severance “entirely satisfactory.”<sup>29</sup>

In an effort to calm the rhetoric, a trustee of both institutions, William J. Simmons, published an editorial that was reprinted in the *Atlanta Constitution*. Recounting the events at that led to the severance, Simmons deemed “the incident a very regrettable one to the friends of both schools.” He then professed his belief that neither Barrow nor Sanford of Georgia “would have knowingly permitted any visiting team to be so grossly insulted upon its athletic field or

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<sup>29</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 25 May 1919.

that a senior class would be guilty of such outrageous impropriety and discourtesy.” Criticizing the faculty of Georgia Tech for acting “too hastily in so grave and serious matter” and not conferring with Georgia officials before severing relations, Simmons believed that the affair could have been “amicably adjusted and friendly relations preserved.” Due to the importance of the matter, he suggested that the trustees of both schools should intervene and resolve the disagreement. Agreeing with Simmons, the *Atlanta Constitution*’s sports editor considered the break “mere child’s play and wholly beneath the dignity of either institution.” Instead, the rivals should “shake hands in a manly spirit” and agree to “let bygones be bygones” for that is the “manly and sportsmanlike way.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the editorial pleas, the rivals stood firm and did not meet on the playing field for the 1920 football season. Although football fans were denied a contest, the Georgia Tech Board of Trustees offered a ray of hope that athletics would resume in the fall of that year. At their meeting, the trustees passed a resolution that called for the reestablishment of “friendly relations” and the formation of a committee comprised of students from both institutions to reach a settlement. The *Atlanta Constitution* praised the trustees for “inaugurating a movement that will undoubtedly lead to the re-establishment of friendly relation between the athletic activities of the two institutions.” Proclaiming that “sufficient time has elapsed for the boys to forget past differences,” the newspapers optimistically hoped for an “‘entente cordiale’ that will give the state the stellar football event of the year.” With Georgia Tech seemingly extending the olive branch, the eyes of the Georgia sporting world focused on Athens and awaited Georgia’s response.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 27 May 1919.

<sup>31</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 14 Oct. 1920.



The wait was in vain, for officials at Georgia were publically silent on the resolution. Exasperated at the prolonged silence, Clark Howell, the influential editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, wrote two letters to Sanford seeking an explanation. In his first letter, Howell stated that “for the life of me I cannot possibly understand why you” and other university officials have not “made any effort to make the position of the University clear.” Still seeking an explanation in the second letter, he informed Sanford that the silence painted Georgia in a bad light and encouraged criticism from the public who were unacquainted with all the facts. To remedy this, Howell encouraged Sanford to publically announce his support of the resolution and then request that Georgia Tech prove their sincerity by acting on the trustee’s suggestion and form the student led committee. This would demonstrate to the public that the athletic department of Georgia “is willing to do everything within its power to restore harmonious relations.” By refusing to comment or take action, Howell concluded that Georgia “is falsely placed in the humiliating position of blocking the effort at an adjustment of differences.”<sup>32</sup>

Howell was not alone in his criticisms of Georgia’s stance. Writing to the *Georgia Alumni Record*, an alumnus also expressed his discontent over the dispute. Praising the “real friends of these two institutions” for their work towards the resumption of athletics, he then demanded that leaders of both institutions “put aside small childish things” and become “real men.” Continuing the theme of manhood, he excoriated the leaders of Georgia for focusing on “trivial things” and not being “BIG enough to overlook such unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of a few irresponsible Freshmen.” A former letterman in football in baseball, the alumnus also demanded that Georgia athletic officials emulate athletes—“REAL MEN” who do not harbor “any animosity” toward their opponents. Since the leaders who controlled athletics were “big,

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<sup>32</sup> Clark Howell to S.V. Sanford, 17 Dec., 27 Dec. 1920, Folder 14, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

broadminded, high toned gentleman,” the alumnus rhetorically questioned why everyone could not “get together?”<sup>33</sup>

In light of these criticisms, the editor of the *Georgia Alumni Record* was quick to his alma mater’s defense and asserted that athletic officials at Georgia had never received an overture from athletic officials at Georgia Tech. To buttress his argument, the editor reprinted an editorial from Georgia Tech’s president Matheson. In the editorial, Matheson admitted that while the Board of Trustees did pass a resolution, “there was nothing mandatory...in the action of the board and the faculty, alumni and students of the Georgia School of Technology were of the officially expressed opinion that no overtures should be made.” In Matheson’s “twenty year” experience, “the best interests of the two institutions would be promoted by not renewing athletic relations.”<sup>34</sup>

The prolonged battle over control of the Atlanta sporting market explains the recalcitrance. With both schools facing chronic budget shortfalls due to a stingy state legislature, controlling the Atlanta sporting market remained paramount. A proposed triangular contract between Georgia Tech, Georgia and Oglethorpe University (a denominational university in Atlanta) illustrates how the institutions jockeyed for control of Atlanta. Under the terms of the detailed contract, Georgia Tech and Oglethorpe agreed to play each other in 1921 through 1923 and Georgia Tech would also play one Saturday game away from the city of Atlanta from 1920 to 1923. This would grant Oglethorpe at least one game yearly without competition from Georgia Tech. Georgia and Oglethorpe agreed to meet in 1920 and 1921 “on such a date as Tech is out of the city of Atlanta. Georgia could also play Alabama in Atlanta “without competition” from Georgia Tech in 1920 and 1921. Outside of those contests with Alabama and Oglethorpe,

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<sup>33</sup> *Georgia Alumni Record* Volume 1 (Jan 1921), 136-7.

<sup>34</sup> *Georgia Alumni Record* Volume 1 (Feb. 1921), 163-4.

Georgia had “to forego her right to play in Atlanta.” Recent success on the gridiron and control over one of the most desirable venues for college football in the Deep South allowed Georgia Tech to negotiate from a position of power and forced Georgia into a subservient position. The contract, however, was never fully agreed upon and tensions flared again as Georgia attempted to schedule a highly anticipated intersectional contest with Dartmouth in 1921.<sup>35</sup>

From the onset of collegiate football, intersectional contests between northern and southern teams attracted widespread interest nationwide. These contests were especially important to southerners, for it allowed them to test their mettle against their former enemies and regain some measure of lost pride. Northern teams, however, seldom travelled to the southland. It was therefore a coup for Georgia to have Dartmouth journey into Dixie. Recognizing the importance of the game, three prominent Atlanta businessmen and members of Georgia’s athletic association petitioned athletic officials at Georgia Tech to rent their stadium for the game. After considering the proposal, the Georgia Tech faculty decided that renting the stadium would not be “prudent.” Although the Georgia Tech senior class voted in support of the proposal, the faculty feared that “regrettable consequences” would ensue since “the sentiment among our students [was] divided on the question.”<sup>36</sup>

The speciousness of the refusal sparked outrage across the state. The editor of the local newspaper in Thomasville, Georgia opined that it was “a grave mistake” and Georgia Tech officials were “jealous of their prestige to an extent that seems to preclude anything of good of anything else, especially if it happens to be from Athens.” The editor concluded that there could “be no real ground for the refusal beyond intensity of hard feeling.” After reading the editorial, a local alumnus wrote Sanford and proclaimed that the piece “hits the nail on the head.” Although

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<sup>35</sup> Harold Hirsch to S.V. Sanford, 2 Nov. 1921, Folder 26, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>36</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6-8 Nov. 1921.

“times are hard,” the alumnus vowed to make a donation to Georgia fundraising drive to “insult” Georgia Tech. William Simmons, a member of both institutions Board of Trustees, also took offense at the refusal. Writing to Sanford, Simmons suggested playing the game at Ponce de Leon Park rather than “knuckle down” to Georgia Tech authorities.<sup>37</sup>

In the wake of the backlash, leading alumni from both schools conferred and negotiated an agreement. The Georgia Tech alumni then called a meeting with the Georgia Tech faculty and requested that they rescind their prior refusal and allow Georgia use of the stadium. With scant discussion, the faculty unanimously complied with the alumni’s request. Speaking for Georgia Tech afterwards, Chip Robert announced that “we want you men of Georgia to know that Tech wants to have you as our guests” and vowed that “Tech students will give Georgia the cordial treatment that southern tradition calls for a host to give an honored guest.” Prominent Atlanta attorney, Georgia alumnus and member of the Georgia Athletic Association, Harold Hirsch also pronounced that “we will feel honored to be Tech’s guests in its splendid football plant” and believed that “this incident will serve to bring the schools into that close relationship that is so necessary for the welfare of both.” Hirsch continued by stating that “if at any time this year or in years that have passed, Georgia has done anything to hurt the feelings of Georgia Tech, I want to say that we are sorry.” With the stadium dispute resolved, and a public apology from Georgia to boot, a new era in athletic relations seemed imminent. Under a headline that boasted “They Found The Way!” an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* “heartily congratulated” the settlement between the two rivals. Due to “the manly and conciliatory spirit of Tech and the prompt action of Georgia in taking the outstretched hand,” the editor confidently predicted that Georgia-Dartmouth game “will mark the end of hostilities that have existed between these two

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<sup>37</sup> *Daily Times Enterprise*, (Thomasville, GA) 9 Nov. 1921; W.F. MacIntyre to S.V. Sanford, 9 Nov. 1921; W.E. Simmons to S.V. Sanford, 17 Nov. 1921, Folder 26, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

great institutions.” With “the complete submergence of all past differences,” the editor gleefully foresaw Georgia and Georgia Tech meeting on Grant Field “for the greatest football game ever played south of the Ohio River” the following year.<sup>38</sup>

The sanguine prediction was wrong. A little over two years later, the *Atlanta Constitution* printed another editorial urging the athletic directors “to get together, forget the foolish differences of the past, and grasp hands in the grip of true ‘friendly enemies.’” After reading the “splendid” editorial, Sanford composed a personal letter to Clark Howell, the owner and editor of the newspaper. Concurring that Howell proposed “the real way in which to settle this unfortunate affair,” Sanford lamented that “for some unknown reason this can never be done.” He then pointedly asked, “Who is the responsible director at Tech? Do you know? If so kindly inform me.” Sanford then recounted that since the “unfortunate separation” occurred, he had frequently meet with Crenshaw, the director of athletics at Georgia Tech, while serving as the president of the Southern Intercollegiate Conference. In his official capacity, Sanford believed that he had “never failed to appoint [Crenshaw] on every committee of importance” and went “out of my way to be kind and considerate of him.” Although they attended athletic conferences together and “have met by special appointment to discuss athletic matters,” Crenshaw “never said a single word about renewing athletic relations.” Given Crenshaw’s silence, Sanford believed “that there is no possible way for me to bring the matter up.” Despite the fact that students at both schools “desire these contests” and “all the bitterness has passed away,” Sanford determined that “only one obstacle” stood in the way.<sup>39</sup>

The “one obstacle” standing in the way was honor—specifically the honor of Georgia Tech’s president Matheson. While economics and control over the Atlanta sporting market

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<sup>38</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11, 12 Nov. 1921.

<sup>39</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 3 March 1923; S.V. Sanford to Clark Howell, 5 March 1923, Folder 34, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

played a prominent role in continuing the feud, the role honor played cannot be overlooked. The parade floats with banners that “impugned” the honor and patriotism of Georgia Tech triggered the severance of athletic relations and sustained it. The insult was so great that a mere apology would not suffice. For Georgia Tech officials, a complete severance of athletic relations was the only appropriate response to the attack on their honor. Howell recognized this in a prior letter to Sanford in which he stated that “the truth is the whole trouble arises from the fact that Tech feels that its honor has been impugned and its loyalty attacked.” William Simmons, a prominent attorney and member of both Georgia and Georgia Tech’s Board of Trustees, revealed that Matheson was the one primarily offended in a letter to Sanford. Describing Matheson as the “ringleader against the University” and the man “largely responsible for the prejudice existing...at Tech,” Simmons confided that “no honorable adjustment of differences can be made as long as he remains there.” Thus with their honor at stake, Georgia Tech would not make the first move toward resuming athletic relations. Given the circumstances, the onus was on Georgia to make amends.<sup>40</sup>

Conversely, honor dictated how officials at Georgia should and could respond to Georgia Tech. Since Georgia Tech made the dispute an affair of honor and initiated the severance, officials at Georgia could not make peaceful overtures without potentially humiliating themselves and risking a loss of their honor. This explains Georgia’s prolonged public silence throughout the feud. To break the silence would imply an acknowledgement of wrong and jeopardize Georgia’s honor. The same letter from Simmons to Sanford regarding the feud again highlights the importance placed on maintaining honor. Discussing Howell and his desire to see the affair ended, Simmons regarded Howell “as one of the more leveable [sic] men I ever knew,

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<sup>40</sup> Clark Howell to S.V. Sanford, 7 Nov. 1921; William Simmons to S.V. Sanford, 17 Nov. 1921, Folder 26, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

but he hasn't any more backbone than a jelly fish, and positively, cannot be insulted." Given his temperament, Howell "would advise any sort of settlement" between the rivals, "however humiliating." Proclaiming himself "not made of that sort of stuff," Simmons believed that Sanford was "cast in a similar mold." In other words, both were men of honor and unwilling to publically humiliate themselves. Reinforcing the importance of honor, Simmons also recounted how Crenshaw "proclaimed eternal hostility to University, and declared he would not accept an explanation or apology" at a meeting of the Georgia Tech Board of Trustees. After hearing this, Simmons vowed that "I would not speak to you [Sanford] were you to be so craven as to bring a Georgia team on Grant field for a contest with Tech without Crenshaw having first apologized." Given the lingering importance of honor, neither Matheson, Crenshaw, or Sanford could initiate a settlement without further risking their honor and losing the respect of their peers.<sup>41</sup>

The resignation of Matheson in 1922 and the selection of M.L. Brittain as president of Georgia Tech offered the possibility of an "honorable adjustment of differences" and a renewal of athletic relations. Although the historical record is silent on who initiated talks or what was discussed, it is known that Sanford and Crenshaw began a series of meetings in 1924 to discuss the resumption of athletics. Through their talks, an agreement was brokered. The manner in which the agreement was publicized and its content further illustrates the role honor played in the dispute. After the meeting, Crenshaw insisted "that no public statement be given to any paper until a written statement signed both by you and by me is given jointly to the press" to "prevent any misunderstanding." Any "premature publication" not issued "jointly" would be "very unfortunate." To further insure that the discussion remained confidential until a jointly signed release was produced, Crenshaw secured agreements from the editors of Atlanta's leading papers to not publish anything "till it was given to all." Sanford concurred that their

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<sup>41</sup> William Simmons to S.V. Sanford, 17 Nov. 1921, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

discussion should remain “a confidential matter” and readily agreed to comply with Crenshaw’s request “to the best of my ability.” The need to make any public announcement a joint venture was paramount, for both parties had to appear as equals in the public eye. A one sided announcement to the press could place the other party in a bad light and further insult their honor. It was therefore imperative that neither side appear victorious or dominant over the other in the resolution.<sup>42</sup>

The terms of the resumption, outlined in a document signed by the president, athletics manager and student council president at each university, further demonstrates the role of honor in both the severance and reconciliation. Under the agreement all parties pledged to maintain “the high principles of good sportsmanship” and “abstain from any acts which may cause friction or ill feeling between the teams or members of the institutions.” Should “any acts occur,” both institutions vowed “to disavow immediately and officially all responsibility for said acts and to mete out to the perpetrators such punishment” that would discourage “further repetition” and remove “the cause of friction and resentment.” In the event that one party determined that athletics hindered “the scholastic work or athletics” at their institution, the agreement stipulated that “a discontinuance may be brought about by simply informing the other institution” in an “official letter.” Should a severance be requested, “no offense is to be taken.” As a result of this carefully worded agreement, the personal element was removed to prevent any future student or alumni pranks from escalating into affairs of honor between the two institutions. The perpetrators, not the institution, were to be held accountable. Moreover, the ease with each the agreement could be severed and the reasoning underlining the severance—to promote academics

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<sup>42</sup> J.B. Crenshaw to S.V. Sanford, 25 Feb. 1924; S.V. Sanford to J.B. Crenshaw, 26 Feb. 1924, J.B. Crenshaw to S.V. Sanford, 28 Feb. 1928; Folder 2, Box 8, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.



and athletics—provided an avenue for both parties to avoid humiliation and thus preserve their honor.<sup>43</sup>

After all parties signed the agreement, it was made public and the feud formally ended on March 1, 1924. The announcement made front page news at *The Atlanta Constitution* under the prominent headline “TECH AND GEORGIA REACH AGREEMENT TO RESUME ATHLETIC RELATIONS, INTERUPPTED SINCE 1919.” Several alumni wrote and sent congratulatory letters and telegrams to Sanford after learning the news. One alumni best summed the mood by writing, “I think it is fine! I have wished for this—in common I think, with thousands of Georgians—for many months. These fine boys and these splendid institutions ought not be at loggerheads in any respect.”<sup>44</sup>

Although the feud was officially over, scheduling conflicts prevented the playing of any football games until 1925, nine years since the last game and five and half years since Georgia Tech formally severed athletic relations. The schools also had to agree on a location for the game and the distribution of gate receipts—a thorny issue in the past. A formal contract resolved these issues. Under the terms of the signed contract, the game was to be played at Grant Field for three consecutive years. In addition, Georgia Tech would get 20% of gross gate receipts to cover “upkeep and improvements” of their stadium. Game day expenses such as “officials, advertising, tickets, police, ticket collectors, ushers, etc” were to then be deducted and the remaining balance equally divided. With this contract signed, football resumed between the two leading colleges in Georgia. While the allotment of tickets and seating locations posed problems for Georgia supporters over the next few years, “friendly” athletic relations persevered and the

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<sup>43</sup> Agreement between the University of Georgia and the Georgia School of Technology, 1 March 1924, Folder 3, Box 8, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>44</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2 March 1924; J.B. Norris to S.V. Sanford, 3 March 1924, Folder 3 Box 8, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

annual Georgia-Georgia Tech contest became a permanent fixture on the Georgia sporting calendar.

The hostilities between Georgia Tech and Georgia provide another opportunity to examine the confluence of old and new values inherent in the emerging modern South. Throughout their athletic history, Georgia and Georgia Tech engaged in a struggle over control of the Atlanta market. With its burgeoning population, proliferation of industry, and transportation systems, Atlanta was the crown jewel of the southern sporting world. The intense rivalry over this market reveals a transformation of collegiate football and southern society. Gone were the days of localized games played before small audiences. Instead, thanks to Atlanta's industrialization, football was poised to enter into the modern era. The rivalry, and prolonged severance of athletic relations, however, was more than just a modern business competition over markets. The importance of honor, a foundation of antebellum southern society, precipitated and prolonged the feud. The perceived attacks by Georgia students on Georgia Tech's courage, patriotism, and manhood necessitated an immediate cessation of athletic relations. In addition, the need to maintain one's standing within an honorific society dictated the terms of the settlement. The confluence of these two values, one old, one new, sheds light on the process by which the modern South emerged.

## Chapter Four

### **Unclean, Unmanly, Dishonest Sport: The SIAA, the Prevalence of Professionalism on Southern Gridirons, and the Americanization of Dixie**

In the spring of 1906, the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) determined that Clemson University student S.W. Dandridge had received money for playing summer baseball—a violation of SIAA’s eligibility rules. Subsequently, Dandridge was deemed a professional athlete and prohibited from participating in athletics at SIAA affiliated schools. In an effort to regain his amateur status for football, Dandridge wrote to W.M. Riggs, Clemson’s faculty advisor to athletics and an officer in the SIAA, and offered to refund the money. An outspoken proponent for clean athletics, Riggs tersely responded, “A man who receives money for athletic services is regarded as an athletic criminal, and he can no more restore himself to amateur standing than can a thief escape the consequences of his act by restoring the property.” Dandridge obviously did not regain his eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics.<sup>1</sup>

The Dandridge case indicates that the SIAA took an active stance in preserving purity and eliminating professionalism in southern collegiate football. Formed to organize and adopt a uniform system of eligibility standards, the SIAA was the leading athletic association in the South for nearly thirty years. Despite its presence, however, charges of professionalism and the use of tramp athletes were widespread during this nascent period of southern football. These abuses undermined the principles upon which college football was founded—to develop a sound mind within a sound body. Although editorials in student publications denounced

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<sup>1</sup> S.W. Dandridge to W.M. Riggs, 19 March 1906, Folder 1, Box 4, Athletic Council Records 1899-1996 (hereafter ACR) in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL).

professionalism as a threat to the spirit and purpose of athletics, they also highlight its prevalence. These editorials reveal that clean athletics were supported in theory, but not in practice—purity took a backseat to winning and prestige. Faculty and administrators at southern colleges were not immune to this mindset. Ostensibly the purveyors of purity, the faculty displayed a willingness to condone professionalism to protect their school's standing in the southern football world. The SIAA's protracted debate over the implementation of a one year rule highlights the faculty's duplicity in promoting clean and pure athletics. Comprised of faculty and administrators with dubious and self serving motives, the SIAA was a weak organization that did little to prevent professionalism in southern college football.

The role professionalism played in collegiate athletics has been a topic of study by sport historians. In his analysis on the controversial nature of collegiate football at northern universities, historian John Sayle Watterson argues that since its inception, controversy, scandals, and professionalism have plagued big-time college football. Although he identifies periods of reform, Watterson asserts that the reforms failed to curb college football's popularity or restore amateurism to the college gridiron. A reform movement during the early 1900s addressed the violence associated with the early game. Reacting to sensational newspaper accounts, critics demanded an end to the brutality. In response, reformers implemented rule changes—such as outlawing mass formation plays and establishing the forward pass—that created a more fluid game and ostensibly curtailed injuries. While these changes increased the popularity of the game, they did not halt the rampant cheating. During this period, coaches utilized ringers and colleges failed to establish eligibility requirements for players. The formation of conferences and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) ended some

of the more flagrant abuses, but football players continued to receive money, jobs, and other perks from alumni boosters and the schools themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The rampant cheating at northern institutions highlighted by Watterson also occurred in the South. These shared experiences on playing fields provide another avenue to examine the reconciliation process which incorporated the former Confederacy into the American mainstream. A gradual process that began in the late 1880s, and lasting well into the twentieth century, the “Americanization” of the South is a key step in the emergence of the modern South. As university officials in the SIAA grappled with the issue of eligibility, they were mirroring and following the lead of the northern counterparts. In doing so, they were injecting northern ideals into southern society and slowly transforming and Americanizing the region.<sup>2</sup>

From the onset, professionalism plagued nascent southern college football. During the first week of November in 1893, anticipation slowly built for the inaugural football contest between the University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology. The game marked Georgia Tech’s first foray onto an opponent’s field and the second contest ever played in Georgia’s home city of Athens. As the showdown loomed, questions emerged over the eligibility of some players on Georgia Tech’s team. Georgia supporters, claiming that “less than one third of the Tech team are regular students of the school,” threatened to not play the squad as representatives of Georgia Tech. Georgia would, however, play the contest if the team billed

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<sup>1</sup> John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Several works address the issue of reconciliation. See, Nina Sibling, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005). For the Americanization of the South, see James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); in the context of football, see David Turpie, “From Broadway to Hollywood: The Image of the 1939 University of Tennessee Football Team and the Americanization of the South,” *Journal of Sports History* 35, (Spring 2008): 119-140.

themselves as representatives of Atlanta athletics. To counter the charges and quell the rumors, Georgia Tech's football manager assured that every member of the team "is a bona fide student." Despite the assurances, Georgia's students and supporters remained skeptical.<sup>3</sup>

The skepticism was warranted. Peppering Georgia Tech's roster were non-students who violated the spirit of amateurism. Included on the team were Park Howell and John Kimball, both of whom played for Georgia the previous year. After graduating from Georgia, Howell studied medicine at Georgia Tech, while Kimball was an aspiring attorney in Atlanta. Georgia Tech's trainer and halfback, was Army surgeon, and future Medal of Honor winner, Lieutenant Leonard Wood. After distinguishing himself for his rugged ability to endure deprivations in the campaign to capture Geronimo, Wood was stationed in Fort McPherson in Atlanta. Craving additional excitement, and a student of football, Wood enrolled in graduate classes to assist in the development of Georgia Tech's team. T.W. Reed, a Georgia alumnus and longtime University of Georgia Registrar, described Wood as "one of the most powerful men, physically, I ever saw." Although not tall, "his shoulders and chest were tremendous and his legs resembled a couple of large posts."<sup>4</sup>

A literal man amongst boys, the thirty-three year old Wood ran over Georgia's players during the game. Using his immense strength, Wood "seemed to take delight in grabbing two Georgia boys and bumping their heads together." Led by Wood, Georgia Tech secured a commanding 18-0 lead at halftime. Due to Georgia Tech's dominance, Georgia fans became unruly, and depending upon the account, started throwing rocks at Georgia Tech's team. Reed, a Georgia supporter, denied that Georgia fans hurled rocks, but did concede that "small boys did

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<sup>3</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1-4, Nov. 1893.

<sup>4</sup> T.W. Reed, "History of the University of Georgia," 3436-7, unpublished manuscript, available online from the Digital Library of Georgia; John F. Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field: Early Days on a Southern Gridiron* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 14-20.

throw clods of earth” and one of the clods “evidently had a rock in it.” One rock struck Wood just above the right eye and caused a three inch gash that soon bled profusely. Despite losing a “considerable amount of blood,” Wood continued to play and would occasionally “wipe his bleeding brow and then plaster the face of some Georgia player with a handful of blood.” Through Wood’s heroics, Georgia Tech trounced Georgia 28-6. After the game, Reed recalled that Georgia’s captain called for three cheers for the victors and the team “was courteously treated” until they departed for Atlanta.<sup>5</sup>

A Georgia Tech player, however, recalled a less cordial treatment. He stated that after the game “we were greeted with a shower of rocks, sticks, and other missiles.” The player feared that he and his teammates would be “mobbed and strung up.” While the other players scurried for cover in a hasty retreat toward the train station, Wood “walked off the field, the center of attack, just as if nothing had happened, as cool under the heavy fire as if he had been in a drawing room.” Wood would later achieve fame as Teddy Roosevelt’s commanding officer in the Spanish-American War, serve as military governor of Cuba, and nearly become the Republican presidential nominee in the 1920 election. Years later, the University of Georgia awarded Wood an honorary degree. At the ceremony, Woods wryly stated, “I beg to assure you that the reception accorded me on this happy occasion is much more cordial than the one I received when I paid my first visit to your beautiful campus.”<sup>6</sup>

The dubious means by which Wood and others achieved eligibility contributed to the hostility of Georgia fans. After the game, a Georgia supporter indignantly proclaimed that while Georgia was defeated, it was not by Georgia Tech students. Instead, Georgia played a “heterogeneous collection of Atlanta residents—a United States Army Surgeon, a medical

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<sup>5</sup> Reed, “History of the University of Georgia,” 3436.

<sup>6</sup> Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 18; Reed, “History of the University of Georgia, 3438.

student, a lawyer, and an insurance agent among them, with here and there a student of Georgia's School of Technology thrown in to give the mixture a Technological flavor." An editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* questioned how Kimball, Howell, and Wood can be considered "bona fide students" and criticized Georgia Tech for matriculating men who have been out of school for years "for the sole purpose of playing and calling them bona fide students." Claiming that most of Georgia Tech's players "make no pretense of pursuing course at the Technological school," the editorial concluded that Georgia Tech's "athletic record will soon be looked upon with disdain by the college world."<sup>7</sup>

The controversy surrounding the contest highlights the fluid nature of collegiate football eligibility and reveals the need for a governing body to dictate what constitutes a bona fide student. The outcry undoubtedly motivated Charles Herty, a chemistry professor and founder of Georgia's football program, to form such an organization. At his request, representatives from several southern colleges convened at Atlanta's Kimball House hotel on December 22, 1894. The representatives met to develop an organization, based upon those already in place outside the South, to supervise, promote, and purify southern intercollegiate athletics. Responding to Herty's call were representatives from the University of North Carolina, Vanderbilt, University of the South, Auburn University, and Georgia Tech. Almost immediately the members drafted a constitution, elected an executive committee, and christened the new organization the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA). W.L. Dudley, a chemistry professor at Vanderbilt, was elected president, while Herty was elected Secretary and Treasury. The committee then submitted copies to numerous southern colleges for their approval.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field*, 18; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 5 Nov. 1893.

<sup>8</sup> *The Red and Black*, 5 Jan. 1895.



Student newspaper editors and contributors were initially supportive of the SIAA and the need for pure athletics. The student editor of the *Red and Black* hailed the formation of the SIAA, praised the committee's work and urged the University of Georgia's athletic association to quickly adopt the constitution for "it will mean much for the improvement of Athletics in Southern colleges." Two years later, the newspaper touched on the importance of pure athletics in a glowing article on Georgia's football coach, Charles McCarthy. A former fullback from Brown University, McCarthy easily won the admiration "and good will of the student body." After playing for Brown and serving as an assistant coach, McCarthy "came South because he recognized a great field for his work." During his tenure at Georgia, McCarthy "has done more for the advancement of athletics than any of his predecessors" for he believes in pure college athletics and is a strong believer in the Southern Intercollegiate Association."<sup>9</sup>

Although student editors professed a support for clean athletics, programs still practiced professionalism. In 1899, the SIAA punished Mercer University, a Baptist denominational college in Macon, Georgia, for employing non-students to play baseball. Mercer was suspended from the association and SIAA members were prohibited from scheduling football and baseball contests with the college. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported that it had "been the custom to secure men from outside the student body to play on the college team" at Mercer. In response to the punishment, Mercer's faculty issued an order prohibiting the "employment of outside men" because it "was not in accordance with pure athletics." At the SIAA's annual meeting, a representative from Mercer confessed the institution's guilt and concurred with the justness of the suspension. He further announced that the incident opened "the eyes of the Faculty and students to the importance of pure amateur college sport." In response, "the Faculty had taken active control of athletics at Mercer" and implemented a high standard of scholarship for future

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<sup>9</sup> *The Red and Black*, 5 Jan. 1895; 30 Oct. 1897.

athletes. As a result of these measures, the representative promised that “that there would be no trouble after this.” Due to the frank admission of guilt, the SIAA unanimously voted to reinstate Mercer.<sup>10</sup>

The editor of the Mercer student literary magazine responded to the suspension and subsequent reinstatement in a series of editorials highlighting the prevalence of professionalism in collegiate athletics and desire for clean athletics. The editorial began by praising the SIAA for its “splendid service” and successful efforts “to put Southern athletics on a clean basis” and proclaimed that “they deserve the hearty support of every college and university in the South.” Attempting to justify Mercer’s actions, the editor noted that nothing is “more easily abused than college athletics and quite too many of our colleges fall before the temptation of resorting to unfair methods.” The editor further decried that there “is hardly a Southern college in a position to ‘cast the first stone.’” The editorial then denounced non-students playing for the sole sake of winning. When professional athletes supplant students, they discouraged the playing of sports for the sole sake of playing and prevented the fostering of school spirit. This “defeats the aims and ends of college athletics.” Therefore, “real athletics” can only exist in “a pure athletic atmosphere.”<sup>11</sup>

In a subsequent editorial, the editor again elaborated on the purpose of college athletics and the dangers of professionalism. The editorial began by reprinting the inaugural address of Yale’s President A.T. Hadley. After condemning professionalism in his address, Hadley then expanded the definition of professionalism to include participating in sports for the sake of advertising personal prowess and success. Instead, participants should develop a “love of sport for its own sake.” The Mercer editor ostensibly reprinted the address because he deemed it

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<sup>10</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8 Dec. 1899; *The Red and Black*, 13 Jan. 1900.

<sup>11</sup> “Clean Athletics,” *The Mercurian* (Jan. 1900), 35-6.

“interesting to our readers” and it reaffirmed the purpose of collegiate athletics. His real motives, however, were to highlight how professionalism was also rampant in northern universities and gloat that Mercer had already developed “a purer and better system.” Another editorial offered yet another definition of professionalism and again praised Mercer’s purity and the SIAA’s diligence. Defining professionalism as “freedom from ‘betting’ and absolute abstinence from cheating” to win, the writer boasted, that to “win by any other means is beneath Mercer’s dignity.” Thanks to the “wise and sound principles embodied in the constitution of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association,” cheating and professionalism were on the decline in collegiate athletics. The editorial concluded with a belief that in the near future “pure athletics” would trump winning by dishonorable and unmanly means.<sup>12</sup>

That day had apparently yet to arrive, for a subsequent edition of the *Mercurian* asserted that “too often, so called college teams have been composed of ‘special students,’ secretly paid for their services, or of men whose averages fall far below the required scholarship.” The editor lamented that students deemed athletics “a trade” and a “source of material gain.” This mindset fostered the development of a “mercenary spirit” which eroded the principles of athletics—“sincerity, scholarship, manhood, college spirit.” At Mercer, however, “teams are composed of *bona fide* students, who participate in sport from love of the game.” By adhering to the SIAA’s eligibility rules, Mercer had “pure, wholesome helpful athletics.” Echoing previous writers, the editor recommended the “adoption of some such policy to all other colleges that have not already taken steps in this direction.” These editorials reveal the ambivalent nature of collegiate athletics: prevalent professionalism on one hand, and a clinging belief that amateur athletics

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<sup>12</sup> “Athletics,” *The Mercurian* (May 1900), 34-5; “Editorial Views,” *The Mercurian* (April 1903), 230-1.

functioned as a means to foster school spirit and develop the ideal of a sound mind in a sound body, on the other.<sup>13</sup>

The actions of the University of Georgia athletic association in the wake of the Mercer suspension, and a subsequent editorial in the *Red and Black*, also highlight the ambivalent attitude towards pure athletics. After Mercer's suspension, Georgia's athletic association passed a resolution reaffirming the SIAA prohibition on compensating athletes for their services. This demonstrated that "the governing body in University athletics realizes the necessity for pure amateur athletics in college sports." By passing the resolutions, the athletic association declared "to all the determination of Georgia to remain closer to the letter of the S.I.A.A. law than she has ever before, and promise that our teams shall set an example in the matter of genuine athletics that will be worthy the emulation of every southern college." The newspaper's editor "heartily" approved of the resolution and encouraged other southern institutions to adopt a similar measure. This would "go far toward the promotion of pure athletics in the South in practice as well as in theory." The editorial also opined that paid players violate the spirit and purpose of college athletics—"the simultaneous well rounded development of both body and mind." A team comprised of professionals prevented student participation in athletics since "no place on the team can be held out to them when somebody has been paid to fill the position." To preserve the noble purpose of college athletics, and in all likelihood insure that Georgia did not suffer a competitive disadvantage, the editor urged all southern colleges to "exercise the most diligent care in ascertaining the bona fide character of the men who compose their teams." Otherwise, "college athletics must fail utterly of its aim and purpose."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Dangers to College Athletics," *The Mercurian* (Feb. 1905), 154.

<sup>14</sup> *The Red and Black*, 24 Feb. 1900.

Another editorial also highlights the complex sentiments students held towards the SIAA and pure athletics. Deeming athletics, and especially football, “a part of college life,” the editorial then lamented that fielding a pure football team places Georgia at a competitive disadvantage. By no longer fielding a team of illegal players, a practice that was “somewhat prevalent here in the past,” Georgia’s “football eleven is laboring under very great disadvantages,” for the scarcity of good material from legitimate students “make a winning eleven possible only with the unanimous support of every student and every faculty member.”<sup>15</sup> An editorial published several years later echoes the belief that adhering to clean athletics placed the football program at a disadvantage. Boasting that the university was “fortunate in having a football team composed of bona fide students,” the editor believed “that it will prove a winning combination” on the playing field. If not, however, the editor claimed that “the sentiment in college is strongly in favor of pure athletics even at an expense of a few lost games.” In the event of a disappointing season, supporters could find solace “even if ‘all be lost save honor.’”<sup>16</sup>

Simultaneously, student publications at Mercer and Georgia were also openly critical of the SIAA and its stance on pure athletics. The criticisms further indicate the complicated and contradictory beliefs held on professionalism in athletics. An editorial at Mercer took umbrage at the SIAA’s new rule that disbarred baseball players who participated in summer contests for payment. Arguing that intercollegiate contests were commercial enterprises that required gate receipts to cover expenses, the editorial deemed the new rule hypocritical. Students who participated in summer contests also incurred expenses and it was only just that they be compensated for their efforts. Not allowing students to receive compensation for expenses during summer would “restrain him from playing under the same conditions as exist while he is

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<sup>15</sup> *The Red and Black*, 30 Oct. 1900.

<sup>16</sup> *The Red and Black*, 2 Oct. 1906.

on the field in the interest of his institution.” The editor predicted that the new rule would be unenforceable and would become “a source of a great deal of wrangling over preferred charges.” As a result, pure athletics would become polluted for “the temptation to disregard the rulings of the Association has been greatly increased.”<sup>17</sup>

The *Red and Black* was also highly critical of the SIAA after they prohibited Georgia from playing a home football contest with North Carolina State University. Prior to playing Georgia, North Carolina State, an institution that was not a member of the SIAA, had scheduled a contest with Clemson University. Just before the game, Clemson protested North Carolina State’s use of three players who had received money for playing summer baseball—a violation of SIAA rules. Since the SIAA prohibited its members from playing teams that featured players ineligible under SIAA rules, Clemson vainly tried to have North Carolina State bench the offenders. North Carolina State refused and Clemson played the contest anyway. In a game “devoid of spectacular plays,” North Carolina State tied Clemson 0-0. Afterwards, however, Clemson’s faculty advisor to athletics and regional vice-president of the SIAA, Walter Riggs, announced that henceforth any team that plays North Carolina State would be blacklisted. In response to the edict, North Carolina State abruptly cancelled the upcoming game with Georgia with scant notification. Unable to schedule another foe, Georgia supporters seethed and “comments of condemnation” directed towards North Carolina State for breaking the their contract and depriving Georgia of a contest were heard “all along the streets.”<sup>18</sup>

In a letter to W.L. Dudley, President of the SIAA, Riggs explained his decision to allow Clemson to play the game despite North Carolina State’s use of ineligible players. After scheduling the contest with the understanding that SIAA eligibility rules would be applied,

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<sup>17</sup> “Editorial Views,” *The Mercurian* (Jan. 1904), 111.

<sup>18</sup> *The Red and Black*, 27 Oct. 1906; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 26 Oct. 1906; W.M. Riggs to W.L. Dudley, 8 Nov. 1906, Folder 3, Box 4, ACR in Special Collections, CUL.

Riggs received a telegram from North Carolina State which stated that they “would use the men protested or cancel the game.” Already en route to the game with the team, Riggs requested a meeting with North Carolina State’s athletic manager prior to kickoff. During the meeting, the manager conceded that two players were ineligible, but claimed they “did not have enough men to play them game” without them. Although Riggs informed him that North Carolina State would be blacklisted from playing SIAA teams unless the men were excluded, the manager remained steadfast. Due to North Carolina State’s intractability, Riggs opted to play the contest “under protest.” To justify not cancelling the contest, Riggs informed Dudley that “we would have forfeited the expense of the Clemson team in going to Columbia,” the site of the game. In addition, Riggs stated that “we would have lost \$1000.00 in profit from the contest, and as this is one of the only games from which we draw our revenue, we could not think of calling it off when it was too late to get another team.”<sup>19</sup>

The *Red and Black* soundly criticized and condemned Riggs’s actions. Recognizing the hypocrisy, the editors claimed that Riggs’s decision also cost Georgia “a considerable sum of money” in lost gate receipts. Noting Georgia’s financial straits, the editorial sarcastically stated that if the “zealous and impartial (???) officials of the SIAA continue to look after our ‘interest’ in this matter,” Georgia’s football program would “put out of business by a superabundance of kindness.” The editor also rhetorically wondered if Riggs had overstepped his authority and questioned his motives. Although an officer in the SIAA, Riggs had no jurisdiction over either North Carolina or Georgia. Subsequently, the editor decried that Riggs’s “interference in our affairs is neither called for nor desired” and stridently proclaimed that it was none of Riggs’s “blooming business” who Georgia schedules.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Riggs to Dudley, 8 Nov. 1906, Folder 3, Box 4, ACR, CUL.

<sup>20</sup> *The Red and Black*, 27 Oct. 1906.

Still stinging over the cancelled contest, the *Red and Black* again took umbrage against the SIAA's eligibility requirements one week later. The editorial began by praising the SIAA's "theoretically perfect" eligibility standards. Theory and practice, however, were not in accordance for the editor knew "positively of instances of where men who were ineligible under the new rules were allowed by opposing colleges to continue work on their team because for some hidden reason it would be impolitic to throw them off." As a result, "the old evil" of professionalism "is not obviated." The editor then questioned the rule that deemed students who received travelling expenses or "slight enumeration" for playing summer baseball games professionals. As a result, these otherwise "bona fide" students were permanently prohibited from participating in intercollegiate athletics. Labeling this an "injustice," the editor highlighted the case of two Georgia students to demonstrate the perceived flaws in the law. Although the SIAA declared them professionals, both students remained in college despite their inability to play intercollegiate athletics. If the SIAA would correct "these weak points in the rules of the association," the editor promised a "support which is impossible so long as they accomplish more harm than good."<sup>21</sup>

A year later in 1907, however, the editors took a strong stance against professionalism and adopted a more conciliatory tone towards the SIAA. Admitting that Georgia's alumni had previously donated money to fund a "semi-professional, but gloriously successful team," the editor revealed that alumni had again come forward with an offer to fund professional players. The alumni were motivated by the belief that "professionalism does not injure the University as much as a losing team." Rejecting their offer, the editor proclaimed that "we have taken an unalterable stand for pure athletics" and "have become allied with the S.I.A.A" to keep athletics at Georgia "immaculately clean." Although the SIAA, "has connived at and swallowed unfair

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<sup>21</sup> *The Red and Black*, 2 Nov. 1906.



practices at sister institutions until it has shaken public confidence,” the editorial announced “we have signified our intention of remaining in its membership and conforming to its regulations in letter and spirit.” By remaining true to the SIAA, despite its perceived biases, the editor boasted that “the condition of athletics at Georgia rises above any comparison that can be made.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite assurances from the *Red and Black*, rumors of professionalism swirled throughout the sporting world. In a letter to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Captain E.J. Williams of the United States Army asserted that unfair practices abounded in collegiate athletics. Stationed at North Georgia Agricultural College, a two year agricultural and military college, Williams wrote that “he has become acquainted with dishonest practices of the athletic associations of some of our institutions of learning—institutions that are members of the SIAA.” Although he did not name names, from the context it is evident he means the University of Georgia, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Mercer College. Although a supporter of athletics, Williams was “disgusted by the methods adopted by some of the associations in this state.” He contended that college teams “are composed to a great extent of professional players” who are being paid by the school’s athletic associations. One team had “a practicing lawyer” on its team; while a player at another institution remarked that he quit his job because “he could make more money playing football.” Although SIAA regulations required players to sign oaths stating they do not receive any compensation for athletics, Williams speculated that athletic associations have a “go-between to do the paying of the money for the hire of athletics.” He also condemned the SIAA, by asserting that the organization was aware of this practice, yet did nothing. Williams concluded his letter with a hope that the newspapers would “take up the cudgel and bring about

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<sup>22</sup> *The Red and Black*, 12 Oct. 1907.

an upheaval that would clean up the rottenness which is a stench in the nostrils of all fair minded enthusiasts.”<sup>23</sup>

Williams’s accusations proved to be correct. After a crushing 0-15 home loss to the University of Tennessee during the second week of the season, Georgia’s coach, J.S. Whitney, dismantled his roster and renewed competition for team positions. Simultaneously, four strangers, rumored to be excellent football players, appeared on campus. The newcomers, however, did not participate in Georgia’s next two contests—a victory against Mercer and a 0-0 tie against the University of Alabama. Excitement quickly spread for Georgia’s next contest against in-state rival Georgia Tech—a team that had soundly defeated Georgia three straight years by an aggregate score of 86-6. In Athens, merchants announced they would cancel students’ debts if Georgia won and wagers in excess of \$1000 were placed on Georgia. Coach Whitney held closed practices and rumors swirled that the four newcomers were indeed ringers brought in solely to defeat Georgia Tech.<sup>24</sup>

Aware of the rumors, Georgia’s Dean, C.M. Snelling, met with Georgia Tech President K.G. Matheson three days prior to kickoff. During the meeting, Snelling acknowledged the rumors, but admitted that university officials lacked evidence to deem the newcomers ineligible. To insure that only eligible players played, Snelling then requested that both teams adhere to the one year rule, whereby only students who had been enrolled for a full eight months of the previous term be allowed to participate. Although this would have benefitted Georgia Tech since Georgia would have lost more players, Matheson rejected this proposal on the grounds that it “would probably cause trouble” in subsequent contests. Snelling then proposed that the game be cancelled. Matheson again rejected this request because “it was too short a time before the

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<sup>23</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 24 Oct. 1907.

<sup>24</sup> Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field*, 79-80.

game and the public had rights which must be protected.” As a result, the game was played under a cloud of suspicion.<sup>25</sup>

Coach Whitney’s actions prior to the game only magnified the suspicion. Arriving with his team in Atlanta, Whitney refused to name his players on the hotel registry, forbade a team photograph, and did not release his starting lineup until moments before kickoff. During the contest, Georgia Tech took a 10-0 lead into halftime. During the second half, Georgia scored a touchdown to cut the lead down to four. With time expiring and darkness descending on the playing field, Georgia drove down the field for a game winning touchdown. To illuminate the field, cars parked along the far sideline turned on their headlights and “in the wink of an eye 200 yellow ribbons of light pierced the darkness in an admirable attempt to light up the gridiron.” Under the artificial glare of headlights, Georgia drove to Georgia Tech’s one yard line. Georgia Tech’s goal line defense, however, held and Georgia suffered another defeat. Immediately after the game, two of Georgia’s players left the state and two more were expelled by the faculty.<sup>26</sup>

Eleven days later, prominent sportswriter Grantland Rice exposed Georgia’s use of ringers in an article first published in the *Nashville Tennessean*. Rice confirmed from “reliable sources” that Whitney “used at least four ringers.” The ringers were former players from Georgetown and Syracuse Universities, who on the train ride home, confessed “that they had received \$150 and all expenses from the Georgia management.” Rice fumed that “of all the bare-faced and flagrant violations of collegiate sport, the stunt perpetuated by the University of Georgia in her game against Tech sets a new limit.” To preserve purity in collegiate athletics, he urged “that the present athletic body at Athens should be turned out in toto and a new regime established.” Rice also condemned Professor Holmes of Mercer, the SIAA regional Vice

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<sup>25</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 Nov. 1907; Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 79-80.

<sup>26</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 Nov. 1907; Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 81-83.

President in charge of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, for not censuring the University of Georgia. Labeling Holmes “honest and well meaning but most evidently incapable of his post,” Rice asserted that the SIAA must take action “if the high purpose and integrity of [the SIAA] is to be maintained.”<sup>27</sup>

Rice’s accusations unleashed a flurry of activity. The following day, Coach Whitney promptly resigned and left the state to resume work with the General Electric Company. In addition, Holmes suspended Georgia from the SIAA and ordered Clemson and Auburn to cancel their upcoming contests with Georgia. In an editorial, the *Atlanta Constitution* declared that “Clean, manly, honest sport: straight contests of skill, endurance and courage; exhibits of self control, trained mental and physical faculties by bona fide college men are what the public expects in an intercollegiate contest.” The accusation against Georgia was therefore “a serious one” for it undermined the purpose and popularity of football. The editorial urged the faculty to promptly launch an investigation and emphasize its opposition “to such a violation of football ethics” to preserve the sport’s integrity. Another editorial lamented that “the football season has a severe crimp in it just because one team, in a burning desire to take one game, ran in some players over whom hangs a cloud of suspicion.” As result, Georgia’s football program was “in an awful muddle, coachless, suspended from S.I.A.A. and with the schedule uncompleted because she was over anxious to win game.” More importantly, however, was the forced cancellation of the upcoming contest with Clemson, for “Atlanta will be without football on Saturday.”<sup>28</sup>

One day later, Georgia’s Athletic Director, S.V. Sanford, issued a denial of the charges in a statement printed in the *Atlanta Constitution*. In the cautiously worded release, Sanford began

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<sup>27</sup> *The Nashville Tennessean*, 13 Nov. 1907, reprinted in *The Atlanta Constitution*, 14 Nov. 1907.

<sup>28</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 15 Nov. 1907.

by denying that Georgia conducted secret practices before the contest with Georgia Tech and stated that “it is not true that any player received any money or expenses from the Georgia management.” Sanford, however, backpedaled from his firm denial by acknowledging that if a player received money, “no member of the university faculty or the athletic management was cognizant of the fact.” He further conceded that money “may have been used and it may not have been.” He then reiterated that if players were paid, “it was without the knowledge of the athletic department of the university or the faculty.” Sanford also proclaimed that “every member of the team registered regularly” and all new students were “closely questioned as to their reasons for entering the university before being permitted to do so.” Despite the scrutiny, Sanford confessed that several students had concealed their identities by registering under false names for the purpose of playing football. Sanford again professed ignorance and stated that the faculty and athletic department had “no knowledge of any such concealment, being forced to rely on the names given in the registry book of the institution.”<sup>29</sup>

While Georgia’s football program remained in limbo, Holmes unexpectedly suspended Georgia Tech from the SIAA and charged them with professionalism two days later. The suspension stemmed from affidavits, which according to Sanford, “provided absolute proof of professionalism through the retention of men who were receiving money for becoming and remaining players Tech.” Included in the charges were Georgia Tech’s president Matheson, Coach John Heisman, and six of Georgia Tech’s players—Robert, Davis, Buchanan, Johnson, Fitzsimmons, and Sims. The charges against Sims appeared to have the most merit, for Daniel Shoe Company, a local clothing firm, provided Sims with a commission for every Georgia Tech student he referred. In a statement to the press, President Matheson, however, acknowledged that he had approved Sims’s employment arrangement after consulting with Holmes to verify its

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<sup>29</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 15 Nov. 1907.

legitimacy. The president of Daniel Shoe Company, L.J. Daniels, also published a statement defending Sims. Daniels wrote that Coach Heisman approached him about employing Sims to help him “pay his expenses through school.” “Anxious to obtain the trade of the students,” Daniels readily agreed. Sims apparently proved to be a poor salesman, for the merchant “had yet to pay out one cent” to him. Georgia Tech’s Director of Athletics, J.S. Randle, also professed the institution’s innocence. Nonetheless, he suspended the six players until the charges were cleared, and stated that “Tech would abide by the ruling of the association.”<sup>30</sup>

Recognizing that suspending Mercer’s instate rivals placed him in a “embarrassing situation,” Holmes then requested that the SIAA’s full executive committee convene to evaluate the evidence and render judgment on the charges against both Georgia and Georgia Tech. On November 22, the full executive committee—consisting of Holmes, Riggs, and Dudley of Vanderbilt, and B.L. Wiggins of Sewanee —met at the Piedmont hotel in Atlanta. Over the objection of Heisman, who wanted the meeting open to the public because “Tech has nothing to conceal and would be only too glad for the facts to be given the fullest exploitation,” the committee deliberated behind closed doors for two days. With public interest in the meeting “at a fever heat,” “friends of both college thronged the lobby of the Piedmont” creating a “football-talk laden atmosphere.” During the meeting, the executive committee first addressed the suspension of the two institutions from the SIAA, and quickly concurred that the suspensions violated SIAA bylaws. Subsequently Georgia and Georgia Tech were quickly reinstated. The committee then examined the specific charges levied against each institution, examining “witness after witness...from morning till late at night.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 19, 20, Nov. 1907.

<sup>31</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 19, 22, 23, Nov. 1907.

During the long session, the committee cleared Georgia Tech's players, coaches, and administration of any wrongdoing. The executive committee determined that Sims was engaged in "a bona fide business transaction" and there "was no evidence to show that this arrangement was in anyway a subterfuge for the evasion of the laws" of the SIAA. The committee did, however, "strongly" recommend that institutions "carefully investigate all such arrangements so as to guard against remuneration for nominal or inadequate services." The committee also exonerated coach Heisman for paying Sims fourteen dollars for playing in a contest. It was determined that Heisman merely reimbursed Sims for his travel expenses, and subsequently, "there was no violation to the letter and spirit" of the SIAA's laws. Finally, the charges against the five other players for allegedly receiving money were also dropped because the accuser, R.R. Cofer a former member of the Georgia Tech team, recanted his prior affidavit. In the affidavit, Cofer attested that players had indeed received financial inducements for playing football. After the recantation and lacking additional evidence, the committee determined that charge "could not be sustained." Having exonerated Georgia Tech, the committee then focused on the allegations against Georgia.<sup>32</sup>

Initially, the executive committee had planned to table the case against Georgia until the SIAA's regular meeting in December. Sanford, however, successfully "demanded" that Georgia's case be heard immediately after Georgia Tech's. During the hearing, the committee ascertained that four men, "ringers in every sense of the word," had matriculated ten days prior to the Georgia Tech game for the sole purpose of playing in the contest. Two of the men left town immediately after the contest, while the other two were dismissed by the faculty days later. Although the committee determined that "University authorities knew that at least four men had been imported for the team," they did not pursue the matter any further. Instead, they primarily

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<sup>32</sup>*The Atlanta Constitution*, 24 Nov. 1907.

focused on Georgia playing Charlie Cox against Alabama and allowing Joe Rossiter onto the team—seemingly less serious transgressions. Three years prior, the SIAA had deemed Cox a professional and disbarred him from participation in SIAA sanctioned contests. Despite the ban, the committee determined that Georgia’s coach Whitney allowed Cox to play “in direct violation” of the faculty’s instructions. Rossiter, like Cox, had also previously been blacklisted from the SIAA, but nonetheless participated in all of Georgia’s games. The administration at Georgia, however, professed ignorance on the legislation which disbarred Rossiter. As a result of these charges, the executive committee concluded that “a condition of affairs has prevailed at the University of Georgia during this season, which has resulted in a grave scandal to that institution and the association of which it is a member.”<sup>33</sup>

In the wake of the hearing, the committee unquestionably accepted “the assurance of Chancellor Barrow that the university faculty was ignorant of, and not responsible for the causes leading up to this deplorable condition of affairs.” Sanford, however, was publicly censured when the committee declared that “with proper supervision and due diligence on the part of the athletic director and his advisory committee, this scandal would never have arisen.” The committee then permanently debarred coach Whitney from “coaching any team in this association, or serving in any capacity, in connection with any team.” The committee also requested that Georgia’s administration launch an “immediate inquiry” into Georgia’s team captain Kyle Smith’s role in the playing of Cox and recommended that he also be disbarred if he was also involved. The executive committee concluded the meeting by professing their confidence that Barrow and the faculty “would investigate more thoroughly the state of affairs that has existed at the University,” eliminate “any source of corruption,” and punish any

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<sup>33</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23, 24 Nov. 1907.



offenders to “prevent any recurrence of the disgraceful conditions.” Despite its guilt, Georgia did not receive any punishment from the SIAA.<sup>34</sup>

After evaluating the hearing and the committee’s verdicts, an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* expressed surprise that the SIAA removed the suspension on Georgia, given the institution’s guilt in hiring ringers. It was widely believed that if these charges proved true, “either suspension or blacklist would surely follow.” The leniency displayed towards Georgia caused some unbiased observers to question if the SIAA had “failed to do its duty” and set a poor example. By allowing Georgia to “go scot free,” critics contended that other programs would soon follow suit. The editor speculated that since “no one pushed charges against the university,” not even arch rival Georgia Tech, the committee “had no desire to see the Red and Black go down and out,” despite the flagrant violation. The editor also praised Georgia Tech for bearing “herself nobly throughout the period of suspension and during the meeting” and hoped that “the strenuous ‘house cleaning’ will be beneficial.”<sup>35</sup>

The “house cleaning” that ensued over Georgia’s use of paid ringers further reflects the ambivalence towards professionalism in early college football. While Georgia’s use of ringers unleashed howls of protest, the protests rang hollow. In a position to take a firm stand against professionalism by severely punishing Georgia, the SIAA’s leadership opted instead to merely make coach Whitney a temporary scapegoat—he was reinstated one year later. In doing so, the organization gave tacit approval for schools to continue violating the spirit of amateurism. Yet again, actions spoke louder than ineffective words of denunciation against professionalism. The protracted debate over the one year rule which resulted from the scandal further reveals the SIAA’s weakness. Faculty members who comprised the SIAA were more concerned with

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<sup>34</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 24 Nov. 1907.

<sup>35</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 25 Nov. 1907.

promoting their school's interest over maintaining purity. Throughout the fifteen year debate, athletic purity took a backseat to winning.

In the wake of the scandal, SIAA members, during their annual meeting, began discussing the possibility of adding a one year rule, whereby a student must be enrolled a full year before participating in athletics. Vice Chancellor Wiggins of Sewanee stated that although he was not in favor of the rule, he would not offer any opposition if it were put before a vote. Holmes, of Mercer, announced his strong support of the rule, believing that it would prevent "the entry in college athletics of professionalists hired for a single season." Students at Georgia requested that their school withdraw from the SIAA if a one year was not passed. Sympathetic with the student's sentiment, Georgia's newly formed athletic association passed a resolution which instructed its representative "to urge the adoption" of the one year rule. Riggs of Clemson, also voiced his support of the rule, proclaiming that "nothing will so clarify the athletic atmosphere or add more to the possibilities of the association for keeping athletics clean, than the passage of this rule." Addressing critics of the rule, he stated that it will not hurt football teams for "no native product is likely to make his varsity team the first year." Furthermore, he believed that the colleges who protested "the loudest in their objections to the rule" provided "arguments in its favor."<sup>36</sup>

During the SIAA's annual meeting in 1907, the members devoted an entire afternoon session to an "earnest discussion" on the one year rule. Although Riggs proposed a strict one year rule, whereby no player could participate in football unless they had been previously enrolled at the same school for a full year, the members passed a compromise measure. The

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<sup>36</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 24 Nov., 3 Dec., 9 Dec. 1907; Minute Book, Board of Directors, Athletic Association, University of Georgia (hereafter UGA Athletic Association Minutes), Box 32, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1865-1970, MS 1578, (hereafter Sanford Personal Papers) Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries (hereafter UGA).

compromise rule still required players to be enrolled for a full year, but granted immediate eligibility to players who had completed fourteen units under the Carnegie system. Named after the philanthropist and steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, the Carnegie system was a grading system developed by educators to unify and raise school standards nationwide. Under the system, fourteen credits was the equivalent of a four year high school course of study. Implemented in the 1909 season, the new rule favored Vanderbilt and Sewanee, the South's leading football powers, since they already required fourteen credits for admission. Most schools in the organization, however, were negatively impacted, for the average admission requirement in SIAA schools was between eight and ten Carnegie credits. The *Atlanta Constitution* lamented that the schools "that affiliate with the Georgia colleges are rather short on their courses." Subsequently, potential players must do "extra work to get the grade," or be forced to wait a year, to gain eligibility. On a positive note, the *Atlanta Constitution* predicted that the new standard "will forever and eternally put ringers on the kibosh, for a football player will have had to...pass bona fide examinations before he is eligible." As a result, the new rule "abolished professionalism conclusively, unless a pro comes along with a good amount of learning."<sup>37</sup>

The reign of the one year rule was short lived. At the following SIAA annual convention, numerous colleges presented proposals to modify the rule. In the end, the organization rescinded the one year rule "by decisive vote" with only two out of seventeen representative colleges voting to retain it. Transfer students, however, were still required to wait a year before gaining eligibility. A sports columnist in the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote that abolishing the stringent one year rule was "the most sensible move that the [SIAA] has made in some time." Georgia Tech's coach J.W. Heisman also labeled the abrogation "a most sensible" move in a newspaper column. Describing the southern educational landscape as a place "where institutions of learning" have

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<sup>37</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 15, 17 Dec. 1907.

varying entrance requirements, Heisman proclaimed that it was “manifestly unfair” for freshman participation to be based on achieving fourteen points in the Carnegie system. By adhering to this standard, college freshmen were denied “their natural and constitutional right to play ball their freshman year.” Under the new eligibility rules, freshmen would no longer be “discriminated against” by the SIAA.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the rule change, eligibility remained a contentious issue in southern college football for the next several years. At their annual convention in December 1913, the members of the SIAA again tackled the issue of eligibility. After a “lengthy and animated discussion,” the organization adopted another one year eligibility rule. Under this rule, all football players at colleges with more than four hundred students must be enrolled a full year before becoming eligible.<sup>39</sup> From the onset, the new rule created controversy in Mississippi. After a two year hiatus, the University of Mississippi eagerly sought a contest with instate rival Mississippi A&M. Mississippi A&M, however, declined to renew the rivalry because Mississippi was exempt from the one year rule. Labeling the game a “veritable godsend,” for Mississippi’s destitute athletic association, an editorial in the *Daily Mississippian* found Mississippi State’s motives for declining the contest specious. Acknowledging that Mississippi could play freshmen, the editor, noting that Mississippi State “had three times our enrollment,” hinted that cowardliness was the primary reason. A rebuttal in Mississippi State’s student newspaper precipitated another attack from the editor of the *Daily Mississippian*. In his scathing editorial, he again denounced Mississippi State’s refusal to play due to the new one year rule and demanded that the college “give us a man’s reason for your refusal.” The editor’s venom, however, was unwarranted. Students at Mississippi State had circulated and presented a petition

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<sup>38</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 13, 14, 26 Dec. 1908.

<sup>39</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 14 Dec. 1913.

to the faculty, signed by nearly the entire student body, which requested that the contest be played. Despite the efforts, the faculty at Mississippi State refused to allow the game.<sup>40</sup>

The controversy in Mississippi was mild in comparison to the maelstrom which threatened to dissolve the SIAA in 1914. In June, officials at Vanderbilt, contending that the new rule was “discriminatory” and placed colleges with over four hundred students at a competitive disadvantage, tendered their resignation from the SIAA. Officials believed that athletes preferred to play immediately, thus giving smaller colleges an advantage in acquiring the best athletes. For Vanderbilt, this was especially galling since their primary rival for SIAA supremacy was tiny Sewanee—a school exempted from the rule. Moreover, Vanderbilt also objected to provisions which required members to enforce SIAA eligibility rules when playing non-members. As the South’s leading football power at the time, this rule hindered Vanderbilt’s ability to schedule highly popular and profitable intersectional contests. To address these perceived wrongs, Vanderbilt requested that other disgruntled SIAA members convene in Atlanta to demand change. With the support of the University of Georgia, a meeting was scheduled in early July.<sup>41</sup>

As the meeting of “eight or more prominent colleges” approached, speculation over the meeting’s agenda, outcome, and fate of the SIAA filled the *Atlanta Constitution*. In a thoughtful assessment of the “undercurrent of dissatisfaction” among most members of the SIAA, one columnist contrasted the organization with those found in other regions of the country. While collegiate athletic organizations in the Midwest and West were geographically compact, seldom exceed ten members, and homogenous in student population and admission standards, the SIAA was composed of over two dozen institutions of varying sizes, admission requirements, and

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<sup>40</sup> *The Daily Mississippian*, 21 Jan. 1914; 11 Feb. 1914; 3 Feb. 1915.

<sup>41</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 21 June 1914.

courses of study. As a result, the large and unwieldy SIAA could not possibly implement rules that would satisfy all of the members. To demonstrate the difficulties the SIAA faced, the column examined the various stances held by the institutions attending the pending conference—Vanderbilt, Georgia, Auburn, Georgia Tech, Alabama, Clemson, Mercer, and Sewanee—on the thorny one year rule. While Vanderbilt opposed the current rule which only applied to colleges with at least four hundred students, the smaller colleges, such as Sewanee and Mercer, opposed any version of a one year rule. Larger colleges, like Georgia, Clemson, and Auburn, on the other hand, supported a universal one year rule. The lack of consensus from eight colleges magnified the tensions and supported the belief that the SIAA had “outlived its usefulness.”<sup>42</sup>

Due to uncertainty over the future of the organization, the meeting was “keenly awaited by college men, athletes, coaches, and the public in general” and speculation ran rampant. Another article, citing “persons in a position to know” forecasted that the SIAA “is doomed and that a new association would be formed.” The new association would consist of eight or nine schools and “be similar to the Western Conference, or Big Eight, with similar rules. The *Constitution’s* sports editor also examined the meeting and its potential ramifications. He observed that “no such stir in college athletics has ever been noticed in the south” and that the outcome “is awaited with considerable interest by the entire south.” Also citing “those in close touch with the situation,” the editor believed that the SIAA “is a thing of the past.”<sup>43</sup>

With a cloud of impending doom hovering over the proceedings, representatives from seven dissenting colleges convened at the Georgia Terrance Hotel in Atlanta to discuss the future of the SIAA. In a meeting conducted with the “utmost frankness,” the representatives approved a resolution that requested Riggs, now president of the SIAA, call a special meeting of the

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<sup>42</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 28 June 1914.

<sup>43</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 30 June, 1 July 1914.

organization to consider several points. First, the representatives called for the “equalization of the educational requirements for institutions composing the association” for athletic team members. Secondly, the “modification of the one year rule as adopted at the last annual meeting” was requested. Next, the seven colleges sought a discussion on the means by which the SIAA deemed athletes ineligible. Lastly, the dissenters wanted the SIAA to address “the question of restricting the colleges in the association in their athletic relations with colleges outside the association.” Seemingly innocuous, the resolution carried a veiled threat against Riggs, since he had previously stated that he lacked the authority to call a special meeting. In essence then, the seven colleges were publicly granting the SIAA an opportunity to accede to their demands, but were privately banking on the SIAA refusing to do so. This would allow the dissenting colleges to form a new organization. With the meeting adjourned, the representatives now awaited Riggs’s response.<sup>44</sup>

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, one day after the deadline for the meeting, Riggs announced that he had requested that members of the SIAA submit a vote on conducting a special meeting. Absolving himself from the responsibility, Riggs stated that “if a majority approved of sending delegates, the convention will be held, otherwise not.” Ten days later, the *Atlanta Constitution* announced the results of the ballot. Twelve members voted for the meeting, eight against, while three abstained. In a letter to the SIAA, Riggs requested that members “send a delegate empowered to represent your institution, whether you be in favor of holding the convention or not,” due to the “importance of the matter to be discussed.” Believing that a “full and free discussion can do no harm,” Riggs further instructed the delegates to consider the four contentions raised by the dissenting colleges and be prepared to amend the SIAA’s constitution. The delegates to the special convention apparently heeded Riggs instructions, for a protracted squabble failed to

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<sup>44</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2 July 1914.

materialize. In less than two hours, the convention resolved two of the points of contention and agreed to table the others till the annual convention in December. During the special convention, the one year rule was interpreted “to apply only in games between S.I.A.A. teams.” Thus, any institution could play first year men in non-conference games. The association also clarified the rules regarding playing non-SIAA foes. SIAA members could now participate in contests with non-conference opponents in SIAA territory, provided all players on the opposing squad met SIAA eligibility requirements. This rule, however, did not apply to institutions outside SIAA territory, thus allowing unfettered intersectional contests.<sup>45</sup>

Although the special meeting temporarily spared the SIAA, tensions over the one year rule continued to simmer. At the University of Mississippi, a student organization hosted a debate on the following issue, “Resolved, that the University of Mississippi should withdraw from the S.I.A.A.” Students opposed to the resolution argued that withdrawing “would not be for the good of the students” for “no effort would be made to develop players.” Instead, the athletic association would bring in players who were “ready made” and “old at the job.” In doing so, the purpose of collegiate athletics would be violated. Another student proclaimed that the Chancellor, not the SIAA was responsible for barring the University’s best players. In addition, he argued that “if we withdrew our victories would not count for anything, nor would we get any honor in winning games” for there would not be a conference championship to play for. Students in favor of the resolution argued that “the association was not now satisfying the needs of the various colleges.” Contending that since the SIAA “barred” the college’s best athletes, the student concluded that the school’s “athletics cannot advance” while still a member. Therefore, “it is our duty to withdraw.” Echoing the prior argument, another student asserted that “as long as we are bound by the rules of the S.I.A.A., we could not have good athletics.” By

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<sup>45</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 15 July, 25 July, 31 July 1915.



withdrawing, the University could field better teams and prevent athletics from sinking to the “Prep school order.”<sup>46</sup>

The University of Mississippi’s football coach, W.L. Driver, also supported withdrawing from the SIAA. In his farewell, valedictory address, he thundered that “Mississippi will never amount to anything as long as she stays in the S.I.A.A.” Receiving “general applause” and the universal approval of the two hundred students in attendance, Driver continued by stating that the university would remain an “under dog” within the organization due to the SIAA’s internal “politicking.” Although the rules ostensibly “favored the wishes of all” members, in reality “a few schools, such as Vanderbilt, Auburn, Georgia, Georgia Tech, and Sewanee, were favored in its every act.” Due to the favoritism, he believed that “the only way for Mississippi to ever amount to anything in the athletic world is to strike its name from the S.I.A.A. members and form an association with Arkansas, Mississippi A&M, Mississippi College, Millsaps, Tulane University, Millsaps, and Louisiana State University.” By forming a smaller, more geographically compact association, Mississippi could then wield more influence.<sup>47</sup>

Under a backdrop of discontent, the SIAA’s annual meeting in December loomed. This discord prompted Riggs to remark that “the fate of the association hangs on this meeting.” The University of Georgia and Georgia Tech had already resigned, while Auburn, Vanderbilt, and Sewanee threatened to as well over “obnoxious rules.” In his presidential address, Riggs urged “the adoption of a flat one-year rule for football players, the absolute prohibition of athletic intercourse with colleges in S.I.A.A. territory which are not members of the organization, and the requirements of a certain standard” of eligibility for intersectional opponents. After a “lengthy” debate, the members ignored Riggs’s recommendations and voted 13-7 to abolish the one year

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<sup>46</sup> *The Daily Mississippian*, 10 Feb. 1915.

<sup>47</sup> *The Daily Mississippian*, 31 March 1915.

rule. In the wake of the vote, eight of the larger schools in the SIAA—Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi State, Clemson, Georgia Tech, and South Carolina—formed their own organization. Named the Southern Conference, the new organization limited membership to twelve institutions, required a one year residency for football eligibility, and prohibited members from playing contests with opponents who did not adhere to the one year rule. Members to the new organization, however, maintained their allegiance to the SIAA. This allowed Riggs to proudly proclaim that “harmony had been restored.”<sup>48</sup>

Riggs’s sanguine assessment proved to be premature, for grumblings over the Southern Conference’s adoption of a one year rule were heard in the state of Tennessee. Struggling in the dual shadows of southern football powerhouses, Vanderbilt and Sewanee, the University of Tennessee favored a strict adherence to the one year rule. The firm stance, however, placed Tennessee at odds with Vanderbilt and Sewanee, neither of whom were members of the Southern Conference, and subsequently, exempt from the one year rule. To force his instate rivals into adhering to the one year rule, the President of Tennessee, E.P. Frost, demanded that Southern Conference members should maintain the one year rule against all opponents. This threatened some of Vanderbilt’s and Sewanee’s longstanding rivalries with current Southern Conference members. By taking this strong stance, Frost hoped to elevate Tennessee’s football standing by weakening his opponents. Officials and alumni at Sewanee resented the actions taken by Frost and the Southern Conference and deemed enforcing the one year rule to be “impractical and disastrous.” Despite Sewanee’s objections, the Southern Conference required all members to impose the one year rule for all contests.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 7, 10, 11, 12 Dec. 1915.

<sup>49</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 26 Jan., 30 Jan., 1 Feb. 1916.

The universal application of the one year rule and the unity of the nascent Southern Conference proved to be ephemeral. At the following annual convention in 1916, the Southern Conference changed its position and allowed members to ignore the one year rule when playing members of the SIAA. Simultaneously, Mississippi State, Georgia, and Tulane withdrew from the Southern Conference. Having maintained their SIAA memberships, these schools could now completely ignore the one year rule without disrupting their schedules. Demonstrating the self serving nature of eligibility requirements, Sanford declared that Georgia's withdrawal "did not necessarily mean that Georgia opposed the one year rule." Instead, Georgia left because "many of the larger southern schools refused to join and adhere to the one year rule." Georgia's defection heralded the demise of the Southern Conference. One year later, only five institutions retained membership.<sup>50</sup>

As the United States entered into World War I, the debate over the one year rule enjoyed a temporary hiatus. Instead, colleges questioned the appropriateness of fielding football teams during the exigency of war. Once the war ended and the nation returned to normalcy, however, the one year rule again became the dominant issue in southern football. Prior to the SIAA's annual convention in 1920, reports surfaced that the larger colleges in the South favored the formation of an association that would exclude the smaller denominational and agricultural schools and implement a one year rule for all members. Labeling the SIAA "unwieldy" due to the variety and size of member institutions, proponents argued that the SIAA had outlived its usefulness. The diversity rendered it impossible to draft legislation that would "apply to all classes and sections equally."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10, 12 Dec. 1916.

<sup>51</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 3, 10 Dec. 1920.

The movement towards the formation of new conference gained momentum when Georgia Tech announced its intention to independently adhere to the one year rule to gain national prominence. After visiting northern institutions to arrange intersectional contests, athletic officials at Georgia Tech “forcibly” realized that the program must abide the same rules as non-southern schools if “Tech was to take part in the championship battles of the country.” Subsequently, the athletic association vowed to implement a one year rule on its own accord. The head of Georgia Tech’s alumni board characterized the decision as “a move to put the athletic standards of Georgia Tech on a par with the very highest standards of any of the big eastern and western teams.” A burgeoning national football power, Georgia Tech’s decision empowered other larger colleges to break away from the SIAA should the association not adopt a one year rule.<sup>52</sup>

During the SIAA’s convention 1920, Georgia’s representative, Sanford, and Georgia Tech’s representative, J.B. Crenshaw, introduced a resolution that would implement a one year rule. Eager to emulate northern colleges and gain their respect, Georgia Tech had already privately instituted the one year rule. When discussing Georgia Tech’s decision to implement the one year rule, the head of the alumni board deemed it “a progressive move” designed to “keep pace with the progressive movements in the north and east in collegiate athletic circles.” In order for Georgia Tech to compete for national championships, “they must conform to the same ruling under which the others operate.” The *Atlanta Constitution* predicted that while “the south has never been given equal consideration in athletics by the other sections of the country,” Georgia Tech’s decision “will win her national approval” and usher in “a new era in southern college athletics.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 Dec. 1920.

<sup>53</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 Dec. 1920.

The new era failed to materialize. At the convention, the smaller colleges, vehemently objecting that the proposal would irrevocably harm their athletic aims, defeated the resolution with their numerical superiority. Unable to forward their proposal, Sanford and Crenshaw then took the lead in forming an additional conference. Through their efforts, ten additional colleges joined the new conference and implemented a one year rule for conference games. Members to the new conference, again named the Southern Conference, also maintained their membership to the SIAA, and again allowed freshmen to play in contests against SIAA teams. By maintaining dual membership, the larger schools kept the SIAA intact, but also insured that the one year rule would remain an issue at the next annual convention. During the convention, a compromise was brokered that allowed both the large and small schools to claim victory. The larger schools successfully imposed a one year rule onto the SIAA, while the smaller schools implemented a migratory rule. The migratory rule prevented “athletes from representing more than one college during their athletic career.” While this new law prevented “tramp athletes from wandering from one school to another” and signified “great progress towards clean athletics,” the new law was also advantageous to the smaller schools. Star players on smaller colleges could no longer gain valuable experience and then transfer to the larger, more prestigious colleges. As a result of this compromise, the SIAA survived another year.<sup>54</sup>

The survival was short-lived. The following year, a mass exodus of large schools from the SIAA ensued. After 1922, the Southern Conference became the home for the South’s largest and most successful football programs. While the SIAA endured until World War II, it was the less prestigious home for the South’s smaller, less successful programs. For nearly thirty years, the SIAA stood as the sole athletic organization in the South. Founded to combat professionalism and promote eligibility standards, the association dissolved over those very

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<sup>54</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11, 13 Dec. 1920; 9, 11 Dec. 1921.

issues. The dissolution of the SIAA and the formation of the Southern Conference highlights the ambivalent nature of eligibility—a professed desire for pure athletics on one hand, yet tacit approval of professionalism, fueled by the desire to win at all costs on the other. The role of the faculty in this ambivalence is also revealing. Although the faculty was supposed to be the guardians of purity, they were in fact accomplices in eroding amateurism in collegiate football. The formation of the Southern Conference by the larger and more successful football programs marks an important turning point for southern football. By forming their own conference, they laid the foundation for big-time football’s rise to prominence.<sup>55</sup>

The history of professionalism and the rise and fall of the SIAA also demonstrates that the South was slowly being pulled into the American mainstream. The numerous scandals that plagued southern programs were part of a larger pattern of nationwide abuse. Throughout it all, the South was constantly looking northward for guidance and ultimately acceptance into the national sporting mainstream. The rise of the SIAA and its demise over the one year rule illustrate this process. Formed to combat professionalism, and mirroring northern organizations, the SIAA eventually outlived its usefulness as northern programs shifted toward smaller conferences and the widespread application of the one year rule. Larger programs with aspirations of competing and gaining national acceptance soon followed suit. The formation of the Southern Conference marks a step towards the Americanization of Dixie and the emergence of the modern South.

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<sup>55</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 16 Dec. 1922.

## Chapter Five

### A Public Relations Weapon: Football, College Presidents and the Modern University

On a warm, sunny Halloween Day in 1897, nearly 5,000 people crowded into the newly erected grandstands and carriage stands in Atlanta's Brisbane Park to witness a football game between the University of Georgia and the University of Virginia. Prior to kickoff, vocal students of Georgia, dubbed the Lung Brigade, filled the air with songs and cheers. The *Atlanta Constitution* noted that "merriment and happiness reigned supreme" for the predominately Georgia crowd. The euphoria lasted until kickoff. As the first half ended, an "out classed" and overpowered Georgia team faced a daunting 11-4 deficit. The mood soon shifted from disappointment to outright sadness after one of Georgia's players, Richard Von Gammon, was fatally injured early in the second half. Attempting to tackle a Virginia ball carrier, Von Gammon lunged, missed and hit the ground violently. The other players then tripped over and fell on Von Gammon's prostrate body. When the whistle blew, signaling the end of the play, all the players stood up from the pile and lined up for the next play, all except Von Gammon. Georgia's team captain, William B. Kent, later recalled that he kneeled over him and inquired about his injury. Von Gammon responded by pointing to his head. Kent then urged Von Gammon not to give up "for you have too much Georgia grit in you to give up, now get up and get in the game, we will beat them." Von Gammon replied, "No Cap I'll never give up" before he lost consciousness. While players reluctantly resumed play, a local physician was summoned from the grandstands to examine Von Gammon. After injecting morphine into his heart, the

physician concluded that Von Gammon had suffered a serious concussion and ordered him transported to nearby Grady Hospital. Von Gammon never regained consciousness and died later that night.<sup>1</sup>

Von Gammon's death cast a pall across the University of Georgia campus and the southern sporting community. Within days of his death, the faculty at Georgia and Auburn University cancelled their remaining football contests. Pastors and ministers in Atlanta denounced football as "brutal almost beyond conception" and urged its prohibition. Politicians and newspaper editors throughout the state also joined the chorus of opposition. The Georgia Speaker pro temp of the state senate remarked that "football is too brutal" and the Georgia attorney general stated, "It is a wonder to me all the players are not killed." The editor of the *Athens Banner* wrote that under no conditions "can this modern-day dangerous, brutal and savage football contest be justified or excused."<sup>2</sup>

Due to the outcry, the city of Atlanta passed an ordinance that prohibited the playing of contests. Not to be outdone, the Georgia legislature drafted a resolution banning football from all schools that received state funds and made participating in a football game a misdemeanor offense. The bill easily passed both the state senate and state house and the fate of football hinged upon the signature of Governor W.Y. Atkinson. Although his wife pressured him to sign the bill, Atkinson remained hesitant. In an effort to reverse public opinion, renowned chemistry professor and father of Georgia football, Charles Herty, wrote a letter to the *Atlanta Constitution* defending the sport. In the letter, Herty stated that the lack of state funding for proper facilities

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<sup>1</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 30-31 Oct. 1897; William B. Kent to S.V. Sanford, 6 Nov. 1928, Box 9, Folder 16, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1865-1970, MS 1578, (hereafter Sanford Personal Papers), Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia (hereafter UGA); Patrick B. Miller, "The Manly, The Moral, and the Proficient: College Sport in the New South," *Journal of Sport History* 24 (Fall 1997): 305-6; John F. Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field: Early Days on a Southern Gridiron* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 40-2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1-7 Nov. 1897; Stegeman, *Ghosts of Herty Field*, 42-3.



was to blame for Von Gammon's death, not the sport itself. He urged legislators to appropriate more funding to develop better facilities instead of abolishing football. Herty's letter inspired Von Gammon's mother to pen a letter to her state representative that ultimately saved football in Georgia:

It would be the greatest favor to the family of Von Gammon if your influence could prevent his death from being used as an argument detrimental to the athletic cause and its advancement to the university. His love for his college and his interest in all manly sports, without which he deemed the highest type of manhood impossible, is well known by his classmates and his friends, and it would be inexpressibly sad to have the cause he held so dear injured by his sacrifice. Grant me the right to request that my boy's death should not be used to defeat the most cherished object of his life.

Published in newspapers across the state, the plea helped diffuse the movement to banish football in the state and Governor Atkinson did not sign the bill into law. While the faculty ban for the season remained in effect, football was saved. The following year Georgia fielded a team and play resumed as normal.<sup>3</sup>

Although football was now on sound legal footing, conservative religious leaders continued to rail against the gambling, drinking and violence associated with the sport. Two year after the death of Von Gammon, a prominent Baptist minister in Atlanta, Dr. Len G. Broughton, denounced football in a sermon published in the *Atlanta Constitution*. Proclaiming football "a shame on our civilization," Broughton disdainfully expressed his "contempt for every college or university that spends its influence for the perpetuation of any such a brutal sport." In addition to the perceived brutality, he also fulminated against football for "developing the coarse side of life" and "running a high-handed gambling machine." He also condemned the emphasis placed on football at the expense of education and wished that colleges "would pay more attention to education and less to such sports and the manufactory of dudes." Broughton was not

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<sup>3</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2, 5, 9 Nov. 1897.

alone in his jeremiad against football. Historian Andrew Doyle demonstrates that conservative theologians throughout the South consistently condemned nascent football and argues that football reveals the schism between northern and southern religious doctrine. While northern religious institutions were embracing a more liberal theology that embraced muscular Christianity, southern evangelicals clung to a more conservative and increasingly outdated doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the constant barrage from religious leaders, and the insolvent state of athletic programs, the fate of early football was far from secure. The sport, however, survived and developed into today's modern spectacle due to the efforts of university presidents, officials, and faculty members who recognized and appreciated the value of collegiate football. Michael Dennis argues that as the twentieth century dawned, a new generation of presidents assumed the helm of state universities across the South. Seeking to wean their institutions away from the classical model of education, the new leaders envisioned state colleges as progressive vehicles to lead, reform, and uplift southern society. By laboring to change the curriculum, establish a more corporate style of leadership, develop professional schools, and implement agricultural reform, these men laid the foundation for the modern, research oriented state university. This transformation required an increased level of support from alumni and state legislators. University chancellors/presidents, like David Barrow, Charles Snelling, and Steadman Sanford at the University of Georgia and Enoch Walter Sikes at Clemson University, recognized that football was an effective "public relations weapon" to promote their school, secure needed alumni support, and ultimately increase state appropriations. As a result, they encouraged the

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<sup>4</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 4 Dec. 1899; Andrew Leo Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-1983" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1998), 64-118; Southern clergy's hostility to sports is also discussed in, William J. Baker, *Playing With God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 85-107.

development of strong football programs. Their support was paramount for the growing success of football.<sup>5</sup>

The use of football by southern progressives to assist in the uplift of southern society also provides a window to examine the larger progressive movement in the South. Like their northern counterparts, southern progressives applied scientific principles and bureaucratic organization to address the ills of society. Like the New South adherents, reformers worked to improve education, health, promote temperance and revitalize a stagnant economy based on the production of cotton. In short, they were laboring to modernize the region and football became a tool they wielded. In the words of C. Vann Woodward, however, these reforms were for whites only. African Americans were expected to remain in their subservient position in southern society. Collegiate football during this era reveals how these reforms were implemented. Efforts to enforce prohibition at football contests demonstrate the friction between middle and upper class reformers and the paying public. Football also highlights the widespread acceptance of segregation and racial exclusion and the lengths both southerners and northerners went to enforce the color line. Finally, college football demonstrates how reformers utilized progressive measures to revitalize football programs to secure desperately needed alumni support.<sup>6</sup>

University leaders at Georgia and Clemson did not originate the idea of football as a public relations vehicle. Historian Robin Lester cogently demonstrates that William Raney Harper, the first president of the University of the Chicago, pioneered using football to promote higher education. Recognizing that a successful intercollegiate football program advertised the

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Dennis, *Lessons in Progress: State Universities and Progressivism in the New South, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Thomas Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 152-174. Dyer first introduced the idea of football as a public relations weapon.

<sup>6</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 369-96; See also William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) for an examination of the southern progressive movement.

new university, Harper hired Alonzo Stagg to coach the football team and provided him a tenured faculty position as head of the physical education department. Under Stagg's guidance, the University of Chicago rapidly developed into a national football power. The vision, or model, developed by Rainey was ultimately adopted by officials at Georgia and Clemson seeking to modernize their institutions and southern society.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the University of Georgia was, in the words of Thomas Dyer, a "college under siege." Private denominational colleges, who felt threatened, attacked the state university in the press. In addition, those who advocated the formation of a separate agricultural college to insure that valuable federal funds were used for their intended purpose also routinely denounced the university. Due to the pressure, Georgia was perpetually in danger of losing its meager appropriation from the state legislature. In the midst of this political maelstrom, Walter Hill assumed the presidency in 1898. His selection proved to be wise. His activism in the Methodist church, strong prohibitionist stance, and reforms that increased appropriations to the agricultural college helped silence the critics. With the criticism abated, Hill worked to transform the university into a modern university that emphasized practical education and service to the community throughout his eight year tenure.<sup>8</sup>

His successors, Barrow, Snelling, and Sanford, continued Hill's work. All three men had served the university for many years before being appointed to leadership positions. A graduate of the university, Barrow was a professor of mathematics for nearly a quarter of a century before his promotion to chancellor in 1906. Serving as chancellor for nineteen years, Barrow labored to

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<sup>7</sup> Robin Lester, *Stagg's University: The Rise, Decline and Fall of Big-Time Football at Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Andrew Doyle also demonstrates how the University of Alabama president George Denny regarded "football as a public relations vehicle that could increase enrollment, gratify alumni, and create popular support for the university" in, Andrew Doyle, "'Fighting Whiskey and Immorality' at Auburn: The Politics of Southern Football, 1919-1927," *Southern Cultures* (Fall 2004), 6-28.

<sup>8</sup> Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 152-162.

expand and modernize the university. Likewise, Snelling, a graduate from the Virginia Military Institute, was a long-time professor of mathematics and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Assuming the chancellorship after Barrow's death in 1925, Snelling held this position until the University System of Georgia was reorganized in 1932. As a result of the reorganization, Sanford was promoted to president of the University of Georgia. A graduate of Mercer University, Sanford joined Georgia's faculty in 1903. Taking an active role in the development of the university, Sanford founded the School of Journalism and was the longtime faculty director of athletics. Throughout his tenure, he worked closely with Barrow and Snelling and shared their progressive vision of forging the university into a modern, research orientated university that would be a positive agent of change and progress in the state.<sup>9</sup>

Making this vision a reality, however, necessitated a high level of financial support from the state legislature and alumni. With the state's agriculturally based economy in a perpetual state of depression, securing the necessary funding was a formidable task. Historian Thomas Dyer noted that the state legislature developed "a reputation for fecklessness and unpredictability" towards funding the university. In most years, university officials considered it a victory if the legislature simply maintained current levels of funding. To achieve this support, Barrow embraced and employed football as means to promote the university. In 1906, the same year Barrow was selected as chancellor of the University of Georgia, he offered his personal opinions on football in a letter to the *Atlanta Constitution*. Described as someone who "takes lively interest in the athletic sports of the college," Barrow "never misses a game" and "derives genuine pleasure from the games and rejoices as much with the boys as if he were a member of the team." Acknowledging "that it is not fashionable to speak favorably of football," Barrow

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<sup>9</sup> Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 163-175, 206; See also, Charles Stephen Gurr, *The Personal Equation: A Biography of Steadman Vincent Sanford* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

nonetheless asserted that he saw things of value in the admittedly rough sport. In his experience, football “has to a large extent, stopped fighting” on campus. Prior to the advent of the sport, “the boys used to fight far more than they do now.” In addition to curtailing violence, Barrow contended that football instilled college spirit and “was the best training in self control.” These values acquired from participating in football—“temperate in habit, aggressive in enterprise, patriotic in emotion”—allowed students to become better citizens of their community, state and country. By offering his support of football, Barrow insured its survival and growth.<sup>10</sup>

As football grew in popularity, especially among alumni, university leaders utilized football to secure desperately needed legislative support by offering complimentary tickets to contests. Football contests thus became opportunities to entertain and woo government officials. This proved to be a popular tactic. Receiving an invitation to attend a homecoming contest, Governor Clifford Walker expressed “his deep personal regret” that a prior engagement prohibited him from attending in a letter to S.V. Sanford. The governor, an alumnus of Georgia, was “greatly grieved that I cannot be present to greet the other homecomers and take advantage of the opportunity to again attest my love for old Georgia.” Believing that “public sentiment in Georgia is one hundred percent stronger for public education and for a square deal for the University,” Walker confided that he was “working out some very definite plans” to improve the University. To bring his plans to fruition, the governor urged each alumnus “to influence members of the House and Senate and otherwise contribute to the molding of a public sentiment which will do full justice to old Georgia.” Several years later, Sanford again personally invited Governor Eugene Talmadge “as guests in my home and also to the athletic contest” against Tulane. Sanford was confident that Talmadge would enjoy the contest and hoped that “it will at least furnish you some relaxation which you badly need.” Sanford also wanted to invite “a

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<sup>10</sup> Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 193-4; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23 Oct. 1906.

number of congenial friends to occupy a place in the box with you and Mrs. Talmadge.” It was important, however, that Talmadge review the list “and discuss frankly with me the group mentioned in this letter.” Stressing that Talmadge was “free to add any names you desire,” Sanford hoped “you will give this very thoughtful consideration and reiterated that “I really want this game honored by your presence.”<sup>11</sup>

Representatives to the Georgia Legislature also received complimentary tickets and secured favors from university presidents. In 1925, State House Representative E.B. Moore requested that Chancellor Snelling reserve four tickets for an upcoming Georgia-Auburn game. Receiving the tickets for his daughter and her husband, Moore complimented Snelling for providing seats “that were the best that could be had.” To cover the cost, Moore enclosed a check for ten dollars and expressed that “your kindness in this matter is greatly appreciated and if I can ever be of service to you, command me.” To reinforce that the tickets were a gift, Snelling returned the check, stating he “could not think of taking it.” Another state house representative, George Eckford, also requested complimentary tickets for a game against Tulane for him and his wife. After returning from a trip to New York, Snelling procured the tickets with an apology that “the seats are not as good as I should like for you to have” vowed to “do better next time.” Several days later, Eckford again requested complimentary tickets to a Georgia Tech contest for him, his wife, and “two close political friends.” Informing Snelling that, “if you cannot see your way clear to sending the tickets for my friends,” Eckford reluctantly offered to pay for his friends’ tickets. Eckford received the four tickets, but Snelling regretted that he could not “send them all complimentary” for his “allotment of tickets is about taken up.” Snelling also assured

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<sup>11</sup> Governor Clifford Walker to S.V. Sanford, 21 Oct. 1925, Folder 55, Box 1, The Charles Mercer Snelling Papers, 1904-1950, (hereafter Snelling Papers), UGA; S.V. Sanford to Governor Eugene Talmadge, 3 Oct. 1933, Folder—Athletics- Football, 1929-1935, Box 1, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1918-1945 (hereafter Sanford Presidential Papers), UGA.

the legislator “of the pleasure it gives me to comply with your request.” The eagerness with which university leaders obliged state leaders, and the obsequious tone of their letters, demonstrates how football games became occasions to curry favor and gain allies in state government.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their best efforts at wooing lawmakers, university leaders had to turn to alumni to fill the significant financial void. During the 1920s, prominent alumni and faculty members formed a Campaign Committee with the goal of raising a million dollar endowment fund. To help achieve this goal, the recently formed Alumni Association published a monthly newsletter, *Georgia Alumni Record*, to generate interest in the university. In a typical editorial in the newsletter, the editor declared “that the state is not supporting the University as it should.” Expecting little financial assistance from the state legislature, alumni “turned their attention to the only practical method of meeting the needs of the University,” by raising private donations for a “fund to be used for urgent needs.” In a letter to the football coach H.J. Stegeman, the chairman of the Campaign Committee, Harry Hodgson, praised Stegeman’s recently published article on Georgia’s football squad and urged him to continue writing monthly articles. Hodgson believed that the articles would stimulate “the interest of the alumni and friends of the University throughout Georgia.” Hodgson also requested that the assistant coach write an “inspirational article, full of pep and optimism” to win “sympathetic interest on the part of all of the old students.” Pep and optimism were needed, since subscriptions to the fund were admittedly lagging and needed “the help of men like yourself and other forward looking friends of the

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<sup>12</sup> E.B. Moore to C.M. Snelling, 28 Oct. 1925; E.B. Moore to C.M. Snelling, 9 Nov. 1925; C.M. Snelling to E.B. Moore, 11 Nov. 1925; George Eckford to C.M. Snelling, 11 Nov. 1931; C.M. Snelling to George Eckford, 12 Nov. 1931; George Eckford to C.M. Snelling, 24 Nov. 1931; C.M. Snelling to George Eckford, 25 Nov. 1931, Folder 53, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.



University.” Linking athletic successes with alumni contributions, Hodgson concluded that “the athletic spirit is a good feature to build upon.”<sup>13</sup>

Linking athletic success with alumni contributions, however, meant ceding control over athletic affairs to alumni. Alumni increasingly expected their school to produce winning teams and became agitated when their expectations were not met. After twelve consecutive losses to in-state rival Mississippi A&M, the president of the moribund University of Mississippi Alumni Association, L.A. Smith, called a special meeting to revive the organization in 1924. Meeting for the first time in five years, the alumni association discussed options to “better conditions in the Athletic Department of the University.” After being apprised of the prominent role alumni played in athletic affairs at other southern universities, the Mississippi alumni formed a committee to meet with the Chancellor and request “that the alumni have at least one representative upon the controlling body of athletics.” The meeting with the Chancellor was successful. At the next alumni association meeting, the committee reported that the Chancellor received them “cordially” and announced his intention to reorganize control of athletics. The Chancellor would abolish “the present Faculty Committee on Athletics” and form a new committee on athletics comprised of two alumni, four faculty members, and one student representative.<sup>14</sup>

Now armed with a voice in athletics, the alumni association quickly assumed an active role. Instrumental in the hiring of Homer Hazel, the association pledged \$2,000 to cover his salary for the 1925 season. Although his team lost to archrival Mississippi A&M, Hazel did

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<sup>13</sup> *Georgia Alumni Record*, Vol. 1 (Aug. 1920), 3; Harry Hodgson to H.J. Stegeman, 16 Oct. 1920, Folder 1920- Oct. 15-23, Box 24, Barrow Papers, UGA.

<sup>14</sup> 21 Nov., 24 Nov. 1924, Alumni Association Minutes Collection (MUM00512), Folder 1925-33, (hereafter AAM), The Department of Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi (hereafter UM); Williams W. Sorrels and Charles Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels: Mississippi Football* (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, 1976), 81-3.

secure a 5-5 record, the school's best showing in eleven years. As a result of the improvement, Smith expressed his pleasure in Hazel's performance and emphasized that "a large number of alumni" shared his sentiment at the next alumni association meeting. In wake of the endorsement, the association resolved to secure Hazel's services for four more years and "assist in raising funds from the alumni for this purpose." Due to alumni involvement, Mississippi's football fortunes improved and the following year they defeated Mississippi A&M for the first time in fourteen years.<sup>15</sup>

At the University of Georgia, alumni also assumed a more active role in athletics affairs. After Georgia's coach resigned following the 1919 to season pursue a career in the military, the Columbus, Georgia Alumni Association wrote to the athletic association to request that Herman Stegeman be promoted to head coach. After extensive discussion and "considerable thought," the alumni association believed that Stegeman "has delivered the goods" as an assistant coach and will "deliver the punch" if appointed head coach. As result, the alumni association "heartily" endorsed Stegeman. The alumni initially proved to be prescient about Stegeman's ability. After being promoted by the Georgia athletic association, his team went 8-0-1 and secured a share of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association championship in his first year.<sup>16</sup>

The success was short lived. After a disappointing 5-4-1 third season, alumni and athletic board members began questioning Stegeman's effectiveness and calling for his ouster. Somebody identifying himself as "an old Georgia man who is deeply and sincerely mindful of the athletic reputation and record of the dear old College," wrote to express his frustration. In his opinion, the offense was consistently "woefully weak" and there was "a lack of coordination

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<sup>15</sup> 21 Nov. 1925, AAM, UM; Sorrels, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 82-92.

<sup>16</sup> Columbus Alumni Association to UGA Athletic Council, 18 Dec. 1919, Folder 9, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

between the always fine line and the backfield.” To remedy these deficiencies, the writer suggested that Georgia replace Stegeman and offered a recommendation for a replacement. In a letter to a fellow athletic board member, Sanford also questioned whether Stegeman should remain as head coach. Although Sanford considered Stegeman a “master” at training the offensive line, he nonetheless suggested that the athletic board should “have a meeting and settle this coaching question as we want it and not as he might want it.” At the next board meeting, the members of the board did just that. Although a couple of members voiced their support for Stegeman, the majority vented their displeasure. One member stated that Stegeman’s inability to maintain harmony on the team justified his dismissal. Moreover, the alumni of the state “are very fixed in their idea that Stegeman is incompetent.” Another member, echoing this point, announced that “alumni and friends of Georgia are firm in their attitude of opposition.” Chancellor Snelling opined that since the “main support of athletics at the University must come from the alumni,” their “views should be given full consideration and that when feasible this Board should conform its actions to meet” their wishes. Subsequently, Snelling felt that “the wishes of the alumni should be met.” To settle the question, the board formed a five member committee to “consider the coaching situation.”<sup>17</sup>

After investigating the matter, the committee submitted their recommendations in a report to the entire athletic board. Since Stegeman was under a three year contract, the committee concluded that the contract should be “respected” and “not disregarded except by mutual agreement.” Unwilling to terminate the contract, the committee brokered a deal with Stegeman whereby the contract be modified so that Stegeman could serve as head of physical education. In exchange for relinquishing football coaching duties, Stegeman would receive the same salary

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<sup>17</sup> Georgia 1912 to S.V. Sanford, 26 Nov. 1922; S.V. Sanford to Harold Hirsch, 23 Nov. 1922, Folder 32, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; Minute Book, Board of Directors, Athletic Association, University of Georgia (hereafter UGA Athletic Association Minutes), 5 Dec. 1922, Box 32, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

and become a member of the faculty. To coach the 1923 team, the committee recommended that former player, and wealthy Coca-Cola distributor, George Woodruff be hired. After hearing the report, the athletic board, with Stegeman's approval, made the changes. The coaching change, motivated by disgruntled alumni, demonstrates how university leaders used football as a means to connect alumni with their alma mater. It also demonstrates the growing popularity of football in the South. Since alumni now expected a quality football team, university leaders had to deliver or risk losing support.<sup>18</sup>

Officials at Clemson University underwent a similar experience. Like his colleagues at the University of Georgia, Enoch Walter Sikes also labored to transform Clemson into a more modern university. Born in rural North Carolina, Sikes attended Wake Forest University and participated on the college's inaugural football team and later served as the school's athletic director. Completing his doctorate at Johns Hopkins University, Sikes served as president of Coker College, a Baptist women's college in South Carolina, for just over ten years before assuming the presidency of Clemson. Prior to his arrival, the military and agricultural college had what one historian of the university deemed "a notorious history of student disorders and unrest." A skilled administrator, Sikes overcame these problems and ushered in an era of growth. During his administration, student enrollment and the number of faculty of nearly doubled, the number undergraduate degrees increased, the college constructed new buildings and established a graduate school. Maintaining an active interest in athletics, especially football, Sikes recognized the value of collegiate athletics in securing alumni support and involvement.

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<sup>18</sup> Harold Hirsh, et al, to UGA Athletic Association, 13 Sept. 1922, Folder 32, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; UGA Athletic Association Minutes, 18 Dec. 1922, Box 32, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

As a result of his attention, a new Physical Education Department was created and Clemson regained respectability on the gridiron.<sup>19</sup>

Since the “Golden Years” of 1900-1903, when legendary coach John Heisman roamed the sidelines, Clemson’s football fortunes had waned considerably over the ensuing two decades. Assuming the presidency in 1925, Sikes inherited a football program in a state of disarray. The 1925 team had only secured one victory, an unimpressive 6-0 victory over the Citadel, and alumni began demanding the dismissal of Coach Bud Saunders. Frustrated at Clemson’s gridiron woes, alumnus David Traxler launched a personal campaign to reorganize and improve athletics. Describing the 1925 season as “a complete miserable affair,” Traxler demanded the immediate dismissal of Saunders and the resignation of David Henry, who in his position as the Director of Student Activities was responsible for Clemson athletics, “to make way for a better organization.” Seeking the “betterment of Clemson,” Traxler requested that Sikes “write me fully what the plans are for next year.” In his brief reply, Sikes thanked Traxler for his interest and wished to assure him that “the athletic situation is receiving attention and I am anxious to see it improved.” Dissatisfied with the vague reply, Traxler demanded to know if Saunders would continue to serve as coach and “whether the Athletic Board is still going to manage affairs.” Proclaiming that “I am in for a long siege, a hot fight and world of publicity,” Traxler vowed “to keep on fighting” until Clemson becomes a leader in athletics.<sup>20</sup>

Traxler was not alone in his indictment against Clemson athletics. Alumnus and former Board of Trustee member Henry C. Tillman declared that the “results of our past three or four

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce Yandle, “The Plowboy Scholar: Enoch Walter Sikes, 1925-1940,” in Donald M. McKale, ed. *Tradition: A History of the Presidency of Clemson University* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 141-158.

<sup>20</sup> Lou Sahadi, *The Clemson Tigers: From 1896 to Glory* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1983), 11-12; David B. Traxler to E.W. Sikes, 9 Feb. 1926; E.W. Sikes to David B. Traxler, 11 Feb. 1926, David B. Traxler to E.W. Sikes, 25 Feb. 1926, Folder 3, Box 1, Office of the President, E.V. Sikes, Correspondence, 1925-1931, (hereafter Sikes Papers), in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL).

years have been rotten.” Linking football success with public support, Tillman determined that “Clemson cannot reach her proper place in the sun without a winning football team” for “the standing of a college now is vitally affected by its Team.” With an “unthinking public” obsessed with football, “no school can get recognition as first class when its Team shows evidence of poor training, poor teaching, poor everything.” To restore Clemson to “her proper place in the sun,” Tillman also advocated the dismissal of Saunders and the removal of Henry. Tillman questioned Henry’s ability to select coaches, stating that “the last two have been frosts—the last one a heavy snow.” Validating Tillman’s assessment, an anonymous alumnus withdrew his \$100 contribution for a new athletic building due to “the deplorable condition of our football team and the non apparent interest of the college to remedy this condition.” Claiming “hundreds of other alumni” were also “thoroughly disgusted” with the team’s performance the past few years, the alumnus vowed to withhold financial support until a coaching change is made.<sup>21</sup>

Another alumnus and former football player, J.L. Carson, also informed Sikes of a movement underfoot by alumni to have Saunders replaced. Reluctant to solely blame Saunders for “the general athletic slump,” Carson expressed his support to Sikes “and the Clemson authorities in whatever you may do for” the good of Clemson. In his reply, Sikes stated that he was “giving the football matter very serious consideration” and not allowing it to “drift.” He confessed, however, that he was uncertain on how “to diagnose the case properly” and “do the best thing for Clemson” for both the following season and the future. To assist Sikes in diagnosing the problem, Clemson alumni and the Board of Trustees formed committees to

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<sup>21</sup> Henry C. Tillman to E.W. Sikes, 14 Nov. 1926, Folder 14, Box 2; An alumnus to The Alumni Central Committee, 30 Sept. 1926, Folder 13, Box 2, Sikes Papers, CUL.

investigate the athletic situation and develop solutions to improve the team's performance and gain alumni support.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of the criticisms and formation of committees, athletics at Clemson underwent a transformation. Administrators terminated Coach Saunders and reorganized the athletic department. Henry no longer controlled athletics; instead, a new Department of Physical Education was created and former player J.G. "Mutt" Gee was appointed head. In his capacity, Gee held the same rank and standing as all other college directors and had "full and complete charge of the administration of athletics." The reorganization divided athletics into an intercollegiate division and an intramural division. Gee supervised intramural athletics and a "program of compulsory physical training for freshman" to insure that every student "receive some kind of physical training." Gee also oversaw intercollegiate athletics. Dismissing Saunders, Gee hired Josh Cody, a Vanderbilt alumnus and assistant football coach, to coach intercollegiate football and basketball. Two assistant football coaches also coached intercollegiate boxing, baseball, track, and the freshman football team. Cody and his assistants were officially listed as instructors of athletics. The new hierarchical organization, with a clear division of duties, incorporated athletics into campus life and placed athletics more firmly under the university's control. The new structure also mirrored a system proposed by W.M. Riggs, Clemson's first football coach and longtime faculty advisor to athletics. Riggs envisioned a system whereby athletics received a "regular Chair" in the faculty and had "the same important place as any other subject in the curriculum."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> J.L. Carson to E.W. Sikes, 9 Feb. 1926; E.W. Sikes to J.L. Carson, 11 Feb. 1926, Folder 3 Box 1; E.W. Sikes to David Traxler, 11 March 1926, Folder 4 Box 1, Sikes Papers, CUL.

<sup>23</sup> E.W. Sikes to David Jennings, 12 April 1927, Folder 20, Box 3; E.W. Sikes to W.K. Magill, 5 April 1929, Folder 74, Box 7, Sikes Papers; W.M. Riggs to John W. McConnell, 9 May 1910, Folder 5, Box 6, ACR, CUL.

The reorganization of the athletic department and the hiring of Josh Cody had a positive impact on Clemson's football fortunes. In his first year, Cody achieved a 5-3-1 record, and subsequently, had three straight winning seasons afterwards. The winning eased alumni hostility. Recognizing the public relations value of athletics, the president of the Washington D.C. Alumni Chapter, wrote that "athletic activities were probably the greatest medium for arousing a forward spirit for Clemson in the public mind." The president also believed that "adequate physical education is next in importance to religious training" and praised the "special attention" Sikes was devoting towards improving athletics. He then informed Sikes that numerous alumni had written letters of praise for Athletic Director Gee's work towards improving athletics. One letter writer enthusiastically proclaimed that Gee "is the finest thing that has ever happened to Clemson." Another alumni chapter also praised Sikes for restoring "Clemson to a plane of normalcy" and boasted that Sikes "will always have the College on a plane of which friends and alumni can feel justly proud." The hiring of Josh Cody and the subsequent success on the football field was instrumental in the restoration of Clemson. Deeming Cody a "jewel," the alumni gushed that "Clemson's athletic success has been entirely due to [his] untiring efforts." The recent success at football has manifested the "true college spirit" amongst alumni and this "spirit will be greatly intensified" as Clemson's gridiron success continues.<sup>24</sup>

Sikes's interest and desire to improve Clemson's football fortunes further demonstrate how football functioned as a public relations weapon. Assuming the presidency under a cloud of turmoil and alumni angst over Clemson's ineptitude in athletics, Sikes quickly authorized the reorganization of the athletic department and replaced Coach Saunders. As a result of the

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<sup>24</sup> Frank J. Jervy to E.W. Sikes, 1 Oct. 1928, Folder 65, Box 6; W.K. Magill to E.W. Sikes, 27 March 1929, Folder 73, Box 7, Sikes Papers, CUL.



changes, and the improvement on the playing field, Sikes regained the support of alumni. With this support, he could then devote his energies towards improving Clemson and making the institution a more modern university. The athletic reforms and the manner in which they were implemented also reflected how football was a vehicle for progressive change in the South. Forming committees to investigate problems and develop solutions is a hallmark of progressivism. In addition, the formation of a new bureaucratic organization, the Physical Department, to manage both intercollegiate and intramural athletics demonstrates the progressive belief in bureaucracy and scientific management to improve society. Finally, the formation of the Physical Department, an idea originally forwarded by Riggs, the father of Clemson football, underscores the continuity between the first generation of football adherents and subsequent generations.

Using football as a public relations weapon to secure alumni support, however, occasionally backfired on the university as evidenced by the letters written by disgruntled and offended alumni. On occasion the offense motivating the complaint was slight, nearly trivial. For instance, one alumnus wrote to highlight how the program for a contest with Yale erroneously claimed that Glenn “Pop” Warner was Georgia’s first paid coach. In another example, an attorney, “friend of the University” and presumably a state legislator, requested that Sanford “quit broadcasting the state with such invitations” after receiving an invitation to attend a game. He complained that by emphasizing “physical prowess over mental training,” Sanford was “divorcing the University from the masses.” Yet another alumnus, William Nicolson, wrote a complaint letter after being denied entrance to the recently completed Memorial Hall on game day. After a long walk up a steep incline with an elderly female friend, the custodian denied them entrance because “they might look at the football game” without paying admission.

Walking away from the building, Nicolson looked up and observed “every window on the side of the stadium filled with spectators.” Agitated at his treatment, the alumnus insisted in his letter that the building, “which was built by alumni,” be available on the days when most of them return. Claiming that “ninety-five percent of alumni never get to Athens except on some occasion such as a football game,” the offended man concluded that “it is an outrage they should be treated thus.” Nicolson letter was forwarded to Chancellor Snelling, who replied that “the building custodian was directed to close the building during the game” since it was assumed that “no visitors would come to the building during the progress of the game.” Snelling speculated that faculty members with keys to the building, in violation of the rules, allowed the people inside. These written complaints over minor matters reveal how football connected alumni with their alma mater. In addition, Snelling’s personal reply highlights the need to placate alumni to insure their support.<sup>25</sup>

On other occasions, alumni expressed their disapproval over student behavior at football contests. A Columbus, Georgia attorney took offense to a banner proclaiming “Give ‘em Hell Georgia!” at a Georgia-Auburn game. The attorney, Henry Goetchius, suggested to Chancellor Barrow that the faculty and athletic manager “ought to absolutely forbid in the future any such language to be used by students.” Believing that both students and alumni would respect such an edict from the faculty, Goetchius contended that “the boys could be brought under control.” Responding to the suggestion, Barrow assured Goetchius that “we are making an effort to discourage the use of the word hell in the yells which the boys give and had some success.” To further assuage the complaint, Barrow playful wrote that “I would not have you think I approve of the use of the word hell; for my part I have no use for the devil or for his place of abode.” He

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<sup>25</sup> R.E. Farrell to S.V. Sanford, 15 Nov. 1929, Folder—Athletics- Football, 1929-1935, Box 1, Sanford Presidential Papers, UGA; William Perrin Nicolson to Alumni Secretary, 14 Dec. 1929; C.M. Snelling to William Nicolson, 21 Dec. 1929, Folder 43, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.

then jokingly told the story of two aged Harvard alumni, one of whom was Dr. E.A. Hale, heading to a football game. When somebody inquired where they were going, “Hale’s companion replied that he was ‘going to yell with Hale.’”<sup>26</sup>

In addition to coarse language, complaints arose over the consumption of alcohol and rowdy fan behavior at contests—despite national and state prohibition laws. These problems were not new to the University of Georgia and collegiate football. Allegedly, a large crowd of spectators flocked to the dispensary for alcohol as sundown and the cessation of alcohol sales approached at the first football game played on Georgia’s campus in 1892. According to Georgia lore, the final score in that contest is inaccurate owing to the referee temporarily leaving the field to join the crowd. During the era of prohibition, however, it became necessary for the progressive university leaders to take a stronger stand against drinking and rowdy fan behavior to maintain the support of the upper and middle class. While they railed against alcohol in letters, officials made little effort to enact meaningful reform. University officials were forced to walk a fine line between appeasing those in positions of power and insuring fan support and gate receipts to keep their athletic associations financially afloat. This balance act highlights how football during the progressive era was a contested territory between reformers and the populace.

An editorial in the *News-Reporter*, “the official organ of Wilkes County and the City of Washington,” reveals the conflicting interpretations of football contests. The reform minded editor denounced the “utter disregard of the officials of the city of Athens and the authorities of the University to the enforcement of the law in so far as public drinking of alcoholic liquor was concerned” during a rainy game with Georgia Tech. Prior to the game the editor proclaimed that “one could not walk up the streets without witnessing people, men and women, drinking out of

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<sup>26</sup> Henry R. Goetchius to D.C. Barrow, 9 Dec. 1921; D.C. Barrow to Henry R. Goetchius, 12 Dec. 1921, Folder—1921, Box 26, Barrow Papers, UGA.

bottles openly and with no thought that they would be disturbed.” During the game, the editor further observed “fifteen or more people who were under the influence of liquor” from his seat. Most galling, however, was a “man so drunk that he could barely stagger along” attempting to lead the band onto the field at halftime while “no effort was made to stop him.” The editorial questioned how “a University which is supported by tax-payers of the state” and responsible for the care of “our growing manhood and womanhood during the formative period of their lives could be so outrageously neglectful” by allowing this type of behavior. The editorial also rebuked the university for “catering to that class of people” to increase gate receipts. Deeming the imbibing a “grave offence against society,” the editor thundered that people “who believe in decency” should “rise up” and demand that athletic contests not become “a day of rowdyism and drunken dissipation.”<sup>27</sup>

In letters to Snelling and Sanford, alumnus J. Glenn Giles also commented on the large “number of intoxicated individuals” observed at a homecoming game. Although Giles was convinced that “the intoxicated individuals were not from the student body,” he decried the “camp followers,” or those who attend contests for the spectacle and entertainment, responsible for the drinking. Believing that the occasion should “reflect an air of sobriety, refinement, and culture,” Giles blamed the local police for not enforcing prohibition laws. In his experience, the police permitted “inebriates to have their own loud, merry time” and only acted if a fight erupted. To remedy this, Giles suggested that the Southern Conference take a strong stand against drinking at games and pressure the police “to arrest all individuals who appeared to be in an intoxicated condition and confine them until after the game when proper punishment would be inflicted.” This would have “a very wholesome effect upon the conditions” and increase

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<sup>27</sup> *The News-Reporter*, 13 Dec. 1929, clipping found in Folder 52, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.

attendance since “men will be willing to take their wives and families in much larger numbers knowing the occasion will be elevating and refining.”<sup>28</sup>

Several years later, S. Price Gilbert, an associate judge on the Georgia Supreme Court, expressed his displeasure at fan behavior during a football game. A self-professed “friend of the university” who has “consistently patronized its football team,” Gilbert anxiously desired to “personally” speak with Sanford, now president of the university, on “certain features” of a recent game. Specifically, Gilbert wanted to discuss the “conduct of the spectators” that forced him to change seats several times and made it “difficult to enjoy the game.” He requested that Sanford advise him when he “will next be at the State Capitol” to “talk this matter over with you for the betterment of our beloved state university.”<sup>29</sup>

In his relatively lengthy reply, Sanford regretted that “some of the spectators made the game unpleasant for you.” He also rhetorically questioned why “some people take occasion to drink and to act so discourteously at a university football game” and expressed his distress “beyond all measure to have drinking at our games.” Although the “college students act with propriety,” the “older people set a horrible example,” especially those who “do not begin to drink until after they enter the Stadium.” A particularly “awful problem” to Sanford were “women who not only drink but who get drunk.” While some of these were “women of the world,” Sanford lamented that “most of them are from families of supposed good standing, and such is the pity of the situation in this modern civilization.” He wished that “such women would never patronize us” and would “gladly return their money, if we could only get them out of the stadium.” Adopting a more optimistic tone, Sanford highlighted how “conditions have improved

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<sup>28</sup> J. Glenn Giles to C.M. Snelling, 21 Oct 1930; J. Glenn Giles to S.V. Sanford, 24 Oct. 1930, Folder 49, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.

<sup>29</sup> J. Price Gilbert to S.V. Sanford, 30 Oct. 1933, Folder—Athletics- Football, 1929-1935, Box 1, Sanford Presidential Papers, UGA.

since 1929” and boasted that “whiskey was taken from certain people entering the Stadium.” Nonetheless, he admitted there was room for “greater improvement” and vowed to “do all in my power to make conditions better.” He was facing an uphill battle, however, since “the officers of the law lend little help—no more than they do in trying to prevent the unlawful sale of intoxicating liquors.” Incorporating flattery, Sanford professed that he needed “the assistance of strong men like you” and welcomed any suggestion “by such a friend as you.” He concluded by stressing his willingness to meet with Gilbert and discuss “any matter that is vital to the welfare of the University.” The conciliatory and nearly fawning tone of the letter reinforces the need to kowtow to those in positions of power to insure future governmental support and funding for the university. The expressed outrage over the drunken behavior of fans also highlights the desire to implement moral reforms and the tepid support from the populace. Employing football as a public relations vehicle necessitated that university leaders appease both groups.<sup>30</sup>

Maintaining public support also meant enforcing the ethos of segregation on the playing field. Ordinarily, this was a moot concern as all southern colleges were strictly segregated during this era. Intersectional contests, however, occasionally became problematic. Historian Charles H. Martin notes that intersectional games developed into very popular and profitable affairs that captured the attention of the nation during the 1920s. Problems occasionally developed, however, when northern and midwestern squads featured African American players. To avert a potentially embarrassing situation, an unwritten “gentleman’s agreement” developed between contestants. Under the agreement, northern schools would bench any African American players when playing southern foes, regardless of location. Martin concludes that the gentleman’s agreement functioned smoothly and seldom caused an outcry. A 1929 game

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<sup>30</sup> S.V. Sanford to Judge S. Gilbert Price, 8 Nov. 1933, Folder—Athletics- Football, 1929-1935, Box 1, Sanford Presidential Papers, UGA.

between Georgia and New York University to be played in Yankee stadium was an exception to the rule.<sup>31</sup>

As the highly anticipated intersectional showdown loomed, a controversy erupted over the status of David Myers, New York's star African American quarterback. In his sports column, Ed Sullivan predicted that "a week before the University of Georgia game, New York University officials will announce calmly that Dave Myers has been unfortunately crippled" and will be unable to play—a common tactic to preserve the Gentleman's Agreement. Labeling Myers "a fine type of colored boy" for his academic and athletic achievements, Sullivan demanded that if Georgia "cannot see its way clear to allow Myers to play" then "N.Y.U should cancel the game." Continuing, Sullivan thundered that if NYU "allows the Mason-Dixon line to be erected in the center of the playing field" then NYU "should disband its football season for all time." Condemning the "secret agreement" that allows a "color line to be erected," Sullivan proclaimed that "northern schools who have a Negro player in the line-up can solve the problem by banning intersectional games with Southern schools rather than by banning the Negro player." Sullivan concluded by demanding that NYU "repudiate that slur on the Negro race!"<sup>32</sup>

Sullivan's column helped fuel the controversy and conflicted reports appeared in northern press regarding Myer's status. The chairman of NYU Board of Athletic Control issued a statement that announced in no uncertain terms that Myers would play against Georgia. Proclaiming that "New York University will tolerate no discrimination against Myers," the chairman announced that NYU "has no agreement with Georgia, either written or verbal or implied in regard to Myers' no participation in the game." Moreover, if Georgia exhibited "poor sportsmanship" by demanding Myers removal from the lineup, NYU "would cancel our contract

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<sup>31</sup> Charles H. Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 1-27.

<sup>32</sup> Martin, *Benching Jim Crow*, 25-6; Newspaper clipping, no date, Folder 54, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.

with them.” A day later, however, NYU’s football coach Chick Meehan stated “that we had no intention of playing Myers against Georgia when we scheduled the game and we do not intend to play him now.” Basing his decision “on the feeling of Southern colleges in regard to playing against negroes,” Meehan asserted that when scheduling the contest with Georgia, “I made my mind up then that Myers would remain out of the lineup.” Several days later, the Board of Athletic Control contradicted Meehan by asserting that Myers would play in the contest, “if his physical condition permits.” Furthermore, the Board also reported that there was no stipulation in the contract “pertaining to race, color or creed” and “Georgia officials at no time made any demands relative to the playing of Myers.”<sup>33</sup>

No doubt the conflicting reports over Myers stemmed from the protest letters the president of New York received. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, African American newspapers, and other leaders including New York congressman Emanuel Celler expressed their outrage to school president Elmer Brown. In his letter to Brown, Congressman Celler deemed it “disgusting” and a “slap in the face to good sportsmanship” for NYU to defer to “Southern racial prejudice.” Not playing Myers would cause NYU to be deemed “an illiberal institution, that harbors racial prejudice and proscribes the Negro.” Reflecting the progressive belief that universities should be at the vanguard of societal reform and uplift, Celler questioned what “contribution may we expect from New York University” if it “is willing to wound the sensibilities of the entire colored population.” Replying to Celler’s letter, the acting chancellor W. H. Nichols blamed the public press for “utterly misleading and inaccurate” coverage. He informed the congressman that the contract for the game is “silent on the question of players” and Georgia “has expressly repudiated any restriction in this particular.”

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<sup>33</sup> Newspaper clipping, 23 Oct. 1929, Folder 54, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA; *New York Times*, 24 Oct., 7 Oct. 1929.



Describing Myers as a “colored lad” and “a fine fellow and great player,” Nichols hoped that he would be able to participate in the game. Myers, however, had sustained an injury and was “under the care of competent physicians...and our athletic authorities will be guided implicitly by their advice” regarding his condition for the game. Nichols concluded by again stressing his hope that Myers play for “he deserves this chance to have a part in personally in setting at rest this unjurious [sic] rumor.”<sup>34</sup>

The prospect of an integrated football contest also created uproar in the segregated South. In an effort to quell the controversy, the University of Georgia student newspaper, the *Red and Black*, reported that the rumors “have no foundation” due to “a gentleman’s agreement” between the two universities. The newspaper also accused the northern press of practicing “yellow journalism” and “sensationalism” for creating agitation and “race animosity.” The *Red and Black* also affirmed that officials at NYU, realizing “the situation in the South” would not “embarrass” southerners by forcing them “to play against a colored man.”<sup>35</sup>

Despite the assurances from the *Red and Black*, other southern presses—a notable exception being the *Atlanta Constitution* which was strangely silent on the subject—reported that Myers would play in the game. This prompted several letters from disgruntled southerners to Chancellor Snelling. After reading a clipping about Myers in a Birmingham paper, an anonymous “southern lady” hoped that Snelling would cancel the game “rather than submit to a colored.” Similarly, after reading a Nashville paper, a self described “southern man interested in football” also hoped that game would be cancelled. Otherwise, “it would lower the estimation of the entire Southland towards your University.” Another person requested that Georgia, a “fine old school,” take the “proper actions in this case” and not play against an integrated team. A

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<sup>34</sup> Emanuel Cellar to Elmer E. Brown, 4 Nov. 1929; W.H. Nichols to Emanuel Cellar, 6 Nov. 1929, Folder 19, Box 6, Snelling Papers, UGA.

<sup>35</sup> *The Red and Black*, 23, 25 Oct. 1929.

current resident of New York who was “born and educated in the South” deemed it “unthinkable that such a typically Southern school as Georgia would condescend to enter into any athletic contest against a team on which a negro plays.” He urged the athletic authorities at Georgia to “give the team a rest,” schedule another contest, or “do anything but play against a negro.” Another writer accused “some of our northern friends” of having “a lack of self respect” for supporting integrated athletics and posited that Georgia’s only option was “to refuse to play.”<sup>36</sup>

In his replies, Snelling confidently predicted that “no colored player will be on their team” for “the Athletic Authorities of the two institutions have understood each other all along.” Snelling proved to be prescient. The day of the game, the *New York Times* reported that a team of surgeons determined that Myers suffered an injury to his left shoulder and deemed him “unfit for duty.” With the controversy quelled, the Georgia team took the field before a crowd of 42,000 in Yankee Stadium. Seemingly “outclassed,” the southern team quickly fell behind 20 to 0 at halftime. At start of the second half, Georgia surrendered another touchdown to New York before launching a furious comeback. Although Georgia scored three touchdowns in the waning minutes of the contest, the deficit was too much to overcome, and New York secured a 27-19 victory.<sup>37</sup>

In his analysis of the Myers controversy, Charles Martin concludes that while Georgia lost the actual ballgame, they “won the larger struggle to maintain the color line for intersectional section competition” and insured that the “gentleman’s agreement still reigned supreme over intersectional competition.” The controversy also reveals how progressive minded southern college presidents utilized football as a public relations weapon to transform their institutions

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<sup>36</sup> Southern Lady to C.M. Snelling, 23 Oct. 1929; Brovan Buford to C.M. Snelling, 25 Oct. 1929; C.R. Spencer to C.M. Snelling, 23 Oct. 1929; James Thayer Pate to C.M. Snelling, 5 Nov. 1929; J.H. Coceie to C.M. Snelling, 24 Oct. 1929; Folder 19, Box 6, Snelling Papers, UGA.

<sup>37</sup> C.M. Snelling to C.R. Spencer, 25 Oct. 1929; C.M. Snelling to Nettles, 30 Oct. 1929, Folder 19, Box 6, Snelling Papers, UGA; *The New York Times*, 9 Nov. 1929; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 Nov. 1929.

into modern, research orientated universities. To maintain tenuous financial support, Snelling had to maintain southern racial mores on the gridiron. Otherwise, he risked alienating a large segment of the population in his quest to convert the University of Georgia into a modern university. The controversy also demonstrates how football was slowly embedding itself into the southern way of life. Events on the field now mattered to a larger segment of the population.<sup>38</sup>

Employing football as a public relations vehicle to garner legislative and alumni support was a monumental step towards the development of the modern spectacle. Under attack at the fin de siècle, the fate of football was far from certain. Progressive university presidents, intent on transforming their institutions into modern, research orientated universities that would be on the vanguard of southern uplift, recognized how football connected governmental officials, alumni and the populace to the needs of the university. As a result, they embraced football and encouraged its growth to gain financial support. Subsequently football became a vehicle for the progressive goals of uplift and transforming society and a modernizing force in the South.

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<sup>38</sup> Martin, *Benching Jim Crow*, 26.

## Chapter Six

### **“A Place On the Map, If Not the Sun”: Stadiums, Big-Time Football, and the Emergence of the Modern South**

For months in 1929 the small town of Athens, home to the University of Georgia, prepared for the dedication of Georgia’s new football stadium. Attendees at the inaugural game included scores of dignitaries—senators, governors, congressmen, business executives, national sports and feature writers, and prominent radio figures—plus thousands of spectators that would double the city’s population. Realizing that the national spotlight shined upon them, the community formed committees to address the issues of traffic, decorations and lodging for the expected guests. To make the city as attractive as possible, the Athens Garden Club erected historical markers on homes of note and requested that all property owners improve and beautify their holdings. In a community-wide effort, downtown businesses decorated storefronts with bunting and ribbons to celebrate the event. To handle “the greatest problem of transportation since the World War,” city council members worked with railroad executives and arranged for twenty-four special trains to transport people into and out of the classic city. University ROTC cadets were employed to direct automobile traffic and parking arrangements were made for the thousands of expected cars. On Friday, October 11, 1929 the first of thousands began arriving in Athens for the dedication of Georgia’s new football stadium. Highlighting the stadium’s christening would be a football contest featuring the bulldogs of Yale and the bulldogs of Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> *The Red and Black*, 11 Oct. 1929; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 12 Oct. 1929.

Friday afternoon, a special train carrying the Yale football team, coaches and band from New Haven, Connecticut arrived at the Athens train station and the guests of honor disembarked. With hundreds surrounding the station and thousands more lining the streets, the Governor of Georgia, Lamartine G. Hardman, met the Yale train on the platform with his military staff. Yale's band then formed columns and led the procession through the overflowing streets to the team's hotel. After playing a couple of popular songs of the era, the band director, sensing the opportune moment, blew three blasts on his whistle. The drums rolled and the crowd hushed in anticipation. Suddenly, and with sufficient force to rattle windowpanes, Yale's brass section launched into a rendition of *Dixie*. Upon hearing the first notes the crowd, "throwing all dignity to the winds, broke into a rebel yell." George Trevor, writing for the *New York Sun*, described the sound as something "that once heard, is never forgotten. They yelled as their forbears yelled at Friedrichsburg (sic), Antietam and Shiloh. It was a spontaneous cry, culminating in a long drawn shriek that bridged half a century in a single minute." Later that evening, a banquet was staged at the Athens Country Club to honor the visiting players. Both teams and coaches attended the event and Charles Herty served as master of ceremonies. Fans continued to revel in the streets until well past midnight. Upperclassmen, dressed in black derbies and sporting red and black canes, led cheers and chants for the southern Bulldogs. Restaurants and drugstores remained open all night while crowds lit firecrackers, blew tin horns and whirred "clackers."<sup>1</sup>

Supporters of the University of Georgia had reason to celebrate. The dedication of a modern, concrete stadium on campus marked a turning point for southern football programs. During the early period of football, programs stood on the brink of insolvency and struggled to survive. To keep their athletic departments afloat, colleges scheduled contests at fairs and larger

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<sup>1</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 18 Oct. 1929; Jesse Outlar, *Between the Hedges: A Story of Georgia Football* (Huntsville, Al: Strode Publishers, 1973), 11-14; John F. Stegeman and Robert M. Willingham, Jr., *Touchdown: A Pictorial History of the Georgia Bulldogs* (Athens: Agree Publishers, 1983), 39-40.

cities to attract crowds and garner much needed gate receipts. Building a modern facility on campus demonstrated that football programs had achieved a critical mass of support from the local community and alumni. Football could now stand alone. The construction of Georgia's stadium and the dedication game with the Yale team, a program so powerful and influential that it seldom traveled to an opponent's field, symbolized that Georgia football's program had come of age. From its humble beginnings, Georgia now stood poised to assume a place on the stage of big-time college football.

In his examination of intersectional contests, Andrew Doyle argues that the University of Alabama's 1926 Rose Bowl victory over the University of Washington served as a watershed moment for southern football. Criticized and lampooned by the northern press during the 1920s, southerners perceived the playing field as a battlefield where wrongs could be righted. Football became a means to repel northern criticisms and regain regional pride. Alabama's stunning victory and subsequent National Championship thus symbolized that "Southerners had overcome the obstacles of poverty and backwardness and were now able to compete on a national level at this most 'scientific' of sports." Moreover, the victory also symbolically demonstrated that southerners could compete in a modern, industrial world and reaffirmed the vitality of traditional southern values.<sup>2</sup>

Georgia Tech's Rose Bowl victory over the University of California three years later affirms Doyle's argument. In 1928 Georgia Tech completed the season undefeated. In route to a perfect season, Georgia Tech held Notre Dame scoreless, defeated Alabama 33-13, demolished Auburn 51-0, and disposed of influenza weakened Georgia team 20-6. As a reward, the team received the coveted invitation to play the California Golden Bears in the Rose Bowl for the

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Leo Doyle, "Causes Won, Not Lost: Football and Southern Culture, 1892-983" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1998), 166-219.

national championship. On December 20, a cold, rainy afternoon, the Georgia Tech team boarded a train in Atlanta bound for Pasadena and the Rose Bowl. Hundreds congregated at the depot to see the team off, confident of victory. Odds makers did not share Georgia Tech fans' confidence and anointed California the favored team, especially after it was reported that several Georgia Tech players had symptoms of influenza. Arriving in Pasadena, Georgia Tech's coach Bill Alexander required players to follow a strict routine. Although the players did have opportunities for sightseeing and visiting with actress Alice White, Alexander insured that his team remained focused on the task at hand, defeating California. The team held several practices before the game, including one on Christmas Day. Sports reporters praised Georgia Tech's squad and several California reporters expressed doubts about the local team's chances.<sup>3</sup>

To cheer Georgia Tech to victory, two hundred followers accompanied them on their transcontinental journey. Additional fans followed in two special trains and a score more chartered buses for the seven day cross-country trip. Native Georgians in Southern California formed a Georgia Tech Alumni Association and hosted a Georgia reunion dance in honor of the team. Fans from all across the nation inundated the Rose Bowl ticket office with requests, selling out the 70,000-seat stadium for the first time in several years. In another first, NBC Radio broadcast the game live, allowing fans in Georgia and throughout the South to listen to the game. On game day, an *Atlanta Constitution* editorial stated that the "eyes of the college men in the entire southeast today are on Pasadena." The editorial urged all to support Georgia Tech, regardless of college affiliation, by affirming that "every patriotic Georgian and southeasterner wants to see the Golden Tornado win the great Rose Bowl this afternoon." The *Atlanta Constitution* predicted that Tech will "bring home the bacon" yet softened a possible defeat by

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<sup>3</sup> Al Thomy, *The Ramblin' Wreck: A Story of Georgia Tech Football* (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, 1974), 121-6; *The New York Times*, 21-26 Dec. 1928.

noting “the players on both sides are gentlemen of the highest type who will not be humbled by defeat nor self-centered by victory.”<sup>4</sup>

Colleges throughout the South sent Georgia Tech telegrams of encouragement. The telegrams indicate that intersectional contests were a unifying force that transcended regional rivalries, a source of regional pride and a vehicle to assert southern equality. Georgia Tech’s bitter in-state rival, the University of Georgia was among the first to send a telegram. Despite a Tech victory the previous year that prevented Georgia from attending the Rose Bowl, the Georgia Athletic Association offered their sincerest wishes for success and referred to Georgia Tech’s team as “a source of pride all this season to the adherents of southern football and rightfully deserves the honor that has come to it through being chosen to represent the south in this annual classic.” The telegram concluded by hoping for a victory to “place your team and the south on the nation’s pinnacle for the season.” The Louisiana State University coaching staff urged Georgia Tech to victory and proclaimed that “win or lose the game we are proud the southland has such a great team as its representative.” The athletic director at the University of Maryland expressed his support for Georgia Tech and assumed that they would prevail because the team “represented not only Georgia Tech, but the entire south and its traditions.”<sup>5</sup>

With the support of the South, Georgia Tech played California in a game that featured one of the most bizarre plays in college football. Minutes into the game Georgia Tech’s running back fumbled the ball after a sixteen-yard gain on the Tech thirty-five yard line. California’s center, Roy Riegels, picked up the fumble and sprinted toward the Georgia Tech goal for a touchdown. Riegels became confused in his attempts to elude tacklers and began sprinting sixty yards toward the California goal line while a teammate and Georgia Tech players pursued.

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<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times*, 16, 27 Dec. 1928; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1 Jan. 1929.

<sup>5</sup> *The New York Times*, 16, 27 Dec. 1928; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1 Jan. 1929.



Riegels' teammate prevented a Georgia Tech touchdown by turning him around at the one-yard line, just before several Georgia Tech players tackled Riegels. Georgia Tech's defense then forced California to punt from their end zone, but Georgia Tech blocked the punt and scored a safety. Georgia Tech later scored a touchdown and clung to an eight point lead. California rallied late in the game, scoring a touchdown and converting the point after for seven points. Tech, however, held on the lead and secured an 8-7 victory, thanks to Riegels' infamous "boneheaded play...that put a spring of poison ivy in the Rose Bowl."<sup>6</sup>

The returning players received a hero's welcome on their journey home. To show their appreciation for Georgia Tech's accomplishments, the city of Birmingham provided the players with a churn of ice cream during the train's stop. The small town of Tallapoosa, just inside the Georgia border, was "out 100 percent to show its appreciation for Tech's resounding victory." The town erected an electric light display in the form of a T and cascaded the team with cheers for their victory—a foreshadowing of what awaited them in Atlanta. Celebration plans in Atlanta called for the Georgia Tech band, the Atlanta police band, the Georgia Tech cadet corps and fans to meet the victors at the train station. To evince its "appreciation of the victory won by Tech and the national recognition of Southern and Georgia football ability," Atlanta hosted a victory parade from the train station to Georgia Tech's campus. Workers decorated every light pole along the parade route with Tech's gold and white colors and Georgia Power Company constructed an "Arch of Triumph" over a viaduct that flashed, "Welcome Home Tech." Amidst a deafening cacophony of train whistles, factory whistles, bands and cheers, Georgia Tech's train rolled into the Terminal Station that evening. A crowd estimated at 50,000 broke through the barricades and overwhelmed the outnumbered police for a glimpse of the returning heroes. The

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<sup>6</sup> Thomy, *Ramblin' Wreck*, 126-31; *The New York Times*, 3 Jan. 1929.

crowd hoisted the players onto their shoulders and delayed the parade for nearly half an hour. An estimated additional 50,000 lined the parade route to celebrate the victory, far exceeding organizers expectations.<sup>7</sup>

The *Constitution* published numerous congratulatory resolutions, editorials, and letters that illustrate the belief that Southern football had come of age. The Fulton County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution that praised Georgia Tech for bringing “fame and glory to Atlanta, Fulton County and the entire southeast.” In an editorial, the *Atlanta Constitution* noted the hardships Tech endured to achieve victory. Upon taking the field, the editorial noted, Georgia Tech had to overcome a biased crowd and “a strange field.” In addition, the opposing team consisted of heavier men that employed a novel overhead passing scheme that “for a time seemed unbeatable.” The players, however, “gritted their teeth and played with a desperation such as they never shown before” and overcame the adversity. In doing so, they achieved victory that every Georgian and “every college man in the south” can be proud of. Richard H. Edmonds, editor of the *Manufacturers Record*, perceived even more symbolism in the victory. Using the university’s victory as a platform to attack derogatory stereotypes of southerners, he wrote that the victory “carries far more broader significance than merely glory to Tech, to Atlanta and to Georgia” for the North and West harbor a widespread belief “that the south did not breed great giants in brain and brawn.” Every athletic victory therefore “heralds to the world not only the tremendous physical stamina of southern born men but the quickness and alertness of brain on...the gridiron are typical of the mental alertness of the people of the south.” He concluded by stating that the Georgia Tech team has “rendered an invaluable service to the south

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<sup>7</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 6-8 Jan. 1929; *The New York Times*, 8 Jan. 1929.

and thus to the whole country by showing to all sections he superb physical and mental stamina and alertness of the people of the south.”<sup>8</sup>

Students at the University of Georgia, which had recently resumed athletic relations with Georgia Tech after a prolonged feud, also congratulated Georgia Tech on their milestone victory. In a conspicuous location near the Terminal Station, Georgia students carried a large banner that read, “The University of Georgia is Proud of Tech.” The *Atlanta Constitution* proclaimed the banner to be “the most touching tribute of the entire reception.” Tech fans noted the banner and one expressed her appreciation. Mary White wrote a letter to Georgia’s faculty advisor to athletics, S.V. Sanford, to “express the genuine feeling of pride that came over me when I first saw the giant placard sent by the University of Georgia.” She congratulated “Georgia on her sportsmanlike spirit and her lack of animosity toward her friendly enemies.” Editors of the *Red and Black* also extended congratulations to the Tech squad and echoed similar sentiments that “by winning the national championship, Tech not only brought itself into prominence but the entire South.”<sup>9</sup>

While Alabama’s and Georgia Tech’s Rose Bowl victories were important steps in elevating southern football into national prominence, the two institutions benefitted from their proximity to the leading industrial centers in the South, Birmingham and Atlanta. Noted newspaper columnist and early chronicler of southern football, Fuzzy Woodruff, declared in 1920 that Atlanta and Birmingham are the only “two cities in the south where football attendance is anything that causes college coffers to jingle.” Located sixty miles from Tuscaloosa, the home of the University of Alabama, Birmingham hosted a majority of Alabama’s home games. The

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<sup>8</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2-3 Jan. 1929

<sup>9</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8 Jan. 1929; Miss Mary White to Dean of the University, 9 Jan. 1929, Folder 19, Box 9, Steadman Vincent Sanford Papers, 1865-1970, MS 1578, (hereafter Sanford Personal Papers), Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries (hereafter UGA); *The Red and Black*, 11 Jan. 1929

city's large population and industrial base provided an environment more conducive for the development of a big-time football program. Likewise, Georgia Tech's location in the heart of Atlanta paved the way for the school to become one of the premier football programs in the South. The financial advantages these two programs shared made them the exception, not the rule, for most southern football teams.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, the construction of modern, concrete stadiums on campus functions as a better indicator of when programs came of age. To build a high capacity stadium, programs needed a high level of support from alumni, friends and students to both fund construction costs and attend games. In addition, an on campus stadium necessitated the development of infrastructure to handle the large crowds that inundated the campus and city during game days. Moreover, as powerful programs in the North and Midwest constructed stadiums, it became a source of pride for a program to possess one of their own. By constructing a modern facility, southern football programs were proudly boasting that they had progressed from playing contests at fairs, attractions, and large cities, to hosting important games at their own campus. A modern stadium, more than an intersectional victory, symbolized that a program now stood on equal footing with others and was ready to assume a place on the big-time football stage. The industrialization, infrastructure, transportation systems, and community support needed to construct a modern, on campus stadium also reveals how these processes of modernization were neither fixed in time nor place. For cities like Birmingham and Atlanta, modernization occurred

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<sup>10</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11 Dec. 1920; The importance of urbanization in the development of modern sports is an important theme in sport history. See, Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1988; Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Steven A. Reiss, *Sport in Industrial America, 1865-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995); Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ. (1990). On the growth and industrialization of Atlanta and Birmingham, see Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

more rapidly. For smaller communities like Athens and Clemson, South Carolina, the process was more prolonged. Examining these college communities and the manner in which their football programs secured stadiums furthers our understanding of how the modern South emerged.<sup>11</sup>

Starting in the 1920s, a wave of stadium building swept college campuses. In 1921, Stanford University constructed a 65,000 seat stadium on their campus. In 1922, the University of Pennsylvania and Ohio State both expanded their existing stadiums to raise capacity to an excess of 60,000. In 1923, the University of Illinois raised the capacity of their stadium to approximately 67,000. Following suit, schools like Minnesota, Northwestern, Missouri and Iowa, also constructed stadia on their campuses with capacity between 40,000 and 50,000 attendees. The large capacities allowed the universities to increase the profitability of their football programs since more seats meant more spectators. The stadiums also became a source of pride and advertisement for their respective schools. By building a stadium, programs across the nation were announcing that they had achieved big-time status.<sup>12</sup>

The University of Georgia's longtime faculty advisor to athletics, S.V. Sanford, dreamed of building a large, modern football stadium on Georgia's campus. Recognizing the nationwide trend, Sanford announced that "this is the age of stadium building" and a "stadium represents the spirit of the age." Claiming that "the whole country has caught fever of stadium building," he contended that "every athletic contest should be played on the college campus." Although insolvency and a lack of infrastructure necessitated that games be played in "large cities where facilities were ample," this defeated the purpose of collegiate athletics. Sanford believed that

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<sup>11</sup> For the rise of modern stadiums throughout the nation, see Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 39-61.

<sup>12</sup> Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*, 45-9.

athletics should not be “hippodrome contests to attract crowds to fairs” or cities; instead they should primarily belong to the students and “be a normal part of college life.” Recognizing the role football played in developing good public relations, Sanford also proclaimed that a new stadium would provide alumni with an opportunity to be “drawn more closely to Alma Mater” and “learn more intimately the needs of the institution.” In addition, a new stadium would bring non-alumni in contact with the university and provide an opportunity for them to “love, support and protect it.” This required the construction of a new facility, since “people no longer attend games where the facilities are not modern and are not adequate to care for the crowds.” To further support his vision of a new stadium, he asserted that colleges were reluctant to schedule games with institutions “that cannot handle large crowds and cannot have modern facilities for the players.” Subsequently, “the students and the players are entitled to facilities equal to those found at other universities of similar rank and standing.”<sup>13</sup>

In a letter, Sanford elaborated on the need for a stadium in less grandiose prose. Discussing why Georgia always played Auburn University in Columbus, Georgia, Sanford bluntly stated that it was difficult creating “a schedule that would pay simply because the average college did not have any seating capacity.” As a result, Georgia had to schedule games in larger cities like Columbus or Birmingham to insure adequate gate receipts. Sanford yearned for the “day when we will have a nice stadium in Athens” so that he could “insist that all college football games be played on campus.”<sup>14</sup>

The need for a modern football stadium was evident on Georgia’s campus. Since 1911, Georgia’s home venue was Sanford Field. Although it featured a covered grandstand, the field

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<sup>13</sup> S.V. Sanford, “The How and Why of the Stadium,” *Georgia Alumni Record* (Oct. 1929): 13; See also T.W. Reed, “History of the University of Georgia,” 3568-9, unpublished manuscript, available online from the Digital Library of Georgia.

<sup>14</sup> S.V. Sanford to R.E.L. Spence, 21 Oct. 1926, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

was designed primarily for baseball games, and as a result, the seating arrangements were not ideal for viewing football games. In addition, the small seating capacity of approximately 3,500 made it financially impractical to host desirable contests. Moreover, with the growing popularity of football, and increased ownerships of automobiles, problems arose over traffic and parking at the facility. In 1921, Georgia's athletic association requested that the county grade an area behind the grandstands and widen the streets leading to the venue to provide parking and alleviate game day traffic congestion.<sup>15</sup>

Due to these inadequacies, rumors circulated that Georgia was planning to build a stadium to equal those at other universities in 1924. Receiving a query regarding the rumors from the *Manufacturer's Record*, a trade magazine for builders and contractors in the South, the president of the University of Georgia, Charles Snelling, replied that "while our Athletic Board had agreed that we should proceed in the matter of providing a stadium on the University Campus, no plans have matured as yet." The stumbling block was money. Although the Athletic Board desired a stadium, they remained insolvent and Snelling conceded that "we do not contemplate any general campaign to raise money for our proposed stadium." Still needing the necessary funds a year later, an alumni member of the Athletic Association proposed that the university raise \$50,000 towards the stadium by selling \$100 bonds to "the Alumni and friends of the University." The member assumed that "there are quite a few Alumni who would make a gift of this amount or even more for this purpose." Anticipating that a stadium capable of seating

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<sup>15</sup> John H. Stegeman, *The Ghosts of Herty Field: Early Days on a Southern Gridiron* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 98; Harry Hodgson to S.H. Dunbar, 5 Feb. 1921, David Barrow Papers (hereafter Barrow Papers), UGA.

25,000 would be built, the alumnus predicted that “the Athletic Association should be able to pay this amount in a short period of years.”<sup>16</sup>

The plan apparently held some merit, for less than a year later, Sanford appeared before the University of Georgia Board of Trustees to advocate the construction of a stadium in a heavily forested natural valley in the center of campus. Vowing that the project could be completed “without cost to the University,” Sanford proposed to finance construction costs “through gifts already promised and those to be secured, as well as by using portions of the income of the Athletic Association.” Centrally located between the current baseball stadium—which also functioned as the home field for the football team—and the Central of Georgia Railroad, the valley also divided the agriculture college from the older liberal arts college. To Sanford the location seemed ideal, for the proposed stadium would be nestled in a natural valley and function as a bridge to unite the university’s two colleges.<sup>17</sup>

The location was not universally accepted, however. Georgia’s former football coach, Alexander Cunningham, believed that “the low valley and intense humidity took a lot from the players” and the team would frequently “go stale without cause.” To remedy this, he suggested that the proposed stadium be built “higher in the hills.” More importantly, Andrew Soule, President of the Agricultural College, objected to the location. Since the forestry department used the grounds as nursery, Soule did not want to endure the trouble and expense of establishing another one. For aesthetic reasons, he also opposed the removal of trees which flanked the

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<sup>16</sup> Snelling to Manufacturer’s Record, 22 Dec. 1924; Snelling to R.O. Wine, 22 Dec. 1924; Robert O. Arnold to Harold Hirsch, 11 Nov. 1925, Folder 42 Box 5, The Charles Mercer Snelling Papers, 1904-1950 (hereafter Snelling Papers), UGA.

<sup>17</sup> Transcripts of the Minutes of the University of Georgia Board of Trustees, 26 June 1926, available online from the Digital Library of Georgia; Reed, “History of the University of Georgia,” 3568-74; For a discussion on the longstanding tensions between the agricultural college and the liberal arts college, see Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 123-200.



Agriculture building. Overriding Soule's objections, the Board of Trustees required that the Agriculture College cede the land for the construction of a new football stadium.<sup>18</sup>

Although a site had been approved, the project still lacked the necessary funding. Nonetheless, firms continued to solicit Snelling for business. In late 1926, an engineering firm requested that Snelling consider them for designing the stadium. To promote their company, the president noted that they had just completed work on the stadium at Washington and Lee University. Highlighting sectional differences and the prevalent poverty in the South, the firm's president stated that southern universities "require different treatment from the Universities of the North and East" since southern schools cannot afford the "very expensive" types of stadiums used in the North due to their inability to "attract tremendous crowds." Politely declining the solicitation, Snelling informed the engineering company that "it is not likely that our Stadium will be built in the immediate future." Georgia was, however, conducting a study of the proposed site "so that we might proceed intelligently." To help them proceed intelligently, the university secured the services of landscape architect C.W. Leavitt, who had previously completed a plan for the long-term development of the campus. Although it would be "some time" before the university was "ready to proceed with the erection of a Stadium," Snelling was impressed with Leavitt's prior work, and asked him to "draw plans for our proposed stadium." Snelling, however, forewarned Leavitt that "before proceeding in the matter we must get some money." Snelling was optimistic though, that "it will not be long before the way is open and I can write more definitely."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Alex Cunningham to S.V. Sanford, 28 Feb. 1928, Folder 7, Box 7, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; Reed, "History of the University of Georgia," 3568-74; Board of Trustee Minutes, 26 June 1926.

<sup>19</sup> F.R. Sweeny to C.M. Snelling, 24 Dec. 1926; C.M. Snelling to F.R. Sweeny, 10 Jan. 1927; C.M. Snelling to John Hill, 10 Jan. 1927; C.M. Snelling to Gavin Hadden, 1 Feb. 1927; C.M. Snelling to Charles W. Leavitt, 9 Feb. 1927 Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

Receiving Snelling's endorsement, Leavitt then submitted an estimate for his firm's fees in developing and overseeing the project. Leavitt based his estimate on building a stadium with a seating capacity of 50,000 people, but designed so "that a section to accommodate 30,000 people may be built as one unit and the section for the additional 20,000 people may be added later." For \$6000, his firm would "make the necessary studies for the design, and submit sketches and preliminary drawings for your approval." Once the preliminary drawings had been approved, Leavitt's firm would then "prepare working drawings and specifications" that would be used "to obtain bids by contractors for construction of the stadium." Leavitt proposed a 4 percent fee, based upon the lowest bid contractor's bid, to cover the cost of preparing the actual plans and specifications. Leavitt's firm also offered to "supervise the construction work" continuously throughout the process for a 3 percent fee "of the cost of construction with travelling expenses and living expenses of the inspector additional."<sup>20</sup>

Serving as an advisor to the stadium project, Harry Hodgson, an alumnus from the University of Georgia and businessman in Athens, deemed Leavitt's fees exorbitant. In a note to Snelling, he suggested studying "this proposition closely" and proposing "a reduction in Leavitt's fees." Acting on these beliefs, Hodgson wrote to Leavitt and informed him that "your initial proposal would involve us in an entirely too large an expense to be justified by the prospects of stadium funds at this present time." Reiterating his displeasure, Hodgson proclaimed that the amount "you should be paid struck me and others who I have talked with as presenting a rather insurmountable difficulty." Since Snelling still remained in favor of Leavitt's service, "provided it did not involve too large an expense," Hodgson suggested a conference "to see if we can get any closer together." Replying to Hodgson, Leavitt's firm defended the \$6,000

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<sup>20</sup> Charles W. Leavitt to C.M. Snelling, 11 Jan. 1927, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

fee for “the design, preliminary drawings, and perspective picture” by asserting that “this amount was arrived at by carefully estimating the time that Mr. Leavitt and his assistants would put on this work and we figured it out just as closely as possible.” Willing to negotiate, Leavitt suggested that the University provide an amount “that you can afford to pay for these drawings, and we will try to give you what you want.”<sup>21</sup>

An agreement was apparently never reached, for several months later Hodgson recommend that Snelling and Sanford examine plans for the recently completed Kenan Stadium, located on the University of North Carolina’s campus. In an apparent coincidence, the engineering firm that designed the stadium, T.C. Atwood and Nash, wrote to Snelling two weeks later. In their letter, they “noted in the press that you are to build a new stadium at the University of Georgia, and if you have not already engaged your engineers and architects for the work this work, we would like to be considered.” To promote their company, Atwood and Nash boasted that they had “just completed the new stadium for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which has been universally regarded by those who have seen it as the best in the South and one of the best in the country.” In addition, the firm also advertised their work on the Yale Bowl and assured “entirely competent work should you desire our services.” University officials and outside advisors desired Atwood and Nash’s service, for three months later they entered into an agreement to construct the stadium. Per the agreement, the engineering firm would “design and supervise the construction” for a “fee of 6% of the entire cost of work.” Under the agreement, the university would pay “1 ½% on estimated total of \$200,000 on acceptance of preliminary drawings.” Once contractor bids were received, the university would then pay another one and a

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<sup>21</sup> Charles W. Leavitt to C.M. Snelling, 11 Jan. 1927; Harry Hodgson to Charles Leavitt, 13 April 1927; Charles Leavitt to Harry Hodgson, 20 April, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

half percent and “the remainder from time to time during progress of work.” The parties also selected the engineer for the city of Athens, Captain J.W. Barnett, “to handle the local work.”<sup>22</sup>

With an agreement in place, the University now had to tackle the thorny issue of funding. A failed attempt to construct a stadium and gymnasium at the University of Mississippi demonstrates how problematic securing funds could be. During an alumni association meeting in 1925, the president of the association presented a plan to raise \$200,000 towards building “a gymnasium and stadium on University grounds” for student use. To generate the funds, Lamar Life Insurance would sell “five year endowment policies in denominations of \$100 each at a premium of \$19.50 per annum.” The First National Bank of Jackson would be the beneficiary of the policies and serve as a Trustee for the funds till the required amount was raised. The association approved the plan and “many signed applications after leaving the meeting.” The enthusiasm was short lived. Exactly one year later, the association recommended abandoning the plan since Lamar Life Insurance “had not worked the proposition sufficiently well to raise any respectable amount.”<sup>23</sup>

To avoid a similar failure, Sanford spent months contemplating how the destitute athletic association could fund a stadium. After formulating his plan, Thomas Walter Reed recalled “a conversation in which [Sanford] outlined his plans in the most confidential manner.” Hearing Sanford’s proposal, Reed bluntly told him that he “had bitten off more than he could chew.” Undaunted, Sanford moved forward with his plan and ultimately proved Reed wrong. Sanford’s plan was simple. He appealed to directly to alumni and “friends of the university” to lend, not money, but their credit and endorse either \$500 or \$1,000 bank notes. Although it cost them no

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<sup>22</sup> Harry Hodgson to C.M. Snelling, 29 Nov. 1927; T.C. Atwood to C.M. Snelling, 16 Dec. 1927, T.C. Atwood to C.M. Snelling, 7 March 1928, Folder 42 Box 5, Snelling Papers.

<sup>23</sup> 1 June 1925, 1 June 1926, Alumni Association Minutes Collection (MUM00512), Folder 1925-33, The Department of Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.

money, the endorsers were trusting Sanford's belief that future stadium gate receipts would quickly repay the loan. Otherwise they would be responsible for their amount of the loan. By appealing to both alumni and friends "who had never attended the University but were enthusiastic supporters of the football team," Sanford quickly secured a \$150,000 loan from the Trust Company of Georgia bank. The ease with which Sanford secured the money demonstrates the growing popularity of football and the high level of support it received. Without this support, Georgia would have been unable to fund the stadium and claim a share of the big-time stage.<sup>24</sup>

With an engineering firm under contract and funding secured, the project was ready to proceed in March 1928. Problems, however, soon emerged over the selection of a contractor. Although select members of the advisory committee believed that MacDougald Construction Company should immediately be awarded the contract without public bidding, Snelling was fearful that this would generate criticism. To avoid criticism, Hodgson suggested that the Trust Company of Georgia issue a public letter outlining that they were only lending \$150,000 and that "MacDougald Construction Company will finance the additional \$50,000 required to complete the structure." As a result of this arrangement, the Trust Company of Georgia could also announce that the loan was contingent on MacDougald Construction receiving the contract. Should this backroom deal be accomplished, Hodgson believed that it "would satisfy everybody."<sup>25</sup>

Hodgson's sanguine assessment was premature, for a month later the stadium committee held a meeting to determine whether MacDougald Construction should be awarded the contract without public bidding. Unable to attend the meeting, board member Harold Hirsch, an Atlanta attorney, composed a letter to voice his support for MacDougald Construction. Labeling the

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<sup>24</sup> Reed, "History of the University of Georgia, 3569-70.

<sup>25</sup> Harry Hodgson to Dameron Black, 29 March 1928, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

financing of the stadium a momentous a problem, Hirsch proclaimed that it was only accomplished “through the conditions set forth by the Trust Company of Georgia.” These conditions hinged on the “generosity of the MacDougald Construction Company, and without them, the building of the stadium would have been greatly delayed.” Fearing that public bidding would further delay the process, Hirsch predicted that “unless we can get to work on this stadium at once it will impossible to have same ready for some of the fall games.” Conceding that Snelling and the University “might possible be placed in an embarrassing position” by not publicly bidding on the contractor, Hirsch nonetheless argued that the all parties had a duty to see the project completed and “permit those who had agreed to finance the stadium to at least, in part, say what should be done.” Contending that “the bid of the MacDougald Construction Company is in line with the work to be done,” he asserted that “the financing by the Trust Company of Georgia was based upon the fact that the MacDougald Construction Company was to erect the stadium and finance the completion.” Any changes to the agreement would jeopardize the financing scheme and “delay the entire proposition.” Hirsch concluded by urging the Board to “unanimously go ahead with the proposition as it now stands.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite Hirsch’s objections, the Athletic Association opted to accept public bids from contractors. After receiving eleven official bids, ranging from \$119,000 to \$206,778, Snelling announced that the committee “would take them under consideration.” He also stressed that “the approval of the bankers advancing the loan for the structure must be secured.” After deliberating and consulting with the Trust Company of Georgia, the stadium committee awarded the contract to Seaboard and Southern Construction Company from Jacksonville, Florida. In their bid, the company agreed to “furnish labor and material required in the erection and completion of

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<sup>26</sup> Harold Hirsch to C.M. Snelling, 24 April 1928, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

concrete stadium and culvert in accordance with plans and specifications prepared by Atwood and Nash, Inc. for the sum of \$148,500.<sup>27</sup>

The county also caused minor problems and delays in the construction of the new stadium. Seeking, and needing community, support, the Athletic Association requested that the county assist in the project by grading the stadium site for free. Although the commissioners deemed it a “pleasure” to grade the stadium site with county forces free of charge, prior scheduled work necessitated a twelve month delay. The county, however, offered to purchase additional equipment for \$15,000 and would then immediately “undertake the grading on the basis of fifty percent of its cost.” The Athletic Association quickly agreed to the compromise and county road crews soon began work on the stadium site a month before final plans were received and a contractor selected. The willingness of the local government to undertake the project also illustrates the reciprocal nature of big-time college football. The university needed the support of the county and the county recognized the economic value a successful program brought to the community. This level of cooperation was necessary for football to flourish in the southland.<sup>28</sup>

Problems, however, soon arose over this arrangement. Paid on commission on the total cost of the project, T.C. Atwood, the owner of the engineering firm supervising the project, objected to the county’s free work not being included in the total cost. Writing to Barnett, the city engineer charged with overseeing the project, Atwood requested that he speak with Snelling and “convince him of the propriety of this being included.” Since the cost of designing and supervising the grading of the earthwork represented the bulk of the project’s cost, Atwood

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<sup>27</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 3 and 6 May 1928; Charles I. Babcock to Stadium Committee, 1 May 1928, Snelling Papers, UGA.

<sup>28</sup> Tate Wright to C.M. Snelling, 20 March 1928, Folder 56, Box 1, Snelling Papers, UGA.

threatened that “the omission of any part of this value would simply necessitate a change in the rate of the fee on the whole.” Due to the veiled threats, Snelling and the Athletic Association ultimately agreed to include the county’s work.<sup>29</sup>

Within a few months, new problems arose over the arrangement with the county. The county commissioners initially agreed to grade the site “with the understanding that the approximate quantities would be 30,000 cubic yards” and the work would be completed by July 1<sup>st</sup>. As the deadline passed, the county had employed its entire road force, including the new machinery, and had only completed half of the project; despite already excavating the estimated amount of earth. With the entire road force occupied with the stadium project, county roads had been neglected and citizens were complaining. Dirt roads in the county were “in worse condition than any of the State roads in contiguous counties,” and county commissioners deemed it “essential that work be done on these dirt roads during the summer months before winter sets in.” Although they were “as much interested in the completion of the stadium as anyone,” the commissioners found it necessary “to move the forces from the stadium job” without completing the project. While a short term setback for the athletic association, the maintenance and development of roads throughout the state was paramount for the long term success of the project. As America entered into the Automobile Age and cars became the primary form of transportation, good highways leading into Athens made it possible for alumni and fans throughout the state to conveniently attend games. Without this revolution in transportation, and subsequent need for improved roads, it would have been impossible for the small city of Athens to sustain and support a large capacity stadium. It was therefore imperative that alumni have easy access to Athens. Recognizing this, Marion Smith, a member of the Georgia athletic board,

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<sup>29</sup> T.C. Atwood to J.W. Barnett, 17 April 1928, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.



pressured the state highway board to pave the highway connecting Atlanta to Athens. In his reply, the chairman of the highway board stated that the state was actively grading, paving and building bridges on the unpaved thirty miles section of the highway.<sup>30</sup>

Meeting the deadline for completion was paramount. Recognizing the importance of a modern, on campus stadium, University officials had scheduled a game with the mighty and prestigious Yale University for the dedication of the stadium. Hosting Yale, one of the most storied and successful football programs, was a logical choice because it assured national interest in the game. In addition, a historic link connected the two universities. Abraham Baldwin, the founder of the University of Georgia, its first president, and a majority of the original faculty were all Yale graduates. In its infancy, Yale graduates modeled Georgia to match Yale standards, even utilizing blue prints from Yale to construct the first campus building.<sup>31</sup>

Securing Yale, however, was not an easy task for Yale seldom traveled to an opponent's field. To induce Yale into visiting, Snelling mixed flattery and sentiment in a letter to the President of Yale. Noting that the University of Georgia was "a child of Yale," Snelling commented that at Georgia "you will find something of the fine spirit that characterizes Yale and makes the institution the distinctive among the colleges of America." Noting the "uniform courtesy and consideration" that Yale bestowed on visiting Georgia football teams, Snelling proudly claimed that a spirit of kinship existed between the two institutions. While acknowledging Yale's "policy not to play Athletic games away from New Haven except with Harvard and Princeton" and the great distance between New Haven and Athens, Snelling nonetheless implored Yale to consider the invitation. He concluded by reminding the president

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<sup>30</sup> Tate Wright to C.M. Snelling, 4 July, 1928; H.R. Maier to C.M. Snelling, 22 Sept. 1928, C.M. Snelling to T.C. Atwood, 3 Oct. 1928, Folder 42, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA; John Holder to Marion Smith, 14 Aug. 1928, Folder 13, Box 9, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>31</sup>Reed, "History of the University of Georgia," 3576-7.

of Yale that Georgia “has carried our football team to New Haven six years in succession” and again expressed his earnest trust that “you will favor the acceptance of our invitation.”<sup>32</sup>

Mirroring Snelling, Sanford wrote to Yale’s Faculty Chairman of Athletics to persuade Yale into scheduling the contest. In his letter, Sanford also noted the historic link between the two schools and repeatedly praised Yale’s athletic program. Sanford remarked that Georgia had designed their stadium after Yale’s and were “eager to have the stadium dedicated with proper formality, and to make the occasion memorable because of the fame of the team which dedicates it.” Appealing to a sense of fair play, Sanford likewise commented upon the courtesy Georgia received in previous visits to Yale and “coveted the opportunity of repaying it in kind.” Invoking flattery, Sanford also stated that the contest “would give the people of Georgia, who would gather in great numbers, and opportunity to see one of the great teams of the country.” In his reply, Yale’s coach, Marvin Stevens, promised to discuss the invitation with his staff and Football Committee from a “football standpoint and make our recommendation to the faculty.” Stevens warned Sanford that the Yale faculty rendered final judgment and cited the denial of a similar request from the University of Chicago the previous year to illustrate “the difficulties involved.” Undeterred, Sanford and Snelling enlisted the help of former governors and alumni from both schools to flood Yale with letters in order to sway the Yale faculty.<sup>33</sup>

Their efforts were rewarded, for the Yale Athletic Association agreed to break tradition and accept the invitation, citing “the close academic and athletic connections between the two Universities and the exceptional circumstances which your invitation generously emphasizes.” Generating front-page headlines in both the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Athens Banner Herald*,

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<sup>32</sup> C.M. Snelling to James Angell, 10 Oct. 1928, Folder 43, Box 5, Snelling Papers, UGA.

<sup>33</sup> S.V. Sanford to George H. Nettleton, 28 Sept. 1928, Folder 14, Box 9, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; Marvin Stevens to S.V. Sanford, 16 Oct. 1928, Folder 15, Box 9, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; Reed, “History of the University of Georgia, 3577.

the announcement also received national coverage. The *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* both printed articles about Yale's historic trip south. The news was also well received by Georgia alumni. Herty expressed his "heartiest congratulations on your success in securing Yale for the inauguration of the new stadium!" in a letter to Sanford. A self described "rather obscure alumnus," also sent his congratulations and deemed the occasion "a splendid honor for Georgia—both state and University and a brilliant achievement." Another person wrote to "extend my congratulations for this great feat. It is all that—possibly some more...my hat is off to you." These letters and the national newspaper coverage demonstrate the importance of the stadium dedication.<sup>34</sup>

To commemorate the occasion, both houses of the Georgia legislature unanimously designated October 12, 1929, the day of the game, "Abraham Baldwin Day" and declared it a state holiday to honor the Yale alumnus and founder of the University of Georgia. Recognizing the importance of the occasion, universities in Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina rescheduled their football contests so that the spotlight could shine solely on the stadium dedication. "To make the occasion memorable in every way," the university invited numerous political dignitaries—including the governors of Georgia, Connecticut, and the states that rescheduled their contests. Sanford also invited the current governor of New York, and future president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Since Roosevelt had "done us the honor of so identifying you with the state of Georgia," Sanford believed that "the occasion would hardly be complete without your

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<sup>34</sup>George Nettleton to S.V. Sanford, 26 Oct. 1928; Charles Herty to S.V. Sanford, undated letter; John Mahoney to S.V. Sanford, 6 Nov. 1928; J.H. Drewry to S.V. Sanford, Folder 15, Box 9, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 Nov. 1928; *Athens Banner-Herald*, 5 Nov. 1928; *New York Times*, 5 Nov. 1928; *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 Nov. 1928.

presence.” Recognizing the importance of the event, Roosevelt initially agreed to join the governors of Virginia, Alabama, and North Carolina to commemorate the occasion.<sup>35</sup>

As the game approached, excitement built in Athens and New Haven. The Yale student newspaper reported that the game was “attracting an unprecedented interest from the entire football world.” To prepare for the contest, Yale’s coach “sent his charges through one of the hardest scrimmages that has been held this fall.” The night before the team departed, 2,000 students attended a pep rally for the team. At the rally, speakers instructed the team to “make the right kind of dedication,” but reminded them that they were “ambassadors of goodwill.” To make the unprecedented trip, the thirty-eight man football team and fifty piece Yale band secured a special train, complete with huge tanks of New Haven water and cartons of apples and chewing gum, for the twenty-six hour journey. Seventy undergraduates also planned to make the trip—forty on the special train, twenty by car, and ten by airplane. During the journey southward, players were ordered to bed at 10:00pm and instructed to only drink water from the New Haven tanks “to insure against any harm which the change in water might cause.” Arriving in Athens on Friday afternoon, the team was greeted with thunderous cheers from thousands of spectators, while Governor Hardman, Snelling, and Sanford extended officials greetings to the Yale team and coach.<sup>36</sup>

For merchants and businesses in Athens, the completion of the stadium represented the realization of a long held vision. Recognizing the economic boost thousands of visitors provided to the local economy, the Chamber of Commerce had long lobbied the Georgia athletic association to stage more and better contests in Athens. The new 30,000 seat stadium made this

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<sup>35</sup> *Red and Black* 4 Oct. 1929; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 12 Oct. 1929; *Yale Daily News*, 10 Oct. 1929; S.V. Sanford to Franklin Roosevelt, undated letter, Folder 23, Box 9, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA.

<sup>36</sup> *Yale Daily News* 10-12 Oct. 1929; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 12 Oct. 1929.

possible. Capitalizing on the national attention and the influx of thousands of visitors for the dedication game with Yale, businesses in Athens and Atlanta flooded newspapers with advertisements that linked commerce with football. A vast array of business—hardware stores, auto part stores, garages, barber shops, hotels, and restaurants—all placed ads that congratulated Georgia and welcomed visitors. The volume of ads, and the diversity of businesses placing them demonstrate, that the stadium was true community effort. They also reveal that Athens, along with the football program, had come of age and fully entered into the consumer based economy.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to advertisements, local and national newspapers contained editorials that invoked numerous Civil War metaphors. Historian Michael Oriard demonstrates that this was a common trend in intersectional contests. He contends that southern sportswriters incorporated allusions to the Civil War to “assert their worth.” The national media, on the other hand, embraced the metaphors “to feed the longing for regional identity in the face of rapidly expanding ‘mass’ culture.” Describing the South’s passion for football, George Trevor, of the *New York Sun*, wrote that “football provides an escape valve for that adventurous urge, that martial ardor, which despite an outward appearance of languor, is the heritage of every son of Dixie.” The *Athens Banner-Herald* proclaimed that when Georgia takes the field “they will cease playing for Georgia. They will be playing for the South. All of Dixie is looking this way.” Continuing the metaphor, the paper deemed the Georgia team representatives “of Dixie chosen for the day, to repel the Blue warriors from Yale.” Invoking southern pride, the editor concluded that “the eyes of the entire South will be turned to Sanford Stadium Saturday as the Georgians

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<sup>37</sup> *Athens, Clarke County* a booklet published by the Athens Chamber of Commerce, (1916), 16-7; *Atlanta Constitution*, 10-12 Oct. 1929; *Athens Banner-Herald*, 10-12 Oct. 1929.

take the field...to uphold the newly arising feeling that football players of the first water are raised in the south.”<sup>38</sup>

With Dixie and the nation watching, Georgia prepared to face the heavily favored Bulldogs of Yale on an unseasonably hot October afternoon. In a pre-game speech, Georgia’s Coach Harry Mehre, a northerner who once remarked that prior to moving South, he thought the Mason-Dixon Line was a railroad, also invoked regionalism and state pride. He spoke of “ideals and fighting for Georgia...and making the state proud of them.” The Yale team, dressed in cotton undershirts and heavy blue jerseys with rubber panels on the sleeve fronts, stormed the field in their traditional acrobatic manner— performing a series of somersaults. Almost immediately sweat poured off the visitors in rivulets. Unaccustomed to the southern sun, one player allegedly lost sixteen pounds during the course of the game. During the game, Georgia played with such determination that an umpire on the field described it as “a superhuman effort with their faces set in a snarl that was fearsome to see.” At halftime Georgia led 7-0, thanks to Vernon “Catfish” Smith, who blocked a punt for a touchdown and kicked the extra point. After the half, Smith continued his nearly single handed dominance. With Georgia’s students chanting, almost pleading, “Come on, Georgia! Come on, Georgia! Oh, Georgia! Touchdown Georgia!” and both bands blaring, Yale’s quarterback, after recovering his own fumble, attempted to dodge a pursuing Smith and stepped out of bounds in the end zone for a safety. Georgia now led 9-0. Yale attempted a comeback, but after Georgia intercepted a pass, Smith caught a touchdown pass to give a Georgia a 15-0 lead, a lead that Georgia held.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, The Weekly and The Daily Press* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 86-100; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 18 Oct. 1929; *Athens Banner-Herald*, 11 Oct. 1929.

<sup>39</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, 13 Oct. 1929; Ole Timer, “Catfish 15, Yale 0” *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 9 Oct. 1949; Tim Cohane, *The Yale Football Story* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), 256.

After the game, the celebration in Athens lasted until well past midnight. The departure of numerous trains scarcely dented the throng. The victory made headlines in both Georgian and national newspapers and sportswriters commented on Georgia's shocking and surprising victory. The *New York Times* sports section headlined in bold font "Yale Beaten, 15-0, By Georgia Eleven In A Stirring Game" and proclaimed the contest a "stunning defeat in the South." Ralph McGill of the *Atlanta Constitution* compared the Georgia team to the men "dressed in butternut charging with Pickett," and announced that "certainly no man of that gallant crew flung himself at the enemy any more valiantly and desperately than did the Georgia football team when it met and repulsed the big blue team from Yale." The congratulatory telegrams that flowed into Sanford and Snelling's offices after the victory also reflect that the victory validated southern manhood and asserted southern superiority. In a telegram to Sanford, A "bulldog of yesteryear" deemed the "striking victory" an important moment for "Georgia and Southern young manhood." Another person was more direct in his proclamation of southern pride. In his telegram, he wrote that "New England—with its cherished tradition of superiority—will have 'to sit up and take notice' that there are A FEW INSTITUTIONS DOWN SOUTH."<sup>40</sup>

Business leaders in Athens viewed the stadium and subsequent victory in a different light. Instead of seeing the victory as validation, they deemed it an opportunity to attract new investments and capital into the city and state. An attorney wrote that the stadium dedication was "a fine demonstration of all the good qualities of the University and the city of Athens." Reflecting the boosterism spirit inherent in the New South creed, the mayor of Athens proclaimed that as a result of the contest, the city and the entire state will "be quickened from a business standpoint." The treasurer of the Georgia Athletic Association, Hugh H. Gordon,

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<sup>40</sup> *The New York Times*, 13 Oct. 1929; *Washington Post*, 13 Oct. 1929; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1929; *Atlanta Constitution*, 15 Oct. 1929; Kennon Mott to S.V. Sanford, 14 Oct. 1929, Box 9, Folder 22, Sanford Personal Papers, UGA; James Henry Simmons to C.M. Snelling, 9 Oct. 1929, Box 1, Folder 54, Snelling Papers, UGA.

opined that the energy devoted towards constructing the stadium and staging a successful dedication on the national stage demonstrated that “the city is capable of handling large problems and carrying them through to successful culmination.” By acquainting “hundreds of people with the potential wealth of this section,” Gordon firmly believed that the contest “will stimulate the commercial development of Athens.”<sup>41</sup>

The dedication of the stadium was a rousing success and an important milestone for southern collegiate football. Recognizing the importance of the occasion, Snelling opined that “Athens and the University have a place on the map if not the sun.” Despite the numerous obstacles, university leaders, alumni, and the local community united to make Sanford’s vision of a modern campus stadium a reality. Hundreds of alumni and friends of the university signed promissory notes to provide the necessary funding. With the help of the local government, the contractor completed the stadium in time for the dedication to with the powerful Yale team. To handle the influx of visitors, the university and the business community worked hand in hand to insure the dedication was a success. The necessary cooperation of all parties to make the stadium a reality reveals that football had received a critical mass of support and had become embedded into the landscape of the South. The completion of Georgia’s modern stadium, a stadium still in use today, demonstrates that Georgia’s football program had achieved big time status. Five years after the dedication ceremony, with the nation mired in the Great Depression, the Georgia Athletic Association fulfilled its financial obligation and paid the \$180,000 loan in full—a further testament to the power of college football in the South.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Edgar Dunlap to C.M. Snelling, 15 Oct. 1929, Box 1, Folder 54, Snelling Papers, UGA; *Atlanta Constitution*, 12 Oct. 1929.

<sup>42</sup> S.V. Sanford to C.M. Snelling, 11 Jan. 1934, Box 5, Folder 41, Snelling Papers, UGA.



While football programs at Alabama, Georgia Tech and Georgia achieved national prominence by the dawn of the 1930s, the timing was not uniform throughout the South. For other programs, as evinced by Clemson University, the process was slower. Nestled in the upcountry foothills of South Carolina, Clemson was, according to one historian, an isolated “sleepy country college in a sleepy Southern village miles and miles from the rest of the world” in 1940. The isolation and lack of a nearby metropolitan area inhibited the university from achieving big time status on the gridiron. The football playing field did not help matters. The student newspaper recalled that the “racky old stands” did not provide fans with good seating since they “were hardly above the playing field.” Moreover, a majority of the seats were located in the end zone further hindering views. As a result, the old stadium and “big-time football just didn’t go together.” To help propel their team to dominance, Clemson’s newly hired coach, Frank Howard, and president, Robert Poole, both envisioned a new 20,000 person capacity stadium. Recognizing the importance of a modern stadium to secure quality home games, Poole announced to the university’s newspaper that a new stadium would draw then powerful programs “like Tennessee, Kentucky, and Tulane to South Carolina.”<sup>43</sup>

With the support of the president, the university began the process of selecting a site for the new venue. To defray costs, members of the senior class in Civil Engineering largely completed the preliminary work. A natural ravine near Cemetery Hill was chosen due to its proximity to the current athletic building, good drainage, and access to feeder roads and parking facilities. To finance the construction of the stadium, the South Carolina Legislature passed an act allowing the university to sell \$110,000 worth of bonds in the summer of 1941. With a financial plan in place, the business manager then requested contractor bids for the project.

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<sup>43</sup> James C. Hite, “The Gentleman Manager: Robert Franklin Poole, 1940-1958,” in Donald M. McKale, ed. *Tradition: A History of the Presidency of Clemson University* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 166; *The Tiger* 3 Oct. 1940, 18 Nov. 1948.

While waiting for the bids, coach Howard demonstrated his eagerness to complete the stadium by having his players clear the site for the contractor. In October of 1941, the contractor began work and the first concrete for the stands was poured three months later. According to Clemson lore, Howard threw a wad of his chewing tobacco into the wet concrete at each corner of the stadium to leave his mark.<sup>44</sup>

Thanks to the foresight of the business manager, construction materials were secured beforehand. As a result, the nation's entrance into World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor did not halt construction. Just under a year later, the stadium was completed in the midst of war at a total cost of \$120,219.39. In a true public-private enterprise, the South Carolina State Highway Department, chaired by a Clemson graduate, and the county government constructed feeder roads to the stadium and performed extensive grading on the site to improve draining at no charge to the university. To complete the stadium, local merchants contributed \$485.00 to purchase a public address system and the Vice President of the Southern Cotton Oil Company, also an alumnus, donated \$600 of his company's money to purchase a scoreboard and clock for the new stadium. The private donations and taxpayer funded road work and site grading significantly reduced the cost of the project and illustrate how developing big time athletic programs required the support of the local business community and government to develop to the necessary infrastructure. On September 27, 1942 the first contest was staged at Memorial Stadium. Although the exigencies of war initially prevented Clemson from selling out the

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<sup>44</sup> H.E. Glen, untitled and unpublished manuscript; newspaper clippings, University Subject Files, Buildings, Stadium; in Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CUL); Bob Bradley, *Death Valley Days: The Glory of Clemson Football* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1991), 12-13.

stadium or securing prominent opponents, after World War Clemson rose to prominence in the sporting world.<sup>45</sup>

With the addition of lights to the stadium six years later, the Clemson student newspaper proudly boasted that “Clemson has one of the South’s most modern stadiums.” The article touted the “most comfortable” seats that allowed 20,500 spectators to witness “big-time football.” In addition, the stadium featured “a most modern press box” complete with two rows of “work benches” that offered sportswriters a “non-obstructive view of the playing field.” The second floor of the press box contained “four sound proof radio booths” that allowed radio stations to broadcast games and area “where movies of the game can be taken.” Finally, the article praised the installation of “one of the most modern lighting systems in the South.” Installing lights and playing games at night would grant “the working public” an opportunity “to see the Tigers in action.”<sup>46</sup>

The construction of large stadiums with modern amenities symbolizes the evolution of southern football from a haphazard, largely elitist affair, into a cultural phenomenon with mass appeal. Southern football had become big-time. Likewise, the stadiums also reflect that their communities had achieved a level of modernity. Examining the process by which the stadiums transformed from vision to reality highlights how the modern South slowly emerged. Although the timing varied from location to location, certain conditions were necessary for this process to occur. Alumni involvement, a level of urbanization and the necessary infrastructure, specifically adequate roads and highways, were paramount for the project’s success. Without the cooperation and involvement of the business community, state, and local governments, the necessary infrastructure to sustain a modern stadium and a modern economy would have been

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<sup>45</sup> Glenn, untitled and unpublished manuscript, University Subject Files, Buildings, Stadium, CUL.

<sup>46</sup> *The Tiger*, 19 Nov. 1948.

impossible. Due to the confluence of these factors, southern football programs achieved big-status and southern communities become modern. These changes laid the foundation for the modern football spectacle prevalent on fall Saturdays throughout the South.

## Epilogue

Yearly and without fail, scandals rock the world of modern college football. Whether it is players receiving illegal benefits, parents requesting money for their son to play for a college, universities switching conference affiliation, escalating salaries for coaches or schools forming their own television networks, these scandals provide fodder for pundits and critics to denounce the excesses of the modern sport and demand sweeping reforms to restore a spirit of amateurism. Historian Ronald A. Smith, however, reminds us that these scandals are not a recent occurrence. Instead, commercialism and excess have plagued intercollegiate sports since their inception in the mid-nineteenth century.

Examining how college football evolved into the modern, big-time spectacle on southern campuses reinforces Smith's argument. Transported by southerners educated at northern institutions, the new and modern sport of football quickly took root on southern soil. Inspired by the Muscular Christianity belief of a sound mind in a sound body, students embraced the new sport. The support, however, was fleeting. Just as quickly, football programs, lacking popular and student financial support, became mired in debt and the sport barely clung to life. A handful of university officials fervently worked to insure the survival of football. Working within a close knit, informal network, these sporting enthusiasts scheduled contests with an emphasis on games that would pay to keep their programs solvent. This emphasis on gate receipts and the profitability of contests helped lay the foundation for the commercialism of today.

In addition to finances, university officials also grappled with the modern issue of player eligibility. From the onset, colleges frequently utilized ringers or tramp athletes to gain a competitive advantage over opponents. To eliminate this practice and implement pure athletics, university officials established the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association. Members of the SIAA, however, were frequently at loggerheads over what constituted a bona fide student and scandals continued to hound early college football. Eventually, the large and unwieldy SIAA splintered over the eligibility issue and the larger, more successful, football programs formed the Southern Conference—the precursor to the current Southeastern Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference. Despite the continual reform efforts, player eligibility remains a hotly contested issue.

As football slowly gained popularity, university leaders, following the lead of their northern and midwestern counterparts, began employing football as a public relations weapon to promote their school and gain financial support from alumni. The financial and popular support allowed colleges to construct large capacity, on campus stadiums. By building modern stadia, southern universities assumed a place on the big-time college football stage. This ushered in a host of new problems as alumni increasingly demanded more control over athletics. In turn, this laid the foundation for the current debate over the role and place of athletics at universities. The scandals and debates of today are nothing new. They have been part and parcel of football since its inception. Analyzing the development of big-time southern football reveals just how deeply rooted the current issues are.

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## **Appendix**



Selected Georgia Football Schedule  
(Source: 2004 University of Georgia Media Guide)

1892

1/30—Mercer (Athens)  
2/20—Auburn (Atlanta)

1893

11/1—Georgia Tech (Athens)  
11/4—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
11/30—Savannah Athletic Club (Savannah)  
12/1—Augusta Athletic Club (Augusta)  
12/9—Furman (Augusta)

1894

10/29—Sewanee (Athens)  
11/3—South Carolina State (Columbia)  
11/10—Wofford (Spartanburg, SC)  
11/17—Augusta Athletic Club (Augusta)  
11/24—Auburn (Atlanta)

1895

10/19—Wofford (Athens)  
10/26—North Carolina (Atlanta)  
10/31—North Carolina (Atlanta)  
11/2—Alabama (Columbus, GA)  
11/9—Sewanee (Atlanta)  
11/23—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
11/28—Auburn (Atlanta)

1896

10/24—Wofford (Spartanburg, SC)  
10/31—North Carolina (Atlanta)  
11/9—Sewanee (Athens)  
11/26—Auburn (Atlanta)

1901

10/12—South Carolina (Augusta)  
10/19—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
10/21—Sewanee (Sewanee)  
10/26—Clemson (Athens)  
11/2—North Carolina (Atlanta)  
11/9—Alabama (Montgomery)  
11/16—Davidson (Athens)  
11/28—Auburn

1906

10/13—Davidson (Athens)  
10/20—Clemson (Clemson)  
11/3—Mercer (Macon)  
11/10—Georgia Tech (Athens)  
11/21—Tennessee (Athens)  
11/29—Auburn (Macon)  
12/2—Savannah Athletic Club (Savannah)

1911

9/30—Alabama Presbyterian (Athens)  
10/7—South Carolina (Athens)  
10/14—Alabama (Birmingham)  
10/21—Sewanee (Athens)  
10/28—Mercer (Athens)  
11/4—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
11/9—Clemson (Augusta)  
11/18—Georgia Tech (Atlanta)  
11/23—Auburn (Savannah)

1916

9/30—Citadel (Athens)  
10/7—Clemson (Anderson, SC)  
10/14—Florida (Athens)  
10/21—Virginia (Charlottesville)  
10/28—Navy (Annapolis)  
11/4—Auburn (Columbus)  
11/11—Furman (Athens)  
11/18—Georgia Tech (Athens)  
11/30—Alabama (Birmingham)

1921

10/1—Mercer (Athens)  
10/8—Furman (Athens)  
10/15—Harvard (Cambridge)  
10/22—Oglethorpe (Athens)  
10/29—Auburn (Athens)  
11/13—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
11/20—Alabama (Atlanta)  
11/25—Clemson (Athens)  
11/27—Dartmouth (Atlanta)

1926

9/25—Mercer (Athens)  
10/2—Virginia (Charlottesville)  
10/9—Yale (New Haven)  
10/16—Furman (Athens)  
10/23—Vanderbilt (Nashville)  
10/30—Florida (Athens)  
11/6—Auburn (Columbus)  
11/13—Georgia Tech (Atlanta)  
11/25—Alabama (Birmingham)

1929

9/28—Oglethorpe (Athens)  
10/5—Furman (Athens)  
10/12—Yale (Athens)  
10/19—North Carolina (Chapel Hill)  
10/26—Florida (Jacksonville)  
11/2—Tulana (Columbus)  
11/9—New York University (New York)  
11/16—Auburn (Athens)  
11/28—Alabama (Birmingham)  
12/7—Georgia Tech (Athens)

1934

9/29—Stetson (Athens)  
10/6—Furman (Greenville, SC)  
10/13—North Carolina (Athens)  
10/20—Tulane (New Orleans)  
10/27—Alabama (Birmingham)  
11/3—Florida (Jacksonville)  
11/10—Yale (New Haven)  
11/17—North Carolina State (Athens)  
11/24—Auburn (Columbus)  
12/1—Georgia Tech (Athens)

## VITA

In 2000, Matthew Bailey graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Science in Social Science Education and a Bachelor of Arts in History. After graduation, he worked for Nationwide Mutual Insurance as a material damage claims representative until 2004. After deciding to pursue a graduate degree, Bailey earned a Master of Arts in History from Georgia College and State University in 2006. In December 2012, he will receive a Doctorate of Philosophy in American History from the University of Mississippi. Since 2009, Bailey has served as a Graduate Instructor in History at the University of Mississippi. He has taught several survey classes in United States History and upper level courses on the Twentieth Century South, Mississippi History and African American History since 1865. In addition, Bailey is also an Adjunct Instructor in History for the University of Memphis, where he has taught both survey and upper level courses in United States history.