

= 1896 Michigan Wolverines football team =

The 1896 Michigan Wolverines football team represented the University of Michigan in the 1896 college football season . They played their home games at Regents Field in Ann Arbor , Michigan and competed in the newly established Western Conference , later to be known as the Big Ten Conference . The team , with William Ward as head coach , started the season with nine consecutive wins in which the Wolverines outscored their opponents by a combined score of 256 to 4 . In the final game of the season , played on Thanksgiving Day at the Chicago Coliseum , the team lost a close game to Amos Alonzo Stagg 's University of Chicago team by a score of 7 ? 6 . The 1896 Michigan ? Chicago game was the first college football game played indoors , and the last portion of the game was also played under electric lights . Henry M. Senter was the team captain .

= = Preseason developments = =

Before the 1896 football season took the field , two developments occurred . First , Michigan joined the Western Inter @-@ collegiate Athletic Conference ( later renamed the Big Ten Conference ) . The 1896 season was the first for Michigan in conference play . Michigan 's three conference games in 1896 were against Purdue , Minnesota and Chicago . Second , William McCauley , who had led Michigan to a 17 ? 2 ? 1 record in two seasons as coach , resigned as Michigan 's football coach . Princeton graduate , William Ward , was hired to replace McCauley . Before leaving Ann Arbor in November 1896 , McCauley assisted Ward in coaching the 1896 team .

Michigan conducted tryouts for the 1896 football team at Sand Beach . The Michiganansian for 1897 reported on the group appearing for try @-@ outs as follows : " Never before had the Athletic field been so teeming with aspirants for foot @-@ ball honors . "

= = Schedule = =

= = Season summary = =

= = = Michigan 18 , Michigan State Normal 0 = = =

Michigan opened its 1896 season with a home game against Michigan State Normal , later known as Eastern Michigan University . The Wolverines won , 18 ? 0 , scoring two touchdowns in the first half and a goal and a safety in the second half . The World of New York reported on the game as follows : " The University of Michigan opened its football season here this afternoon by a loosely played game with the Michigan State Normal eleven . Only four members of last year 's ' Varsity eleven were in the game , although four of them were on the ground ready to play . "

= = = Michigan 44 , Grand Rapids High School 0 = = =

Michigan played its second game of the season at home against the team from Grand Rapids High School , ( Now Grand Rapids Central High School [ Mich . ] ) . The game was played in halves of 20 and 10 minutes , and Michigan won easily by a score of 44 to 0 . A newspaper account of the game described Michigan 's performance as follows :

" Michigan is now rapidly rounding into form and the team played a much stronger game today than a week ago . Several of the new men did some creditable work , and the interference at all times was excellent . Hazen Pingree , at half , made several brilliant runs , and Hannan , at full , punted very well . Bennett , Wombacher , Palmer and Farnham also showed up well in the line . Grand Rapids was never able to gain and the ' varsity scored as she pleased . "

Michigan 's lineup in the game was Palmer ( left end ) , Giovanni " Count " Villa ( left tackle ) , Fred Baker ( left guard ) , John David Wombacher ( center ) , John W.F. Bennett ( right guard ) ,

Frederick Henninger ( right tackle ) , Thaddeus Farnham ( right end ) , Richards ( quarterback ) , Hazen Pingree ( right halfback ) , Thomas Jesse Drumheller and Steel ( left halfback ) , and William Caley and Hannan ( fullback ) .

= = = Michigan 28 , College of Physicians and Surgeons 0 = = =

Michigan 's third game of the season was a mid @-@ week match against the team from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Chicago . The game was played in 15 minute halves at Ann Arbor 's Regents Field . Halfback Gustave Ferbert scored a touchdown " on a brilliant twenty @-@ yard run " in the first half , and Villa and Pingree scored two touchdowns each for Michigan . Steel and Hogg each added two goals after touchdown for Michigan . A newspaper account of the game described Michigan 's performance as follows :

" The game put up by Michigan was the best of the season . This was the first game in which the ' varsity work has been tried against a heavy team , but , as a rule , the interference was fast and sure and their team work good . Farnham , Pingree , Ferbert , and Villa carried off the honors for Michigan . "

Michigan 's line up against the Physicians and Surgeons was Palmer and Ayers ( left end ) , Giovanni Villa ( left tackle ) , Bert Carr ( left guard ) , John David Wombacher ( center ) , John W.F. Bennett ( right guard ) , Frederick Henninger ( right tackle ) , Thaddeus Farnham ( right end ) , J. DeForest Richards ( quarterback ) , Gustave Ferbert and Gordon ( left halfback ) , Hazen Pingree ( right halfback ) , Steel and James R. Hogg ( fullback ) .

= = = Michigan 66 , Rush Lake Forest 0 = = =

Michigan 's fourth game was played against Rush Lake Forest two days after the game against the Physicians and Surgeons team . Michigan compiled its highest point total of the season , winning the game 66 ? 0 . Through the first four games of the season , Michigan had outscored its opponents by a combined tally of 156 to 0 .

= = = Michigan 16 , Purdue 0 = = =

The team traveled to Lafayette , Indiana to open its conference schedule against the Purdue Boilermakers and came away with a fifth straight shutout and a score of 16 ? 0 . The game was played in front of a crowd of 2 @,@ 000 at Purdue 's Stuart Field . One newspaper described the game as " the most desperate game that has ever been played on Stuart Field " and concluded that " Michigan won by superior weight . " The same account noted that " the prettiest play of the game " was a 40 ? yard run by Ferbert and has tackle by Marshall . Michigan 's scoring came on two touchdowns by Caley and one by Hogg . Michigan 's lineup was Loomis Hutchinson ( left end ) , Giovanni Villa ( left tackle ) , Carey ( left guard ) , Wombacher ( center ) , Bennett ( right guard ) , Henninger ( right tackle ) , Farnham ( right end ) , Greenleaf ( quarterback ) , Ferbert ( left halfback ) , Caley ( right halfback ) , and Hogg ( fullback ) .

= = = Michigan 44 , Lehigh 0 = = =

Michigan 's sixth opponent was the Lehigh Mountain Hawks . The game was played at the Detroit Athletic Club field in Detroit and ended in a sixth straight shutout by a one @-@ sided score of 44 ? 0 . Michigan 's scoring came on seven touchdowns and five goals after touchown ( all five kicked by halfback Ferbert ) . During the 60 minutes of play , the ball was in Lehigh 's possession " not more than ten minutes , " and most of that was in the first half . One newspaper account stated that " the Eastern boys were outclassed from start to finish . " The same report gave the following account of the game :

" The team play of the University of Michigan was excellent and the interference as good as has ever been seen in this city . The star of the game was probably Ferbert , though the plays of Villa ,

Farnham , Henninger , and Caley were at times brilliant . ... The University of Michigan is celebrating the victory here tonight , and pointing proudly to the fact that the best Pennsylvania [ 1896 national champions ] could do against Lehigh was 32 to 0 . "

Michigan 's lineup in the Lehigh game was Thad Farnham ( left end ) , Giovanni " Count " Villa ( left tackle ) , Carr ( left guard ) , Wombacher ( center ) , Baker ( right guard ) , Henninger ( right tackle ) , Hutchinson ( right end ) , Howard Felver ( quarterback ) , Caley ( left halfback ) , Gustave Ferbert ( right halfback ) , and Hogg ( fullback ) .

The 1897 Michiganensian noted that the game was Lehigh 's worst defeat of the 1896 season and suggested that the game was important in measuring Michigan 's standing : " This was the only contest with an eastern team and furnished some basis for comparison . ... Comparison with the eastern leaders was necessarily indirect , but it can conservatively be said that at this time Michigan was playing in much the same form as the great eastern quartette . "

= = = Michigan 6 , Minnesota 4 = = =

The first close game of the season game in early November in a conference game against the Minnesota Golden Gophers in Minneapolis . In a game played in 35 minute halves at Athletic Field in Minneapolis , the Wolverines came away with the win by a score of 6 ? 4 . Michigan came within ten yards of a touchdown five minutes into the game but did not score . The first half ended in a scoreless tie . When Michigan scored its touchdown in the second half , Michigan fans in the bleachers signaled the event with cowbells . Michigan 's touchdown was scored by fullback duffy and the goal after touchdown was kicked by Ferbert . Minnesota responded with a touchdown ( worth 4 points under 1896 rules ) , but the score came at the far corner of the field where a straight kick for the goal after touchdown ( worth 2 points ) was impossible . Accordingly , Minnesota attempted a double kick , kicking the ball first to the fullback Loomis . Loomis caught the ball so close to the goal posts that his kick for goal " was easily stopped by Michigan players . " The blocked kick was the difference in a close game . Michigan 's lineup was Hutchins ( right end ) , Henninger ( right tackle ) , Bennett ( right guard ) , Wombacher ( center ) , Carr ( left guard ) , Villa ( left tackle ) , Farnham ( left end ) , Felver ( quarterback ) , Caley ( right halfback ) , Ferbert ( left halfback ) , and Hogg and Duff at fullback .

= = = Michigan 10 , Oberlin 0 = = =

After the road game against Minnesota , the Wolverines defeated Oberlin College by a score of 10 ? 0 in front of a crowd of 1 @, @ 000 spectators in Ann Arbor . An account of the game published in The World of New York reported : " Michigan put a substitute team against Oberlin to @-@ day and won by making two touchdowns in the first half . Oberlin forced the fighting towards the end of the game . "

= = = Michigan 28 , Wittenberg 0 = = =

In the final home game of the 1896 season , Michigan defeated Wittenberg College by a score of 28 ? 0 . The game was described by the press as " a fine exhibition of football , " and the Wittenberg team was credited with playing " a sportsmanlike and fast game . " The game was played on " extremely muddy grounds " at Regents Field , but the conditions did not stop Michigan 's interference . Three minutes into the game , Michigan 's right end scored the first touchdown " on a pretty quarterback kick from the thirty yard line . " Michigan reportedly " found no trouble in gaining as she pleased , " scoring 18 points in the first half and 10 more in the second . Halfbacks Coley and Pingree each scored two touchdowns for Michigan . The game was played in halves of 20 and 15 minutes . Michigan 's lineup in the game was Farnham ( left end ) , Villa ( left tackle ) , Carr ( left guard ) , Wombacher ( center ) , Bennett ( right guard ) , Henninger ( right tackle ) , Greenleaf ( right end ) , Drumheller ( quarterback ) , Pingree and Gordon ( left halfback ) , Coley ( right halfback ) , and Hogg ( fullback ) .

Through the first nine games , Michigan was undefeated and had outscored its opponents by a combined score of 256 to 4 .

= = = Chicago 7 , Michigan 6 = = =

The final game of the season , to decide the Western Conference championship , matched Michigan against Amos Alonzo Stagg 's Chicago Maroons on Thanksgiving Day . Michigan lost the game , which was described as " one of the most desperately contested games ever played in Chicago , " by a score of 7 ? 6 . The game featured " few trick plays , " as both teams relied on " straight , hard football . " Hazen Pingree , Jr . ( whose father , Hazen S. Pingree , had been elected Governor of Michigan three weeks earlier ) was the star of the game for Michigan , as one newspaper reported that Pingree 's effort " in the first half was the ' whole thing , ' the plucky little fellow seldom failing to make the required distance . " Pingree was unable to play in the second half , and Gustave Ferbert , who later became a millionaire in the Klondike Gold Rush , took over in the second half and " was equally effective . "

Chicago 's scoring came on a blocked punt resulting in a safety and a drop kick ( worth five points under the rules at the time ) by Clarence Herschberger from the 45 ? yard line . Michigan 's sole touchdown came in the second half when Henninger was pushed into the endzone from the two @-@ yard line , and Ferbert " kicked an easy goal . " Michigan drove the ball to Chicago 's 20 ? yard line late in the game , but Chicago recovered a fumble and " Michigan 's chances of victory were dashed . "

The Michigananensian described the defeat as follows :

" There had been every reason to expect a victory from Chicago . Michigan had played strong and consistent foot ball throughout her schedule ? Chicago had been erratic and unsteady . But there is certainly no sport more full of surprises than foot @-@ ball , and the Thanksgiving Day contest of ' 96 furnished as sensational a surprise in as exciting a contest as had ever come off on a western gridiron . There was one great difference in the character of the play of the two teams . Michigan was playing her stock game of football , hard and steady , the game she could have been depended on to play at any time . Chicago seemed to have been trained and nerved to this one game . There could have been little doubt what the result of a series of contests would have been . But this one game , Chicago won by good generalship , by the most advantageous use of her greatest resource ? a magnificent player in a telling place .

= = = Indoor football = = =

The most unusual feature of the Michigan @-@ Chicago game on Thanksgiving Day was that it was played indoors at the Chicago Coliseum and was " the first collegiate game of football played under a roof . " Adding to the novelty , as daylight turned to darkness , the field inside the Coliseum was lit with electric lighting . According to a newspaper account , the field grew dark in the second half , and play was halted for ten minutes to discuss whether play should continue . Play was resumed , and the lights were finally turned on after Michigan scored a touchdown .

The crowd was stated in varying press accounts to be either 15 @,@ 000 , or 20 @,@ 000 . Noting that the game was played in the same building " in which five months ago W. J. Bryan was nominated for the presidency , " the press proclaimed the experiment in indoor football to be a success :

" One thing at least was settled by the game , and that is , that indoor football is literally and figuratively speaking a howling success . The men had no trouble in catching punts , and football was played on its merits , without the handicaps of a wet field or a strong wind . Toward the end of the second half it got very dark , and the spectators were treated to a novelty in the shape of football by electric light . "

Another newspaper described the novelty of indoor football as follows :

" Indoor football is an innovation , but it promises to become a permanency for late games . While the other fields about Chicago were sloppy and the players were floundering about in the seas of

mud , the athletes in the Coliseum played on dry surface and secure from the elements . A two @-@ inch layer of tan bark was placed over the hard earth , and there was no inconvenience from dust . None of the punts touched the beams overhead and spectators and players were captivated with the comfortable conditions under which the game was played . Darkness came on at 4 : 00 and the players were scarcely distinguishable for a time , but electric lights soon rendered each play distinct . "

= = Starting lineup = =

Ends

Henry Mortimer Senter ( captain ) , Houghton , Michigan

George Greenleaf , Brazil , Indiana

Thaddeus Loomis Farnham , Rosford , Ohio

Loomis Hutchinson , Ceresco , Michigan

Tackles

Frank Villa , Walla Walla , Washington

Frederick W. Henninger , Barberton , Ohio

Guards

Bert Carr , Cedar Springs , Michigan

John W. F. Bennett , Jackson , Michigan

Fred L. Baker , Hillsdale , Michigan

Center

John Wombacher , Joliet , Illinois

Quarterbacks

Thomas Jesse Drumheller , Walla Walla , Washington

Howard C. Felver , Batavia , Illinois

J. De Forest Richards

Fullbacks

James R. Hogg , Knoxville , Tennessee ( St. Albans Military Academy )

Ignatius M. Duffy , Ann Arbor , Michigan

Halfbacks

Gustave Herman Ferbert , Cleveland , Ohio

William Caley , Boulder , Colorado ( University of Colorado )

Hazen Stuart Pingree , Jr . ,

= = Coaching staff = =

Coach : William Ward

Assistant coach : William McCauley

Trainer : James Robinson , hired in 1896 from his position with the Manhattan Athletic Club

Manager : Ward W. Hughes

Assistant manager : Charles O. Cook