

= 1879 Navy Midshipmen football team =

The 1879 Navy Midshipmen football team represented the United States Naval Academy in the 1879 college football season . The team was the first intercollegiate football squad to represent the United States Naval Academy . The team had no coach , as it was entirely student @-@ operated ; however , it was captained by squad member Bill Maxwell . The team played just a single game , which was a scoreless tie with the Baltimore Athletic Club . The team was entirely student operated , and was not supported by the Naval Academy 's faculty . The school would not have another football squad until 1882 .

= = Background = =

It is widely believed by football researchers that the playing of intercollegiate football began in November 1869 , when a player at Rutgers University challenged another player at the nearby College of New Jersey (now Princeton) . The contest more closely resembled soccer , with teams scoring by kicking a ball into the opponent 's net , and lacked a uniform rules structure . The game developed slowly ; the first rules were drafted in October 1873 , and only consisted of twelve guidelines . Even though the number of teams participating in the sport increased , the game was still effectively controlled by the College of New Jersey , who claimed eight national championships in ten years . Only Yale presented any form of challenge , claiming four national championships in the same time period .

The birth of football at the Naval Academy is debated among historians . The most accepted occurrence was in 1869 , when a midshipman (a student) returned from his leave with a football . While throwing the ball with a friend , it was dropped and a group of fellow midshipmen attempted to take it . A contest was eventually organized , which ended abruptly when the ball was kicked into the Severn River . However , biographer C. Douglas Kroll stated that the first evidence of a form of football at the United States Naval Academy came in 1857 , but the school 's cadets lost interest in the game shortly afterward , a theory supported by journalist Jack Clary . Regardless , the sport had been banned for several years prior to 1879 .

= = Schedule = =

= = Season summary = =

There were two separate efforts to establish a Naval Academy football team in 1879 . The first was guided by first @-@ classman J.H. Robinson , who developed it as a training regiment to help keep the school 's baseball team in shape . The team played the sport under rules that made it much closer to soccer , where the players were permitted only to kick the ball in order to advance it . The second effort , headed by first @-@ classman William John Maxwell was more successful in its efforts . Maxwell met with two of his friends , Tunstall Smith and Henry Woods , who played for the Baltimore Athletic Club and officially challenged their team to a game with the Naval Academy . A team was formed from academy first @-@ classmen , which Maxwell led as a manager , trainer , and captain . The team would wake up and practice before reveille and following drill and meals . The squad received encouragement from some of the faculty , who allowed them to eat a late dinner and skip final drill for additional practicing . This was against the direct orders of the school superintendent , who had banned football and similar activities .

The year 's sole contest was played on December 11 against the Baltimore Athletic Club . The opposition 's team was reportedly composed of players from Princeton , Yale , Pennsylvania , and Johns Hopkins . The Naval Academy hosted the Baltimore team on a temporary field drawn on part of the superintendent 's cow pasture . Rules decided upon between the teams established that the game was to be played under rugby rules . The Baltimore American and Chronicle , which covered the contest , described it as such :

The game , played under rugby rules , was a battle from beginning to end ? a regular knock down and drag out fight . Both sides became immediately excited and the audience was aroused to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by the spirited contest . The ball oscillated backward and forward over the ground without any material result .

The scrimmages were something awful to witness ? living , kicking , scrambling masses of humanity surging to and fro , each individual after the leather oval . If a Baltimorean got the ball and started for a run , he was unfailingly caught by one of the brawny Cadets and dashed to earth with five or six men falling on him .

The game was closely fought and was finally declared a scoreless tie by the referee about an hour after it began . Navy reportedly never gained possession of the ball . However , the Naval Academy managed to keep the Baltimore Athletic Club from ever being in a scoring position . On three separate occasions , Navy forced Baltimore back into its own end zone for a safety ; these were not worth any points until 1882 , however , so they offered Navy no benefit . The American and Chronicle reported that Maxwell , Craven , and Sample of Navy gave the strongest performances , but were also reckless in their play and were repeatedly penalized for jumping offside or kicking the ball out of play , a form of delay of game .

Some time after the game , Walter Camp , known as the " Father of American Football " , credited Maxwell as the inventor of the first football uniform . After he was informed that the Baltimore team he was playing outweighed his by an average of ten pounds , Maxwell looked for a way to make the teams more evenly matched . Using his knowledge of sailing , he decided to design a sleeveless canvas jacket which would make his players " difficult to grasp when they began to sweat " . He presented the design to the academy 's tailor , who created the double @-@ lined jackets which " were laced down the front and drawn tightly to fit snugly around a player 's body " . The weighted suits were worn by the team , which was confused by the " strangle , heavy , newfangled getups " .

= = Players = =

The 1879 Naval Academy team was made up of fifteen players at four different positions . The squad consisted of ten forwards , two halfbacks , two wholebacks , and one three @-@ quarterback . Maxwell , in addition to playing as a rusher , served as team manager and captain . John F. Luby , a first @-@ classman , served as an unofficial assistant coach . Only first @-@ classmen were asked to participate on the team . The age of the players , however , ranged several years due to the academy 's admission policy ; the school allowed for men between the ages of 14 and 18 to be admitted as first year students , which future player John B. Patton remarked made it " just a boys ' school " .

= = Postseason and aftermath = =

The first postseason college football game would not be played until 1902 , with the Pasadena Tournament of Roses ' establishment of the east @-@ west tournament game , later known as the Rose Bowl . The Midshipmen would not participate in their first Rose Bowl until the 1923 season , when they went 5 ? 1 ? 2 and tied with the Washington Huskies 14 ? 14 in the match . According to statistics compiled by the National Championship Foundation , Parke Davis , and the Billingsley college football research center , Yale was declared the 1882 season champion , giving them their eighth overall .

The Naval Academy would not produce another football team until the 1882 season . The 1882 team would be the first with a coach , being supported by Academy officials . The 1879 season was the last time that a Navy squad would play the Baltimore Athletic Club . Navy would finish the 1880s with four winning seasons , and an overall record of 14 ? 12 ? 2 , with one of those ties being the game against the Baltimore Athletic Club . Navy would outscore their opponents 292 ? 231 , and would finish the 19th century with an overall record of 54 ? 19 ? 3 . The lack of a coach for the 1879 season was one of the two times the Naval Academy squad lacked one , the other time being from 1883 through 1891 .

