SPORT IN A MIDWESTERN CITY:
BASEBALL AND FOOTBALL IN COLUMBUS, OHIO, 1890 TO 1910

A Thesis

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by
Douglas Micah Rasnake, B.A.

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Master's Examination Committee:
Melvin L. Adelman
Nancy Wardwell

Approved by
[Signature]
Adviser
School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
VITA

1992 .................. B.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

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INTRODUCTION

Turn-of-the-century America was a period of profound social change which realized the transformation of the United States from a rural-agrarian society to an urban-industrial one. Historians have long recognized the profound impact these dramatic alterations had on shaping the context, structures and meanings of the American sporting experiences. Much of their attention and analysis has focused on how sporting developments and change was intimately linked to societal dislocation and fragmentation, particularly in the new urban environment, as a result of the onset of modernity. In explicating the urban influence historians have investigated sport mainly in the large metropolitan cities, such as New York, Boston, Chicago, and New Orleans. However, far less scholarship exists on middle size cities.¹

¹ For an overview of sport around the turn of the twentieth century, see Donald J. Mrozek, Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982). For works dealing with sport in the city see Steven Riess, City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Stephan Hardy, How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation and Community, 1865-1915 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982); Roy Rozenzweig, Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Dale Summers, The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900 (Baton Rouge:
This thesis examines sport in Columbus Ohio from 1890 to 1910. It focuses on baseball and football to illustrate that sport in the Capital City did not follow the pattern that scholars have uncovered in their research on the urban influence of athletics. Here the breakdown of community was not a major influence on sporting patterns in Columbus as it was in the older and more numerically ethnic cities of the northeast. Nevertheless, the notion and construction of community as the result of the expansion of the city impacted dramatically on the fortunes of the national pastime and the gridiron game during these two decades.

America underwent rapid and profound social change in the period between 1880 to 1920 as no facet of its life and culture was unaffected by the dramatic alterations that shifted America from a rural-agrarian society to an urban-industrial one. Changes in the economy, a result of industrialization's expansion in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, were critical to the cultural and intellectual transformation that Americans experienced. The emerging industrial technology created new patterns of work and leisure which altered the former rhythms of rural life. The organization and composition of the workforce shifted

strikingly, generating new wealth that significantly impacted on social and personal relations.²

A dramatic rise in the number of cities, a significantly expanding population, and the metamorphosis of urban life accompanied industrial change. The city became emblematic of the alterations of changing American life and culture; for many, it was a place of evil and vice, while others envisioned it as dynamic and progressive.³

Nationally, these changes took place initially in the East, but quickly spread to the rest of the country. These transformations were usually played out in the larger and older cities, affecting the surrounding rural areas. It would be wrong to lump the experiences of all cities together, but the above does provide a general outline of the evolution of urban America.


However, not all cities fit this general pattern. Columbus, Ohio was such a city. Columbus did fit the pattern in some ways: there was a natural growth in population, and there was also growth in the business community. The growth in population was steady, and saw Columbus grow from 17,822 people in the middle of the nineteenth-century to 51,647 people in 1880. By 1910 the population had reached 181,511 people in Columbus, and 222,567 people if Franklin County is included. But in general Columbus was different. There was not a large influx of immigrants, and the population remained basically homogenous. There was a growth in business, but it was not sudden, and for the most part Columbus enterprises tended not to be industrial or manufacturing; Columbus had primarily a white-collar service-based economy. There also did not seem to be a problem of overcrowding in the city. Anyone could easily reach the country from any point in Columbus, and the Capital City was still seen as being a part of its rural surroundings. There were no extremes in Columbus; there were urban-elites, and poor people, but by no means were there large numbers of either, and most people in Columbus did not come into contact with these small groups. Columbus was prosperous, but was always predominantly a middle-class city. As the state capital Columbus became a large city at this time, but it never suffered the ills

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associated with urban growth like most other large urban areas. Columbus was different than other big cities, but it was not singular; there were other such cities -- Indianapolis was a prime example. A study of Columbus could provide insight into such cities, and could perhaps change the way that this period is seen.\(^5\)

Sport historians have written about turn-of-the-century America because sport was a means of releasing tension and alleviating stress caused by existing in an urban environment, and because sport was an effective way of building community, or giving an existing community a means of identification. Sport historians have been especially concerned with baseball because it became an important part of the urban experience. People could escape the troubles they faced in the city through baseball. This was fully played out with professional baseball. People were drawn to baseball more and more as spectators, and could get lost in the experience of the game. Eventually, strong community associations developed, and fans did not go just to see a team play, but rather went to see their team play. City boosters were quick to identify these

\(^5\) For information on the history of Columbus, Ohio see Garret, *Columbus: America's Crossroads*; Osman Castle Hooper, *History of The City of Columbus, Ohio* (Columbus: The Memorial Publishing Company).
qualities, and made efforts to use sport as a means of promoting their city.\textsuperscript{6}

Spectator sports became an important part of city life, as virtually all of the growth in sport took place in the city. Organized sport was basically an urban experience and had little to do with rural America. Due to the stressful conditions of city life, there was a desire to engage in escapist activities such as sporting events. Sport fed on the city, and like industrial manufacturing needed a large urban center for its support. First, Columbusites did not like minor-league baseball. That is not to say that there was no interest in the sport at all, rather, the city as a whole did not embrace it like other cities had. Professional baseball did exist in Columbus at various times, and in different forms, but it was never successful. Baseball in Columbus was a failure in the sense that it never engaged the community as a whole, and it never enjoyed a prosperous growth in the city.

The reason for the failure of baseball in Columbus was that its residents did not enjoy the professional game. The quality of baseball was inconsistent, and the games intermittently attended. Baseball failed to establish any community ties in Columbus, and this was the crux of the

problem. People were simply indifferent towards baseball and they felt no loyalty to any of the teams that played in Columbus.

In contrast to the fate of professional baseball, college and high school football succeeded. At a time when college football gained popularity throughout the country, it was this sport that captured the hearts of Columbustes and lured them in numbers out to contest.\(^7\) Football succeeded in establishing community ties, the component needed to ensure success of a sport in Columbus.

The function of sport as a way of releasing tensions, providing an escape from the urban way of life, does not figure in the development of popular team sports in Columbus because there were minimal urban tensions in this city. The idea that sport would become successful in Columbus because it represented the community does seem plausible. When Ohio State University played Case University it was not Ohio State University against Case University, but rather Columbus against Cleveland. The same was also true of high school football, but on a different scale.

This thesis draws upon the *Columbus Evening Dispatch* from the period of 1890 to 1910 to understand the way that people in the Capital City felt about professional baseball and

football, and the way they were presented. Several other papers existed in Columbus, but the Dispatch is the only real source of information for sporting activities in Columbus. The Dispatch was continually active as a booster of Columbus, and saw sport as a way of promoting the city. A sports section existed throughout this period, and varied in size: from one to three pages. The Dispatch is the only reliable, consistent source of information, but nevertheless important. The newspaper gives a broad perspective, and is the best barometer of community interests and preferences.

This thesis is divided into two main chapters: the first dealing with professional-baseball, the second with college and high school football. I have tried to provide basic information, but my intent is not to present a detailed narrative of sport in Columbus, but rather illustrate how sporting patterns in Columbus compare with those laid out in the studies of other cities, and show what relationship existed between sport and society in Columbus.
CHAPTER I
Problems With The National Pastime During The 1890's

By the onset of the twentieth-century, baseball had been the national pastime for nearly 50 years, and the last three decades of the nineteenth-century witnessed the rapid growth of professional baseball in America. Baseball was not just a popular form of recreation, it had become an urban institution serving several functions. First, it was simply a way of spending a pleasant afternoon; it was enjoyable and entertaining. However, baseball within an urban context took on a much more significant role. It increasingly provided a community experience for people who felt ever more displaced in the city. It was a place where one could belong, and feel a bond with the other spectators, even if only for several hours. The fact that baseball was seen in escapist terms made it even more attractive. For example, a person could get in touch with America's virtuous, rural past. They could go back in time to when things were more simple, when living arrangements were not so close, and when things were cleaner. They were escaping from their bad experiences, and living in their own world. Baseball teams came to be seen as representative of their respective communities, and indeed
cemented the success of baseball teams. If they could establish these ties, and if the community counted the team as their own then the team was likely to flourish.

The 1890's witnessed the emergence of two patterns in baseball in Columbus. First, there seemed to be a general lack of interest in professional baseball, and second there was always an inability to create a community bond with the Capital City. These two trends played on one another and provided a block for the development of professional baseball in Columbus. Attendance at professional games bears this out, as a fairly consistent pattern of attendance arose. Each year there would be support for the team, but the fans would dwindle by the end of the season. This was the case even when Columbus had successful teams.

Baseball emerged from the middle of the nineteenth-century as a popular game that attracted both spectators and players alike. But gradually it grew into a popular spectator sport, with the real thrill being able to go watch a professional game. Professionalism was discouraged initially and was seen as a corruption of the sport, but individuals were quick to see that money could be made by hiring top-quality players to play games, and charging people to witness the spectacle. There was instability in professional baseball, with a low success rate for teams, and a high player turnover. But in the 1870's the National League was founded with William A. Hulbert as one of the prominent leaders. This
organization was instrumental in providing a solid foundation for professional baseball, and paved the way for the future of baseball.\footnote{Harold Seymour, \textit{Baseball: The Early Years} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 75-87.}

Professional baseball grew, with the development of Major League and Minor League baseball being the most prominent feature. The various leagues represented different cities, and businessmen's attempts to break into the world of professional baseball. These ventures were lucrative, but they also brought prestige to the town that they represented. By the turn-of-the-century pro-baseball was well developed, but by no means stagnate, and was a common fixture on the urban landscape.\footnote{For a general account of the early history of baseball see Seymour, \textit{Baseball: The Early Years}; David Quentin Voigt, \textit{American Baseball: From The Gentleman's Sport To The Commissioner System} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); Steven A. Riess, \textit{Touching Base: Professional Baseball And American Culture in the Progressive Era} (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Neil J. Sullivan, \textit{The Minors: The Struggles And Triumph Of Baseball's Poor Relation From 1867 To The Present} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).}

This chapter looks at baseball in Columbus during the decade of 1890. During this period a distinct pattern of attendance emerged: Columbuses would go out to the ball field to cheer for their team, but as the season progresses support waned, with the folding of the team the usual outcome. Professional teams were usually short lived in Columbus, and during this period few teams existed for more than one year.
The lives of the teams mirrored the attendance: a ball-club would be organized, and fans would support it, but when attendance fell, the team could not survive.

There are several reasons for this that are interrelated, and mutually effect one another. The first is simply that Columbustes did not like professional baseball. The second is that no ball club could ever create a tie with the community, which was needed for their to be any long term support. The fact that Capital City residents did not like professional baseball made it difficult to create a permanent bond: no team was ever in existence long enough to start a tradition of pro-ball in Columbus. These factors were played out in a way that set the tone for baseball in the city, and in no way did they establish what was required to build a Major League team.

On March 20, 1890, the Columbus Evening Dispatch printed an article titled, "The Amateurs Ready", which heralded the coming of the baseball season in Columbus.³ The author was upbeat as he looked forward to the baseball season, and by the tone of the report, many Columbustes shared this view. The writer concluded by listing the Director as A.B. Cohen, an employee of the Lazarus department store, and the Manager as

³ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 20 March 1890.
Buckenberger, and noted that the season was to begin April 1 and close July 15.\textsuperscript{4}

Opening day was cold, but the Dispatch reported that there was a good turnout. However, an article the following day called the game a "farce", even though the people sat through it.\textsuperscript{5} This would continue to hold true for the team; Columbus would not play well, crowds would dwindle, and the Dispatch would attack the Columbus team.

Attendance fell during the season. It seemed that no matter how the club played, the team did not draw more people. The Columbus paper was clearly a strong booster of baseball, but no matter what effort the newspaper put forth, attendance would not rise. From this evidence, the main patterns of Columbus baseball begin to emerge. Residents showed an aversion to Minor League baseball, no matter how well it was played. Yet there was an interest in Major League baseball, which can be seen by the sporting page. It was filled predominantly with baseball news: statistics, news of Major League baseball, articles about individuals, and gossip. This could have been boosterism on the part of the newspaper, but this does not seem to be the case though, for Columbusites were always fans of the Cincinnati team. For example, on June 9 the Dispatch reported that great support existed for the

\textsuperscript{4} Williams City Directory (Columbus: Williams Company, 1883-4), 160.

\textsuperscript{5} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 2, 3 April 1890.
Cincinnati team, which was doing well that season.⁶ It seems the reason for the lack of interest in Columbus baseball was that residents were not interested in Minor League baseball in their city.

While Columbus had problems assembling a quality team, another problem arose: cities around the state began enforcing Sunday laws, which prohibited the playing of baseball on Sundays. The Columbus Evening Dispatch ran a front page article on the subject on June 9. It reported an incident in Newark, Ohio. Several hundred men showed up for a game in Newark on Sunday June 8, 1890. The police came with arrest warrants shortly after the game started, but they allowed the contest to be played, which the Dispatch, in a humorous mode, noted that Newark won. Upon completion of the game, the police arrested several baseball players. The spectators were upset, and there was a feeling of agitation in Newark. The Dispatch that the issue of Sunday baseball would be a source of strife in Columbus as well.⁷ Sunday blue laws did become a source of problems and confrontations, and posed a threat to the existence of top-quality baseball in Columbus.⁸

As the season progressed the situation got worse. By July, the Dispatch no longer provided very much coverage of

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⁶ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 June 1890.
⁷ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 June 1890.
⁸ For more information on Sunday Blue Laws see Riess, Touching Base; Seymour, Baseball 135-162, 261-295.
the Columbus team, and basically reported national baseball news. There was occasionally some coverage, but it was usually not good. On July 9, Columbus had won 33 games and lost 31 games, and was in fifth place in the league. However, the newspaper remarked that same day that Columbus had lost to "soft marks" from Rochester in the previous game. And on July 21, the Dispatch announced that "Columbus is Plunging Headlong Downwards", and reported that even though the club was still in fifth place, they dropped below .500 with a record of 36-37. Finally as baseball came to a close for 1890, the Dispatch became truly vicious. It reported on July 30 that "Columbus [was] whipped this time by a crowd of farmers."

The 1890 season was a failure for Columbus. The quality of baseball was not low, and the team did not have a bad record, yet attendance remained low. Although Capital City resident's aversion for Minor League baseball is evident from this lack of support, much of the blame also lay with the organizers of the team. Investors did not always pay for stock in the baseball club, and many bad managerial decisions were made. There was a general lack of good business sense exhibited that will become clearer in subsequent years.

The 1891 season was also uneventful, and in large measure repeated the dismal conditions of the previous one. The

9 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 July 1890.

10 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 21,30 July 1890.
season started out well, with great enthusiasm from the Dispatch. One journalist declared that "We want a baseball team that can go down the line with money in every pocket - bet 'em to fare-you-well." Proud statements, such as, "Land us anywhere in the first division" and "Well that's just the kind of a team Columbus sports this year," were also to be found in the Dispatch.\footnote{Columbus Evening Dispatch, 2 June 1891.}

The team did moderately well that year in terms of maintaining an average record such as the one recorded the previous season, but did not receive the kind of support from fans that the Dispatch felt it deserved. In June it stated, "There was a goodly crowd on hand yesterday to greet the Senators upon their return, but not by far as great as the game merited."\footnote{Columbus Evening Dispatch, 3 June 1891.} This pattern would also be true in the future; even though the team would do well, crowds would never number what boosters felt they should number.

One other feature distinguished 1891, the reemergence of Sunday baseball as an issue. Before the start of the season, it was already a topic of debate with city politicians, who already were campaigning for the next election. Most favored allowing Sunday baseball, and the rest tried to be as vague as possible. An article on Sunday baseball in the Columbus Evening Dispatch reported such statements as "Candidate Pagels denies being opposed to it [Sunday baseball]," the Republican
mayoral candidate "specifically stated that he will not interfere with Sunday baseball," and "as Mr. Kayle the Democrat candidate has not declared against Sunday games, the local enthusiasts may rest assured that in the event of the election going either way base ball will not be disturbed."\textsuperscript{13} Although fans of baseball spoke out, they did not have the influence needed to impact upon city policy, and in the end lost the cause.

The 1892 baseball season was perhaps the most fascinating season of the decade. During that season, the Columbus team experienced extraordinary success on the field, received support and enthusiasm from the fans, yet still failed as an organization.

Columbus started the season by playing well, and showed great promise, even though its American Association team did not do as well as hoped for the previous year.\textsuperscript{14} As usual, the Dispatch gave extensive coverage to the Columbus team, and provided their usual call for support from the fans. Gus Schmelze, the manager, had a good team and started to bring his program together. On May 10, Columbus was still in second place, with an 11-5 record.\textsuperscript{15} However, in less than a week, the jumped into first place after winning their next four

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 5 May 1891.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 5 May 1892.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 10 May 1892.
games. This was met with great enthusiasm by everyone, and crowds tended to be large. However, it was early in the season and it remained to be seen if they could keep it up over the season.

By the end of May, Columbus still led the league; by June 7, the team amassed an impressive record of twenty-eight wins and only nine losses. Milwaukee, the distant second team, had only nineteen wins with the same amount of losses. This year Manager Schmelze had a top quality team with a high level of skill, and most importantly, they seemed to be disciplined and well-managed. They continued their winning streak until June 29 when they had a record of forty wins and sixteen losses, and no near competitors. They went into the League championships with confidence, and even though they lost two games, they finished first in the league. This was a milestone for baseball in Columbus, and everyone was talking about it. The Columbus Evening Dispatch stated rapturously, "Columbus never had a team like it." It would seem that this was just what Columbus needed to start

16 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 16 May 1892.
17 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 17 June 1892.
18 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 11 June 1892.
19 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 29 June 1892.
20 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 1 July 1892.
21 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 15 July 1892.
a successful baseball program. Colombusites had the quality product that they had been waiting for.

However, the opposite happened: baseball in Columbus collapsed. At a meeting of the Columbus Athletic Exhibition Company on July 16, the president O. M. Evans, and the treasurer Emil Kiesewetter reported that some stockholders had not yet paid for their shares, and there was no money to pay debts or players' salaries. How this situation arose, or why, can not be answered from the scanty evidence available. This was a truly dark moment for the Columbus baseball community, since they knew that while the team was a fabulous success it was a financial failure. It was disclosed that there were about 50 stockholders that had paid 100 dollars for a share, and that there were about fifty 100 dollar shares outstanding. There was a call that these shares be paid for, and it was also proposed that there be an additional assessment of fifty dollars per shareholder to raise additional funds. This was only a tentative solution, and there was mixed reaction to it. It was decided that it would be better to adjourn the meeting until July 26 so that further information could be gathered.²²

Though the team experienced these problems, games continued to be played, but they were poorly attended. In a bitter article in the Dispatch, one reporter wrote,

²² Columbus Evening Dispatch, 16 July 1892.
"professional baseball is dead in Columbus." He further proclaimed that "less than 1000 people showed up for the game" played the previous day, and that "people don't want it." The article was concluded with the statement "The English vocabulary is too poverty-stricken to furnish an adequate expression." And indeed on July 19 there were less than 200 fans at Recreation Park to witness the last game—an interesting way to punctuate such a successful season.

Nothing came of the July 26 meeting and professional baseball died in Columbus, and the only information available on these business meetings was what the paper reported, which was little, so it is difficult to draw a clearer picture. It could be said that baseball never did well in Columbus because the quality of baseball was always low, and people would not pay for such a low quality product. However, this would not seem to be the case after looking at the past season. Columbusites had a winning team, that fans supported for a while, but interest waned quickly. The second season had low attendance and was cancelled before the end of the summer.

Capital City residents did not feel any ties to Minor League

23 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 18 July 1892.

24 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 18 July 1892.

25 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 18 July 1892.

26 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 19 July 1892.

27 To see this look at the Columbus Evening Dispatch July - August 1892.
baseball, and while they got excited over a winning team for a while, they quickly lost interest.

The start of the 1893 baseball season did not promise the sort of excitement experienced the previous year because of the way in which the last season was finished, but it was not entirely bleak either. There was an acceptance of the fact that high quality professional baseball would not be seen any time in the near future in Columbus. This year saw the start of a new city league. The league would consist of six amateur clubs: the Defiance Club, the Easterns, the Eclipse Club, the Shepards, the Reds, and the Pan Handles. In addition, the games would be played at the newly renovated Recreation Park, owned by Mike Riehl. Although the players were amateurs there was still some hope that a profit could be made from the league. Season tickets were to be sold: the first 100 would be sold for $2.50 each, and thereafter each season ticket would be sold for $5.00. Tickets could also be purchased at the gate: twenty-five cents for each adult and fifteen cents for each child.²⁸

On May 15, the Mayor of Columbus threw out the first baseball of the season before a crowd of about a thousand people. The Columbus Evening Dispatch noted that there were a number of "ladies" present as well and there was a definite effort to make this league appeal to the entire family, though perhaps it would have been wise to offer free admission to

²⁸ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 29 April 1893.
children accompanied by parents, instead of trying to extract fifteen cents for each child. In any event, there was an effort to bring the entire family out to the ball park. In this same vein it was announced in the Dispatch on the 25th of May that there would be a half-hour musical event at the next Sunday game.²⁹

The league was enjoying success based on the reportage of the paper, and appeared to have a moderately promising future. However, Sunday baseball reemerged as an issue and seriously affected baseball in Columbus. In the first days of June, the city government of Columbus banned Sunday sports. This was a disaster for Columbus baseball. Since this was an amateur league, all of the players worked at regular jobs, which meant they worked long hours six days a week.³⁰ As stated earlier in this paper, Sunday was the only day that many baseball players, and certainly all amateur baseball players, could play games. This was also to an extent true for the people that watched the games. While this may not be have been true for white-collar workers it was true for blue-collar workers whose numbers were needed in the stands.

On June 14, the Dispatch stated that the city was firm in their resolution to prohibit any Sunday sports, yet little else was said that would explain why certain officials were so adamant. They also stated that the city suggested that

²⁹ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 25 May 1893.
³⁰ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 13 June 1893.
employers give their employees a half day off on Saturdays so the players could play and more spectators could attend.\textsuperscript{31} This was of course not a reasonable solution; it seems unlikely that an employer would forgo a half day's productivity so that a group of men could play a game that was not even doing very well.

This measure by the city caused serious problems for the new City League. On June 22, the \textit{Dispatch} stated that sports in Columbus were in trouble, and that the City League was in danger of failing. Throughout this entire ordeal, two names came to be hated in Columbus: Mutchmore and Pagels. These men were the Director of Public Safety and Superintendent of Police, respectively.\textsuperscript{32} Why would these two men be concerned? It does not seem that there was ever any unruliness at baseball games, or any other behavior that would be a threat to public safety. In fact, there were never usually enough people at the games to cause any trouble.

Whatever the motive of city officials, it effectively destroyed any hope the city league had of surviving. After July 8, news of the city league or any baseball in Columbus disappeared from the pages of the \textit{Dispatch}. People would have to be content to follow baseball in the newspaper.

Although the National game received coverage in the \textit{Dispatch}, there was no news of a team representing the Capital

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 14 June 1893.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 22 June 1893.
City. However, there was still interest in playing the game. Several times during the summer, various groups of men united, formed teams, and offered a challenge to anyone who would accept. There were not many takers, though. For example, on May 15 the Pan Handle Club put an advertisement in the Dispatch. They were simply looking for someone to play with. On June 19, another team, the Kings, stated that they had organized a team and would like to play anyone for any sum of money.\(^{33}\) Why not play the Pan Handles? Perhaps they had disbanded, or perhaps the two teams had played, and the Kings simply wanted other opponents. I cannot shed light on this question, but it is clear that it was difficult to organize any kind of baseball in Columbus, whether it be professional, amateur, or simply recreational.

The following year offered some hope for Columbus baseball in the form of a new minor league called the Inter-State League.\(^{34}\) This league was founded to oppose the hegemony that the National League enjoyed at the time, and used the incentives of Sunday ball and readily available liquor. The Columbus team started off acceptably enough at the beginning of the season.\(^{35}\) One thing was certain though, and that was the commitment of the Dispatch. On May 31, there was an extremely large sports page that covered all of the

\(^{33}\) *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 15, 19 June 1894.

\(^{34}\) *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 4 June 1895.

\(^{35}\) *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 7 June 1895.
major national news, but reported all aspects of Capital City baseball with great relish.\textsuperscript{36}

The Columbus club played well at the beginning of the season, and fell into third place.\textsuperscript{37} However, the team’s performance declined, and public support quickly, as seen from the paper, waned as well. By the end of the summer the sports page was a merely a single column, and there was no news about Columbus baseball. The pattern of early season support followed by a fall in attendance reemerged, and Capital City residents showed apathy for Minor League baseball that illustrates why it was difficult to develop a baseball heritage in Columbus.

Sport and leisure were two vehicles that worked very well in developing a sense of community in the new urban centers, and this is why organized sports and leisure grew at this time. Sports especially provided a community, if only temporary, that people could become a part of. A baseball team became more than mere entertainment, even if it was plain fun to watch; it was a symbol of the city or community from whence it came. People identified with their team. When their team lost, they lost as well; another community had one-upped them. People cared about their team or teams.

Professional baseball was never able to create a community bond that would ensure a tradition of baseball.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 31 May 1895.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 26 June 1895.
Columbus was different than New York City, Boston, and Chicago, and did not have the same sporting patterns either. Yet it had similarities: it experienced a population growth. However, this did not represent many new emigrants in Columbus, but rather an increase in the birth rate and people moving from outlying rural areas to Columbus. Although Columbus experienced a population growth, it did not really change the character of the city. Columbus remained close to its agrarian roots, and as such, was not a big shock to people from rural areas. In addition, Columbus' economy was based primarily on the fact that it was the state capital. Government and many small businesses and service firms were the mainstay of Columbus' economy.

Although there were common features, and differences between Columbus and other large cities, the reason for the dislike of professional baseball was internal to the Capital City. There was an aversion to Minor League baseball, especially when the teams were owned by outsiders. Colombusites followed National news, and had an interest in baseball. But they realized when outsiders were simply trying to make money at there expense.

Baseball started off in 1896 with support from the paper and the fans, and fielded numerous amateur teams. Once again there was a real effort to draw spectators. One interesting gimmick was a fish fry, sponsored by General Passenger Agent W. H. Fisher, that was to be held at the game, at no cost to
the fan attending the game. There also seed to be an effort on the part of local businesses to sponsor baseball and be publicly associated with it. For example, Bryce Brothers & Company, a clothing store, had a large advertisement on the sports page, and they fielded a local team as well.\textsuperscript{38}

The sports page was now two pages long, and there was an abundance of information for the sporting fan. However, most of the news was national rather than local. Still, the Dispatch was extremely supportive of baseball in Columbus. This year local teams competed in seven different leagues, which were more for recreation than profit. Columbus also sponsored a professional team that year: the Columbus Buckeyes, which competed in the Western League.\textsuperscript{39} There was support in Columbus for the team, but it was, unfortunately, in last place. It seems obvious that this was not a good team, lacking both discipline and skill. The Dispatch was particularly hard on the Buckeyes, and perhaps for good reason. On July 3, it ran a very long article on the club. Once again, the Columbus team was headed for trouble. The Dispatch stated that baseball in Columbus was a disgrace and that the players fooled around and performed badly. The article read:

\begin{quote}
To ask fifty cents to sit in a grand stand and witness games of the quality recently furnished is practically robbery—sand bagging in the first degree. This is no
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 27, 29 June 1896.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 30 June 1896.
stab at the players--they are doing the best they know how--but those who can read between the lines may figure out for themselves wherein the trouble lies. . . . In lieu of the former there has come over our city full of fanciers a total repulsion of feeling about the outcome of the club.\footnote{Columbus Evening Dispatch, 3 July 1896.}

This article gives great insight into Columbus baseball. First, there were a number of baseball fans, or fancies as they were called at this time, that enjoyed watching baseball, and wanted quality baseball in Columbus. Second, baseball in Columbus was usually of a low quality -- it certainly was that year. Finally, it would appear that the problem was that the management of Columbus baseball was poor. The Dispatch said this, and felt that this was the primary cause for the failure of the National Pastime in the city. The paper was a booster of Columbus, and wanted baseball to succeed, but they never realized that the problem was not the quality of the players or the owners. They failed to see that Minor League baseball was unable to create a bond with residents, and until this was achieved no tradition would be developed.

The Columbus Buckeyes finished the season and played most of their games. They finished last in the league in early August.\footnote{Columbus Evening Dispatch, 12 August 1896.} Columbus’ Western League team, the Buckeyes, was not successful in that it could not draw the steady support of the city, and residents did not identify the Buckeyes as their team. It had an uneventful season in 1897, and was in serious
trouble at the start of the 1898 season. George J. Karb, the Chairman of the Board of Trade Committee, wrote a letter to the Dispatch that summed up the situation very well. He stated that it would look bad for Columbus to lose its Western League team and not be able to identify with other cities that had successful clubs, as its owner was ready to move. He went on to state that patronage had been poor, but in the interest of Columbus people should support the Buckeyes. He finally said that 2000 tickets, at one dollar each, would need to be sold to help save the team.\textsuperscript{42}

These sorts of pleas had usually fallen on deaf ears in the past, but it seems that Columbus was willing to stand behind the Buckeyes that year. On July 27, the Dispatch remarked that Karb was doing a good job of raising money, and the future looked bright. The newspaper concluded that the railroads should lend support as well, once again reaffirming the notion that a good baseball team does more for a city than simply provide entertainment.\textsuperscript{43} The next day in the Dispatch there was a letter that stated businessmen should get involved and provide some money. From the letter, it seemed as though the business community was rallying for the Buckeyes. One thousand tickets were sold, and it looked like the endeavor would be a success.\textsuperscript{44} On July 29, Karb once again wrote the

\textsuperscript{42} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 26 July 1898.

\textsuperscript{43} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 27 July 1898.

\textsuperscript{44} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 28 July 1898.
Dispatch, in which in an urgent-sounding plea, he articulated that it was the duty of Columbuses' to support the city by supporting the team. He further stated that helping the local baseball club was not simply placing money in the coffers of the team and its owner, but rather, it was a way to promote Columbus itself. He concluded by saying that baseball would put Columbus in contact with other cities, and give respect.⁴⁵

As of 1 August 1898, 1500 tickets had been sold, and Karb stated in the Dispatch that he thought that the endeavor would be successful.⁴⁶ However, the very next day, the newspaper reported problems with selling the remaining tickets necessary to save the team.⁴⁷

The Buckeyes had been playing league games all along, and not doing that well. They remained in fifth place the entire summer, and did not do well at the box office. Columbus eventually finished in fifth place. The ticket sales intended to save the team was not successful, and at the end of the season the Dispatch implied that it was very uncertain whether or not the team would be back the next year.⁴⁸

Although the 1898 season seemed to indicate that Columbus would lose its Western League team, it in fact did not. The

⁴⁵ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 29 July 1898.
⁴⁶ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 1 August 1898.
⁴⁷ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 2 August 1898.
⁴⁸ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 20 September 1898.
1899 season started off fairly well for the Buckeyes, and there was no controversy in the air either. Columbus quickly fell into third place, and seemed to have a moderately talented team.\(^{49}\) By June 17, the club was in second place, and two days later, they assumed the top spot with the league.\(^{50}\)

It had been years since Columbus had a team in first place, but city residents remained unenthusiastic. Of course, there was a group of steady fans in Columbus that always supported baseball, but this was a small group of no more than a thousand. What was needed for a successful ball club was to bring the people out in the thousands, and this was not happening.

Columbus remained number one for several days, then dropped to second place, and by July 8, Columbus was back in third place.\(^{51}\) On July 10, the owner of the Columbus club, Tom Loftus, printed a letter in the Dispatch. He stated that he would not stay in Columbus any longer: "I do not figure upon returning to Columbus at the end of the trip as the people of Columbus will not patronize baseball, even with a winning team."\(^{52}\)

\(^{49}\) Columbus Evening Dispatch, 13 June 1899.

\(^{50}\) Columbus Evening Dispatch, 19 June 1899.

\(^{51}\) Columbus Evening Dispatch, 22 June, 8 July 1899.

\(^{52}\) Columbus Evening Dispatch, 10 July 1899.
Loftus’ statement seems to summarize baseball in the 1890’s in Columbus. People would just not support professional baseball in Columbus. Ball clubs in the city were badly and well managed at various times, and performed similarly over the decade. Those factors could not be reasons alone for the inability to develop a baseball tradition in the Capital City. The community tie could not be fostered, and this was the core cause for the situation in Columbus.

In 1898 the Buckeyes were in trouble financially, and they were not successful in resolving the trouble. However, Loftus bailed out the team, and they were back the next year. Not only were they back but they were very good, and did well in the Western League. Yet the people of Columbus would simply not come out in numbers to support the team. Perhaps it would be best just to say that Columbusites did not like baseball. They did not like the rickety old grandstand, even though it had been renovated. Perhaps baseball seemed to much like a business venture, and they were just the source of revenue. In any event, it was not something that inspired a feeling of community, or togetherness.

The 1900 baseball season seemed to punctuate the 1890’s in a graphic way. Columbus fielded a team for the Interstate League. This indicates that there was still interest in baseball in Columbus. However, the team fell into sixth place early in the season, and attendance consequently was pathetic.
Columbus then dropped to seventh place in the league.\textsuperscript{53} Columbus remained in this place for the summer. But it was a boring and uneventful summer, and the people could not have cared less for the league. On September 9, the \textit{Dispatch} stated that the league was a failure and would not be continued. The reason was that no one would show up to watch very low quality baseball.\textsuperscript{54}

Baseball in Columbus basically followed the same patterns through the next decade. There was interest in baseball, but it was relatively low. There were city leagues and local leagues which were primarily participatory in nature. Columbus again had a team in the Western league in the first part of the new century, but baseball never really caught the interest or the support of the city.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 25 June 1900.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 9 September 1900.
CHAPTER II
The Success Of The Gridiron Game

Football experienced tremendous growth in the last decade of the century. Football was popular at colleges on the East coast, and it was there that the game developed into its present form, with the rules and methods of play being devised at those institutions. Nevertheless, football also enjoyed great in the Midwest.¹

Football was extremely popular in Columbus, and enjoyed a success that Minor League baseball never achieved. While professional football was present in Ohio, and became popular later, college football is the focus of this thesis. In addition I will also look at high school football to a degree, since high school and college football are similar in that they both are school programs as opposed to a professional program. Football was popular in Columbus because there was a tie with a school, which in turn became a tie with the community. In the previous chapter I maintained that professional baseball never fostered any community ties in the

Capital City, and this was one important reason why it was not successful. However, football did create this bond with the community. Although football became popular in general, it was Ohio State University football that captured the interests and loyalty of many Columbusites. When Ohio State played teams from rival cities within the state, or against a university team from a rival state such as Michigan, it was no longer just a sporting contest, but a contest between the cities. When Ohio State played Case University, Case University was frequently referred to by the Columbus Evening Dispatch as the Cleveland team, and Ohio State was clearly fighting for Columbus.$^2$

Interest had been growing keenly in football in the late 1890's, but the sport really became a rage in the early years of the 1900's. However, football started at OSU when students who lived in the North Dorm began to play informal games. The first unorganized, but formal, competition began in 1886, and these contests became increasingly regulated as the decade progressed. By the first years of the 1890's an Ohio State team was competing with other area universities on a regular basis. By 1900 the Buckeyes had a stable team, a fixed schedule, and a football tradition.$^3$

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$^2$ For information on football at Ohio State University see James E. Pollard, *Ohio State Athletics, 1879 - 1959* (Columbus: Athletic Department, Ohio State University, 1959) pages 36-93.

Practice for the season started usually four weeks prior to the first game, which was usually around the last week in September. In 1901 there were two college teams in Columbus: the Ohio State University and the Ohio Medical College teams. There was much anticipation of the first games of the season in the Dispatch, which pitted Ohio State against Otterbein College, and the Medics against the team from Muskingum College. Otterbein was to become a fierce rival of Ohio State, and although today this little college would be recognized as one of the institutions of higher learning in Columbus, it is actually located in Westerville, a suburb of Columbus, it was not considered part of Columbus at the turn of the century.

The Dispatch ran an article on college football. It praised the sport and gave a good indication of how popular it was and predicted even better things in the future. The author stated:

[Football] is the great college sport of America, and the interest is now beginning to crystalize into fever heat in the regions wherever a college yell is heard or the flutter of colors is seen. It is football from now until snow and ice put a stop to the game. Golf, tennis, baseball with the rest of outdoor sports are no longer on the calendar. There may be still some lingering interest in the expiring throes of summer sport. But it is waning. From now on football is king.  

There was still news of baseball from around the country, as well as some boxing and horse racing, but is clear that the

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4 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 28 September 1901.

5 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 28 September 1901.
Dispatch was interested in football above any other sports. It is understandable why the local newspaper supported football so enthusiastically--finally, the Capital City had a sport that Columbusites loved.

The headline on the sports page the day following the OSU's opening game shows how people felt about the team. It stated that the Buckeyes lost the game, even though the game actually ended in a zero to zero tie. Ohio State University had been the state champion for two years in a row and was considered to be a top quality team. Nearly two weeks later a Dispatch article explained that it was not poor performance on the part of Ohio State, but rather Otterbein was a greatly improved team, which was responsible for the result. The following Saturday against Wittenberg, Ohio State did well, winning of course, and once again was hailed as a great team once again.

College football was patronized quite loyally by Columbusites. This can be attested by the fact that crowds numbering consistently between 1500 and 5000 people were always on hand at Ohio State games. Even with bad weather, large crowds showed up to watch football games. For example, when Ohio University came to play in Columbus, the weather was

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6 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 29 September 1901.
7 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 11 October 1901.
8 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 6 October 1901.
rainy and very cold, yet people showed up in numbers to see Ohio State win. 9

However, the impression should not be given that people did not care about other teams in Columbus. People also attended the contests of the Medical College's team and were quite enthusiastic it. This period also saw a growing interest in boy's high school football. It also should be stated that there were no hard and fast leagues established for high school football, and it was not uncommon for high school teams to play college teams. For the high school boys the culmination of the season was the state championships, which saw Columbus North High School defeat Cleveland Central High School.10

As the season came nearer to a close interest significantly expanded. The teams seemed to fight harder as well. For example, at the Ohio State - Western Reserve University game, 1500 people showed up, and witnessed a hard-fought game that saw Ohio State prevail six to five.11 The Dispatch described it in vivid terms:

It was Greek against Greek, and the boys from Cleveland put up the fight of their lives, every ounce of muscle and sinew being thrown into each play as they plunged

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9 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 13 October 1901.

10 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 20 October 1901; 3 November 1901.

11 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 27 October 1901.
into the phalanx of the champions, who met their attacks and many times hurled them backwards.\textsuperscript{12}

This type of praise certainly stands in stark contrast with the daily gloom found in the sports pages during baseball season. Indeed the \textit{Dispatch} went on to praise the Buckeyes, as they were already called, by saying that "Ohio State had the best eleven that has represented the scarlet and gray this season on the field."\textsuperscript{13}

The season reached a pitch as anticipation mounted for the Ohio State - University of Michigan contest. The topic became the daily obsession of the sports page. On November 6, the \textit{Dispatch} stated that an enormous crowd was expected, and concluded by declaring "Three more days of preparation for the greatest game of football ever played in Ohio."\textsuperscript{14} In fact it was estimated that between 4000 and 6000 people showed up for the contest for with the Wolverines, with 700 to 1200 of those people from the state of Michigan.\textsuperscript{15} That same day seating capacity at Ohio State's athletic field was temporarily enlarged to 5500 seats.\textsuperscript{16}

Game day was clearly exciting as the entire town seemed to become obsessed with football. A headline on the front

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 27 October 1901.
\item \textbf{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 27 October 1901.
\item \textbf{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 3-6 November 1901.
\item \textbf{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 7 November 1901.
\item \textbf{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 8 November 1901.
\end{itemize}
page of the Dispatch declared, "About The Biggest Thing In Town." The crowd was described as the largest ever, although no numbers were given. Despite Ohio State losing, the game was heralded as a success, as the Michigan team was surely superior and no one had delusions of this fact. However, the Buckeyes played well and Michigan scored only 22 points. The Ohio State versus Michigan game was already emerging as one of the most important games of the season for both teams, and a bitter rivalry was established that is still very strong today over 90 years later.

The Ohio State University versus University of Michigan rivalry offers insight into the success of football in Columbus, and sheds light on the past failure of baseball in Columbus. I cited in the previous chapter that one reason Columbus never consistently kept a baseball team was that there was no sense that the teams were representative of Columbus. This was not the case with football. The competitors were based at schools and universities, which in turn reflected the community and even the various neighborhoods. From the very start there was a sense that Ohio State University was representative of not only Columbus, but the state of Ohio. Admission standards were high at Ohio State at this time, and most people did not attend Ohio State or other universities. However, Ohio State was founded as a

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17 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 9 November 1901.

18 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 10 November 190.1
non-sectarian, land grant university that was seen as open and egalitarian, and indeed by the standards of the day it was.\textsuperscript{19} It was these aspects that helped to mold public opinion about the university. So when Ohio State University played the University of Michigan it was not just a contest between two universities, but rather a competition between the state of Ohio and the state of Michigan.

High school football games were a way of expressing pride in one’s neighborhood. If Columbus North High School beat Columbus Central High School in a game of football, then it is reasonable to assume that Columbus North simply had a better team playing on that given day. But it was much more than that. It was a reflection on the school and on the community as well. Many things were a part of school pride and community pride, but football games become one of the major factors. After all, not many people care when two school baseball teams meet, or not at least in the way that they do when two schools meet on the football field. When a school child remarks "Oh yea, who won the game last year?" to a child from a rival school they are most certainly talking about the football game.

The question of how Ohio State emerged as the representative of Columbus and later of the state of Ohio

\textsuperscript{19} For a view of Ohio State University at the turn-of-the-century see Pollard \textit{Ohio State Athletics} pages 3-211; also the \textit{Lantern}, the paper of the university, at this time gives a good account of student life and college issues; the \textit{Maiko}, the yearbook, also gives valuable information.
still remains. Ohio State University was the major college in Columbus; consequently, it was conspicuous and Columbusites attended its football games. People did go to see the Ohio Medical college’s football games in large numbers, but in the mind of Columbusites, OSU was the college to cheer for. If people could not actually attend college, Ohio State University was still their favorite college. Indeed, if they were to go to college Ohio State University is the one that they would attend. After all, it was founded as basically an egalitarian university. There were many colleges in Ohio that provided a far better education than Ohio State University, but OSU was still seen as Ohio’s university.

When Ohio State played the University of Michigan, it was a big event in Columbus. Why was it not such an important event when the University of Michigan played other Ohio teams? It was clearly important for the team playing the Wolverines, but it was not seen as the Ohio State versus University of Michigan game was seen: as a confrontation of Ohio with Michigan.

This was played out more in Columbus than elsewhere in the state; it could not have happened anywhere else. For example, it does not seem possible that Kenyon College could ever be seen to represent the state of Ohio. It was Ohio State University that grew to become the university of the people of Ohio.
The stability of the university behind the team also helped Ohio State football to become successful. Initially, it did not matter if the team drew large crowds and made a profit for the school. So there were no business pressures on the team or its leadership to meet any pre-figured business goals. This would change later as college administrators realized that they could make large amounts of money by exploiting the bonds that it fostered with the community.\textsuperscript{20}

Columbusites keenly anticipated the 1902 college football season. A picture of the football team was printed in Spalding's \textit{Official Football Guide}, which the \textit{Dispatch} encouraged Columbusites to purchase at their local newsstand.\textsuperscript{21} On September 8, the Ohio State team began practicing for the season, and Columbusites seemed to be anxiously awaiting the first game.\textsuperscript{22}

The season started on September 27 with Ohio State playing Otterbein, and the Ohio Medical College opposing Dennison College.\textsuperscript{23} There was an announcement in the sports page that was of great significance: Neil Park was to be wired with lights, and the Ohio Medics would play several games at night. The article said that this would enable many

\textsuperscript{20} For a more detailed look at this subject see Ronald A. Smith, \textit{Sports And Freedom} chapters 12-13.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 27 August 1902.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 26 August 1902.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 26 September 1902.
people who did not have the chance to watch a football game before to now see one. It was mentioned previously that many people could not come to sporting contests or any other form of leisure for that matter on Saturdays as most people still worked on that day. Although this primarily meant men, there were a significant number of women who worked as well. This meant that sports could be opened up to a larger audience, which was certainly needed if they were to grow in Columbus. The season started off well for the Buckeyes, and the Dispatch confirmed this by saying that the game was disappointing because Ohio State did not beat Otterbein more severely, although it did say that Otterbein was a tough team. The Medics did not have such a successful start, as they lost their opener.

The big announcement came in the October 3 Dispatch. At 8:00 that same night, the first night football game in Columbus would be played. There were to be 28 lights placed around the football field at Neil Park. The ball was also to be painted with white enamel paint to ensure that the spectators could see it as well. There was also another innovation planned: an announcer with a megaphone would report what was happening on the field to the spectators. There was also another attraction as it was noted in a grotesque way: the star player for the Medics, whose name was

24 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 27, 28 September 1902.
25 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 28 September 1902.
Caleb Sickles, was an Indian. The Dispatch treated this with genuine interest and did not note it in a manner that would treat the star as a freak.²⁶

Night football was not to be though, at least not that night. The evening of October 3 was rainy and extremely cold; consequently, the game was postponed until the upcoming Monday.²⁷ The Buckeyes of Ohio State did well the next day and beat Ohio University soundly in front of approximately 1500 spectators.²⁸

Monday finally came for Columbus football fans, and the game was played. It was a huge success with the Medics winning soundly. But it was night football that was wildly successful, and I tend to think that it did not matter who won or lost. People were thrilled to be watch football, and the fact that it was played under the shining lights made it more exciting. There was a crowd on hand numbering 4000. The Dispatch reported, "The game was spectacular and pleased the Crowd". They continued on to say that it gave people who could not watch on Saturday afternoons a chance to see football.²⁹ Perhaps Muchmore did indeed redeem himself with the sporting fans of Columbus.

²⁶ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 3 October 1902.
²⁷ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 4 October 1902.
²⁸ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 5 October 1902.
²⁹ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 7 October 1902.
Several other night games were played and they were met with equal success. But attention was soon diverted to the Ohio State team as they started their campaign for another state championship. Their next opponent was West Virginia University, a tough foe, but the Buckeyes rose to the occasion and beat the Mountaineers. Ohio State then played Marietta College, winning easily this time as the season was winding down.  

The state championship was being contended for by three teams at that point: Case University, Ohio Wesleyan University, and Ohio State University. However, before Ohio State met any of these teams, it had to play the University of Michigan for the yearly contest of supremacy. There was keen anticipation for this game, but the Buckeyes were soundly trounced 86-0, and the Dispatch chose to focus on the upcoming fight for the state championship.  

Ohio State had one last warm-up game before it would meet Case University, and that was with Kenyon College. Ohio State played extremely well and beat the team from Gambier in an impressive manner. Ohio State had a good team, and hopes in Columbus were high for the championships. However, on

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30 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 12, 17, 19 October 1902.
31 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 25, 26 October 1902.
32 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 2 November 1902.
November 8, Case prevailed over Ohio State, and Ohio State lost its chance to repeat as state champions.\textsuperscript{33}

The season may have ended in a cloud of gloom for Columbuses, since Ohio State had lost to the University of Michigan, and had come so close to a state championship and then lost it, but it was overall a good season for football in Columbus. After all, football was flourishing in the capital city, with more people than ever before witnessing the sport, thanks to the night games at Neil Park.

The 1903 season was to be similar to the previous one. Ohio State won its usual early season games, but was not playing very well. On October 10, the Buckeyes beat Denison College, but the \textit{Dispatch} noted that the team played badly. The paper cited the fact that although the OSU team prevailed they did so in a sloppy fashion. It was further said that there was a lack of team work and spirit, and if the Buckeyes met a strong team in the same way, defeat would be certain. However, the Ohio Medical College played well and beat Heidelberg College.\textsuperscript{34}

Ohio State did seem to lift the level of its game when it soundly defeated Kenyon College.\textsuperscript{35} However, the Buckeye’s next game was with Case University.\textsuperscript{36} OSU obviously sought

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 9 November 1902.
\item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 11 October 1903.
\item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 19 October 1903.
\item \textsuperscript{36} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 25 October 1903.
\end{itemize}
revenge against the club that had crushed its hopes for a state championship the previous year. As fate would have it this would not only be a game of redemption, but one that would be necessary for Ohio State to win if it wanted a chance at the state championship this year. The game was keenly anticipated by not only Colombusites but by Clevelanders as well. When game day finally came, 5000 spectators, many of whom travelled from Columbus, packed the athletic field at Case University to witness the contest. That day was filled with high drama as the game became a hotly contested battle. After the game was over, Colombusites returned to Columbus sad and dejected, as Case once again prevailed over OSU. For the second year in a row, Case University dashed Ohio State's hopes of winning the state championship.

Columbus did have exciting college football once again, provided by its two college teams, and it also had a good season of high school football.

Already Columbus was developing a strong tradition of high school football, and in many ways enjoyed equal space in the sports page with the college game. The Dispatch would usually give almost equivalent coverage to high school football if it was merited. The 1903 season saw Columbus North High School dominate the football scene, as it did the previous year. Early in the season, Columbus North High School beat Columbus Central High School, which was always a

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37 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 25 October 1903.
good team, and it then went on to win the city championship with its victory over Columbus East High School.\textsuperscript{38} By the onset of the 1904 football season, Columbusesites were ready for another year of action. The sport had always been popular in Columbus, but it appears to have become more so. This could be seen in the sports page: it was bigger, frequently consisting of two pages and occasionally three, and was well organized with football dominating it.\textsuperscript{39} There were also more advertisements for sporting goods, specifically football items. For example, Bryce Brothers & Company advertised that they sold Spalding sporting goods.\textsuperscript{40}

The season started off well for Ohio State University with a win over Miami University.\textsuperscript{41} The next week the Buckeyes soundly defeated Dennison 24-0.\textsuperscript{42} Ohio State was playing better, and the fans were looking ahead to next game which was with the University of Michigan. But during the week prior to the Michigan game it was fans were reminded the state championships were to be played on the 22nd of October.\textsuperscript{43} It certainly was a week a keen anticipation for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 11, 25 October 1903.
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 2 October 1904.
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 2 October 1904.
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 2 October 1904.
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 9 October 1904.
  \item \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 10 October 1904.
\end{itemize}
Ohio State fans, which judging by the Dispatch was the entire city of Columbus.

Once again, Ohio State met the University of Michigan on the football field and once again the Wolverines prevailed. The Dispatch stated that the game was a success, as the Buckeyes played extremely well. The announcement came on the front page of the Dispatch, and the article was continued on to the sports page. "Clearly, football had achieved a status that baseball never did in Columbus. It is easy to get caught in the events of the football season, but it should be remembered that the fact that there were steady events in Columbus to be followed clearly proves that football was successful in Columbus. This would set the pattern for sports in Columbus -- while professional sports would exist in Columbus, and later establish a measure of stability, they never achieved the status of College football, meaning Ohio State University football, or the loyal support of its fans.

The day the state championship game finally came, many Colombusites had forgotten the outcome of the Michigan game. The championship game was another hard fought battle between Columbus and Cleveland, but this time Ohio State prevailed, defeating Case 16-6, and the Buckeyes reemerged as the state football champions again. Colombusites were thrilled, and the paper reflected this. The title of the sports page the next

"Columbus Evening Dispatch, 16 October 1904."
day read, "The Ohio Football Championship Cup Comes Back To State's Trophy Room".\textsuperscript{45} Ohio State played several other games, but the results were not important for Columbushites because they were state champions once again.

The 1905 season saw an even greater enthusiasm for football in Columbus. It appears that more people had been drawn to the game as spectators, and local businesses increasingly exploited the popularity. Clothing stores were selling apparel to be worn at football games, which basically included anything warm, and to an extent sporty. Some stores even used football as a gimmick. For example, in October, the Lazarus clothing store offered a Reach football with each purchase of a boy's or children's suit. No doubt, many young boys were eager to get a new suit.\textsuperscript{46}

This season also saw various football teams around the city capitalize on the game as an entertainment spectacle. For instance, Columbus High School held a game between their current team members, and alumni team members with the purpose of generating more interest in the game. The regulars won, but it was an extremely hard fought game. The point is that people began to realize that football had great potential as a source of entertainment, and therefore as revenue. In addition, football was loved and supported in Columbus in a

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 23 October 1904.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 6 October 1905.
manner that no other sport was. In fact Columbusesites were becoming football crazy.

Football was successful as a sport. It had affiliations with community and school, and it was exciting. Yet there is one aspect of the excitement that football generated that has been left out of the discussion—violence. Clearly, this was something that made football exciting in a way that no other sport, including boxing, was. Boxing was popular at this time; there was even some boxing in Columbus at this time, but it was clearly not a respectable spectator sport, and therefore was not promoted in the same way that other sports were. As said before, football games had been likened to military struggles, and at times, these games came very close to deserving the title of a real military battle. This was exciting for the people that witnessed this.

The fact that football teams were associated with schools gave football the respectability that it needed to ensure its success with the middle-class. Indeed, much of Columbus was middle-class, unlike other urban areas where there were distinct class demarcations, and a stark difference between the upper and lower classes. So in fact any sport that was to succeed in Columbus would have to have had a middle-class appeal. Football was associated with academic institutions, which were a hallmark of the middle-class, so there was a protection of football in the sense that if the school
sponsored it, then it was clearly an acceptable form of entertainment.

Baseball also earned a middle-class reputation, but this was only after a period of time.\textsuperscript{47} It was to an extent portrayed as a gentlemanly endeavor, which it may have been in its earliest years, but as it grew as a professional sport, activities such as gambling and drinking crept in that made many middle-class moralists uneasy. For some people, going to the ball park was like going to a bar: one was leery of the place and not sure what went on there, except that it was not good. This is why baseball magnates of the day offered discount rates for women; the presence of women ensured that immoral behavior was foreign to the place, and they conferred an air of respectability. But this was never a problem with college and high school football. People attending these games were students, teachers, faculty, and parents.

The violent nature of football can be observed through an incident that occurred at the start of the 1905 season.\textsuperscript{48} On October 7, Ohio State played Wittenberg, and there was a serious accident. Lee Warren of Ohio State received a blow to the head that left a big gash in his scalp. He was taken off the field in a state of delirium, and apparently he kept


\textsuperscript{48} For a view of the violent nature of the game see Smith, \textit{Sports and Freedom} chapters 1-2.
insisting that he was fine, and wanted to be put back into the
game. He later slipped into a state of unconsciousness.
Although he regained consciousness at Protestant Hospital in
Columbus, he later slipped into a state of unconsciousness
which he would remain in for several days. The Dispatch did
not follow up with the story. 49

It is interesting how the Dispatch noted the incident as
the first serious accident of the season. This implies that
these accidents were common, and that this one was noteworthy
because it was the first. This is a bit harsh; nevertheless,
it does seem that violence was an accepted part of football at
this time.

Even though one of its players was injured, Ohio State
won the game 17–0. 50 The Buckeyes were playing well, and had
an up-coming game with Dennison. However, controversy arose
around the Dennison team, that sheds light on what was already
a problem in college football. Apparently Dennison had
several players on its team, that had played for money in
Dayton. 51 As college football grew, there was more pressure
to win, which encouraged such behavior. This issue is
certainly beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be
noted that this was to become a problem that would change the
nature of college football. These problems came late to

49 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 8 October 1905.
50 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 8 October 1905.
51 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 October 1905.
college football in Ohio. In fact, these sorts of issues had come to the surface much earlier in the more organized college leagues of the East. In any event, Ohio State and Dennison argued for the entire week prior to the actual game, but to no avail. Game day finally came, and 2000 people showed up. Another argument broke out, and it was determined that Ohio State was the winner by default. The people were furious, and demanded their money back. Even the Dispatch later said that the whole affair was a disgrace.\textsuperscript{52} Apparently the fans did not care what the players' backgrounds were; they just wanted to see a football game. However, it is ironic to note that it was the fact that these football games were drawing ever-larger crowds, causing such keen competition between teams, which led to these under-handed activities.\textsuperscript{53}

Ohio State easily won the next game it played defeating Depauw of Indiana. The following game would not be so easy, as it was with Case University, with the state championship once again on the line. The Dispatch had an actual picture of the game on the front page. It was stated that there was a huge crowd there to witness the struggle. Struggle indeed, was what both teams did, but to no avail. The game ended in a scoreless tie.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 15 October 1905.

\textsuperscript{53} For a discussion of these issues see Smith, \textit{Sports and Freedom} chapters 11-15.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Columbus Evening Dispatch}, 29 October 1905.
The 1906 season was a good one for Ohio State, but an uneventful one as well. The Buckeyes opened the season with its traditional first game opponent, Otterbein. As usual Ohio State won. After that, the season was very uneventful. It was not until the game with the University of Michigan drew closer that Columbus began to really get excited. Ohio State seemed to be gearing up for the game, and had only one game left before the confrontation with the Wolverines. This one with Wittenberg, was watched closely for indications of how the Buckeyes were playing. Ohio State performed well and beat Wittenberg easily. The fans were thrilled, and ready to take on their nemesis from Michigan.

The Buckeyes - Wolverine game was a big event for Ohio State University, and its Columbus fans, but was it really important for the University of Michigan and its fans? After all, Michigan had emerged victorious every year and by a huge margin, even when Ohio State had a good team. The University of Michigan sent down 500 supporters this year, and it should be recalled that in previous years the Michigan school always sent down a large group of fans to cheer at the game. Why? The University of Michigan clearly had a superior team.

I feel that this support from fans at football games proves that people looked at these teams as representing their

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55 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 30 September 1906.
56 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 12, 14 October 1906.
57 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 20 October 1906.
respective states. It was not Ohio State University against the University of Michigan; it was the state of Ohio against the state of Michigan. Even though the games between the two states were not very good ones, as they certainly were not an even match, people sensed the significance of the two premier state universities competing against each other. After all, why should Michiganders be so smug? Ohioans had more industry and more large urban areas, such as Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo, Akron, Youngstown, Ashland, Lima, Mansfield, and several others, as well as Columbus. True, Michigan had Detroit, but clearly Michigan was not the state Ohio was. Ohio also had numerous colleges and institutions of higher learning—far more than Michigan. Certainly, these football games were important—dominating Ohio State was a feather in the state of Michigan’s cap.

The game day arrived, and the paper gave the impression that the city of Columbus came to a halt. There was great excitement as the two teams battled. The University of Michigan won, but only by the extremely narrow margin of 6–0. The many fans that witnessed the spectacle, save the 500 fans from Michigan, were thrilled. The Michigan fans could once again be happy that they won, but it was certainly a joy tempered by the knowledge that the Buckeyes were closing the gap. Columbustites’ team had lost once again, but it had played well, and they knew that their football team was great.

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58 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 21 October 1906.
The 1907 football season saw more and more people attracted to the game. This was reflected in the sports pages which devoted increasing attention to football and the issues surrounding it. High school football became more prominent on the sports pages, and almost received equal billing with college football.59

Ohio State played well that year, and hopes were high for the team. That year, Wooster was the Ohio team that received a great deal of attention in Columbus for playing so well. Ohio State played them on October 19; and in a hard fought battle, and Wooster played extremely well, held Ohio State to a tie.60 This game did not sit well with Columbusites, who wondered why their team did not do better. After the Wooster game, Ohio State's performance declined. To compound problems, the game with the University of Michigan was coming up soon.

The competition with the University of Michigan was growing stronger. This year the Wolverines wanted Ohio State to send a golf team up to Michigan, where the contest was to be played this year, so that the two schools could have a golf tournament on the Friday before the game. The response was not favorable though. The Dispatch reported: "It will be impossible to comply with the request as the golf team at

59 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 13 October 1907.
60 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 20 October 1907.
State is not now in existence."⁶¹ This was somewhat embarrassing for Ohio State, as it was shown up once again by the University of Michigan. People shrugged it off though, and set their sights on the up-coming football game.

Even though Ohio State did not have a consistent team, 900 fans from Columbus travelled to Ann Arbor to support their team.⁶² The fact that fans from both states made the trip to see their team when they were playing away from home clearly proves that they were dedicated to their teams. Today, in an automobile, the trip from Columbus to Ann Arbor is about four hours, which is no small trip. At the turn of century, this trip would have been a serious endeavor, requiring a great deal of time, and a considerable amount of money. Clearly, these were serious football fans. It should be said that many more would have made the trek, had they had the resources.

The actual game was well attended, and Ohio State fans must have been happy as they watched since the Buckeyes played well the first half with the University of Michigan scoring only six points. However, all fell apart during the second half of the game, and although the Buckeyes performed admirably the Wolverines went on to beat Ohio State 22-0.⁶³

⁶¹ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 14 October 1907.
⁶² Columbus Evening Dispatch, 26 October 1907.
⁶³ Columbus Evening Dispatch, 27 October 1907.
The 1908 season saw Wooster emerge as the strong competition of the early season. The previous year, Wooster tied Ohio State, and the Buckeyes were worried about this year’s contest. Ohio State’s fears did not prove to be unfounded as they lost to Wooster. However, Ohio State played well in their next game and defeated a strong Dennison team. But Ohio State was once again on the losing side of a confrontation with the Western Reserve University. It might seem logical to say that Ohio State was declining, but this would not be fair, to either Ohio State or any of the other universities. Ohio State was clearly having a weak season, as they had the previous year, but the other universities were fielding teams of increasing ability. This shows the general escalation of the competition between teams, and the steady improvement of the teams themselves.

Columbusites were used to having their team dominate all of the other Ohio teams, with the exception of Case University, so this was difficult. Nevertheless, Columbusites were still extremely enthusiastic about the sport. As the season drew on, sights were set on the up-coming game with Michigan. Excitement grew in both camps, and this year’s game was to be another big affair. Even though Ohio State had troubles that season, optimism existed for the outcome of the game. It was noted that this year 400 supporters made the

64 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 2, 4, 11 October 1908.
65 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 18 October 1908.
trip from Ann Arbor. 66 Despite the fact that OSU did not have a good season, they managed to rise to the occasion. They lost, but in a close contest, and the 5000 spectators on hand were not disappointed. 67

Attendance at these football games was always high, people were enthusiastic about the sport, and it was supported strongly in Columbus. This is illustrated by the evidence presented, yet there are other indications that football had really become a permanent fixture in the sporting world of Columbus. Clothing, and fashion are generally looked at with scorn by the historian, and are hardly given any notice. But what people wear, and why they wear it can be very telling. For example, today clothing bearing the logo of a sporting team, is extremely popular, and people will pay large amounts of money for these items. This is a big business today, firmly entrenched in our society. Athletic clothing was not a big business at the turn-of-the-century, but clothing is a big-business only because it is important to people, and they feel that they are expressing something of their character by what they wear. This attitude had its origins in the turn-of-the-century. The Lazarus department store was advertising fall clothing using a football motif: handsome people dressed smartly, seen at a football game. 68 Fans were "dressing" to

66 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 24 October 1908.
67 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 25 October 1908.
68 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 4 October 1908.
see football games. It was not enough to just go to a football game, one had to dress appropriately.

The 1909 season was an erratic one for Ohio State in terms of their performance. They did start out playing well, but Wooster was to be the tough early season game as they had a strong team that year. Nevertheless, the Buckeyes rose to the challenge and defeated Wooster. Ohio State continued to play well throughout the season and looked strong. However, attention was once again drawn to the upcoming game with the University of Michigan by the paper. Students were very excited, and a huge rally was held on campus, where it was decided that Ohio State would send 1000 students and fans to Michigan to cheer for Ohio State. However, the Wolverines had a strong record that year, and Ohio State met them in a weak manner. Michigan overwhelmed Ohio State, 36-0. Ohio State played well the rest of the season, and the paper stated that it was a successful year of football.

The last football season that will be covered in this paper will be the 1910 season. This is fitting in many ways, as it was a season that saw football grow even stronger in Columbus and serves as an indicator of things to come.

69 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 7 October 1909.
70 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 10 October 1909.
71 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 13 October 1909.
72 Columbus Evening Dispatch, 17 October 1909.
Ohio State played well from the start of the season; it easily beat Wittenberg, and looked stronger than ever.\textsuperscript{73} The Buckeyes then overwhelmed the University of Cincinnati 23-0.\textsuperscript{74} Ohio State seemed to improve steadily, and hopes started to rise in Columbus about this. Ohio State next met Western Reserve University, which had beaten the Buckeyes in the past. Ohio State was the epitome of steadiness and resolve, and won 6-0.\textsuperscript{75}

With Ohio State playing well, Columbustites could not help thinking that there might be a chance to finally beat Michigan. After all, Case University had already tied the Wolverines this year.\textsuperscript{76} Perhaps the University of Michigan was having a weak season, but the truth was that both Ohio State and Case University had elevated their games, and were now top-level football teams. There was a big rally on October 20th at the Ohio State University's campus. The Dispatch also noted that Ohio State was in good shape for the up-coming game.\textsuperscript{77}

In front of a huge home crowd, the Ohio State football team thrilled its fans by holding Michigan to a 3-3 tie.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 2 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{74} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{75} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 16 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{76} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 9 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{77} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 21 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{78} Columbus Evening Dispatch, 23 October 1910.
It might appear silly to be excited about a tie, and even proclaim that a tie was victory. But it was a true triumph for the Buckeyes. For years Michigan had had a superior football team, and although Ohio State did not defeat them, they did tie them, which proves equality, at least. Equality with such a great team was truly a victory for the Ohio State football program and its fans, and placed itself amongst a national acclaimed university.

Although Ohio State had several more games left, Columbustites still lingered over the recent success against their rival from Michigan. Ohio State did finish up the season with more victories over Ohio teams, but the University of Michigan game was the real focal point. It showed that Ohio State could set its sights outside of the state and could play with the best teams in the country.

Sport historians have shown that there is a profound relationship between sport and society, and this relationship had its first growth and foundation during the last years of the nineteenth century. I argued initially that while sport became important in Columbus, it did so in a way that was not totally similar to that of other cities. The major difference being the failure of professional baseball in Columbus. Professional baseball could never create essential ties with the community, and this was the reason for its failure. Ultimately this comes from the inability to create ties with the city.
Football, both college and high school, on the other hand were where the community chose to invest its ties. It was successful for this reason: with the people of the city behind it, football was assured of permanency and ultimately success.
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