

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Western Maryland College Football"

Carroll County Times Article for 4 December 1994

by Jay A. Graybeal

A little more than a century ago Western Maryland College added football to its athletic program. The team uniform consisted of a laced jersey emblazoned 'W M,' matching breeches, knee socks and leather shoes with low heels. The 1893 college yearbook, THE ALOHA, included a brief history of the new sport:

The fall of '91 witnessed the introduction of this popular game into our midst. Hitherto the spirit of youthful innocence had characterized our field sports, and the mad, tempestuous rush of Foot Ball was to our untutored simplicity but a creature of the imagination. But, with the opening of the fall term, a new era in athletics seemed to dawn upon Western Maryland. Arousing from her lethargic slumbers, she suddenly became fully awake to the fact that this most popular game was as yet a stranger within her borders. Conviction was but the parent of action, and soon the inflated oblate spheroid was to be seen bounding over her ample grounds. And then began the metamorphosis. Tennis rackets were thrown aside in disgust at their quiet, gentle innocence. Even base ball grew strangely unpopular, and its once ardent enthusiasts thronged eagerly to the foot ball ground. Here a howling mob in frantic eagerness chased a luckless bit of leather from goal to goal. Ignorance of the game excused no one, and enthusiasm fully atoned for inexperience. Our athletes were clad in new costumes and spoke in a different tongue. Our ancestral slang became obsolete, and the more pithy foot ball terms were at once substituted. Even long hair came suddenly into fashion, and the college barber took in his sign. True, indeed, many physiognomies suffered from violent collisions, and the grand march to chapel exercises revealed a variety of limps and hops well-nigh distracting our pianist and defying the most complicated time relations produced by the ablest composers. Still our zeal did not lag, and we eagerly scanned the physique of every entering freshman, as he innocently knocked at our doors for admission. Material in abundance was found, but in the crude state it was such that neither one season nor two could bind it firmly together into the one necessary unit of power. We claim no superior excellence for our foot ball team, but we are not ashamed of our beginning, and are confident that, once firmly established, our college will win no meagre honors in this department.

During the 1894 season, the "college eleven" played a memorable game against Johns Hopkins University. The Hopkins team expected an easy victory since they had recently beaten the Maryland Agricultural College team by a score of 60 to 0; the latter team had previously downed Western Maryland by a score of 52 to 0. According to a local newspaper correspondent, the forerunners of today's Green Terror "played more as a unit and with greater science" and beat Hopkins by a score of 16 to 0.

The 1894 season also included a "football controversy," as recorded in the November 3 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel:

The Baltimore American of Wednesday contained the following:

Western Maryland College yesterday notified the City College football team that the game scheduled for Saturday next would not be played. It was expected that this would be the result, and now three of the State League teams, viz., St. John's College, Washington College and Western Maryland College, have performed the pleasant duty of not only canceling the games scheduled, but doing so at such a late hour that it has been impossible to arrange other games. The feeling against the League teams at the City College is very bitter. Hereafter little attention will be given to these college in the athletic department

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by the Baltimore City College. The local collegians will continue to play other state colleges, and will contest for the state championship.

Alluding to the foregoing, Manager Eckard, of the Western Maryland College team, has this say:

"The Western Maryland College will not play the football team of City College on Saturday. The game was canceled because there are several players on the City College team who are not college men. The W. M. C. boys have not forgotten about the stuffed team that the City College played against them last year. The victory was claimed for City College when, in fact, only five of the players were City College students. They used the same tactics against Western Maryland in baseball, but even then they could not defeat the W. M. C. team. All the colleges of the League have refused to play city College in football, and unless their management determines to play strictly bona fide students, athletics at City College will not be recognized by the other colleges of the State.

"The football team of Western Maryland College is composed of bona fide students who came to college for the purpose of study and not to play football. This is so well known that no player of the team has been challenged by any of the teams of the League."

From these noble beginnings have come a century of football traditions.

Photo Caption: The 1892 Western Maryland College Football team as they appeared in the 1893 college yearbook. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection.