THE BAREFOOT LEAGUES:
AN ORAL (HI)STORY OF FOOTBALL IN THE PLANTATION TOWNS OF KAUA‘I

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Recent sport scholarship has expanded the literature on race and sport beyond African-American experiences to increasingly include those of Asian Americans and Latinos/Latinas. Nonetheless, studies on Japanese American sport have generally focused on Japanese American participation in baseball and internment camp recreation/sporting practices. Though illuminating previously untold aspects of sport history, the aforementioned studies focus on an especially dramatic and painful moment in Japanese American history. Meanwhile examinations of Hawai’ian sport have looked at what might be labeled “native” activities like surfing and swimming without exploring sport within different immigrant groups. In contrast, this paper examines American football, a non-native mainland sport within the context of everyday plantation/cannery life in pre-and post-World War II Kaua’i.

The Barefoot Leagues consisted of loosely affiliated teams from various towns on the island of Kaua’i. Participants played football in their bare feet: in part because they rarely wore shoes -- in part because as field and cannery workers, they could not afford athletic gear. The leagues drew players from a range of ages and ethnicities provided they could meet the weight limits of 115 to 135 pounds. While the league was officially open to all races, the lighter weight leagues did draw more Asian American, as opposed to
Hawai’ian or Portuguese participants. Most of the teams arose from “company” or plantation towns -- i.e. towns where the sugar and pineapple plantation or cannery was the primary source of labor for the locals. The players were drawn from the working class, generally plantation or cannery employees, often those performing manual labor. In general, the plantation or cannery supported the teams formally and informally with the plantation/cannery camp residents acting as fundraisers and spectators.

According to Kunio Nagoshi, a league participant in the mid-1940’s, the towns hoped to develop loyalty and esprit de corps. In addition, the town and “company” encouraged Barefoot League football to provide a form of recreation for the male laborers. While sifting through league documents, town records and newspaper articles illuminates the structure and schedule of “barefoot” football, the way football came to be played along with the meaning of football for spectators and players remains obscured. By interviewing twenty-five former barefoot football players, a story behind the official or written sources emerges. As Karen E. Fields notes in her article on oral history, “What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly,” she chooses not to call her grandmother’s memoir history, sociology or even an oral history in order to free herself from methodological constraints. Similarly, though employing the stock method of oral history -- the interview -- I prefer to present a story (rather than history) of football amongst laborers on Kaua’i. Along with illuminating how the residents of the plantation towns situated football within their collective identity, the interviews highlight how the players saw/understood the place of football in constructing individual, town and ethnic identities.
Dedicated to the men who played and coached barefoot football on Kaua’i
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Though the game resembled the style of American football played on the mainland (the Continental United States), barefoot football had two distinctions -- it was played in bare feet and the leagues were initially delineated solely by weight (not age). Barefoot football began on the island of Oah’u, though its origins are unclear. Some scholars contend that visiting military brought football to the islands, where it was adapted by the locals. Because most working class children and young adults did not wear shoes, football was played in bare feet.¹ In his encyclopedia of Hawai’ian sport, Hawai’i Sports: History, Facts & Statistics, Dan Cisco traces the origin of barefoot football to Oah’u sporting goods salesman, A.K. Vierra.² Because of the nature of Cisco’s work, he does not delve into the barefoot leagues in detail, though one can speculate that like the entrepreneurs of sport on the mainland, Vierra saw an opportunity to promote his business and/or increase sales of head gear and padding by organizing competition amongst barefoot teams from different parts of Honolulu. The earliest

¹ http://www.usatoday.com/sports/football/2004-11-09-hawaii-football_x.htm

barefoot teams emerged from relatively urbanized areas, specifically neighborhoods of Honolulu such as the Palama settlement and Kahili, which were reputed to be “rougher” areas of the city. From there, barefoot football spread to more rural parts of the island, like Waipahu, that were more closely linked to the sugar plantations. After establishing itself on Oahu, by 1926 barefoot football spread to the other islands including Kauai.

Though it arose from the Oahu game, Kauai’s barefoot football quickly developed distinctive characteristics. While the early teams of Oahu emerged from somewhat urban roots, Kauai’s barefoot teams emerged from the plantation and cannery camps. In addition, Palama and Kalihi had substantial numbers of native Hawaiians, who did not comprise a significant part of Kauai’s plantation workforce. Perhaps reflecting the generally larger body size of Hawaiians compared to Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Filipino males, the Oahu barefoot leagues permitted players up to 170 pounds. Though Kauai continually set and re-set the weight classes for barefoot football throughout its existence, the Kauai leagues capped the top weight at between 135 to 150 pounds.

Choosing to play football in bare feet arose from cultural norms, familiarity and financial need. Bare feet were the norm for the working class children of the plantation. Even at school, children went barefoot. As Paul Taniguchi notes, “To play barefoot was more natural to us than playing with shoes. Besides, shoes cost money. I did not own a pair of shoes until high school.”

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purchasing athletic shoes would have been an economic burden, severely limiting participation in football. Since children in Hawai‘i did not wear shoes regularly until high school and often could not afford them, playing barefoot made the game accessible. In addition, going barefoot was more comfortable, allowing for a wider range of movement. Some football players struggled to adjust to shoes when they did begin playing high school or college football. Despite the moniker “barefoot football” and the acceptance of bare feet in the plantation camps, rubber shoes were permitted during the barefoot leagues’ second year of existence on Kaua‘i. However, the rule permitting footwear was abolished in the third and all subsequent years of the barefoot leagues.

Along with the financial limitations of the plantation/cannery employees, the decision to play the game barefoot may have been informed by the plantation’s financial interests. The plantations may have tried to minimize the costs of providing recreation by omitting shoes from the team uniform. While the plantations provided full football equipment, including shoes, for their senior football league teams, they may have believed that the lighter weight and smaller size of the participants (135 vs. 150 pounds) mitigated the chances of injury or physical damage. According to the former players interviewed, the plantation/cannery supplied all equipment, usually a flimsy helmet without face protection, a t-shirt/jersey and occasionally thin shoulder pads. This set-up

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4 Kunio Nagoshi, interview by author, 29 August 2004, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, tape recording. Nagoshi notes that while serving in the military, he played football on the base. Because he found it easier to move without shoes, he competed barefoot, which caught the attention of the announcer who told the spectators that the quarterback was playing barefoot. Also, Joel Stephen Franks, Hawaiian Sports in the Twentieth Century (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

5 Garden Island (Lihu‘e, Hawai‘i), 27 September 1927.
afforded little protection for as several players pointed out, the helmet was so soft it could be compressed and stuffed in a pocket. In addition, some plantations did not provide any type of padding, leaving players to adapt by utilizing jabon (large grapefruit) peel as shoulder pads.⁶

While the weight limits made it possible for smaller boys and men to take part in tackle-style football, they served certain ethnic groups better than others. Mamo Wakuta comments that

The other nationalities were too big for 135-pound league. It was mostly Japanese. Pono AC [Athletic Club] never had Portuguese, but Hawaiian Cannery had Portuguese.⁷

Paul Taniguchi concurs, “Because of the weight limit, it was very difficult for Portuguese, Puerto Ricans and Hawai’ians to play because they were generally larger than Japanese. Caucasians were practically non-existent in the Koloa community.”⁸ Though George Matsuzaki, who played for a Lihu’e senior barefoot team and Haruo “Dyna” Nakamoto, also of Lihu’e, recall teammates of different ethnicities, others claim that the 135-pound barefoot teams were comprised primarily of Japanese American boys and men.⁹

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⁷Mamo Wakuta, interview by author, 5 September 2004, Kapa’a, Hawai’i, written notes. Of the twenty-five former players I interviewed only two, Billy Texeira (Portuguese) and Rudy Notebook (Filipino) are not of Japanese descent.


Throughout its existence the barefoot leagues altered and added different weight classes. The original barefoot leagues imposed a 135-pound weight limit, which was lowered in the 1930’s, before re-asserting itself in the 1940’s and becoming the most celebrated and most fondly remembered league. As the barefoot leagues expanded, lower weight limits of 130, 125, 120 and 115 pounds were introduced to encourage the involvement of younger boys. For the most part, men 150 pounds and heavier were relegated to the senior league (loop), where they played in full football gear. In the later years of the barefoot leagues, some barefooters also played for a high school football (Gary Matsuwaki, Paul Taniguchi, Billy Texeira), but many chose the barefoot leagues because they were too small/light to compete against high school athletes (Edward Matsumoto, Rudy Notebo). The weight limit evened the playing field on that count, favoring speed, quickness and shiftiness over size and strength. However, calling barefoot football a “finesse” type of play misrepresents the nature of the play on the field, which was often described as “rough and tumble” in the newspaper’s coverage.10

Along with permitting smaller, lighter men and boys to compete on the gridiron, the classification of the barefoot leagues by weight allowed for wider participation in terms of age. As long as a boy or man could “make weight,” he was eligible to play on Sunday. In fact, it was not uncommon for a man to play into his early thirties as long as he was single. Generally, once a man married, he could not risk injury and the resultant lack of income from his inability to do his job at the plantation or cannery.11 As a result, Hiroshi Arakaki, who played in the 1940’s as an eighth grader, remembers going up

10Garden Island, 8 November 1927.

11Billy Texeira, interview by author, 10 September, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, tape recording.
against men in their late twenties and early thirties. Along the same line, in the 1950’s Richard Kashiwabara and Charles Niitani, faced off against harder, muscled, working men while in high school. As Kashibara and Niitani commented, the older men, who had engaged in physical labor for years, were tough competition thanks to their physical condition and general “hardness.” Seeking this type of competition, Shoichi Igarashi, recruited for the high school team, turned down the coach, stating that “I want to play against men, not boys.”

Even though high school football, played in shoes and full equipment, grew in popularity during World War II, barefoot football continued to draw huge crowds every Sunday. Anecdotal information and *Garden Island* features indicate that crowds for the games, even until the last year of the league (1955), were sizable. The games were popular enough to warrant weekly coverage in the *Garden Island* beginning in the late 1920's and in 1944, increased coverage with live broadcasts on KTOH radio.

The plantation and cannery were central to the towns on Kaua’i. Along with employing most of a town’s population, they also constructed housing camps, recreational facilities and camp hospitals. As a result, many residents’ lives were

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12 Gary Matsuwaki, interview by author, 29 August 2004, Honolulu, Hawai’i, tape recording; Billy Texiera, interview by author, 10 September 2004; Edward Matsumoto, interview by author, 27 August 2004; Rudy Notebo, interview by author, 5 September 2004, Kapa’a, Hawai’i, tape recording; Hiroshi Arakaki, interview by author, 9 September 2004, Kalaheo, Hawai’i, tape recording; Shoichi Igarashi, interview by author, 17 September 2004, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, tape recording; Richard Kashiwabara, interview by author, 17 September 2004; and Charles Niitani, interview by author, 17 September 2004, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, tape recording.

13 Paul Taniguchi, interview by author, 27 August 2004. Taniguchi recalls that players were asked to put their back to the radio announcers, so they could read the jersey numbers. Though his mother did not understand English well, he speculates that when she heard his name mentioned in the broadcast, it was a thrill for her.
completely interconnected with the plantation/cannery: they lived in plantation housing, played in/on plantation fields and gymnasiums, relied upon the plantation medical plan and shopped at the plantation store. Not surprisingly, a town’s identity was intertwined with the plantation/cannery as evidenced by some of the barefoot team names. For example, the town of Kalaheo had the Kauai Pine team, which represented the Kauai Pineapple Company before merging with neighboring Lawa‘i to create the Kala-wai Packers. On the east side of the island, Kapa’a’s Pono Athletic Club (Pono AC) emerged from the Hawaiian Canners, which processed pineapple. Mamo Wakuta, who played for Pono AC before leaving for military duty explains that Kapa’a’s identity was wrapped up in Pono AC -- “Kapa’a was Pono AC. Pono AC was Kapa’a.”14 The towns of Ele’ele and Wai‘iawa supported the McBryde Scots, who were boys and men from the McBryde Sugar Company camp. Meanwhile, the main city on Kaua‘i, Lihu‘e, had two squads -- the Lihu‘e Planters and the Lihu‘e Townies of the Lihue Plantation. In nearby Puhi, the athletic teams were named for their attachment to the Grove Farm plantation.

Because of the obvious affiliation with the plantations and canneries, most scholars who mention barefoot football contend that the plantations and canneries provided the primary financial support for the barefoot teams.15 Though some players admitted that during their playing days, they had not questioned where the money came


from for jerseys and helmets, they figured the plantation supplied everything.\textsuperscript{16} In some cases, the plantation/cannery supplied the game site, e.g., McBryde Field. To assist the players, the plantation/cannery usually supplied a truck or bus to transport the players to the field, and according to one interviewee, for spectators to attend away games. In addition, in the event of injury, the plantation’s medical staff handled the situation at no cost to the injured party.\textsuperscript{17} In short, the backing of the plantation in barefoot football reveals some of the paternalistic aspects of the plantation/cannery management of its laborers.\textsuperscript{18}

I am a sport historian, but I had never heard of the Hawai’ian Barefoot Leagues. From 1926 to 1955 thousands of boys and men on Kaua’i participated in barefoot football, which attracted thousands of spectators, yet after nine years of immersion in sport history and sociology -- not to mention summers spent on Kaua’i, my parents’ history on the island and my family’s working class roots -- I did not know about barefoot football. Despite familiarity with colonial and post-colonial theory, I found few scholarly works that connected plantation culture, the sugar industry and sport other than the work of C.L.R. James, who juxtaposes his experience and memories of cricket, as participant and spectator, against Caribbean colonial culture. Though sport in the Hawai’ian islands merits investigation based on its colonial, industrial and/or ethnic

\textsuperscript{16}Alan Matsuzaki, interview by author, 21 August 2004, Los Angeles, California, tape recording; Paul Taniguchi, interview by author, 27 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{17}Gary Matsuwaki, interview by author, 29 August 2004; Mamo Wakuta, interview by author, 5 September 2004.

\textsuperscript{18}In 1939 James Shoemaker reported that the plantations were “benevolently paternalistic rather than liberal” in their treatment of labor. As quoted in www.ilwu142.org.
roots, I found little mention of “local” sport beyond “native” sports such as surfing and swimming. Furthermore, even those histories devoted to the experience of immigrants in Hawai’i, Asian American history and the history of the plantations glossed over the barefoot leagues, making only the briefest asides about barefoot football. All of which demonstrate how all history is not created equal, particularly if the actors in that history are ethnic minorities and working class.

In 1999 I presented a paper at the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) conference entitled, “Re-theorizing Race: Some Preliminary Observations for Sport History.” Borrowing from the work of Jeffrey Sammons, who calls for a re-theorization of race in his 1994 survey article for the Journal of Sport History and Catriona Parratt, who argues for the heuristic value of the theoretical “turn” (in regard to gender), I presented the limitations of the essentialized, non-problematized articulation of race that dominates most sport history and sociology.19 Like Sammons and Parratt, I sought to uncover the stories and voices of those “erased” by non-theorized conceptions of race and class. Echoing the concerns of Parratt, I worried that the “turn” toward race and class might obscure the lived experiences of working class people of color.20 In short, as I focused on re-theorizing race and class, I became dissatisfied, realizing that I was theorizing about rather than doing, the type of sport history I was calling for.

19 Even studies that claim to challenge this conceptualization of race ultimately uphold that same conceptualization. See John Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

This socio-historical study utilizes a Cultural Studies and Critical Race Studies framework to examine the history of barefoot football in the plantation towns of Kaua‘i. Borrowing from the works of C. L. R. James, Richard Delgado and Gloria Ladsen-Billings, I investigate three aspects of the barefoot football through the lenses of race and class: the rise of barefoot football, specifically the structure and organization of the Barefoot Leagues; the intersections of barefoot football, the plantation/cannery and working class community, including the meanings derived from those intersections; and barefoot football as a local production that reified and challenged plantation culture. The adoption of a Cultural Studies and Critical Race Studies perspective allows for a “bottom-up” examination of barefoot football, particularly the meanings participants brought to and took from barefoot football. Cultural and Critical Race Studies’ critical examination and re-definition of history calls for the embrace of narrative and storytelling as sources, allowing different, often untold (hi)stories to emerge. By viewing the barefoot leagues as a product of the intersections of plantation structure/culture and individual agency/identity -- socially situated and embedded within the unequal power relations of plantation culture -- a Cultural Studies and Critical Race Studies approach allows for the construction of a more nuanced picture of ethnic and class dynamics and sport. Against this fuller explication of sport and plantation culture, a more

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comprehensive vision emerges of how barefoot football contributed to the construction of “local” identity and led to accommodation and resistance against plantation culture.

Even as the fields of history and more specifically, sport history expand, most history comes from the top. As oral historian Paul Thompson notes, “...we have the idea of History - History with a capital H; History, the permanent record; History, the proud, bound volumes on the library shelves...” We also have the idea of Sport History, consisting largely of studies on professional, collegiate and Olympic sport, generally focusing on organizations, structures, records, media coverage and individual accomplishment. Even as the field expands to embrace examinations of sport oriented around race, class and gender, certain stories and perspectives are absent from Sport History. For example, research on race and sport tends to revolve around the fixed binary of Black and White, obscuring the sport histories of those within the categories (such as middle class African Americans) as well as other racial categories (Latino/as, Asian Americans, American Indians). In the case of Japanese Americans, when not absent

22Paul Thompson, “Believe It or Not: Rethinking the Historical Interpretation of Memory,” in Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience, ed. Jacklyn Jeffrey and Glenace Edwall (Latham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1994), 1-16.

23Jeffrey T. Sammons argues that any meaningful analysis of race and sport must examine the construction of “whiteness” as a race, not just “blackness.” Despite this exhortation, sport scholars who examine race and sport generally fall into the trap of essentializing race. Even the groundbreaking sociologist of sport, Harry Edwards, who acknowledges the influence of cultural forces on the conceptualizations of White and Black, ultimately accepts the fixed notions of White and Black and places them in a false binary and permanent oppositional relationship. Meanwhile, David K. Wiggins’ primary contention is that Black dominance in certain sports is best explained through historical analysis of social structures, yet maintains that we should not completely discount “scientific” explanations for Black athletic prowess. John Hoberman’s book, Darwin’s Athletes, declares that sport has damaged Black America and preserved the myth of race. Despite labeling race a myth, Hoberman reifies what Sammons calls the “common meaning” of race by assuming the existence of two racial categories, Black and White. Like Wiggins, Hoberman intimates that superior Black athleticism might one day be explained at the molecular level. In this current theorization of race, there is no room for exploring the sporting experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders except in relation to the racial binary, which frequently marginalizes or
from sport history, their stories are usually in the context of the Internment - a traumatic event that informed/informs Japanese American identity - but one that ultimately represents a limited time in their overall history in the United States. While in the case of Hawai’ian sport, studies tend toward surveys (understandable in this relatively young field of sport inquiry) or examine what might be considered “native” sport, i.e., surfing, diving, swimming and/or culturally significant figures (i.e., superstars) like Duke Kahanamoku and Herman Wedemeyer.

From listening to my father’s stories about growing up in Lihu’e camp on Kaua’i, I knew that the plantation workers of various ethnic backgrounds engaged in “American” sports like baseball, football and track. Armed with his stories and inspired by the inclusion of a session on Pacific sport at the 2003 NASSH conference, I checked the internet for sources on Hawai’ian sport. Queries on Hawai’ian sport brought back limited “hits,” including an article on Herman Wedemeyer, a lauded football player for St.


Mary’s College in California. The article mentioned Wedemeyer’s involvement in barefoot football, but subsequent internet searches on barefoot football and the barefoot leagues came up empty.26 Since the few books on Hawai’ian sport and the internet were limited, I turned to my family for information. I discovered that three uncles, a few distant relatives and an old family friend played barefoot football on the island of Kaua’i. Listening to their stories about wearing helmets that folded to fit into a pocket and eating musubi (rice balls) provided by the spectators, I realized these were the stories that would disappear with the barefooters, unless written down and entered into Sport History.

Since written records generally demand some kind of access to power (e.g., education, leisure time, writing materials), certain stories are missing from traditional history or History. Because I wanted to ground my (hi)story of American football in the experiences and knowledge of the working class people of color (largely Asian) who took part in the barefoot leagues, I chose to rely on interviews with former barefoot players. In order to elicit the stories, autobiographies and personal narratives around barefoot football, I travelled to Hawai’i to conduct face-to-face, unstructured interviews with former barefoot participants (barefooters).27 From my initial three interviews, I acquired names of other players, whom I telephoned to request an interview. I ultimately

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26 The internet guided me to Cisco’s book on Hawai’ian sport, which mentions barefoot football. Given the survey nature of his work, he devotes limited space to barefoot football, noting basics about organization, time period and uniforms, rather than tying barefoot football to the larger social contexts of plantation culture and community identity. See Cisco, Hawai’ian Sports, 131-2. Though brief, Franks’ discussion of barefoot football alludes to social context, including race and community. See Franks, Hawaiian Sports in the Twentieth Century, 56-8.

interviewed twenty-five men about their barefoot playing days. In addition, I interviewed the sons and grandson of three prominent player-coaches, as well as three wives of former players.

While traditional oral history examines primary sources to check the veracity and validity of the stories gathered via interviews, I use the sports section from 1926 to 1955 of Kaua’i’s weekly paper, the Garden Island, and the bi-monthly plantation newspapers to provide context or backdrop as opposed to “fact check” for the interviews. In addition to the newspapers/newsletters, I combed through the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives (HSPAPA) at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa. Rather than positioning the Garden Island or the HSPAPA as the official source or the “truth,” I place the interviewees’ stories side by side with other sources to put forth an overall examination of barefoot football, which gives as “true” a picture of barefoot football as the Garden Island’s sports section or plantation papers. Therefore, rather than subjecting the stories to analysis or merging them into a monolithic narrative representing “the” history of barefoot football, I present a multiplicity of voices to offer “a” history of barefoot football.

I chose the term (hi)story after some deliberation, recognizing that some will see the (hi) as an affectation of a post-modern approach or an exercise in self-indulgence. Because I employ personal stories to tell a story of barefoot football -- to construct an account that embraces, challenges and stretches the boundaries of History -- (hi)story is an appropriate term. By considering interviews historical documents, as valid and “accurate” as traditional archival sources, I deliberately blur the divide between history
and storytelling. As Karen E. Fields notes in “What One Cannot Mistakenly Remember,” by refusing to label her grandmother’s memoir an oral history, Fields frees herself from methodological constraints, particularly those regarding validity and veracity. To ultimately shape the memoir, Fields has to develop what Latina scholar Gloria Anzaldua calls a “tolerance for ambiguity” or even a tolerance for contradiction. As Fields did in interviewing her grandmother, I discovered contradictory “facts” about barefoot football. Rather than attempting to meld the disparate stories into a smooth, unimpeded narrative, I left things messy, allowing that version to stand as History. For instance, I asked the barefooters how the team names were chosen, spawning four different stories for the Koloa Plutes:

1. Koloa received lots of rain, so they were named for the god of rain, Pluto;
2. Piyute is a popular card game in Hawai‘i and the Koloa players tended to goof around and play cards rather than practice hard, so they were labeled Plutes,
3. Pilute is pidgen English for drunkard, which was shortened to Plute and
4. Plute refers to tall stalks of sugarcane, reflecting Koloa’s status as the oldest plantation town on Kaua‘i.

Other interviews, articles in the *Garden Island* and Koloa School library resources did not reveal the “truth” about the team name. However, as Ladsen-Billings contends (via

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30Burt Ebata, interview by author, 9 September 2004, Koloa, Hawai‘i, tape recording; Mamo Kaneshiro, interview by author, 9 September 2004, Kalaheo, Hawai‘i, tape recording; Kunio Nagoshi, interview by author, 27 February 2005; and Paul Taniguchi, interview by author, 27 August 2004. Ebata, Kaneshiro and Taniguchi were members of Koloa Plutes barefoot squads.
Robert Williams) that “getting the ‘facts’ right is really not all that important. An Indian Storyteller is much more interested in the ‘truth’ contained in the story.”\(^{31}\) Though I consider myself a historian, for this project I am also a storyteller. To that end, I listened, recorded, transcribed and attempted to “get out of the way” in order to allow the “truth” contained within the interviews to come forth.

**The Grandchild of a Field Hand**

In “Racialized Discourses, Ethnic Epistemologies,” Gloria Ladsen-Billings celebrates the fact that “The children of field hands return to do fieldwork,” expanding the scope and perspective in the field of education. Specifically, she cites the application of Critical Race Theory to interrogate and up-end embedded practices that bestow power, voice and validity in educational research. Moreover, Ladsen-Billings maintains that children of field hands can often access information thanks to insider status and double-consciousness (and/or the ability to function within and slide between majority and minority group cultures). As a result, they tell stories that otherwise remain untold.\(^{32}\)

I am not the child of field hands, although as teenagers my father planted sugar cane and my mother stood on the cannery line. I am the grandchild of a field hand, a house keeper in a haole house,\(^{33}\) a power plant operator for the plantation and a

\(^{31}\)Ladsen-Billings, “Racialized Discourses,” 268.

\(^{32}\)Ladsen-Billings, “Racialized Discourses,” 269.

\(^{33}\)A haole house usually belonged to the planter or manager of the plantation. Haole house
pineapple cannery worker. However tenuous my connection to Kaua’i and the old plantation/cannery culture, it helped me gain access and later, the trust of the men who played in the barefoot leagues. Kunio Nagoshi notes, “The whole island of Kaua’i is small town in its outlook...everyone knew everyone else.”34 To an extent this exists today. My uncle, Richard Nagoshi, made cold calls to former barefooters, convincing ten of them to speak with me. I arrived on Kaua’i and began calling potential interviewees, intending to briefly explain my study and rationale, set an interview and thank them. I expected to take about ten minutes per call. I began to panic when my first calls ran about thirty minutes for each potential interviewee. In order to secure an interview, I could not approach subjects as Lauren Morimoto, graduate student from Ohio State University. I ceased being Lauren Morimoto, individual, researcher, Californian: instead I became Richard’s niece, Vivian’s daughter, Mike’s oldest, Yoshikazu’s granddaughter, Fay’s cousin, Aster’s niece, relative of the Hanamaulu Morimotos, etc. Only after I made an element in my web of identity salient for the potential subject, I was permitted to move toward arranging an interview.

Perhaps it is my status as the grandchild of a field hand that drove this research. It convinced me that my familiarity with Kaua’i, plantation history and Japanese Hawaiian culture would allow me access to subjects. Furthermore, as a sport historian and descendent of Japanese Hawaiians, I was surprised to suddenly stumble upon the barefoot leagues, which drove home how certain stories are absent from History. Upon

 lubrically means a house that belongs to haoles (Whites), though it also implies high economic and social standing, e.g. plantation owner, medical doctor. Though the Portuguese have European roots and served as lunas (managers) for the plantation/cannery, they were not considered haole.

34Nagoshi, interview by author, 27 February 2005.
learning more, as opposed to positioning barefoot football as a “lesser” version of American football or a side note in the history of sport on Kaua’i, I place it at the center of Kaua’i history. Barefoot football was central to the maintenance of plantation/cannery communities. In addition, the mode of play articulated and upheld Asian American working class identity. As Franks comments, “We should also remember that even as Asian Pacific people adopted Europeanized and North Americanized sports, they often did so on their own terms.”35 By deciding to play football shoeless, barefoot football represented an adaptation to the economic status and the cultural norms of the plantation and cannery camp families. In addition, by imposing weight limits, the Asian American players normalized and validated their physical attributes and strengths, rather than adopting the values and standards of other ethnic groups. In terms of its place in Kaua’i’s culture, the barefoot leagues demonstrate how sport can be “both/and,” i.e., it can simultaneously fortify inter- and intra-racial connections; it can promote identification with the plantation/cannery and working class consciousness. In short, barefoot football intersected with race, class and community in ways that led to accommodation and resistance.

While the footballers initially defined our interviews as “talking story,”36 after our conversations most of them looked at their barefoot experience differently. Instead of minimizing their memories of barefoot football, they saw their stories as worthy of study and written treatment as it links to the histories of the plantation/cannery, race


36 Pidgin English meaning to “shoot the breeze” or engage in casual, light conversation.
and ethnicities, plantation culture, class development/relations and town expansion. This study is not only about the men who played barefoot football, it is also for them -- to validate their experiences, to give voice to their memories, to demonstrate their agency and to celebrate their contributions to the working class Hawai‘ian community.

In fact, at a get-together with some of the participants, I promised to send them a copy of the finished paper, to which Mamo Kaneshiro replied, “We don’t want an article, we want a book now.” At the same time, Shoichi Igarashi passed a message via my aunt asking me to rush because he might not be alive to see the final book. As I take on the part of storyteller with the assistance and trust of these men, I plan to continue charging through/over methodological safety barriers and emerge with a story/History intact.
CHAPTER 2

THE BIRTH OF THE BAREFOOT LEAGUES ON KAUA’I

As noted by Dan Cisco, barefoot football started on the island of Oah’u in 1922 and slowly moved to the outer islands. From 1926 to 1955, boys and men on the island of Kaua’i (Hawai’i) played American style tackle football thanks to the financial support of the sugar plantations and pineapple canneries, the economic bases for the island. In addition, the barefoot leagues garnered the support of the local paper, the Garden Island and in later years, the plantation newsletters and newspapers. The motivation and reasoning behind the start of barefoot football on Kaua’i are difficult to pinpoint. The initial organization of the barefoot leagues was loose — a seemingly informal assemblage of plantation personnel and Garden Island staffers coming together to bring the Oah’u game to Kaua’i. On September 7, 1926, the Garden Island reported debate amongst the previous year’s senior league teams regarding the 160-pound weight limit. The Garden Island advocated keeping the weight limit for a senior league and volunteered to help form a barefoot league where any player who could make the lower weight cut-off would be allowed to participate. By increasing the number of competitors in football, the
From September 28, the Garden Island announced a meeting at its offices for those interested in starting a barefoot league. The October 12 edition of the Garden Island reported that three teams (later Lihu’e became the fourth) agreed to remain in the senior loop with a 160-pound weight limit. With the disbandment of the Kaua’i High School football team due to lack of competition on the island as well as the school’s financial difficulties, the Garden Island expected a new influx of players for the senior league. On November 16, 1926, the creation of seven teams and the schedule for the eastside barefoot league were announced in newspaper. The results of the first game followed on November 23. By December 14, four teams formed a west side barefoot league with a 135-pound weight limit. For the 1926 season Kauai supported four senior league and ten barefoot league teams.38

When queried about the origins of the barefoot leagues, several interviewees believed that Charlie Fern, manager/editor/writer for the Garden Island organized the first barefoot matches.39 In addition, Harriet Albao, Fern’s long time secretary confirms that Fern started barefoot football in an attempt to give something back to the people of Kaua’i. Reporting on a barefoot reunion held in 1982, the Garden Island claimed that Fern founded the barefoot leagues as a way to help immigrant working class youth

37 The Garden Island, 7 and 14 September 1926.
38 Garden Island, 23 November 1926.
assimilate and gain access to other opportunities.\textsuperscript{40} George Matsuzaki, who played for the Lihue Townies in 1938, commented that Fern might have pushed for barefoot football to provide subject matter for the \textit{Garden Island}'s sports page.\textsuperscript{41} Throughout his career, Fern supported the barefoot league by providing meeting space at the paper’s offices, making public appearances and promoting the sport in the pages of the \textit{Garden Island}. Though Fern and the \textit{Garden Island} supported the barefoot leagues in various ways -- even serving as chairman and “sponsor” respectively of the league in 1943 -- there is no record of direct financial contribution. At the 1982 reunion of surviving barefooters, Fern was honored as the founder of barefoot football in the \textit{Garden Island}'s special insert celebrating the barefoot leagues. However, Fern’s 1995 obituaries in the \textit{Garden Island} and the \textit{Honolulu Advisor} do not list his role in starting or sustaining the barefoot leagues among his accomplishments. That said, since the league meetings were held at the offices of the \textit{Garden Island}, it is likely that Charlie Fern was part of those meetings.

While some players identified Charlie Fern as the founding force behind the barefoot leagues, others saw the plantation or cannery in that role. Billy Texeira, Kaua’i High School and barefoot football star states, “Barefoot started between plantations in the 1920's with betting to buy winners chop suey. Plantation managers organized the games.”\textsuperscript{42} Most of the participants point to the plantation and cannery managers as the formal/official organizers of barefoot football. Each plantation and cannery had a

\textsuperscript{40} Harriet Albao, interview by author, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, 8 September 2004; \textit{Garden Island}, 2 July 1982.

\textsuperscript{41} George Matsuzaki, interview by author, 21 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{42} Billy Texeira, interview by author, 10 September 2004.
manager, who oversaw the workers and matters pertaining to them. In addition, some plantations/canneries had an athletic director devoted to building and maintaining facilities and coordinating sports teams. As Mamo Wakuta notes, “Albert Horner was the manager of the cannery and he liked sports. So we had boxing, football, baseball. We played basketball too.”\textsuperscript{43} In fact, George and Alan Matsuzaki’s 1938 and 1953 barefoot football team photographs for the Lihu’e Townies (Lihu’e Plantation) and Peter Tsuha’s for the 1946 McBryde Sugar Company team include the plantation manager, perhaps reflecting the manager’s centrality to the organization, maintenance and promotion of the barefoot leagues.

Despite Fern’s substantial public support and boosterism for the barefoot leagues, the \textit{Garden Island} indicates that he did not act alone. Rather, a group comprised of the plantation managers and/or directors acted in tandem with the \textit{Garden Island} to organize football on Kaua’i. As it did in the fall of 1926, in 1927 the \textit{Garden Island} advertised organizational meetings for the barefoot leagues at its office, though the meetings were scheduled for February as opposed to August as in the previous year.\textsuperscript{44} Along with recruiting additional teams from the westside of the island to maintain a two division structure, the \textit{Garden Island} sought to establish rules for the barefoot league.

The imposition of weight limits was hotly debated throughout the history of football on the island. As football reached Kaua’i and gained popularity, two leagues developed: the barefoot leagues and the Senior football league. The Senior football

\textsuperscript{43}Mamo Wakuta, interview by author, 5 September 2004.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Garden Island}, 20 February 1927.
teams initially required a maximum weight of 160 pounds, but later rescinded that limit the following year, allowing anyone over 150 pounds to take part. From the initial days of football, certain teams, hoping to become more competitive, sought the repeal of the weight limits in 1927 (the senior league’s second year of existence). The attempt to repeal and/or raise the weight limits was also brought before the barefoot leagues. Other attempts to field a stronger team involved the lighter senior league players, who would play with the barefooters until the senior football season opened. (The barefoot leagues opened on October 2, 1927 while the Senior league started on November 13.) However, a 1927 rule change prohibited the inclusion of senior players on the barefoot teams.\textsuperscript{45}

Related to the exclusion of Senior league members, it was decided that any player who signed up with the barefoot league must play the complete season with that team, i.e. he could not quit mid-season and join a Senior team. The organizing group for the leagues sought to inform all team representatives of the two new rules. Additionally, the organizers intended to produce a printed copy for each representative in case of dispute.

Though the same informal organization of barefoot football on Kaua’i continued in 1927 and 1928, a self selected band of leaders for the barefoot leagues oversaw its expansion. As in previous years, the barefoot organizers contended with the question of weight limits. In its annual call for a meeting of team representatives and league organizers, the \textit{Garden Island} noted that it had been receiving requests from a number of young football players for a 120-pound league that would exclude Senior leaguers, even if they were able to meet the weight requirement. Those interested were invited to the

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Garden Island}, 6 September 1927.
meeting for the 135-pound league. The September 25, 1928 edition of the *Garden Island* announced the formation of a 120-pound league consisting of six teams, while the 135-pound league decreased from eight to five teams.\(^{46}\) Along with the new 120-league, there was a new rule pertaining to weight. In previous years players were weighed once at the beginning of the season: if they made weight on that day, they passed for the entire season. Starting in 1928 players were weighed just prior to game time and required to make weight for each game.

Along with increasing the overall number of boys and young men playing barefoot football, the Kauaʻi barefoot leaders sought competition beyond the island. In tandem with the Pageant of Progress committee, the Kauaʻi barefoot leagues approached the Oahʻu barefoot leagues to arrange a match between the Oahʻu and Kauaʻi 135-pound squads to determine the inter-island championship. When the Moiliilis, leaders of the city league of Honolulu accepted and agreed to play two Kauaʻi teams (Waimea and Kapaʻa), the *Garden Island* predicted record attendance, anticipating high interest for the first game to feature a team from Honolulu. Reflecting the special nature of the inter-island contest, admission of fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children was charged to defray the costs of hosting the visiting team. The *Garden Island* also noted that the games would be of special interest to the Japanese since both of the local squads were made up “almost entirely of Japanese” and the Moiliili team was entirely Japanese. Finally, the paper anticipated a “real good battle,” arguing that “this will be one occasion

\(^{46}\) *Garden Island*, 18 and 25 September 1928.
when the locals will not be outclassed in any inter-island football.”

While the visiting team might have drummed up interest in football on Kaua’i, the local teams did not make a good showing. Though the Garden Island usually celebrated barefoot football, after the Moiliili contests it took the local football system to task. Despite acknowledging that a comparison to the Moiliili squad might be unfair since it was the best team in its weight class in Honolulu, due in part to its excellent head coach, the Garden Island contended that the contests highlighted the “failure of the local system.” In particular, the newspaper took the players to task for their lack of conditioning, resulting in excessive time-outs for injury or rest and the slow unfolding of plays. As a result, the Garden Island called for upgrades in practice and conditioning methods.

In spite of the local teams’ losses to the Honolulu squad, the 135-pound league title game three weeks later featuring Koloa and Waimea drew a “record-breaking crowd.”

According to sports writers, Leslie Nakashima, fans were still discussing the game weeks later as Christmas 1928 approached. In fact, because of the terrible weather and a questionable call, fans clamored for a rematch. For the first time, a Garden Island account of a barefoot game included a description the behavior of spectators. Nakashima notes that Koloa had a yell leader, a man with “new type haircut” who riled the Waimea cheering section by doing the hula. In the end, Nakashima complimented

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47 Garden Island, 6 November 1928.

48 Garden Island, 11 December 1928.

49 Leslie Nakashima, Garden Island, 11 December 1928, p. 4. Though the hula is performed by men, performing a mock hula was probably an attempt to feminize the audience and possibly the players on the field.
the spectators for enthusiastically cheering the players, which energized them on the field. In spite of a decisive defeat at the hands of the visiting Honolulu team, the Kaua’i barefoot leagues ended 1928 with a “classic,” well-fought title match that engaged the fans and solidified the standing of barefoot football in the plantation communities.\(^{50}\)

The end of the 1920’s saw the temporary end of the 135-pound league. Despite gaining seemingly enthusiastic fans during the 1928 season, by 1930 there were not enough players trying out at the 135-pound weight limit. Though the 135-pound league disappeared, the representatives of the plantations and canneries organized 110-pound and 120-pound leagues. New teams emerged on the east and west sides of the island. Eventually, the 120-pound teams increased their weight limit to the 125-pound.\(^{51}\)

As during the first years of its existence, the barefoot leagues entered the new decade with a shifting, ever-changing roster of members. The new lighter weight classes opened opportunities for the formation of new teams. Teams sprouted up, teams withered away, yet some form of island-wide competition re-asserted itself from year to year. Despite the shifts in league membership, the plantation/cannery continued to invest in barefoot football. At the same time, the connection between plantation/cannery organizers and Garden Island remained in place. Even as new weight classes appeared, the debates about weight limited did not abate. Though the heavier 135-pound weight was rejected earlier, there emerged a nostalgia for the old weight class and its style of play. As a result, the re-emergence of the 135-pound league seemed more and more

\(^{50}\)Garden Island, 25 December, 1928.

\(^{51}\)Garden Island, 6 July 1982.
The Move Toward Bureacratization

From its early loosely organized and coordinated contests in 1926, the barefoot football leagues moved toward bureaucratization. Though the same mix of plantation employees and Charlie Fern continued to establish the schedule and weight classes, they attempted to expand the sport and improve the product of Kaua’i barefoot football in order to compete with Oah’u. At the same time, the some plantations were beginning to establish athletic associations and clubs to manage sport and recreation for the workers. Although a single manager or supervisor might promote activity, the athletic associations tried to increase the workers’ participation in the decision and budgetary processes, not just in the gym or playing field. For the most part, the efforts of each individual plantation/cannery got coordinated at meetings prior to the start of the season.

Though the oligarchy of plantation/cannery representatives and Charlie Fern continued to run the barefoot leagues, the plantations and canneries began to sponsor athletic associations or clubs. The athletics associations/clubs may have arisen from attempts by the plantation/cannery to mitigate the increasing tensions between management and labor that culminated in labor unrest and a series of strikes in the late 1920’s, driven in large part of the Japanese and Filipino workers. In spite of their name, the athletic associations/clubs’ mission extended beyond coordinating athletic

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contests or managing the barefoot leagues. Most associations sought to improve working class life, as well as individual well-being by offering recreation and leisure activities. In addition, athletic associations attempted to increase community involvement in special events such as Armistice Day in hopes of continuing to fund sports like barefoot football. For the athletic associations created before 1936, the motivation and objectives of the plantation are unclear, though some authors speculate that by encouraging and supporting the creations of athletic associations -- and in many cases providing leadership and other types of input -- the plantation may have been trying to stave off labor unrest through distraction, improving company morale or linking working class identity to the plantations.  

Though sponsored and to a certain extent controlled by plantation management, the athletic associations articulated and celebrated ethnic and class identity. For example, in 1933, the Hanapepe Athletic Club (HAC) voted to sponsor a Bon Odori dance as its first community project. As this was the first bon dance held in Hanapepe in over fifteen years, the HAC asserted its objective to keep the dance “clean and dignified, so that the real beauty and meaning of dance will be brought out” by requiring the wearing of traditional kimono. According to Garden Island, the bon dance was a success, drawing 5,000 participants over the weekend. Credit for the success of the event was given to the

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53 The Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Archives does not have the constitution or by-laws for Kauai athletic associations or clubs before 1926. In their books Crossing Sidelines and Pau Hana respectively, Joel Franks and Ronald Takaki state that the plantations used sport to manage the increasingly contentious labor-management relationship, yet neither provides references/citations for this claim.

54 Bon odori or bon dance is a gathering that celebrates and seeks to enlighten the souls of the dead. Stemming from Buddhist tradition, bon odori usually includes the performance of folk dances, carnival-type games and food stands. In addition to the festivities, a sermon is often delivered at the temple.
“older” people, who aided the younger members of the HAC in creating a celebration that accurately reflected the essence and character of bon dance.55

Ironically, as plantations developed athletic associations/clubs interest in the “king of sports,” barefoot football, appeared to be waning, particularly on the western part of Kaua’i. The Garden Island claimed that most of the loyal west side supporters -- which only number a few -- felt that the west side was too involved with Bon Dances, fishing contests and other attractions to pay attention to the “king of sports.” But in fact, the HAC, flush from the success of the Bon Dance and recognizing the need for Sunday recreation, decided to create a playground ball league with teams from Hanapepe, Port Allen, Ele’ele, Wahiawa and New Mill to fill the void left by the cancellation of the 1933 westside football league.56 Though Hanapepe was unable to put up a 125-pound team, it did consider placing a lighter team (115-pound) team into competition. However, the flurry of activity surrounding the newly formed HAC in Hanapepe and the opening Waimea Hall limited west side involvement in the barefoot leagues.

As interest was diminishing on the west side of the island, the east side representatives for the 125-pound league met at the Garden Island offices and adopted a strategy to make Kaua’i more competitive in inter-island play. In the past, the championship team from the Kaua’i barefoot leagues challenged a Honolulu team. Due to smaller rosters and consequently, limited number of substitutes, the Kaua’i champions were frequently handicapped by injuries in these inter-island title matches. In response

55Garden Island, 18 August and 5 September 1933.
56Garden Island, 5 September 1933.
the east side league adopted a plan where the most successful Kaua’i team would place eleven men, to be selected by the coaches of the barefoot leagues, on an all-star team. The second team would be chosen among players from all the other teams, taking the best players on the island and/or allowing the Kaua’i champions to fill more than just the eleven starting positions. By adopting this selection method, the east side league could create a team with more depth and recognize players throughout the league.\(^\text{57}\)

Though the \textit{Garden Island} reported minimal interest in barefoot football in some parts of Kaua’i, in its coverage of the games the newspaper notes solid, and even one record-setting, crowds.\(^\text{58}\) In addition, a sense of nostalgia for the old 135-pound league emerged with older fans of the league. For example, in November 1933 an “old-timer” suggested that the \textit{Garden Island} sponsor a kicking and passing contest for former 135-pound players. The fan justified the contest by “talking story” about the football of four or five years earlier, opining that the current 125-pound players were no match for the 135-pounders. The \textit{Garden Island} announced its willingness to organize and fund an event if it would bring out any of the former 135-players.\(^\text{59}\) If such an event took place, it was not covered by the \textit{Garden Island}, which might indicate the event never occurred. However, the proposed kicking contest did occur eventually (in 1938), sponsored by the University of Hawai’i, with a 135-pound player taking the top prize.\(^\text{60}\)

In spite of unfavorable comparison to past gridiron stars and diminishing west

\(^{57}\textit{Garden Island}, 26 September 1933.\)

\(^{58}\textit{Garden Island}, 31 October 1933.\)

\(^{59}\textit{Garden Island}, 14 November 1933.\)

\(^{60}\textit{Garden Island}, 13 December 1938.\)
side interest, the east side community rallied around the league and its All-Star team. After selecting a team to travel to Oah’u to face the champion Aie’a Red Raiders, the east side league promoted a benefit show at the Lihu’e Theatre to defray travel expenses. Though the plantations and canneries offered the use of facilities and vehicles for island travel, for the away series, the members of the plantation and pineapple camps ultimately footed the bill for the young men of the community. The All-Star spent a week on Oah’u where they were treated like “visiting royalty” and reversed the trend of sub-par games against Oah’u squads. Though the Kaua’i All-Stars lost, they gave a good game, losing by only one touchdown. As the “locals” did on Kaua’i, the Oah’u working class turned out in large numbers, drawing an estimated crowd of 5,000 to the inter-island championship.61

The following years cemented the place of the barefoot leagues on Kaua’i, accompanied by greater codification and organizational support from the plantations. The Garden Island noted that the number of overall participants was increasing on the strength of the eight team 125-pound league as well as the addition of the 115-pound and barrel (heavyweight) leagues/loops. With this rise in involvement came greater structure both across the league and within individual teams, generally in the form of athletic associations. In 1934, the season-opening double header at Lihu’e field had a twenty-five cent admission charge as did the Koloa-Puhi contest to determine the 125-pound series champion. Other athletic associations, such as Puhi and Kealia, raised money for the team by sponsoring dances -- a method that would later be employed by the Lihue Plantation Athletic Association (LPAA) and Kekaha Athletic Association (KAA). The

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61Garden Island, 12 December 1933.
admission charge for the Koloa-Puhi game was earmarked for whichever team prevailed and traveled to Oah’u as the Kaua’i barefoot league championship.\textsuperscript{62}

In 1935, the usual pre-season call for team representatives to meet at the Garden Island to determine the upcoming season ended with the leaders of the leagues exerting more control of the games. For the first time, league officials were chosen by the self-appointed leadership group. Previously, officiating was undertaken by volunteers from the plantations/canneries, most of whom did not receive any kind of training. Consequently, the officiating could be inconsistent at best, biased at worst. In some cases the official became the 12\textsuperscript{th} man on the field.\textsuperscript{63} For the most part, the officials were competent and fair: the league’s decision was influenced by the desire for uniformity and consistency in the application of the rules.\textsuperscript{64} As for weight limits, amid the usual squabbling over weight and complaints about “making weight,” the organizing group decided to relax the demands. Players were given a three pound cushion, in essence, creating a new top weight of 128 pounds.

\textsuperscript{62}Garden Island, 9 September; 30 October; 4 December 1924. Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, KSC 2714, Kauai Athletic Association.

\textsuperscript{63}Garden Island, 6 July 1982. While celebrating the barefoot leagues and Charlie Fern’s contribution, many players joked how Fern so favored the Lihu’e Plantation teams while officiating that opposing teams felt like they were playing a 12-man squad.

\textsuperscript{64}Garden Island, 27 August 1935.
CHAPTER 3

THE CODIFICATION OF THE BAREFOOT LEAGUES:
THE EMERGENCE OF THE KAUAʻI ATHLETIC UNION

As usual, the Garden Island’s coverage of the upcoming 1936 barefoot season kicked off in August with a report on the meeting of the football organizing group (which gathered at the offices of the newspaper). While there was the typical wrangling over the weight limit and enforcement, the group’s announced changes -- including increasingly tight controls for players’ weight -- heralded an increasing bureaucratization of the 125-pound and Senior barefoot league. Players would have the opportunity to meet the weight limit up to five minutes before game time and could weigh 128 pounds in their equipment or 125 pounds stripped. However, the more dramatic changes in the structure and operation of the 125-pound league were approved by the organizers pertained to participation, officiating and scheduling. Unlike past years where participation was open, the decision-makers imposed an entrance fee of twenty dollars, due before the opening game. The fee would be returned if the team did not forfeit a single game during the season. Along with the fee, the organizers made additional demands of the teams. During the previous season, league organizers chose officials, a task they now put on the
teams: the home teams supplied referees while the visiting team supplied the linesman.

While game times had been flexible, the group declared that all games were to start at 2:30 p.m. except in the case of doubleheaders, which were at 1:00 p.m.\textsuperscript{65} In short, the presentation of barefoot football was more closely legislated under the group’s leadership.

As with the 125-pound league, the Senior barefoot league officers instituted a range of rules designed to promote fairness, uniformity and order for the new season. Like the lighter league, the Senior league required an entrance fee: ten dollars and another ten dollars to cover league expenses. For the first time, the league reserved the right to reject a team or an individual player. The regulations asserted a requirement of amateur status for all players, which would be determined by the league. In addition, the league added a resident clause, noting that all players added to the roster after the September 27 had to meet a two-week minimum Kaua‘i residence requirement. Among the new responsibilities: the home team had to ensure that the field was in playing condition and to supply regulation size footballs. In addition, the home team was responsible for the conduct of its players and fans.\textsuperscript{66}

As with the 125-pound league, the Senior League organizing group placed power in its own hands. Unlike the 125-pound league which made the home team responsible for choosing officials, the Senior league appointed officials to the games and provided them horns, whistles and stop watches. The league also considered opening an officials’ school in the future, which would be open to any interested parties, but settled for

\textsuperscript{65}Garden Island, 25 August 1935. Kekaha phoned in its entry.

\textsuperscript{66}Garden Island, 22 September 1936.
offering classes on officiating that would coincide with the start of the season. In addition, the organizing group established a protocol for on field protests in which it would hear protests filed within forty-eight hours of a game. Any player whose conduct was deemed “unsportsmanlike” would be suspended until released by the committee. Similarly, any team that violated the rules would forfeit the game and face the possibility of additional action by the committee.⁶⁷

Though the Senior league leadership accepted a slate of new rules, the issue of caring for injured players brought about some heated discussion, according to the Garden Island. The league proposed that any player injured during the game receive free care and hospitalization provided by the home team. While the plantation teams, which had their own medical facilities to serve the working class, could meet this demand, two independent teams based in Lihu’e and Kapa’a were unable to guarantee free hospitalization. In the end, the hospitalization question remained unsettled and tabled for a later date.

Despite similar commitments to bureaucratizing the barefoot leagues, the leadership groups of the 125-pound and Senior leagues were distinct, particularly in terms of race and class. The Senior League leaders voted to call itself the Kauai Football Association and elected Lindsay Faye of Kekaha as president and W. P. Alexander of Puhi and Hans Hansen of Kekana as first and second vice president respectively. Additional officers included Sunday Reantaso as Secretary and Director, Tommy Miles as advisor to the Director and Johnny Fernandez as Treasurer. Faye, Alexander and

⁶⁷Garden Island, 22 September 1936.
Hansen, White males, were managers of plantations, which gave them social, political and economic status and power on Kaua’i.  The remaining Senior league committee members was comprised of Whites, Filipinos, Hawai’ians and Japanese. While the Kaua’i Football Association was led by plantation managers, the 125-pound league committee was dominated by the Japanese and Filipinos. The inclusion of Japanese represented a shift from earlier years when Whites and the Portuguese organized barefoot football. Whites and the Portuguese held most managerial and luna ( overseer) positions, whereas the Japanese and Filipinos were primarily manual labor for the fields and factory, generally the lowest on the plantation totem pole. Though the traditional leadership held in the heavier league (which included more players of White, Portuguese and Hawai’ian ethnicities), the 125-pound league accommodated working class involvement, allowing the ethnicities of some of the leadership to match those of the players.

As the 1936 season got underway, the Garden Island provided detailed coverage of the season, which did not mention opposition or complaint about the new leagues’ rules. As the season progressed and the teams entered into the second series, the Kaua’i teams prepared for home-and-home series with Honolulu teams (as in previous years). For their late October match-up, the Lihu’e Planters and the Lihu’e Townies, local rivals

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69 *Garden Island*, 1 September 1936. The 125-league organizing committee included representatives from the Lihu’e Townies (Coach Gene Layosa and Willie Albao, Filipino; Shin Matsuoka, Japanese), Koloa (Hiroki Hiramoto and Coach Harry Abe, Japanese) and Lihu’e Plantation (Mr. Yama, Tetsuo Omoto and Assistant Coach Fada Miyake, Japanese). *Garden Island*, 22 September 1936.
whom the *Garden Island* tagged as the local equivalent of Army-Navy or Notre Dame-Southern California contestants, charged twenty-five cents admission to defray expenses for the Planters’ upcoming inter-island games against the Waialua eleven of Oah’u. The Lihu’e Planter-Waialua game, scheduled as part of the island’s Armistice Day Celebration, was Kaua’i’s first inter-island football battle of the year. The Lihu’e Townies followed with a contest against the Aie’a 125-pound team from Oah’u. To assist with costs, the Townies requested a small (unspecified) donation from fans attending the Townies-Koloa match.⁷⁰

Despite the centralization of barefoot league organization and decision making, for the 1936 inter-island contests, the Lihu’e Plantation, not the league leaders, coordinated one of the most extensive programs for visiting players for the Waialua 120-pound squad. The players were hosted by individual families though the plantation provided meals and entertainment. The itinerary for the visitors, many of whom had never been off the island of Oah’u, included plenty of sightseeing and social events. The Waialua itinerary demonstrates the effort expended by the Lihu’e Plantation:

Wednesday, November 11
6:00 p.m.: Guests at hekka (barbeque) party at Hanamaulu Hall.

Thursday, November 12
Sightseeing to Waimea to see Menehune Ditch, the Hanging Bridge, Waimea Canyon and Kuuapele.
Trip to Kalalau look-out with lunch at Puukapele Rest House.
Visiting Barking Sands.
Evening: return to Lihue for individual entertainment.

Friday, November 13
Sightseeing on north side of the island – Kilauea Lighthouse, Hanalei Beach and Haena Caves.
Lunch at Camp Naue.

⁷⁰*Garden Island*, 27 October and 3 November 1926.
Spend evening at Camp Naue.

Saturday, November 14.
Morning return to Lihue: Tip Top Bakery for breakfast.
Sightseeing to Kukuiolono park, Lawa’i Beach, Spouting Horn with lunch at Poipu Beach.
2:30 p.m. Return to Lihu’e for practice and rest.
Evening: individual entertainment and rest.

Sunday, November 15
Breakfast and lunch at host homes.
2:00 p.m.: Game. \(^7\)

To offset expenses, the Lihu’e Planters planned to charge ten cents admission for the contest against Waialua.

While the Planters of the 125-pound league were hosting an Oah’u team, other inter-island battles were planned in an attempt to extend the reach and confirm the progress of Kaua’i’s barefoot teams. The Lihu’e Senior barefoot team also took part in Armistice Day, hosting the Kahuka Senior team. Unlike the 125-pound league, the Senior league did not charge admission for its match. Later in the month, the Lihu’e Townies hosted the Aie’a team, who were Oah’u champions and boasted a distinguished coach. Although Kaua’i football was becoming more competitive, most “locals” expected the Oah’u team to dominate as had previous visiting teams. However, the Garden Island exhorted fans to attend the match, arguing that the local football product was becoming comparable with Oah’u’s. In addition to battling Oah’u teams, the Lihu’e Townies scheduled a contest with the Lincoln Wreckers of the Big Island, marking the first time a football team from Kaua’i traveled to the Big Island. As Kaua’i hosted visiting teams and sponsored travel to other islands, the need for an organization to schedule, ensure uniformity of rules and promote Kaua’i’s teams became apparent. This

\(^7\)Garden Island, 10 November 1936.
need, along with concerns about plantation life, led to the creation of and/or formalization of plantation athletic associations.

Though Hanapepe, Kekaha and Puhi had formed athletic associations a couple of years earlier, the formation of the Lihuʻe Plantation Athletic Association (LPAA) was critical to the bureaucratization of sport on Kauaʻi. The Lihuʻe Plantation encompassed several sugar operations including Kealia and Makeweli. Furthermore, its central location on the island helped link the east and west sides. The initial meeting of the LPAA took place under the leadership of C.E.S. Burns, manager of Lihuʻe Plantation Company and Paul G. Rice, the sheriff of Lihuʻe. Speaking to approximately 200 plantation employees at Hanamaulʻu Hall, Burns outlined the need for recreational programs on the plantation that would encourage participation of all the employees. By establishing strong Lihuʻe teams, Burns sought to continue the development of inter-island competition. However, creating opportunities for competition, in terms of better sporting experiences was only part of Burns’ interest in establishing the LPAA.  

Though the desire to improve the level of competition for inter-island contests and to promote sport on Kauaʻi were part of the motivation for formation of the LPAA, the creation of positive employee relations and company loyalty was equally important. Along with providing recreational opportunities, Burns expressed his desire that such

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72 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 26/23, Hawaiian Amateur Athletic Association. The Kekaha Athletic Association’s (KAA) statement for 30 September 1936 shows membership of 1,206 men and 224 women and boys. The members’ dues came to $695.00, which was matched by the Kekaha Plantation. The expenditures included $213.73 for boxing equipment, $201.02 for baseball and $261.82 for barefoot football.

73 Garden Island, 1 December 1936.
activities would “make for a better understanding among the whole plantation personnel…and create both a better spirit and a better employee.” Graham Tewksbury, Burns’ newly appointed recreation director presented the by-laws and constitution to the assembled employees for their approval. 74 While the first stated objective was “To promote a recreation program for the benefit of the employees of the L.P.D., Ltd,” it also included the additional objectives “To develop among the participants a sense of loyalty to plantation interests” and “To develop an interest in community affairs which pertain to plantation interests.” In addition, the by-laws claimed that “Each member should express his willingness to be loyal and to support this Association and the LPC Ltd.” At a November 20, 1936 meeting, the attending Lihu’e Plantation employees adopted the constitution and by-laws and elected officials for the LPAA. 75

With the founding of the LPAA, the Lihu’e Plantation cemented its paternalistic practices in relation to labor -- practices that began years earlier, but were now becoming more institutionalized. As with the founding of plantation stores, which kept funds from groceries and sundries in plantation hands, the athletic associations collected part of the laborers’ entertainment funds through membership and special event admission charges. In addition, the plantation attempted to control the types of recreation sought by its workers, providing athletics, dances and festivals as an alternative to activities like drinking and gambling. 76

74 *Garden Island*, 1 December 1936.

75 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, LPAA Constitution and By-laws.

76 Milton Murayama, *All I asking for is my body*, 96.
Prior to the establishment of athletic associations, the plantation generally had an employee overseeing the conditions, including recreation and leisure for the workers. The creation of the LPAA led to the formalization of the position of Athletic Director. Before the establishment of the Athletic Director, the promotion of sport was generally dictated by the personal interest of the manager of the plantation. With the formation of the LPAA, the Athletic Director was assigned responsibilities that further bureaucratized sport on the island. For the LPAA Athletic Director duties included the scheduling of inter-camp, inter-plantation and inter-island contests; keeping a file of all games, meets and programs; appointing committeemen, officials and sports managers; purchasing equipment and attending all meetings. Along with administering the sports program on the plantation, the Athletic Director upheld the rules of the LPAA, particularly issues of amateurism. In matters of enforcement, the Athletic Director had the final word in accepting athletes and teams to the LPAA. Though the position was largely administrative, the Athletic Director often had sporting past, which led some to get involved with coaching the teams.  

While plantation management held some leadership positions in the LPAA, overall, the remaining elected officials included members of the working class. Consequently, the make-up of the officers reflected the various ethnicities and nationalities represented by the Lihu‘e plantation work force. The LPAA was open to all “bonafide” employees of LPC Ltd.: membership was voluntary and on occasion, the general body had the opportunity to comment on policy and organization. Membership  

77Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LSC 1411, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association Constitution.
dues were one dollar per calendar year for men, slightly less for women and children. On the Kekala and Lihu‘e plantations, the collected membership fees were matched by the plantation.

Modeling themselves on other athletic associations, such as the Hawaiian Athletic Union, the LPAA legislated the terms for sport spectatorship as well as participation. The LPAA collected a dollar fee per male worker: in exchange for their dues, LPAA members were issued membership cards entitling them to free admission to all events, except for those designated “special,” which incurred a minimal charge. However, according to a letter of complaint issued to Mr. Burns, the manager of Lihu‘e Plantation, the LPAA set an admission fee for barefoot football, one of the few plantations to do so. For those taking part in, rather than observing sporting contests, the LPAA required adherence to amateur rules. Professional athletes, defined as anyone who had ever received pay for taking part in sport, were permitted membership but were not allowed to participate unless they applied for and were approved for amateur standing with the LPAA. Finally, the LPAA took the responsibility for keeping records of the contest,

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78 One dollar was roughly equivalent to 3/4 a day’s pay for planting cane; 1/2 a day’s pay for cutting cane and 1/3 a day’s pay for loading cane. Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 2/15, H.P. Faye Ltd. Correspondance.

79 This may have been true for other athletic associations, but only Kekaha’s and Lihu’e’s reports are in the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Archives. All the interviewees believed the plantation supplied the equipment, transportation and travel money for home and home series, so it is likely that other plantations met the funds of their athletic associations.

80 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/33, Lihue Plantation Company 1935-36.

81 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association.
facility usage and finances.

As the 1936 barefoot season rolled on, Kaua‘i sports moved toward increased institutionalization. The formation of the LPAA, along with the athletic associations at other plantations (such as Hanapepe, Grove Farm and Waimea), created a network with the potential to centralize control and governance of Kaua‘i sport. More importantly, in December 1936, Kaua‘i gained its first representative on the Hawai‘ian Association of the Amateur Athletic Union with the appointment of Lindsay A. Faye, manager of Kekaha Sugar Company. Along with the assistant managers from two other plantations, Faye planned for strict enforcement of amateur rules to keep Kaua‘i eligible for inter-island contests. The presence of a Kaua‘i representative to the Hawai‘ian AAU gave Kaua‘i more of a voice in inter-island sport, as well as the institutional support necessary to develop sports more fully.

Despite this new representation at the territorial level for athletics, the Kaua‘i Sugar Planters’ Association (KSPA) raised questions about the need for a local organization for sport. At the KSPA’s instigation, a meeting was called on December 28, 1936 by L.A. Faye, the newly appointed AAU Commissioner for Kaua‘i. Apparently, Faye contacted representatives, who were for the most part managers or assistant managers at other plantations. Those attending installed themselves as the first group of officers for the newly created Kauai Athletic Union (KAU). Under Faye’s direction, the KAU began to instigate itself into local sport, establishing a twenty-five collar membership fee for each plantation or cannery athletic association interested in joining.

82 Garden Island, 22 December 1936. Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 2714, letter to L.A. Faye.
the KAU. The fee was waived for the high schools. Amateur boxing was the sport drawing the most attention from the KAU, which determined that Faye should order the forms regarding amateur status and apply for a Territorial Boxing License in the name of the KAU for 1937. In addition, the KAU determined that it would charge admission for its boxing matches with a maximum of forty cents for reserved seating and twenty-five cents general admission.83

Despite taking quick action regarding boxing, the official constitution and objectives of the KAU were not ratified until February 1937. Though the KAU was ostensibly concerned by the promotion, protection and presentation of amateur athletic contests, its eight objectives embraced civic and institutional/bureaucratic concerns. For example, while the fifth and eighth objectives included the standardization of rules -- particularly those determining amateur status, training officials for various sports and the promotion of legislation investing in public playgrounds, baths and fields -- other objectives asserted the social value of sport. Regarding officials, the KAU required that they study and research their sport’s rules as well as abstain from active participation in sport and affiliation with any organization. In addition, the KAU arranged for officials to earn three dollars per game to cover their expenses. Related to issues of pay, the KAU resolved to compensate the secretary of the KAU, allowing him ten dollars per month to cover out of pocket costs. The KAU also noted that the secretary, an employee of Kekaha Sugar Company, would be permitted time off from his regular plantation job to fulfill his KAU duties.

83Kaua’i Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 13.
As opposed to objectives furthering the bureaucratization of the KAU, the third objective called for “The promotion of the civic interests of the community by the island-wide education of all classes…in the benefits, physically, morally and mentally, to be derived by participation in athletics and wholesome recreation.” In addition, the KAU articulated the importance of organized amateur sport to “the future welfare and development” of young boys and girls. Since the leadership of the KAU included the managers of the plantations, the organization’s “civic interests” tended to conflate with plantation interests. As Mr. Horner, President of the KAU, stated, the KAU is “an organization of organized athletic clubs for the purpose of promoting island sports and health and welfare of young people, particularly in view of the fact of shortened hours of labor now in force.” He further contended that “available time could be best utilized in athletic and other games.”

Through its focus on promoting and improving sport for the entire island of Kaua‘i, the KAU unified the barefoot teams of the east and west sides of the islands, creating one larger barefoot league. The 125-pound league consisted of ten teams: from the east Pono Athletic Club (Pono AC), LPAA, Grove Farm Athletic Association (GFAA), Townies Athletic Club and from the west Koloa Athletic Association (KOAA), Kauai Pine Company Athletic Association (PFCAA), McBryde Athletic Association (McBAA), Makaweli Athletic Association (MAA), Waimea Athletic Club (Waimea AC) and Kekaha Athletic Association (KAA). The Senior football league consisted of four teams. While eastern and western plantation teams had competed against each other in

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84 Garden Island, 16 February 1937. Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Kauai Athletic Association.
the past, the KAU made scheduling and obtaining officials much easier. By establishing “universal” rules of competition, teams were able to compete on equal footing. In addition, the KAU’s close ties to plantation management assured plantation support for the development of sporting possibilities for plantation and cannery workers on both sides of the island.85

While the KAU had established some rules for barefoot football, as the season approached, the officers tinkered with them more. For the players, the rules generally matched those adopted by plantation athletic associations, e.g. regarding making weight, the KAU followed the guidelines established by the LPAA, though KAU regulations allowed those players who failed to make weight fifteen minutes prior to the game to make another attempt at half-time. According to Burt Ebata, kicker for the Koloa Plutes, players only weighed in at the beginning of the season, and despite the rules demanding a game by game weight check, while playing in the late 1930’s he did not follow the change in rules and weighed in only at the beginning of the season.86 The home team brought out a scale, often the same ones used in the processing plant, to weigh the players. Making weight was a struggle for some of the players and the appearance of the scales prompted “A pretty young lady in a red dress at the Kauai Pine field at half time, trying out the scales…[to exclaim]: ‘Oooooooh, dis scale craiiiiizeee.’”87 Along with enforcing weight limits for play, the KAU did set additional regulations to protect the

85Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, LPAA monthly report 1937.

86Burt Ebata, interview with author, 9 September 2004, Koloa, Hawai‘i, tape recording.

87Garden Island, 2 November 1937.
players. Before the installation of the KAU, player equipment and uniform was
determined by the plantation or cannery: under the KAU, teams were required to provide
headgears, shoulder pads and jerseys for the 125-pound teams and full equipment for the
Senior barefoot teams. Officials had the power to send any player off who did not have
the minimum amount of protective gear. In addition, each player was to undergo a
physical examination under a “competent” physician, who would clear the player to take
part in the contest. 88

Along with protecting players, the KAU focused on preserving the amateur nature
of football contests. The KAU insisted that each athletic association complete individual
registration forms for each player. The athletic association returned the forms to the
KAU registration committee, who gave them an “once-over” to ensure all players met
standards for amateurism. As KAU secretary Sunday Reantaso noted in a letter to Mr.
Ray Allen of Kilauea Athletic Association and registration committee chair, “The
decision of Registration committee shall be final in determining the amateur status of the
players.” 89 Though it had the final authority on amateur standing, the registration
committee did entertain appeals for individuals seeking re-instatement of amateur status.

As the beginning of the barefoot season loomed, plantation athletic associations
made appeals on behalf of men who had taken money at one point of their athletic careers
– generally for taking part in “semi-professional” boxing. 90 For example, in September

88 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa
Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Kauai Athletic Union. Garden Island, 17 August 1937. None of
the barefoot players interviewed mentioned clearing a physical exam.

89 Kaua’i Historical Society, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 13.
1937 the LPAA requested re-instatement for John de los Reyes and Takumi Akama, Lihu’e Plantation employees who fought in professional fights four years earlier. Though the KAU permitted re-instatement, it forced de los Reyes and Akama to sit out of all KAU athletic activities for an entire year. Similarly, the Grove Farms Athletic Association chair (and manager for the Grove Farm plantation), W. C. Alexander, appealed to the registration committee to allow Acasio Augustin to regain his amateur standing. While conceding that Augustin received a small sum of money for boxing in 1932, Alexander assured the committee that Augustin realized his mistake and had taken no money since for boxing. In his letter to the committee, Augustin commented that in 1931 and 1932 “there was no such things as professionalism or amateurism and I used to participate in all branch of sports without trouble, but since the K.A.U. has taken charge of all sports, I was unable to participate in any and I sincerely beg to be re-instated as an amateur as I am not at all interested in professionalism.”

Along with determining regulations, the KAU raised the issue of money in the barefoot leagues. In previous years, only special games (e.g. involving an opponent from another island) or fundraising events such as supporting Mahelona Hospital carried an admission charge for spectators. For the first time, spectators would have to pay for attending the regular, weekly contests. The KAU believed that “fans should contribute toward making local sports successful.” Consequently, they planned on charging

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90 Semi-professional generally meant the boxers made a few dollars for their appearance in the ring and perhaps, had their travel expenses covered. Most men who engaged in boxing at this level were unable to sustain any kind of living income from the activity. Milton Maruyama, All I asking for is my body (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1959)

91 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 12/15, Kauai Athletic Union 1938; Kaua’i Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 14.
outsiders (those not connected to an athletic association) twenty-five cents while anyone holding memberships cards from one of the KAU-affiliated athletic associations or clubs would pay only ten cents. The gate receipts would be split sixty percent for the home team and forty percent for the visitors.92

According to the LPAA summary of the 1937 football season, “The KAU football season began with a bang on October 3, 1937.” The instigation of new regulations led to improvements in level of competition on the playing field and helped make barefoot football more of a spectacle. Connecting the west and east sides, which increased the 125-pound league to ten teams, harkened back to the earlier years of barefoot football, which appeared to fuel player and spectator interest. The Garden Island played on the nostalgia for the Kaua‘i barefoot leagues (despite its youth). For example, the Garden Island celebrated the participation of the Waimea Explorers, who dominated the west-side league in the early 1930’s. The Explorers drew a record turnout of thirty-two try-outs for 125-pound team and this new blood joined the sixteen veterans from the glory days of west-side football, creating a team with the best of youth and experience.

The KAU requirement of team colors drew the attention of the Garden Island sports writers, who wrote that

We already told you about Kekaha’s unis, so we’ll skip that to tell you something of McBryde outfits. The Scots have a blue jersey with white shoulders and big white numbers. Their pants are golden yellow and the headgears are painted blue and white. Maroon stockings were seen on the legs of a couple of players.93

92 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Kauai Athletic Union. Garden Island, 17 August 1937.

93Garden Island, 12 October 1937.
The following week, the *Garden Island* observed that

Manager Otto Wramp believes in uniformity in everything. The Blue and Gold colors of the Waimea AA was conspicuous all day. Jerseys, head gears, down boxes, yard lines and line markers were all painted a brilliant blue and gold.\(^94\)

For a league whose players originally wore cut-off pants and sailor moku shirt (denim-type work shirt), the color coordinated uniforms and equipment added an element of drama and spectacle. As the *Garden Island* noted, the Kekaha Desert Raiders were “resplendent in green jerseys and uniform gridiron togs.”\(^95\)

Along with the uniforms, some plantation athletic associations altered and improved venues to enhance the spectators’ experience of the barefoot games. For example, at the Kalawai contests held at Kalaheo Park, a loud speaker announced the position of the ball on every play. The *Garden Island* claimed that this was appreciated by the majority of fans who were not able to run up and down the sidelines to follow the action. Since Kalaheo Park did not have bleachers, fans stood on the same level as the action and as the newspaper noted, “It’s impossible to see those white lines when you’re on the same ground level.” On the other hand, the *Garden Island* commented that the games at Hans P. Faye Park were always colorful, thanks to the long set of bleachers and the new scoreboard, which “certainly makes one feel that he is really at a football game.” As in H.P. Faye Park, the McBryde plantation installed bleachers for football spectators, though many fans continued to sit on cars to watch the action.\(^96\)

\(^94\) *Garden Island*, 19 October 1937.

\(^95\) *Garden Island*, 20 December 1939.
Along with promoting barefoot football on Kaua‘i, the KAU continued the advancement of Kaua‘i football on the territory-wide level. While individual plantation managers arranged inter-island contests in the early years of the barefoot leagues, the KAU demanded approval for all inter-island contests. The centralization of scheduling seemed to benefit Kaua‘i, who enjoyed a big season with Oah‘u teams. The Waipahu Jackrabbits, previous inter-island competitors re-visited Kaua‘i, while the Lihu‘e Planters and McBryde Scots traveled to Oah‘u for the first half of home-and-home series. The feather in the KAU’s cap was the December 14 battle between the Kauai Pine Packers, who traveled to Honolulu to face the University of Hawai‘i All-Stars. Two weeks later, on Christmas Day, the All-Stars re-played the Packers at Kalaheo Park. The KAU’s ability to schedule an opponent for the caliber of the U.H. All-Stars cemented its hold on inter-island sporting contests and exposed Kaua‘i sport to a wider audience on both islands.

At the end of the barefoot season, the Kaua‘i All-Stars had to be chosen. In previous years a sports writer (probably Charlie Fern) or the sports staff from The Garden Island chose the All-Star team. Despite some grousing from players, coaches and fans, the selection process remained the same until the 1937 season. On December 10, 1937, the Garden Island treated the Kaua‘i coaches and officials to dinner with the purpose of having them put together All-Star teams for the 125-pound and Senior barefoot leagues. Interestingly, the KAU left this to the Garden Island and coaches, rather than taking part in the decision. 

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in this aspect of sport.\textsuperscript{97}

With the creation of the KAU, competition between plantations became more intense, prompting the plantations to hire and “recruit” former athletes to take charge of the athletic programs. For example, Lihu’e Sugar Plantation welcomed Teddy Blackstad, former plantation employee turned gridiron star at a mainland university, into the managerial ranks, making him the LPAA’s Athletic Director. Along the same lines, the plantations sometimes hired an employee with athletic promise with the assumption that he would contribute to the athletic endeavors of the plantation or cannery. Like Blackstad, Bill Chu, was hired by Hawaiian Cannery in Kapa’a, in part due to his athletic ability. Chu was hired as a high school senior to organize a track and field team for the Hawaiian Cannery. From his initial starring role as a sprinter/coach on the track team, Chu developed into an outstanding barefoot football player-coach. He eventually spent twenty-seven years at Hawaiian Cannery where he played, organized, managed, directed and coached various sports teams sponsored by the cannery and the community’s Pono Athletic Club. Though Chu was active in athletics for Pono AC, he was never designated the “Athletic Director” nor received remuneration for his athletic contributions. He was simply an employee of the cannery.\textsuperscript{98}

For its first year in existence, the KAU managed a positive balance in its account. The organization took in $1,738.24, primarily from boxing receipts ($838.24) with

\textsuperscript{97}Garden Island, 14 December 1937.

\textsuperscript{98}Garden Island, 26 March 1973 and 5 November 1973. Keala Kai, grandson of Bill Chu, notes that strong players and coaches were “recruited” to some extent, generally, through the offer of a position with the plantation/cannery in exchange for signing on as coach or player. Keala Kai, interview by author, 5 September 2004, Kapa’a, Hawai’i, tape recording. Joel S. Franks also notes that the plantations were willing to hire on competent athletes in Franks, \textit{Crossing Sidelines, Crossing Cultures}, 18.
football ($310.00) and baseball ($225.00) trailing. Though barefoot football did not bring as much to the KAU coffers as boxing, according to the LPAA 1937 summary, football outdrew all other sports in terms of participants. Barefoot football attracted 518 men and boys, nearly double the next most popular sport, women’s softball (250). Baseball pulled in 225, while boxing had 154 athletes. KAU barefoot football generated the highest expenses amongst the sports, but not due to the larger pool of participants. Barefoot had expenses of $231.00 (versus 187.00 for boxing and 222.46 for baseball), which represented the traveling expenses of officials. There was an additional $67.40 directed toward the officials in January 1938 -- $51.00 for traveling expenses and $16.40 for an officials’ dinner. At the end of the year, the KAU showed a balance of $697.59.\footnote{99 Kaua’i Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS1, Box 56, Folder 13; Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 12/15, Kauai Athletic Union 1938.}

The bureaucratization of Kaua’i athletics, specifically the power of the KAU and the athletic associations, caused some consternation. As previously mentioned, the KAU’s definition of amateurism and its authority to determine amateur standing excluded some who would hardly be considered professional athletes. In addition, the KAU (and its affiliated organizations) decision to charge admission -- a rule that was not applied uniformly throughout the island -- irritated some spectators who were accustomed to free events. In a letter dated October 25, 1937, “A Loyal Worker” of the LPAA, wrote to Mr. Burns, the manager of Lihu’e Plantation to complain about the admission fee. Asserting his investment and ownership in the team as an employee of the Lihu’e Plantation, “A Loyal Worker” articulates his concerns about the lack of
community support in light of the admission charge. According to Loyal Worker, charging admission undermines the connection between the Lihu’e workers and the plantation team and damages the standing of the plantation in the community. He writes,

In my opinion it is not fair for the plantation people in this community to pay an admission to see their own team play on our ball grounds. If this present policy is continued, I am afraid there won’t be any loyal supporters on our football team…The people here in Lihue and the outside communities are complaining about the admission fee that is charged to those who attend the games played by our home team. The other plantation games have no admission charges. I have attended the outside games and the attendance were [sic] very large as compared to the crowd that attended our games. This admission fee has done a lot of harm to the good name of our plantation, the athletic bound officials and the football team.¹⁰⁰

Whether this letter or other like it had influence with the KAU or LPAA -- or expressed common sentiments among the spectators -- for the following season, the KAU did not report gate receipts for football nor does the LPAA.¹⁰¹

Despite the 1937 resolution by the Kauai Athletic Union to charge admission to games (with the gate split between the two teams) and payment to game officials, all the barefooters, regardless of when they participated in the barefoot leagues, claim that everything was done gratis. Even after the 1937 resolution by the KAU to charge admission to games (with the gate split between the two teams) and payment to game officials, all the barefooters insisted that there was no remuneration -- no special treatment, such as time off, or easier tasks or more desirable jobs. In fact, they laughed when asked if the coach or officials were compensated. As Peter Tsuha put it, “But what we got? We didn’t get anything -- no money or prize -- we were playing for the

¹⁰⁰ Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Letter to Mr. C. Burns.

¹⁰¹ Kaua’i Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 13.
glory.” As for admission fees to the games, Burt Ebata, who played for the Koloa Plutes from 1928 to 1948 insists that “No, nevah, nevah charged.” In addition, even though Ebata remembers some people selling soda water at the games, none of the money trickled to the team. Similarly, George Matsuzaki, member of the 1938 Lihu’e Townies Senior barefoot squad recalls that the games were free.

In August 1938 the KAU planning meetings for the upcoming barefoot season got off to a heated start. The old debate over weight classes gained new life as backers of the now-defunct 135-pound league grew more vocal in their support of re-establishing that league. Though both the 125-pound and Senior leagues would continue, some coaches contended that the formation of the 135-pound league would end up eliminating the Senior football loop. In fact, when the 135-pound league was proposed, two teams, Waimea and Lihu’e, expressed interest in switching from the Senior to 135-pound level. Because of the investment in equipment made by the four teams in the previous year’s league, adding the 135-pound loop, which might detract potential participants, was seen as unwise. In the end, the KAU stuck to its original plan of organizing a 125-pound and

102Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8 September 2004. Interestingly, the son and grandson of two prominent coaches contradict the lack of remuneration. Pat Layosa, son of Gene Layosa, successful football and boxing coach, mentions that on occasion his father received a bonus of extra meat or eggs for a successful run. Pat Layosa, interview by author, 8 September 2004, Kalaheo, HI, tape recording. In a different vein, Keala Kai, grandson of Bill Chu, outstanding player-coach for Pono AC in the late 1930’s, notes that strong players and coaches were “recruited.” Keala Kai, interview by author, 5 September 2004. In contrast, Edward Kawamura, Sr., son of Mac Kawamura, coach and organizer of the barefoot leagues from the 1940’s on, cannot remember his father acquiring extra goods or services in exchange for coaching. Edward Kawamura, interview by author, 11 September 2004, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, tape recording.

Senior loop, just as it had the previous season.\textsuperscript{104} At the start of the season, the KAU had eight 125-pound and four Senior teams.

Despite the KAU decision, the call for the return of the 135-pound league remained strong. Many fans felt that to produce the best football, the 135-pound plan should have been approved. As before, the nostalgia for the old league re-surfaced with fans recalling the speed and class of local 135-pound teams of yester year. Others contended that the 135-pound league was more in tune with local material, probably referring to the smaller build of the Asian labor-class men who filled the teams’ rosters. However, the loudest cries for change to the 135-pound loop came from fans who criticized the previous year’s Senior league for the lack of speed and action on the field. Though the move to re-instate the old weight class was unsuccessful, the \textit{Garden Island} commented, “Fans are hopeful that the seed has been planted and that 1939 may see the re-organization of 135 pounders.”\textsuperscript{105}

Though the KAU had cemented its position in Kaua’i sport, determining leagues, playing schedule and home and home series, the individual plantation athletic associations remained the primary financial resource for the barefoot teams. As in 1937, the KAU limited the money it dispensed to barefoot football, providing funds for the officials (game pay and travel expenses). To cover the remaining costs, the football squads relied on money from the plantation. Though nearly all the interviewees assumed

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Garden Island}, 9 August 1938.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Garden Island}, 9 August 1938.}
the plantation covered the expenses, a substantial part of the money came from the workers themselves. For example, in the April 30, 1938 treasurer’s report for the Kekaha Athletic Association, the membership dues amount to $658.55, which the plantation matched with a donation of $676.25. While the plantation supported sport and recreation by funneling money to the athletic association, the workers were equal contributors, responsible for the funding of their own sporting opportunities.

Along with supporting sport through membership dues to the plantation athletic associations, the workers’ willingness to participate in festivals and dances put money into the athletic associations’ coffers. Though the plantation and local businesses often donated facilities and goods for such events, the bulk of the money raised probably came from the pockets of the workers, who represented the majority of guests at these community events. Throughout the 1938 barefoot season, the plantation organized a plethora of fundraising “fun-filled” events. For instance, in the first months of 1938, the Kekaha Athletic Association raised $67.00 from two dances and $359.05 from its Armistice Day Celebration, which included a barefoot football game as part of the festivities. Like the Kekaha Athletic Association, during the 1938 football season, the Kauai Pine Athletic Association raised funds for plantation sport. Kauai Pine decided upon a carnival that featured a baby show, the first on Kaua‘i. The baby show offered prizes contributed by the McBryde Plantation Store and the Makaweli Plantation Store to


107 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Kauai Athletic Union.
the babies determined to be handsomest at the carnival. Additional prizes were given by Doi Store and Costa Brothers of Kalaheo. Reflecting the ethnic make-up of Kaua‘i, the carnival’s entertainment included Filipino folk dance, Japanese dance and a Hawaiian troupe. In addition to the carnival, Kauai Pine Packers sponsored a dance on November 8 at the Kauai Pine Gymnasium.

Like Kauai Pine, the McBryde Scots hosted an “athletic” carnival to “fill its athletic chest for future sports activities.” To entice the community to attend, the McBryde Athletic Club carnival featured Ondo dance, Japanese folk dancing similar to the popular Bon Odori celebrations of the summer, on both nights. As was typical for most athletic club carnivals, the concessions included bingo, baseball throw, basketball throw, duck throw and horse racing.

While the Kauai Pine carnival celebrated and included cultural celebrations of the Japanese plantation and cannery workers, the Pineapple Bowl Celebration thrown by Pono Athletic Club emphasized sport. Designed to raise funds for Pono AC as a whole, not just barefoot football, the celebration collected money through admission fees and concession sales. The all-day program, dubbed “The Biggest Show for 25 Cents,” included horse racing, a marathon race, bicycle races and kite flying contest. The afternoon brought the highlight of the festival, a barefoot football doubleheader featuring the top two 115-pound teams and a match between Hawaiian Pine and Pono AC Senior

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109 *Garden Island*, 1 November 1938; Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 25/13, Armistice Day and Other Celebrations.
leaguers.\textsuperscript{110}

Along with generating income for sport, the athletic associations managed the administrative duties for the football leagues that fell outside the purview of the KAU or filled the gaps left by the KAU. For example, when the younger boys in the plantations expressed an interest in barefoot football, some of the athletic associations came together to create the 115-pound league during the second half of the 1938 barefoot season. Unlike the heavier weight leagues, the 115-pound league had a weight and age limit: as with the other barefoot leagues, players could weigh three pounds over the limit in equipment, but players had to be less than eighteen years old. There were six teams entered in the 115-pound league: Kileaua, Kealia, Kapa’a, Hanamaul’u, Anahola and Lihu’e. The Lihu’e Plantation Athletic Association supported the Kealia, Hanamaul’u and Lihu’e teams by providing equipment, practice field, transportation to practice and a coach (from the plantation employees). In its first year of reappearing, the 115-pound league attracted ninety-two participants for the LPAA’s three plantations alone.\textsuperscript{111}

From the creation of the KAU through the onset of World War II, the LPAA and KAA maintained records of gym and field use, which indicate how central barefoot football was to the recreational/social aspects of the plantation communities. The numbers reflect a significant level of participation and spectatorship for barefoot football as well as other LPAA sponsored events. For example, for August 1938, men’s baseball

\textsuperscript{110}Garden Island, 6 December 1938.

\textsuperscript{111}Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association.
drew 102 participants and 4500 spectators and barefoot preseason preparation involved 891 participants. Once the barefoot season got underway in late September football drew a large number of spectators, rivalling events like the Autumn Frolic dance and dances.\footnote{Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association, 1937-1941. In September football practices and games drew 2129 participants and 2500 spectators. The number of participants seems high, especially when compared with other years, but that is the number on the document. In comparison, the LPAA monthly dance drew 500 and Sam King’s Political rally had an audience of 1250.}

The following month saw an overall increase in events in gym and on the playing field. Barefoot football had the largest number of participants -- 762 (and 2500 spectators), while men’s volleyball had 139, men’s basketball 116, men’s tennis 225 and women’s tennis 94 -- and no spectators. However, the dances and festivals outdrew even football with 1000 attending the LPAA monthly dance and 2500 at the LPAA Frolic dance. Since the dances helped fund plantation sport, the strong showing at the dances might reflect the community’s support for barefoot football (or plantation sport in general).\footnote{Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association. The LPAA and the KAA have the most comprehensive records of the Kaua‘i plantations, seemingly thanks to Lindsay Faye’s meticulousness in recordkeeping. The Kaua‘i Historical Society and Grove Farm Museum have access to plantation documents that have not been archived yet and therefore, not available for scholarly use by the public. However, the LPAA and KAA are probably representative of the other plantations’ athletic association in terms of constitution, by-laws, objectives and function in plantation camp and culture.}

Through the 1938 barefoot season, barefoot fan involvement, as spectators at events and fundraising efforts, demonstrates how barefoot football was ensconced in Kaua‘i’s local culture. Burt Ebata, who began his barefoot career in 1936, states that barefoot games crowds were much larger than those for high school football games. Even when Kaua‘i high school football’s popularity took off in the 1940’s, Ebata contends that barefoot football continued to draw crowds equal to the high school contests. Ebata notes, “The games were really popular because not much else to do,
yeah.” Game coverage in the *Garden Island* as well as the LPAA reports, estimated the number of spectators in the low thousands. As the barefoot title match for the 125-pound league approached, the *Garden Island* declared that “Any football addict who doesn’t own a jalopy will either walk or catch the bus to Kalaheo park this Sunday afternoon to train his optics on the pigskin extravaganza of the current season.” In the same edition of the newspaper, the sports writer, commenting on the previous week’s battle between Kauai Pine and Kekaha, comments that “In spite of driving rain, the players and officials stuck to their tasks and the spectators, a large gathering, stayed on to watch from their automobiles.\(^\text{114}\)

The 1938 barefoot season closed strongly in December with a barefoot kicking contest sponsored by the Associated Students of the University of Hawai‘i and a Christmas Day game at McBryde Sugar Company’s new athletic field. The kicking contest was designed to determine the best kicker on the island, who would receive a trophy and free travel to Honolulu to compete in the territorial finals on New Year’s Day. For the first time, Kaua‘i’s players were included in the competition. Since each athletic club was entitled to enter two contestants, the contest drew spectator attention across the island. The eventual winner, Shigeo Akagi of the McBryde Senior barefoot team emerged victorious with a fifty-five yard punt and fifty-nine yard place kick.\(^\text{115}\) A couple weeks later, to offer fans some post-season gridiron action, the McBryde Scots hosted the


\(^{115}\)Eight of the nine top finishes were from players of Japanese ethnicity (one from a Chinese players), The top three finishers for punting - Akagi, Ching and Hirota; drop kick – Hirota, Ching, Okuhura and place kick – Akagi, Hirota, Takiguchi.
Waialae 125-barefoot team from Honolulu. To defray the cost of hosting the visiting team, the McBryde Athletic Association charged fifteen cents admission to the game. Though the Scots were unsuccessful against the Waialae squad, the support for a barefoot Christmas match ended the season on a high note.\footnote{Garden Island, 20 December 1938 and 10 January 1939.}

In the January 10, 1939 the *Garden Island*’s sports page headline read, “1938 Proved to Be Greatest Year In Sports on Kauai; KAU Deserves Full Credit.” Sports writer, Masao Seto,\footnote{Most of the sport reporting in the *Garden Island* did not have by-lines. Seto’s was one of the first by-lines, though most players and fans assumed that Charlie Fern wrote many of the barefoot football stories.} contends that Kaua’i was becoming a leader in sport thanks to the capable management by the KAU leadership and the “co-operation of the sugar plantations and pineapple firms. To demonstrate the advancement of Kaua’i sport, Seto points to the appointment of territorially renown athletes, Albert (Powerhouse) Nahale-a and Bill Among as sport directors of Hawaiian Sugar Company and McBryde Sugar Company respectively. In addition, Seto asserts that the Lihu’e Plantation’s newly completed modern gymnasium and athletic field are the best in the territory. Along with excellent leadership and facilities, Seto argues that parity, demonstrated by the fact that each athletic association claimed a championship in one sport, shows the overall excellence of Kaua’i sport. Lastly, he sees opportunities for continued growth in women’s sports, which developed thanks to the presence of the KAU.\footnote{Garden Island, 10 January 1939.}

Despite Seto’s assertions that the KAU advanced the number and quality of Kaua’i sports, the management and financial backing of the barefoot leagues was
undertaken, in large part, by the plantation and cannery athletic associations. For example, though football had the greatest number of participants among KAU sponsored sports (400), the KAU expended fewer dollars on football than on basketball (and only thirty-five dollars more than baseball). In addition, while the KAU subsidized the Makaweli basketball team’s travel to Honolulu, barefoot teams (like McBryde) that traveled to Honolulu covered its own costs. Though the KAU collected $378.50 in entrance fees from the thirteen barefoot teams, it spent only $331.50 on barefoot football, the bulk of which paid for the officials’ travel expenses.\textsuperscript{119} In comparison, the Kekaha Athletic Association spent $923.53 on football for the year.\textsuperscript{120} Despite collecting general membership from the athletic associations and league fees from the barefoot teams, the KAU left the costs of equipment, player transportation and field maintenance for the plantations and canneries to cover. That said, the KAU did not earn gate income for barefoot football, so even with its limited expenditures, the balance at the end of 1938 was $73.50.\textsuperscript{121}

Perhaps in reaction to the limited KAU funds for football, the plantation athletic associations continued their fundraising efforts. In spring and summer 1939, there was a flurry of activity from various athletic associations. For example, the Kilauea Athletic Club organized a Spring carnival and a May Day Festival. Kilauea AC was self-supporting, meaning it received no funds from the KAU or plantation/cannery. The

\begin{flushright}
119 Lihu’e Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 13.

120 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Kauai Athletic Union.

121 Lihu’e Historical Society, Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company, MS 1, Box 56, Folder 13.
\end{flushright}
festival revenue was earmarked “solely…to promote better sports and sportsmanship among members.” With the similar purpose of “…[raising] enough funds to purchase equipment for sports activities…,” the Koloa Athletic Association coordinated an August “Frolic.” Koloa AA noted that since several other KAU clubs had already sponsored carnivals, ondo dances and benefit shows (all successful), Koloa AA was putting on something unique and different. The Koloa Frolic included Filipino, Hawai’ian and Japanese folk dancing, as well as other entertainment and concessions. In July, the LPAA sponsored two summer dances, charging a small admission fee to raise funds for the association.¹²²

The end of the decade presented a mixed picture of barefoot football on Kaua‘i. Before the 1939 season, the Garden Island heralded the return of football, celebrating the presence of three leagues (115-, 125- and 140 pound) that featured more than twenty teams, but also acknowledged the possibility of waning interest in barefoot football. Despite a solid showing in previous years, the Senior league was discontinued though Pono and Kekaha maintained squads for exhibition games with visiting teams, especially for contests as part of the Armistice and Thanksgiving Day celebrations. At the lower weight classes, there was reduced interest, yet increased attention for the 140-pound level. For instance, the previous season’s 125-pound loop had ten teams, but only four for the new season: though when the season actually began two more teams joined, giving the 125-pound loop a respectable number of teams. However, the loss the Lihu‘e Townies 125-pound team, which had dominated the past couple years, weakened the overall level of competitions. With the demise of the Senior league, the 140-pound

league drew considerable interest, with seven committed teams and two possibilities. Responding to the changing barefoot league structure, the LPAA re-allocated its resources and efforts, deciding to sponsor more teams, especially at the lighter weights. The LPAA entered four teams from Kealia and Lihu’e, three 115-pound and one 125-pound team. The Lihu’e 115-pound team, coached by former barefoot star, Taku Akama, consisted of thirty rookie players who practiced for two to three hours a day, Monday through Friday. The 125-pound team included four “old-timers” (full-time working men) and twenty-two boys, who also practiced daily. Interest in the lower weight leagues was keen, as the August pre-season practices drew 1018 participants and spectators to Lihu’e Plantation’s Isenberg field.

As usual with the new season, the barefoot leagues were subjected to new rules. Rather than limiting participation only by weight, the KAU added an age requirement. The new ruling applied to the 115-pound league only, establishing an age limit of nineteen years old. The 125- and 140- pound loops were still open to all ages. Officials in the 115-pound league did not get paid: however, those for the heavier leagues had their travel expanses covered by the KAU.

Though the KAU membership consisted primarily of White managers from the various sugar plantations, members of the working class continued infiltrating the

123 *Garden Island*, 8 August 1939 and 5 September 1939.

124 The Lihu’e Townies, who withdrew from the 125-pound league was made up of boys and men from Lihu’e, not necessary Lihu’e Plantation. The LPAA team, the Lihu’e Planters, was made up of plantation workers (or plantation boys).

125 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association. The 140-pound team drew healthy interest (twenty-eight players) as well under Coach Gene Layosa.
positions of leadership within the barefoot leagues. For instance, some of the coaches such as Bill Chu, Taku Akama and Stanley Kawakami were non-management employees of the plantation, whose athletic talents allowed them to rise to leadership positions in barefoot football. In addition to being members of the working class, Gene Layosa, Chu, and Kawakami were of Filipino, Chinese and Japanese ethnicity respectively, representing the immigrant ethnicities imported to work the fields on Kaua‘i. While the KAU controlled the structure of the leagues, the working class participants were shaping how the game was being played on the field.\textsuperscript{126}

Once the 115- and 125-pound leagues were underway, the 140-pound loop began drawing attention among the Kaua‘i fans. The \textit{Garden Island} and barefoot fans anticipated a high level of competition, figuring that the former Senior players combined with older (and heavier former 125-pounders, who were often the stars of that league) would make for good competition. In addition, a significant number of Honolulu high school stars, who had graduated and currently worked for the plantations, were expected to take part in the 140-pound leagues. According to the \textit{Garden Island}, the former Honolulu high school stand-outs were the nucleus around which various plantations formed their barefoot teams. Apparently, the trend of hiring plantation workers to acquire their athletic talents, as in the case of Bill Chu in 1936, continued to impact the barefoot leagues.\textsuperscript{127}

Though the majority of players were not paid, the recruitment of what Keala Kai

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{126}Kunio Nagoshi, telephone interview by author, August 2005. Nagoshi states that Kawakami was the first coach to employ the t-formation.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{127}\textit{Garden Island}, 3 October 1939.}
terms “semi-professionals,” as well as the proliferation of coaches demonstrates a professionalization of sorts in the barefoot leagues. While the earliest barefoot games were informally arranged events, the inclusion of those hired for specialized athletic skill coincided with other professional aspects, such as the coaches’ studying and adopting mainland playcalling and formations. For example, Stanley Kawakami, Kauai Pine coach, and Gene Layosa, Lihue Plantation coach, studied the coaching techniques of mainland football teams and eventually imported the t-formation as opposed to relying on the single and double wing set-ups. In addition, athletes who competed on the mainland or in Honolulu, such as Teddy Blackstad and Herman Wedermeyer, imported the techniques and strategies they learned. While earlier coverage of the games focused on the talents and actions of the athletes on the field, in 1939 the Garden Island starts to emphasize, examine and critique play-calling ability of the coaches.128

As the Kaua‘i teams became more competitive, the KAU built upon the popularity of previous home-and-home series, attempting to increase the amount of inter-island competition. In October, the twenty-five Pono AC Juniors (115-pounds) traveled to Mau‘i for a contest against the Wailuku Sugar Company for a game that was the featured entertainment for the Mau‘i County Fair. With the approval of the KAU, Albert Horner, manager of Hawaiian Cannery and president of Pono AC made the arrangements with the Mau‘i County Fair Sports committee, extending Kaua‘i barefoot football to another island in the territory. Later in the month, the Kauai Pine Packers arranged a series with the Smile Café team of Honolulu, which drew a record crowd to Kalaheo

128See, for example, Garden Island, 12 September 1939 and 26 September 1939.
field. Unlike previous years where the Honolulu team soundly defeated the local team, Kaua’i Pine earned a 6-0 victory over the visitors.\textsuperscript{129}

The highlight of Kaua’i’s inter-island football competition took place in the events leading up to Pono AC’s second Pineapple Bowl Celebration. From the end of November to the New Year, Pono AC hosted a “parade of high-class attractions” at Hans P. Faye Park in Kekaha, which became “a mecca of [the] sports-loving public.” Albert Horner scheduled a big football game every Sunday, climaxing with the Pineapple Bowl on December 31 and January 1. Citing the fact that little else was going on, Horner hoped to provide good entertainment “deserving of the support of the Kauai public.” The football program featured a game between the Pono AC Seniors and Hawaiian Pineapple coached by Neil Blaisdell, a future mayor of Honolulu; the Wailuku Lightweights of Honolulu vs. the Pono 115-pounders; the Kekaha Seniors vs. the Pono Seniors; Pono vs. Navy, including a performance by the Navy band; and finally, the Hawaiian Polar Bears, Honolulu Senior League Champions vs. the Pono Seniors. As the \textit{Garden Island} pointed out, because Pono AC was spending a considerable amount of money bringing all these football teams to Kaua’i, “events should merit support of the community as a whole.”\textsuperscript{130}

As the decade close, the barefoot leagues were firmly embedded in the sporting culture of Kaua’i. Not only had the KAU brought codification and professionalization, it re-popularized barefoot football on the island and established it as one of the major sports in the territory.

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Garden Island}, 21 November 1939.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{The Garden Island}, 21 November 1939. The KAU financial report does not show any expenditures for the end of the year inter-island football matches.
CHAPTER 4

TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY:
BAREFOOT FOOTBALL DURING WORLD WAR II

Though the impact of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on mainland Japanese Americans has been documented,\(^\text{131}\) little has been written about how life changed for Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i, much less those on Kaua‘i. Because many works devoted to Asian American, Asian Hawai‘ian or Hawai‘ian history focus on the demise of the sovereign Hawai‘ian kingdom and the rise of plantation culture, their examinations of Hawai‘i cover the period before the American entry into World War II.\(^\text{132}\) An exception is Franklin Odo’s study of Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i during World War II. Odo attempts to dismantle/problematize the myth of the model minority, which emerged during and immediately post-World War II. Odo’s examination of the Varsity Victory Volunteers (VVV), a group of Nisei volunteers who performed non-military


labor, documents the difference between the internment of mainland Japanese and the situation with Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i, contending that the local haole elite prevented mass internment and the heightened racial tensions present on the mainland by “nearly [making] the Nisei haole.” Ronald Takaki makes a similar argument, claiming that the Japanese in Hawai‘i were perceived as “locals,” while their mainland counterparts, despite years of working and living in the United States, remained “strangers.”

Although not subjected to mass deportation/relocation, the Hawai‘ian Japanese, along with other ethnic groups were subjected to restrictions. Prior to the December 7, 1941 assault on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, there was already a military presence on Kaua‘i. In November 1941, Colonel Eugene Fitzgerald met with Japanese “old-timers” (most likely Nisei or second generation Japanese), advising that they keep the “hotheads” under control. Fitzgerald said that he did not doubt Japanese loyalty to Hawai‘i or the U.S., but that others might. Demonstrating his faith in the local Japanese, when confronted on December 8, 1941 by military employees requesting the removal of two Japanese American males working in the communication center at County Hall in Lihu‘e, Fitzgerald refused. Despite the presence of haoles like Fitzgerald, who supported the Japanese, the military ruled with an “iron fist” closing down the Japanese language schools, deporting community leaders like the bonsan (Buddhist minister) and teachers, and censoring print materials. In addition, the military imposed a 6:00 p.m. curfew and

issued passes for travel in and out of the plantation camps, in effect curtailing nearly all social activity on the island. The sympathetic haole military personnel was exemplified by Fitzgerald was counterbalanced by military leaders like “Cojo” McDonald, who was “ready to shoot – pass or no pass.”

The story of barefoot football during the war years is difficult to trace through either interviews or primary print sources. George Matsuzaki, who played for Lihu‘e in 1938 had moved to the mainland to attend the University of Minnesota by World War II. According to Kunio Nagoshi, from late 1941 to 1943 there were no games on account of the war. The cancellation of contests on Kaua‘i matches accounts of football on Oahu, where war also disrupted the 1941 and 1942 barefoot leagues. However, Burt Ebata claims that games continued throughout the war and while he also remembers the cancellation of the 1941 season, Mamo Wakuta competed for Pono AC in 1942. Similarly, Haruo “Dyna” Nakamota recalls barefoot contests in Lihu‘e drawing spectators from the occupying military force.

Though the 1941 barefoot season should have taken place prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, it appears that the barefoot season was cancelled before December. The Garden Island does not offer the usual coverage, which usually commenced with updates from the football leadership committee, often regarding weight

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137 Burt Ebata, interview by author, 9 September 2004; Mamo Wakuta, interview by author; 9 September 2004; Haruo “Dyna” Nakamoto, interview by author, 16 September 2004.
limits and rule changes. In fact, for all of 1941 and 1942, barefoot football is non-existent on the pages of the *Garden Island*, reappearing in the 1943 newspaper coverage, covering a late and truncated 1942 season. In the face of the military’s strict control over island travel, which thwarted communication between plantations, it may have been difficult to organize a barefoot season. In addition, the military discouraged large gatherings and based on the recollection of players and accounts in the *Garden Island*, the football games had the potential to attract crowds.\(^{138}\)

As with the reports in the *Garden Island*, records for the KAU and LPAA are not available for 1941 (and in the case of the KAU and LPAA, the remaining war years).\(^{139}\) While the lack of game coverage in 1941 in the *Garden Island* might indicate that barefoot football temporarily disappeared, it may also reflect other changes brought about by martial law. In the immediate aftermath of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the military exercised control over the press, which may have chosen to ignore a sport that involved large numbers of Japanese-American males.\(^{140}\) With the onset of the war, the KAU disappeared, leading the *Garden Island* to step in as the sponsor of the barefoot leagues for the 1942 and 1943 seasons.\(^{141}\) Though no official reason is given for the KAU’s disappearance, the leadership for the KAU and LPAA were primarily haole males

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\(^{138}\)“Supplementary Notes on Waimea with Special Reference to the Japanese,” 59-61.

\(^{139}\)Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association. The Kaua‘i Historical Society does have access to plantation papers, however, they are not yet archives or available to the public. The Grove Farm museum recently hired an archivist to shift through boxes of papers -- available papers do not address athletics during the war.

\(^{140}\)Kunio Nagoshi, telephone interview by author, 7 October 2005.

from the financially privileged families on the island: these men may have been pulled into other wartime duties. In at least one case, the manager of the plantations was called into service for the military, leaving the KAU and LPAA without at least one of its leaders.142

With the Garden Island once again assuming a leadership role with the barefoot leagues, competition resumed with the 1942 season, which actually got underway in January 1943. The 130-pound league helped ring in the New Year with the Lihu’e Ramblers defeating the Kekaha Sheiks in front of what the Garden Island characterized as a “record throng of holiday fans” on New Year’s Day. Two days later, the Moloa’a Hillbillies, a new team, scored an upset of the Waimea Explorers in front of a “record crowd” at Waimea’s field. After a stellar start to the season, the barefoot games scheduled for Sunday, January 24, were postponed in response to an Office of Civil Defense alert. The shortened season concluded on February 7, 1943, but the day was celebrated by the Garden Island, who wrote that the Pono AC’s 7-0 victory over Kauai Pine contest was a “fitting tribute to King Football…and a gallant gesture to the many injured Pono players on the sidelines…before a sizeable crowd of grid enthusiasts.” As was the norm for the 1942 season, the U.S. Army provided the officials for the game, marking the first time that members of the plantation or cannery community did not officiate. Finally to close the 1942 season, the 130-pound league crowned the Lihu’e

142Vivian N. Morimoto, personal conversation with author, 7 October 2005.
Ramblers its new champion, which brought “the first major island-wide sport event since the blitz of December 1941” to a conclusion.\textsuperscript{143}

In September 1943, the \textit{Garden Island} invited entries for the 130-pound league, which attracted fourteen teams. Despite the seeming return to normalcy of Kaua’i’s sport scene, aspects of the war surface in the newspaper’s coverage of the barefoot loop. For example, along with the usual competitors, the Kapa’a Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) organized a team under the leadership of Father Thomas Miyashiro a former star of Honolulu barefoot football. Minashiro, Hawai’i’s first and only Japanese-American Catholic priest may have avoided relocation thanks to his Catholic affiliation (most Buddhist bonsans were removed from Kaua’i). In his preview of the upcoming season, Burt Ebata, a former barefooter and assistant coach for the Koloa Plutes, notes that six of the eleven Koloa starters for the 1942 season were serving in the Army. As the season got under, the \textit{Garden Island} listed the eight Kala-wai Packers who volunteered for the U.S. Army.\textsuperscript{144} In addition, the paper did not always put out a weekly issue as was the case prior to the war, which may also reflect aspects of censorship.

As in previous years (and reflecting the return of the \textit{Garden Island} to sponsorship after the disappearance of the KAU), a meeting of athletic representatives was called to set rules and regulations. The meeting of team representatives, presided by Joe Shiramizu, the \textit{Garden Island}’s sports editor, established league management.

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Garden Island}, 5 and 19 January 1943; 9 and 16 February 1943. Though the barefoot leagues were re-activated, the number of participants declined sharply. For 1942 there were 150 participants in barefoot football compared to. This was due to the reduction of the barefoot league to only one loop, the 130-pound league, as opposed to the three to four weight classes that competed in earlier years.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Garden Island}, 28 September 1943 and 19 October 1943. All fourteen volunteers mentioned have Japanese surnames, reflecting the primarily Japanese-American composition of the 130-pound league.
Charlie Fern was chosen chairman, while Willie Albao, an outstanding Lihu’e athlete was unanimously chosen as manager for the 130-pound league. The rules remained the same except for a half pound weight increase, allowing a player to weight up to 133 pounds in “a light weight shirt and full length trousers.” Weighing would take place thirty minutes before game time, however, the half-time weigh-in was deemed injurious to players’ health and therefore, abandoned. For the official start of the season on October 24, the Garden Island anticipated a “mild stampede” of gridiron fans.\footnote{Garden Island, 5 October 1943.}

Trumpeting the opening of the 1943 130-pound league, the Garden Island celebrated the nature of the barefoot game itself and sought to broaden its audience beyond the plantation and cannery families. The Garden Island urged the servicemen to turn out to the football contests, explaining that the Hawai’ian style of barefoot football is “even faster than the fast collegiate brand seen on the mainland.” Replying to queries about whether the boys and men abide by Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) rules, the paper contends that everything is run by the local football league, as it would be on the mainland -- the only difference being that the participants play and kick barefoot. Demonstrating how some barefoot league coaches taught themselves from by learning from the mainland game, the Garden Island notes that the play, beside being faster, can be traced to “Knute Rochne’s Notre Dam system, or Clark Shaughnessy’s T-formation, or Bernie Bierman’s bruising power drives, or the deception of the Trojan War-horse Howard Jones.” At the same time, some coaches developed their own style, modifying
play from “old books.”146 While borrowing from the mainland, the coaches create a uniquely Hawai’ian way of playing football.

During the 1943 season, the war intruded upon the barefoot league in a new way, the loss of former barefoot players in the 100th Infantry. On November 14, Coach Mack Kageyama of the Koloa Plutes dedicated the game to the memory of Private Toshiaki “Popeye” Fujimoto, former Koloa lineman, who was killed in action in Italy. Fujimoto was the first Kaua’i American Japanese Athlete (AJA) to die in the war effort. Two weeks later, the Garden Island reports the death of a second Kaua’i AJA, Kaoru Naito, who had played for the Lihu’e barefoot squad for several years.

After the completion of the Kaua’i 130-pound circuit, the Lihu’e Ramblers hosted the Honolulu Diamond Packers, three-time Oah’u 130-pound champions in the Poi Bowl Fray on New Year’s Day. Given the limitations on inter-island travel, the arrival of a visiting team symbolized some sort of normalcy. Along with defeating the Kaua’i champion Ramblers, the Diamond Packers earlier defeated the Pono Canners on Christmas Day. Both games drew a “large crowd of enthusiastic fans.” Though the Diamond Packers displayed athletic and coaching talent, the Garden Island highlighted the generosity of the Honolulu team. The Diamond Packers turned over all proceeds from the game, estimated at $400.00 to three Kaua’i charity funds.

The last days of the 1943 season also brought controversy regarding the Garden Island’s reporting of the 130-pound league. In responding to the critique, the Garden Island illuminates how it sees the role of barefoot football in Kaua’i’s culture, as well as

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146 Garden Island, 19 October 1943.
the values and character of the game. In a letter to the editor from an earlier edition of the paper, \textsuperscript{147} a Kapa’a CYO backer took issue with the \textit{Garden Island}’s criticism of the CYO team’s sportsmanship in the previous edition of the paper. The author of the letter, as well as other supporters who sent anonymous letters, claimed that the \textit{Garden Island} displayed prejudice against the CYO team throughout the season. Not surprisingly, the \textit{Garden Island} denies the charge, then goes on to declare that the sports department is

\begin{quote}
…but whole-hearted in its attempt to restore normal pre-war activities for the younger folks and athletes. And there is no finer institution than one like the CYO to build and prepare the young people into good American citizens. In the united effort to slash the rising juvenile delinquency rate, both the press and the organizations must cooperate.\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

Continuing its position on the incident, the \textit{Garden Island} states that the Kaua’i 130-pound league has been generally free from rowdyism and dirty play and the incident involving CYO was the first of its kind in many years and that “The best offensive against dirty play and rowdyism on and off the field is publicity, and placing the responsibility for it where it belongs.”\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147}I could not find the letter that sparked the \textit{Garden Island}’s response and essentially, defense of the barefoot league. However, the incident of sportsmanship might relate to a Kapa’a player who developed a reputation for using his cast art as a weapon on the field. A few players mentioned this player, though not by name. Apparently this Kapa’a athlete used to drive his forearm, which was in a cast, into people’s bodies. Though they did not exactly joke about the style of play, the players did not express feeling hostility or anger toward this player or call him a “dirty” player -- more of an expression that he was a tough, mean-spirited player who pushed the action on the field to an extreme. Shoichi Igarashi, interview by author, 17 September 2004; Whitey Kurasaki, interview by author, 17 September 2004, Lihu’e, Hawai’i, tape recording.

\textsuperscript{148}\textit{Garden Island}, 4 January 1944.

\textsuperscript{149}The idea of publicity to counter bad behavior might have arisen from the Japanese concept of “shame.” The worst thing an individual can do is “bring shame” to the family or an organization. See Murayama, \textit{All I asking for is my body}, p. 42 and Dennis Ogawa, \textit{Jan Ken Po: The World of Hawaii’s Japanese Americans} (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 30-43. In her description of camp life, Ann Takano discusses the role of gossip as a means to maintain discipline within the community. Takano, “Camp Four,” \textit{Social Process in Hawaii} 8 (1949): 63. Kunio Nagoshi also mentions how small town life,
As Kaua’i geared up for the 1944 barefoot season, the expected meetings to prepare for the new season included two changes. For the first time, the managers for the 130-pound league solicited input from all the teams as they headed into the annual meeting regarding rules and regulations. The league leadership sent out questionnaires to see where teams favored setting the weight limit for the next season (or what was feasible). For as players like George Matsuzaki and Rudy Notebo point out, the boys were getting bigger, which might account for questions about making an upward adjustment in the weight limits. Plans to add a 140-pound loop or add 5 pounds to the 130-pound loop were being considered, leading the league to ask team managers to take a survey of their players to determine their average weight, to which the leadership would react/adjust the limits.

While the barefoot league committee handled the regulatory aspects, Pono AC’s front office staff took steps to improve the quality of play. For the first time on the island, there was pre-season “camp” for interested players. While organizations like the LPAA and Kekaha Athletic Association set aside time and facilities for pre-season practice, Pono operated the first camp that took boys from the plantations for a few days of football intensive. Coach Bill Chu, who led the 1943 Pono Canners to the Kaua’i co-championship, was in charge of the camp. Both lightweight and heavier boys were admitted to the camp, whose expenses were covered by Pono AC and the Hawaiian

where everyone knows each other, makes each person accountable to the community and aids in disciplining people. Kunio Nagoshi, interview by author, 29 August 2004.
Cannery. From September 15 to 17, Bill Chu drilled the boys in football fundamentals and just as importantly, focused on conditioning.\footnote{Garden Island, 29 August 1944; 5 November 1973.}

As the Kalawai team, under Coach Kubota prepared for the new season, Kubota adjusted to the impact of the military draft on the barefoot league. Kubota began putting together a younger team, recruiting a fair number of teen-agers to offset the unavailability of older players. Based on his recruiting strategy, Kubota was not hurt by the military draft as much as older teams.\footnote{For example, Kunio Nagoshi of Kalawai and Mamo Wakuta did not play the 1945 season to enter the military. Nagoshi, interview by author, 29 August 2004. Wakuta, interview by author, 5 September 2004.} In fact, Kubota’s team had the youngest player in the league, 13-year old John Nohara from McBryde plantation camp. The Kalawai team, with an average age of 16-1/2 years and weight of 125 pounds was one of the youngest and lightest, but Kubota contended that with his new system in place, a modification of the t-formation, his team could compete with more veteran teams for the top of the league standings.\footnote{Garden Island, 3 October 1944.}

In September 1944 the KAU, headed by Henry Hughes of Kekaha plantation, suddenly re-emerged on the Kaua’i sports scene, kicking off another period of increased institutionalization for the barefoot league.\footnote{The Garden Island does not elaborate on the return of the KAU, nor does it engage in a power struggle over barefoot football. When the KAU reappears, the Garden Island relinquished sponsorship and control. The Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Archives did not yield documentation of either the KAU’s temporary disappearance or re-emergence on Kaua’i.} Though the \textit{Garden Island} certainly put rules in place, the KAU renewed attempts to control every facet of the game. Unlike the \textit{Garden Island}, which accepted just about any team, the KAU instigated a $30.00
entrance fee per team. However, the entrance fee did not appear to discourage participation as the KAU-led season attracted ten teams. In addition, it required that teams set their rosters by October 1. The KAU kept the 133 pound limit, but entertained requests for a lighter league for younger boys, provided interest and participation in the 133-pound league remained high enough to warrant adding more football to the schedule.

Even as the *Garden Island* commended the resurgence of the KAU for the 1944 season, some rumblings of discontent against the KAU’s management of the barefoot league were reported by Sports Editor Joe Shiramizu. In his September 15th column, Shiramizu comments on “Backfire from last week’s news item that the Lihue Ramblers would be rambling down the gridiron…was proved null and void.” Apparently, the KAU ruled that entries for the 1944 season closed on September 6th, a deadline missed by the LPAA. The KAU refused Lihu’e admittance into the 1944 barefoot race, killing the Lihu’e Ramblers’ opportunity to defend its 1943 co-championship. According to Shiramizu, the refusal to include the Ramblers on the schedule was inspiring comment and consternation from the locals. Shiramizu notes that back in 1942 and 1943 (under the *Garden Island*’s sponsorship), late entries were accepted, “The general idea of the whole thing was to get as many clubs in the play as possible.” Though he purports to remain neutral, Shiramizu clearly supports being flexible with the deadline and allowing the Ramblers to compete, pointing out how KAU administrative errors contributed to the missed deadline. More importantly, Shiramizu intimates that the locals would be the “losers,” getting a sub-par product as well as the losing a great rivalry (Pono and Lihu’e)
if the KAU maintains its hardline approach. After Shirmizu’s column, the KAU reserved itself, permitting the Ramblers to join the 130-pound loop for 1944.  

Despite the war-time conditions, regulations on travel and communication between the Japanese American, other Asian American/Pacific Island and the Portuguese residents were relaxed by 1944. Despite the on-going war, Joe Shiramizu anticipated record crowds for the 1944 season. As the newspaper did the previous season, Shiramizu declares that for the servicemen based on Kaua‘i who were football fans, they were welcome to all games. He was confident that the barefoot style of play would win over the visiting military men and convert them into new fans. He comments that “war-time crowds here have not been up to par, as the sad attendance at boxing and baseball events, shows.” However, he expresses confidence that football’s “rough-and tumble” tactics should attract a substantial number of sports deprived civilians and servicemen.

The early games of the season matched Shiramizu’s expectations. The opening match between the Kalawai Packers and the Olok’ele Redlanders drew a crowd of several hundred spectators. Pono AC’s 130-pound squad also drew healthy crowds, as Mamo Wakuta notes, each game drew “Lots [of fans]. Four hundred people, maybe more. You know Kapa’a Beach Park, both sides of Kapa’a Beach Park were filled with people.” For Pono AC’s side, the supporters/spectators were primarily the “family of the boys.”

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156During the war years, while family and camp members made up the bulk of the spectators, “Dyna” Nakamoto comments that servicemen often came to the Lihu’e games. Haruo “Dyna” Nakamoto, interview by author, 16 September 2004. Given that Lihu’e was the capital city of Kaua‘i, making it central to military operations, it is not surprising that visiting servicemen would attend Lihu’e’s contests. The Garden Island notes that some military personnel attended a Kala-wai game at Kalaheo Park.
October 29 battle between the 1943 co-champion Lihu’e Ramblers and Pono Canners, beside being a tightly contested thriller, brought out “one of the season’s biggest crowds.”

After a few years on the backburner, due in part to the KAU dropping from the sports scene, the plan to make the officiating more uniform and objective kicked into action in the middle of the 1944 season. The first step, which dealt literally with officials’ uniforms, put traditional black and white striped shirts onto the officials’ backs. In his weekly column, Shiramizu opines that “The shirts should certainly add color to the barefoot loop.” The KAU purchased the uniforms for the officials. In addition, the KAU sought to re-establish the casually arranged officials’ organization of the pre-war years. The KAU contended that the uniforms and a viable officials’ association would glamorize local sports and bring Kaua’i close to establishing itself at the same level as Oah’u. The Garden Island concurred, contending that fair play could only be guaranteed by an organization of strict regulation covering every detail of the football contests. As a result, the newspaper decided that “Professionalizing local officials is a definite asset and it will go a long way in determining what kind of athletes can participate in each recognized sport…One thing that is certainly going to be stamped out is the everlasting ‘beef’ over home town officials being so partial.”

Despite the institutionalization and professionalization creeping into the 130-pound barefoot league, moments of community amongst the working class players

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characterized the way the game was played. For example, in its November 5th contest against their arch rival Lihu’e Ramblers, the Pono Canners -- the players and their backers -- displayed sportsmanship that was celebrated in the *Garden Island*. Though the battle on the field was close and fiercely physical, neither team was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct, which the Garden Island claimed was “…noteworthy and something that every fan and athlete should follow as a prime requisite and moral in sports.” When a Lihu’e lineman was injured and required removal from the field, the rules regarding a prolonged time-out could have resulted in a penalty against Lihu’e. However, Pono waived the rule, treating the injury time-out like a “regular” time-out. In a letter from Lihu’e coach Yoneo Ota and fans Mack Kawamura (future Lihu’e coach) and Takumi Akama (past and future Lihu’e coach), Lihu’e acknowledges had Pono maintained the intercollegiate rules governing time-outs for an injured player, the Canners would have received the ball on the one-yard line, “a certain touchdown and a victory would have been their glory.” However, the game rules were ignored “in favor of the welfare of an injured player.” Ota then expresses gratitude to Mr. Horner, manager of Hawaiian Canneries, for offering his car to transport the injured boy. He also sends an “aloha”\(^\text{159}\) to Coach Bill Chu and his team in response to Pono’s sportsmanlike conduct. In the end, Pono played Lihu’e to a third consecutive scoreless tie.\(^\text{160}\)

The *Garden Island*’s coverage of the season included a new aspect, following the exploits of one player throughout the season, creating a sporting hero for the barefoot league. While the newspaper had celebrated the accomplishments of other stars of the

\(^{159}\text{“Aloha” is a greeting and a farewell, but it can also connote love, affection and respect.}\)

\(^{160}\text{*Garden Island*, 7 November 1944; 26 March 1973.}\)
gridiron, it informed the fans about a new Kaua‘i player, Kenichi Shimogawa, before he played a game on Kaua‘i. Shimogawa, a teenager with experience in Honolulu’s barefoot loop, joined the Kalawai Packers, whose coach touted him to the press. The coach bragged of Shimogawa’s exploits with the Prima Lux team of Honolulu, particularly the fact that Shimogawa was the only player to score against the Honolulu Diamond Packers for the entire season. Sports Editor Joe Shiramizu identified Shimogawa as a player to watch. Shimogawa fulfilled the hype, quickly establishing himself as the star of the 130-pound barefoot league. Reports on the Kalawai games invariably mentioned his performance, which never disappointed the writers at the *Garden Island*, who chose him as the Most Valuable Player for the entire league.161

As the end of the 1944 season approached, the 130-pound league, rather than focusing only on preparation for home-and-home series with Honolulu teams, geared up for a more organized and substantial fundraising effort. Though the barefoot teams had charged admission to recoup costs expended by the plantation athletic associations and to raise money for local Mahelona hospital, in December the league linked with the Honolulu unit of the Shrine hospital, who sponsored the first Shrine Benefit Gridiron Classic All-Star Game, East Meets West on Kaua‘i. Based on the same model of the annual benefit Shrine games in Honolulu, the local Shriners attempted to match the quality of entertainment offered on Oah‘u. To ensure a great game, the football end of the benefit was managed by Henry Hughes, head of the KAU. Barefooters and their fans, for the first time, nominated their all-star selections, thirty for each side of the island. For

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161 *Garden Island*. 3, 10, 31 October 1944; 7, 28 November 1944; 5, 19 December 1944.
the fundraising end, ticket prices were set at fifty cents for general admission and one dollar for reserved bleacher seats. Sports Editor Joe Shiramizu opined that “For the pageantry and pomp and color of the big initial Shrine, classic, that’s not shelling too much.” Organizers anticipated a crowd of 5,000 fans for the benefit. The fundraiser was a resounding success: after expenses, the Shrine game earned over $1000 for the hospital.162

Though the early part of the KAU 130-pound barefoot season occurred after Japan’s surrender to the United States, there was no direct commentary or mention of the end of the Pacific campaign in the Garden Island’s sports pages. However, the war did get mentioned obliquely. For instance, the Garden Island noted that McBryde was fielding a team after a war-time layoff. Kalawai coach, Stanley Kawakami commented that his team was going to be hard pressed to compete, given that he expected to lose four players to the draft. Coach Benny Holt of the Waimea Explorers faced the same loss of former players through the military draft. Coming back after a few years out of barefoot competition, McBryde organized a large, but young and experienced team -- as did Waimea. For example, Hiroshi Arakaki was only an eighth grader, and Peter Tsuha only a few years older. Arakaki recalls going up against veteran players who were toughened working men. Kunio Nagoshi, quarterback for the Kalawai Packers, played as high school senior, notes that there may have been some juniors, but at the other end there were men who worked for the pineapple company who were in their late 20’s and early 30’s. Perhaps in light of losses through the draft, McBryde followed Kalawai’s tactic,

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adopted a couple seasons earlier, and recruited a younger team in hopes of fielding a competitive team in the face of wartime losses. 163

On September 30, 1945, the barefoot league kicked off the season with four games at Kapa’a, Koloa, Waimea and New Mill. Though the games throughout the war years did draw spectators, the Garden Island rarely mentioned specific attendance. Despite the relatively inexperienced teams being presented by McBryde and Waimea, there does not seem to be a drop in fan interest. Perhaps as Kunio Nagoshi suggests, people were happy with World War II coming to close. As far as the number of spectators, the Garden Island notes that “Hundreds of fans who lined the sidelines from end to end saw the [Kalawai] Packers topple the [Kekaha] Sheiks from the top spot…” Kunio Nagoshi concurs, “And as I recall, the turnout was very good. I would say that people lined up both sides of the field.” As for the newly activated McBryde team, Peter Tsuha, who joined in 1944/45, claimed that the games at McBryde Park drew “a mob…only McBryde had grandstands and they would be full…Even at Koloa and Lihu’e we had lots of backers. I don’t know how they got there, but they were there.” 164

The Garden Island’s reporting of the 1945 season highlighted a conflict between a Pono player, Bobby Kure, and the game officials. Up to this time, complaining about the officials seemed to rest primarily with the fans, generally during post-game analysis (in the form of letters to the newspaper). However, on November 20, 1945 during a McBryde-Pono contest, which was a scheduled KAU contest, the referee refused to allow


a gain made after the whistle had blown. Pono team captain Kure allegedly use “abusive and profane” language protesting the decision, for which he was penalized. Pono coach Bill Chu also protested the decision, but the referee did not reverse himself. At half time, during the referee and Chu’s discussion about what occurred, Kure became abusive and was ejected from the game. Chu managed to convince the referee to allow Kure to return to the game, but as the third quarter got underway, Kure confronted the referee, resulting in his ejection. In response, Coach Chu directed his team to walk off the field with Kure. KAU officials on site attempted to convince the Pono team to re-take the field. Nonetheless, Pono refused to return, forfeiting the game to McBryde.165

While a confrontation between a player and referee might not seem significant, for a single player to cost the team, it does raise questions about the meaning of such an act. Though the players appeared to accept the rules of the KAU or Garden Island, they had little input in determining playing conditions, schedule or weight limits. Instead, their interests were usually represented by the plantation managers or athletic directors. Whether Kure’s refusal to accept the referee’s decision marked an act of independence or agency cannot be determined.166 Because many players felt that in playing barefoot football they were representing their camp or town, for a player to draw attention in such a detrimental (at least in terms of the result for the team) manner, was unusual. In addition, as previously mentioned, the concept of “shame” disciplines members of the Japanese-American community, which would discourage displays that draw undue

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165 Garden Island, 27 November 1945.

166 Bobby Kure had agreed to an interview with me, but when I arrive on Kaua’i, his wife informed me he was too ill to meet. Sadly, he passed away a few months later.
attention to the individual, especially when it contributes to a negative result for the community as a whole. Though the Garden Island labeled the incident “regrettable,” it did not criticize Kure too harshly and there was no public backlash against Kure from the Canner team or Kapa’a town.  

For the 1945 season the 130-pound championship was decided at the second annual Shriner game. Once again, the KAU cooperated with the Shriners to arrange a good game for the fundraiser, handing over the title game. The Garden Island promoted the upcoming McBryde-Kalawai contest as “The Greatest Game for the Greatest Cause” in a full page advertisement. Reserved seats crept up to $1.50 and general admission to $1.00. The Shrine officials designated the mauka (west) bleachers as McBryde’s and the makai (east) for Kalawai. Fans were advised to arrive early for good seats for a “big throng” was expected for the game. The game lived up to the hype, which was “thriller,” with strong offensive and defensive performances, that ended in a 7-7 tie. The action on the playing field, plus the cheering fans and the presence of the Kaua’i High School band added “color” and a “cheerful tone.”  

Despite the demise of the barefoot league in the months immediately following the American entry into World War II, by the end of the war, the 130-pound league rebounded. Barefoot football was central to the communities of Kaua’i, as measured by the participation of boys and men as players, the support of the camp resident and the related cultural activity, like the Shrine fundraiser, that was tied to the barefoot leagues. Though the barefoot leagues had been reduced to one loop, the 130-pound league

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emerged from the war in good health. As the younger boys from the plantations took up
the game, the future for the barefoot league looked promising -- with the potential to
expand to its former format that included several lighter weights, thereby increasing
participation amongst the working class boys in plantation camps.
CHAPTER 5

A YEAR OF CHANGE:

THE GREAT SUGAR STRIKE OF 1946 AND SPORT ON KAUAI’I

The 1946 barefoot season began like every other season. The KAU officers and representatives of the KAU plantation/cannery teams met in August to determine the course for next season. Although these football leaders did enact two significant changes from the previous year, they did not anticipate larger cultural shifts that would impact the barefoot leagues. Within a month of this meeting, thirty-three of the thirty-four plantations in Hawai’i, under the leadership of the International Longshoremen’s and Workers’ Union (ILWU) would come together in a territory-wide strike that would later be dubbed “The Great Sugar Strike.” Though the Japanese and Filipino laborers had staged moderately successful strikes in the past, they had eventually been broken thanks to the importation of cheap alternative labor and/or the pitting of racial groups against each other. However, with the assistance of the ILWU, which focused much of its organizing efforts on Kaua’i, plantation and cannery workers earned the right to organize in 1945 with the passage of the Little Wagner Act. The passage of the Little Wagner Act, along with the growing class awareness fostered by the ILWU, gradually organized the different ethnic groups into a coalition against the plantations and canneries. In 1946 the two largest groups of laborers, the Japanese and Filipinos, came together for a territory-
wide strike that succeeded in shutting down sugar production on all the islands for 79 days.\textsuperscript{168}

Early in the strike, management attempted to break the strike with the usual combination of intimidation, hiring “scabs” and playing on ethnic divisions. Another effective weapon used by management was to fire those who expressed sympathy for the strikers. Because industry was limited on the island, workers did not have much choice for employment and if they stepped out of line with plantation policy, they could get blackballed by the plantations and canneries. Edward Matsumoto recalls

You know, this is separate, but your grandfather got me in trouble, you know. Because they had -- I was working for the cannery, I was in college then -- and they had a strike on the cannery and he was very active and he asked us to hold up the sign. And me and two other people held up the sign, we lost our jobs because of that. So I had to work from Hawaiian Cannery to Hawaiian Fruit Packers. They wouldn’t hire. Later on, I got a job by way of someone I knew who got me into the cannery again. But we didn’t know anything, supporting, holding, he used us, you know. And they took our name down, the management, you know those days…And we’re just kids, we don’t know what we’re doing. Maybe we thought your grandfather would buy us a soda or what not, big deal, treat, eh, so we did it. Yeah, yeah, because of him, I lose a job. But bambei, it’s not a big deal.\textsuperscript{169}

Despite the brewing labor unrest, the KAU proceeded with business as usual, announcing the start of a new season on September 22, which included an expansion of barefoot offerings. The KAU added a 120-pound league while keeping the heavier league. Rather than 130-pound, the KAU added five pounds, to create a 135-pound


\textsuperscript{169}Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai’i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, The 1920 Filipino Strike. Edward Matsumoto, interview by author, 27 August 2004. “Bambei” is a pidgin expression derived from “by and by,” usually expressing sentiments like “after some time” or “looking back.”
league. By raising the weight limit, the KAU hoped to permit more players to participate. While the 135-pound loop continued as always without an age restriction, the 120-pound league was limited to players under nineteen years old. Unlike past years when weight limits sparked sometimes vociferous debate, these adjustments passed without protest.\textsuperscript{170}

While the KAU encountered little resistance from the team representatives, it did battle with the game officials. Football Chairman, Domingo Los Banos, sought free officiating for the 120- and 135-pound leagues after the KAU and the KAU Officials’ Association (KAUOA) debated the amount the KAU should pay for officiating. Because of the impasse between the KAU and the KAUOA, Los Banos requested that each of team in each weight class provide two officials per game. Unlike past KAU officials, who were paid and had travel paid, these officials ended up working gratis.\textsuperscript{171}

As the opening of the season approached, two teams dropped out of the barefoot leagues. Although teams sometimes withdrew without explanation, the “surprise withdrawal” of Pono AC was a disappointment to local fans. While other teams ceased to compete during the war (McBryde) or placed resources with certain weight classes over others (LPAA), Pono AC had a tradition and reputation for athletic excellence since the 1930’s when Bill Chu was initially hired by the plantation.\textsuperscript{172} Chu, as a player-coach, led successful track and field and football squads. In fact, Pono had contended for the 130-title for the past three years. The \textit{Garden Island} did not offer and explanation for

\textsuperscript{170}\textit{Garden Island}, 20 August 1946.


\textsuperscript{172}Keala Kai, interview by author, 5 September 2004.
Pono’s departure from the league. While Bill Chu’s retirement from coaching the athletic teams probably played a part, his retirement was not announced earlier. Whatever the reason, the barefoot leagues looked to opening day without the presence of one of its strongest competitors.\footnote{Garden Island, 10 September 1946; March 26, 1973. Bill Chu’s retirement does not appear to be linked to the impending labor troubles, though the decision to put resources into sport may have been tied to the simmering unrest. Though Chu stepped as coach, he maintained his professional relationship with the Hawaiian Cannery, remaining an employee until the cannery closed years later. In fact, my father, Michael Morimoto, worked under Chu’s supervision during one summer break from Ohio State University (which would have been around the mid-1950’s). Keala Kai, interview by author, 5 September 2004; Michael Morimoto, personal conversation with author, September 2004.}

With the withdrawal of the Pono Canners, the Lihu’e Ramblers became the favorites for the 135-pound title. Early in the season, the Ramblers had a number of players who were having trouble making the weight limits, despite the extra five pound cushion. As the Garden Island pointed out, the season was short -- five games -- so Coach Gene Layosa “ought to be able to keep the boys off poi and beer for that length of time.” The kind of struggles and tactics to make weight that occurred in the earlier years continued. Gary Matsuwaki, who played barefoot and high school football, notes

> When you play in the barefoot league, you gotta watch your weight, you see, otherwise you cannot play. And when you cannot play, you’re out of the community, like, and it took a lot of pride. But there were a lot of cases, where maybe, I know his guy, Muramoto, he was older than me, but he was a star, a running back. I used to see him sweat, I mean. You know when came, maybe Sunday is the game, from about a week, you’re jumping on the scale to see, and all week, they’re on diet. Oh, real pitiful, you know, but it was pride.\footnote{Gary Matsuwaki, interview by author, 29 August 2004.}

Peter Tsuha recalls
Before every game, we have to get on the scales. If over, some of the guys would run around the field to try and make weight. Or they would sit in a steam bath and try to sweat it off. Some of them, they were big boned, and they had a hard time making weight.\footnote{Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8 September 2004. Though most of the players in the 120-pound met the weight limit because of their youth, some of the nineteen year olds who would to run around to drop the last pound before a game. Edward Matsumoto, interview with author, 27 August 2004.}

The lighter 120-pound league did give the younger members of the plantation the chance to compete on a more even playing field. As Edward Matsumoto, member of the Lihu’e Sugar Babies notes, the difference in fifteen pounds and a few years of physical labor made a significance difference in strength. While in the past, even the lighter league had working men, the age restriction imposed by the KAU meant that the 120-league consisted primarily of high school boys. Matsumoto notes that during a home-and-home series with the Kalihi Valley team of Honolulu, which was comprised of pig farmers who were two to four years older, the Lihu’e team “didn’t have any chance.” The older team was too strong for the Sugar Babies, despite the Sugar Babies’ readiness to play.\footnote{Edward Matsumoto, interview with author, 27 August 2004.}

Along with promoting participation for the younger men in the plantation and cannery camps, the 120-pound league gave the high school coaches the opportunity to evaluate future material. The \textit{Garden Island} acknowledged that the “Boys do not have the polish of the 135 lb. loop, but they have enthusiasm and dash.” The newspaper contended that some of the players needed only a few more pounds and experience before being ready to contribute to a high school squad. While some players played in the barefoot leagues because they were too small for the high school squads, players like
Billy Texeira and Shoichi Igarashi were approached by high school coaches because of their prowess in barefoot contests. The *Garden Island*, along with suggesting the barefoot league as a viable recruiting base, suggests that “Various alumni associations should make the 120 lbs. teams farms for their varsity by helping with equipment and coaching.” For the most part, the high school football programs remained separate from the barefoot leagues, despite participation by some boys/men in both systems. The high school football teams and coaches never formalized a relationship with the barefoot leagues, regarding recruiting, equipment or sponsorship.\(^{177}\)

Despite the on-going strike, the KAU and plantations continued to support the barefoot leagues, even sponsoring home-and-home series with Honolulu. Even in the midst of the labor unrest, the KAU concerned itself with improving the quality of play on Kaua‘i and to that end, promoted inter-island competition with Oah‘u. In early November 1946, the Diamond Packers, a squad of thirty-five boys and men, traveled to Kalaheo. For the second part of the series, the Kalawai Packers, in the first away Kaua‘i match of the season, voyaged to Honolulu for a Thanksgiving Day game. According to new Sports Editor, Masao Seto, the Diamond Packer-Kalawai Packer games demonstrated the dramatic improvement of the local teams -- or the diminished quality of the Honolulu teams. In addition to the quality of the Kaua‘i team’s play, Seto noted the “superiority of equipment used by locals. Many a Honolulu team including the Diamond Packers lacked the full regalia of local teams.” Seto credits the better equipment to the KAU, who required full equipment (helmet and shoulder pads). As a result, Seto claims

that there are fewer serious injuries for players on KAU teams compared to their Honolulu counterparts.\textsuperscript{178}

Though the inter-island match with the Diamond Packers was a big draw, the \textit{Garden Island} sponsored an Invitational Series separate from the KAU’s series. The series held at McBryde field had an admission charge. When questions arose about the distribution of the funds, the \textit{Garden Island} divided the funds as follows: 30\% held out for medical purposes and if no medical needs arose that portion would be used to feed all participants at the end of the season. The remaining proceeds were divided amongst the four contestants on a sliding scale, which was one of the few times proceeds went to the teams as opposed to Mahelona or Shriners’ Hospital. The \textit{Garden Island} hoped that by offering part of the gate to the teams, they would be able to cover their expense for the game and perhaps part of the season. On top of it all, the \textit{Garden Island} purchased a trophy, making it one of the few competitions to put up a tangible prize.

Even as the Great Sugar Strike entered a third month, the barefoot season rolled on. According to Peter Tsuha of McBryde and Billy Texeira of Grove Farm, despite the strike and the growing interest in high school football (played in shoes and full equipment) the barefoot contests drew healthy crowds. Texeira remembers that Barefoot used to draw big crowd. Used to be full. Draw more crowd than high school. Because high school was playing on a Saturday, those days, lots of guys used to work Saturdays, and Saturday afternoon we used to play. And then, Sundays, everybody off, so they would see the football games. It was a big crowd, especially when you play teams like McBryde or Koloa, hot shoe, that’s a team to beat, you know. Kauai Pine was pretty good, too, Kalaheo. But I don’t know, big crowd those days.

\textsuperscript{178} Kenichi Shimogawa, interview by author, 12 September 2004. \textit{Garden Island}, 12 November 1946.
When about the number of people who attended their games, Tsuha replies,

Oh, a big mob, bigger than high school. Because we had only Kauai High and Waimea High. The whole community, all Wai’iawa would come. The bleachers would be full.

In fact, during the last weekend of the strike (which had gone on for seventy-seven days), the *Garden Island* comments that “King Football came to a glorious end as far as local barefooters were concerned” when the Lihu’e Ramblers took the 135-pound title by beating the Kalawai Packers. Though in the midst of a lengthy, bitter strike, the laborers and their families came to support the footballers, creating a crowd of about 1,000 spectators, leading the *Garden Island* to comment that if the KAU gives the fans a “hot” attraction they will attend even though they have to pay. As barefoot football concluded, the *Garden Island* finally mentioned the strike, noting that with the termination of the sugar strike, the KAU was planning an accelerated sports program for the rest of the year.¹⁷⁹

With the Kaua’i title decided, the KAU turned its attention to inter-island competition. While the McBryde Scots arranged a home-and-home series with the Moiliili Blues, one of Honolulu’s 130-pound barefoot team,¹⁸⁰ and the Okolele Indians hosted the Vineyard Athletic Club’s football team, the most important inter-island contest matched the Kalihi Valley Athletic Club against the Lihu’e Ramblers. As the island champion, Lihu’e represented the KAU in the territorial 130-pound gridiron title.

¹⁷⁹Billy Texeira, interview by author, 10 September 2004; Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8 September 2004; *Garden Island*, 19 November 1946.

¹⁸⁰Though Kaua’i raised the weight limit to 135-pounds for the 1946 season, Honolulu maintained different weight classes since the barefoot leagues were not administered from one organization.
Despite Kalihi Valley’s stellar reputation, Lihu’e Coach Gene Layosa believed his team could compete with the rivals from the city. Though a win would have “give[n] locals plenty of prestige and leg on the Territorial title,” Kalihi Valley came in and trounced Lihu’e 24-0 before the largest football turnout of the season.\textsuperscript{181}

In his summary of the 1946 season, \textit{Garden Island} Sports Editor Masao Seto discussed the future of the barefoot leagues. Seto foresaw the KAU’s return to the business of codifying barefoot football. In addition, he anticipated greater entertainment from the barefoot leagues, both on and off the field. Seto notes that the Registration Committee of the Hawaiian Association of the AAU (HAAAU) contacted its clubs and high schools, urging them to file new applications for athletes’ registration through the committee. Though the KAU handled the registration and the occasional reinstatement of amateur status, once it disappeared from the Kaua’i sports scene, it did not manage issues of amateurism. The HAAAU adhered to the guidelines set by the AAU, defining an amateur as “…one who engages in sport solely for the pleasure and physical, mental or social benefits he (sic) derives therefrom and to whom sport is nothing more than an avocation.” As for the quality of play, Seto comments that the Kalihi team “schooled” the locals, specifically, the Kaua’i teams ought to emphasize fundamentals such as conditioning and improving foot speed. According to Seto, Lihu’e was literally sent sprawling onto their backs in the face of Kalihi’s superior blocking and speedy running. Finally, Seto suggests that the Kaua’i song leaders learn from the visiting Punahou (an exclusive private school in Honolulu) song leaders to improve their performances.

\textsuperscript{181}\textit{Garden Island}, 26 November 1946.
Overall, Seto’s tone indicates that Kaua’i barefoot football -- and perhaps sport in general -- has a ways to go before matching the play and spectacle of the Honolulu teams.\footnote{Garden Island, 26 November 1946. Normally the Kaua’i song leaders performed at the high school games. For special games like the Shrine Game, they might cheer for the barefoot games. None of the interviewees recall the cheerleaders at their games, i.e. there might be people leading the cheers, but not cheerleaders or song leaders in the current sense.}

Though the 1946 strike altered the management-labor relationship, particularly the paternalistic sense of obligation and control the plantations and canneries formerly bestowed upon their labor forces, barefoot football continued to draw an audience, as well as passionate debate, until the end of the decade. Under the auspices of the KAU, the barefoot leagues geared up for the 1947 season, though there was some debate about whether it was viable to run both a 135-pound and 120-pound loop. In an open letter to KAU football committee chair, Domingo Los Banos, Haruo (Dynamo) Nakamoto criticizes the KAU’s decision to jettison the 120-pound league, contending that if Los Banos would simply contact last year’s participants he will find interest for the lighter weight league. Nakamoto then makes the case for organizing a 120-pound series, arguing that

As usual, the Kauai Athletic Union is behind schedule in calling for and creating interest in the coming football season… Neglecting the younger boys in the smaller weights will not seem important right now, but in the future, where will our football players for the 135 pound league, and the high school and the senior league come from. We believe in early training and education. That is the only way Kauai can keep up with the high standards in athletics that the island is now showing.

If the KAU does not care to “hustle” the younger boys for a 120 pound league, we would suggest that the Garden Island sponsor a league. A try is worth the effort, but if the KAU prefers not to try, then we appeal to the Garden Island for their help.\footnote{183}
The following week, in a long letter to new sports editor Jarrett Kano, Domingo Los Banos responds to Nakamoto’s letter, challenging Nakamoto’s implication that the KAU lost interest in the 120-pound league as well as critiquing Nakamoto’s view of the situation. Los Banos contends that the KAU was interested in supporting both the 135-pound and 120-pound leagues, going so far as to order championship trophies for both. Unfortunately, says Los Banos, some of the teams that initially came to the organizational meeting opted not to put up a lighter team. For instance, McBryde dropped out of the 120-pound league because its athletic club felt that the expense was too great. Los Banos states that

Here I want to remind Mr. Nakamoto that it is not the interest alone that we have to put into the minds of various clubs – it is the expense, transportation, leave alone the troubles in caring of the boys. Mr. Nakamoto is an old timer of the game and he ought to know how expensive it is to put up a Football team. The Committee has done everything to promote this league but that he could not do any more than what it has done under present circumstances.

Los Banos also takes exception to Nakamoto’s accusation that the KAU is behind in organizing the upcoming season, pointing out that “Incidentally, Mr Nakamoto who made this unfair criticism is a member of the LPAA and yet that club did not even send its representative.” Finally, responding to Nakamoto’s headline, “We’ll Take It if they won’t,” Los Banos declares “You are welcome to it and wish you all the luck!” Nonetheless, Los Banos called another organizational meeting for the 120-pound league

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for the upcoming Friday, stating that “In view of the complicated nature of the formation of this league all teams are urged to send representatives without fail.”

By early September the KAU had established the rules and regulations for the 135-league, reinstating the level of codification that existed before the KAU “took cover” in 1941. As always, the rules around weighing in were formalized. Players could not weigh more than 135 pounds wearing “light, ordinary pants (not play pants) and regulation playing jerseys minus equipment such as head-gear, shoulder pads, hi and knee pads.” A player late to weigh in could be weighed by agreement between both coaches, however, no player could be weighed once the game started.

In addition to determining the weight limits, the KAU’s bureaucratization limited the freedom of players to move from club to club. Club rosters were to be mailed to Chairman Domingo Los Banos one week before the opening of the barefoot season. During the season, team managers were required to have a list of players, positions and numbers ready for presentation at the scale at least a half hour before game time. Any player not listed was considered ineligible and allowing an ineligible player called for a forfeit. In addition, no player was allowed to transfer from one club to another once the season got underway: once the player participated in one game or after the opening of the league, the player had to compete with his initial team or sit out the remainder of the season. The athletic club was entitled to as many players on its roster as desired. Though the club could have high school players on the roster, they were allowed to play only after the completion of the high school football season unless they obtained a signed

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185 Garden Island, 9 September 1947.
The right to play, rather than resting with the players, lay in the hands of the KAU and high schools.

The end of World War II and the re-emergence of the KAU on the Kaua‘i sports scene had repercussions for the spectators as well. Once again, the KAU instituted a twenty-five cent admission fee per game or a $1.00 season ticket for all nine games. However, the *Garden Island* exclaimed that the “League should be one of the best that KAU has sponsored” in light of the plentiful number of players and solid reserves. In addition, the return of war veterans to the playing field after absences of one to two years elevated the level of play on Kaua‘i. For example, Kenichi Shimogawa, the Most Valuable Player for 1944, retook the playing field in 1947 after a stint with the army. Similarly, Billy Texeira also brought some athletic star power to the barefoot leagues when he resumed playing football after his military service. Though the KAU attempted to collect admission, Shimogawa and Texiera contend that the fans were admitted without charge.187

Despite the KAU’s efforts to coordinate and administer the barefoot leagues, a few issues arose during the season that led to complaints among the local fans. Foremost of the complaints: the quality of officiating and the KAU’s handling of the 135-pound championship. According to Jarrett Kano of the *Garden Island*, “Local football fans and teams themselves are slowly realizing the fact that Kauai has pretty bum officiating.” Kano argues that several KAU barefoot and Kaua‘i high school games were marred by

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186 *Garden Island*, 9 September 1947.

poor officiating and if not corrected, “football on Kaua’i will be reduced to an officials’
game.” Specifically, fans complained about the officials calling questionable fouls on
offences committed away from the action and/or fouls that did not increase the chances of
injury to the player. In short, fans argued that the officials were taking the game away
from the players. Unlike in past years where the KAU responded to criticism with talk of
an officiating school, the KAU did not immediately address the officiating concerns.188

Along with inadequate officiating, the KAU earned some criticism for failing to
adequately promote the 120-pound league. Despite Haruo “Dyna” Nakamoto’s
assertions that teams were interested in competing at the lighter weight class, the KAU
attracted only two teams for the 120-pound league, Kekaha and Lihu’e Plantation, who
engaged in a three game series. Though there was limited interest on Kaua’i, the Lihu’e
Sugar Babies travelled to Paia, Mau’i for a home-and-home series. Nonetheless, the lack
of a 120-pound Honolulu team and the limited participation on Kaua’i may have reflected
how players were becoming larger in general, as reflected in the reinstatement of the 135-
pound league.

The Garden Island’s final complaint about the KAU -- the KAU mismanaged the
135-pound championship. At the end of the season, the Koloa Plutes, Kalawai Packers
and Kekaha Sheiks were tied for the 135-pound barefoot title. After initially announcing
a sudden death series to determine the champion, the KAU backpedaled the next week
insisting that each of the three teams would play the other. However, the KAU did not
arrange or announce the details for the play-off series. Jarrett Kano comments that the

188Garden Island, 14 October 1947; 9 December 1947.
“KAU is always yapping about lack of finances in carrying out its large scale sports program, here then is the $$$$$ opportunity to make part of it by having games during the holiday season.” Two weeks after the season officially ended, the KAU simply declared a three-way championship as opposed to conducting a play-off. According to Kano, the KAU officials were dealing with “a very temperamental eleven, somewhat like an upturned-nose artist, who can’t be told what the league decides.” Apparently, the co-championship satisfied a fair number of the players.\textsuperscript{189}

In response to the possibility of a “sport-less” holiday season, thanks to the inefficiency of the KAU, the Garden Island sponsored an invitational 135-pound series for Christmas and New Year’s Day. The Garden Island stepped up, according its sports editor, “Because of numerous requests by fans and players themselves.” Not only did the Garden Island fill a sports entertainment void, it created the opportunity for a 135-pound island championship. The lack of KAU sponsored games did not keep teams for seeing action. For example, in addition to the invitational series, the Koloa Plutes embarked on a home-and-home series. The Plutes departed for Hilo, Hawai‘i on December 19, returned to Kaua‘i for the Christmas Day games, and hosted the Ola‘a team on December 28. Finally, the Plutes took part in the Garden Island’s 1\textsuperscript{st} Mokihana Bowl, which determined the island championship. In sponsoring the year-end competition, the Garden Island managed to get a local business to donate a trophy and decided to direct gate

\textsuperscript{189}Garden Island, 18 and 25 November 1947; 2 December 1947.
proceeds to the teams themselves. From the void created by KAU inaction, the *Garden Island* gave the local fans and players a satisfying conclusion to the season.\(^{190}\)

At the conclusion of the year, Jarrett Kano presented his wish list for the 1948 season:

*To the KAU – An entire change in its present setup, plus renewed interest in all activities they promote. Big names at times are no names at all and it’s always the little fella who does all the work. An executive secretary paid for his efforts might change the dull picture.*

*To the LPAA – Be able to promote better and bigger sports attractions in ’48*

*May it bring to the 120-lb teams, namely Kekaha and LPAA, more competition next year.*

A decade earlier, the *Garden Island* credited the KAU providing the greatest sports year in Kaua‘i’s history as well as advancing the development of sport on the island.

However, in the years immediately following the war, the *Garden Island* found the efforts of the KAU and LPAA lacking. Though not explicitly spelled out, the uninspired sport offerings from the Lihu‘e Plantation might reflect the post-sugar strike relationship of the plantations’ and canneries’ to labor. As Hiroshi Arakaki, Billy Texeira and Peter Tsuha point out, the strike led to diminished sporting opportunities (as participant and spectator) for the working class. Whether or not the strike did lead to a shift in the plantations’ thinking on sport and their workers, the *Garden Island* found fault with the management of sport at the end of 1947.\(^{191}\)

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\(^{190}\) *Garden Island*, 30 December 1947. Of course, the *Garden Island*’s report on the KAU’s handling of the 135-pound championship and holiday season should be read critically since the KAU’s “failure” to manage the season appropriately, allowed the *Garden Island* to re-assert itself into the running of the barefoot leagues.

\(^{191}\) *Garden Island*, 30 December 1947. Hiroshi Arakaki, interview by author, 9 September 2004; Billy Texeira, interview by author, 10 September 2004; Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8 September 2004.
Yet in its January 1948 review of the previous year, the *Garden Island* reverses itself, declaring that there was “A record turnout of participants in all phases of sport activities as new clubs formed to handle the boom.” The paper claims that the “Vacuum of active participants during the war and just after hostilities has been filled.” In addition, the *Garden Island* points to the record number of home-and-home series as another indication of a healthy sports year. However, unlike previous year’s when it credited the KAU for the island’s sport success, the *Garden Island* notes that while the KAU undertook the sponsorship of major sport activities, clubs, organizations, schools, counties and individuals played a significant role in developing a well-rounded sports program. Specific entities mentioned include the Christian Youth Organization (CYO), Kaua’i County Bureau of Recreation, Kaua’i Interscholastic Federation, Kaua’i Baseball League, Waimea Sports Boosters, Buster Tsuchiyama, community athletic organizers and Wailua Golf Club. The emergence of athletic organizations independent of the plantations/canneries demonstrates the shift from plantation/cannery centered amusements and sport. Rather than relying on the plantation or cannery to provide, the locals began creating new sporting structures and institutions. Though the plantation’s model for managing the life of its working class communities remained in place through the mid-1950’s, by the end of the 1940’s, the centrality of the plantation and cannery to Kaua’i’s culture begins to diminish.

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192 *Garden Island*, 6 January 1948. Interestingly, the *Garden Island* speaks about the vacuum of participants during the war when its coverage indicated that barefoot football games did take place during World War II. In fact, the newspaper coverage celebrated the return to more normal sport conditions by 1943.
CHAPTER 6

ALL PAU: THE DEMISE OF THE BAREFOOT LEAGUES ON KAUA‘I ¹⁹³

The future of the KAU 135 lb. barefoot grid loop is as good as the U.S. Government savings bonds.

-Joe Shiramizu, Sports writer ¹⁹⁴

In 1953, when Joe Shiramizu declared that the future of the barefoot leagues looked solid, he had reason for optimism. During the late 1940’s barefoot football rebounded from setbacks during World War II. Though some former barefoot participants blame the 1946 Sugar Strike for the demise of barefoot football, the barefoot games continued during the strike and attracted substantial crowds in the nine years following the strike. While the plantation may have changed its approach to labor by adopting a less paternalistic approach, it did continue to provide access to recreational facilities. In addition, the plantation did offer sport and entertainment, though not to the same degree as the earlier decades. Nonetheless, the barefoot teams were attracting a steady flow of participants as well as crowds of about 1,000 spectators per contest until 1954. ¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³Pau = pidgin English for finished. “All pau” indicates something is finished or completely gone.

¹⁹⁴Garden Island, 7 January 1953.
Though the 1950 season started strong -- according to the *Garden Island*, the barefoot season drew record crowds -- the dissipation of Pono AC may have signalled the beginning of the end of the barefoot leagues. At the start of the 1950 season, Kapa’a’s Pono AC unexpectedly dropped out of the barefoot leagues, citing a lack of interest in terms of recruiting athletes and acquiring financial support for athletics. To the disappointment of the manager of Hawaiian Canneries, Albert Horner, an avid sportsman, “every opportunity was given members of the community to reactivate the club to continue sports promotion, but response was entirely lacking in attendance and enthusiasm.”

Though plantation teams often came and went with the barefoot leagues, the fortunes of Pono AC shocked the *Garden Island*, which cited Pono AC’s long history of athletic excellence and support in the community over the previous decades. Jarrett Kano, sports writer, comments that “Kapaa, once a popular sports loving community, producer of many champions in all major sports, has within the past few years slowly faded from the sports picture into nothingness.”

Perhaps the decline of Pono AC resulted from a shift in plantation support and/or priorities regarding the labor force. After the 1946 strike the relationship between labor and management changed on Kaua’i, which impacted the sporting practices of the working class. The 79-day strike empowered the union, who extracted major concessions from the plantations and canneries for the first time. Specifically, the union worked with

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196 *Garden Island*, 19 September 1950.

197 *Garden Island*, 26 September 1950.
the plantations to install a shorter working day as well as equalized pay across ethnic
groups (for the same work completed). For some barefoot participants, the trade-off for
these gains was a loss of other advantages of plantation life. Some of the barefooters felt
the union disrupted the plantation system, which had been good about meeting the
physical and social needs of the workforce. In place of the paternalism that marked the
plantation’s approach in dealing with labor, the plantation adopted a less “hands on,” all-
encompassing control of the workforce.198

While the sports infrastructure of the plantation such as the gymnasium and playing
fields remained intact and available for use by the workers, the level of support for sports
diminished after the 1946 strike. When asked why he stopped playing football after the 1946
season, in which the McBryde Scots were the 135-pound league champions, Peter Tsuha states
“When the union struck in 1946, no transport for your guys. We couldn’t get to the games.”199
Billy Texeira concurs

When they started the union, you know, the ILW union, a lot of sports went out. The plantation stopped supporting the teams. The union came in, the plantation, automatic, stop supporting the sports. But before the union come in, the plantation used to supply mostly all the equipment, you know, for the teams. Even transportation-wise, used to give everything. When the union came in 1945 or ’46, I think…

LM: ’46 was the strike, yeah.

BT: That’s when it stopped the plantation supplying. Yeah, people used to be real
good, the plantation. The union jam up everything.200

199Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8 September 2004. McBryde Sugar Company had supplied a
truck to transport players to the games up to this time.
200Billy Texeira, interview by author, 10 September 2004; Donald Donough, The Story of Koloa:
Though he does not blame the union for disrupting sport on Kaua‘i, Kenichi Shimogawa of Kalawai notes that

    KS: Players and plantations, too, it’s all separating all ready. They did away with all da kine…

    LM: So the plantation was changing?

    KS: Yeah, then the individual team was left alone, like, to fend for themselves. I think that was the reason [barefoot football died out].\textsuperscript{201}

    Focusing on the 1946 strike and the resulting breakdown of paternalism as the main factors in the demise of barefoot football creates an incomplete picture. Despite the strike, the barefoot league did continue for another nine years. While the plantation may have offered less financial and managerial support for barefoot football than it had in the 1930’s and early 1940’s, the men who played in the 1950’s wore jerseys provided by the plantation, often on the plantation owned playing field. Alan Matsuzaki notes that as a young man he did not give much thought to who was supplying the jersey, transportation or field -- he assumed the plantation was the main resource. According to Richard Kashiwabara and Charles Niitani, who played for the McBryde Scots, the barefoot team’s main sponsor was the McBryde Sugar Company. While the plantations may have changed its level of support, they did not completely pull its support for working class recreation and sport -- instead, they continued to supply the basics for the continuation of barefoot football.

\textsuperscript{201}Kenichi Shimogawa, interview by author, 12 September 2004.
Along with a less paternalistic approach to managing labor, additional changes emerged from plantation culture. The early immigrants, if they did not return to their country of origin, often spent their entire working lives on the plantation. For example, Mamo Wakuta, Billy Texeira and Peter Tsuha worked from teenagers to retirement for the plantations. In the late 1930’s some Nisei began choosing to leave Kaua’i for the mainland to pursue a university education. When George Matsuzaki prepared to travel to Minnesota, the plantation tried to impede his travel, aware that upon his return, he would be less likely to accept employment on the plantation. Subsequent generations of Japanese American laborers were less willing to bind themselves to the plantation and began looking beyond the plantation for employment. The increasing number of Japanese American males exiting the plantation for other options may have contributed to decreasing participation in barefoot football.

Along with the decreasing number of young men to participate, in 1956 the KAU attempted to establish a new barefoot league. Along with the weight limit, the KAU decided to impose an age limit of 18-1/2 years old. By setting an age limit, even for the heavier weight class, the KAU excluded the men who had been at the core of barefoot football, the working men of the plantation. However, attempting to draw solely from the younger men had limitations as other forms of recreation -- unrelated to the plantation and cannery -- were emerging on Kaua’i. In 1953 accounts of Little League games appear on the

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pages of the *Garden Island*. In addition, Pop Warner football arrived on Kaua‘i and developed a reputation for better preparing boys for high school football (as it was played in full equipment including shoes), appeared in the late 1950’s. Whereas the plantation had been the only games in town, other options were now available to the working class children.²⁰³

As the post-1946 plantation culture became less paternalistic and the plantation became less central to Kaua‘i life, the younger Japanese boys and men may have been “culturally unsuited” to barefoot football.²⁰⁴ As mentioned Japanese boys were increasingly exploring options off the island and frequently demonstrated an unwillingness to devote themselves to the plantation in the same manner as the previous generation. For the men who played in the 1940’s, they worked a full day then practiced every day for two to three hours. Similarly, the younger boys attended school, some worked, then attended daily practice.

According to Shoichi Igarashi, who coached for one year in the 1950’s, the new generation did not have the same commitment and toughness. He remembers telling the boys they were not in condition -- however, rather than rising to the challenge, they were content to remain in poor condition.²⁰⁵

In 1953 the death of a barefoot player may have galvanized community support for the sport, while also adding to the impending conclusion of the

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²⁰³ *Garden Island*, 30 December 1953. Kenichi Shimogawa is one of the founders of the Koloa Pop Warner football team, which was probably the first on the island of Kaua‘i. According to Shimogawa, Pop Warner first appeared around the mid-1950’s.


²⁰⁵ Shoichi Igarashi, interview by author, 17 September 2004.
barefoot leagues. During a Kaumakami-Kekaha match, Delphin Fabia of Kaumakani died after a tackle that ended with an opposing player falling onto Fabia. When Fabia did not rise from the ground, he was rushed to the hospital where he died five minutes later. Fabia, sixteen years old, had been warned by his uncle not to play since he had been coughing that morning, but he had insisted on taking part. At the hospital, Dr. Brenneke attributed the death to a combination of football injuries and pneumonia. Brenneke opined that Fabia could have survived one or the other, but that both conditions put an excessive strain on Fabia’s body.  

In the aftermath of the Fabia tragedy, the KAU and KAU barefoot football league officials responded quickly. Immediately following the accident, Brenneke met with officials to discuss injury prevention, though no new regulations or equipment was mandated for the players. Nor did the KAU entertain suggestions to “soften” the tackling aspects of barefoot football. Along with taking in Brenneke’s information, the KAU began organizing a benefit for Fabia’s family. By the following Sunday, the KAU coordinated a double-header benefit match, played under the recently installed klieg lights at Hanapepe Park. The doubleheader attracted a crowd of 2,500 spectators, who after praying for Fabia, provided tremendous support for both matches. The crowd was amongst the largest for the last years of the barefoot leagues.  

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206 *Garden Island*, 14 October 1953.

Out of respect for Fabia’s family, the Kaumakani team chose to cancel the rest of its season, despite the fact it was defending the previous year’s 135-pound barefoot title. Kaumakani’s withdrawal weakened the schedule, though the season did finish strongly in terms of attracting fans. However, Kaumakani never returned to the barefoot leagues. In subsequent years, Mack Kawamura, the head of the KAU barefoot leagues begged for plantations to organize teams for the league. In 1954 and 1955, weeks prior to the season opening, Kawamura had to hustle to recruit a fourth team to join the barefoot leagues. Even under threat of cancelling the season, teams did not emerge, most likely due to lack of participants or funding. For these last two seasons of the barefoot leagues, Kawamura was able to recruit the fourth team at the eleventh hour, ensuring another season. However, in 1956, despite Kawamura’s and the Garden Island’s efforts, the necessary number of teams did not materialize, leaving 1955 as the last season of barefoot football on Kaua‘i.  

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208 Edward Kawamura, Sr., interview by author, 19 September 2004, Lihu‘e Hawai‘i, tape recording.
CHAPTER 7

“LOCALS ONLY:” MEANINGS OF BAREFOOT FOOTBALL ON KAUA’I

For the purpose of creating better fellowship among the employees of the Kekaha Sugar Company and because it is the purpose of the plantation to provide better facilities for the general entertainment and recreation of its employees, this Constitution is adopted.

- Kekaha Athletic Association

Shit too was organized according to the plantation pyramid.

- Milton Murayama

In his autobiography, All I asking for is my body, Milton Murayama notes that the physical layout of the plantation was organized as a “pyramid” with the plantation manager’s house at the apex or top of the hill. On the level below lay the “nicer looking” bungalows of the lunas or plantation overseers, primarily the Portuguese, though occasionally the Spanish or Japanese. Further down the slope were the identical, overcrowded barrack type dwellings of the Japanese, Chinese and Korean field hands followed by the Filipino camp at the base of the pyramid. According to Murayama, the sewage system followed the hierarchy of housing: the concrete ditches that functioned as toilets and outhouses carried human waste from the manager’s home past the lunas and

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209 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 26/22, Kekaha Athletic Association Preamble to the Constitution of the Kekaha Athletic Association, 1937.
field hands to its final destination near the Filipino camp.\textsuperscript{210}

Though immigrants existed at all levels of the plantation pyramid, the physical set-up reflected and re-ified racial, ethnic and class hierarchies. The Haole (White) owners/planters were trailed closely by the Haole plantation managers, followed by the Portuguese lunas, the East Asian workers and finally the Filipinos. According to Jonathan Okamura, the dominance of the Haole (generally referring to English and Scotch) planters and shop owners over the Hawai’ians and other immigrants groups led to the construction and use of the term “local.”\textsuperscript{211} Though “local” generally identifies someone born and raised in Hawai’i, it does not speak to geographic roots alone. Dennis M. Ogawa defines “local” as a long term resident of Hawai’i, generally non-Haole, though it sometimes includes kamaaina Haoles.\textsuperscript{212} However, Haoles born in Hawai’i are usually not considered local, despite their history and contribution to the state. Despite their European roots, the Portuguese are not Haoles -- in part because they were originally imported as manual laborers -- and therefore, do have local status. Okamura claims that the term “local” is often used to exclude and consequently, is racially loaded (i.e. prejudicial). Yet he admits that “local” identity is based on the “common

\textsuperscript{210} Milton Murayama, \textit{All I Asking For Is My Body}, 96.


\textsuperscript{212} Dennis M. Ogawa, \textit{Jan Ken Po: The World of Hawaii’s Japanese Americans}, 182. Haole is slightly pejorative, though less so as more haoles populate the islands. Though “locals” on Kaua’i, especially around discussions of barefoot football, expressed the opinion that the incoming, newly transplanted haoles did not care about preserving past island history, especially when it pertains to Asian Americans. Kamaaina refers to a long term resident, though I was surprised to learn that haoles could be considered kamaaina because in current common usage, kamaaina (at least in my family) refers to “locals”. For my family, who history is rooted in the plantation and cannery, kamaaina usually referred to non-Haole. Kamaaina also implies “local” with certain privileges attached. For instance, when I was younger, the adults would ask after kamaaina prices for inter-island flights, indicating there was a special price category for the locals.
subordinate status of the non-white to the dominant Haole group during the heyday of the plantations. Consequently, “local” acknowledges its lower ethnic and economic status while concomitantly asserting privilege and power by excluding the dominant Haole class from the category of those that truly belong in Hawai‘i. (Yet this exclusion via language did not translate into Haole exclusion in the economic, political and/or educational life of the Islands.)

Though it may have been created by Charlie Fern to assimilate the working class plantation employees and offspring or by the plantation to mitigate tensions between management and workers, barefoot football was ultimately a “local” production. Despite the financial contribution of the plantation and cannery, the barefoot relied on the participation of the locals as fundraisers, athletes and spectators. In addition, the locals rose to leadership positions in the KAU and in many of the plantation/cannery athletic associations, which meant that locals constructed rules and regulations and shaped the product on the field as did the players themselves. More than merely reflecting “local” qualities or values, barefoot football contributed to the construction of “local” identity. Participating in the barefoot leagues gave workers the opportunity to assert their working class and ethnic identities.

Of course, the barefoot leagues were not intended as a site for the celebration of working class, immigrant identities. While the plantations chose to provide recreational opportunities for its workers to promote “a sense of loyalty to plantation interests,” improve worker well-being and encourage worker engagement in community affairs

“which pertain to plantation interests,” the barefoot leagues did more than bind the athletes and spectators to the plantation or cannery. Barefoot football promoted plantation/cannery/camp identification, yet allowed for the emergence of “local” identity, which simultaneously re-ified and challenged the social, class and racial hierarchies embedded in the plantation pyramid. The players were laborers from the plantation or cannery and the spectators were generally their camp mates, families and friends, though the lunas and managers might attend the games. Burt Ebata, Kunio Nagoshi and Shoichi Igarashi discuss how they felt they were representing their communities and took pride in performing well on the field. Therefore, barefoot football was a “local” activity, in spite of its links to the plantation. Moreover, barefoot football helped delineate who was “local,” which had a positive connotation despite its association with those at the lower half of the plantation hierarchy.

While all the former interviewees stated that the plantation provided all the necessary financial support (or they assumed did), budget reports (1936, 1937) for the Kekaha and Lihu’e Athletic Associations indicate that the workers actually provided approximately half the budget for the associations. The athletic associations charged membership fees: one dollar for men (the equivalent of one-day’s work for a field hand) and twenty-five cents for women and children. However, it appears that men were charged only fifty cents with the plantation donating the other fifty cents. For example,

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214 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LSC 27/33, Constitution and By-laws of the Lihue Plantation Athletic Association, 20 November 1936.

in September 1936, the Kekaha Athletic Association collected $695.00 from 1206 men and 224 women and children with the plantation donating $695.00. Though the plantation successfully created the impression of providing for its workers, in reality the workers were partially responsible for creating and funding their own recreation. Rather than an extension of plantation and cannery paternalism, barefoot football can be seen as a local production -- financed, participated in and consumed by “locals.”

Despite the collecting of fees by the athletic associations and later on, the KAU, the funds did not trickle down to the local architects and participants of the barefoot leagues. According to nearly all the interviewees, the coaches, players and game officials did not receive remuneration, contrary to the ever-changing objectives and regulations of these organizations.

Along with formal offers of support, the plantation made informal gestures, specifically in helping the competitors “make weight.” If unable to meet the weight limit, players were not allowed to take part in the game. For some of the barefooters, to fail to make weight meant they would be letting down the community. Unlike on Oah’u, where players were weighed once at the beginning of the season, the Kaua’i barefoot league demanded a pre-game weigh-in. For some of the larger boys/men, attempts to meet the weight limit led to some drastic individual action. Several men recalled teammates running around the field after a weigh-in to drop the last couple of pounds for

216 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/14, Financial statements of the Kekaha Athletic Association, September 30, 1936 and May 31, 1937.

a re-weigh. Charles Niitani stated, “I knew lots of guys, they had to go sit in the hot car, go sit and sweat ‘em [pounds] off,” sparking Richard Kashiwabara to remember, “There was one guy - Blackie Arakaki. Just for make weight, he was one of them.” Furthermore, Whitey Kurasaki and Kashiwabara had teammates that sat next to boilers, rather than closed up cars in the sun. While some players dealt with making weight on their own, some accepted help from the plantation. Mamo Wakuta, when asked about how he handled the weight limit, replied

I always struggled. Me and Fujimura, Tamishiro, we were big guys. We had to sweat it out before the game. Everything Thursday before a game my boss, Mr. Takemoto, he was cannery engineer, would ask me, “Are you going to make weight?” And I’d say [shrugs his shoulders, palms up]. So Mr. Takemoto would tell me to sit by the boiler, instead of working, he had me sit by the boiler while I was getting paid, and sweat the weight out.  

By allowing players to sweat on company time, the cannery demonstrated at least minimal support for and commitment to success in the barefoot leagues.

Though opinions differed among the barefooters about who initially organized the barefoot leagues, they all concurred that the plantation/cannery was the key resource in promoting and maintaining them. As Edward Matsumoto explains, his 120-pound squad was

a plantation organized team. The plantation was the one responsible. The workers for the plantation organized the games. They organized with plantation facilities, you know, the field and gym.

However, the players diverged on their assessment of what motivated the

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219 Edward Matsumoto, interview by author; 27 August 2004.
plantation/cannery to allocate resources to a sporting venture like barefoot football. With few camp dwellers owning cars and a lack of public transportation, getting to the movie houses or bowling alley in Lihu‘e and Kapa‘a was difficult for boys on the west side of the island, limiting entertainment possibilities. Whitey Kurasaki explained, as did others, that there was “...not too much entertainment. If you like fruit, you go up to the mountains, if you like fish, you go to the water.” Kunio Nagoshi expressed the need for amusement, “I suppose like any young man, you’re looking for things to do.” They posit that the plantation might have backed the barefoot leagues to keep the boys and young men of the camp out of trouble by sending them to practice every afternoon post school or work. In addition the barefoot leagues gave the plantation/cannery the ability to provide regular, relatively cheap entertainment for a large proportion of their work force. From its perspective, the plantation/cannery provided an important social service -- presenting opportunities for exercise, competition, amusement and gathering (for players and spectators.) Charles Niitani suggests that the plantation sought “to keep the community together.” As Shoichi Igarashi notes, “You gotta give lots of credit to the plantation for backing the people and backing football.”

Of course, the plantation/cannery’s intentions may not have been so “pure.” According to Nagoshi, barefoot football functioned as a means of “social control,” enabling the plantation/cannery to rally the laborers around the company. By creating

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an “esprit de corps” the workers were more likely to identify with the cannery, rather than their fellow worker. Similarly, Milton Murayama writes that “Everything was over-organized. There were sports to keep you busy and happy in your spare time.”

Along the same lines, Franks writes “In Hawai‘i...working class Asian Pacific Americans could take advantage of the recreational facilities and organizations sponsored by sugar and pineapple plantation operators as a way of diverting Hawai‘ian laborers from militancy.” In fact, the objectives in the Constitutions of the Kekaha Sugar Company Athletic Association and the Lihue Plantation Athletic Association demonstrate the desire to improve worker loyalty and investment in the plantation.

However, if the plantation/cannery intended to stave off disruption by the workers or unionization, barefoot football helped create social conditions antithetical to union busting. As Alexander Saxon demonstrates, from 1850 - 1950 the railway companies in California prevented labor cohesion and organization by fracturing the working class along racial lines. By playing the race card against the class card, management deepened the resentment and mistrust against Chinese workers, creating an “enemy” for White laborers, to distract them from the battle against the “true” enemy (or the enemy responsible for White labor’s economic and social position).


224 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, LPC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association.

Rather than dividing Kaua‘i’s multiracial labor force, barefoot football allowed
the players to interact and connect with other ethnic backgrounds while gaining
community support for the team, regardless of its racial make-up. While Gary
Matsuwaki found that the crowds attending the lower weight games were “Oriental”
since the team members were primarily Oriental, Haruo “Dyna” Nakamoto claimed that
the best thing about barefoot football was that it put him in regular contact with other
races (camp housing was often segregated by race), permitting him to befriend and
know a wider range of people.226 In fact, the August 1938 monthly activity report for
Lihu’e Plantation comment that the 115 pound team included 90 boys who “are made
up of all nationalities…They play well together and have a grand time.” The following
month’s report claims that “All nationalities of boys are playing together, Japanese,
Portuguese [sic], Filipino and Hawaiian.”227 Other players like George Matsuzaki, Burt
Ebata, Mamo Kaneshiro and Shoichi Igarashi, who took part in the barefoot leagues in
each decade of their existence (from 1937) valued the inter-team and intra-team, as well
as inter-ethnic, camaraderie. At a time when transportation was an issue, barefoot
football brought together plantation/cannery workers from the east and west sides of the
island, rather than isolating each geographically or racially. Barefoot football presented
the possibility of interaction and connection with a broader working class.

Regardless of the ethnic background of a barefoot team, the camp and town


227 Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
Library Hawaiian Collection, LSC 14/11, Lihue Plantation Athletic Association “Monthly Activity
Report,” August 1938 and September 1938.
turned out to support it. While Japanese boys/men dominated the rosters, e.g., of the
1945 barefoot all-stars 26 of 28 have Japanese surnames; the 1945 McBryde squad lists
48 Japanese surnames,\textsuperscript{228} the Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans and Portuguese came in
support. According to Taniguchi, in 1944 Koloa had a population of 4,000, but “It was
not unusual to have a crowd of about 2,000 at any Koloa game.” For the McBryde
matches in the mid to late 1940's, the spectators were “A big mob, bigger than high
school [crowd] because we had only Kaua‘i High and Waimea High. The whole
community, all Wai‘iwa would come...Whole families, children, old folks and all.”

Even as the barefoot league was shrinking in the 1950's, drawing fewer teams, Richard
Kashiwabara and Charles Niitani describe the McBryde contests as “plenty old folks
come out and watch...the whole camp, sitting on cars, roofs and chairs”\textsuperscript{229} The camp-
wide support for barefoot teams composed largely of Japanese might point to a
connection on a working class level, despite ethnic differences.

Whether the plantation/cannery hoped to avert working class militancy or
activism by providing recreation and entertainment through various means including
barefoot football, the plan did not hold. In 1946 the International Longshoremen’s and
Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU) organized the statewide “Great Sugar Strike,” which
paralyzed the sugar industry until the strike was resolved. A year later, the pineapple

\textsuperscript{228}Garden Island, 15 January 1946; Garden Island, 18 September 1945.

\textsuperscript{229}Paul Taniguchi, interview by author, 27 August 2004; Peter Tsuha, interview by author, 8
September 2004; Richard Kashiwabara, interview by author, 17 September 2004; Charles Niitani,
interview by author, 17 September 2004.
plantations’ workers followed suit.\textsuperscript{230} (Perhaps ironically, two of the biggest barefoot league stars of the 1930’s and 1940's, Taku Akama and “Dyna” Nakamoto later served as officers for the ILWU.) While some men, Peter Tsuha and Mamo Wakuta noticed a disruption in the plantation’s support of barefoot football after the 1946 strike, the 1948-49 and 1949-50 seasons involved plenty of boys/men, drew “sizable” crowds and maintained its prominent place on the sports pages.\textsuperscript{231}

Throughout its history barefoot football was regularly covered by the *Garden Island*. However, the island’s official newspaper was not the only source for sporting news as the plantation newspapers and newsletters offered detailed accounts of the barefoot matches, often including the same kind of detailed report of the action found in the *Garden Island*. For the most part, the plantation newsletters, usually written by plantation employees, were directed toward the non-management workers and were probably supported by the plantation as another means of promoting company identification and loyalty.

Though the newsletters in the late 1930’s celebrated barefoot football, they would also critique the quality of the game or character of play. Along with reporting the “facts,” the newsletters also commented on the value and necessity of sport. For example, the Kekaka Athletic Association (KAA) news comments that

Football exemplifies the things that most of us admire. It is significant that when an author attempts to portray a masculine, self-reliant character, he invariably mentions the fact that so-and-so

\textsuperscript{230}\url{www.ilwu.org}

\textsuperscript{231}Nakamoto, interview; *Garden Island*, September - December 1948; *Garden Island*, September - December 1949.
played on his varsity team in his undergraduate days.\textsuperscript{232}

The valorization of football fits with the objectives of the KAA, which include promoting plantation and civic interests and developing character amongst the laborers. Yet the newsletters also celebrated the working class men taking part in the game, commending the effort, heart and energy of the teams. Though the message of aspiring to a particular type of character is present in the newsletters, there is an acceptance of the men and boys as they are.\textsuperscript{233}

\textsuperscript{232} Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection, KSC 27/18, \textit{Kekeha Athletic Association News}, 10 November 1938.

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Plantation News}, October 1955.
When I started to piece together a history of barefoot football, I intended to break from traditional research paradigms. In keeping with the tenets of Critical Race Theory, I wanted to elevate story-telling and narrative, to treat them as resources with equal standing to traditional first person sources like newspapers, government papers and business archives. As I began to organize my data, I found it hard to avoid constructing a meta-narrative of barefoot football. Despite utilizing interview excerpts alongside quotes from the newspaper or Hawaiian Sugar Planter Association Archives, I worry that the men’s voices end up functioning as adjuncts to the larger narrative arc regarding the rise and fall of the barefoot leagues. Although I intended to place the former players’ voices at the center of the story of the barefoot leagues, their voices are in competition with other sources.

Though I could not completely escape the meta-narrative, I am not entirely disappointed for there is a need to present and preserve the overall story of barefoot football on Kaua’i. While many of the men were initially surprised that anyone was interested in researching this form of football and/or writing this history, by the end, most of them expressed a desire for a book on the subject. They wanted something to document this aspect of Kaua’i’s history, which acknowledges the contributions of the
working class plantation and cannery workers. In fact, many of the interviewees were less interested in preserving their individual voices or achievements, but rather in celebrating the barefoot leagues as a whole. Specifically, the men wanted their children and grandchildren to have something that recorded the history of barefoot football – and captured the spirit and character of the game.

Writing a living history presented other dilemmas. Because many former barefoot participants are still alive, I felt pressure to get the stories “right,” which was exacerbated by the multiple narratives presented in the interviews. I hoped to give different interpretations or memories equal time, yet again, I found myself looking for commonalities or triangulation, rather than simply accepting the multiplicity of voices. Although I recognize the limitations of my research, locals, after reading part of my work in the *Garden Island* complained about the lack of diversity, specifically noting that I had not spoken to members of certain teams and/or I over-emphasize Kalawai and Lihu’e (which are my parents’ home communities).

In addition, my familiarity with the “players” in the history of barefoot football raised some unexpected conflicts-of-interest for me. For example, as I researched the roots of barefoot football, I had mixed feelings about celebrating the accomplishments of Charlie Fern, a political (and personal, according to my father) enemy of my paternal grandfather. In addition, several players shared how the union “jammed” things up (ruined) by successfully leading strikes in the late 1940’s, which served as a catalyst for the diminishment of the paternalism on the plantation – strikes that were organized by my grandfather. Finally, I learned that my paternal uncle and other family members
were major participants in the barefoot leagues. Unfortunately, I am estranged from that side of my family, which has kept me from approaching them for interviews—which raises questions about the completeness and diversity of the story I have constructed about barefoot football. Of course, every study has limitations and every researcher has biases, but I never anticipated having mine in the forefront.

On the positive side, my research has allowed me to re-visit and re-create local communities created around barefoot football. When interviewing former Pono AC players, I learned that some of them keep a loosely defined community intact, gathering for a meal or drinks on Friday evenings. In fact, the former players had gone so far as to embrace the grandson of their former coach and make him part of the community. While the barefoot league held a reunion in 1982 for all the Kaua‘i teams, this past March some former Kalawai Packers, most of whom were interviewed for my paper, re-connected at the Kalaheo Community Center. The reunion appears to have been sparked by my interest in the players’ histories, which in turn, caused them to reassess barefoot football as something of historical significance for Kaua‘i. In their coming together, I like to think they are reasserting aspects of local identity that were tied into and expressed via the barefoot leagues and therefore, recreating community.

During my research and writing, this community has extended itself to me. These men and their families treat me as a “local,” though really, I am a katonk (mainland-born Japanese). Though they are doing me a favor by relating their histories, they express their gratitude that someone has taken an interest in this particular aspect.


235www.kauaiworld.com/articles/2005/03/06/sports/sports01.prt
of their past. As a result, I have standing invitations to a plethora of events upon my return to Kaua‘i. As I left Kaua‘i, Harriet Albao, who shared her memories, newspaper clippings and photographs with me, insisted that I had to stay in touch because “We’re connected now.”

While there is pressure/responsibility to tell their stories as accurately and as in timely a manner possible, I feel lucky because these men and women remind me that my research matters, because barefoot football matters/mattered to them. For instance, when I contacted Lefty Muramoto for an interview, I spoke to his wife who informed me he was not well enough to speak to me. However, she noted that the only thing he remembers clearly or talks about is barefoot football. As I went through the Garden Island’s articles, I copied some of the sports stories that mentioned Lefty or detailed his performance (interestingly, the newspaper accounts matched the stories relayed to me by Mrs. Muramoto, which had been told to her by Lefty) and mailed them to him. When I returned to Honolulu, I spoke to Mrs. Muramoto. She thanked me for the articles because as she read them to Lefty, he smiled the entire time and asked her to read them over and over, and for that time, he was happy. Regardless of the value placed on this research by the academy or publishers, I know that it has value. At least for one man and for me, that is enough.

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