

# Harvard and Columbia and a Reconsideration of the 1905-06 Football Crisis

Ronald A. Smith\*

American intercollegiate athletics have been unique in the world of higher education for more than a century. In no other country have there been such highly commercialized and professionalized athletics as in America. A pivotal point in the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics was the 1905-06 football crisis. Numerous colleges considered abolishing the game both for its commercialization and professionalism as well as its brutality and questionable ethics. Columbia and another score of colleges even banished the game. The leading American university, Harvard, agonized for over a half year before deciding to accept the game with reformed rules. Out of the 1905-06 travail came the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The NCAA did little to limit commercialization and professionalization of football or other sports, but it did help to reform the rules of football so that it would remain acceptable to a majority of colleges. These developments raise several questions. How strong was the challenge to the existence of American intercollegiate football? Was there a strong move by colleges to have football legislated out of existence? What role did the two largest colleges in America, Harvard and Columbia,<sup>1</sup> play in the football crisis of 1905-06?

Writing in 1969, Guy M. Lewis, a leading historian on the development of football and intercollegiate athletics, argued that "while there was abolitionist sentiment and some administrators actually banned the sport, the *threat to outlaw football was never a serious one.*" In his article on the role of Theodore Roosevelt in the 1905-06 football controversy, Lewis further claimed that Roosevelt's "action did determine the direction of football, but he did not save the game because *its existence was never threatened.*"<sup>2</sup> New evidence, primarily concerning Columbia and Harvard, raises doubts about the soundness of Lewis' statements. Evidence appears to indicate that football was indeed in jeopardy. Not only did an important college, Columbia, drop football, but Harvard came to the brink of banning it. Furthermore, the first intercollegiate meeting of college authorities to consider abolition came within two votes of resolving to ban the sport as then played.

\*Mr. Smith is an Associate Professor in the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.

# I

## Football and the Columbia University Scene

The problems of intercollegiate football which led to calls for its abolition in 1905 were not sudden developments. The records of two institutions centrally involved in the crisis, Columbia and Harvard, reveal clearly that the demands to ban football grew out of previous decades of controversy and attempts at reform. At Columbia, the major problems in football began in 1899 when the undergraduate football manager, a key position in the Football Association, paid the university expenses of five team members out of football receipts. Even Columbia's professional coach knew nothing of the "scholarships."<sup>3</sup> The payment for services of players, false entries in the financial records to cover up the payments, and bold lies given to the faculty Athletic Committee created a sense of skepticism among the Columbia faculty, president, and Board of Trustees. The action caused one trustee to call the affair, "the most disgraceful scandal ever known in college athletics. . . ." <sup>4</sup> Though that was doubtful, the Football Association added to its troubles the next year by defaulting on a large \$15,000 contract to rent Manhattan Field from a professional baseball team in New York.<sup>5</sup> The Columbia president indicated that if the football team could not pay its obligations, then it would be the University's task to "pay our debts as we can and to abolish the sport"<sup>6</sup> Football, the president said, must be self-supporting each year or it would be discontinued.<sup>7</sup>

Football continued at Columbia, but so did the problems, and the faculty legislated stricter controls over the basically student-run contests. One faculty member, Dean of the Law School, George Kirchwey, chaired the Athletic Committee, and figuratively threw up his hands over the football situation. He told the president that the athletic system rested on a false basis and that its evils were incurable." Only by cooperation with other colleges, did he believe that athletics could be effectively controlled. Kirchwey believed that "the most vigilant faculty committee [was] at the mercy of a dishonest student manager," while faculty legislation brought "friction and injustice, and a growing cynicism and hardness."<sup>9</sup> Kirchwey knew that other institutions were having similar difficulties controlling athletics, especially football. With the noted exception of Yale, most of the influential eastern institutions had some form of faculty control of athletics. He proposed a plan for Columbia which would modify faculty involvement by including an alumnus as financial comptroller of athletics and increased alumni power in controlling athletic eligibility and general athletic policy. He believed that at other institutions, faculty control had helped keep student athletics regulated. Kirchwey hoped that his Columbia plan would be acceptable to such institutions as Harvard, Brown, Princeton, Cornell, and Pennsylvania. He even suggested that it might be acceptable to the student controlled, Yale outcasts "in the cave of

Adullam at New Haven.”<sup>10</sup> What were needed, Kirchwey believed, were eligibility rules common to all institutions. Earlier attempts of eastern college faculty to create common eligibility rules had been made several times in the 1880s and 1890s. All had failed to be accepted by colleges in which students continued to be the dominating force in shaping intercollegiate athletics.

On the heels of Kirchwey’s proposal, another football incident occurred at Columbia. The Football Committee in 1902 attempted to subvert a Faculty Committee’s disqualification of Columbia’s outstanding football player.<sup>12</sup> The nasty problem angered Dean Kirchwey enough to cause him to publicly announce that “keeping athletics from professionalism and kindred evils—contributes the principal business of faculty control, both at Columbia and elsewhere, and is the despair of faculty committees.”<sup>13</sup> Convinced that the control of athletics needed thorough reorganization, the entire faculty Athletic Committee tendered its resignation.<sup>14</sup> A reorganization resulted after a study of other eastern institutions’ policies. A new University Committee on Athletic Sports was formed, composed of three alumni and two students, with the elimination of faculty representatives. The new committee had charge of all eligibility except determination of the athletes’ scholarship, which the faculty retained.<sup>15</sup>

The alumni-student committee had been functioning for about two years when the precipitous 1905 football season began. The brutal nature of American football was reflected at Columbia, beginning with its game against Wesleyan College. A Columbia runner was brought down at Wesleyan’s 10 yard line. With the tackled player down, a Wesleyan player “gathered up his legs” and crashed into the back of the prostrate Columbian. Players, fans, and the Columbia coach rushed on to the field. Newspapers reported that coach Dick Morley struck the Wesleyan player who had injured the Columbia runner, and order was restored only when the police rushed on to the field.<sup>16</sup> Before the next game, Francis S. Bangs, University trustee and Chairman of the University Committee on Athletics, warned both Columbia and Amherst captains and coaches that the game would be stopped if slugging occurred or the game got out of control.<sup>17</sup>

The remainder of the season was such that Bangs, who loved athletics, decided that football played under the existing rules was brutal, encouraging vicious antagonisms and injuries. He pointed out to President Nicholas Murray Butler the need for a presidentially appointed national rules committee to replace what he termed the “self-perpetuating, non-representative, pig-headed, oblivious to public opinion and obstinate . . .” old rules committee headed by Walter Camp of Yale.<sup>18</sup> Bangs said that placing power at Columbia in the hands of graduates had not solved the athletic problems. The suggestion of Bangs were sent to President Butler, who, in turn, contacted President

Charles W. Eliot, Harvard's noted president of three and a half decades.<sup>19</sup> Eliot refused to be involved with any rules committee in which Walter Camp could possibly be associated, and he declined to take part in inter-institutional reform. Eliot wrote Butler:

I should not care to join in appointing a committee on rules for football in the manner proposed. As the matter stands, Mr. Camp has the matter completely in his hands. He has always controlled the existing irresponsible committee on rules, and caused it at the start to lay down the principle that no rule shall be altered without unanimous consent. He seems to be as powerful today as he ever was at Yale and elsewhere, and would undoubtedly be appointed the Yale member of a new committee. I should never have had any faith in his superintendence of football reform, inasmuch as he is directly responsible for the degradation and ruin of the game. The trouble with him seems to me to be that he is deficient in moral sensibility—a trouble not likely to be cured at his age.<sup>20</sup>

This was the same Charles Eliot who, three weeks later, refused the request by Chancellor Henry MacCracken of New York University to call a meeting of university presidents to consider what to do about football. At that time Henry MacCracken went ahead without Harvard's help, calling a conference whose aim was to either reform football or to abolish it.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, through Bangs' urging, Columbia decided unilaterally to attempt a leadership role by abandoning football. Following the end of the season, the Columbia Committee on Student Organizations, a faculty group, abolished the game and disbanded the Football Association.<sup>22</sup> The faculty decision, based upon both the brutality involved and the questionable ethics used in football, had the full support of President Butler, and unlike most other institutions, the decision of the faculty was apparently never questioned by the Board of Trustees.<sup>23</sup> Although the banning was protested vigorously by students and some alumni, for the next decade Columbia remained out of intercollegiate football.

Columbia, through its faculty and administration, next attempted to influence the national movement to prohibit intercollegiate football which had gathered considerable strength during the fall of 1905. President Butler invited trustee Francis Bangs and one faculty member to represent Columbia at MacCracken's original meeting of eastern colleges to consider the football question.<sup>24</sup> Thirteen colleges met at the Murray Hill Hotel in New York City on December 8, 1905 to consider the question, "Ought the present game of football be abolished?" A resolution was formulated "that the game of football, as played under existing rules shall be abolished." Five colleges, including Columbia, voted "aye."<sup>25</sup> Had two other colleges joined the abolitionist group, this small, but significant, group of college authorities would have joined Columbia in its move to eradicate American football as then played. Reform, not abolition, was favored by a majority of the thirteen institutions.

To accomplish this reform, the convention set up a special committee to consider suggestions for rule changes to end dangerous, brutal, and mass play. MacCracken of New York University, Palmer Pierce of West Point, and Bangs of Columbia were chosen for the task. The convention further decided to ask all colleges in America to join its group and to meet annually to consider questions about football. To keep out an undesirable professional element at the first proposed convention, the thirteen institutions voted that no one could represent his college who had received compensation from athletics as “a player, coach, umpire, referee, director, committeeman, or in any other capacity, except a member of a faculty of a college who is regularly enrolled as such in its catalogue.”<sup>26</sup> A call went out for a national convention to be held on December 28, 1905, as the first annual meeting of what was to become the National Collegiate Athletic Association.<sup>27</sup>

## II

### Harvard's Leadership in the Football Question

While Columbia was attempting to stop football, and a reform organization was being established, a much more influential institution, Harvard, was reaching the climax to two decades of soul searching about the continued existence of America's dominant collegiate game. Harvard was the leading educational institution in America, a pacesetter in collegiate reform and in social custom. Harvard, much more than Columbia, was looked to for leadership in football reform. If Columbia, New York University, Northwestern, California, or Stanford would drop football (and all did so by 1906), they would likely have had less impact than if Harvard alone had chosen to abandon football. There had been turmoil over football at Harvard since the 1880s with a major crisis reached during the fall of 1905.

Over twenty years before, Harvard's faculty first attempted to come to grips with the American version of English rugby. Following the football season of 1883, the Harvard Athletic Committee, composed of three faculty members, notified the football team that unless rules were changed to reform the brutal nature of the game it would be abolished. Harvard's faculty committee asked the faculty of Yale to call a conference of important eastern colleges to discuss athletic rules. The Yale faculty, which had no voice in athletics, declined the offer. The Harvard Athletic Committee then invited thirteen institutions to meet in New York City. The most influential colleges attended including the “Big Three,” Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. A second conference was held, and resolutions to control athletics were circulated to 21 eastern colleges for their adoption. Though the Harvard faculty adopted them overwhelmingly, and both the Princeton faculty and trustees approved unanimously, no other colleges agreed to the document. The proposal included such provisions as no professional coaches, a limit to four years eligibility, and no participation

against professional teams.<sup>29</sup> This first attempt at inter-institutional, faculty control was a failure. With no common controls and another year resulting in brutal and demoralizing play, the Harvard faculty moved to prohibit football.<sup>30</sup> Harvard's solitary action lasted only one year.

Harvard resumed playing football in 1886, but the use of mass formations, such as the "V" wedge and eventually the "Flying Wedge" in the early 1890s contributed to even more injuries and faculty consternation. Following a particularly brutal game between Harvard and Yale in 1894, the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences resolved to ban football.<sup>31</sup> President Charles Eliot agreed with his faculty calling the game "unfit for college use."<sup>32</sup> To Eliot, the spirit of play was even more evil than the injuries incurred from mass plays. Football, however, was not eliminated the next year. Only the annual Harvard-Yale game was terminated for the following two seasons.

From the banning of football with Yale in 1895 until the Harvard faculty again voted to abolish football in 1905, Eliot railed against the moral abuses of college football. Among other problems that Eliot and the athletic administration had to deal with were cases of eligibility. A particularly thorny instance arose in 1902 and involved a football player who had attended Bates College and had been out of school five years before going to Harvard to play football while attending its Law School. The eligibility of Oliver Cutts was vociferously questioned by Yale who charged that Cutts had previously given private lessons for profit in boxing and fencing at a Philadelphia area grammar school and thus making him a professional.<sup>33</sup> Following rancorous charges of professionalism between Harvard and Yale, Cutts was declared ineligible. A short time later Eliot charged publicly that football had the ethics of war, while in private he advised, paradoxically, that the prohibition of football would be unwise because "the American public, including the graduates of our high schools, colleges, and universities, takes more interest in football than in any of the other sports."<sup>34</sup> Eliot, as well as the Harvard faculty, kept the pressure on those who favored the financially lucrative and most popular college game. The faculty continually recommended abolishing football, and Eliot continued to attack its moral qualities.<sup>35</sup> When the 1905 season arrived, many of those in power at Harvard were more than ready to abolish football as a menace to the real work of Harvard.

One graduate of Harvard, Theodore Roosevelt, loved football and was in a position to attempt to save the game from possible extinction. President Roosevelt, Harvard class of 1880, believed strongly in the strenuousness of football in developing character and teaching virility in young men.<sup>36</sup> Roosevelt feared that the abolitionist spirit could prevail if football players and coaches failed to exhibit sportsmanship, and if the rules of the game were not changed to

prevent brutal contests.<sup>37</sup> At the request of a leading school headmaster, Endicott Peabody of the Groton Preparatory School, Roosevelt invited the “Big Three” colleges to a White House meeting on football early in the 1905 season. Out of the October meeting with the three coaches and three athletic representatives of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, a joint statement was produced stating that American football leaders would consider it an obligation to carry out the rest of the football season “in letter and in spirit,” preventing roughness and foul play.<sup>38</sup>

While there were expectations that the moral suasion of the President and the three elite universities would reach the entire collegiate scene, the nature of the football rules was such that questionable practices and serious injuries would continue in the American game in which the desired result of the contest, victory, dominated the concern for playing the game. It was most difficult for the signatories, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, to carry out the spirit of the rules when the football players at these three institutions, according to a former Harvard athlete, had been for years taught the “tricks of the trade” in deceiving the officials.<sup>39</sup> Even foul play and brutality, which were specifically noted in the White House meeting, were difficult to eradicate. This was as true at Harvard as elsewhere. Following questionable ethics and brutal play during mid-season, an intriguing controversy occurred between Harvard’s ruling authorities, who favored a ban on football, and those closest to Harvard football, who reacted quickly to the threat to eliminate their game. This threat and counter-action likely saved football at Harvard and may have done the same at institutions which followed Harvard’s leadership.

### III

#### The Threat to Ban Harvard Football and the Reaction

In early November, Herbert White, a former Harvard football manager, telephoned Bill Reid, the football coach, to tell him that the Harvard Corporation had secretly voted to abolish football.<sup>40</sup> The two decided to meet immediately with former coach William H. Lewis and two others. Reid, as well as Harvard football, had much at stake, for the 26 year old coach’s salary was greater than the salary of any Harvard professor and approached that of President Eliot.<sup>41</sup> The group of five football enthusiasts decided to write an open letter to the Harvard Graduates’ Athletic Association. The document, which they decided only Reid should sign, was designed to criticize strongly certain aspects of football and to suggest that a committee be formed to consider radical rule changes. So closely was this session guarded that not for twenty years did Reid or any others reveal their secret meeting to attempt to save Harvard football.<sup>42</sup>

With the open letter released to the press, Reid’s group believed that there was a good chance of preventing an official ban of football if it could be seen that a

reform movement, similar to the one Eliot had advocated, were being initiated. Using a copy of President Eliot's criticism of football as the guide, the five Harvard football leaders embodied Eliot's ideas in their letter. After late night hours of editing, Reid signed his name to what he believed helped save football not only at Harvard, but in American colleges.<sup>43</sup>

The letter was soon published, making many important newspapers across the nation. It read:

After several years of experience with Intercollegiate football, after careful consideration of the criticisms which have been made of the game, and after the many honest but fruitless efforts to change it so that these criticisms could be avoided, I have become convinced that the game as it is played to-day has fundamental faults which cannot be removed by any mere technical revision of the rules.

Although I am willing to admit that the necessary roughness of the game may be objectionable to some people, that appears to me to be much less serious than the fact that there is a distinct advantage to be gained from brutality and the evasion of the rules—offenses which, in many instances, the officials cannot detect because they are committed when the players and the ball also are hidden from the eyes of the umpire. For these reasons I have come to believe that the game ought to be radically changed.

I therefore respectfully request your Association, which represents the Alumni of the University, immediately to appoint a Committee whose duty it shall be to make a careful investigation of the subject, and to report such thorough-going alterations in the game as will remove the unfair advantage now obtained from violation of the rules, will put a higher premium on skill, make mere weight and strength of less value, and will produce a more scientific and interesting game.<sup>44</sup>

One will never be sure if this calculated move by Harvard football interests saved football, but it may have bought time so that Harvard was in a position to make major demands for new rule legislation which was more acceptable to Harvard authorities.

The turmoil of the 1905 season continued for Harvard. A few days after the Reid letter was published, Harvard played the University of Pennsylvania. One incident was particularly disturbing. During the game the Harvard center was kicked in the groin several times by a Penn player. After having complained to the umpire with no satisfaction, the Harvard man belted the Penn player in the face and was banished from the game. Hearing of the episode, President Roosevelt called coach Reid to the White House for an explanation of the action which appeared to be a gross violation of the "Big Three" agreement. When Reid explained the situation and asked Roosevelt how he would have responded, Roosevelt reacted saying that "it wouldn't be policy for me to state," and agreed that the Harvard player had some justification for his actions.<sup>45</sup> Several weeks later, Yale played at Harvard in "The Game." With 43,000 spectators jammed into the nation's first concrete college stadium, the fans saw a Harvard player smashed in the face as he was receiving a punt. As



blood spurted from his nostrils, those in the stands believed that Francis Burr had been clearly slugged by the Yale tackler, Jack Quill. One member of the Harvard Corporation was so upset at the time of the incident that he sent an order to coach Reid to take the Harvard team off the field. This Reid refused to do.<sup>46</sup> Other Harvard fans and newspaper writers used the incident as one more example showing that, as one Harvard alumnus stated, "cheating and brutality are profitable."<sup>47</sup> Roosevelt shot off a letter to the head game official, Paul Dashiell of the Naval Academy, asking for an accounting of the game. Dashiell, a member of the seven-man Football Rules Committee, apologized for the incident to Roosevelt, saying that he regretted the action which injured the game of football, "now in so critical a condition."<sup>48</sup>

The game was indeed in a critical stage, for on the same day of the Burr-Quill incident at Harvard, a Union College player was killed in a pile-up in a game with New York University. This death triggered a telegram from Chancellor MacCracken of NYU to ask President Eliot if he would call a conference to either reform or ban football. Eliot declined to become involved because, Eliot believed, college presidents "certainly cannot reform football, and I doubt if by themselves they can abolish it."<sup>49</sup> MacCracken then took the lead in attempting to solve the football crisis by calling a conference. Columbia, at the same time, banned the game. Football's existence was in jeopardy as the old Rules Committee attempted to draw up its own reform rules, while the upstart college administrators, through MacCracken's influence, attempted to form their own.<sup>50</sup> Harvard, with the help from its best known graduate, Theodore Roosevelt, played the key role in the reform movement. Harvard accomplished what possibly no other college could have done in achieving reform. As the leading college in America, Harvard threatened to abandon the game if its own reform policies were not accepted. When Harvard spoke, other institutions were prone to listen and to follow its leadership.

#### IV

#### Harvard and Football Rules' Reform

Harvard was represented on the old Rules Committee by its coach, Bill Reid. The plan of the Harvard athletic leadership was designed to gain time and to bring about changes in football which would be acceptable to the ruling Harvard University officials. Time was needed to enable an Harvard Athletic Association ad hoc committee of Harvard alumni to consider the radical reforms which the Reid group had called for in its open letter.<sup>51</sup> As part of the Harvard athletic strategy, the Harvard Athletic committee decided in mid-December not to send a representative to the new Rules Committee of the MacCracken convention. Rather, it would send Reid to the old Rules Committee meeting on December 29th. Rules which the old Committee would devise were to be sent back to the Harvard Athletic Committee for approval.<sup>52</sup> The old Rules

Committee had met earlier in December, but it did so without Harvard's reform proposals. Furthermore, Harvard graduate Theodore Roosevelt refused to endorse any proposals of the old Rules Committee which left the selection of game officials in the hands of the Rules Committee. The President's influence was significant, and Roosevelt was still smarting over official Paul Dashiell's handling of the Burr-Quill incident which left Harvard with its fourth consecutive shutout at the hands of Yale.<sup>53</sup>

The collegiate travail over whose rule reform would succeed, or whether the two ruling-bodies would come together to form uniform rules, came to a head in late December 1905. The MacCracken group of 68 colleges from across the country met in New York City on December 28th. This gathering, after lengthy and emotional debate, decided to form a rules committee of seven to meet with the old Rules Committee of seven which was meeting the next day in Philadelphia. If the old Rules Committee refused to be amalgamated, the MacCracken convention was determined to form its own rules.<sup>54</sup> The new Rules Committee journeyed to Philadelphia and met with the old Committee. The new group was headed by Henry Williams, an M.D. and coach of the University of Minnesota. Williams' Committee asked the old Rules Committee, headed by Walter Camp, to join together and form a sub-committee of five to write the rules. The proposal suggested that the sub-committee be formed of two from Williams' and three from Camp's Committee and that their rules would be ratified annually by the amalgamated committee. The Camp Committee deliberated for some time, hesitated about amalgamating, and decided that each committee member should first confer with his own institution and then meet again before agreeing to the new group's proposal.<sup>55</sup>

Two weeks later, on January 12, 1906, the two groups met independently but in the same hotel. Harvard came to the meeting with its own power play. The Harvard Athletic Committee determined that Bill Reid would withdraw from the old Rules Committee dominated by Yale's Walter Camp and would meet with the new Rules Committee. It was the "hope" of the Harvard Athletic Committee that other university representatives would join Reid.<sup>56</sup> As has been shown in previous research of Guy Lewis,<sup>57</sup> Theodore Roosevelt had put pressure on Paul Dashiell, the Naval Academy officer on the old Rules Committee, to support the merger so that Harvard would not have to stand alone. When the rule groups converged on Hotel Netherland in New York City, Reid left the Camp Committee and was accepted into the rules group from the MacCracken Conference. A joint session was agreed upon after a series of notes was passed between them. Reid, not Walter Camp, became secretary of the amalgamated rules committee, a position of power previously used by Camp.<sup>58</sup>

Even with the newly merged group, Harvard was not assured that the radical rule reform its ad hoc alumni committee suggested (or demanded) would be accepted by the joint rules committee. Harvard had not yet shown its hand on its proposed rule changes. Reid's political savvy was demonstrated as he pushed the Harvard proposals to fruition. The Harvard coach later explained that he "hit upon the scheme of getting certain members of the Old Committee together in a private gathering" prior to the joint rule session. As they discussed the Harvard proposed rules, he told the small group that either the "rules go through or there will be no football at Harvard; and if Harvard throws out the game, many other colleges will follow Harvard's lead, and an important blow will be dealt to the game." Reid told them that "this will mean English rugby, and if that is introduced, it will be a long time before we are playing the American game again."<sup>59</sup> Reid asked each one of the Old Committee to push through the Harvard proposals as his own. The desire of Reid to push through the Harvard recommendations was hastened by the Harvard Overseers' action two days previous to the New York City meeting. The Overseers, an official group with power to recommend Harvard policy, voted that there should be no further intercollegiate football at Harvard until they had a report on the acceptance of the Harvard proposals by the national rules committee.<sup>60</sup> The word from Harvard's officials seemed clear—if other colleges wanted Harvard to continue in intercollegiate football, they would have to accept Harvard's reform recommendations.

Indeed, nearly all of the Harvard proposals were accepted by the Rules Committee after three months of meetings, and they became part of the official rules for the 1906 football season.<sup>61</sup> A committee of the Harvard Overseers carefully examined the revised rules and recommended that the Overseers approve football for the next season.<sup>62</sup> After a struggle in the Board of Overseers and in the Corporation, Harvard voted to sanction football.<sup>63</sup> President Eliot remained unconvinced. "It is childish," Eliot wrote, "to suppose that the athletic authorities which have permitted football to become a brutal, cheating, demoralizing game can be trusted to reform it."<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Harvard's ruling bodies, by a slight margin, allowed Harvard to remain one of the football playing colleges.

Harvard was now in the fold, and only Columbia of the major eastern colleges was on the sidelines of football. Harvard was the apparent key to the reform of a game which was indeed in jeopardy. The rule changes did soothe, for a time<sup>65</sup> many of those who were most concerned about the brutal nature of the game, but the changes did little to affect the commercialization and professionalism of football. With the acceptance of the 1906 reform rules, those who feared that the dominant college game was at the brink of disaster could be more confident that collegiate football had weathered its first major storm.

## Notes

1. The U.S. Department of the Interior, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for Year Ending, June 30, 1905* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1907), Table 29, pp. 578-597, indicates that Harvard had 4,136 male students followed by Columbia, 3,201; Cornell, 3,159; and Michigan, 3,142. Yale had only 2,880 male students Chicago had 4,598 students but nearly half were women. In total size Columbia and Harvard followed Chicago.
2. Guy Lewis, "Theodore Roosevelt's Role in the 1905 Football Controversy," *Research Quarterly*, XL (December 1969), p.718, 724. Emphasis is mine. Only Guy Lewis has looked at the important 1905-06 crisis with any degree of thoroughness. In addition to his Theodore Roosevelt article, his doctoral dissertation, "The American Intercollegiate Football Spectacle, 1869-1917," University of Maryland, 1964, devotes 40 pages to "The Great Crisis, 1905," pp. 219-259. Lewis' sources were principally the Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Library of Congress and the Walter Camp papers, Yale University. They are excellent sources, but they emphasize the positive about football in both cases. Inclusion of Harvard and Columbia archive sources give a more complete picture of the 1905-06 crisis. The other published paper which has shown some primary research is John H. Moore, "Football's Ugly Decades, 1893-1913," *Smithsonian Journal of History*, II (Fall 1967), 49-68. His findings were based almost entirely on newspaper accounts. Moore only briefly mentioned the 1905-06 crisis and indicated nothing about the Columbia-Harvard involvement Moore was confused about the early meetings of the rules committees. He believed that had President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton and President Edwin Alderman of Virginia joined forces with President Charles Eliot of Harvard, the sport might have been eliminated from American academic life (p.67) In *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1978), pp. 242-245, John Lucas and Ronald Smith used Lewis' work to a great extent, but they concluded that the abolition movement was a strong force in 1905. In *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974), pp 127-128, John R. Betts recognized the importance of the 1905-06 crisis but lacked insight into the rule reform movement and threat of abolition John Allen Krout, in *Annals of American Sport* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), p. 246, was confused about the series of events leading up to the rule reform in 1906. Betty Spears and Richard Swanson, *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1978), p. 181, noted little more than the violence of football in 1905 leading to the formation of the NCAA. Two institutional histories give little clue to the football machinations of 1905-06: Morris A. Bealle, *The History of Football at Harvard, 1874-1948* (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 163-165 and Tim Cohane, *The Yale Football Story* (New York: Putnam, 1951), pp. 155-158. The following six football histories are spotty in research and often erroneous The best account is in Alexander M. Weyand, *The Saga of American Football* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp 82-84. The others are: Allison Danzig, *History of American Football* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1956), p. 29; Jim Koger, *National Champions. The History of the National Intercollegiate Football Championship, 1900-1969* (Columbus, GA: Atlantic Publishing Co, 1970), p. 28; Lamont Buchanan, *The Story of Football* (New York: Stephen-Paul Publishers, 1947), p. 61, 71; Donald G. Herring, *40 Years of Football* (New York: Carlyle House, 1940), p. 108; and Ivan N. Kaye, *Good Clean Violence: A History of College Football* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973), p. 54. Parke H. Davis, *Football: The American Intercollegiate Game* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp 111-117, discussed the 1905-06 crisis, but gave no indication of Harvard's role in it.
3. "Report to the Advisory Committee of the Columbia University Athletic Association," ca. Spring, 1900, "Athletics" Folder, Columbia University Central Files (Hereafter referred to as CUCF).
4. John B. Pine, Trustee, letter to Prof. F. R. Hutton, University Committee on Athletics, 13 September 1900. "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
5. Gustavus T. Kirby, Chairman, Football Committee, letter to President Seth Low, 26 February 1901; and Fred M. Knowles, Secretary, New York Base Ball Club, letter to President Seth Low, 21 March 1901, "Athletics" Folder. CUCF.
6. President Seth Low, letter to F. S. Bangs, Football Advisory Committee, 25 March 1901, "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
7. Low to Bangs, 11 May 1901, "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
8. George W. Kirchwey, letter to President N. M. Butler, 14 July 1902, "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid. Adullam refers to David of the *Bible* and his group of 400 outcasts who opposed Saul's rule from the Cave of Adullam in Palestine; I Samuel, 22.
11. John W. White, W. S. Chaplin, and A. B. Hart, "Athletic Report," 12 June 1888, HUD 8388.3B, Harvard University Archives (Hereafter referred to as HUA); "Athletic Committee Minutes," 14 December 1886, p. 129, HUA. (President McCosh of Princeton had suggested the meeting in 1886); and "Brown Conference Report on Intercollegiate Sports," 18 February 1898, HUD 8398.75, HUA.

12. George W. Kirchwey, Chairman, Committee on Athletics, letter to Ludlow Chrystie, esq., Graduate Director of the Football Committee, 12 November 1902; Chrystie to Kirchwey, 13 November 1902; and Albert W. Putnam, graduate member of the Football Committee, letter to President N. M. Butler. 13 November 1902, "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
13. George W. Kirchwey. "The Problem of Athletic control," *Columbia University Quarterly*, V (December 1902), p. 19.
14. J. F. Kemp, George W. Kirchwey, Marston T. Bogert, committee on Athletics, Letter to President N.M. Butler, 27 February 1903. "Athletics" Folder, CUCF.
15. "Controls of Athletics," *Columbia University Quarterly*, V (June 1903). pp 317-319.
16. *Columbia Spectator*, 9 October 1905, p. 1; *New York Daily Tribune*, 8 October 1905, p. 9, and 10 October 1905, p. 4; *New York Herald*, 8 October 1905, Sec. I, p. 1, and 10 October 1905. p. 11; and *New York Sun*. 3 December 1905, "Columbia University Football Scrapbook," Columbian Collection, Columbia University.
17. F. S. Bangs, Chairman, University Committee on Athletics, letter to N.M. Butler, 23 October 1905. Francis S. Bangs Papers, "1905-1910" Folder, CUCF.
18. Bangs to Butler, 28 October 1905, *Ibid*.
19. Butler thanked Bangs and told Bangs that "I am going to try to have an early conference with President Eliot on the whole subject," Butler to Bangs, 30 October 1905, *Ibid*.
20. Butler to Bangs, 3 November 1905, *Ibid*. Butler quoted Eliot extensively in his letter to Bangs.
21. Henry M. MacCracken, telegram to Charles W. Eliot, 10:29 p.m., 25 November 1905. Eliot Papers, Box 227, "Henry M. MacCracken" Folder, HUA; *New York Times*, 27 November 1905, and 29 November 1905; and *New York Daily Tribune*, 29 November 1905, p. 2.
22. *Columbia Spectator*, 28 November 1905, p. 1 and 29 November 1905, p. 1, and 29 November 1905; ball," *New York Daily Tribune*, 29 November 1905, pp 1-2.
23. *New York Evening Post*, 4 December 1905, in "Columbia University Football Scrapbook." Columbian Collection, Columbia University. There was no discussion of football by the Columbia Trustees from 1905-1907 See Columbia Board of Trustees Minutes, CUCF. Columbia had a long tradition, according to President Butler, of the Trustees backing up faculty decisions. He said in 1920 that for the previous two decades, "in only one important instance [and it was not athletics] . . . was a Faculty or Council recommendation ever disagreed to. . ." See "Francis S. Bangs File (1878)," Columbian Collection, Columbia University.
24. President N. M. Butler, letter to F. S. Bangs. 5 December 1905, Francis S. Bangs Papers, "1905-1910" Folder, CUCF
25. *Columbia Spectator*, 11 December 1905, p. 1. Union, NYU, Stevens, and Rochester joined Columbia in the vote. West Point, Wesleyan, Fordham, Syracuse, Swarthmore, Haverford, Lafayette, and Rutgers did not vote to abolish football. Guy Lewis, "Theodore Roosevelt's Role in the 1905 Football Controversy," p. 721, states inaccurately that "there was no opposition to the proposals that the group endorse football and initiate a reform movement" at the December 8th meeting.
26. *Columbia Spectator*, 11 December 1905, p. 4
27. MacCracken had suggested a national conference to be held at Christmas time well before the December 8th Conference was held. See *New York Daily Tribune*, 29 November 1905, p. 2
28. "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 22 November 1883, p. 24, HUA.
29. John White, et al, "Athletic Report," 12 June 1888, HUD 8388.3B, HUA
30. *Ibid*.
31. M. H. Morgan, Acting Sec'y of the Faculty, letter to Harvard Athletic Committee. 20 February 1895. "Athletic Committee Minutes," 25 February 1895. p. 355, HUA.
32. "President Eliot's Annual Report," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, III (1895), p. 369.
33. Ira N. Hollis, Chairman, Harvard Athletic Committee, letter to President Eliot, 23 January 1902. Box 143, "Hollis" Folder; Ten letters from President Arthur T. Hadley. Yale to President Eliot. 19 November 1901-January 1902, Eliot Papers, Box 117, Folder 260; and "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 22 November 1901, p. 413 and 12 January 1902, p. 417, HUA
34. "President Eliot's Annual Report," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XI (March 1903), p. 413. and Eliot, letter to Attorney Lucian R. Worden, Milwaukee, 16 December 1902, Eliot Papers, Box 110, Folder 114. "Athletics," HUA.
35. "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes, 16 February 1903, p. 438, HUA, and C. W. Eliot. "The Evils of Football," *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, XIII (March 1905), p. 385'

36. Theodore Roosevelt, "The Harvard Spirit," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIV (September 1905). p. 5.
37. *New York Herald*, 10 October 1905, p. 1, and *New Times*, 5 December 1905, p. 9.
38. The Signatories were Walter Camp and John Owsley of Yale; Arthur Hildebrand and John Fine of Princeton; and Dr. Edward Nichols and William Reid of Harvard. *New York Herald*, 10 October 1905, p. 1 and 12 October 1905, p. 1, and *New York Times*, 10 October 1905, p. 1.
39. Quoting Karl F. Brill, newspaper clipping, Fall 1905, HUD 10905, HUA.
40. See H. F. Manchester, "Reveals How College Football Was Saved in 1905," *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1926, Sec. E, p. 7. Reid's reminiscence 20 years following the events indicates that the Harvard Corporation voted in secret to ban football, but that the banning was withheld until a later date, presumably after the season. Perusal of both the Harvard Corporation Minutes and the Harvard Overseers Minutes shows no evidence of a recorded vote to abolish football. Whether the Corporation or the Overseers had actually taken an official vote or not is questionable. As the Corporation and the Overseers had discussed football at other times and had listened to President Eliot speak out strongly against the game, it is unquestionable that there was strong sentiment to do away with football within both bodies. That the vote, if taken, can not be documented is unfortunate, but it seems to be of less importance than was the response of the football leaders to what they believed was a threat to their game.
41. Reid was hired in 1905 for \$3,500 with an equal amount guaranteed by the alumni. The highest professor's salary at Harvard College was \$5,000. Eliot's salary of \$6,000 when added to benefits totaled about \$8,000. For comparisons, Dudley Sargent, long time director of physical education received \$3,500, and physical education instructor Carl L. Schraeder received \$1,500 in 1905. See Harvard Corporation Minutes, 27 November 1905, pp. 181-198, Corporation Records, XVIII (1904-1907), HUA; Archibald C. Collidge, "Professional Coaches," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIV (March 1906), p. 394; R. B. Merriman, "Proceedings of the Athletic Committee," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIII (June 1905), pp. 630-631; "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 17 February 1905, p. 521, HUA; and "Appeal for Teachers' Endowment," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIII (June 1905), p. 762.
42. *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1926, Sec. E, p. 7. Reid told essentially the same story a half century later. See *Washington Post*, 13 September 1970, Sec. C, p. 13. The letter which Reid's group drafted was evidently based upon President Eliot's Annual Report published earlier that year See Eliot's "The Evils of Football," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIII (March 1905), pp. 383-387, for many points similar to those found in the Reid letter.
43. Reid recalled that the historically heralded Big Three meeting in October, 1905, did little to save football. but that the Harvard instigated rule changes might have "preserved the sport." *Washington Post*, 13 September 1970, Sec. C, p. 13. Earlier, Reid was quoted as saying that with the new rules which Harvard initiated, "the great pigskin game had been saved." *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1926, Sec. E, p. 7.
44. "Reid Condemns Football," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIII (December 1905), p. 300 The same letter was published in the *Harvard Crimson*, 9 November 1905. President Butler and Trustee Bangs of Columbia were aware of the letter the same day. See Butler, letter to Bangs, 9 November 1905, Francis S. Bangs Papers, "1905-1910" Folder, CUCF.
45. *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1926, Sec. E, p. 7
46. Ibid
47. Richard H. Dana, Lawyer, letter to President Eliot, 29 November 1905. Eliot Papers, Box 209, "Dana" Folder, HUA.
48. Paul J. Dashiell, letter to Theodore Roosevelt, 7 December 1905, Eliot Papers, Box 244, "Theodore Roosevelt" Folder, HUA. Dashiell was considered by Yale to be the leading official in America and had officiated all the Harvard-Yale games in the early 1900s. Harvard, possibly because it had been shut out by Yale in its three previous games, did not want Dashiell to officiate in 1905. Though Harvard threatened to cancel the game if Dashiell officiated, Dashiell was hired. See Edwin White, President & Manager of Yale University Football Association, letter to Walter Camp, 16 August 1905, and Camp letter to William T. Reid, Harvard Coach, 30 October 1905, Camp Papers, Box 48, "1904-05" Folder, Yale University Archives; Camp, letter to President Arthur T. Hadley, Yale, 27 November 1906. Camp Papers, Box 49. "1906" Folder, Yale University Archives; and *Harper's Weekly*, XLIX (28 October 1905), p. 1556.
49. Eliot, Telegram to MacCracken, 26 November 1905, as quoted in the *New York Daily Tribune*, 29 November 1905, p. 2.
50. MacCracken called the Old Rules Committee "a committee on misrule," charging it was an oligarchy comparable to that of the Russian Grand Dukes *New York Daily Tribune*, 21 December 1905, p. 10.
51. *New York Daily Tribune*, 18 December 1905, p. 10. The Committee was composed of Lorin Deland, former Harvard coach; L. B. R. Briggs, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and then President of Radcliffe College, H. '75; Dr. Edward Nichols, Harvard Medical School and team physician, H. '86; W. C. Forbes, former Harvard coach, H. '92; William H. Lewis, former Harvard coach, H. '95; Robert Wrenn, H. '95; and Bill Reid. H. '01. chairman.

52. "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 20 December 1905, p. 546, HUA.
53. Theodore Roosevelt, letter to President Eliot, 5 December 1905, Eliot Papers, Box 244, "Theodore Roosevelt" Folder. HUA.
54. The Committee consisted of E. K. Hall, Dartmouth, Charles Daly, West Point, J. A. Babbitt, Haverford, C. W. Savage, Oberlin, H. L. Williams, Minnesota, J. T. Lees, Nebraska, and F. H. Curtis, Texas. See *New York Times*, 29 December 1905 and *New York Sun*, 29 December 1905, "Columbia University Football Scrapbook," "Columbiana Collection," Columbia University
55. "National Intercollegiate Football Conference," National College Conference, letter to American Colleges, ca. 1 January 1906, HUA and *New York Times*, 30 December 1905, "Columbia University Football Scrapbook," Columbiana Collection, Columbia University.
56. "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 10 January 1906, p. 550, HUA
57. Guy Lewis, "Theodore Roosevelt's Role in the 1905 Football Controversy," p. 723.
58. *New York Times*, 13 January 1906, p. 7. The two groups agreed that the old committee would provide the chairman and the new committee would provide the secretary. L. M. Dennis of Cornell was elected chairman, and James Babbitt of Haverford was elected secretary. Babbitt resigned in favor of Bill Reid.
59. *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1926, Sec. E., p. 7. Reid reminisced that Harvard had 19 proposals, but Harvard, in fact, proposed 21 rule changes. See "Athletic Committee Minutes," *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, XIV (March 1906), pp. 486-488.
60. R. B. Merriman, "Football Reform," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIV (March 1906). p. 427 and *New York Times*, 16 January 1906, p. 8.
61. Compare the 21 recommendations of the Harvard Graduates' Athletic Association Ad Hoc Committee (see fn. 59) with the 1906 Rules (see *New York Times*, 1 April 1906, p. 12). Reid had been on the key "Committee on Open Play" with Walter Camp and E. K. Hall of Dartmouth. Most of the rule changes came from this committee. Reid and Hall favored numerous rule changes. Camp apparently would have been satisfied with one major change, the increase of yards to be gained from five to 10 in three downs. Reid and Hall wanted other changes to weaken the defense and strengthen the offense such as the forward pass, a neutral zone at the line of scrimmage, no tackling below the knees, and a limit of only six men on the defensive line of scrimmage. See *New York Times*, 23 January 1906, p. 7; 25 February 1906, p. 11; and 1 April 1906, p. 12.
62. "Report of the Committee on Physical Training, Athletic Sports and Sanitary Condition of all Buildings." ca. April 1906, Eliot Papers, Box 276, "April 1906" Folder, HUA.
63. "Harvard Athletic Committee Minutes," 2 April 1906, p. 561, HUA; "The Overseers Permit Football," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIV (June 1906), p. 694; Henry L. Higginson, Overseer, letter to President Eliot, 13 April 1906, Eliot Papers, Box 220, "Henry L. Higginson" Folder, HUA; and "Harvard President and Fellows Minutes," Vol. 18, 28 May 1906, p. 265, HUA
64. "Topics from the President's Report," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XIV (March 1906). p. 406
65. Another crisis erupted in 1909-10 over the vast number of injuries incurred in football. This time, the eastern powers had less to do with the reform than in the 1905-06 crisis as power in collegiate football was moving westward. See John S. Watterson, "The Football Crisis of 1909-1910: The Response of the Eastern 'Big Three,'" *Journal of Sport History*, VIII (Spring 1981). 33-49.

