

# IU football troubled by fobs and 'Bunny' Hare in 1906

Rumors have a way of getting around, and in March of 1906 a rather unsettling one was picked up by the *Bloomington Courier*. As one of the writers put it, "It has been learned definitely that the rumor that Indiana's football men were on a 'strike' is true, and all the men unite in the assertion that they will not play on the Varsity next year, unless the Athletic Association stay by its alleged agreement to supply them with gold watch fobs."

As if football in its early raw stages didn't present enough problems. According to the *Courier*, the IU football coach, James Sheldon, had promised the tangible reward in return for a winning season. But it was the self-funded Athletic Association that had to foot the bill for the fobs.

Even though a Bloomington booster by the name of Jeff P. Kemp,



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

offered to put up some money on a matching basis with the Association, nothing came of it. Commented the *Courier*, "So the team went on a 'strike,' and as matters now stand it seems that a large majority of the regulars will refuse to report for practice next fall."

Subsequent issues of the *Courier* did not reveal whether the strike got the desired effect, but there are some very interesting early glimpses of IU football in the pages of local papers.

In the dispute the spokesperson

for the team was its quarterback, who had the improbable name of "Bunny" Hare. The young man from Noblesville was multi-talented, athletically speaking, since he played on the varsity baseball team, as well as the football team.

His career at IU had its ups and downs. The *Bloomington Evening World* of Dec. 18, 1905, reported that Hare, whose real first name was Frank, was heir to a carriage-manufacturing firm, and was leaving school to work for his father. Grades may have had something to do with his decision, since he was also an active member of a social fraternity and considered quite a catch for coeds.

Apparently the report from Noblesville was premature, since Hare was back at IU in the fall of 1906. In fact, his return set off a controversy

with the university's arch rival up the Monon line. Over a front page article, the *Weekly Courier* ran a short and simple headline: "SPITE WORK Shown in Purdue's Protest of Bunny Hare."

Quoting from a "Chicago dispatch," the newspaper told its readers, "One incident occurred during the meeting of the college conference today to mar the general good feeling. This was the disqualification of Captain Hare, of Indiana. Purdue lodged a protest early in the season against the Hoosier quarterback and pressed the matter before the eligibility committee in the afternoon session."

What on earth had the young man done? Well, according to the Purdue representative, Hare had turned professional by accepting money as a member of a Noblesville

team.

Specifically, the Purdue complaint said, "Hare had deficient scholarship and had played on a semi-professional baseball team notorious for its consisting of paid players."

Hare's reply was that he had received only \$1.25, which he spent on cab fare and a dinner. His additional argument was that because the Noblesville team's field was not enclosed with a fence, it could not possibly be a professional playing situation.

IU lost the argument and Hare, who was the star of the team. Having been disqualified, the young man turned pro after all. In 1908 the *Evening World* brought its readers up to date with the information that Hare was switching from the Sioux City Western League Club to the Indianapolis Reserves.