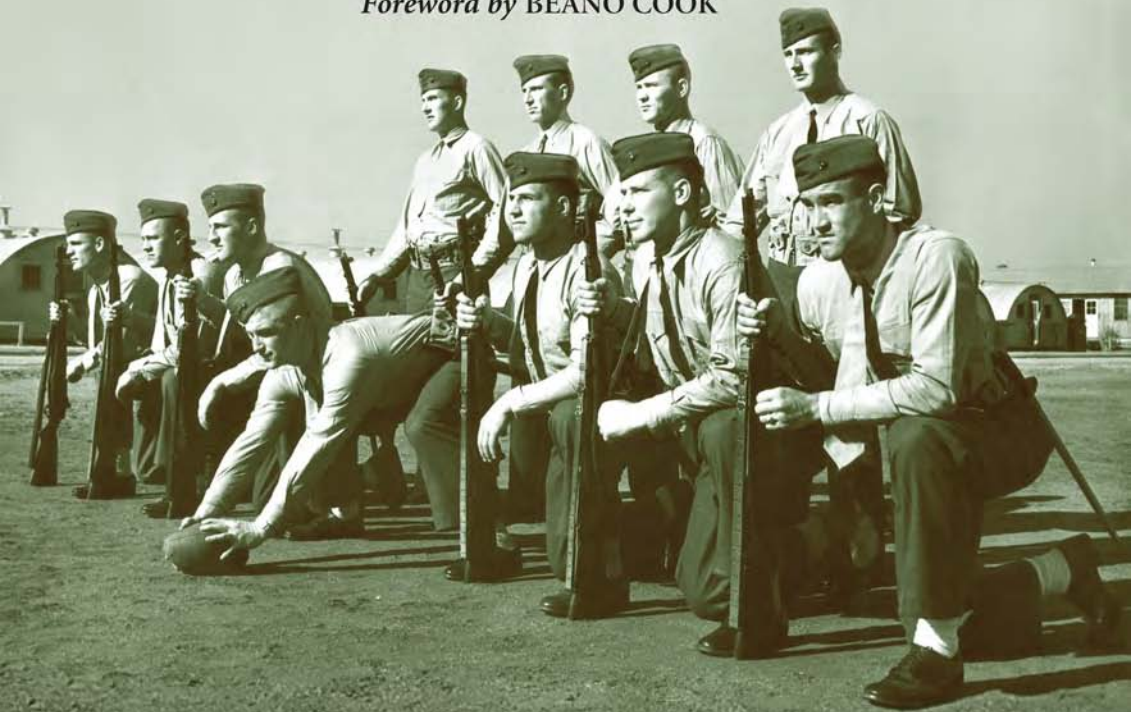


“FOOTBALL! NAVY! WAR!”

*How Military “Lend-Lease” Players
Saved the College Game and
Helped Win World War II*

WILBUR D. JONES, JR.

Foreword by BEANO COOK



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McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Jefferson, North Carolina, and London

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA


Jones, Wilbur D.

“Football! Navy! War!”: how military “lend-lease” players saved the college game and helped win World War II / Wilbur D. Jones, Jr. ; foreword by Beano Cook.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7864-4219-5

softcover : 50# alkaline paper 

1. Football — United States — History — 20th century.
2. College sports — United States — History — 20th century.
3. Football players — United States — Biography. 4. United States. Navy — Biography. 5. Navy-yards and naval stations — United States — History — 20th century. 6. Football and war — United States. 7. World War, 1939-1945. I. Title.

GV959.5.U6J66 2009

796.332'63097309044 — dc22

2009014121

British Library cataloguing data are available

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On the cover: College football players pose during their Marine Corps training at Parris Island, SC, in 1942 (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)

Manufactured in the United States of America

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640
www.mcfarlandpub.com

To those World War II servicemen
who played military and college football
to harden them for combat,
then lost their lives fighting for our country
on foreign battlefields, particularly those United States Marines
who died on Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945.

These include former Camp Lejeune coach Lieutenant Jack Chevigny (Notre Dame, coach Chicago Cardinals), who was killed in action on Iwo Jima, and twelve Marines who played in the Mosquito Bowl on Guadalcanal in December 1944, who died on Okinawa:

4th Marines: end Jim Quinn (Amherst); end David Nathan Schreiner (All-America Wisconsin); tackle Bob Bauman (Wisconsin); and tackle Hubbard Hinde (Southern Methodist);

29th Marines: end Chuck Behan (DeKalb Teachers, Detroit Lions, Camp Lejeune 1943, Navy Cross); end George Edward Murphy (Notre Dame, Lejeune 1943); tackle Ed Van Order (Cornell); tackle John Hebrank (Lehigh); center Red DeGreve (Michigan); back Tony Butkovich (Illinois, All-America Purdue); back Wayne "Rusty" Johnston (Marquette); and back Johnny Perry (Wake Forest, Duke, Navy Cross).

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Acknowledgments

I am exceptionally grateful to several people for pointing my research in the right direction, and helping me turn a burning idea into a manuscript. My friend and World War II navy veteran Leo Bednarzyck introduced me to Marine Corps sports historian Col. John Gunn, USMC (Ret.), an enormous reservoir of material and expert on World War II football who believed in my project. John, a retired newspaper sports editor and author of two books on Marine Corps football, allowed me full access to his vast sports library in his Gulf Breeze, Fla., home and put me in touch with several World War II players for interviews. He loaned me game programs, annual periodicals, books, and personal files.

John, even though (at this writing) your health condition has diminished your capability to pursue your occupation, I want you to know how much I appreciate receiving your advice and facilitating my task. I also thank your children, Bruce, Vikki, Becky, and Laura, for giving me permission to use your material and for donating your library to the University of North Carolina–Wilmington (UNCW).

Through John's weekly online column, three football history enthusiasts stepped forward. Jack Hilliard, a retired Greensboro, N.C., television producer and football collector, provided me with tons of material, particularly on Bainbridge Naval Training Center and Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice. His continuing interest in my success — our success — inspired me. With Gunn and Hilliard providing me a major portion of my research material and urging me on, producing the manuscript was a cinch.

Having ESPN's Beano Cook, the country's premier college football historian and commentator, write the foreword to this book is a rare professional honor and a personal coup. I had him in mind for several years as the right person to approach, but how would I do it? Through sheer coincidental good luck, his ESPN producer associate, John Lukacs, was a passenger on the Valor Tours World War II Battle of the Bulge tour I led in June 2008. Because

of John's intervention, Beano's ageless analytical charm and omnipotent memory give this book a special appeal. The fact that Beano found me someone with whom he could rap about the football days of his youth probably was one reason for our resulting frequent phone conversations.

Early in my research, Mike Miklas of Charlestown, Md., dedicated to preserving the Bainbridge memory through the Bainbridge Naval Training Center Historical Association, arranged and hosted my exploratory visit to the old site. I spent the day with Mike for a tour and interviews with locals who remembered the facility, and garnered significant research material. The Cecil County (Md.) Historical Society, home to old Bainbridge, publicized my effort through historian Mike Dixon and sent me material.

Larry Clark, dean of the Cameron School of Business at UNCW, loaned me 1940s football guides of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, vitally rich sources to which I constantly referred. Jerry Parnell, a first-class reference librarian at UNCW's Randall Library, conducted valuable literature searches.

The Naval Academy sports information office facilitated an interview with the fabulous Clyde "Smackover" Scott, of Little Rock, Ark., my World War II military football hero. We had a marvelous conversation. I also enjoyed informative discussions with a number of other World War II players, including Julian Pressley, George "Sonny" Franck, and Dave Rankin.

John Thorpe, of DeBary, Fla., sent me substantial information about the Great Lakes navy team. John Witt, of Elkmont, Ala., loaned me his scrapbook of his father's participation with the Keesler (Miss.) Air Field and Hawaii Air Force teams.

I also thank two organizations in particular for granting me permission to use photographs: the National Collegiate Athletic Association and Street & Smith's/*The Sporting News* Annuals.

My wife, Carroll, my loyal and best constructive critic and soundboard, as always urged and helped me immensely. My sons Andrew, a sports journalist with Buster Sports in the North Carolina Triangle, and David, a Los Angeles marketer, frequently advised me. Sportswriter Brian Hendrickson, whose beat is the Portland Trail Blazers, and historian and author Dr. Chris Fonvielle, a UNCW professor, also played devil's advocate in reviewing and improving my work.

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Player collegiate loyalties “came down like the Wall of Jericho,” noted sportswriter Furman Bisher, who wrote postwar, “of sacrifice in return for loyalty to country by male athletes who found themselves campus nomads in the military system.... Many a football career was born on service fields ... and heaven only knows how many were left there, not to mention those left under white crosses in military cemeteries.” Lieutenant Paul Brown, wartime Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center coach and future member of the professional Hall of Fame, stated: “Things like football tended to dim in importance to men who, two or three months later, might be lying dead on some beach in the South Pacific. It was something I never could reconcile myself to while coaching service football” (Bisher and Brown quoted in Bisher, “You’re in the Army, Mr. Trippi,” *Southern Living*, September 1984).

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Foreword

by Beano Cook

Since the late nineteenth century, Americans have done two things better than anyone else: fight wars and play football. So it's hardly a coincidence that the relationship between the two has been one of the most enduring in this nation's history. If you don't think our proud military tradition and our national passion are joined at the hip pads, how else do you explain the roar of Air Force jets flying over your stadium? The snappy color guard standing at attention during the playing of the national anthem? The precise brassy, Sousafied sounds of marching bands?

The evidence abounds. From Operations Goalpost and Varsity in World War II to Operation Linebacker in Vietnam, the military has long demonstrated an affinity for football terminology. And try to go one fall weekend without hearing television commentators utter the words "blitz," "trenches" or "bomb." It can't be done.

A more challenging task, though, is pinpointing the exact point in history when the link between football and war became embedded in our national consciousness. It's like trying to make an open-field tackle on Jim Thorpe.

The similarities of war and football probably seemed vaguely familiar to the spectators watching the lines of Princeton and Rutgers clash in 1869, which was, after all, just four years after Appomattox. Maybe the connection was made when America's earliest gridiron stars marched off to the Spanish-American War. You may not know that the famed football stadium at West Point is named for Captain Dennis Michie, the "father of Army football," who was killed in Cuba in 1898. Or perhaps it was during the Roaring Twenties, an era when coaches, radio announcers and poetic sportswriters, many of whom had witnessed World War I firsthand, used battlefield imagery in their descriptions of games.

One thing, however, is for certain: there was never a time, and prob-

ably never will be, when war and football were more closely coupled than World War II. That's because football, in so many ways, saved America. And the war, in turn, saved football.

It's a forgotten yet fascinating era of conjoined football and military history which, thankfully, Wilbur Jones has expertly exhumed and chronicled in these pages. The association was born out of both necessity and natural design. It is perhaps appropriate to presume that had the Associated Press conducted a poll shortly after December 7, 1941, the United States would likely not have received a single a vote. Pearl Harbor had left the nation battered, humiliated and uncertain of the future. The Rose Bowl game, after all, had to be moved from Pasadena and played in a misty rain in Durham, North Carolina. There were losing battles abroad and on the homefront: the manpower drain and travel restrictions would force hundreds of colleges to drop football for anywhere from one season to the duration of the war. A game plan for the nation's survival, as well as the survival of the game, had to be devised.

Fortunately, as Stanford coach Clark Shaughnessy said, football is "a great war game" — the solution was already in place. After all, where better than college campuses to train young men to study and lead — and gridirons to teach them to fight? And what better teachers could one envision than the coaches of the era, many of whom could be considered drill instructors in their own right? "When Paul Brown sends a team on the field it's as tough mentally and physically as any commando unit." This is just one of the gems unearthed by Jones in his extensive research. And Brown is just one of the coaching legends that appears in these pages. There are cameos from Paul "Bear" Bryant and Bud Wilkinson, just to name two. There are also some unfamiliar, yet noteworthy names such as Lt. Jack Chevigny, the Knute Rockne-era Notre Dame star who coached the University of Texas in the 1930s and who was killed on Iwo Jima.

While the U.S. Army limited its personnel to intramural sports, the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard ultimately placed thousands of males in more than 130 schools that had been awarded NROTC, V-5, V-7 and V-12 training programs. Put simply by Jones, "the Navy had rescued football." The result was a win-win situation. Because of their love of competition, physical prowess and single-minded pursuit of victory, athletes — football players especially — made excellent officers, soldiers, sailors and Marines. Only the helmets and uniforms changed — the attitude stayed the same.

If I had to be in a huddle or a foxhole, I would want to be surrounded by Marines. Jones writes that Marine V-12 players received two Navy Crosses, seven Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars and other assorted decorations for valor on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. As far as individual hardware goes, the Heisman Trophy and Maxwell Award pale in comparison.

A section of this book that is of particular interest to me describes the role of Admiral Thomas Hamilton, my former boss at the University of Pittsburgh, in formulating the Navy's V-5 pre-flight training program. Hamilton wore many hats during his long career — he was a player, coach and athletic director at the Naval Academy, athletic director at Pitt and commissioner of the Pacific Eight Conference, as well as executive officer on the USS *Enterprise* during the war — but he is most famous for saying, after he eschewed the opportunity to kick a tying field goal in the famous Army-Navy game in 1946, that “a tie is like kissing your sister.” Hamilton was on to something. From 1941 through 1945, ties were not acceptable either.

Another win was the fact that the situation provided America with some of the best — and most bewildering — football that the game would know. As their training progressed, players were transferred between schools so often that Jones appropriately calls them “Lend-Lease players.” For example, during one strange season, the University of Michigan used ten former Wisconsin Badgers to beat Wisconsin. Another player/trainee commenced his career at North Carolina, played a few games for Duke, then returned to Chapel Hill in time to suit up against the Blue Devils. So strange was the situation that Minnesota's Golden Gophers once lost to an Iowa Navy Pre-Flight team coached by none other than their own legendary pre-war mentor, Major Bernie Bierman of the USMC.

Simultaneously educational and entertaining, this book is as solid a play-book as I've read. Jones left no game program or annual unpursued, no archive unused. His meticulous research and storytelling style combine to form a potent pairing that rivals that of wartime football's most famous duo, Army's Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis, “Mr. Inside” and “Mr. Outside.” Only question remains for me: How did the WAVE cheerleaders compare to the USC Song Girls?

From tales of Heisman Trophy winners and hobbled combat veterans to 4-Fs and feared tacklers, there are plenty of stories here. There's the odyssey of Bob Steuber, perhaps the only player in history to play collegiately after playing professionally. There's the Penn coach who worked in a defense plant mornings and coached during afternoons. There are the stories behind the origins of some of the game's famous nicknames, such as Elroy “Crazy Legs” Hirsch, Clyde “Smackover” Scott, and Charlie “Choo-Choo” Justice.

As for Justice, you'll learn just how close he was to attending Duke — the University of North Carolina's archrival. Blue Devils fans, you can thank Admiral Yamamoto for that one. You'll also learn how Justice eventually came to call Chapel Hill home. All I can say is that it was one incredible package deal; the recipient of his scholarship probably had the slowest time in the 40-yard dash in the program's football history.

Although the majority of this book deals with the military's relationship to the Saturday game, there's plenty of information on the war's effect on the National Football League, including the records of such war-necessitated combination teams as the "Steagles" — the joint Pittsburgh Steelers–Philadelphia Eagles hybrid that toughed out a 5–4–1 record during the 1943 season and helped keep professional football going.

Oh, and you can't forget the names. There's Sgt. Harvard Yale Princeton, "a paratrooper player at Fort Benning." And a key member of the staff at Great Lakes Naval Training Center was named Steve Belichick — yes, the father of NFL coach Bill Belichick.

This book, with its breakdown of almost every key player's height and weight and major military training station's football history and records, is a stats junkie's dream. You'll learn about some of football's forgotten dynasties, wartime wonders such as the Bainbridge Navy Commodores, the El Toro Flying Marines, the Great Lakes Bluejackets, the Iowa Pre-Flight Seahawks, the Fleet City Bluejackets, the Norman Naval Air Station Zoomers, the North Carolina Pre-Flight Cloudbusters, the St. Mary's Pre-Flight Air Devils, the Tuskegee Army Air Field Warhawks, the Keesler Field Commandos, the Fourth Air Force Flyers, and the Randolph Field Skymasters. As a youth growing up during the war, I remember when some of these strange names appeared, fleetingly, in the AP poll. Thanks to Jones, they take the field once again.

Unlike the war, this narrative does not end with V-J Day. You'll also read of postwar showdowns including the celebrated clash between Fleet City and El Toro after which several El Toro players were reportedly shipped to China and Japan for occupation duty as punishment for losing. Talk about high stakes. There were poignant postseason honors, too, such as the "All-Purple Heart Collegiate All-America" team whose members had recovered from combat wounds to star for their college squads.

"During the war," writes Jones, "American armed forces transported freedom and football around the globe." American troops played everywhere from Algeria to Ireland. Even in Nagasaki, Japan, where the bizarre "Atom Bowl" was played amid the rubble and radiation on the site where the second atomic bomb was dropped.

Technological advancements were not limited to the battlefield. Working on gridiron laboratories, coaches helped propel the game into the modern era. While manpower shortages necessitated the suspension of the freshman-eligibility rule, some military teams with manpower surpluses used two different squads for different offensive formations, an evolutionary step toward the eventual multiple-platoon system. There were also schematic improvements that not only would change the way the game was played, but

also the way it was coached and appeared to spectators. Improvements in pass protection, the use of motion and multiple offensive sets to spread defenses, as well as free substitution and fluid defensive schemes developed during World War II would all fuse into the modern incarnation we watch on television today.

But these innovations and ramifications were merely the residual effects of a more significant achievement. Indeed, as Jones writes, “American football, as perhaps no other sport, justified itself during World War II.” In early September 1945, another poll, one infinitely more important than the one which was soon to be tabulated by the Associated Press, was released. And the United States sat atop the rankings. We have the sacrifices of millions of men and women — plus football — to thank for that.

Consider this book your ticket to the story of great games, greater names and perhaps the most important era the game of football will ever see. Thumb your way through the pages, shuffle down the row and take your seat. That’s it right there, in the national nostalgia section, right on the fifty-yard line. As for the popcorn, well, that’s your responsibility.

Beano Cook, a well-known ESPN commentator and historian, is widely considered one of the most knowledgeable media personalities in the business. He has been around college football in various capacities for more than fifty years.

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Preface: “Saved from the Junk Pile”

“College gridiron circles which staggered through 1943 face 1944 with conditions much improved.... In future years when anything resembling a naval station wants a football game from a top flight team, do it. For college football has been saved by the navy from the junk pile of non-essentials scrapped in these war days.”¹

Popular Blue Network sportscaster Harry Wismer, predicting the 1944 college football landscape in the middle of World War II, lavishly credited the Department of the Navy for its role, its “inestimable value,” in saving wartime football by allowing its college officer candidate trainee-students to play on the varsities.² The army refused its college students this opportunity.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association, the college sport’s governing organization, mightily underscored Wismer’s affirmation. After reviewing the previous two seasons just completed under arduous uncertainties, and of course without knowing when war would end, the NCAA enthusiastically thanked the navy for its endorsement of football to supplement the war effort.

The Department had intentions besides saving college football, important as that could be. It had a war to win at sea and on Pacific islands. It needed tough, disciplined, motivated naval surface and submarine officers and aviators, and Marine Corps lieutenants and all their crews. At the outset of the war, naval and Marine officials inaugurated vigorous physical and mental conditioning programs to train and develop teamwork, and leaders’ motor skills, endurance, and fortitude. A whole new wartime force of yesterday’s casual civilians had to be constructed. Football fit this need perfectly.

The title of a training manual on rigorous physical and mental strength shouted out its demonstrative motto and organizational credo: “Football! Navy! War!” Created overnight by flight training director Commander

Thomas J. Hamilton, a carrier pilot, former Naval Academy head coach, and the Football Writers Association's 1942 "Man of the Year," the rallying cry symbolized the immediate transformation of civilians into fighters. This book's title recognizes football's exceptionally effective motivational role.

Harry Wismer, the NCAA, school administrators, and the public wondered what would happen to this revered sport, college football. They must have asked questions. What would become of the game and the public's appetite and demand for it? Would it go extinct, be discarded, hibernate, be realigned or downsized? And how did all this bear on the war?

With the U.S. entry into World War II on December 7, 1941, football faced a choice of bitter harsh realities. What was the gridiron role in the massive mobilization of men, weapons, equipment, and morale, if any? At once, both by necessity and choice, conditions thrust football smack into the middle of the war effort as a vital participant. Thus the military and colleges joined forces in these tumultuous times to prepare fighting men for combat and, as a calculated by-product, prevent dismemberment of the game and sustain robust enthusiasm. The military and colleges championed and collaborated on competitive programs absolutely essential for war victory. Their zeal likely influenced the simultaneous survival of the National Football League.

It was a national emergency and the NCAA got it right. The Department of the Navy's vision, organization, and drive truly proved to be the engine of wartime football. After early and serious evaluation, emboldened by vocal leadership from the president and naval officials, the altered sport persevered as well as possible under exceptionally extenuating circumstances. Sometimes unconventionally administered, fluctuating and unpredictable, football and other sports generated the competitive regimen which also provided a huge morale boost for the home front, both civilians and military. Within two seasons, stability would return, interest explode, and the wartime experiment begin fading into memory.

Terminology

In this book:

- (1) The words "military" and "services" mean any and all of the armed forces which in World War II included the army (including the army air forces), navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard;
- (2) The Department of the Navy included the Marine Corps (always) and the Coast Guard (during wartime);

- (3) To distinguish the service academies from the rest of the army and navy, capitalized “Army” and “Navy” denote the service academies at West Point, N.Y., and Annapolis, Md.— and their football teams;
- (4) “War Department” and “the army headquarters” denote the same;
- (5) The words “colleges” and “schools” include universities;
- (6) Team won-lost-tied records are indicated like so: 6–4–1;
- (7) “Troop(s)” implies uniformed personnel of all services;
- (8) “Eleven” was a contemporary synonym for a football team (from its eleven players).

See the glossary for keys to team records, players and coaches, player positions, military facilities, jargon, and other terminology.

“Fighting a Desperate War”

“We are fighting a desperate war,” navy secretary Frank Knox reminded Americans in 1943. He raved about football’s importance as an essential, body-contact, physical conditioning training mechanism in helping prepare men for warfare, particularly in the Pacific. In underscoring his civilian boss, the Marine Corps commandant equated rapid reactions on a football field to the same in the jungle and on the battlefield.³

This book is about more than just what happened to the college sport. After setting the table, it concentrates primarily on the multitude of military-base elevens which dotted the country. The armed forces likely would have played football in some manner anyway, regardless of college actions. The reader will see that all branches formed teams, scheduled opponents from colleges and other bases, and did their best to promote football for morale and entertainment as well as conditioning. Consequently, the game at both levels intertwined and proceeded, largely mutually dependant and cooperative. In all reported instances the effort succeeded.

In praising the navy’s 1942 actions, a leading magazine foresaw a debt accruing to the department at the war’s conclusion. Without heavy navy and Marine Corps participation, it stated, college football would have been very informal at best, and mostly campus intramural leagues at worst. But by then the outlook called for nearly the same robust schedule of games as before the war.⁴ After a ragged organizational and jurisdictional start in 1942, both college and military football regained its footing and was played out for the remainder of the wartime seasons of 1942–45 for the good of participants, fans, and the war effort.

Sensing an Untold Story

Having forgotten this sports story of my wartime childhood growing up in Wilmington, North Carolina, I encountered it head-on while writing an obituary in 2003. When North Carolina football icon and illustrious native son Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice died in Cherryville, on October 17, the *Wilmington Star-News* asked me to write his obituary. As their military analyst, I had covered Operation Iraqi Freedom extensively and penned op-ed pieces on North Carolina World War II history.

Justice began the road to national football immortality as an Asheville high school phenomenon in the early 1940s, and achieved folk-hero enshrinement as the state’s most famous football player (some might say most-famous athlete as well, with due respect for Wilmingtonian Michael Jordan). His death evoked a deluge of memories of his twice-All-America exploits for the Tar Heels, my college alma mater — he graduated in 1950; I entered in 1951 and never saw him play — but few people remembered his long-ago overshadowed World War II naval service.

My Wilmington buddies and I idolized Justice and his team. In those days Chapel Hill was a thousand miles and scarce tickets away, and radio was the medium of choice. My father preferred that I perform Saturday chores and allowed me time off only to hear the games if broadcast.

Following interviews with his wife Sarah and Carolina teammates, and further research, I submitted the obituary on deadline. But my attention simultaneously focused on something else. The name Bainbridge kept surfacing. Bainbridge, the old naval base? Certainly. Justice trained at the Bainbridge Naval Training Station in Maryland, starred on their base team in 1943–44, and later in Hawaii in 1945. Referring to his team as the “Bainbridge eleven” reflected the days of two-way players, playing both offense and defense prior to the platoon system.

The historian in me sensed a gem. I began compiling information on Bainbridge, Justice, and the story of military and college football during the war. Its enormous historical value began consuming me. Why hadn’t someone previously written about all of this? Without stopping to answer that question, I dived right into the subject.

But let me backtrack. As a high school and Carolina student, I worked part-time in the *Star-News* sports department beginning in 1950. Then I envisioned myself as a career sports writer, went to college to study journalism, and imprinted novice business cards with “Grantland Rice Jones” after the era’s foremost sports journalist. More than half a century later, having majored in history instead, I see this book as the result of my early dream. After I retired and moved back to Wilmington in 1997, the *Star-News* and I renewed our

working relationship. My occasional op-ed and feature pieces and letters have brought me statewide journalism awards and immensely helped in my efforts to preserve North Carolina World War II history. I knew that I need not worry about the book’s timing, because until now other sports and military historians have ignored my subject.

The availability of numerous popular football periodicals that continued wartime publication, game programs, military-base newspapers, and additional contemporary accounts facilitated my research. Several excellent secondary sources included: *College Football’s Twenty-Five Greatest Teams*; *The History of American Football: Its Teams, Players, and Coaches*; *The Navy V-12 Program: Leadership for a Lifetime*; and John Gunn’s two superb books on Marine Corps football history. A highlight of my research was visiting Bainbridge.

To fill an untapped four-year void in the history, lore, and participants of World War II military and college football — and its impact on the war effort — I wrote this book to please football fanatics, Saturday-only watchers, sports lovers, and military history enthusiasts. The appeal doubles by the fresh historical insight into the World War II procedures for assigning and training for combat mass numbers of military personnel, particularly officer candidates, and the government’s mixed signals in determining the role of sports.

The Bainbridge Eleven

The most famous wartime military eleven was the Bainbridge Naval Training Station (later Center) Commodores, both a boot camp and advanced training facility. It also showcased the period’s most sensational player, the storybook teenaged halfback “Choo Choo” Justice. Bainbridge gridiron fortunes peaked with an undefeated 1944, ranking fifth in the Associated Press poll, sporting a roster of All-Americans and NFL veterans.

Bainbridge merits recognition as the archetypical successful wartime service team. Besides being extremely colorful, full of stars, and winning their first twenty-one games over three seasons, their exploits gleam with human interest and, with Justice the central figure, help shape the book’s story line. The sailors’ saga highlights players, coaches, big games, spirit, and well-earned national prominence. The whole scene just got to me.

Three decades after the war, the navy closed Bainbridge. Named for a naval hero of the War of 1812 and never on any map, it sprouted in 1942 in the northern Chesapeake Bay, meeting a wartime demand. Now overrun with weeds, its fenced location can be found by asking around Port Deposit, Maryland. Wild vegetation wraps badly decaying structures and covers the unrec-

ognizable football field. Entry is by a prearranged, guided tour from dedicated locals struggling to keep its faded memory alive through a small historical society. This book reviving its glory days might help. Both the navy and football long ago foreclosed on Bainbridge.

A case can be made for spotlighting the fabulous Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center Bluejackets, but I decided not to. Their highly productive elevens posted a 33–11–3 wartime mark (they twice defeated Notre Dame, the era's crown prince of college football, and tied them once) and likely created more of a stir than any other service program. But the Great Lakes began during World War I and it is still an active facility. Bainbridge has more mystique, color, and élan. Thus I focused on Bainbridge.

Introduction: *“The Most Awesome Melange”*

“While football went into various degrees of retrenchment on college campuses, it broke out like the measles in some of the most unlikely places.”¹

Years after World War II, prominent Atlanta sportswriter Furman Bisher reflected on the success of military football in those “unlikely places.” He recalled that base commanders recognized not only footballs’ superb combat conditioning value but also its entertainment value, a way to keep “the more fractious out of trouble.” Players figured they could score points with superiors and perhaps postpone the date they would be sent overseas.² See what else wartime football did for the national spirit?

By the fall of 1942, with America’s war nine months old, an optimistic annual football publication forecast that the sport would be more stable than the season before. The armed forces, anxious for officer material, began recruiting heavily in colleges, pushed football as a conditioner and encouraged schools to continue playing.³ As colleges, conferences, and the National Football League reviewed their options, the country nervously preoccupied itself with far more serious matters and burgeoning wartime unknowns.

Football publications and prognosticators held reservations. Finding, retaining, and conditioning players was only one aspect of continuing the game. Scheduling, transportation, and other restrictions required factoring. The *Football Pictorial Yearbook* warned that the upcoming season would be “the most awesome melange of fact, fiction, turmoil, contradiction, recrimination, patriotism, and general uncertainty ever loosed on the American sporting public.”⁴ In other words: sports fans, watch out. The old game will never be the same. Could myriad uncertainties be sorted out amidst such a fluid, unsettled atmosphere, both to support the war effort and satisfy the public’s wishes?

Like the prospects for victory over the nation's enemies, the football melange would be settled in due time. But temporarily, at least, the games persisted, a case of the military, colleges, and pros being obligated to play with cards they were dealt.

This book will examine how the game surmounted enormous obstacles — or skirted them — and survived, and how “the melange” sputtered, hit-or-miss, into and out of 1942, its residual effect continuing in varying degrees throughout the remaining three wartime seasons. It concentrates almost entirely on wartime military and college football, but briefly addresses the professional game in chapter 10, mainly as it applied to the national emergency. The story of how military football helped to win the war starts by identifying up front the indelible link it had with the colleges. Neither could have sustained football without the other: interdependency and an accommodating, mutually beneficial and lasting marriage of convenience was forged by strong vision, foresight, leadership, determination, and flexibility.

The State of Football on December 7, 1941

When the United States entered the war, baseball was the king of American spectator and team sports. Football reigned supreme on college campuses, but its nascent professional version had yet to grab the fascination of the press and fans. To most Americans without the collegiate experience, football “was a pastime that thrived detached from most of the nation’s urban centers,” wrote Mike Vaccaro in his book about the year 1941.⁵ Small towns such as Tuscaloosa, Palo Alto, Chapel Hill, and South Bend dispatched teams to meet giants from Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, and Chicago.

Baseball bore the scars of the Great Depression, however. President Franklin D. Roosevelt encouraged major league baseball to continue for its morale factor, which it did, although weakened in player quality during the war. Sports historian Benjamin G. Rader maintained that college football weathered the economic down times easier than professional baseball.⁶ Richard O. Davies wrote that collegiate sports “naturally reflected the nation’s capitalistic creed.... The economic malaise naturally affected American sports.... And the sparkling performances of athletes no longer seemed all that thrilling. The Golden Age of American sports gave way to a dour and disconsolate era that reflected the tough times of the 1930s,” even cutting stars “down to size.”⁷ Basketball, with the excitement and attachment to the National Basketball Association and college hoops, far from being a headline sport, would wait for a postwar boom.

Rader further believed that college football’s popularity grew partly by

generating potent symbols. "While restoring the loyalty of a burgeoning alumni, college teams often evoked symbols that transcended the college itself." Citizens developed state pride in their university teams and became engulfed in "symbolic battles for superiority between states and regions, sometimes even ethnic groups, religions, and ideologies." The annual Army-Navy game vaulted into a national spectacle overshadowing the classic Yale-Harvard rivalry, evoking immediate endearing attachments to either side.⁸

The passive role of the National Collegiate Athletic Association during World War II barely translates into that organization's current powers and responsibilities. Colleges established the NCAA as their own governing body for intercollegiate sports in 1910 from an earlier conglomerate. Member colleges limited the NCAA's authority primarily to making rules for its various sports and supervising national tournaments. The NCAA had limited authority to enforce its principles and resorted to moral suasion. "Traditionally, colleges had accepted the basic premise that, being honorable institutions, they should police themselves." This proved inadequate. In 1941 colleges approved a new NCAA constitution providing for expulsion of members who failed to abide by association rules, but none were expelled during the war.⁹

"College football faced the forties hindered with renewed attacks by critics who assailed its very legitimacy and place in institutions of higher learning," according to historians Douglas A. Noverr and Lawrence E. Ziewacz. Once war broke out, American sports tried maintaining course and speed, a normalcy lasting only two years. Among the major college programs disbanding football, the University of Chicago cited it as "a handicap to education," noting that half of all Big Ten players were majoring in physical education. Some schools dropping football publicly said that the game was inappropriate when totalitarianism and fascism threatened freedoms, traditions, and institutions.¹⁰

Team Sports to Train the Surge

Shortly after December 7, the federal government began expanding or constructing vast numbers of facilities to train the huge surge of men and women entering the armed forces. Their numbers included many professional and college football players and coaches. The president acceded to the military's requests to allow maximum sports participation in order to emphasize and extort physical training, toughness, leadership, teamwork, and camaraderie.

From 1942 to 1945, the navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard placed thousands of male officer candidates in colleges for preliminary training through their NROTC, V-5, V-7 and V-12 training programs, explained in

chapter 3. Many, including All-Americans and professionals, played on varsity teams and the five navy pre-flight schools located on campuses. For example, in 1943-44, 13 of 25 college All-Americans were Marine-affiliated students. Without this massive student infusion — some might say saturation — numerous colleges, especially small, private ones experiencing rapidly declining male enrollments, would have closed their doors. Roosevelt saw the V-12 as “a grand chance to save some little college” which otherwise might have shut down.¹¹ *This assertion is key to understanding the magnitude of the problem that colleges faced and how vital military students suddenly became to their very survival as educational institutions.* Also, hundreds of military bases fielded teams. Later on, the services formed teams overseas to play ad hoc schedules and all-star or special “bowl” games.

The war stringently impacted nearly every facet of American life including sports and recreation. Players and coaches volunteered or were drafted into the armed forces, or began college officer programs. In 1942 more than 60 colleges abandoned football because of enrollment problems and subpar player quantity and quality. Two-thirds of colleges waived the rule barring freshman participation. Restrictions took over. Night games ceased on both coasts, and the government forbade special buses or trains for spectators to attend games. Transportation exigencies and gas and tire rationing limited college and military teams and scouting coaches from some travel, resulting in game site transfers and cancellations and a 19 percent attendance decline.¹²

Player collegiate loyalties “came down like the Wall of Jericho” during the war, Bisher said, “sacrificed in return for loyalty to country by male athletes who found themselves campus nomads in the military system.... Many a football career was born on service fields ... and heaven only knows how many were left there, not to mention those left under white crosses in military cemeteries.”¹³

The army limited its personnel assigned to more than a hundred colleges (the Army Specialized Training Program — ASTP) to intramural football only. The ASTP differed from navy and Marine Corps V-programs in that it trained officers and enlisted men in technical skills, whereas V-programs trained just officer candidates. This limitation was unnecessary, second-guessed, and ultimately proven unwise. The *Football Pictorial Yearbook*, in rhetorically asking where football fit into the war effort, chastised the army for wasting time by limiting officer cadets to intramural sports, while the navy urged intercollegiate competition and encouraged its candidates to sacrifice and absorb hardships to play varsity ball.¹⁴ In 1943 Walter Okeson, NCAA football rules committee chairman and annual *NCAA Football Guide* editor, felt that the difference between the two policies placed navy schools at a distinct advantage in player material.¹⁵ No doubt about that.

A leading magazine called the army's decision "one of those wrinkles wrapped in the red tape of bureaucratic Washington which will never be completely understood by a civilian mind." The Military Academy superintendent, his school a wartime varsity power, tried explaining to a congressional committee why intramural sports would give the same physical and character benefits as the rougher intercollegiate game. It was a long stretch, but "that's how prevalent the physical education miasma has become."¹⁶ Charles Moran wrote of the army's contradictory position: "If the cadet at West Point can move on the double for 12 to 16 hours, with 40 or 50 minutes a day allowed for [intramural] grid practice, are the army men at Ohio State or elsewhere of such inferior physique that they cannot stand the gaff mixed with football?"¹⁷

Nevertheless, most army and air force bases competed. Air force training commands ranked among the top-flight military teams, generally surpassing weaker army base elevens. Hundreds of military bases, most constructed to train the recruit surge, also fielded teams. Enjoying flexible, liberal recruiting policies, the service academies fielded sensational teams. Army's top-rated 1944-45 elevens with All-America backs Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis remain legendary.

The "Lend-Lease Players"

As already mentioned, from 1942 to 1945, the navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard placed thousands of officer candidates in colleges for preliminary training. Many, including All-America and professional players, played on football varsity teams and at navy pre-flight schools. These trainees — called "Lend-Lease players" — often participated on multiple teams during the same season, sometimes even playing against their old teammates. Marine trainee Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch, a future NFL Hall of Famer, began 1943 at Wisconsin, was transferred to Michigan, and then helped the Wolverines defeat the Badgers. The vagabond Hirsch played at Camp Lejeune in 1944 and for the loaded El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in 1945.

The football application of "Lend-Lease" came from the term describing the U.S. program to ship weapons and equipment to European Allies Great Britain and the Soviet Union before and after America's entry into the war. Repayment arrangements, overlooked for all intents and purposes, were inconsequential in light of the immediate goal of defeating Nazi Germany. Thus the term aptly fit the mechanism to provide wartime college football players: Play now to win now. Let tomorrow take care of itself.

Great Players, Great Teams

The war years produced a “mini–Golden Age” of famous players, coaches, and games, heralded in 1945 when they returned from combat for one last hurrah game before discharge. Although some players forfeited their prime years, many resumed or advanced to stardom or renown in college or the pros.

A sobering fact: a number lost their life for our country. Camp Lejeune coach Jack Chevigny died on Iwo Jima, and Okinawa claimed a dozen Marine players, including All-America Tony Butkovich. Paul Brown, wartime Great Lakes Naval Training Center coach and future pro Hall of Famer, said, “Things like football tended to dim in importance to men who, two or three months later, might be lying dead on some beach in the South Pacific. It was something I never could reconcile myself to while coaching service football.”¹⁸

Great players wearing both college and military uniforms included: Otto Graham, Len Eshmont, Bob Dove, Barney Poole, Charley Trippi, Les Horvath, Arnold Tucker, Bob Steuber, Buster Ramsey, Buddy Young, Glenn Dobbs, Wee Willie Wilkin, Paul Governali, Nick Suseoff, Jack Russell, Don Whitmire, Marion Motley, Dick Todd, Bruce Smith, John Mellus, Joe Stydhar, Bill Dudley, Frankie Albert, George McAfee, and John Yonakor.

Great coaches in uniform included: Paul Brown, Earl Blaik, Joe Maniaci, Tony Hinkle, Paul Schissler, Bud Wilkinson, Bear Bryant, Bernie Bierman, Jim Tatum, Hampton Pool, Dick Hanley, Don Faurot, and Jim Crowley.

Numerous great games involved military teams. In 1943, Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Station defeated Notre Dame 19–14 on a last-minute touchdown pass. The Irish received the national championship award anyway. In the most heralded all-military game, Fleet City Receiving Station beat the El Toro Flyers, 45–28, before 60,000 in the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1945. Other powerhouses, some representing facilities now long disestablished, included Randolph Field Army Air Base; Iowa Navy Pre-Flight; Fort Pierce Naval Amphibious Base; Alameda Coast Guard; Fort Riley; Kessler Army Air Field; Jacksonville Naval Air Technical Training Center; and the First, Second, Third and Fourth Air Force stateside training command teams.

College varsity teams played within their conferences and against other colleges, sometimes on short notice, and nearby military teams. Military elevens concentrated on playing each other as “independents,” usually confined geographically, while the major conferences attempted to maintain integrity.

"New Vigor, New Excitement"

Besides transitioning into the Department of the Navy officer program elevens, in 1942 a number of well-coached, well-manned military base squads emerged. What might have been an otherwise "drab campaign was surcharged with new vigor, new excitement by the competition of these dynamic soldier and sailor arrays."¹⁹

Although his college trainees could not play intercollegiate athletics, the army's athletic and recreation head touted his 1942 version of base football as being "more versatile." He trumpeted a sturdier vitality and more ambitious schedules that matched prowess with college varsities. Because army purposes subordinated football, "play was the thing and not the moulding of super grid giants." Intramural football's primary and perhaps lone army mission was physically training the troops.²⁰

Soldiers, the official further said, constructed vigorous schedules designed for one-on-one or team-on-team action rather than championships. The wartime result: the army, excluding the air forces, with more establishments nationwide and overseas, fielded more base teams than the other services, but few of their base teams achieved more than fleeting, one-season notoriety. Many, especially small ones, disbanded during the season or after one or two losing campaigns. Numerous air force training command and base elevens, however, produced exceptional records and ranked high in national polls.

The army stressed inter-unit competition between battalions and regiments, developing quick rivalries overriding previously nonexistent base football tradition and institutions. Military duties came first, and football evolved as a spectator sport. Against military squads, "the khaki elevens often held their own."²¹

America's favorite college prewar participant and spectator sport, football now needed to process and train men for combat, which radically altered the scene. The NFL continued but lost its core to military duty. Approximately 350 colleges dropped football programs for a season or the war's duration. These included entire small conferences, most of the Southeastern Conference, and such large schools as Harvard, Princeton, Mississippi State, Florida, Stanford, and Oregon.

Some observers believed 1943 was the low point. Even then schools tightened their belts and played under adverse and abnormal conditions, generating praise for flexibility and criticism for quality. Simultaneously, football began rebounding. Some who gave it up were said to be "timid souls"; some "did it sadly." Military squads replaced some lost games. The annual *Street & Smith* magazine emphasized the main issue which recurs as a theme

throughout this book: the games nevertheless continued for all the right reasons.²²

Those colleges retaining programs, if bolstered by experienced players, played full schedules against teams with a collegiate-military mix. Colleges without eligible trainees played only 17-year-old freshmen not facing the draft, those 18 or older awaiting a draft call, physically disqualified 4-F's, and discharged servicemen. "In almost every instance they suffered defeat after defeat," noted *College Football's Twenty-Five Greatest Teams*. So afflicted, Ohio State somehow amazingly finished No. 2 in the 1944 Associated Press poll.²³

Military and collegiate officials and conferences quickly adjusted to gargantuan travel restrictions, rationing, transportation availability, time away from base or campus, military duties and studies, and other allowances necessary for the war effort. Flexibility prevented potential chaos. Colleges relaxed eligibility requirements, permitting freshmen and other special cases to play. Collegiate playing rules governed: there were no revisions until 1945. Military elevens competed as independents, while major conferences attempted to maintain integrity.

Both military and college programs endured weekly roster problems caused by transfers and draft inductions, and juggled practices with irregular game schedules. The military and colleges primarily played three categories of games: military vs. military, colleges vs. colleges, and military vs. colleges. Military elevens occasionally played NFL teams in exhibitions or regular games against minor league pro teams (mostly in California and Hawaii). Scheduling difficulties, cancellations, and last-minute substitutions rendered completely accurate record keeping impossible. Coaches varied offensive and defensive schemes to fit personnel. Judged with the colleges and often dominating polls, military elevens played before one thousand spectators on base or a packed Los Angeles Coliseum.

By 1943, the navy had rescued football, as hundreds of players went to college for officer or specialist training or remained at their respective schools. In the Big Ten, or Midwestern Conference, this evolved into the "haves" (Michigan, Purdue, Northwestern — plus independent Notre Dame, also navy-fortified) with their service trainees who normally would have graduated in 1944–46, and the "have-nots," who "made the best of their conditions."²⁴

Mid-season trainee transfers wrecked, weakened, or strengthened teams. Transfers started in late October, and the experts experienced "a harrowing season" trying to track changes.²⁵ The Big Ten's civilian teams — Ohio State, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, and Wisconsin — approached Saturdays uncomfortably "like lambs led to the slaughter."²⁶ Marine football historian John Gunn claimed that the services aggressively lured many of the nation's

top 1941 coaches and players to join, a "manpower grab" equal to the pre-flight establishment.²⁷

The draft drained rosters in 1943, the most famous draftee being Notre Dame quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Angelo Bertelli. How drained? *Time* reported in December about one squad's 4-F's: "The tailback has osteomyelitis. Another back, the best ground gainer, has a severed Achilles tendon. One tackle has two bad knees, another has only one lung. A guard has only one arm. But somehow the team's not beaten."²⁸

Carrying On

Most colleges carried on, repeatedly proving the resilience and fortitude of wartime football participants. Schools denied the use of army personnel had it rough. Those with navy students fielded some of the sport's most fabulous teams of that day, generating substantial sports-page ink and fan attention. Young players generally acquitted themselves credibly and even shouldered the load for some major teams, a few receiving All-America recognition. Trainees completing courses in November and then transferring gave freshmen a break, as "lineups seemed a constant hodge-podge and jumble."²⁹

Thanks to older, more mature and experienced military players on both varsities and bases, in 1944 the sport rebounded, albeit erratically. Intriguing matchups between established collegiate teams and new service ones posed the continuous question of who had the advantage. Would youngsters playing in ripened, traditional, top collegiate programs, with limited preparation time, hold their own versus ad hoc elevens of ex-college stars and professionals? A Los Angeles scribe believed military football was the best being played, possibly excepting the NFL, declaring that few collegiate elevens could compete with any of the services' "potent aggregations" and "escape with a whole hide." Military players, the writer said, "are thoroughly familiar with all the tricks of the trade."³⁰

A number of major colleges resumed playing by reducing academic or enrollment eligibility standards. For example, six Southeastern Conference schools allowed any bona fide student except former pros to dress out. Shifting of players from one school to another by the navy and Marines confused the lot. One might see a Dartmouth back one Saturday against Yale, and the next week in the Yale backfield against another team.³¹

A popular football annual called sophomores and freshmen "the star-pretenders of '44 ... mostly make-good-quick kids," augmenting older trainee hands. Time limitations prevented arduous practices, fine-tuned coaching, and gradual breaking-in that "produces precision-gearred linemen and robot-con-

trolled backs.” But “youthful vim and spirit can often be a wonder-working substitute for know-how.”²³ Previously unimaginable, powerhouse military teams successfully bridged the jump between college and professional levels in talent and production and laid to wartime rest the supposition that football detracted from intensive study. “That healthy bodies make healthy minds has been fully and literally demonstrated.”²⁴

Tomorrow

When college and military teams began 1945 summer drills, the war was over. Not everything returned to normal overnight, but football tried. The army, a bit tardy, allowed soldiers to participate in sports during the duty day for competitive conditioning and during leisure hours for activities and recreation.²⁵ A war late, and a public relations debacle short.

By 1945, wartime game attendance increased annually, the new “T” formation dominated the offenses, “normality” edged back into American life, and sportswriter chatter anxiously awaited football’s post-war explosion. Famed sportswriter Grantland Rice prepared readers for a new day.

The skies are clear, the sun rises high, the wind blows fresh and fair, and it’s marvelous football weather all across the map.... The sawdust is spurting in the tackle-dummy pits, the charge-machines are creaking, the passes and plunking punts are on the wing.... For King Football, stretching outside his winter cave, there’s more than autumn’s music in the air. He can feel not only the pulse of new blood, the invigorating strength of extra muscle, but can sense a pervading spirit of doing an enterprise that will lead on to mighty deeds.³⁵

For 1946, the NCAA looked both backward and ahead. It cited those youngsters, trainees, veterans, and coaches who persevered despite the factors of weight, age, and experience which often resulted in lopsided competition. Beginning now, teams could rebuild to prewar levels quickly, with stability, longer practices, and improved defenses. “With GI Joe back on the gridiron the major colleges again will have players old enough, heavy enough and experienced enough to delight the alumni.”³⁶

Football America could hardly wait.

Helping to Win the War

That football continued to be played — and consequently contributed to victory — was a tribute to an unprecedented combination of national unity,

athletics, top-level leadership, forceful personalities, and overcoming service politics.

Competitive football enhanced troop and civilian morale on the home front and overseas by providing an uplifting, entertaining, and exciting diversion from the horrors, sacrifices, and boredom of war. Football's "value on the home front and in war theaters was recognized by those who directed the war effort."³⁷

Teams fostered pride in unit identification. Men who might never have attended college found collegial camaraderie on military teams of varying sizes and scope, and attached football to the normal world to which they wished soon to return. Football stirred patriotism, recruiting, allegiances, war bond sales, charitable contributions, and productivity, and thus positively affected the war effort.

The NCAA further defined the value of wartime football: "High military, government and educational authorities publicly recognized the tremendous value of football as an integral part of the war training program. Indeed, American football, as perhaps no other sport, justified itself during World War II."³⁸

Midway through the war, the navy — the war's strongest proponent of football — began evaluating its demanding pre-flight and college officer programs, emphasizing mandatory sports and football in particular. The evaluation concluded that "the high state of efficiency and the remarkable records that the navy has made in this war already in gunnery and aerial warfare are ample proof that these competitive methods are very worthwhile."³⁹

From contemporary accounts, it is clear that the navy and Marine Corps, of all the services, firmly attested that football aided their performance of duty. Now we can state confidently that competitive, tough, conditioning football played a sizable but little-known role in helping to win the war.

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CHAPTER 1

“A Roster Out of Football’s ‘Who’s Who’”: The Bainbridge Eleven

“At Bainbridge, sports is big time by big-timers. In one year the center has gained top-flight importance as a sports spot, deriving its strength from the cream of the crop among the gladiators of the nation. They fought for dear ol’ Siwash then. Now it’s strictly for the bluejacket time, but the thirst for victory is just as keen. It’s an old American custom done to the tune of Anchors Aweigh.”¹

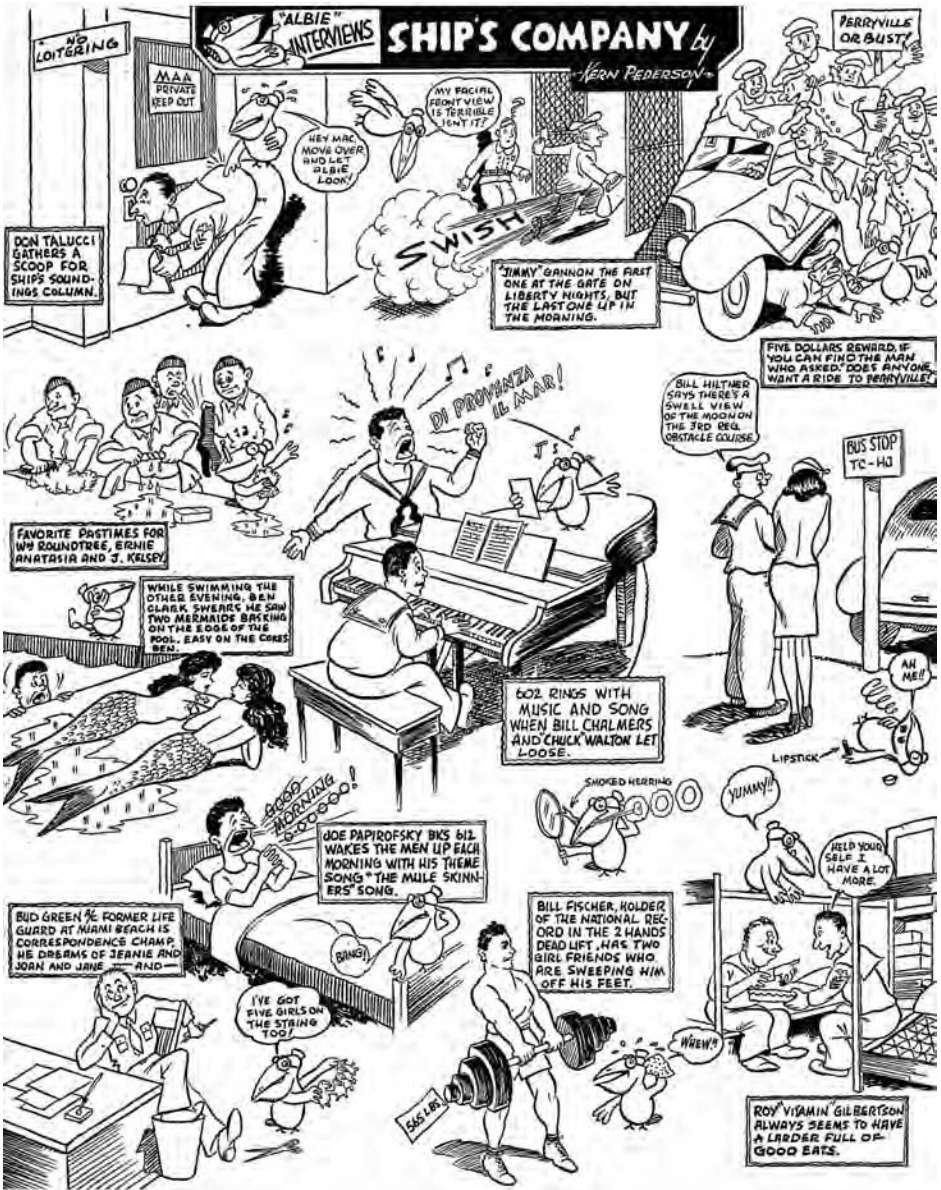
By 1944, from out of nowhere, the Bainbridge navy Commodores rocketed into the American football hierarchy.

Undefeated in seven games during its first season in 1943, and outscoring opponents 313 to 7, “with a roster which reads like a page out of football’s ‘Who’s Who,’” the team and station demanded immediate national notice.

Five members won berths on the Associated Press Mid-Atlantic Service eleven. Each possessed a brilliant college or professional record except for Charlie Justice, “an amazing football prodigy fresh out of Asheville (N.C.) High,” named over such stars as Bill deCorrevont of Northwestern and Dan Durdan, Oregon State’s Rose Bowl whiz, both Bainbridge teammates of Justice.²

But let’s not jump the gun.

What was Bainbridge?³ Nothing, until the navy arrived. If the navy sought isolation on a major body of water to prepare its trainees for combat, it aptly selected the site for the Bainbridge Naval Training Station. Hastily planned from scratch, beginning in early 1942, on 1,200 acres in the Cecil County countryside in the northern Chesapeake Bay region, on the property



"Ship's Company." The Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Station *Mainsheet* weekly newspaper spiced news about the war, its sailor trainees, sports programs, and campus scenes with lots of humor (*Bainbridge Mainsheet*, ca. 1943).

of the Jacob Tome Institute, its construction overcame enormous odds while battling foul weather and mud, and coping with insufficient water and a lack of roads.

Located in northeast Maryland near the mouth of the Susquehanna River, along Route 22, and halfway between Baltimore and Wilmington, Del., essentially it was in the middle of nowhere. The topography did not fit the traditional rigid military reservation form, undoubtedly contributing to the prevailing "community atmosphere."⁴ Recruits got there on the Baltimore & Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroads, through Aiken four miles away.

The navy noted that construction of Bainbridge was typical of the speed and efficiency with which the service rapidly expanded. "Where cow bells had tinkled in the spring, the sound of marching cadence echoed in October." Five months after breaking ground, Bainbridge began delivering trained seamen. In less than a year, crews built or renovated 357 buildings costing \$45 million. Primarily built of wood, the complex consisted of four complete training units accommodating 4,000 men each, an officers' group, and support services structures. Each training unit contained 22 barracks housing 224 enlisted men each and a drill hall.⁵

Opened as a boot camp on October 10, 1942, Bainbridge joined similar facilities at Sampson, N.Y., and Farragut, Idaho. Recognizing its expanding role, the navy upgraded Bainbridge to a "center" in April 1944, adding it to the traditional centers at Great Lakes, Ill., and San Diego, Calif., as the three major wartime training facilities. The base newspaper, the *Bainbridge Main-sheet*, the navy's second-largest wartime paper, was published weekdays and Saturdays with a circulation of 22,000-plus.

Sampson and Farragut shut down after the war and became state-owned parks with museums. Now-deserted Bainbridge, closed in 1976, is neither. "For Bainbridge the legacy has been deliberate destruction and indifference to progressive deterioration, the whole reverting to a wild and unkept state, the orphaned sister."⁶

The first recruits found no "happy hours" or station football team. Movies were the early thirties vintage which required rewinding after each reel. "It was no uncommon sight ... to see navy personnel walking about with mud hip-high on their trousers." Sailors speculated whether rainy, muddy days at Bainbridge counted as sea duty, but genuinely accepted the blessings of water to wash with and shelter at night. The commandant characterized the station's rapid growth as a "dirty miracle."⁷

Besides the boot camp, or Recruit Training Command, Bainbridge housed service schools for shipboard ratings including gunners mate, fire controlman, radioman, electrician's mate, storekeeper, steward's mate, quartermaster, signalman, hospital corpsman, and physical instructor ("PI"), plus

the Naval Academy Preparatory School, a naval hospital, and a school for WAVES. The PI school trained the trainers, enlisted men who taught physical conditioning throughout the fleet and also manned the station's football teams. Into this rating poured All-Americans, professionals, and Charlie Justice.

Captain C. F. Russell served as Bainbridge's first commandant until 1945 when relieved by Commodore William F. Behrens. Personnel assigned there averaged around 20,000. The first boot company graduated in December 1942. Bainbridge's auditorium seated 2,700 and its amphitheater 10,000. Buildings were supposed to last 25 years. Tome Field, where the gridders romped, seated 15,000. By V-J Day on August 14, 1945, the center had trained 244,277 recruits to man ships and bases, and 24,484 men in technical ratings.

"They were for getting you in and getting you out," remembered Albert Bagley. "The need was over there and not here at Bainbridge." He had quit high school as a junior. "Our whole class went to war." The base was still under construction when he arrived in December 1942. "Wasn't too much navy down there. Nothing but mud." Chief petty officers, who pushed the boots, "were physical education majors in college. They had to teach us how to poop — you were thrown into [a] long string of johns. Diets changed." Sneakers lasted only a day as the mud sucked them off feet. "We were like cattle in a barn. They kept us busy," it was said. The navy even charged sailors for their basic textbook, the *Bluejackets Manual*.⁸

President Franklin D. Roosevelt named the station after Commodore William Bainbridge, one of the navy's great pioneers and the founder of its first school. Born in New Jersey in 1774, he began a sea career at age 15 and in 1798 earned a lieutenant's commission. He commanded the frigate USS *Philadelphia* in the war against Tripoli in 1803. During the War of 1812 he led a squadron including his flagship USS *Constitution* and captured the British frigate *Java* off of San Salvador. Active in expanding sea programs, in later years he directed work on the signal code revision and construction of navy yards and docks at Boston and Philadelphia. He died in 1833 at age 59.⁹

Sailors boasted to the folks at home: "We're going to be fighting bluejackets! That is why we were sent here ... [to] transform us from civilians, unfamiliar with the ways of the sea, into sailors." They vowed to remember the experience.¹⁰

*Hail! Men of Bainbridge,¹¹
Let us turn the tide,
March forth as one and man the guns
To conquer all in stride.
We're the navy's sons
Whose valor has been tried.*

*The course is rough;
We'll show how tough
They build men on this side.*

*Sing together, loud and long.
Pull together, stout and strong.
Make each day spell death to wrong.
Bainbridge men fight on and on.
Steer ships of Freedom,
Masters of the sea,
And when we're done, the battle won,
We'll rest in Victory.*

1943

Now back to serious matters, the Bainbridge eleven. On September 25, 1943, their run to fame began at the Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps



Base. "Break out the rabbit's foot mate, and keep those fingers crossed," the *Mainsheet* implored. Lejeune lost its opener to Duke, 40-0, but don't be fooled. Packing royal blue uniforms with red numerals outlined in white, the 60-man squad headed to Durham as head coach Ensign Joe Maniaci (All-America Fordham, Brooklyn Dodgers, Chicago Bears) announced, "the team's ready to shoot the works."¹² They won 9-0.

The station had decided to field a team only one month prior. Out went an urgent call for all former pigskin coaches and players to report. Quality players suddenly appeared in

Lieutenant (junior grade) Joe Maniaci coached the Bainbridge Commodores to a 17-0-0 record in 1943-44 (game program, Bainbridge at Camp Lejeune, September 25, 1943).

droves, but formulating a schedule proved another story. Nearby natural rivals dropped football and others had completed their schedules, but the station found ten games after numerous telegrams, telephone calls, letters, and tips.¹³ Maniaci "promptly set about the organization of one of the swiftest-moving, most invulnerable teams in the East," opined the *Illustrated Football Annual*.¹⁴

Maniaci bemoaned the start-up task he inherited. Looking around at the odd mixture of station candidates, he found a number of well-known names and "and a kid by the name of Charlie Justice who was voted the best high school back in the South last year." Frustrated over scrambling for an eventual schedule of seven games, he realistically figured his material just happened to be stationed there and probably wouldn't remain long after completing training. Some might not finish the season. "But what a team they would have been. Oh well, *c'est la guerre*."¹⁵

Maniaci had starred for seven years as a running back with the Brooklyn Dodgers and Chicago Bears, with a lifetime average 5.0 yards per carry. His first assistants were Ensigns Maurice Orr (All-America, Southern Methodist University), Phil Ragazzo (Western Reserve, Philadelphia Eagles, Cleveland Rams), and Jack Williams (Texas).¹⁶ Maniaci also coached the team in 1944.

After two weeks of practice the squad charted three backfield combos for two scrimmages. One combo included deCorrevont, Bill



Ensign Phil Ragazzo (Western Reserve, Philadelphia Eagles, Cleveland Rams), Bainbridge assistant coach and lineman, 1943 (game program, Bainbridge at Camp Lejeune, September 25, 1943).

Dutton, Tom "Knobby" Noble, and Justice. Against the Washington Redskins, the impressive sailors scored once, and Justice, "shifty Commodore back," sparked carrying the ball. Linemen Phil Ragazzo and Garrard ("Gerry" or "Buster," All-America William & Mary) Ramsey did "a 4.0 job." Andy Farkas sparked the Redskins.¹⁷ Over in Annapolis, Bainbridge gave No. 2-rated Navy "something to remember them by."¹⁸

Observers saw something special developing. Three weeks into the campaign, the *Football News* tabbed Bainbridge a "wonder team."¹⁹ The *Baltimore Sun* said: "And if there be a cynic who believes big-time stars can be lured to play only by fame and fortune, let him look at the Commodores' roster.... Without being induced by purses or plaudits," they established cohesiveness and unity en route to a most impressive record.²⁰

The *Mainsheet* updated sailors and fans. After the only team to score against the Commodores, Curtis Bay (Md.) Coast Guard, fell, 26-7, in October, the paper reported that the squad still had trouble defending against the forward pass because its backs played the receiver instead of the ball. Maniaci's efforts to install the "T" formation began developing finesse, featuring dangerous breakaway runners Durdan, Jim Gatewood (Georgia), and Justice. Fullback Harvey "Stud" Johnson (William & Mary), slowly rounding into shape, showed more power, and durable back Hilliard "Upan" Cheatham (Auburn) shined. The line showed power on defense and appeared ready for the long haul.²¹

By late October, the Bluejackets had lost seven regulars to sea duty or extra duties forcing them to give up football: backs Bill Dutton (All-America Pittsburgh), Bill Fuqua (Roanoke College), Win Siegfried (All-America Duke); quarterbacks Brick Bradford (Iowa) and Hugh Flanigan (Vanderbilt); guard Dick Kelleher (Cleveland Rams); and Hoyer Williams (Baylor). An injury placed captain and guard Len Akin (Baylor, Chicago Bears) on the sidelines for the season.

After dismantling a Philadelphia professional team 72-6 on November 6 ("more of a track meet than a pigskin session") for their fifth straight, the Commodores ranked No. 9 among the nation's 15 unbeaten and untied teams, with Purdue and Notre Dame heading the list. They led all service elevens except Iowa Pre-Flight in the prestigious Williamson military football ratings.²²

The Commodores continued driving their point. Maryland scheduled Bainbridge twice but played them only once. "There may be easier methods of murdering a group of youngsters such as inserting them into a gas chamber or lining them up against the wall and spraying them with machine-gun slugs," a scribe wrote, branding such schedule making as "bordering on insanity."²³ By then Bainbridge led the nation in three of five game categories: passing, total defense, and rushing defense; and was second (total offense) and

third (rushing) others. Maryland had "absolutely no chance of upsetting the Bainbridge outfit composed mainly of former pros and ex-collegiate stars."²⁴

The scribe was correct. In its final contest, Bainbridge (46) held the Terapins (0) to two first downs and 17 total yards, gaining 406 total yards and returning kicks for 421. Still, the team exhibited sloppy ball handling and blocking and won largely because of their brilliant backs.²⁵ Never mind. Bainbridge had definitely hit the gridiron map.

So, how good were they? The media went to see for themselves, as a November piece in the *Baltimore Sun* reported.²⁶ "Football's just an incidental at the Bainbridge Naval Training Station. But the team, incidentally, is good. Just how good, no one knows. The opposition hasn't really extended the galaxy of former college and professional football stars who comprise the Bainbridge eleven.... Yesterday's 46-0 victory of the University of Maryland was typical.... If the 8,000 seamen who witnessed the game were excited, they hid their emotions well. They beat a loud tattoo with the feet on the floorboards of the stands, but only because it was cold." WAVE cheerleader Iris Jean Moore "got more applause when she came on the field than the team did. Sixty-yard practice kicks were much in evidence, but only the few women who walked in got whistles. Not that the players mind. They're playing for the fun of it."

The Commodores, the paper reported, "are one of the peculiar phenomena of wartime: a collection of top-ranking gridiron players whose performances by necessity are comparatively unheralded. Naval duties take up all but a few hours of their time, so football must remain incidental. Only servicemen comprised the cheering section at home games." Outsiders could not attend. Both admission and game programs were free. Games were not subsidized. Away games were played on fields covered with large stones and trees bordering the end zone. Hardly any glory was involved, "but the game is played ... intensely."

The dressing-room scene "was typical of its college counterpart," according to the *Sun*. Relations between the coach ... and the players were completely democratic, in spite of the fact that only one of them is a commissioned officer and only nine are newly made chief petty officers." One difference from college ball: "Pre-game tension was completely absent. In fact, so relaxed with confidence were the players that the coach permitted an extensive interview of the squad."

DeCorrevont said, "It's not quite as tough as college. We don't spend enough time on it. Military duty comes first, and they never let us forget it.... There's none of the do-or-die spirit, but there's always that old feeling that you'd rather win than lose any day." Justice felt "grateful to the navy for his association with 'such a flock of big boys.' He confessed to thinking he was

out of place when he first joined the team but his success in action and their acceptance of him had made him much more comfortable."

Players got two hours of daily practice if their duties allowed, were subject to transfer on three days' notice once completing training, and had no idea if they would play next week or ever again. This did not diminish their interest. Team captain Akin, a four-year pro with the champion Bears (\$200 per game), said, "Football is fun, no matter who or what you're playing for."

Fun, sure, and it helped to be awesome. Bainbridge topped the country in scoring average and defense, and was rated as one of the decade's greatest offensive clubs. A number of its key players notched among national leaders.²⁷ Powerful Duke (8-1-0; lost to Navy, 14-13) flirted with playing Bainbridge after the 1943 season. The Duke athletic director agreed, then backed off, citing severe V-12 player losses. A Commodores war bond benefit in New York or Washington never materialized either.

The navy forced Bainbridge to restrict its play to Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and canceled its games with Pittsburgh, Villanova, Navy, and Sampson (postseason), and a second match with Fort Monroe (Va.). Observers believed it could have beaten any college or service team around.²⁸

National honors accrued. The AP named them the best military team, Notre Dame the best college eleven, and Ramsey to its first-team All-America service team. Writer Grantland Rice hailed Ramsey as "the greatest lineman in college football."²⁹ Honorable mention included ends Howard "Red" Hickey (Arkansas, Pittsburgh Steelers, Cleveland Rams) and Carl Mulleneaux (Utah State, Green Bay Packers), tackle Ragazzo, Durdan, deCorrevont, Johnson, and Justice.

Two of Justice's backfield mates on the Mid-Atlantic All-Service squad included former National Football League players Norm Standlee (Stanford, Chicago Bears) of Camp Davis (N.C.) and Cecil Hare (Gonzaga, Redskins) of North Carolina Pre-Flight. The other was Commodores fullback Johnson. The three Bainbridge linemen were Ramsey, Hickey, and Ragazzo. Second-teamers included center Lou Sossamon (South Carolina), tackle Elwood Gerber (Alabama, Philadelphia Eagles), and backs Cheatham, and deCorrevont.

Bainbridge finished as the nation's third-highest-scoring team in only seven games, and was one of six unbeaten college-military elevens after leader Purdue. The sailors' all-opponent team included: best team, and one of the east's finest service elevens, Camp Lejeune; best back, Curtis Bay's Fred Dobler; best linemen, Camp Lee's Howie Gentry, Maryland's Pete Karangelen, and Curtis Bay's Russ Monica.

And the Bainbridge best? "Hangnail Sketches" in the *Mainsheet* spotlighted three.³⁰

Ensign Phil Ragazzo, Western Reserve All-America tackle, was "quite a lad in the pro football ranks [with] the Philadelphia Eagles and the Cleveland Rams. Phil is the only officer playing with the Commodores and it's like betting on Man O' War to say that Ragazzo could make any team playing football today. One of the keenest diagnosticians of an opponents' strength, Phil pitched right in at the beginning of the season here and lent Joe Maniaci a hand with the Bainbridge line." He wants to coach "when the lights go on again," the *Mainsheet* reported.³¹

Guard and Specialist (A) Leonard "Len" Akin, team captain, born in 1916, played high school football in Oklahoma City and Dallas, Tex. He played four years for Baylor and made All-Southwest in 1938-39. He later played pro football with the Milwaukee Chiefs (American League all-stars) and in 1942 with the Bears.

Of halfback and Specialist (A) First Class Donald "Don" Durdan, the *Mainsheet* said: "Diminutive, swivel-hipped Don Durdan, one of the shiftiest and fastest scatbacks ... really knows his football." Born in 1920 in Eureka, Calif., he excelled in every major high school sport, then was Oregon State's triple-threat for four years as they won the Pacific Coast championship. There he also lettered in basketball and baseball. On New Year's Day 1942 he scored the winning touchdown in the 20-16 win over Duke when the Rose Bowl shifted to Durham, N.C. He was voted the outstanding Pacific Coast athlete in 1941. Durdan graduated from PI school and entered the V-12 program.

THE BAINBRIDGE 1943 RECORD (7-0-0)
(Scrimmaged Washington Redskins and Navy)

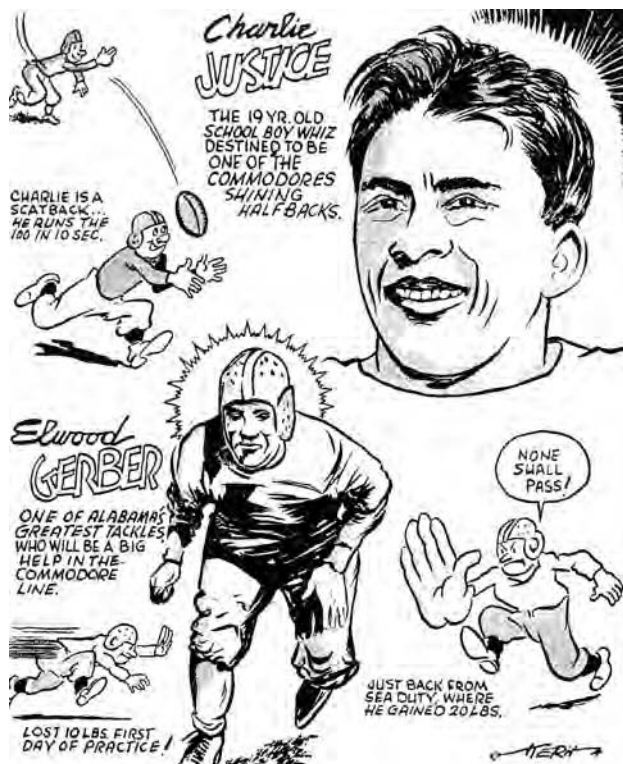
Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base	9-0
Ft. Monroe (Va.)	57-0
Curtis Bay (Md.) Coast Guard	26-7
Camp Lee (Va.)	49-0
Philadelphia Yellowjackets	72-0
Curtis Bay	54-0
Maryland	46-0
	313-7

1944

Now promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) and heading the station's civil police, Maniaci eyed men reporting from Sampson and Great Lakes for his 1944 squad. Practice started on August 15 behind the new fieldhouse, with

conditioning exercises, punting and passing drills, and light formation workouts. Player availability remained uncertain, but officials hoped enough men would report so the squad could repeat the previous year's performance. Sixty aspirants tried out.³² The *Mainsheet* noted the normal grunts and groans of practices in Tome Quad at 1630 hours. "The telephone in coach Joe Maniaci's office has been howling like a banshee all week.... No cut will be made until each man has a chance to demonstrate his wares."³³

Key returning players included Ramsey, Cheatham, Akin, Hickey, Johnson, Durdan, Gerber, Gatewood, and Justice. One source predicted that Maniaci would carry only about 22 players because of their military duties. The previous season's big names had moved on, but the station promised to field "a fair team."³⁴ Thirty-eight men dotted the final roster. Assistant coaches were Chief Warrant Officer Roland Raphael (Purdue, Packers), and Specialists (A) Second Class Joe Skladany (Pittsburgh, Carnegie Tech head coach), and Ed Brominski (Columbia). And their record surpassed 1943.



Bainbridge player sketches of back Charlie Justice and tackle Elwood Gerber (Alabama, Philadelphia Eagles) (*Bainbridge Mainsheet*, September 1944).

"The Fighting Commodores"³⁵

*Roll up the score for dear old Bainbridge,
Roll up the score you Commodores.
Down the field in Navy Blue,
Show your colors true.
Rah! Rah!*

*Just like a Navy battle wagon,
Sail on to meet and sink the foe.
Fight! With might! You men of Bainbridge;
Sail right on to Victory!*

Schedule conflicts continued in 1944, as contests were canceled with Richmond (Va.) Air Base, Camp Davis, Jacksonville (Fla.) Naval Air Station, and North Carolina. Travel restrictions again limited games to the same states as 1943. The Commodores played most games at home in Tome, called one of the nation's most beautiful fields.

Five top-notch guards dominated the line, including two of the finest in Ramsey and Akin. Returnee Florian Surdyk (Illinois) "has one of the most vicious charges in football." Strong reserves included Joe Petro (Muhlenberg) and "Mr. Five by Five" Rocky Rockenbock (Michigan State).³⁶ Transfers interrupted tempo. Hickey, who led the nation's ends in scoring with 56 points in 1943, received his commission and departed, and Ensign Ragazzo left to head the Newberry College V-12 program. Quent Klenk, Charlie Noble, and Sherry Fries also received orders. For a while it appeared Bainbridge might not be able to dress eleven players for its opener.³⁷

The starting forward wall included: center Sossamon, guards Ramsey and Akin, tackles Gerber (team captain) and Lou Rymkus (Notre Dame), and ends Joe Davis (Southern California) and Al Vanderweghe (William & Mary). They "should be household names around Bainbridge by nightfall," it was



Although loaded with former college and professional stars, the Bainbridge starting lineup in 1944 usually included: front row, left to right: end Joe Davis, tackle Frank Hrabetin, guard Garrard Ramsey, center Lou Sossamon, guard Len Akin, tackle Elwood Gerber, end Alfred Vanderweghe. Back row: backs Don Durdan, Harvey Johnson, Joe Michaels, Jim Gatewood (*Bainbridge Mainsheet*, September 30, 1944).



Bainbridge back Dante Magnani explodes around left end in a 1944 home game at Tome Field (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1945*).

said. All returned from 1943 except Rymkus and Davis. The backfield starters: quarterback Cheatham, halfbacks Gatewood and Durdan, and fullback Johnson.³⁸

The "bluejacket boys from the banks of the Susquehanna" traveled to Camp Peary for a 7-0 October 22 victory. "Newspaper observers — the professional pundits whose opinions influence national rankings — immediately pounced upon the win as placing the Marylanders in the upper brackets ... including not alone GI teams but colleges as well."³⁹

Fans and the media anticipated certain games more than others, and the *Mainsheet* covered them enthusiastically. After outscoring their first five opponents 167-21, with two successive, grueling, close battles, the Commodores visited loaded North Carolina Pre-Flight on November 5 in a "natural" game



The Commodores prevailed against the Maxwell Marauders, 13-3, to finish the season at 10-0-0 (game program, Maxwell [Ala.] Field at Bainbridge, December 3, 1944).

that could determine the mythical eastern military service championship. The future aviators, ranked No. 7 in the AP poll and led by passing quarterback Otto Graham (All-America Northwestern) and Stan Kosloski (Holy Cross), had already torpedoed powerhouses Navy and Duke. Bainbridge prevailed, 49–20.⁴⁰

SEASON STATISTICS TO DATE

RUSHES: 200 for 1068 yards (5.5 yds. p/carry)

TOP GROUND GAINER: Justice, 22 rushes for 242 yds. (avg. 11.0)

Gatewood averaged 5.75, Johnson and Harry Hopp 4.25, Durdan 4.0

PASSING: Cheatham 6 for 12, Joe Michaels 8 for 21, Justice 1 for 1

LEADING PUNT RETURNER: Hopp, 4 for 86; Justice 11 for 178 (16.0+)

SCORING: Johnson, 24 points, 9 on PATs

"Star-studded" Bainbridge, playing all military teams and winning 17 straight over two unbeaten seasons, took the navy championship at 10–0–0, downing the opposition 331–70. Noted for their "sheer power" along with army champion Randolph Field (Tex.), the two headed more than 100 service teams "blending in a quantity and quality of inter-camp play that fulfilled their primary mission of entertaining as many of Uncle Sam's servicemen as possible."⁴¹

The public sought a Randolph Field–Bainbridge meeting and flooded the War and Navy Departments with requests for postseason games. The departments waffled, then decided no, the AP reported in late November. Once more navy officials disallowed Bainbridge and other navy elevens to participate because of training responsibilities, and did not relax the rule requiring a navy team to play either on its own or its opponent's home field. The Army–Navy game in Baltimore was excepted because it was considered the normal Navy home game. No navy eleven could play on a neutral field without "special consideration." None came.⁴² Bainbridge earned fifth in the AP rankings among all teams and fourth in the rankings of the respected Dr. L. H. Baker football service.

1944 RECORD (10–0–0) (Scrimmaged Washington Redskins)

Camp Lee (Va.)	43–0
Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base	53–7
Camden (N.J.) Blue Devils	47–7
Camp Peary (Va.)	7–0
Maxwell Field (Ala.)	15–7

North Carolina Pre-Flight	49-20
Cherry Point (N.C.) Marine Corps Air Station	50-7
Camp Lejeune	33-6
Camp Peary	21-13
Maxwell Field	13-3
	331-70

1944 BAINBRIDGE COMMODORES ROSTER
(listed numerically by jersey number)

G	Garrard Ramsey	6'1"/195	William & Mary*
B	Donald Durdan	5'9"/175	Oregon St.*
B	James Gatewood	6'½"/180	Georgia*
B	Charlie Justice	5'10"/165	Asheville (N.C.) HS
B	Joe Kane	5'8"/185	Pennsylvania
G	Len Akin	5'11"/202	Baylor*
B	Frank Santora	5'9"/166	Garfield (N.J.) HS
E	John Feeney	6'1"/200	Scranton U.
B	John McTamney	5'10"/180	Georgetown
E	Bernard Kuczynski	6'0"/195	Pennsylvania
B	Jackie Field	5'11"/195	Texas
E	Charles Mehelich	6'2"/200	Duquesne
E	Alfred Vanderweghe	5'11"/190	William & Mary*
G	Joseph Petro	6'0"/195	Muhlenberg
E	Tom Vargo	6'3"/200	Penn St.
B	Joe Michaels	5'10"/180	Pennsylvania
B	Harry Hopp	6'0"/210	Nebraska
B	Dante Magnani	6'1"/180	St. Mary's
G	John Badaczewski	6'2"/210	Western Reserve
E	Joe Davis	6'2"/200	Southern California*
E	Paul Ruby	6'2"/210	Villanova
C	Lou Sossamon	6'0"/195	South Carolina*
B	Arthur Pollard	6'0"/180	Texas A&M
QB	Hilliard Cheatham	5'11"/200	Auburn*
G	Florian Surdyk	5'11"/200	Illinois
E	Joseph Schwarting	6'0"/190	Texas
B	Harvey Johnson	6'0"/205	William & Mary*
E	Carl Tomasello	6'0"/195	Scranton U.
B	Andy Pulley	5'11"/200	Richmond (Va.) HS
C	Lester Gatewood	6'2"/200	Baylor-Tulane
B	Dewey Proctor	6'0"/195	Furman

G	Lyle Rockenboch	5'9"/205	Michigan St.
T	Garvin Mugg	6'0"/201	North Texas St.
T	Frank Hrabatin	6'4"/203	Loyola (La.)
T	Elwood Gerber (captain)	6'0"/205	Alabama*
T	Jim Tharp	6'5½"/235	Notre Dame
T	Zygmunt Czarboski	6'0"/200	Notre Dame
T	Lou Rymkus	6'4"/201	Notre Dame*
C	Clure Mosher	6'1"/203	Louisville

HS — High school player without college experience

*Starter

1945

Preseason headlines predicted a sea change. "Bainbridge will not thunder the South Atlantic gridirons," the *Illustrated Football Annual* blared.⁴³ *The Football News* shut the door: "Undefeated Bainbridge Loses Stars Who Made It Great." After two successive unblemished campaigns, outscoring opponents 644 to 77, the nation's only team until then never to lose a game expected that record to be snapped. The Commodores, an advance obituary stated, "are not what they used to be."⁴⁴ Why not? As the war wound down, the PI school closed in June, and the marquee athletes disappeared.

Three practice weeks somehow convinced new head coach Paul Pierce (Texas State Teachers) that his unit would be good but hardly great. No superstars, no All-Americans, no NFL veterans, or All-Service standouts, the likes of Hopp, Johnson, Gatewood, Gerber, DeCorrevont, Rymkus, Akin, Mullineaux, and Ramsey. Also departed: "sensational high school back, Charlie 'Choo Choo' Justice of Asheville (N.C.) High," who trailed only Army's Glenn Davis as 1944's top scoring back.⁴⁵

The Bainbridge candidate replacement reservoir still had thousands, mostly kids right out of high school and college freshmen averaging less than 20 years old. Therefore, Pierce's "T" formation did not figure "to be the same potent brew that the great elevens of '43 and '44 manufactured."⁴⁶

Yet, remarkably, the unbeaten record stretched to 21 games, as Bainbridge continued outscoring opponents 140 to 13, until the Nashville (Tenn.)-based Air Transport Command halted it, 24-6. Too many outbound personnel transfers? By then the meteoric, unprecedented, startling two-plus-season run was through. But, oh, what a run.

THE BAINBRIDGE 1945 RECORD (5-4-0)

Atlantic City (N.J.) Naval Air Station	14-6
Aberdeen (Md.) Proving Ground	59-7
Camp Lee (Va.)	27-0
Camp Detrick (Md.)	40-0
Air Transport Command (Tenn.)	6-24
Little Creek (Va.) Naval Amphibious Base	0-7
Camp Lee	0-26
Ft. Bragg (N.C.)	14-20
Oceana (Va.) Naval Air Station	53-14
	<hr/>
	213-104

CHAPTER 2

“Ideological Arsenal”: The Impact of Football on the War Effort, Morale, and Fighting Spirit

“The American people relied not only on their massive production of arms and material but upon an ideological arsenal. The field of organized athletics had a symbolic and rhetorical appeal.... Sport represented the moral and physical superiority of the United States.”¹

The military firmly believed that football, “the American method of physical conditioning,” provided the key to achieving such moral and physical superiority. Spectators attending the 1943 game matching Northwestern at the Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center read in their programs that “football is as American as skip-bombing” and furthermore that sports competition challenges a young man’s individuality and decision-making process under all circumstances.²

Clark Shaughnessy, one of the era’s great coaches and considered the “father of the T formation,” called football “a great war game,” the only field sport closely simulating battle strategy and tactics. To illustrate, he cited the tactics of British General Bernard Montgomery, almost identical with the “T” formation’s fullback-counter play, in defeating General Erwin Rommel’s Afrika Korps in the Battle of El Alamein on November 4, 1942. The victory saved Cairo and Alexandria and led to the German defeat in North Africa six months later.³

By 1942, the U.S. focus for prosecuting the war quickly manifested itself in the hardened, conditioned American boy, strongly grounded in robust

athletics and competitive sports. Football as a principal mechanism naturally conformed. The *Athletic Journal* "depicted Japanese soldiers fleeing in terror from a group of uniformed football players. 'Why not battalions of football players?' stated the caption, 'they are the fightingest men we have.'"⁴

What might be the shortest way to win the war? Columbia's Lou Little, a prominent and eloquent coach, in 1942 answered for the National Collegiate Athletic Association: "Play football. Play it hard and intensively with an even more savage will-to-win than in peacetime. Play service football as much as the military programs of the men under arms will permit." A year later Little continued rationalizing the push for football. American males love the "hard-hitting, punishing contact sport," he said, that energizes an invaluable mental approach for the combat soldier.⁵ After employing the single-wing offensive formation for 20 years, in 1944 Little became one of the new "split-T" innovators.

Little also chastised peacetime America for its dull competitive spirit,

physical and mental softness, and decried the prevalent de-emphasis on winning or sacrificing for victory. As one of them, he knew coaches of major college sports had done their utmost to keep the competitive spark alive and against odds to maintain the American boy in fighting trim.⁶ Now the nation needed to stand up. Other critics joined Little, notably the NCAA.

Few disagreed. One college coach reflected the prevailing view, that if football hindered an all-out war effort, then cancel it for the duration. Otherwise, sup-



"Coach Morgan must've lost a lot more men in the draft than he lets on." The older players departed for military duty to be replaced by underage youngsters (Bo Brown in game program, Texas Tech at Lubbock Army Air Field, September 18, 1943).

port it and make it work. Letters he received from former players on every front pleaded to continue the game. "I am not afraid of Hitler spiking the guns in our sports set-up. The biggest danger to college football is not planning for the future."⁷ Already some were thinking of the postwar.

Once America entered World War II, the military recognized that youth maturing during the pacifist, Great Depression 1930s generation required massive physical and mental makeovers. The nation's males were out of shape. Too many men flunked early-war enlistment and draft physicals because of health or mental conditions (classified 4-F). Some did end up on college grid rosters. The country's highly suspect physical fitness resulted in one of every four teenage boys being rejected for service by 1943. But by lowering standards and testing every eligible prospect, enough physically qualified fighters eventually entered the services.

For example, the author's home county, New Hanover, N.C., showed a total wartime rejection rate of 45 percent, according to a December 1945 study. The racial breakdown: 36.3 percent white, 61.1 percent black. Reasons: the lack of health care and efficient health education.⁸

The navy soon recognized this serious condition during screening for pre-flight schools. From a population representing "complacent obese, peaceful days" they selected only specimens who could "produce the ruggedness and sharpness of mind and body" to make a superb aviator.⁹ Calisthenics and gymnastics alone could not manufacture the ideal pilot or ship officer. In 12 weeks the navy physical and mental development programs tried to surmount many mistakes of peacetime living and consequently helped to complete mission assignments and ultimately save U.S. lives. The *Chicago Daily News* added: "It was remarkable how soft we had gone mentally."¹⁰

The NCAA, the college sports governing organization, in 1942 promoted football's rigorous competitive tradition to indoctrinate players on the importance of the big picture — warfare, mission, victory — far larger than one man or his team. Mandatory hard drills incorporated a study of the opponent's strategy and tactics as a field or sea commander would engage the real enemy's. In diagnosing an opponent's strengths and weaknesses, the player on receiving a coach's order knew the objective would be gained if he and his comrades properly followed through.¹¹

Violent, body-contact football rounded a man out by emphasizing individual and collective coordination and team play. It exposed fortitude, perseverance, resilience, the ability to play through injuries, and unit fighting spirit, while demanding self control and respect of others.¹² The overwhelming majority of players in this era wore no face mask. Those who did used a simple, basic inverted-T wire guard. Pads and helmets provided meager protection compared to today's equipment. By 1942, feedback from the combat

fronts told of heroic exploits by former college athletes. The NCAA further believed the recreation advantages of football also reduced wartime stress and strain for participants as well as followers.¹³

A poignant 1944 sporting goods company advertisement in the *NCAA Football Guide* trumpeted the positive influence of competitive sports on American youth as a safeguard for democracy. "Out there, where 'the best man wins,' they develop a *will-to-win*, the *never-say-die spirit*, that makes them fight till the last man is out — till the final gun of the last quarter — the last bell of the last round — the last shot of the last long set — the last stride of the last lap." Youth playing sports in those extremely turbulent times appreciated and experienced determination, self-confidence, freedom and democracy, in addition to building strong bodies and agility.¹⁴

Continuing to extol the sport's virtues, coach Little believed the war returned most of the nation to its senses. He concluded that America needed football not necessarily for relaxation on Saturday afternoons, but as a team game to enhance and fuse temperament, character, and principles in the boys who played and ultimately fought for our freedom.¹⁵

Requiring a player to endure terrific physical punishment on the field prepared him as little else could for the emotions, mayhem, and death on the battlefield, and to sustain high morale. The American Football Coaches Association believed that when practices and games ended, the player took immense pride in showing the guts to give and take a violent pounding. It made him a better soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine.¹⁶

The principal proponents of military football were those officials responsible for providing adequate numbers of naval aviators (which included Marine Corps aviation) and shipboard officers for the fleet, and Marine ground officers. Naval aviation's V-5 pre-flight football conditioning program opened in 1942 snagged in intra-service politics and turf battles. Program director Commander Tom Hamilton weathered the rough beginning to create overnight a superb regimen, as much "mental conditioning" as physical, and unsurpassed by any service during the war. Its demonstrative motto — "Football! Navy! War!" — was the subject of a training manual on physical and mental strength. "Ecstatic sports journalists" lauded Hamilton's plans, methods, and organizational abilities. In a knowledgeable position, in 1943 he attributed the navy's high degree of readiness and remarkable records in gunnery and air warfare to competitive training methods.¹⁷

Future naval pilots learned to absorb shock and pain as football players, how to rebound from misfortune and adversity, and gain bodily skills, strength, and resourcefulness. Combined with fostering split-second reactions, these qualities, the navy believed, produced the world's toughest and finest fighting men.¹⁸ Daily feedback in 1943 cited an "athletic ace of yesteryear" cast in

a leading role at the front, praising his competitive training.¹⁹ The *Chicago Tribune's* prestigious sports writer Arch Ward went so far as to predict that V-5's success or failure would "determine the outcome of the war."²⁰ Another newspaper stated the navy saw football as molding body and mind into a winning spirit "in a game where there are no moral victories and the good loser is a dead one."²¹

A Marine with football experience made an ideal fighter on Pacific islands, wrote football historian John Gunn. "He was tough. He had stamina. He was team-oriented. And he loved action." As soon as the public became aware of Leatherneck accomplishments, adding to their lore, players flocked to recruiters,²² Sergeant Philip "Moon" Calabrese, for example. A veteran of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Tarawa, who had relished his gridiron time, Calabrese credited his faith in God and ingrained mental and physical alertness for enabling him to withstand fierce combat against the Japanese.²³

What was the payoff? The NCAA reported the combat theaters requested more football players, because those boys "could be counted on to take an assignment and to follow orders to the letter." Even the enemy favored American sports. After World War I, Germany concluded that quickly mobilized U.S. soldiers with little military background but grounded in competitive sports had outfought German veterans. Germany and Japan adopted some of our games post-war.²⁴ But, as one coach stated, "what the Axis could not import in one generation, however, was the American spirit of athletic competition." Athletes, they concluded, were "American weapons."²⁵ Two Americans stationed in Berlin — and imprisoned by the Germans later — wrote that a U.S. tank officer driving against the German panzers probably "thought back to an autumn day when he was a quarterback," and that "battle plans and football plays showed striking similarities in fundamentals of strategy."²⁶



Commander (later captain) Thomas J. Hamilton, USN, head of the navy's preflight and physical training program, Bureau of Aeronautics. He was mainly responsible for developing and executing the rigorous physical conditioning programs which promoted playing football and is credited with helping to prepare flyers in winning the war (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1943*).

And on the home front? Regarding the 1944 game in Los Angeles between Randolph Field and the Fourth Air Force, the *Evening Herald and Express* praised military football's tremendous influence on the war effort. That kind of exhibition, matching two headline dream elevens — a setup unlikely under normal circumstances — raised money for troop athletic equipment, trained players "for the bigger game ahead," and uplifted civilian morale.²⁷

Football boosted morale and the fighting spirit everywhere. Gridiron periodicals, exceptionally popular in an age with radio as its only electronic news medium, conformed to the war effort while dealing with paper usage restrictions. To the delight and appetite of participants and fans in and out of uniform, a surprising number maintained annual or weekly publication. Many of these aided my research for this book: the *Football Rule and Record Book*; *Football Prevues*; *The Football News: The American Collegiate Sports Weekly*; the *Football Review: Yearbook of the Football News*; *Illustrated Football Annual*; *Football Pictorial Yearbook*; and, extremely valuable, the *Official National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide*. Some of these ceased publication long ago.

Football Prevues 1944 limited its number of pages, printed smaller type, and eliminated photographs. The editor explained why he did not suspend publication: the troops enjoyed reading it. *The Football News* promised to publish whatever interesting material it could to entertain servicemen, and liked to receive order lists from soldiers using APO mailing addresses. Naturally troops overseas thrived on sports news from home.²⁸ But the soldiers' popular, globally distributed magazine, *Yank: The Army Weekly*, reported lit-



Women Marines training at the Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base served as cheerleaders for their football team. How many other military teams used female cheerleaders is unknown, but likely few (game program, Bainbridge Naval Training Center at Camp Lejeune, November 19, 1944).



Players from white-jerseyed Randolph (Tex.) Field, one of the war's strongest military elevens, stop a Texas back in the 1944 Cotton Bowl. The battle ended tied 7-7 (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

tle of the military games to troops overseas, concentrating on college games and other sports "so as not to upset the fighting men about all these uniformed GI's frolicking about on the playing fields back home."²⁹

Sports brought various college campus elements together and provided a relief from an arduous study week or weekend academic restrictions, all campus morale boosters. Young trainees needed football's diversion. At the Great Lakes boot camp, it linked home to the transition period.³⁰ Great Lakes, it was said, "played as thoroughly as it worked.... Sailors took great pleasure in crashing into each other, and pounding the daylights out of each other.... [Great Lakes] even made soccer into a raucous contact sport, turning that rather gentle game into all-out football without helmets or pads."³¹ The 1943 game of Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base at Jacksonville (Fla.) Naval Air Technical Training Center, Marines and sailors playing against each other, but together, in a way exemplified the cooperative interservice spirit that would lead to victory overseas.³²

Cooperation and conditioning aside, military elevens zealously played to win, particularly in 1945. Overnight rivalries developed between services and bases. Fans attending the game pitting Fleet City (Calif.) Naval Receiving

Station and El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station in San Francisco's Kezar Stadium prepared for a "civil war" and "old fashioned family football quarrel." Those "blood brothers," it was said, "like to cut each other's throats occasionally."³³ No kidding. Further motivation required? Dartmouth All-America and Chicago Bears pro Bob MacLeod stated the coach of his 1944 El Toro eleven gave pep talks that included a "fake telegram from the commandant of the Marine Corps." The telegram "told the players flatly, 'The next time (you mess up) you'll catch the next boat to the next action place.'"³⁴

With the national elation of victory, 1945 produced classic, star-filled matchups, and sports scribes reached for superlatives. They billed the December game between unbeaten Fleet City (23) and the Pacific Fleet All-Stars (7), a once-in-a-lifetime display of powerful combinations of top players, as one that "may well live in football history as one of the greatest games of all time."³⁵ The following week Fleet City whacked El Toro for the second time, 48–25, in what is remembered as the war's best all-military game.

If wartime restrictions could cripple college football, it would have been by 1944, the *Football Rule and Record Book* stated. Public attention and support accelerated, producing record crowds in many sections. Big Ten attendance exceeded 1943 by 300,000; Ohio State broke its record, aided by 83,627 in Cleveland for the Illinois contest; and Notre Dame played before half a million. The caliber of play improved or held its own with 1943 and courageous college men carried on.³⁶

Buy Bonds! While service personnel attended all-military games free, civilians often gained admission only by buying a war bond. Game programs and pregame publicity urged support of the government's bond drives to finance the war's staggering costs. Into late 1945, after V-J Day on August 14, the final drive solicited funds. "We haven't finished the job yet" until all financial obligations are finished, and bills have to be paid, the *Brooklyn (N. Y.) Eagle* shouted at the Brooklyn Bond Bowl Game on Nov. 11, 1945. The First Air Force from Mitchell Field, N.Y., defeated the Army Air Forces Training Command from Texas, 24–6. "The firing may have ceased officially; victory parades have been held; bonfires have been lit; some of our boys are home — but THE JOB remains unfinished."³⁷

Purchasing a bond admitted a spectator for the Brooklyn tilt. Sports "sent its stars and its money to the far reaches of the earth to bring victory. But sports must not bog down now." Those who had already bought a bond needed to do it again, the *Eagle* reminded fans. "Do you remember Waddy Young and Don Wemple? They played football at Ebbets Field several seasons for the (National Football League) Brooklyn Dodgers. They will never play football again. They're dead, lost in action with the Air Force. Their job is done. But not yours."³⁸



Foremost among the myriad postseason and bowl games involving military teams was the 1945 Brooklyn Bond Bowl Game played at Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, N.Y. Purchasing a war bond admitted a spectator. The First Air Force team from Mitchell Field (N.Y.) downed the Army Air Forces Training Command (Tex.), 24–6 (game program, First Air Force vs. Army Air Forces Training Command, November 11, 1945).

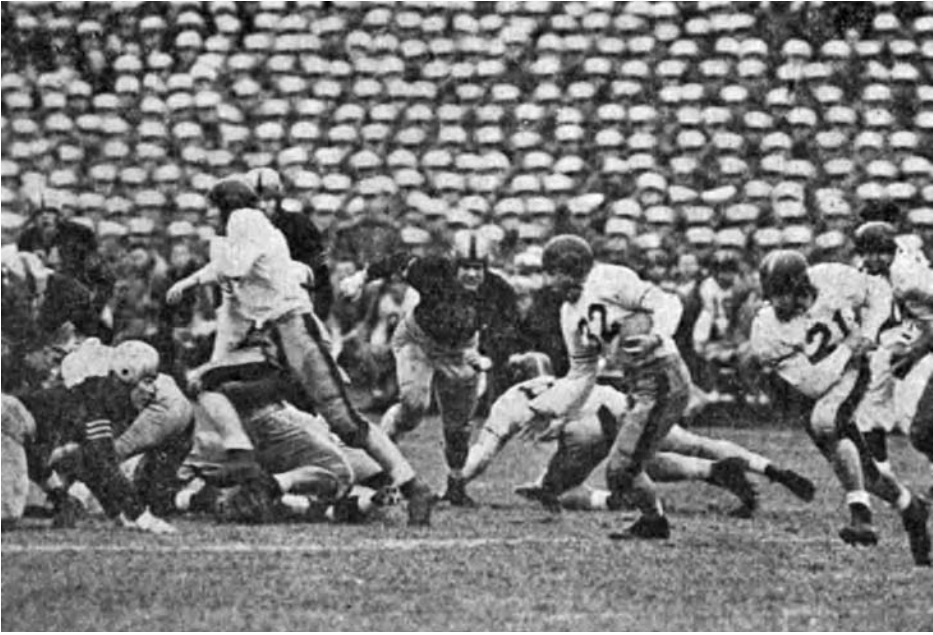
The War Department appointed famed sportswriter Grantland Rice to head the civilian War Football Fund, Inc., to raise money for Army Relief, a service charity. It organized eight games between professional and army all-star teams, coached by the well-known Colonel Bob Neyland (Tennessee) and Major Wallace Wade (Duke), which netted \$241,292.³⁹ Gate receipts from the 1944 annual game matching the College All-Stars and the NFL champion Chicago Bears earned \$78,000 for the Army Air Forces Aid Society and Chicago Service Men's Center.

The 1944 Army (23)-Navy (7) war-bond game in Baltimore, Md., drew 66,566 fans who paid scalpers as much as \$35 per ticket. War bonds sold: \$58,637,000 to ticket buyers, including 15 box seats at \$1,000 each. The game claimed history's largest sports radio audience, with shortwave relays to the entire globe for every G.I. Joe and Jane.⁴⁰ That night Cadets coach Colonel Earl "Red" Blaik received a telegram from the Philippines: "The greatest of all Army teams — STOP — We have stopped the war to celebrate your magnificent success. [General Douglas] MacArthur."⁴¹

In December 1944, despite horrible weather and snow flurries, before a "hardy gathering" of 8,356 in New York's Polo Grounds, the "vaunted ground offensive" of Randolph Field defeated the Second Air Force, 13-6, to win the Army Air Forces championship. Nevertheless, the "bone-crushing battle between super-charged lines and ever-running backfields" in the Treasury Bowl game brought \$79.5 million in war bond sales.⁴²



Cartoon showing football fan saddened by the 1943 season's end following great games between Army (0) and Navy (13), and Notre Dame (14) and Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center (19). The war's gloomiest season nevertheless produced some of its most exciting military games (*The Football News*, December 4, 1943).



Navy's back Hillis Hume (32) carries against Army in the Midshipmen's 13-0 victory in 1943, their fifth straight win over the Cadets, before 15,000. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ruled the game be played "in the comparative privacy" of West Point, N. Y., under strict travel limitations to prevent outsiders from attending (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1944*).

Officials formed the powerful March Field, Calif., Fourth Air Force "war-born aggregation" to raise funds to buy athletic equipment, cigarettes, candy and magazines for overseas forces, and for the Red Cross and army charities. The merchants, service clubs, and Riverside Chamber of Commerce assisted.⁴³ Midway into the 1944 season they raised \$138,000 for army charities and the All-Pacific Recreation Fund, headed by celebrity Joe E. Brown, that shipped recreation and comfort items to the Pacific and other theaters. Servicemen in hospitals and their dependants received priority.⁴⁴ The "GI Juggernaut" went 32-7-3 during the wartime seasons, essentially as a part-time, off-working-hours activity, with men sometimes practicing on their own.⁴⁵ By August 1944, 90 percent of all sports equipment being made headed for the armed forces, costing \$38 million annually—the equivalent of outfitting 30,000 football, 65,000 baseball, and 110,000 softball teams. Colleges had enough to go around and husbanded theirs.

Attendance at college games in 1944 "leaped upward" to approximately 5,555,000 for 333 home games played by 67 colleges, according to the Asso-

ciated Press's annual canvass. Low ticket prices spurred attendance. This increase of about 1.5 million over the 273 games by 57 schools charted in 1943 did not result from additional schools resuming play. Pennsylvania led with 379,000 for seven games at Philadelphia's Franklin Field.⁴⁶ By 1945, with the end of gasoline rationing and wider sports interest, zooming attendance broke existing records before the end of November. Penn led again with 478,000. Military all-star games played in Hawaii in 1944 drew crowds exceeding 45,000 service personnel.

The principal customers for military games remained the troops. In 1943 Great Lakes used football to encourage enlistments and as entertainment. The 1942 team (8–3–1) played all 12 games on the road including in Chicago, St. Louis, and Cleveland, and at Big Ten schools Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois, energizing recruiting drives and showing the navy flag to young people from landlocked states.⁴⁷

By November 1945, magical Notre Dame awaited its third sellout crowd versus Navy in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium. The Irish played before sellouts at Georgia Tech and Pittsburgh, and no tickets remained for upcoming games with Army in New York's Yankee Stadium and at Northwestern. On December 1 Army walloped Navy, 32–13, before 102,000 in Philadelphia. How conditions had changed. The president ruled that the 1943 contest would be played "in the comparative privacy" of West Point under the same travel restrictions as the 1942 game at Annapolis, to prevent outsiders from obtaining tickets. Only persons on duty there or living within a 10-mile radius could attend, and tickets were sold only on game day.⁴⁸ Navy won its fifth straight over Army, 13–0, on November 27, 1943, before 15,000.

As the 1945 football season approached, the services shifted thousands of personnel to the West Coast for the war against Japan. Many talented football players transferred, including to Fleet City, for games considered essentially good for morale. By season's end, Fleet City expected to perform before nearly a half-million, mostly sailors and soldiers.⁴⁹

Because the NCAA strongly believed the sport's paramount contribution to the war effort was the training of men for combat, it accordingly cooperated with the armed forces. According to John L. Griffith, when victorious America "sits down to analyze the place of football in wartime, the game will be remembered first and foremost for its training values." But football also gave sports-conscious men and women lighter, refreshing entertainment, whether in a stadium or by radio.⁵⁰ Reviewing 1945, the fourth and final wartime season, the NCAA reemphasized football's place and tremendous value in wartime, and cited military, the government, civilians, and educators for making it work. "Indeed, American football, as perhaps no other sport, justified itself."⁵¹

Fleet City's December Victory Bond Drive game reminded fans that such a game normally would be a dream, as the shadow of war and death hung over the nation. According to the game program, "We Americans who prayed so long for peace must now continue to work to pay for the victory we have won. It is the least we can do in keeping the faith with those who laid down their lives for the ideals we hold in common and the flag we love."⁵² A state university coach predicted the country would "get militant" about athletics and physical fitness so as to avoid a repeat of prewar conditions.⁵³ For the moment that seemed plausible.

The future arrived quickly. In 1945, with the war about to be won, Grantland Rice reflected that sports created the "happy links" joining battlefields and Main Street. "The interest created, the skills acquired, will not be left behind when Johnny comes marching home."⁵⁴ But not all soldiers did.

*They hit the line — and they hit it hard —
And they ran the ends of same.
They passed and kicked to the distant goal,
When they starred in the college game.
But they heard the bugles of war that called
To a rougher and tougher test.
And now they sleep under foreign soil,
The stars who have earned their rest.
They played the game in the good old way
That led to the bayonet's thrust.
They led the charge to the final goal
Which covers their golden line.
— Grantland Rice, 1945⁵⁵*

CHAPTER 3

“Lend-Lease Football”: Navy and Marine Corps College Officer Training Programs

“Lend-lease’ huskies, wearing navy blue or the khaki of naval aviation trainees, turned the Longhorns into a team that the rest couldn’t touch.”¹—Weldon Hart

Once-beaten Texas — and that loss was to a team unheard of before or since — ran roughshod over the Southwest Conference in 1943. How? Coach Dana X. Bible fortunately got and kept a solid cadre of good V-12 boys for the entire season. Only Texas A&M’s beardless, all-civilian “Kiddie Korps” presented any obstacle.²

No stretch or play on words, the “Lend-Lease” moniker applied to temporarily loaned star football players and linked directly to the successful U.S. program to provide weapons and equipment to our allies. It resonated and stuck because essentially it was correct.

In a year when Baylor dropped out, Texas walloped all-civilian Arkansas, Rice, Southern Methodist, Texas Christian, Texas A&M, and Blackland Field, edged Oklahoma, and tied Randolph Field (Tex.) 7–7 in a classic Cotton Bowl showdown on New Year’s Day 1944, in what became the highlight military post-season game. Its only loss was to Southwestern University, 14–7. Southwestern? Yes. The Georgetown, Tex., Pirates, stocked with activated Marine Corps reservists (33 of their 37 players) formerly on the Longhorns, compiled a 10–1–1 mark against a mixture of service and big-name college teams. Now playing in Division III, the team soon achieved mediocrity once Marine trainees departed, and fell to 2–6–1 by 1945.

Southwestern’s regional “Cinderella” sisters included the Southwestern Louisiana Institute (SLI) Ragin’ Cajuns and North Texas Agricultural Col-

lege. Those schools, "lifted from athletic obscurity by the V-12 program, found that if the navy giveth, the navy also taketh away." Like other 1943 Southwestern Conference teams, they lost many of their stars by November first.³ Also called "the mushroom teams ... such sudden growers" the Cinderellas "sprouted quickly in '43 under a heaven-sent rain of veteran Marine trainees."⁴

Meanwhile, through the "recruiting coup of the century," SLI enrolled 175 two-year college starters — including two Marine trainees, quarterback

Alvin Dark (future major-league baseball player) of Louisiana State and Rice All-America guard Weldon Humble (future pro Hall of Famer). On January 1, 1944, in the first Oil Bowl, SLI (5-0-1), now Louisiana-Lafayette, avenged an earlier tie with "Cinderella" team Arkansas A&M, 24-7.⁵ SLI won "despite losing a raft of players to Marine boot camps November 1. The team had a 'pocket full of refunds' from teams unwilling to play. For polling purposes, one can imagine the problem of trying to make known to the sports desks of the *New York Times* and the Associated Press the background of a team from Lafayette, La., that had played five games."⁶

Marines dominated the one-shot, 1943 Arkansas A&M Boll Weevils (5-2-1)



A Marine Corps "Lend-Lease" trainee, back Spot Collins was among the many former Texas players who helped Southwestern University's "Cinderella" team defeat the Longhorns, 14-7, in 1943. Southwestern recorded a 10-1-1 mark but soon settled into mediocrity when trainees departed (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1943*).

who defeated Arkansas 20–12 wearing borrowed uniforms and sneakers sent by the Naval Air Technical Training Command in Tennessee, a team disbanded because of disobedience of orders. Now Division II Arkansas-Monticello, the Weevils also lost to Southwestern. The Cinderellas beat up on each other.⁷

The V-Programs

Why and how did these “lend-lease” players get there? Through the Department of the Navy’s college officer-training programs, called the V-Programs.

The department knew it required thousands of junior officers to man the projected number of ships and aircraft, and lead hundreds of infantry rifle platoons. At the war’s outset and throughout, the department determined and adjusted the fluctuating number of officers and recruited and administered accordingly. When the draft age was lowered to 18 in November 1942, that drastically reduced the potential college enrollment pool. Traditionally demanding that its officers be college graduates, the service established the V-12 program to provide undergraduate educations for selected candidates, assisted in the start-up by the American Council on Education.

The pre-commissioning V-Programs, that substantially produced a continuous pipeline of officer candidates, originally were designated:

V-1, for college freshmen and sophomores (begun in 1942);

V-5, pre-flight, for potential aviation cadets;

V-7, for college juniors and seniors (instituted in 1940) and

V-12, for general line and staff officers — the largest program.

The successful Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, already on many campuses, and the V-1 and V-7 programs integrated into V-12 in 1943.

The single purpose of the V-Programs was to give prospective naval, Marine, and Coast Guard officers a college education in areas the navy most required. They were “not intended to protect young men from the fighting, to save colleges from closing, or to achieve any of the other ends often ascribed to it by admirers and critics,” wrote James G. Schneider, who studied V-12 in depth.⁸ But “a passing mark means as much to the navy as a well-aimed shell,” ribbed the campus magazine at North Carolina, a V-12 school.⁹ Furthermore, the National Collegiate Athletic Association believed V-Programs in 1943 supplied the backbone of American football.¹⁰

Of note, in December 1942 the army established the Army Specialized Training Program in some colleges to provide specialized technical training of men already on active duty, but did not allow them to play varsity foot-

ball. Consequently, no army or army air forces trainees on any college campus played varsity football, only intramurals.

V-12

The V-12 program commenced on July 1, 1943, six months after being announced. The navy intended it as a college course, from planning to recruiting to operation, and deferred to the schools — within broad outlines and requests — regarding course content, textbooks, academic credit, and awarding of degrees. The active-duty candidates attended classes along with civilian students, wearing enlisted uniforms, while those attending medical, dental, and theological schools wore midshipmen’s uniforms. Their academic load and expectations exceeded those of civilians.

The matter of jurisdiction, discipline, and administration necessitated joint agreements. Officer procurement personnel selected the candidates, shipped them to schools, and then connected with them again at commissioning time. Meanwhile, an active duty support staff administered the programs at each institution.¹¹

Successful curriculum completion qualified a student for further training at midshipmen’s schools or the Marine Corps officer candidate school before commissioning as an ensign or a second lieutenant.¹² Some 60,000 students of the 125,000 who enrolled completed the V-12 regimen. Many returned to college after the war to complete undergraduate or graduate degrees under the GI Bill. More than 40 future navy admirals and 18 Marine Corps generals began their careers in V-12.

“The unprecedented democratic nature of the selection process” provided educational opportunities for many young men, James G. Schneider found. Officers successfully completing V-12 training and its follow-up courses assumed enormous responsibility and leadership loads. Those commissioned at age nineteen at once commanded dozens of men up to twice their age.¹³ Candidates and cadets included reservists and men fresh off the streets. The World War II “90-day wonder,” referring to officers commissioned via compressed training, did not come from V-12. The minimum was eight months for those with seven previous college semesters (the “irregulars”), and approximately two years for men with no college (“regulars”).

Colleges and the navy soon bonded in this major contribution to the war effort. Offered an opportunity to participate, hundreds of colleges jumped, particularly small ones fearing a dearth of students would create the loss of revenue and therefore faculty, necessitating an indefinite shutdown. Additional students, the primary motivator, became a godsend. As a result,

from the 500 schools that qualified, 131 were chosen in 43 states and these eventually hosted navy training programs in some manner under government contracts.

Asked not to pursue a unit aggressively, schools nevertheless began their "political tactics." Schneider determined "life in college America was getting too difficult for institutions to use less than their maximum efforts to secure one of the very desirable college training contracts." With their schools' existence at stake, college officials nevertheless also derived patriotic satisfaction from participating in the war effort. Secretary Frank Knox said in December



Former Oregon back Roy Dyer played at Southern California as a Marine Corps V-12 officer candidate trainee. The Trojans, but not the Ducks, were one of only four Pacific Coast Conference (now PAC-10) schools fielding teams in 1944. Using mostly Marine "Lend-Lease" players, USC perfected the T formation and won its eighth straight Rose Bowl (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1943*).

1942 that the navy would give special consideration to small colleges but refused to offer priorities to self-supporting colleges.¹⁴ Then the navy responded to political pressure. According to Schneider, a member of Congress "was not doing his duty to his constituents if he didn't actively support their 'most reasonable' request to land a navy contract." A school's selection was reason for celebration, "with a flurry of planning, purchasing, remodeling, and hiring."¹⁵

Participants came from the Ivy League, state universities, teachers' colleges, and private and church-aided colleges. For example, Duke, which owned an NROTC unit, offered Marines basic, engineering, premedical, and pre dental curricula. The number of students ranged from 2,000 (660 Marines) at Dartmouth to 68 at Webb Institute of Naval Architecture in New York. Besides helping achieve victory, the schools reaped benefits and prestige, and drew institution and community closer together. Some gained more national attention with their V-12-dominated athletic teams than before.

To facilitate transfers between schools, the program operated on a year-round schedule of three four-month terms, beginning on July 1, November 1, and March 1, with five and a half work days. Every student carried a minimum of 17 hours of academic work plus physical training. The end of V-12 terms did not coincide with the completion of football schedules, causing some squads winning their first few games to lose their last few because of October 31 departures.

V-students were males and nearly unanimously white. The navy stated that no racial barriers existed, but because a person's race went unnoted on his V-12 application, the number of blacks accepted is unknown. Schneider believed the program originally enrolled a dozen, 36 by mid-1945, and probably 75 overall. This exceptionally bold, pioneering step to integrate the navy officer corps paved the way to commissioning of black officers at Great Lakes Naval Training Center.¹⁶

The V-12 program commenced when 70,000 men already in V-1 or V-7 programs reported. Marines eventually numbered 11,460, but by mid-1945 that number decreased to only 1,902. Both services contended "with the morale problem that arose from the sense of urgency to get out to the 'real war,'" an attitude pronounced in the Marines because of their fighting reputation and macho image.¹⁷ Marine V-12 attrition was eight percent, about the normal college rate.

For their 40 V-12 detachments (units), the Marine Corps recruited a sizeable number of candidates who happened to play football. College campuses recognized "that most of the 'jocks' were enlisting in the Marines," and coaches encouraged players to sign up.¹⁸ One football historian equated the Marines' "manpower grab in 1943 [as] comparable to the navy's establishment of its pre-flight programs in 1942" when it induced top coaches and players. The

Corps actually believed that the president was trying to save small colleges. Furthermore, historian John Gunn reasoned, "a football player made an ideal Marine.... He was tough. He had stamina. He was team-oriented. And he loved action." Marine V-12 players received two Navy Crosses, seven Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars and other decorations for valor on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.¹⁹

Soon the leading football schools coincidentally hosted Marine units: Notre Dame, College of Pacific, Duke, Northwestern, Georgia Tech, Michigan, North Carolina, and others, including eight of the 1943 Associated Press top 20 teams. Other colleges lifted into temporary powers by navy and Marine trainees included Franklin & Marshall, Rochester, Purdue, and unbeaten Colorado College. The navy refused to let its schools play in the Sun, Grape, and Raisin Bowls, and other postseason games, because of gas rationing and training conflicts.

Using seven navy and twenty-six Marine trainees, Purdue turned a 1-8-0 1942 season into 9-0-0 Big 10 championship in 1943 and a No. 5 AP ranking. "Any doubts about the wartime strength of Purdue's 1943 football team were convincingly dispelled. They were a great team that would never have been, but for the course of world events far away from college football."²⁰

By 1944, hundreds of Marine trainees who'd propped up college elevens transferred to advanced training, permanent duty stations, or headed overseas, depleting V-12 ranks in some schools. Iwo Jima loomed only four months away. Mounting casualties created an urgent need for marines in the Pacific, and those failing to qualify for a commission shipped out to combat duty. Incoming 1944 V-12 ranks included men with combat experience, and wounded on Guadalcanal or in other Pacific campaigns, who'd recovered and returned to civilian life and football, despite carrying pieces of shrapnel. The Corps consolidated some units, anticipating a reduced officer need, leaving 13 active.²¹

An annual football magazine stated some 1943 V-Programs backfired unintentionally, in spite of navy cooperation in providing material to smaller colleges. Small schools depending on navy or Marine students faced a large disadvantage when competing with those with large enrollments, except the few Cinderellas. The two outbound student transfer-moving dates of July 1 and November 1 meant July transferees wasted the previous spring's team practice, and fall transferees left in mid-season. Players learning one school's system might switch to a rival in the same conference.²²

The V-Programs started phasing out in June 1945, but some schools continued offering NROTC. By October, with the war ended in August, "everyone had the 'short-timer's attitude.' ... The bold wartime educational experiment had done its job."²³

V-5

The V-5 pre-flight program launched prospective naval aviators toward earning commissions and wings. Three officials devised the regimen: Undersecretary James Forrestal, Captain Arthur Radford, commander of aeronautic training, and Lieutenant Commander Thomas J. Hamilton, a carrier pilot, former Navy head football coach, and director of overall flight training. Soon promoted to commander, Hamilton retired as a rear admiral. The Naval Academy football stadium locker room bears his name.

Hamilton's determination, organizational genius, and cheerleading led the way. He demanded physical conditioning and competitive team sports to meet the prospective pilot's need for special indoctrination and "hardening," and "to generate desirable psychological attitudes and group loyalties [that] placed particular emphasis on football and hand to hand combat. In short, these men were trained for war through sport," wrote Donald J. Rominger, Jr., in *The Journal of Sport History*.²⁴

The Bureaus of Aeronautics and Personnel conflicted over the emphasis on football. Former heavyweight boxing champion Commander Gene Tunney, a Roosevelt favorite who headed Personnel's physical section, strongly disagreed that V-Programs should play a national college schedule. Tunney's rebuke fueled a smoldering internal debate of "sports versus calisthenics." He opposed the commissioning of "fat football coaches," and viewed pre-flight training as "elitist collegiate play" that slowed combat training, "thereby forcing an unfair share of the war's burden on less fortunate enlisted personnel." To Rominger, however, Hamilton's persistence regarding "toughening" to rid students of "socially developed sanctions against aggression" was "social engineering at its zenith."²⁵ Besides, those "fat football coaches" exposed to V-5 training procedures included prominent names: Bear Bryant, George Halas, Paul Brown, Jim Crowley, Ray Morrison, Tex Oliver, Don Faurot, Jim Tatum, Raymond Wolf, Matty Bell, Woody Hayes (who commanded a destroyer escort), Bud Wilkinson (on carrier USS *Enterprise* [CV-6]), and Gerald Ford (on carrier USS *Monterey* [CVL-26]).

Hamilton prevailed and deserves singlehanded credit for making the program work. A football writers' association named him 1942 "Man of the Year." After long deliberations, Knox permitted participation in intercollegiate athletics, subject to eligibility rules, and limited athletes to traveling 48 hours away from school. Lacking adequate practice time, coaches squeezed three hours into one and a half on the field, requiring sharp focus at the end of an arduous duty day.²⁶

Before formal authorization and without staff or facilities, Hamilton announced his plan in December 1941. In early 1942 the navy opened three

pre-flight schools at state universities in Athens, Ga.; Chapel Hill, N.C.; and Iowa City, Ia., and a fourth at St. Mary's College in Moraga, Calif. Each operated through the war and fielded impressive elevens. The fifth operated only in 1943 at the Del Monte Hotel, Monterey, Calif. Minnesota coach and Marine reserve Major Bernie Bierman in March 1942 commanded the first cadre of V-5 instructors, who began training the first cadet class in May 1942.

Cadets had to be unmarried and between 18 to 27 year of age, and received \$75 per month. Hamilton insisted that everyone learn football mechanics and be required to play either varsity or intramural football or soccer, "especially those [sports] that were fast, explosive, and violent were regarded as laboratories in which to develop strength, courage, and concentration under pressure."²⁷

Navy "birdmen" endured the most stringent, strenuous, and complete conditioning routines of any service or college for one purpose: "To master the fastest, most vicious machines in the world — fighting aircraft."²⁸ To Bierman, Iowa Pre-Flight's first coach, the regimen incorporated physical and emotional conditioning and qualities, and developed strength, skill, maturity, stamina, and the "will to win."²⁹ Football's experienced mentors turned out cadets who would not merely enter battle, but would react quickly, remain alert, and aggressively and fearlessly accomplish their missions and return to base, disregarding fatigue, discomfort, or wounds.³⁰



Lieutenant Commander Jim Crowley, member of Notre Dame's famed "Four Horsemen" backfield, was one of the high-profile wartime military coaches at North Carolina Preflight in 1942 and Sampson (N.Y.) Naval Training Station in 1943-44 (*Street & Smith's Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

"A Navy Flyer's Creed"³¹

"I am a United States Navy flyer.

"My countrymen built the best airplane in the world and entrusted it to me. They trained me to fly it. I will use it to the absolute limit of my power.

"With my fellow pilots, air crews, and deck crews, my plane and I will do anything necessary to carry out our tremendous responsibilities. I will always remember we are part of an unbeatable combat team — the United States Navy.

"When the going is fast and rough, I will not falter. I will be uncompromising in every blow I strike. I will be humble in victory.

"I am a United States Navy flyer.

"I have dedicated myself to my country, with its millions of all races, colors, and creeds. They and their way of life are worthy of my greatest protective effort.

"I ask the help of God in making that effort great enough."

Both navy and Marine cadets trained in the same categories over 26 weeks: flight, ground, military, and physical. Academic work consisted of mathematics, physics, celestial navigation, aerology, essentials of naval service, nomenclature, and navigation signals. Students did no actual flying. On completion, most cadets entered heavier-than-air primary training at the Pensacola, Fla., Naval Air Station.

The Chief of Naval Operations in 1943 issued a training manual for playing football the naval-aviation way. "We are facing enemies who are careless of life because they are so steeped in a fanatical nationalism," it said, enemies to whom the common rules of war meant nothing. "It is our duty to train the cadets to be superior to that enemy, mentally and physically." Within, detailed explanations and diagrams showed men and coaches the numerous positions, skills, formations, and strategies leading to gridiron victory, instruction not left to chance.³² *The Football News* reported that pre-flight football was no luxury or extra-curricular recreational activity. Virtually every officer attached to units acted as either football coach, instructor, supervisor, or official. The squads went directly to and from their game sites to minimize time away from cadet duties.³³

In 1944 Hamilton's successor reiterated that V-5 was producing aviators superior to any enemy mentally and physically. He insisted on accommodating intramural competition as well as varsity, and approximately 10,000 cadets played football, 60–65 percent without previous experience. "We are definitely on the offensive now. In football we always have been."³⁴

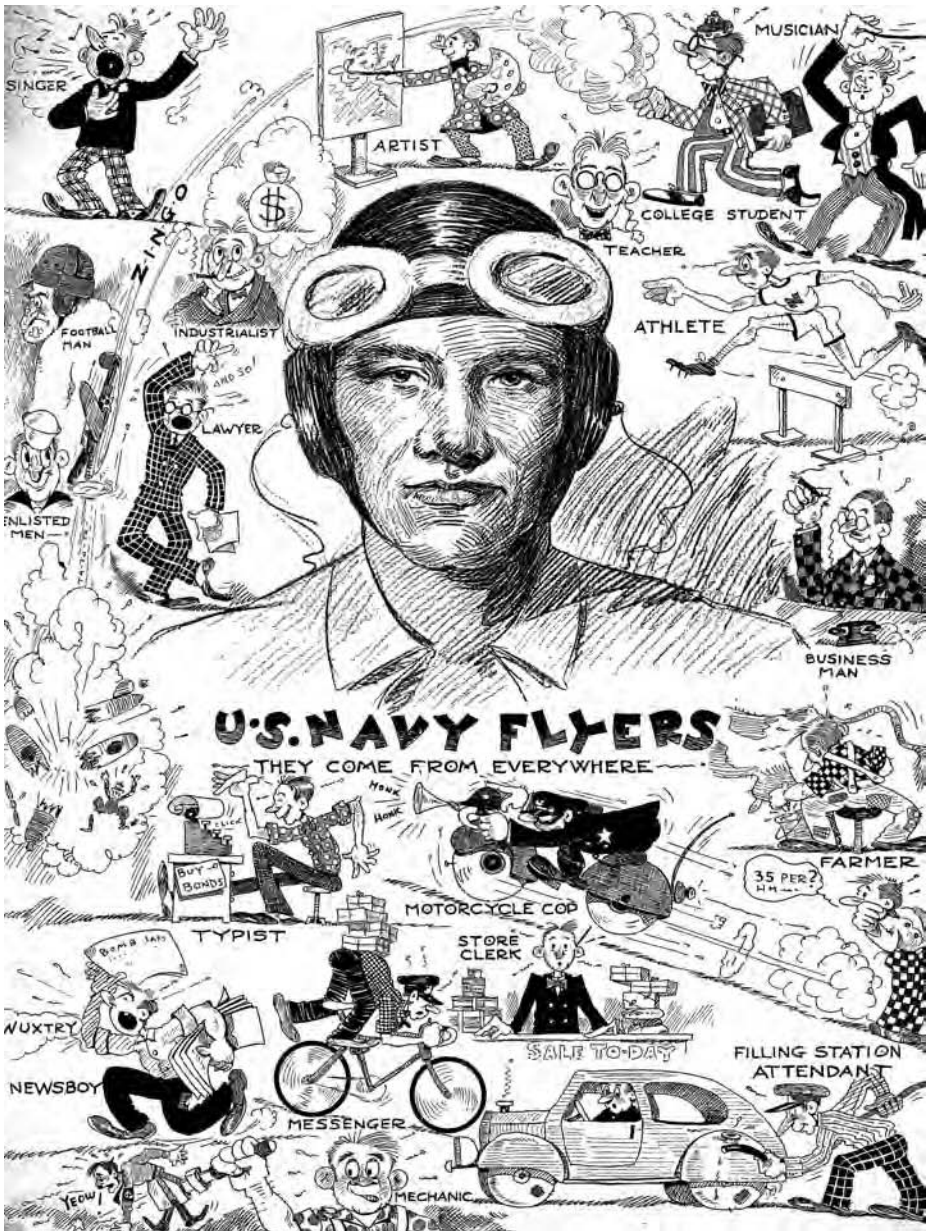
Pre-flight school football flourished with big names and big games. The schools agreed to use no more than five officers (permitted in 1942 only) and

to seek cadets available for up to five games before graduation. At St. Mary's, the navy changed the campus only to meet military purposes, such as adding more housing and specialized structures, but not its personality. Civilian classes continued but with only 200 students and a faculty-staff of 50. The navy averaged 200 officers and 1,900 cadets. "It all depended upon how fast we were losing pilots."³⁵

Player material in 1942 turned over so rapidly that St. Mary's Air Devils coach Lieutenant Commander Tex Oliver faced continuing player availability uncertainty. During three weeks in October, 15 cadet players graduated, but gloom, if any, stayed under wraps. The coaching staff actually appreciated the loss of stars at mid-season and were glad to see them go into advanced training. Fortunately, Stanford All-America quarterback Frankie Albert (future College Hall of Famer, San Francisco 49ers) and end Eddie Erdeletz (St. Mary's College coach, future Navy coach), who led the team, already had their commissions. Some officers who had been out of football for several years reported for practice "with all of their old enthusiasm of college days."



All-Americans such as back Bruce Smith (Minnesota) rushed into both military and football uniforms, often playing with multiple elevens during the war or over the same season. Here Smith, previously with the Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center Bluejackets, runs for St. Mary's (Calif.) Pre-Flight Air Devils against Fourth Air Force in 1943 (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1944*).



Military football game programs, although limited in size because of wartime paper shortages, publicized their service or unit's activities to the benefit of game attendees and ultimately historians. Naval aviation received enormous attention (game program, Camp Lejeune at North Carolina Pre-Flight, November 13, 1943).

The Air Devils peaked at 5–3–1 in 1942 and never achieved the prominence of other V-5 elevens.³⁶

Almost all the 45 players at Iowa Navy, in April 1942 the first V-5 school, came from Big Ten schools, including Michigan quarterback Forest Evashevski (future Iowa coach). En route to fame as the nation's premier V-5 football program over 1942–44, the Seahawks amassed records of 6–4–0, 9–1–0 (a November loss to Notre Dame, 14–13), and 10–1–0 (an opening loss to Michigan, 12–7) versus primarily Big Ten and Midwest universities.

Military training took up 80 percent of the Iowa Field House, and varsity teams struggled to find facilities, disadvantaging them within the Big Ten. In 1943 coach Don Faurot's staff included future heavyweights Bud Wilkinson and Jim Tatum, who later won national championships at Oklahoma and Maryland using his split-T offense. Their typewritten, mimeographed press guide noted tickets at \$2.75 for the home Nebraska game, and the "absence of special concessions to varsity participants" for road trips—going directly there and directly back.³⁷

For eleven months, the navy rented the Del Monte Hotel resort in Monterey, "where the sporty rich used to cavort, and in the salons where the wealthy idle gathered to kill time, selected groups of the youth of the land [were] taught to kill the assailants on the United States and liberty." The Navyators, who practiced on the hotel's polo field, went 7–1–0, beating UCLA and California and losing only to loaded College of Pacific, 16–7. Stars included All-Americans Len Eshmont (Fordham, New York Giants), Paul Christmas (Missouri, Chicago Cardinals), Jim McDonald (Ohio State, Detroit Lions), Parker Hall (Mississippi, Cleveland Rams), Bowden Wyatt (Tennessee player and future coach, College Hall of Famer), and Ed Cifers (Tennessee).³⁸ The resort is now the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School.

Each room housed four to eight cadets in double-decker bunks. Cooks turned out balanced meals of 5,000 calories. The stores where "debutantes" and "young bucks" bought furs, nylons, and dancing pumps became offices. An observer noted: "One accustomed to the fastidiousness of the old idle hour Del Monte hotel hardly would recognize it.... There is still grappling in the famed Bali Room where society danced and the arty groups put on world noted dress parties. But it is the honest grappling of the wrestling mat ... by eager youth ... in hand to hand combat. And the taproom? The beer taps are gone. The display of liquors and liqueurs in fancy bottles has long since been removed.... They're making men where once men made fun."³⁹

The Georgia Pre-Flight Skycrackers posted a solid 12–2–1 record under coaches Lieutenants Raymond "Bear" Wolf (North Carolina coach) in 1942 and Rex Enright (South Carolina coach) in 1943, before slipping to 4–5–0 in 1944. The 1942 highlight: A 23-hour, 40-minute train ride to Philadel-

phia for their opener to beat Pennsylvania, 14–6, with a flat 24-hour return.⁴⁰ Stars included Frank Filchok (Indiana), Jim Poole (Mississippi), Charlie Timmons (Clemson), Don Hightower (Texas A&I), Billy Patterson (Baylor), Noble Doss and Orban Sanders (Texas), and Bob Suffridge, Art Edmiston, and Bobby Foxx (Tennessee).

Cadets began arriving at North Carolina in May 1942 until reaching a quota of 1,875.⁴¹ The first class graduated in October. Two hours of daily participation in competitive sports was compulsory. "The militarization of Carolina" caused academic turbulence and physically modified the campus, the alumni magazine remembered. The navy appropriated the dining halls, employing Italian and German prisoners of war and prohibiting coeds and civilians from eating there, and used dormitories and fraternity houses for lodging. "The university was navy."

Scuttlebutt abounded concerning cadet tenures in Chapel Hill. Word was that cadets tolerated the layover as "an annoying delay" before "the real game" in Pensacola. At a 1943 UNC football game, cadets cheered for the opponent. Since V-5



After a rigorous daily routine of classes and military drills, navy V-5 aviation trainees suit up for football practice in the late afternoon at North Carolina Pre-Flight. The author played varsity lacrosse on this Navy Field, 1952–55 (monograph, "U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1942-1943").



OFFICIAL SOUVENIR PROGRAM

U.S. NAVY PRE-FLIGHT SCHOOL

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, CALIFORNIA

vs.

FLEET CITY BLUEJACKETS

★ ★ ★ 4 NOVEMBER 1945 ★ ★ ★ ★

KEZAR STADIUM • SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

St. Mary's, a weak 2-4-1, was the lone pre-flight school among the five still playing football after the war ended on August 14. Still, it tied the mighty Bluejackets, 7-7, its only blemish on a perfect season (game program, St. Mary's [Calif.] Pre-Flight vs. Fleet City, Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, November 4, 1945).

trainees remained on campus longer than V-12s, most early pre-flighters were Carolina students who viewed this training as extending regular student life. But they expressed relief and unease when reviewing the alumni casualty reports, and "were trying to pack a little college into their lives before the Big Fight." (The army sent nearly 500 students there in special training programs.)⁴²

The Carolina program involved two future U.S. presidents, Gerald Ford and student George H. W. Bush, plus student Ted Williams, the Red Sox ballplayer, and coach Bear Bryant. After finishing instructor school, Ford stayed to teach naval subjects and coach nine sports, including football, before being ordered to sea duty. When Bryant took the Maryland head coach position after the war, he recruited a number of V-5 players. Bush, the most famous V-5 graduate, entered the navy on his eighteenth birthday and was its youngest pilot just before turning 19. He flew 58 Pacific combat missions, was rescued at sea after being shot down in his torpedo bomber in 1945, and received the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

The 1942 season (8-2-1) began with "Lieutenant Commander [Jim] Crowley's North Carolinians, handsomely uniformed and handsomely outfitted with cluster of stars at every post."⁴³ In their best season, 1944 (6-2-1), the Cloudbusters downed powerful Duke, 13-6, and Navy, 21-14. Coached by Lieutenant Commander Glenn Killinger, that eleven included quarterback Otto Graham (Northwestern, future pro Hall of Famer), selected on most all-service squads.

Cadets studied and played hard. With a campus male to female ratio of 6:1 (800 coeds), dances continued showing off "glamorous satin ball gowns, but crisp naval uniforms replaced tuxedos on the dance floor." Harry's served beer and the student union juke box serenaded with "I'll Be Seeing You" and "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree." Coeds got pinned in the arboretum, quick engagements followed, "wedding fever" spread. Boys "with uncertain futures were anxious to add a little permanence to their lives."⁴⁴

From 1943 on the navy restricted pre-flight grid roster eligibility to cadets only, no officers, which tended to lower their level of competition equivalent to college civilian elevens. With the war over, and aviator needs diminished, only St. Mary's among the V-5 schools played in 1945. Officials canceled the other schedules as well as for many bases.

Disestablished in June 1946, V-5 trained 80,000 cadets and 2,500 instructors. Naval aviation expanded from seven to more than 100 carriers, from 4,500 to 60,000 pilots, and from 3,500 to 41,000 aircraft. At the end, Hamilton credited his pilots with superior performance records. Undoubtedly the V-Programs indoctrinated and prepared colleges of varying sizes for

the onslaught of veterans descending in the late 1940s to pursue educations under the GI Bill. Rominger concluded: "The war saw a thorough permeation of the country's social and ethnic fabric with military-athletic euphemisms and philosophies, and V-5 played a redoubtable role in defining that fabric. It was only a short distance from the idea of sports training for national defense to sports training for national welfare.... Whether [it] ... merely revived the older concept of character development through play, or whether it broke new ground in motivation, research and mass athletics, it stands as a unique bench mark in the history of sport and war."⁴⁵

CHAPTER 4

“A War Game in Miniature”: Reacting, Adjusting, and Playing the Game

*“Within the letter and spirit of the rules, of course, every football game this fall should be a war game in miniature.”*¹—Lou Little

Famed Columbia coach Lou Little, a stern proponent of the sport as a combat conditioner, staked out the upcoming 1942 season. Drive harder, run faster, and use deception and a strong defense. Every lesson football teaches the American college athlete prepares him for actual combat.² For a country at war experiencing new and severe sacrifices and adjustments to its way of life for survival, the sport of football required immediate changes if it, too, was to exist within the framework of upheaval.

College football reactions and adjustments to wartime began immediately after the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December 7, 1941. The day before in Honolulu, the University of Hawaii defeated Willamette University of Salem, Ore., 20–6. Another mainland team present, San Jose State, had its game with Hawaii on December 13 canceled, “the first time in our history that American college football teams have been under hostile attack.” The Spartans remained several days and volunteered for blackout duty before leaving with a ship dispatching wounded. Willamette also stuck around and provided guard services before sailing for San Francisco.³

By then the regular college season had ended but several bowl games were yet to come. The first major adaptation to wartime relocated the 1942 New Year’s Day Rose Bowl away from Pasadena, Calif., for the first and only time. Officials feared the 100,000 spectators presented an inviting bulls-eye for Japanese bombers. Led by halfback Don Durdan, later a Bainbridge Navy star, Oregon State upset Duke, 20–16, before 54,000 in Durham, N.C., in the “Transplanted Rose Bowl Game.”

Approaching 1942, the National Collegiate Athletic Association believed collegiate and high school coaches would expand their programs, figuring that a lengthy war meant combat service for even the day's youngest high school boys. Some programs did, some contracted, and some disappeared. Fortunately a multitude of necessary adjustments kept football alive and allowed boys to play for conditioning as well as recreation and competitive school spirit.

Colleges nationwide waived the freshman eligibility rule which generated dire predictions of diminished player and game quality. Freshmen immediately impacted the game, particularly at schools without navy and Marine



students. Those schools depended entirely on the student body for material, recognizing "there will be no opportunity to augment this basic group by any devious method as which might have been used heretofore."⁴ Undergraduate players enrolled in army and navy special courses which deferred them as long as they met leadership and scholarship basics.⁵

One lesson learned was that "17-year old college boys ... are not the inept dumbjohns they were very often accused of being [and] can give an excellent account of themselves in gridiron action."⁶ For example, in 1943 Notre Dame's young sophomore

Former Duke back Jasper "Jap" Davis played for an army all-star team against the Washington Redskins in Los Angeles (Calif.) Coliseum on August 30, 1942. Davis, a member of the Blue Devils' 1939 Rose Bowl team, helped coach the 1942 Duke squad in the "Transplanted Rose Bowl Game" in Durham, N.C., where Oregon State prevailed, 20-16. After serving in Europe, after the war he became a coaching legend at the author's New Hanover High School in Wilmington, N.C. (provided by John Gunn).

Johnny Lujack stepped in to replace Heisman Trophy quarterback Angelo Bertelli, since departed for Marine Corps duty. A quick coaching adjustment worked, and Notre Dame and Lujack excelled. After World War II navy service, Lujack earned All-America honors twice, won the Heisman Trophy in 1947, and was later enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame.

Authorities shelving football regretted being forced to do so while admitting the utility of gridiron competition to prepare our fighting men. Georgetown, fielding a team for 45 straight seasons, faced 1942 without a holdover. Most 1941 players had either entered active duty or joined the reserves and the Reserve Officers Training Corps, and ended up elsewhere. Yet they manufactured a 5–3–1 campaign, losing to powerful North Carolina Pre-Flight, 23–7, before dropping out for 1943.

Teams said farewell to peacetime travel arrangements, comforts, and accommodations (e.g., missing classes), and then played with abandon regardless of preparations. Harry Wismer wrote in *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*, "Call it pent up energy, call it American resourcefulness, call it wartime fever or what you may, college football asked for no quarter and gave none."⁷ To cite one league, the Big Ten expanded schedules from eight to ten games to accommodate service teams. In a game displaying scheduling flexibility and ingenuity, played five days after booking, North Carolina snapped Duquesne's 11-game winning streak, 13–6. Keeping options open and immediately handling demanding changes, athletic directors, coaches, military officials, and players eventually underpinned the resilience of college football.⁸

Wartime conditions obligated football administrators and coaches, both civilian and military, to reach into heretofore unexplored reservoirs of



"Now get out there and show them you're worth being deferred till the end of the season." (Bo Brown in game program, Texas Tech vs. Lubbock Army Air Field, September 18, 1943).

resourcefulness, set aside any permanent illusions, maintain flexibility, and react positively to the unexpected. Success in reaching ad hoc, temporary objectives depended to an extent on such resourcefulness. If an exception existed, it would have been the navy pre-flight programs.

Some athletic directors found reasons for playing, others did not. In a day when they often worked alone or with limited assistants, particularly at small schools, they dealt with mounting problems and difficult decisions besides who to schedule and where to play. Problems included finding and hiring coaches and staff, arranging transportation and other logistical support, eliminating or curtailing intersectional games, utilizing all facilities competing with burgeoning intramurals, limiting practices to short daily periods (military teams practiced about an hour), and cooperating and coordinating with military officials on campus. Plus, football could not interfere with accelerated academics. But "the colleges [would] suffer any difficulties cheerfully in order to play."⁹

Conferences and Schools Adjust by Season

The college conferences abandoning football in 1943–44 included Missouri Valley, Pennsylvania State Teachers College, West Virginia Athletic, North Central Intercollegiate, Central Intercollegiate, Nebraska Intercollegiate Athletic, Oklahoma Collegiate, South Dakota Intercollegiate, Kansas College Athletic, Texas Collegiate Athletic, Lone Star, Border Intercollegiate Athletic, Mountain States (Big Seven) Athletic, Rocky Mountain Athletic, New Mexico Intercollegiate, Central Intercollegiate Athletic, Interstate, California Collegiate Athletic, Far Western, Washington Intercollegiate, Pacific Northwest Intercollegiate, Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic, and Missouri College Athletic Union.

Mid-Atlantic colleges, for example, completed schedules with no apparent decline in interest, but experienced a drop-off in football quality and attendance, alarmingly so where games were unreachable by train. For the moment, manpower and transportation obstacles could be ameliorated by switching games from sparsely populated locations to metropolitan centers. Thereby potential spectators need not anguish over driving in the face of severe tire and gasoline rationing.¹⁰ Black colleges achieved this.

All Southern Conference schools kept playing. Freshmen became eligible in 1942, diluting form and substance while balancing competition. Seventeen- and eighteen-year old freshmen played throughout collegiate football and compensated for squad shrinkage. Player attrition hit Duke hard. When coach Wallace Wade left for army service, replaced by Eddie Cameron, the

nominally powerful Blue Devils failed to match the Duke Rose Bowl team. Conference coaching ranks shrank as mentors and their assistants joined the military, including Rex Enright (South Carolina) and Jim Tatum (North Carolina). Seven of the 16 schools started with new head coaches.¹¹

College football overseers continued optimistic, looking for silver linings anywhere to sustain it. Colleges in 1942 lost a plethora of players, freshmen to seniors, to the military—"youthful spirits attuned to attack by the flame of war."¹² These depleted ranks nevertheless generated new season records for yards gained and scoring. All told, the madly scrambled and harrowing season perplexed experts trying to monitor the changes.¹³

Reviewing the 1942 season, and with mobilization accelerating, the NCAA rules chairman and *Football Guide* editor forecast "less time to devote to meticulous coaching, to say nothing of poorer and poorer material to work with and ... a decided falling off in the caliber of college teams." Interest would not waver, however, he predicted. He proved correct on each account.¹⁴

By the end of 1943, approximately 190 colleges had abandoned football. The NCAA noted a developing uncertainty for military teams, that could force the sport to the sidelines or curtail it as the nation at war mobilized for victory. Predictions depended upon how manpower had shifted around and what college stars were now trainees.¹⁵



Postcard of Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base team playing at home, ca. 1943 (provided by John Gunn).

The Southeastern Conference, which temporarily lost members Florida, Auburn, Tennessee, Vanderbilt, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Mississippi State, relaxed eligibility rules for servicemen but not civilians. Only Georgia Tech and Tulane had navy units. Contingent on his commanding officer's approval, any serviceman could play regardless of professional or college experience and without an academic mark to maintain. Civilians could not transfer and had to pass their courses.¹⁶ Football prospects for 1943, however, remained "in a state of almost astronomical nebulosity" employing mostly 17- and 18-year-old freshmen, "4-Fs with loose eardrums," and some naval reserves. "*C'est la guerre.*"¹⁷

In the Southern Conference, *Football Pictorial Yearbook* reported that Clemson's coach Frank Howard lost all regulars and started from scratch with plenty of uniforms. He pined for suggestions as to where he could find someone to fill them. N.C. State's Doc Newton, with no returnees, fretted that all his prospects had emigrated to Duke as Marines.¹⁸

Wartime eliminated the Southwest Conference's usual balance. Trainees needed to reserve stamina for classes and night studies. Long chartered Pullman train trips became memories. The league revoked the freshmen (and most other) eligibility rules, allowing participation by any military student, including transfers, graduates, and professionals, turning the 1943 chase into a guessing game. A leading sports writer lamented: "Big business football is out. Newspaper headlines belong to a bigger game," but fans still attended games for relaxation and diversion.¹⁹ Without trainees, Tulsa's 42-man varsity went 6-0-1 using 24 4-F and nine underage players, and Texas Tech fielded 27 freshmen and five sophomores on their 34-man roster.

The Pacific Coast in 1943 will be remembered as "Mr. Amos Alonzo Stagg's Season," recognizing the 83-year old College of Pacific's national coach of the year. He lost only to the Fourth Air Force.²⁰ California schools played within the state and Northwest teams played within that region. In the Western Plains, revamped schedules eliminated intersectional games until feasible. Their lone eligibility rule required a player to be duly registered and approved by faculty. Like other sections, few older head coaches — such as Oklahoma's Dewey Luster — stayed, as many joined the military's physical training branches. Understudies carried on and firings after poor seasons for those remaining appeared impracticable.²¹

After the strong 1942 showing by navy-strengthened squads, the Midwest figured to experience talent leveling because of calls to active duty, a narrowing of the gap with all-civilian elevens. But 1942 fortunes reversed. Reigning No. 1 Ohio State lost repeatedly while dressing kids and physically disqualified men. Wisconsin and Minnesota watched former players beat them in 1943. Michigan (8-1-0) picked a varsity from 1,000 navy and 300 Marine

students. One was ex-Gopher All-America Bill Daley who led the Wolverines to victory over Minnesota, 49–6, before his navy transfer. Northwestern, using eight Gophers, whipped Minnesota, and Michigan's 10 Badgers helped the Wolverines defeat Wisconsin, 27–0.

Notre Dame, which canceled its traditional series with Southern California and Stanford, employed mostly V-12 and NROTC trainees en route to the 1943 national championship. While trainees comprised all of Muhlenberg's team, two enlisted men assisted its civilian coach. After its naval battalion finished in October, tiny William Jewell College in Missouri (4–3–1) had one center and one end remaining.

Army and Navy ruled the Mid-Atlantic, Army by stockpiling promising youngsters and Navy by collecting college veterans. Neither academy had a man drafted. Lacking trainees, Temple lost money maintaining a full schedule, with attendance about one-third of 1942. Princeton joined schools playing unofficial, informal games.²² In the Rocky Mountains, conference races were canceled.²³ "This year ... gives you mines, mountains and befuddlement," noted one prognosticator, the promise of unpredictable football at best with almost all teams starting over with new personnel, requiring "the magic of a soothsayer" to figure out who would do what.²⁴

The NCAA praised former high school stars, now freshmen, for projecting themselves through varsity competition. On the trainee campuses, graduations and transfers often opened positions and playing time. Fans anticipated and followed trainee moves bearing directly on their schools' prospects. As stars departed, their former teams sometimes spiraled downward, and stars arriving often boosted their new teams' fortunes. With coaches also entering active duty in numbers, professors and alumni coaches stepped in to assist, including an increase in women coaches. (Although the NCAA raised the matter, the author found no evidence that women coached college football varsities, but some may have.) Home-and-home games fit travel restrictions.²⁵

Sportscaster Harry Wismer surmised that schools quitting the game could not stand experiencing or anticipating defeats after years of thumping once weaker clubs for warmups. Some returned to the gridiron for 1944. The Southeastern Conference, for instance, resumed play with 11 of their 12 programs. The other SEC member, Vanderbilt, played "informal" games with other schools or clubs, as did Harvard, Boston College, and Princeton.

NCAA Guide won-lost records do not always delineate whether a school's season was official or informal. Some Stanford players played for hated rival California. When some conferences folded, a team or two might continue to play varsity games as independents. Athletic directors revised plans, believing football must either bounce back or die, and cited the number of discharged servicemen as potential players.²⁶

The Big Ten commissioner went further: schools abandoning football recognized "the error of their ways ... that young men will play the game with or without the sanction of college administrators."²⁷ Only four of ten Pacific Coast Conference schools fielded 1944 teams, and Southern California, using mostly navy and Marine students, perfected the "T" formation to win its eighth straight Rose Bowl. Other coast teams lacked prewar talent. Sailors and Marines helped Georgia Tech (Southeastern), Duke (Southern), and Oklahoma (Big Six) win conference championships.

Besides the Southeastern Conference programs, other big names reinstating football in 1944 included Michigan State, Princeton, Syracuse, Southern Illinois, Utah State, and Boston College. Tennessee rebounded from a year off by going 7–0–1 before losing to Southern Cal in the Rose Bowl, 25–0. Discharged veterans began making a difference, including Joe Saia at Mississippi State, Buzzy Gher at Yale, George Savitsky at Pennsylvania, and Bon Turner at Rice. Veterans comprised 19 members of the powerful Second Air Force Superbombers. The Melville (R.I.) Naval Patrol Torpedo Boat outfit dominated New England with its "beribboned, cited veterans of the PT fighting with the Japs," edging out the Coast Guard Academy.²⁸

Transfers continued complicating rosters and affecting game outcomes. Rutgers' Howard Bernstein played every minute until an army induction notice removed him from the Lehigh game six minutes before the end so he could report to Fort Dix, N.J., at 6:00 P.M. Tackle Thad Ellis started at North Carolina, played a few games at Duke, then returned to Carolina in time to play against the Blue Devils. Bucknell's Harold Swenson became eligible on Monday, played on Saturday, and transferred out on Wednesday, ending history's shortest varsity football career (to that time).²⁹ No player came close to matching the vagabond record of end George Barney Poole of the famed Pooles of Ole Miss. The future College Hall of Famer played seven varsity seasons: three at Mississippi, one at North Carolina, and three at Army.

Because of September player availability uncertainties, some schools traded the usual spring practice for an extra summer month once freshmen enrolled. Others resumed spring practices. A broadened 1944 season appeared after officials revoked the 25-mile travel rule. Coaches realized that diminished standards required continued flexibility with players and schedules. A squad need not be three-deep at every position to survive; day coaches sufficed for Pullmans; no team ever starved on a road trip despite rationing; athletics bonded lonely trainees with the rest of the campus; and fans would pay to see good games regardless.³⁰

The Mid-Atlantic, although experiencing 1944 with balanced competition and increased interest, notably a 25 percent rise in attendance, slumped to a wartime low in player quality and numbers. In the Rockies,

"Warplanes purr over the snow-capped peaks of the skyline country, dimming the din of the football throngs. The players pause in the practice sessions to look up into the clouds, as if to recognize an old teammate up there."³¹ That was understandable. As the war progressed, casualty lists including football players increased. Fewer experienced players around created a younger average age and decline in the caliber of play. For example, Stagg welcomed 30 prospects but only one returnee.

By now, "green" *vis-à-vis* experience and maturity became the catchword.

Compared to prewar standards, southern football nosedived. Big-name college trainee players had long since departed for combat zones, high schoolers answered the draft, military teams said good-bye to too many quality players going overseas, and leftovers were too green. A casualty: North Carolina's greenies struggled for one victory in nine games, 20–13 over the Cherry Point (N.C.) Marines. Naval trainees kept the Southwest Conference from struggling even more. Texas Christian's coach Dutch Meyer patched together a championship team fielding "comparatively green and not particularly talented ... small rugged band of opportunists."³²

As the postwar era arrived, college football prospects for 1945 brightened immediately, spurred by the release of thousands of servicemen and the new GI Bill, which paid for veterans' college educations. Many would be recruited heavily regardless of whether they played during wartime. Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice of Bainbridge-Hawaii by North Carolina and Clyde



Because of lenient wartime eligibility rules, end George Barney Poole set a fixed modern college football record. The College Football Hall of Fame honoree played seven varsity seasons: three at Mississippi, one at North Carolina, and three at Army, for which he is best remembered (*Street & Smith's Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

"Smackover" Scott of Navy by Arkansas sparked such exciting headlines. Most teams now returned to action, including Vanderbilt, Colorado A&M (now State), Baylor, Utah, and Carnegie Tech. The SEC reenacted the prewar ineligibility of "migratory athletes," permitting only those transfer students who played on 1944-45 teams, upsetting plans of some coaches.³³

Offensive and Defensive Formations

Most colleges began wartime play using the winning offensive formations of the previous decade, the single wing and double wing. But by 1943, the formations' college triple-threat tailback began fading out. "The actual extent to which grid specialists are replacing the run-pass-kick stars of yesterday is easily discernible" in their absence from rankings among the nation's top ten 1942 offensive leaders, the NCAA reported. The principal exception was back Frank Sinkwich (All-America Georgia), "Flat-foot Frankie," the virtually unanimous player of the year and the first ever to gain 2,000 yards. His marks: total yards 2,187 on 795 passing and 1,392 rushing.³⁴

In 1943 teams began switching to the relatively new and more potent basic "T" offensive formation, using a balanced line, with the principal ball-handler quarterback taking the snaps from under the center. The straight T was a radical change from the popular prewar single and double-wing sets where the tailback was the principal runner and passer, and differed from the Notre Dame T which shifted into a box formation.

In the T, which emphasized speed and innovative imbalance rather than sheer power, the quarterback was the principal passer but not the runner, and handed off to the ball-carrier halfbacks and fullback. A main reason coaches switched to the T, if they had a good ball-handling quarterback, was because individual line assignments called for simple blocking. Variations included a flanker and man-in-motion, Iowa Pre-Flight's split-T, Pittsburgh's and Brown's offset T, Dartmouth's double-splits, Yale's triple-split line, and an unbalanced line (two linemen on one side of the center). Possessing abundant manpower depth, some military and collegiate powerhouses such as El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in 1944-45 deployed separate T and wing-offense units. Ohio State, Michigan, and Colgate also ran both offenses. Thus the eventual postwar multiple platoon system began.

In 1944 on its 150th anniversary, Army (23) used the T to beat Navy (7), which used the single wing: "a perfect game of contrast." The previous season coach Colonel Earl Blaik scrapped the single wing, Army's hallmark, and introduced brush blocks, flankers, man-in-motion, streamlined fullbacks, fleet flankers, and a clever passer "who can flip 'em to the bucket." Blessed



Back Charley Trippi (Georgia) played for the Greensboro (N.C.) Army Air Forces Overseas Replacement Depot Tech Hawks in 1943. The 1942 Maxwell Award winner later earned membership in the college and professional halls of fame ("Army Town: Greensboro, 1943–1946," Greensboro [N.C.] Historical Museum, 1994).

with "mercury gaited carriers," the Cadets utilized a "precision-gear'd line" with a passing game that spread the defense for long gainers.³⁵

Fans enjoyed the fascinating and exciting T, and popular players such as Sid Luckman described "How to Watch the T Formation."³⁶ His former coach at Columbia, Lou Little, called Columbia's version the split-T. Little refined what coach Clark Shaughnessy is credited with developing. During the late 1930s, Shaughnessy worked with Chicago Bears coach George Halas to modernize the primitive new offense, and the Bears' Luckman, a pro football Hall-of-Fame member, became the first modern T quarterback in both college and the pros. After the 1940 season saw Shaughnessy lead Stanford to a 9–0–0

record and Halas, Luckman, and the Bears whip the Washington Redskins for the National Football League championship, 73–0, the T became a fixture.

By 1944, manpower limitations forced coaches to switch to the T because individual line assignments revolved only around a good quarterback and simple blocking. Teams varied the combinations of the T with other formations and the flanker and man-in-motion. By 1945, a football yearbook observed that the T was set as today's offense. "It's easier to teach unseasoned hands how to advance the ball than it is to coordinate them on defense. Most coaches ... are proceeding on the theory that if you can't stop the other fellow you had better try to outscore him."³⁷

The most widely used offensive formations:

T-formation— Seven linemen; backfield composed of quarterback (primary ball handler and passer) taking snaps under center, two halfbacks (running backs, No. 1 ball carriers and also receivers), fullback (blocker and No. 2 ball carrier); usually a balanced line masking the point of attack; ends split away from tackles a few yards, halfbacks four yards deep, and fullback five yards behind center; man-in-motion added variety; excellent passing and deceptive formation.

Weakness: difficult to develop a mass power attack; quarterback should be an excellent ball handler and passer; halfbacks, fast and clever ball carriers, and good receivers.

Single wing— Seven linemen; backfield composed of tailback (primary ball handler, runner, and passer), fullback (blocker and No. 2 runner), blocking back (primary blocker), and wingback (receiver and No. 3 runner); similar to modern shotgun formation; balanced or unbalanced line; strong running game to strong side.

Weakness: weaker running game to weak side and for passing and punting plays.

Double wing— Similar to single wing with two wingbacks spread in backfield as blockers or receivers (blocking back became wingback), tailback handling the ball as principal runner and passer, and fullback (No. 2 runner); unbalanced line with wingbacks flanking each offensive end one yard behind the line; optimum for spinners, reverses, and multiple pass patterns; strong for running through tackle.

Weakness: lacks power up the middle; plays slow getting to the line; plays require intricate maneuvering and precise timing (a handicap when teaching new players with short practice times).

The single- and double-wing tailback had to be a good runner, passer, and punter.

For the 1946 season, experts predicted more variations of the T formation, even combining it with the single wing. Other formations included the "QT," "5-1," and single wing with quarterback close to center.

Authorities supposedly agreed that play selection was the most important game factor, and that poor selection could nullify teamwork and harm morale (as well as the final score). A brilliant quarterback could raise a mediocre eleven. He should have "courage, initiative, brains, vocal command and the complete confidence of his teammates."³⁸ Ergo, for the navy, prime leadership qualities for the Pacific War.

Conversely, changing or shifting defensive theories, maneuvers, and schemes proceeded gradually. Teams insisted on kicking the ball out of bounds, "a strategy much criticized because of the failure to use it as a psychological tactic in fine offense technique, and the preference for using it rather as a simple preventative against spectacular runbacks."³⁹ Coaches soon changed this tactic, as seen below.

Coaches also weaned themselves away from the old-school, "hold-that-line" defensive strategy and switched to a more fluid scheme designed to bend but not give, to slow a play rather than stop it cold at the start, and retard the long-gainers. But by war's end, ends still rushed the passer and "bull-butting linemen" charged through, whether caught in a mousetrap, to block kicks. "The fans do not want safety-first football. The players are not geared for it, mechanically or by temperament. The coaches ... can shoot the works with what they've got."⁴⁰

Generally, player experience and talent, weather conditions, and sometimes the opponents' offense, dictated defensive formations. Five or six men played on the line. Linebackers were important because they got into practically every play after linemen stripped a ball carrier of his blockers.

The 6-2-2-1 was the most widely used and best balanced defense. It fielded six linemen, two linebackers, two halfbacks, and one safety. Effective against running, passing, and kicking games, its weakness was lack of strength against line plunges. Other standard defensive formations included the 7-1-2-1 diamond; 7-2-2 box; 5-3-2-1; and 6-3-2.

Rules, Coaching, and Strategies

Military teams played by prewar collegiate rules. The NCAA and military officials by mutual consent deferred "official" changes until 1945. Midway through the war, however, a gentlemen's agreement among coaches introduced some national and regional modifications. They eliminated the out-of-bounds kickoff. Henceforth teams kicked off again to keep the ball in

play for a return. Passing from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage, as in the pros, was permitted. It "upjacks the attack of teams that cannot rely on straight power." A fumble recovered by the defense could be advanced. And certain penalty rulings were modified governing forward laterals and offense within the ten-yard line.⁴¹

One major rule change in 1941 had essentially introduced what evolved into the postwar two-platoon system. It allowed substitutes to enter except during last two minutes of the first half as long as that sub and the replaced player stayed put for at least one play. Unrealized at the time, this new rule eventually helped reduce player exhaustion and injuries and improve quality of play in accommodating college manpower shortages.

The NCAA in 1945 codified earlier unofficial changes for the out-of-bounds kickoff and a legal forward pass from anywhere behind the line. The first such kickoff was without penalty, a second resulted in the receiving team taking the ball at the kicking team's 40. Also, substitutes could enter by reporting to any official, and the center in snapping the ball could not have any part of his body ahead of the ball and his feet had to be behind the ball.⁴²

Most games employed four field officials: a referee, linesman, umpire, and field judge. They wore a striped shirt, white knickers-pants, long black socks, bow tie, and usually no cap. Field dimensions, goal post location, and markings were the same as today's except for the end zone which was marked with diagonal stripes.

In its 1942 preview, the NCAA saw the decline of "old-fashioned generalship" in coaching and stated that "games, no less than wars, are won by teams bearing the stamp of master technicians employing the highly complicated offensive and defensive tactics" of the modern game.⁴³

New concepts and tactics adapted, improved, and refined included the forward pass and pass protection, man-in-motion, shifting defenses, numerous defensive sets, the quick kick, lateral-forward pass, high tackling, flankers, offensive sets to spread the defense, and free substitution. The navy's "Rules of Generalship" advised coaches on successful formulae: (1) A rush of more than 40 yards is rarely worth it because something bad or unforeseen happens; (2) Don't lose the ball on downs, and always kick the ball forward when necessary; (3) Push the kicking game; (4) "Make and play for the breaks"; (5) Beating a weak team is simple, but beating an equal or better one generally depends on (4). In summary, the winner usually wins by making fewer mistakes.⁴⁴

Coaching routines never settled but adapted to reality. The 1944 *Illustrated Football Annual* forecast not enough time "in these world-shaking days" for lengthy drills, preparations, meticulous coaching, and developing "precision-gearred linemen" and "robot-controlled backs." The makeup of college

elevens full of "star-pretenders" and "mostly make-good-quick kids, sophomores and freshmen," along with a handful of older trainees still around, would be vastly different. Could youth and desire offset know-how for another season?⁴⁵

First of all, coaches tried to whip players into shape. In the initial wartime season the NCAA bemoaned the lack of physical fitness throughout the population. "In fighting a Japanese army, toughened by five years of warfare, and a German nation, which even before 1939 had spent years in developing physical fitness throughout Germany," executive director Walter Okeson noted, "we are sadly handicapped." Modern football is offensive, not defensive, "a combat game ... teaching teamwork, the will to win and the determination not to lose no matter how tough the going," all to train American boys to fight. To train and "toughen the moral fiber, you need the nearest thing to warfare you can find. There is little doubt that thing is intercollegiate football."⁴⁶ Those going into action thanked football fitness for their survival. One told a Marine major serving as secretary of the American Football Coaches Association that he always felt the same coolness and competitive urge as when a football game started.⁴⁷

The navy pre-flight schools stressed rigorous physical training as a factor in evaluating students competing as naval pilots. Kansas State basketball coach Jack Gardner in 1942 joined the navy and oversaw athletic and physical programs at 42 Midwest naval flight and training schools. Since most civilians reporting as V-12 officer candidates were out of shape, the navy spent more time on meeting high fitness standards than on pure military training.

Physical training demands could work against pre-flight teams. The venerated Grantland Rice noted that 1942 pre-flight elevens abounded in player material but were handicapped by a strenuous, near body-wrecking regimen and a constant personnel ebb and flow as the brand-new schools settled into operation. Generally they were "weary and battered, worn down, and ... far from any football sharpness" after a 10-hour daily training regimen. They lost when running out of gas, as did Georgia and Iowa Pre-Flight, from sheer physical and mental lapses and weariness, against Louisiana State and Notre Dame. Still, even while concentrating on a much bigger task ahead and with football a diversion, they defeated many solid collegiate elevens that season.⁴⁸

And what about the nation's physical fitness for the postwar? It needs to "get militant" about athletics and fitness, wrote a major college coach in 1944, or risk fumbling the ball and making no more progress than was seen after World War I which precipitated the 1941 prewar malaise.⁴⁹

Football: The Naval Aviation Physical Training Manuals, issued in 1943 by the Chief of Naval Operations and a valuable textbook for all levels, said



Del Monte (Calif.) Pre-Flight pummeled Alameda Coast Guard, 34–7, en route to a 1943 7–1–0 record in their lone season. Here the Navyators' end Fred Stanford gains yardage (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

the country faced desperate enemies, steeped in “a fanatical nationalism,” who cared nothing about human life or conventional rules of warfare. It stated the navy was duty-bound to train future aviators “to be superior to that enemy, mentally and physically” and be prepared to run through and demolish “a broken field of Axis planes.” The manual directed that everyone receive football instructions, such as tackling using the best body blow, and compete for a position on a team, whether college varsity or intramurals.⁵⁰ Other manuals included additional sports and hand-to-hand combat instruction. However, it was acknowledged, “The most physically fit soldier in the world is worthless if he does not have in his mind and heart the will to win.”⁵¹

Postscript: Created on the spot, the team ranked No. 2 in the nation in 1943 bore the unfamiliar name of Iowa Pre-Flight. The next season, the Associated Press Top 10 ranked such new names as Randolph Field, Bainbridge Navy, and March Field (Fourth Air Force). “And just as swiftly, they vanished from the scene.”⁵²

World War II Military Teams (Partial)

Many military teams played full schedules for the four-season duration. Most played one, two, or three seasons or folded after a few games in their only attempt to field a team.

Nicknames: "Very few of the service teams were without one, and with many of the teams the necessary title was much emphasized. Use was made of every kind of publicity to popularize the name."⁵³

Abilene AAB Flyers, Tex.
 Aberdeen Ordnance School, Md.
 Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.
 Air Transport Command, Nashville, Tenn., Rockets
 Alameda CG, Alameda, Calif., Sea Lions
 Alaska Air Transport Command Clippers
 Albuquerque AB, Alb. N.M., Colin Kellys/Flying Kellys
 Algiers, La., Navy
 Amarillo AAF, Tex., Sky Giants
 Army Air Forces TC, Randolph Field and Fort Worth, Tex., Skymasters
 Army Air Forces Personnel Distribution Command, Louisville, Ky., Comets
 Atlantic City NAS, N.J., Flyers/Corsairs
 Bainbridge NTS/NTC, Md., Commodores
 Barksdale AAB, Shreveport, La., Skyriders
 Beaumont Hospital, El Paso, Tex., Raiders
 Bergstrom AAF, Tex.
 Berry Field, Tenn.
 Blackland AAF, Waco, Tex., Eagles
 Bogue Field, N.C., Marines
 Bowman Field, Ky., Flyers
 Bryan AF, Tex., Raiders
 Bushnell General Hospital, Brigham City, Ut., Medics
 Bunker Hill NTS, Ind., Blockbusters
 Camp Ashby, Calif., Stevadores
 Camp Barkeley, Tex.
 Camp Beale, Marysville, Calif., Bears
 Camp Butner, N.C.
 Camp Campbell 220th Armored, Ky., Engineers
 Camp Davis, N.C., Blue Brigade/Fighting AA's
 Camp Detrick, Md.
 Camp Gordon 3rd Armored Division, Ga., Tankers
 Camp Grant, Rockford, Ill., Warriors

Camp Hood-North, Fourth Army, Gatewood, Tex., Maroons
Camp Hood-South, Gatewood, Tex., Doughboys
Camp Kilmer, N.J., Eagles
Camp Lee, Va., Travelers
Camp Lejeune MCB, N.C., Marines/Leathernecks
Camp Mackall, Hoffman, N.C., Chutists
Camp McCoy, Wisc., Engineers
Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Va., Pirates
Camp Pendleton, Calif., Marines
Camp Polk, La.
Carlisle Barracks-Medical Field Service, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Medicos
Charleston CG, Charleston, S.C.
Chatham AAB, Savannah, Ga., Blockbusters
Cherry Point MCAS, N.C., Marines/Leathernecks
CG Receiving Station, Berkeley, Calif., Pilots
Colorado Springs AB, Colorado Springs, Colo.
Coronado, Calif., Amphibs
Corpus Christi NAS, Tex., Comets
Curtis Bay CG, Md., Cutters
Daniel Field AB, Augusta, Ga., Fliers
Del Monte, San Francisco, Calif., Navyators
Deming AAF, N.M., Dusters
Drew AAF, Fla.
Eagle Mt. Lake, Fort Worth, Tex., Rangers
Eastern Flying TC, Maxwell Field, Ala., Eagles
Edgewood Arsenal, Md.
Ellington Field, Houston, Tex., Flyers
El Toro MCAS, Irvine/Santa Ana, Calif., Flying Marines
Fairfield-Suisun AAB, Fairfield, Calif., Skymasters
Farragut Naval Training Station, Id.
First Air Force, Mitchell Field, N.Y., Aces
Fleet City NTC/Naval Receiving Station/Naval Personnel Training and
Distribution Center, Shoemaker, Calif., Bluejackets
Fort Bliss, El Paso, Tex., Anti-Aircrafters/Commandos
Fort Bragg Field Artillery Replacement Training Center, N.C., Cannoneers
Fort Benning, Ga., Doughboys
Fort Benning 1st Student Training Regiment, Ga., Panthers
Fort Benning, Ga., 4th Infantry Raiders
Fort Benning, Ga., 300th Infantry, Sabres
Fort Benning, Ga., 124th Infantry, Gators/Tigers
Fort Benning, Ga., 176th Infantry, Spirits/Rockets

Fort Bragg, N.C.
Fort Bragg 3rd Field Artillery Replacement Training Center, N.C., Canoneers
Fort Crook, Neb.
Fort Douglas, Ut.
Fort Knox, Ky., Armored
Fort MacArthur, Calif.
Fort Monmouth, N.J.
Fort Monroe, Va., Gunners
Fort Ord., Calif.
Fort Pierce, Fla., Amphibs
Fort Riley Replacement Training Center, Kan., Centaurs
Fort Sheridan, Ill., Comets/GI's
Fort (Francis E.) Warren, Cheyenne, Wyo., Broncos/Fighting Quarter-
masters
Fourth (4th) Air Force, March Field, Riverside, Calif., Flyers
Galveston AAF, Galveston, Tex.
Georgia PF, Athens, Ga., Skycrackers
Godman AAF, Fort Knox, Ky., Bombers
Goleta MCAS, Goleta, Calif., Marines
Great Lakes NTS, Great Lakes, Ill., Bluejackets
Great Falls AAB, Great Falls, Mont., Bombers
Greensboro, N.C., Army Air Force Overseas Replacement Depot, Tech Hawks
Greenville AAB, N.C., Bombers
Gulfport AAF, Gulfport, Miss.
Gulfport NAS, Gulfport, Miss.
Gulfport NS, Gulfport, Miss., Seabees
Hill Field, Ogden, Ut., Flyers
Hondo AAF, Hondo, Tex., Comets
Houma AB, Houma, La.
Hutchinson NAS, Hutchinson, Kan., Navalairs
Iowa PF, Iowa City, Seahawks
Jackson AB, Jackson, Miss., Bombers
Jacksonville NAS, Jacksonville, Fla., Flyers
Jacksonville Naval Air Technical Training Center, Jacksonville, Fla., Air
Raiders
Keesler Field, Biloxi, Miss., Keeslerites
Kearney AAF, Kearney, Neb., Raiders/Flyers
Kearns AAB, Salt Lake City, Ut., Eagles
Kinston, N.C., Marines
Kirkland Field, Albuquerque, N.M., Flying Kellys
Klamath Falls, Ore., Marines

Knoxville, Tenn., Engineers
LaGarde Hospital, New Orleans, La.
Lake Charles AAF, Lake Charles, La.
Lakehurst NAS, Lakehurst, N.J., Blimps
Lincoln AAF, Neb., Wings
Logan NTS, Logan, Ut.
Lowry Field, Denver, Colo., Bombers/Bombardiers
Manhattan Beach CG, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Ala., Marauders
Mayport NAS, Mayport, Fla.
McClellan Field, Sacramento, Calif., Rangers
McCook AAB, McCook, Neb.
Melville Patrol Torpedo Base, R.I., Night Raiders
Memphis Naval Air Technical Training Center, Tenn., Blues
Miami AAF, Miami, Fla.
Miami NTC, Miami, Fla., Navaltars
Minter Field, Calif., Flyers
Montford Point, Camp Lejeune, N.C., Panthers
Moore General Hospital, Swannanoa, N.C.
New River Marine Corps Air Station (Peterfield Point), N.C., Devil Dogs
New London Submarine Base, New London, Conn., Diesels
Norfolk Fleet Marines, Norfolk, Va.
Norman NAS, Norman, Okla., Zoomers
North Carolina PF, Chapel Hill, N.C., Cloudbusters
Olathe NAS, Olathe, Kan., Zippers/Clippers
Ottumwa Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Ia., Skyers
Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot, S.C.
Patterson Field, Oh., Stars
Pearl Harbor Navy All-Stars, Pearl Harbor, T.H.
Pensacola NAS, Pensacola, Fla., Goshawks/Goslings/Air Cadets
Pleasanton Naval Personnel Distribution Center, Calif., Bluejackets
Pocatello, Id., Marines
Pomona Army Ordnance Base, Calif., Gunners
Portsmouth Fleet
Randolph Field, Tex., Ramblers
Reno AAB, Nev., Flying Wolves/Flyers
Richmond AAB, Richmond, Va., Thunderbirds
Rome AAF, N.Y.
Rosecrans AAB, St. Joseph, Mo., Flyers
Salt Lake AAB, Salt Lake City, Ut., Wings
Sampson NTS, Sampson, N.Y., Sailors/Bluejackets

San Diego NTS, San Diego, Calif., Bluejackets/Tars
San Francisco Bay CG Receiving Station, San Francisco, Calif., Pilots
Santa Ana AAB, Orange County, Calif., Flyers
Santa Barbara MCAS, Santa Barbara, Calif., Marines
Second (2nd) Air Force, Colorado Springs, Colo., Superbombers (formerly
of Spokane, Wash.)
Selman AAB, Monroe, La., Cyclones
South Plains AAF, Lubbock, Tex., Winged Commandos
Spokane Air Service, Spokane, Wash., Commandos
St. Mary's PF, Moraga, Calif., Air Devils
Stockton AAB, Stockton, Calif., Commandos
Third (3rd) Air Force, Morris Field, Charlotte, N.C.; later Drew Field,
Tampa, Fla., Gremlins
Tonopah Fourth Air Force, Tonopah, Nev., Flyers
Tulsa AB, Tulsa, Okla., Bombers
U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn., Bears
U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., Cadets
U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., Midshipmen
U.S. Submarine Base, New London, Conn., Undersea Raiders
Will Rogers AAB, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Wilmington Army Engineers, Calif.
Wilmington CG, Wilmington, N.C.
Wilmington Engineers, Amarillo, Tex.
Yuma AAB, Ariz., Gremlins

Black teams: Tuskegee AAF, Tuskegee, Ala., Warhawks; Columbus AF, Columbus, Ga.; Bryan AF, Tex.; Camp McKall, N.C., Paratroopers; Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Riley, Kans.; Norfolk NTS, Norfolk, Va., Brown Bombers; Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; Selman AAB, Monroe, La.; Randolph Field, Tex.; MacDill and Daniel Fields, Ala.; 56th Engineers Training Battalion, Wash.

CHAPTER 5

“Shifty and Smart, Harder to Stop Than Superman”: Charlie Justice, Glamor Prodigy

“The heat was on,” wrote Shirley Povich in the Washington Post in 1944. “Choo Choo Justice and his marauding on the gridiron amounted to a home front for the navy—Halsey, Nimitz and Justice shared the headlines.”¹

This “Choo Choo” was no National Football League star or college All-America singled out by the esteemed sportswriter. On the contrary, this smallish, teenaged boy, right out of high school, through talent, determination, and wise coaching, bolted onto the military football scene and soon became the glamor football prodigy of World War II.

His new navy family at the Bainbridge Naval Training Station recognized in a flash the enormous gridiron potential once he arrived in 1943. “He didn’t have a big college or pro reputation. He didn’t even have a press book full of clippings, but this high school kid is holding his own with the cream of the crop in the Commodores’ ball-carrying department.”² The impact had only begun, and for two remarkable football seasons he played a key, memorable role in Bainbridge’s rapid ascendancy to wartime greatness.

“You’ve probably seen him in action,” the station newspaper boasted about 18-year old Seaman 2nd/Class Charlie Justice, “so you know that he’s fast, shifty and smart. Fact, once he gets past the line of scrimmage, he’s harder to stop than Superman.” In the first six games Justice rushed 25 times for 302 yards and scored two touchdowns. “Not bad for a high school kid.”³

Justice graduated in 1943 from Lee H. Edwards High School in Asheville, N.C., also known as Asheville High. According to biographer Bob Terrell, his desire to play football overcame physical difficulties and ill health as a boy.

As a single-wing quarterback and halfback, he led the Edwards offense to undefeated seasons in 1941–42, as Edwards outscored opponents 487–7, scoring a point a minute in 1942 against mostly out-of-state foes. Justice made the All-Southern and All-State teams both times, and led the South with 172 points. On the state's 1942 Shrine Bowl team, he scored three touchdowns against South Carolina preps.

Football was natural and expected in the Justice family. Three brothers preceded him in the sport and a fourth wore his jersey number in 1943. At Edwards he still found time to fall in love with his future wife Sarah. "From that point on Charlie and his loves [football and Sarah] would not be separated."⁴ Justice later reflected, "It was destined that I was going to play football and be an athlete."⁵

If the nation were not at war he would have accepted one of some 12 college scholarship offers. But he was drafted into the navy, passed the tests for aerial gunnery, and headed for Bainbridge for training. His eventual rating was petty officer specialist (physical education instructor) second class (SP(A)2c), a rating established during the war and equivalent to today's petty officer second class, but disestablished thereafter. He taught physical education and "pushed boots" through recruit training, coincidentally to allow adequate time for athletics.



Fresh out of high school in Asheville, N.C., 18-year-old Charlie Justice practices punting during Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Station drills in 1943, after convincing coaches he could kick as well as receive. Justice wore three jersey numbers at Bainbridge in 1943–44, 3, 9, 23, and number 12 in Hawaii. Postwar at North Carolina, his jersey (22) would become the most famous athletic number in state history (game program, Bainbridge at Camp Lejeune, September 25, 1943).

1943

Justice reported to Bainbridge in the summer of 1943, and as a baby-faced, raw apprentice seaman joined 99 others in trying out for the team. Coach Lieutenant Joe Maniaci (Fordham, Brooklyn Dodgers, Chicago Bears) issued him a ragtag uniform and no football shoes. Their introduction took on a "Knut Rockne-meets-George Gipp overtone," wrote famed sportswriter Furman Bisher. Maniaci instructed him to stay out of the way and only field punts. "You won't get hurt that way, kid."⁶

Tar Heel football historian Ken Rappoport credited the navy for bringing Justice "down to earth." "What do you want?" snapped Maniaci. "I'm a halfback," Justice responded. After checking out the young, rather undersized applicant, Maniaci dismissed him to other end of the field for punting drills, with Justice wearing only sweat socks.⁷

Bored with just shagging, it didn't take long for Justice to turn this around. One practice he booted the ball 65 yards back up the field, without shoes.



'Who kicked that ball?' Maniaci bellowed. 'The kid over there.' Maniaci called to Justice. 'You kick like that all the time?' 'I do it better when I'm wearing football shoes,' Justice said, pointing to his sneakers.⁸ That did it. Maniaci told him there was no way he would make the club, with all their pros and All-Americans. But if he wanted to hang around and kick, fine. After two weeks Justice got cleats and made the squad.

Impressed with his practice runs, Maniaci inserted him into the Washington Redskins scrim-

By now nicknamed "Choo Choo," Charlie Justice scampers at home at Tome Field in 1943. "He runs like a runaway train." Sportswriters pounced on it and it stuck forever (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

mage. All he did was intercept two passes, make four tackles, average five yards per carry, and race 45 yards for the sailors' lone touchdown. His four punts, however, averaged only 20 yards. "It's a good thing you can do something else besides kick or you'd be headed for sea duty," an admonishing coach said. "It seems that every time I needed a break I got the break," Justice recalled.⁹

"I went out for football primarily for one reason," Justice told Rapoport, "to get out of KP. I knew just enough to know that if you played football you were automatically jerked from KP duty." He had heard of Maniaci but until reporting for practice nothing about the array of professionals with whom he would compete and ultimately play alongside. "Justice was lost in this forest of talent."¹⁰

Justice, who stood 5'10" and weighed between 165 and 170, eventually thought that being the only high school boy worked to his advantage. "Nobody would believe it." When asked why he didn't attend college, he answered, "Well, I'm not old enough. I didn't get out of high school in time."¹¹ Realizing his place in the pecking order, and deploying his charm and personality, he soon established himself with coaches, teammates, and the media. To the latter, he became a "darling": great player, great copy. It would last his entire football career.

The pros quickly liked the kid, "who had a great competitive flair and an even and controlled temperament mixed with his natural talents." Terrell discovered Justice practiced enthusiastically with an "attitude of total cooperation and self-sacrifice. His good nature and fine spirit were always present." Justice noted the pros often operated on the field independently from coaching instructions, including changing called plays in the huddle. "'Aw hell, he don't know what he's talking about,' someone would say." Do what we say, they told Justice. Maniaci allowed them to freelance a bit because he knew it worked.¹²

Maniaci finally provided the opportunity. Bob Quincy and Julian Scheer, in their Justice book, called it "a battlefield promotion." Maniaci said, "He's got everything. He can run, tackle, block, and boot that ball a country mile." The coach then had to determine how to utilize him most effectively as a spot player.¹³

So how did he get the nickname "Choo Choo"? At one game a naval officer watching from the stands reportedly said, "'Say, that Justice kid runs just like a choo choo train.'" Sportswriters immediately pounced and it stuck, forever. While starring at North Carolina later, he received mail addressed only to "Choo Choo, N.C.,"¹⁴ or his jersey number "22, Chapel Hill, N.C." Justice later added his version to *Touchdown Illustrated* in 1988. He said an officer was sitting with Paul Menton, sports editor of *The Evening Sun* of Baltimore, and said: "Look at that guy run. He looks like a runaway train."

We ought to call him Choo Choo." Menton picked it up and used it in the paper.¹⁵ Coincidentally, Justice's father worked for a railroad. Even today young North Carolinians recognize the name and know the legend.

With two weeks of practice "under their skivvies," Bainbridge fielded three backfield combinations. One included Bill deCorrevont of Northwestern, Bill Dutton of Pittsburgh (All-America), Charlie Noble of Marquette, and Justice "of North Carolina." Justice never started. By the second game, Hilliard Cheatham (Auburn), Jim Gatewood (Georgia), Don Durdan (Oregon State), and Harvey Johnson (William & Mary) comprised the first team.¹⁶

Here are some seasonal games, facts, and numbers of note.

Bainbridge 26, Curtis Bay Coast Guard 7, at Bainbridge, October 16. Justice scored the final touchdown by returning an interception 32 yards.

Bainbridge 49, Camp Lee 0, at Camp Lee, Va., October 23. "AP: With Bill deCorrevont, of Northwestern fame, pitching and Al Vanderweghe [William & Mary] and Charlie Justice catching, the Sailors unleashed a devastating aerial attack." Before 12,000, Justice, "fleet 18-year old speedster," ran "the spectacular play of the day," took a deCorrevont lateral and raced 60 yards through the entire Lee team for a 20-0 halftime lead. Justice also scored a fourth quarter touchdown.¹⁷

Bainbridge 54, Curtis Bay 0, at Curtis Bay, Md., November 6. Bainbridge "steam-rolled a hapless" Curtis Bay team. In the fourth quarter "the fleet-footed" Justice, in "the standout run of the day," took a Cheatham 72-yard touchdown pass, "bobbing and dancing his way the last 45 yards."¹⁸

A week later Justice did not play against Maryland because of a bad back. He told the *Baltimore Sun* he felt "grateful to the navy for his association with 'such a flock of big boys.' He confessed to thinking he was out of place when he first joined the team but his success in action and their acceptance of him had made him much more comfortable."¹⁹

The AP named Justice Mid-Atlantic Rookie of the Year, but he was still unknown nationwide, wrote Quincy and Scheer. "A back with only a high school background had no right to out-point proven pro and college stars."²⁰ The *Bainbridge Mainsheet* observed, "Justice seems to be the surprise package of '43. You'll hear more of him."²¹

"The Guy Doesn't Do Justice to Himself," the *Mainsheet* wrote.²² "Leaving his foes / In clouds of dust is / Asheville's pride / One Charlie Justice."

1944

All of a sudden, plaudits and superlatives rained down upon Justice. The NCAA in its 1944 preview reminded readers that "Charley [*sic*] 'Choo Choo'

Justice, extraordinary youngster of Bainbridge ... ran wild in every game."²³ That season he finished second nationally (14 touchdowns for 84 points) to All-America halfback Glenn Davis of Army (20 touchdowns for 120 points) in scoring. Soon even the first name would be correctly spelled: Charlie.

In mid-September the Commodores scrimmaged powerful Navy. "According to the reports it ended up all even with Charlie Justice dashing 60 yards to tally a Bainbridge score. The guys here [at Bainbridge] aren't talking about it."²⁴

Bainbridge 43, Camp Lee 0, at Bainbridge, September 30. Justice "picked up where he left off last year" for the Commodores in their eighth straight win, by scampering for two 50-yard touchdown runs on an interception and punt return without a hand touching him.²⁵

Bainbridge 53, Camp Lejeune 7, at Bainbridge, October 7. In the second quarter, Jackie Field (Texas) and "the fleet-footed, shifty" Justice, a "high school phenomenon," "each hit pay dirt from 32 yards out." Both gigantic lines battled fiercely, and Bainbridge was penalized 105 yards, mostly for unnecessary roughness.²⁶ The AP reported the 19-year old Justice "already has made a down payment on a backfield spot on the 1944 all-service team." He handled the ball seven times and scored on runs of 83, 51, 50, and 32 yards. The other three carries were for 34, 26, and 12 yards.²⁷ What running, and what blocking.

Justice supplied the coup d'état. "Standing on his own 17, 'Choo Choo Charlie' took [a] lateral and headed for the western sidelines. Apparently stopped on the line of scrimmage, he suddenly reversed his field and, side-stepping a half dozen enemy tacklers, broke into the clear and swept 83 yards for the day's longest scoring jaunt.... Don't get the idea that this Lejeune team is any pushover even if the score was monstrous."²⁸ So was the Asheville phenom.

"The Fighting Commodores"²⁹

Roll up the score for dear old Bainbridge,

Roll up the score you Commodores.

Down the field in Navy Blue,

Show your colors true.

Rah! Rah!

Just like a Navy battle wagon,

Sail on to meet and sink the foe.

Fight! With might! You men of Bainbridge;

Sail right on to Victory!

Bainbridge 47, Camden (N.J.) Blue Devils 7, at Bainbridge, October 14. Unbeaten Camden, atop the eastern professional football league,

scored first on a 42-yard fumble recovery return. Then the sailors poured it on. "Youthful Charley Justice again stole the show offensively" by scoring twice on a 3-yard end sweep and a 36-yard off-tackle gallop.³⁰ Bainbridge "continues to be a high handicap team," the *Mainsheet* reported, with 300 penalty yards in three games. Justice booted three extra points but each time the team committed a penalty, nullifying the kicks.³¹

Bainbridge, October 17. "AP — 'He's the greatest natural football player I've ever seen,' says Bainbridge coach Joe Maniaci of 19-year old Charley Justice, while Duke coach Eddie Cameron chortles at them kind words and rubs his hands in glee." In the sailors' first three games Justice scored six touchdowns and averaged 25 yards per carry. The *Baltimore Sun* reported, "Cameron is sleeping well despite his unsuccessful Duke team because he apparently has the inside track on the kid's services after the war. Justice has told intimates, 'It's Duke for me.'"³² His numbers: nine rushes for 186 yards, total (counting runbacks of kicks and interceptions), 16 for 399.

The *Sun* continued³³:

The part they don't tell is his fire-eating love of football — he has been dressed and waiting in an empty dressing room three hours before a game — his ability to learn quickly from mistakes, his vicious blocking, good kicking and ability to shift directions bewilderingly on the dead run. Last year he was a surprise David — weighing 165 — among a flock of giants.... Back of a tremendous line that has given its opponents this year minus 84 yards from rushing, he outshines such proven ball carriers as Harvey Johnson ... Don Durdan ... Jim Gatewood ... Jackie Field ... Harry (Hippety) Hopp ... Joe Kane ... and a flock of others. Because of the Commodores' triple deep backfield strength, he has played just 58 minutes ... but when he's in, there ain't no justice in Charley Justice.

Bainbridge 7, Camp Peary 0, at Williamsburg, Va., October 22. Prior to the game that the media billed as an early-season service championship, Coach Maniaci expected trouble. "The only thing we know about Peary is that they can field 15 professional ballplayers against us. We don't know whether they use the 'T,' the single wing or what. All we know is they've got an awfully tough ball club." They sure were. Hopp (Nebraska) ran back a punt 65 yards for the only score as the Commodores took their eleventh straight victory.³⁴

Dr. William Friday, president emeritus of the University of North Carolina system and a close postwar Justice friend, watched that game in the William & Mary stadium. Friday was stationed at the naval ammunition depot in Norfolk and later remembered³⁵:

His club won, and he put on quite a show. I believe he was wearing tennis shoes. To see him out there running among all those big fellows was amaz-



To the delight of a multitude of fellow Bainbridge navy white hats, Choo Choo Justice roars down the sidelines for another Commodore touchdown (*Bainbridge Mainsheet*, October 21, 1944).

ing. If I recall [correctly] his main contribution was punting. He kept the opposition on the defensive all day. He was so different, and that was why he stood out. There are some people you can't coach, like Michael Jordan and David Thompson. You just let them go. There was a quality of grace in their performance. He was one of those. He was given a gift. I can't ever remember Charlie being called for any kind of penalty. He was a gentleman, a unique person."

In their hard-fought return engagement on November 25, Bainbridge prevailed 21–13. Peary kept Justice "bottled up throughout the afternoon," holding him to two rushing yards, his only bad game.³⁶

Bainbridge 15, Maxwell Field 7, at Montgomery, Ala., October 29. "AP — About five minutes were left when flashy Charlie Justice ... took a lateral and galloped around right end" to score from six yards out. Justice passes set up the drive, his 35-yarder to Charlie Mehelich (Duquesne) taking it to

the six. Bainbridge tied the score 7–7 in the second quarter when Justice sped 17 yards for a touchdown and Harvey Johnson kicked the extra point. Bainbridge added a late safety.³⁷ Visiting Maxwell lost a second game to Bainbridge on December 2, 13–3, and was the only military team playing both Bainbridge and their air force powerhouse equivalent Randolph Field in 1944.

"Justice Thorn in Maxwell Field's Side," blared the *Mainsheet*. You can't tell Maxwell "there isn't any Justice," as he engineered the scoring plays for the team's twelfth straight win. He stopped Maxwell's second scoring drive by hauling down Johnny Clements (Southern Methodist, Chicago Cardinals) from behind, and "did about everything else but tote the water bucket during time out. Until the fleet 20-year old former Asheville, N.C., schoolboy and his mates settled down to playing football after a ragged first period, the 12,000 fans in the shirt-sleeved crowd thought they saw an upset in the offing." Five army bands entertained. The field sent three bombers to rescue the Commodores from bus trouble to bring them to Maxwell. Justice booted one of the season's longest punts, 71 yards, which rolled dead on the Maxwell six. His longest run of the day was 20, which almost went for a score but he slipped at midfield in the clear and fell. Justice now ranked second among East scorers with eight touchdowns for 48 points, and trailed Army's Glenn Davis who had 60.³⁸

Bainbridge 49, North Carolina Pre-Flight 20, at Chapel Hill, November 5. "Joe Maniaci's rugged (with a capital 'rug') Bainbridge football team can beat any college eleven of the American gridiron," the *Greensboro Daily News* trumpeted. "Carolina fans were treated to their first view of pro football as it is, and should be, played." The "big bruisers" from Maryland averaged 209 pounds on the line and 195 in the backfield. "That was just the starting team, the rest of the personnel got bigger." Bainbridge scored 41 points in the second quarter. Justice tallied on a 42-yard screen pass. Reserved seats cost \$2 each.³⁹

This marked his first game in Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill, where ultimately Justice would become the state's all-time premier college football player. Playing only 10 minutes against the No. 1-ranked military eleven, he scored on a 65-yard "Sally Rand" naked reverse and led the team in yards gained.⁴⁰ "The Bainbridge team whooped onto the field, hoisted Charlie on to big shoulders, and carried him off the field to admiring cheers from the crowd."⁴¹

Bainbridge 33, Camp Lejeune 6, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., November 18. Justice highlighted the game with a dazzling 83-yard run during which he outfoxed the superback Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. "I was having a hot day. We ran a sweep to the right ... and I twisted around John Yonakor, a big end from Notre Dame, cut back across the field and found no opening there, so I cut across to the right sideline again and when the way closed up there

I cut back across the field for the third time, found a lane over there, and went on in for the touchdown." Untouched, he faked out Hirsch, the last man he passed.⁴²

The Lejeune newspaper piled on the plaudits: "Justice Leads Way as Commodores Win." Justice, "the boy among men ... sprinted to his 12th, 13th, and 14th touchdowns of the season.... National reputation on professional and collegiate gridirons faded into nothing as Justice, the high school star from Asheville, N.C., more than lived up to his pre-game ballyhoo. The kid handled the ball seven times from scrimmage for 145 yards and three touchdowns."⁴³

Justice paced his team in scoring (21 touchdowns for 126 points) and yards rushing (80 carries for 1,011 yards) for the unbeaten two years, while playing only 10 minutes per game. He fit in perfectly with a much older veteran group of players, including many All-Americans, National Football League pros, and postseason bowl participants. Recognizing something special in this young man, they opened holes for him to run through, and exploited his superb defensive savvy. Those were the days when a team's best players played on both sides of the ball as much as they could. Other: team leaders: Justice, 84 points; Hopp, 52; Johnson, 18 (PATs); Vanderweghe, six touchdown passes caught; Justice, 629 yards rushing. Justice later credited his Bainbridge career as two years of pro ball.



In what might have been the war's classic one-on-one matchup, the great back Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch [Wisconsin, Michigan, Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base, El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station], a former V-12 trainee, was outfaked and outrun by Charlie Justice on his way to a score in Bainbridge's 33-6 victory on November 18, 1944, at Lejeune (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1943*).

Justice earned a spot on the AP All-Service second team along with backs "Indian" Jack Jacobs (Fourth Air Force), Glenn Dobbs (Second Air Force), and Bill Daley (Fort Pierce). Eight Commodores made the 1944 Mid-Atlantic All-Service team:

FIRST TEAM	SECOND TEAM
E Al Vanderweghe	T Lou Rymkus
G Garrard Ramsey	G Leonard Akin
HB Justice	QB Hilliard Cheatham
FB Harvey Johnson	FB Harry Hopp

After marrying Justice on November 23 in Asheville, Sarah moved to Washington, D.C., to be closer to him, and ultimately worked at the station, making recruit portraits. "Sarah thinks we got married so I wouldn't have to go to Annapolis," he said about the navy's offer to send him to the Academy. "That wasn't it." The navy tore up his orders once they wed because married students were against regulations.⁴⁴

1945

After the Bainbridge physical education instructors school closed in 1945, Justice joined other East Coast athletes shipped to Hawaii to prepare for the pending invasion of Japan. Naturally they were expected to play a little organized football in their spare time, for bragging rights, of course. Quincy and Scheer went further. Justice's fame on stateside shore duty embarrassed a navy at war, they said, precipitating his transfer to Honolulu during the period when civilian officials were prodding the armed forces to "get their big-name athletes out of the country."⁴⁵

Justice played several games with a group of navy all-stars in the Honolulu area against similar teams from the Marines and air force. By then he graduated into a starting backfield position along with old Bainbridge colleague Cheatham, Bob Sweiger (Minnesota), and Bob Morrow (Illinois Wesleyan, Chicago Cardinals), the nemesis quarterback when Bainbridge beat Camp Peary in 1944. A November game against the air force stars ended a wartime football rivalry which "[bid] aloha to Hawaiian servicemen and women ... with the final game of a thrilling series.... These games, scheduled ... as a means of recreation [have] succeeded admirably in [their] purpose."⁴⁶

Playing before crowds of 45–50,000 service personnel in the Honolulu-Pearl Harbor area, the air force all-stars went 4–0, Justice's squad 2–2, and the Marines 0–4. Justice, who earlier leaned toward attending Duke, played alongside former Duke backs George McAfee and Steve Lach. His final game

in uniform was a losing effort against the Marines in San Francisco. For those who wonder about his wartime naval service, he led trainees in physical education — and he played football.

Postwar

More than 250 colleges wanted Justice after the war. The Philadelphia Eagles, Chicago Bears, Boston Yanks, and Redskins offered him professional contracts. He settled on college at North Carolina, but on one condition. They struck a deal. I'll attend on the GI Bill, he told Carolina, and you give my scholarship to my wife, Sarah. That worked. She attended classes for two years before leaving to care for their first child. After Charlie died, Sarah related this story to the author about how she went to Carolina on a football scholarship, hardly a secret to the media.

What about his service to our country, and his maturity and growth? Among others, Carolina teammate Robert H. Koontz said that the navy positively influenced Justice and "gave him a tremendous amount of experience that served him well."⁴⁷ Teammate Joe Augustine remembered, "Everyone was looking for something to rally around after World War II," and in North Carolina Justice became the man.⁴⁸ Justice remembered what really mattered. "They tell us we [football players] contributed to morale. I hope so. I'm no hero. I'm lucky. Most of the guys I started with for gunnery school were lost in the Pacific."⁴⁹



Back Charlie Justice (then 5'10"/175) on the navy's Pacific All-Star squad out of Hawaii in his final game in a military uniform in 1945. Justice and other football players had been shipped there to prepare for the invasion of Japan. He never saw action or got farther west than Hawaii (Game program, Fleet City vs. Pacific All-Stars, Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, December 2, 1945).

A coach said as Justice left the navy: "Calling him a freshman football player when he enters college is like calling Joe Louis a promising young fighter.' Charlie thus became the most highly discussed talent ever to pass from high school to college, via a three-year layoff."⁵⁰ Learning lessons in the school of hard knocks "armed [him] with the experience of a professional football player and the exuberance of a college freshman."⁵¹

At Carolina, the triple-threat (run, pass, punt) halfback wearing jersey number 22 gained 4,883 yards running and passing, a school record that lasted 45 years, scored 234 points, and ran or passed for 64 touchdowns. Justice finished second in the Heisman Trophy balloting in successive years, 1948–49, one of only three players (Army's Glenn Davis, 1944–45, and Arkansas' Darren McFadden, 2006–07 being the others) thus accorded runner-up finishes. A member of the College Football Hall of Fame, Justice earned first-team All-America honors in 1948–49 and was named national player of the year in 1948.

The Tar Heels during the "the Justice era" went 32–6–2 and played in three major bowls including the Sugar and Cotton (when bowls were far fewer and more prestigious than today), finished in the AP Top Ten for three seasons, and reached No. 1 for a while in 1948. Justice received the most valuable player award for the 1950 College All-Star game in leading the post-collegians to a 17–7 victory over the NFL champion Eagles. Music created a special place for him in the Orville Campbell-Hank Beebe hit song, "All the Way Choo Choo." Tar Heel Andy Griffith penned the ditty, "What It Was Was Football" about the team.

Justice fashioned a solid but unspectacular career with the Redskins until retiring from football in 1954 to become briefly the "color man" in their radio broadcasting team, perhaps the first ex-player to do so. He returned to North Carolina in 1955.

Postscript

On October 17, 2003, Choo Choo died in his Cherryville, N.C., home at 79. The statement of Carolina Athletic Director Dick Baddour resonated for all Tar Heel friends and fans. "Charlie Justice was one of the most beloved people in the history of this great University. He was a true Carolina icon. There was only one Charlie Justice, not only because of his football feats, but because of his humility, devotion to his family and teammates and his love for Carolina. His passing is a great loss to so many people who loved and admired him."⁵²

CHAPTER 6

“All Hail to the Navy”: Great Lakes, Fleet City, Pre-Flights, and Midshipmen

Two years into the war, the NCAA lauded the service for the “collegiate game’s very existence” as “the ‘plasma’ for the lifeblood of football.... ‘All Hail to the Navy’” became the playing theme for 1944.¹

The National Collegiate Athletic Association kicked off the first post-war football season by continuing to heap praise upon the navy and Captain Thomas J. Hamilton for playing the key role in “recognizing football’s value and keeping the game alive.” Football in the navy was a “training ‘must.’”²

The navy responded by fielding numerous powerful teams at the Naval Academy, five pre-flight schools, and at naval stations, in addition the its “Lend-Lease” officer candidate training programs at some 131 colleges. Because the navy did and the army did not allow its students to play varsity football, colleges with navy and Marine Corps officer candidates had a huge leg up on talent and coaching, and consequently better won-lost records. Yet the navy after 1942 disallowed commissioned officers with collegiate or professional experience from playing pre-flight varsity football, placing those schools “on approximately the same footing as their college opponents” who would dress mostly freshmen.³

The Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Station/Center, playing the sport since World War I, vied with the brand-new Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Station/Center as best base team. Fleet City (Calif.) Naval Receiving Station bolted into the spotlight in 1945, producing what some observers rated as the finest single-season wartime service eleven. At 25–6 for their



Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center Bluejackets starters, 1942 (8–3–1, military champions, seven shutouts, all games on the road). Linemen, left to right: Carl Mulleneaux, Jim Barber, Bill Radovich, Bob Nelson, Ken Robesky, Jim Daniell, Fred Preston. Backfield: Pete Kmetovic, Rudy Mucha, Bob Sweiger, Bruce Smith. Smith received more wartime service honors than any other player, including the Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club's trophy as top service player (*Illustrated Football Annual 1943*).

three campaigns against mostly college competition, Iowa Pre-Flight also deserved No. 1 consideration and surely topped the pre-flights. Great Lakes and Bainbridge were so evenly matched in many eyes that the better team sometimes boiled down to a personal opinion (if one had seen them play).

To Bainbridge's advantage, its holdover 1943 players competed the following season, whereas Great Lakes players could participate only one season. From the start Great Lakes played mostly college teams, predominantly from the Big Ten, some of which used naval and Marine Corps trainees and some not. Bainbridge, primarily playing military schedules, won 21 consecutive games over two and a half seasons.

Below is a look at some formidable navy elevens. Only the Naval Academy, Great Lakes, Jacksonville, and San Diego still operate today.

Camp Peary (Williamsburg, Va.) Naval Training and Distribution Center Pirates

The 1944 eleven coached by Lieutenant Commander Norman P. "Red" Strader (St. Mary's), finished fourth in the Williamson service poll after twice battling Bainbridge Navy.

1944 CAMP PEARY (5-2-0)	1945 CAMP PEARY (4-4-0)
Washington Redskins 33-17*	Amphib Trng Base 6-0
Cherry Point MCAS 20-0	Camp Lee 0-13
Camp Lee 38-0	Fort Monroe 40-0
Bainbridge NTS 0-7	Fort Bragg 12-0
Camp Lee 41-0	Cherry Point MCAS 27-0
North Carolina PF 19-7	Camp Lee 6-7
Bainbridge NTS 13-21	Pers Dist Comd 14-21
*Scrimmage	Cherry Point MCAS 0-7

Del Monte Pre-Flight (Monterey, Calif.) Navyators

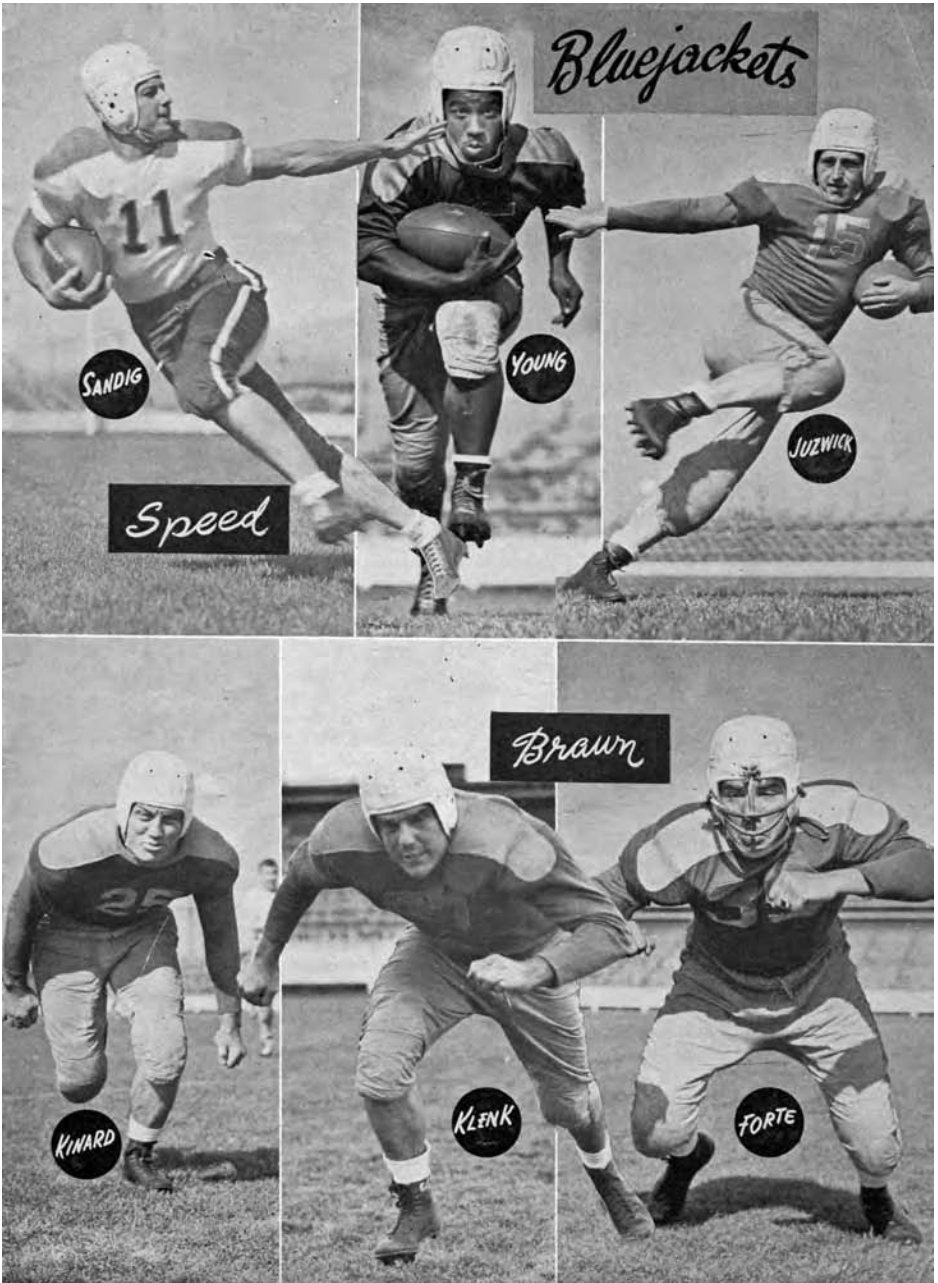
Del Monte played only one season and closed 11 months after opening. Coach Lieutenant Bill Kern (All-America Pittsburgh, coach Carnegie Tech and West Virginia) wanted "to play his cadet group as much as possible while still getting some mileage from the highly touted officer corps," particularly his All-America "dream backfield" of Leonard "Len" Eshmont (5'11"/180, Fordham, New York Giants), Parker Hall (Mississippi, Cleveland Rams), Jim McDonald (All-America Ohio State, Detroit Lions), and Paul Christmas (Missouri).⁴ Tackle Ray Bray (225, Western Michigan, Chicago Bears) received a direct commission as an ensign and instructed at Del Monte and Chapel Hill, Glenview, Ill., and Jacksonville, Fla. He recalled that Del Monte was "like living in a resort. The place was beautiful—everyone loved it.... The time went by so fast and we were really sorry to leave."⁵

Featuring a "devastating" single-wing with unbalanced line, Kern raised eyebrows with delayed bucks, double reverses, flankers and pass-laterals. The line and backfield averaged 210 and 195 pounds respectively.⁶ They ranked No. 8 in the final AP poll and fourth among military elevens.

1943 DEL MONTE PF (7-1-0, 252-65)

Alameda CG	34-7
St Mary's College	33-7
Pleasanton Navy	34-6
College of Pacific	7-16
San Francisco U	34-0
UCLA	26-7
St Mary's PF	37-14*
California	47-8

*at Kezar Stadium, San Francisco; 49,000



Fleet City Naval Receiving Station, aka Pleasanton and Shoemaker Field (Shoemaker, Calif.) Bluejackets

Fleet City was the nickname for the world's largest receiving station, located 40 miles east of San Francisco in the Amador Valley. Together with a Seabee (naval construction battalion) replacement depot, hospital, disciplinary barracks, and personnel separation center, it was part of the U.S. Naval Training and Distribution Center. An observer wrote that the Bluejackets "inhabit a thriving, modern city at Shoemaker, replete with theatres, bowling alleys, ship's service stores and refreshment counters."⁷

Lieutenant Jack Malevich coached the 1944 squad which finished ranked No. 9 among service teams and No. 18 overall. Linemen Joe Stydahar (West Virginia, Chicago Bears) and Bob Suffridge led the way.

The 1945 Fleet City T-formation eleven, under Lieutenant Commander William J. Reinhart (coach Oregon), "was regarded by a majority of the servicemen as the best football team anywhere," according to the NCAA.⁸ The schedule included three minor-league professional/semi-pro teams. Major news services did not rank military teams that season, but the Williamson poll named them No. 1. Its two battles with the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station were considered classics. The Bluejackets entertained a quarter of a million "football-loving servicemen." Thousands of men "are now being channeled through the separation center back to civilian life," a game program read.⁹ Its meeting with the Fourth Air Force before 50,000 in San Francisco's Kezar Stadium for the Pacific Coast championship generated thousands for the War Wounded Fund.

Stars included HB Claude "Buddy" Young (5'5"/160, All-America Illinois), No. 10 in the Associated Press voting for male athlete of year; HB Steve Juzwik (5'8"/195, Notre Dame), named Washington Touchdown Club 1945 outstanding service player in the country; HB Edgar Jones (5'10"/195, Pittsburgh); FB Harry Hopp (6'0"/210, Nebraska, Bainbridge); and QB Charles O'Rourke (5'11"/185, Boston College).

Opposite: Super-powerful 1945 Fleet City (Calif.) may have been the most potent single-season wartime eleven (11-0-1), with two wins over mighty El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station. Its biggest star was fleet-footed back Buddy Young (Illinois), shown with backs Curtis Sandig and Steve Juzwik, and linemen Al Forte, Frank Kinard, and Quentin Klenk (game program, Fleet City vs. Fourth Air Force, November 25, 1945).

1943 FLEET CITY (1-4-1)		1944 FLEET CITY (6-4-1)	
San Francisco U	13-0	College of Pacific	7-6
St Mary's PF	0-43	El Toro MCAS	7-13
Del Monte PF	7-34	Alameda CG	7-7
Modesto JC	6-20	St Mary's PF	12-0
Alameda CG	6-46	4th AF	0-39
Modesto JC	6-8	San Francisco CG	27-6
		California	19-2
		CG Pilots	27-6
		El Toro MCAS	0-14
		St Mary's College	26-0
		Nevada	19-2
		St Mary's PF	0-3

1945 FLEET CITY (11-0-1)

San Joaquin Cowboys	77-0
2nd AF	7-0
El Toro MCAS	21-7
Camp Beale	88-0
Hollywood Rangers	16-0
Fort Warren	21-9
St Mary's PF	13-13
Los Angeles Broncos	41-6
San Jose St	26-0
4th AF	20-10
Pearl Harbor All-Stars	23-7
El Toro MCAS	48-25

Fort Pierce (Fla.) Naval Amphibious Training Base Amphibs

Located near Port St. Lucie and Vero Beach, the 1944 Fort Pierce team ranked No. 18 in the AP poll and No. 9 in the Williamson service poll. Stars included B Bill Daley (All-America Minnesota, Michigan). The 1944-45 coach was Ensign Hampton Pool (Stanford), who also played end. In 1945 QB Johnny Lujack (Notre Dame) joined the team.

1944 FORT PIERCE (9-0-0, 385-22)		1945 FORT PIERCE (3-9-0)	
Miami NTC	40-7	Air Trng Cmd	10-13
Chatham Field	74-0	1st AF	7-19
Miami	38-0	Air Trng Cmd	7-19
Mayport NS	53-0	Jacksonville NAS	6-13
Miami NTC	70-0	3rd AF	26-12
Mayport NS	48-2	Jacksonville NAS	7-35
Jacksonville NAS	21-0	Pers Dist Ctr	7-16
3rd AF	7-6	Fort Benning	14-13
Keesler Field	34-7	Amph Trng Base	7-27
		Keesler Field	21-7
		Fort Benning	6-40
		Amphib Trng Base	0-20

Georgia Pre-Flight (University of Georgia, Athens) Skycrackers

The 1942 Georgia Pre-Flight eleven finished at No. 4 nationally under two coaches named "Bear": head coach Lieutenant Raymond "Bear" Wolf (coach North Carolina), assisted by Paul "Bear" Bryant (Alabama, coach Alabama, Vanderbilt). Back Frank Filchock (5'10½"/190, Indiana, Redskins) headed the 48-man, half-officer roster. Georgia and other pre-flight squads often curtailed or canceled practices because of intense study periods or military duties. Lack of game preparation for these talented, experienced players tended to help balance the youth and inexperience of their opponents.

Starting in 1943 the navy disallowed commissioned officers and former professional from playing. New classes of cadets came and went every two weeks. Coach Lieutenant Rex Enright (Notre Dame, coach South Carolina) turned to FB Pat Harder (200, Wisconsin) and HB Steve Filipowicz (195, Fordham).

Adhering to navy policy of changing coaches annually, Lieutenant Raymond W. "Ducky" Pond (Yale) came aboard for 1944 and found Harder the only returning regular. The 1945 schedule was canceled.

1942 GEORGIA PF (7-1-1)		1943 GEORGIA PF (5-1-0)	
Pennsylvania	14-6	Daniel Field	19-13
North Carolina PF	14-14	Georgia Tech	7-35*
Duke	26-12	Newberry	53-0†
Pensacola NAS	26-0	North Carolina PF	20-7
Louisiana St U	0-34	Tulane	14-13
Jacksonville NAS	20-6	Clemson	32-6
Auburn	41-14		
Tulane	7-0		
Alabama	35-19		

*12,000 at Atlanta

†10,000 at Athens

1944 GEORGIA PF (4-5-0)	
South Carolina	20-14
Cherry Point MCAS	38-0
3rd AF	7-19
North Carolina PF	0-3
Georgia Tech	7-13
3rd AF	12-34
North Carolina PF	19-33
Daniel Field	30-0
Daniel Field	53-12

Great Lakes (III.) Naval Training Station/Center Bluejackets

Principally a boot camp for initial training, Great Lakes is located north of Chicago on Lake Michigan. Right after Pearl Harbor, a mammoth, two-year, \$120-million station expansion began during an extremely frigid winter, utilizing 26 architectural firms, 14 general contractors, and 13,000 workmen. By September 1942, acreage swelled from 172 to nearly 1,600 and trainee numbers from 6,000 in January to 68,000 in 17 separate training camps. By mid-1943, the station employed more than 700 instructors.

Lieutenant Commander Paul D. "Tony" Hinkle (Chicago, coach Butler), who coached the Bluejackets during 1942-43, instituted a platoon system of "commandos" as shock troops, a unit using a basic single-double wing and the Notre Dame box, and another employing the straight T. Led by FB Steve Belichick (Western Reserve, Detroit Lions), HB Bruce Smith (6'0"/185,

Heisman Trophy 1941, All-America Minnesota), and B Bob Sweiger (Minnesota), the sailors captured the Associated Press top service ranking and their third straight military championship. Two players, B Bill deCorrevont (Northwestern) and E Howard "Red" Hickey (Arkansas), moved to Bainbridge for 1943.

"The Lakes" powerhouse posted seven shutouts (six consecutive), allowed only 91 first downs, and finished eleventh among all college-military elevens. They played all games on the road to stimulate recruiting, but because of transportation restrictions and rationing comparatively few watched. The Michigan game at Ann Arbor drew 17,000. No other wartime player matched or exceeded Smith's numerous honors. These included both the Grantland Rice (*Collier's*) and United Press All-Service teams, and the Lieutenant Robert B. Smith Trophy of the Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club as Best Service Player. Smith ranked seventh nationally with 1,335 total yards on 5.9 yards per carry.

Hinkle's 1943 repeat armed-forces champion Bluejackets fielded as solid a backfield as any wartime squad: QB's Steve Lach (6'1"/200, All-America Duke, Chicago Cardinals) and Paul Anderson (5'11"/200, Western Reserve),

All-American at Great Lakes Again Shines



who also played half-back, and backs Dewey Proctor (5'11"/190, Furman, and later Bainbridge), Emil Sitko (5'8"/175, Notre Dame), Steve Juzwik (Notre Dame, Washington Redskins), and Ray Jones (Texas). The team suffered numerous injuries and player shortages. Anderson, the only back to start all games, played all 60 minutes in four.

Proceeds from

Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center quarterback Steve Lach, Duke All-American and former Chicago Cardinal, threw the last-minute touchdown pass to Paul Anderson to defeat Notre Dame, 19-14, in 1943 in the war's greatest military game. Lach later teamed with Charlie Justice on a Hawaii navy all-star squad (*The Football News*, October 16, 1943).

the welfare and recreation fund covered costs for the center's athletic program, at no expense to the government, said to be the world's largest. Switching from recruiting to entertainment, the eight home games attracted some 170,000 naval personnel. Only about one-quarter of assigned personnel could attend each game. In the finale, Great Lakes downed unbeaten Notre Dame on a last-minute Lach-to-Anderson touchdown pass in certainly its greatest wartime victory and probably military football's finest game of all-time.

By 1944, the Midwest accounted for approximately 35 percent of the navy's personnel. Nearly all finished boot camp at Great Lakes, the world's largest naval training base. The 40-man roster contained players from 27 colleges and averaged 20.4 years of age, the youngest among known military elevens. One-third were undergoing boot camp, the rest were recent graduates. Officers and professionals could not compete. Six WAVE cheerleaders and the Center band excited home crowds of 25,000.



Future National Football League Hall of Fame coach Lieutenant (junior grade) Paul E. Brown (Ohio State, Miami (Oh.), coach Ohio State) assumed coaching duties in 1944, relieving Hinkle, who departed for Southwest Pacific duty. Brown divided his 38-man squad, representing 20 colleges, into three working combinations. Six had only high school experience. Because the Center played predominantly colleges, the commanding officer banned ex-pros. Three rookie backs, part of the Center's youngest-ever backfield, shined in the shutout of Northwestern.

The unexpected Japanese surrender triggered immediate demobilization of key players.

Lieutenant (junior grade) Paul E. Brown, USNR, athletic officer and head coach at Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center, 1944-45 (15-6-2). Brown, former Ohio State coach, became a National Football League legend with the Cleveland Browns and resides in the NFL Hall of Fame (provided by John Gunn).

Brown had only two practice weeks prior to the 1945 opener against Michigan, a "man-sized task." Michigan was coached by Fritz Crisler, who invented the two-platoon system that season. Future NFL Hall of Fame member FB Marion Motley (6'0"/210, South Carolina State, Nevada), one of the few visible blacks playing military football, sparkled. Fullback Jim Mello (Notre Dame) led scorers with 67 points. Starless and with three losses, the Blue-jacket high schoolers and former reserves stunned football (the AP sports surprise of the year) by thrashing Notre Dame a week before Pearl Harbor Day. By then recruits being trained decreased from 60,000 to 10,000. With such obvious signs, the glory days of military football faded quickly.

1942 GREAT LAKES NTS (8-3-1) 1943 GREAT LAKES NTC (10-2-0)

Michigan	0-9	Fort Riley	20-19
Iowa	25-0	Purdue	13-23
Pittsburgh	7-6	Iowa	21-7
Wisconsin	7-13	Pittsburgh	40-0
Michigan St	0-14	Ohio St	13-6
Missouri	17-0	Northwestern	0-13*
Purdue	42-0	Marquette	41-7
Camp Grant	33-0	Western Michigan	32-6
Marquette	24-0	Camp Grant	12-0
Illinois	6-0	Indiana	21-7
Northwestern	48-0	Marquette	25-6
Notre Dame	13-13	Notre Dame	19-14

*at Evanston, Ill.; 36,000

1944 GREAT LAKES NTC (9-2-1) 1945 GREAT LAKES NTC (6-4-1)

Fort Sheridan	62-0	Michigan	2-27
Purdue	27-18	Wisconsin	0-0
Illinois	26-26	Purdue	6-20
Northwestern	25-0	Fort Benning	12-21
Western Michigan	38-0	Marquette	37-27
Ohio St	6-26*	Western Michigan	39-0
Wisconsin	40-12	Illinois	12-6
Marquette	45-7	Michigan St	27-7
3rd AF	12-10	Fort Warren	47-14
Marquette	32-0	Notre Dame	39-7
Fort Warren	28-7	College All-Stars	0-35
Notre Dame	7-29		

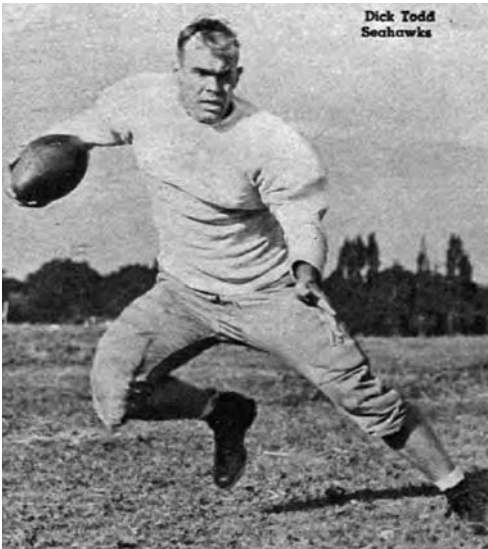
*at Columbus; 73,477

Iowa Pre-Flight (University of Iowa, Iowa City) Seahawks

The Seahawks, originally known as Iowa Navy, in 1942 played all but one game against major Midwest colleges. Coach Lieutenant Colonel Bernie Bierman, USMC, who had led Minnesota to five Big Ten championships, was called to active duty in 1941 to help organize naval aviation physical training. Almost all of his 45 players were from Big Ten schools, such as QB Forest Evashevski (Michigan), a future University of Iowa coach. Starting strong, the team collapsed indifferently and dropped its last three games. Losing cadets and stressful regular duties got the blame. All wartime home games were in Iowa Stadium.

The Seahawks started with great personnel, including end Mal Kutner (All-America Texas), Jim Langhurst (Ohio State), and Dick Fisher, a half dozen former Minnesota stars, and other nationally known players. Notre Dame stopped the Seahawks' four-game streak, from which they never fully recovered after losing many early-season personnel.

The 1943 club, coached by Lieutenant Don Faurot (coach Missouri), returned only one player, but still the Seahawks gained national prominence



and finished No. 4 in the AP poll and No. 1 among service teams. Its 324.4 yards rushing per game set a new intercollegiate record, and its 3,244 total yards surpassed national champion Notre Dame by 107. Halfback Richard Todd (Texas A&M, Redskins) received the Robert L. Smith Memorial Trophy as the outstanding service player and gained first-team All-Service honors. Other pros included center Vince Banonis (All-America Detroit University, Cardinals) and Perry Schwartz (California, Brooklyn Dodgers).

Fifty-seven of the more than

Iowa Pre-Flight halfback Richard "Dick" Todd (Texas A&M, Washington Redskins) received the Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club's 1943 trophy as the best military player and all-service first team honors in leading the Seahawks to a 9-1-0 record against primarily Midwestern college elevens (*Illustrated Football Annual 1944*).

100 prospects who reported for summer drills in 1944 made the squad. Under coach Jack Meagher (coach Auburn), this team "arguably could have been the strongest of the three." Unlike most military elevens, Iowa Pre-Flight had an unusual continuity in material.¹⁰ Leading football analyst Dr. L. H. Baker ranked it third overall and second among service teams. The Seahawks placed their center on the AP All-Service first teams all three years: George Svendsen (All-America Minnesota, Green Bay Packers) in 1942, Vince Banonis in 1943, and George Strohmeyer (Texas A&M) in 1944.

1942 IOWA PF (6-4-0)		1943 IOWA PF (9-1-0)	
Kansas	61-0	Illinois	32-18
Northwestern	20-12	Ohio St	28-13*
Minnesota	7-6	Iowa St	33-13
Michigan	26-14	Iowa	25-0
Notre Dame	0-28	Missouri	21-6
Indiana	26-6	Fort Riley	19-2
Fort Knox	13-7	Marquette	46-19
Nebraska	0-46	Camp Grant	28-13
Ohio St	12-41	Notre Dame	13-14
Missouri	0-7	Minnesota	32-0
		*23,496	



Bunker Hill (Ind.) Naval Training Station Blockbuster defenders surround Iowa Pre-Flight back Art Guepe (Marquette), one of the few bright spots in its 33-7 loss in 1944 to the Seahawks (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1945*).

1944 IOWA PF (10-1-0, 313-96)	
Michigan	7-12
Minnesota	19-13
Olathe Navy	45-12
2nd AF	12-0
Purdue	13-6
Fort Warren	30-0
Marquette	26-0
Tulsa	47-27
Bunker Hill Navy	33-7
Missouri	51-7
Iowa	30-6

Jacksonville (Fla.) Naval Air Station/Naval Air Technical Training Center Flyers/Air Raiders

The Jacksonville (Fla.) Naval Air Station facility opened in February 1941 and trained skilled machinists mates, metalsmiths, ordnancemen and radiomen. The NAATC was a separate command subordinate to the NAS commandant. The team, originally known as Jacksonville Navy, played numerous colleges in the first three seasons and ranked sixth among service teams in 1942 under coach Lieutenant Hobbs Adams (coach Kansas State).

Triple-threat back George McAfee (6'0"/180, All-America Duke, Chicago Bears), the kingpin and inspirational leader, threw a crucial touchdown pass in defeating his alma mater.

The 1943 linemen averaged 201 pounds, the backs 184, husky for that era. By the season's finale, the Raiders, coached by Marine Captain Fred F. Frink (Illinois), found themselves. "No locker room orations or touches of sentiment" for the "swan song" were necessary to fire up the Center for their game against Camp



Back Bobby Tom "Bob" Jenkins (Alabama), a "human dynamo," "190 lbs. of fluid force," with "marlinspike legs" and "virtually unstoppable," spearheaded Navy's (6-3-0) 1944 squad (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

Lejeune. "All the dope portends a super-duper contest," it was said.¹¹ But Jacksonville lost. Future College Hall of Famer Lieutenant Jim Tatum (North Carolina) coached the 1945 eleven.

1942 JACKSONVILLE NAS (9-3-0)

Florida	20-7
Georgia	0-14
Miami	14-0
Spence Field	33-0
Daniel Field	55-0
Tampa	26-0
Georgia PF	6-20
Rollins	6-13
Clemson	24-6
Pensacola NAS	16-10
Duke	13-0
Spence Field	19-6

1943 JACKSONVILLE NAS (3-4-0)

Fort Benning	13-7
Miami	0-6
North Carolina	0-23
Camp Lejeune	7-20
Miami	20-0
Daniel Field	44-0
Camp Lejeune	6-13

1944 JACKSONVILLE

NATTC (4-3-0)

Florida	20-27
Miami NTC	39-13
North Carolina PF	13-14
Fort Benning 3rd Inf	35-13
Fort Benning 4th Inf	26-19
Cherry Point MCAS	33-0
Fort Pierce	0-21

1945 JACKSONVILLE

NATTC (9-2-1)

Miami NTC	35-6
Cherry Point MCAS	26-0
Corpus Christi NAS	35-7
Fort Pierce	13-6
Miami NTC	61-0
Fort Pierce	35-7
Fort Benning	33-7
Corpus Christi NAS	13-14
Pensacola NAS	48-0
Fort Benning	7-14
Pensacola NAS	48-0
Camp Johnson	0-0

Navy — a.k.a. the Naval Academy or Annapolis (Annapolis, Md.) Midshipmen

Captain Johnny Whelchel, the Naval Academy's coach in 1942-43, had a way with words. He described football as "a war without guns, and who in hell wants to lose a war?" and his star, "will-'o-the-wisp" 150-pound HB Hal

Hamberg, as a "PT boat amid a squadron of dreadnaughts." Late in the war Whelchel commanded the heavy cruiser USS *San Francisco* (CA-38) in the Pacific.

The 1944 eleven, mentored by Commander Oscar Hagberg, who had just returned from Pacific submarine command, won the Eastern championship Lambert Trophy. Several scribes mailed their votes before the Army-Navy game kickoff "with the wisdom-streaked comment" that their choice would be the winner.¹² The three-year eligibility expired for four of Hagberg's best players, including Hamberg and All-America center Jack Martin, but all could practice. Superb talent abounded nonetheless. Colorful journalism followed back Bobby Tom "Bob" Jenkins (Alabama), a "human dynamo," "190 lbs. of fluid force," "virtually unstoppable" with "marlinspike legs," and "the piston-legged personification of power." Receiver Bill Barron was called a "speedy stepper," their "breakaway boy [who] buzzes hither and yon."¹³

Academy officials in 1944 reversed the previous eligibility rule because of the NCAA's "Four Year' wartime rule" and allowed four players another season. The Middies disappointed fans and never reached their full potential. They lost to Georgia Tech, "a team which they would have beaten nine times out of ten," and then came the Army debacle when they were pregame favorites. A leading football magazine wrote that the 1943 players believed in the preseason "drumbeating that ushered them into the hall of champions" before playing a down.¹⁴ Another periodical called them "the riddle of 1944."¹⁵

Again in 1945 Navy possessed a galaxy of talent equal to or perhaps greater than Army's, to the delight of sportswriters. They fielded the best backs in the country. To accommodate the talent, Hagberg switched to the T formation. His problem became who to play and for how long. "The joint is jumpin'," as in the popular swing song, "with swivel-hipped halfbacks with buggywhip arms." Jenkins, now the "Talladega Thunderbolt," shredded "rivals asunder with berserk plunges." Returnee Clyde "Smackover" Scott was raring to go at his new wingback position. Other big names galore: Bobby Hoenschemeyer (Indiana), Bob Kelly (Notre Dame), Tony Minisi (Pennsylvania), Dub Jones (Tulane), and Dick Duden.¹⁶ But Navy never jelled and tailed off at season's end with a controversial and sluggish 6-6 tie with Notre Dame and a 32-13 shellacking by the Cadets.

Opposite: Superback Len Eshmont (Fordham, New York Giants) played and starred on more teams during World War II than any known player: North Carolina Pre-Flight (1942), Del Monte (Calif.) Pre-Flight (1943), Norman (Okla.) Naval Air Station (1944), and St. Mary's (Calif.) Pre-Flight (1945) (provided by John Gunn).

1942 NAVY (5-4-0)		1943 NAVY (8-1-0)	
William & Mary	0-3	North Carolina PF	31-0
Virginia	35-0	Cornell	46-7
Princeton	0-10	Duke	14-13
Yale	13-6	Penn State	14-6
Georgia Tech	0-21	Georgia Tech	28-14
Notre Dame	0-9	Notre Dame	6-33
Pennsylvania	7-0	Pennsylvania	24-7
Columbia	13-9	Columbia	61-0
Army	14-0	Army	13-0
1944 NAVY (6-3-0)		1945 NAVY (7-1-1)	
North Carolina PF	14-21	Villanova	49-0
Penn State	55-14	Duke	21-0
Duke	7-0	Penn St	28-0
Georgia Tech	15-17	Georgia Tech	20-6
Pennsylvania	26-0	Pennsylvania	14-7
Notre Dame	32-13	Michigan	33-7
Cornell	48-0	Wisconsin	36-7
Purdue	32-0	Notre Dame	6-6
Army	7-23	Army	13-32

Norman (Okla.) Naval Air Station Zoomers

The 1944 team, coached by Lieutenant Commander John Gregg, ranked fifth among service elevens. The 1945 season was canceled. Key players: B Emil Sitko (Notre Dame, Great Lakes 1943, St. Mary's Pre-Flight 1945) in 1944; and HB Leonard "Len" Eshmont (Fordham, New York Giants). The Zoomers downed Big Six champion Oklahoma and handed Sugar-Bowl bound Oklahoma A&M its only loss. Eshmont played for more military teams than any known player: North Carolina Pre-Flight in 1942, Del Monte Pre-Flight in 1943, Norman Naval Air Station in 1944, and St. Mary's Pre-Flight in 1945.



1943 NORMAN (4-3-0)		1944 NORMAN (6-0-0)	
Oklahoma	6-22	Oklahoma	28-14
49th Army	40-0	Arkansas	27-7
Fort Riley	0-33	Amarillo Field	19-13
Oklahoma A&M	20-0	2nd AF	13-6
Oklahoma JV	19-0	Oklahoma A&M	15-0
Lubbock AAB	0-13	Lubbock AAB	42-0
Will Rogers AAB	33-6		

North Carolina Pre-Flight (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) Cloudbusters

In 11 games in 1942 the Cloudbusters, coached by Lieutenant Commander James H. "Sleepy Jim" Crowley (one of the Notre Dame Four Horsemen, coach Fordham), allowed only 142.8 yards per game and 842 rushing yards, fifth and eighth nationally. Halfback Len Eshmont carried the load. Lieutenant Frank Kimbrough (coach Baylor) succeeded Crowley in 1943, and Lieutenant Commander Glenn Killinger (Penn State) replaced him the next season, assisted by Lieutenant Commander Bear Bryant.

The 1944 roster featured star quarterback Otto Graham (6'0"/190, All-America Northwestern). After beginning with three wins, including successively over Navy, 21-14, and Duke, 13-6, they faded. Stan Koslowski's (Holy Cross) runs split the Midshipmen defense and led the momentous upset. Graham keyed the game winner, lateraling to HB Frank Aschenbrenner (5'10"/180, Marquette) after a 50-yard scamper to complete the 74-yard touchdown.

Both the varsity and Pre-Flight elevens were known as "Carolina," sometimes causing confusion. The varsity played only college teams except two against the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station.

1942 NORTH CAROLINA PF (8-2-1)		1943 NORTH CAROLINA PF (2-4-1)	
Catawba	13-2	Navy	0-31
Harvard	13-0	Duke	0-41
Georgia PF	14-14	Camp Davis	23-18
N.C. State	19-7	Georgia PF	7-20
Boston College	6-7	Wake Forest	12-20
Temple	34-0	Camp Lejeune	14-14
Syracuse	9-0	N.C. State	21-7
Georgetown	23-7		
Manhattan	17-0		
William & Mary	14-0		
Fordham	0-6		

SO SORRY PLEASE? NUTS! TAKE THAT!

THE RIFLE RANGE OFFERS VERY FINE TRAINING

SEMAPHORE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CADET'S TRAINING

GIVE 'EM L

CADETS LEARN TO TAKE IT TOO

WHAM

FOOTBALL ALWAYS TAKES A FORMIDABLE SPOT IN ANY KIND OF A PHYSICAL TRAINING PROGRAM

FIRST AID

TRAMPOLINE PRACTICE MAKES THE CADET AIR-MINDED

A PRE-FLIGHT CADET'S DREAM

BOOM

LET'S SEE—RN TRAIN TO-DAY!

LET'S WANT LIKE THIS IN COLLEGE!

GET READY!

DEAR A HARD PATES!

WHEN DO WE EAT?

FAMOUS COACHES AND ATHLETES RECEIVED THEIR INDOCTRINATION TRAINING HERE AT CHAPEL HILL

CADETS MUST LEARN TO SWIM WITH THEIR CLOTHES ON, AND CARRY A RIFLE AT THE SAME TIME

LABOR ENGINEERING IS VERY POPULAR

A VERY FINE COLORED BAND TOO!

AEROLGY

ARRIVAL

2ND WEEK

3RD WEEK

4TH WEEK

5TH WEEK

DEPARTURE—OFF FOR PRIMARY TRAINING

COMMANDER JOHN P. GRAFF, USN (RETIRED)
COMMANDING OFFICER

U.S. NAVY
PRE-FLIGHT SCHOOL
CHAPEL HILL, N.C.

LIEUT. COMDR. JAMES P. RAUGH, USNR
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

LIEUT. COMDR. BURTON INGWERSON, USNR
DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

North Carolina Pre-Flight at Chapel Hill, one of five naval aviator officer candidate wartime schools. Candidates took preliminary training there to qualify for advancement to flight training at Pensacola, Fla. (game program, Camp Lejeune vs. North Carolina Pre-Flight, November 13, 1943).

1944 NORTH CAROLINA PF (6-2-1)

Cherry Point MCAS	27-14
Navy	21-14
Duke	13-6
Virginia	13-13
Georgia PF	3-0
Jacksonville NAS	14-13
Bainbridge NTS	20-49*
Georgia PF	33-18
Camp Peary	7-19

*at Chapel Hill; 22,000

St. Mary's Pre-Flight (St. Mary's College, Moraga, Calif.) Air Devils

The Air Devils played primarily college opponents, more than the other pre-flight teams. Their 1942 squad, mentored by Lieutenant Commander Tex Oliver (coach Oregon), all had college experience, mostly from western schools. The team leader, QB Ensign Frankie Albert (5'10"/170, All-America Stanford), "scintillated every time Pre-Flight shifted to the T formation." As with all pre-flight teams throughout the war, frequent personnel movements, causing availability uncertainties, deterred St. Mary's, which bogged down in mid-season, keeping the team from achieving its potential after strong early-season expectations.¹⁷

Former Minnesota All-America and Heisman Trophy recipient HB Bruce Smith transferred from Great Lakes for 1943 and joined E Ed Manske (All-America Northwestern, Chicago Bears), G Joe Rentz (Notre Dame), and B Vic Bottari, who led California over Alabama in the 1938 Rose Bowl.

Lieutenant Jules Sikes (Texas A&M, coach Georgia) coached the 1944 season, assisted by Lieutenant George Svendsen, a carrier pilot who participated in strikes on Tarawa, Truk, Wake, Makin, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, the Palau, and Yap.

Lieutenant Commander George "Potsy" Clark (Illinois, coach Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Butler, Brooklyn Dodgers, Detroit Lions) coached in 1945. He enjoyed a star backfield of Jim McDonald, Parker Hall, Emil Sitko (his third navy team), and Len Eshmont (his fourth). Clark's otherwise inexperienced team developed a strong line but seriously lacked reserves. Albert returned from carrier duty to help for a few games. For the final game, the pros did not play, including linemen Bob Titchenal (San Jose State, Redskins), John Kuzman (Fordham, Chicago Cardinals), Ray Riddick (Fordham, Packers), and John Woudenberg (Denver, Pittsburgh Steelers).

1942 ST. MARY'S PF (6-3-1)		1943 ST. MARY'S PF (4-4-1)	
College of Pacific	38-9	Alameda CG	13-13
Oregon	10-9	College of Pacific	7-13
UCLA	18-7	USC	0-13
Alameda CG	40-0	California	39-0
Santa Ana AB	59-0	4th AF	6-7
Washington	0-0	San Francisco U	41-0
Santa Clara	13-6	Del Monte PF	14-37
Stanford	13-28	Modesto JC	19-6
California	6-12	Pleasanton Navy	48-0
USC	13-21		
1944 ST. MARY'S PF (4-4-0)		1945 ST. MARY'S PF (2-4-1)	
College of Pacific	6-14	College of Pacific	69-0
Fleet City	0-12	USC	14-26
USC	0-6	4th AF	7-20
UCLA	21-12	UCLA	13-6
4th AF	0-7	Fleet City	13-13
Alameda CG	32-13	El Toro MCAS	0-7
Fleet City	3-0	California	0-6
California	33-6		



Besides allowing participation on college varsity and V-5 preflight squads, as part of its demanding physical conditioning regimen the navy encouraged other V-5 and V-12 officer candidates to play intramural football. The army allowed only intramural participation for its college officer candidates. Here intramural players at St. Mary's (Calif.) Pre-Flight take the field (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1943*).

Sampson (N.Y.) Naval Training Station Sailors/ Bluejackets

Primarily a recruit training facility located on the eastern shores of Seneca Lake, Sampson also provided advanced training. Named for a Spanish-American War hero, it cost \$50 million to build in 1942, covered 2,500 acres, and closed in 1946. The sailors played four NFL teams and three semi-pro squads.

The 1943 team, coached by legendary Jim Crowley, numbered 60 players. Only 11 players in 1944 had college experience, others only high school or sandlot. The Cornell game program noted: "The burley [sic], big-named professional and collegiate veterans who studded the starry 1943 lineup have scattered to the four winds and the seven seas." Sampson's "sporting sons ... are not pampered and shielded. They are first, last and always navy men, available on a moment's notice for action with our far-flung fleets; and that's why this year's football team is comprised of fresh, young, new faces."¹⁸

1943 SAMPSON NTS (8-3-0)		1944 SAMPSON NTS (2-7-0)	
Phila. Yel. Jackets	47-7	Syracuse	6-13
Villanova	17-7	Boston Yanks	0-14
Rome AAB	47-0	Green Bay Packers	14-25
Rensselaer Polytechnic	7-0	New York Giants	0-13
Rome AAB	48-7	Cleveland Rams	12-26
York Vikings	55-0	Villanova	6-7
Army	7-16	Rochester Shipbldg Oldenbacks	60-0
Muhlenberg	28-7	Cornell	6-7
New York Giants	0-19	Scranton	39-0
Unknown	42-19		

San Diego (Calif.) Navy, a.k.a. U.S. Naval Training Center Bluejackets

San Diego Navy gained national recognition in 1943 as the first team to defeat Southern California's Rose Bowl team after the Trojans blanked their first six opponents. The score was 10-7. Coached by John J. "Bo" Molenda (Michigan, Giants, Packers, New York Yankees), the Bluejackets stymied every club except for the Fourth Air Force who defeated them in two close games. In 1944 Coach Lieutenant Skip Stahley's (Delaware, coach Brown) team played

in three of the season's outstanding battles, all one-touchdown losses. They ranked thirteenth among Williamson's 1944 service teams.

1942 SAN DIEGO NTC (6-1-0)	1943 SAN DIEGO NTC (7-2-0)
4th AF 9-6	Redlands 20-0
Loyola Fr-JV 20-0	Fort Ord 59-0
Stanford Fr 20-13	Pomona Ord Base 48-2
California Fr 20-0	4th AF 0-7
San Diego St Fr-JV 21-13	Compton College 35-0
College of Pacific 14-0	UCLA 28-0
4th AF 0-26	USC 10-7
	San Pedro All-Stars 53-7
	4th AF 2-13
1944 SAN DIEGO NTC (4-3-1)	1945 SAN DIEGO NTC (4-2-0)
1005th Army Eng 65-0	UCLA 14-20
Compton College 85-0	USC 33-6
UCLA 14-12	Compton College 61-0
El Toro MCAS 0-6	El Toro MCAS 0-20
Fort MacArthur 69-0	Santa Barbara Marines 34-7
Amphib Trng Base 0-0	San Diego Bombers 19-0
USC 21-28	
4th AF 0-7	

CHAPTER 7

“Every General Liked to Have His Own Base Football Team”: Ramblers, Fighting AA’s, Flyers, and Cadets

“TOUCHDOWN—With the U.S. 7th Army in Sicily, July 22 (delayed) (AP)—An American Force commander yesterday sent this message to Lt. Gen. Patton: ‘Can we make a touchdown on our own initiative. Rush reply.’ Thirty minutes later the answer came back. ‘You have the ball. Call a touchdown play.’ With this go ahead the U.S. armored column swung north to Palermo, capital of Sicily.”¹

A general’s base team could be wherever he determined he needed one, whether stateside or overseas in a combat zone.

In this case it was nine days after the Allies invaded Sicily to commence the long, arduous Italian Campaign, and the instigator was Seventh Army Commander and West Point graduate Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. On July 19, 1943, to break out of sluggish beachhead alignments, Patton assembled a provisional corps of his 2nd Armored and 3rd Infantry Divisions under Major General Geoffrey Keyes and boldly dispatched them northwestward posthaste toward the capital of Palermo.

Acting as the coach, Keyes and his mobile machine proceeded with lightning speed and advanced 100 miles in four days through rugged hills, heat, and dust. Greeted mostly by surrendering Italian soldiers, his men took the city on July 22. This was Patton’s “TOUCHDOWN,” and a turning point in the U.S. Army’s ability and reputation as a fighting force in Europe.

Entering World War II, football and the U.S. Army had enjoyed a long, competitive tradition in units, camps, and at the Military Academy. Although

not allowing those officer candidate students ordered to college campuses to participate on varsity teams, unlike the navy and Marine Corps, army officials still encouraged football as a combat conditioner. Prewar teams vied for championships by corps geographic areas and branches (e.g., infantry, cavalry). Football defensive formations, from a four- to eight-man line, were spaced to protect opposition thrusts similar to how the infantry organized strong points along the main line of resistance to an enemy's likely approach path. The secondary deployed as a deep mobile reserve behind the line. Tactics of both the football offense and infantry were designed to attack.²

Thus the scene was set for masses of soldiers in a hundred or more army camps and air force bases to play collegiate and inter-military schedules, but soldiers could not play for college varsities. But, most important, "every general liked to have his own base football team of such strength that he could outdo other generals," a postwar recap stated.³ Except for a handful of air force elevens, the luster and contribution of active-duty army wartime football paled in contrast to that of the sister services. Year in, year out, an army camp might produce a stellar record against varying degrees of quality opposition. Then just as quickly its fortunes could reverse, curtailing a season or disestablishing the team.

Three army air force programs vaulted toward the top of military football, and any could easily qualify for the war's most exciting and productive service eleven. They included the sensational Randolph Field Ramblers and the Second and Fourth Air Force. Each scheduled a collegiate-military mix. In 1945 air force teams played only service counterparts, and seven major commands formed a morale-building 84-game league (with a "man-killer" schedule) to entertain the troops.⁴ Wounded veterans nearby received transportation to games. Profits went to army charities. The league became the first football organization to travel exclusively by air and span the continent. Personnel with more than two years of air force participation were ineligible. The results:

Third Air Force (Drew Field, Fla.)	4-1-1
Army Air Forces Training Command (Randolph Field, Tex.)	4-1-1
Fourth Air Force (March Field, Calif.)	3-2-1
First Air Force (Mitchell Field, N. Y.)	2-2-3
Air Transport Command (Berry Field, Tenn.)	2-3-2
Personnel Distribution Command (Louisville, Ky.)	2-4-0
Second Air Force (Colorado Springs, Colo.)	1-5-0

Perhaps the best army team was the collection of undergraduate athletes at the Military Academy who dominated college football for three successive seasons beginning in 1944. Playing almost entirely a collegiate schedule and

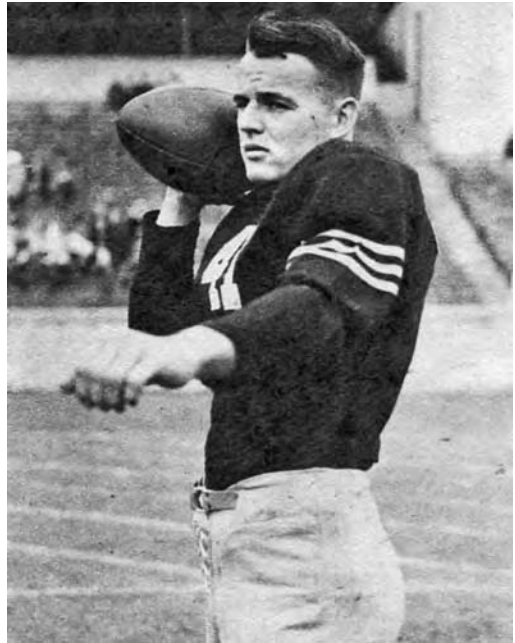
only one fellow army eleven, the Cadets captured sports page headlines with a galaxy of big-name All-Americans and ferocious victories.

West Point led the way among army teams.

Army — a.k.a. the Military Academy or West Point (West Point, N. Y.) Cadets

Undefeated, "Army rolled through the 1944 season like Patton through France,"⁵ slaughtering defending champion Notre Dame, whipping No. 2 Navy in the finale, and winning by an average score of 56–4. The team garnered the Williams Trophy (national championship) and Lambert Trophy (best eastern eleven). "Never before had a college football team authored such astonishing credentials," dominance unduplicated since and the prelude to coach Colonel Earl "Red" Blaik's T-formation dynasty. Some college football historians contend it was the finest ever.⁶

The "Touchdown Twins," FB Felix "Doc" Blanchard and HB Glenn Davis, are perhaps history's most famous college backfield teammates. They finished second and third for the Heisman Trophy before each won it, in 1945 and 1946 respectively. Davis (the "California Comet" with "dazzling speed"), received the 1944 Maxwell Trophy, Walter Camp Trophy (outstanding halfback), and Helms Foundation Award (outstanding college player of the year), and finished runner-up behind Heisman Trophy recipient Les Horvath (Ohio State).



Army's backfield of halfback Glenn Davis, shown here, and fullback Felix "Doc" Blanchard, "the Touchdown Twins," ignited the Cadets' powerful 1944-45 runs through military and college football. Behind these brilliant backs, perhaps college football's most illustrious combo ever, Army "rolled through the 1944 season like Patton through France," compiling a 9–0–0 record and outscoring opponents 504 to 35 (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1946*).

The army allowed Blaik to recruit active-duty personnel with football experience and offer them three additional years of eligibility. The service needed officers. This arrangement obligated players to complete the four-year education in those three years. Blaik had so much talent that Blanchard — "Mr. Inside" — and Davis — "Mr. Outside" — did not start as plebes (freshmen).

Blanchard (6'0"/208) began football at North Carolina in 1942 before being drafted in 1943 and appointed to West Point in 1944. Davis (5'9"/170) arrived as a true freshman and played on the 1943 team. The pair blended easily into Army's T-formation arsenal of two separate 1944 squads which averaged 20 years of age: the primarily plebe "Lombardo Team," quarterbacked by Tom Lombardo with Blanchard and Davis, and the "Kenna Team," quarterbacked by senior Doug Kenna, which started every game. Heavy academics and military training limited practices to about 75 minutes daily.

Members earning All-America honors included: Blanchard, Davis, guards Joe Stanowicz and Jack Green, ends Barney Poole (6'3"/215) and Ed Rafalko, tackle DeWitt "Tex" Coulter (6'4"/220), center Bob St. Onge, and backs Kenna and Max Minor.



Fullback Felix "Doc" Blanchard, "Mr. Inside" to halfback Glenn Davis as "Mr. Outside," won the 1945 Heisman Trophy, Maxwell Award, and Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club award, as Army went 9-0-0 again and ranked No. 1 in the Associated Press poll for the second straight season (*Street & Smith's Football Pictorial Yearbook 1946*).

Dick Walterhouse kicked 47 straight extra points. Blanchard kicked off 45 times.

"Blaik's blitzboys" returned eight regulars in 1945 including "those twin atomizers" who scored 37 times (222 of the team's 412 points). En route to taking the Sullivan Award as the year's outstanding athlete, Blanchard rushed for 19 touchdowns on 718 yards. Blanchard, a sportswriter observed, "blasts up the middle and when the opposition is massed and maimed ... Davis ... takes to the ends like poetry in motion and you-know-what on wheels." Seldom did either play more than half a game. Blanchard also raked in the Heisman, Maxwell, and Touchdown Club (outstanding college player) awards.

Besides Poole and Coulter, the Cadets featured QB Arnold Tucker, HB Tom McWilliams, and linemen E Hank Foldberg, C Herschel "Ug" Fuson, guards Joe Steffy, Jack "Johnny" Green, and Art Gerometta, and T Al Nemetz, part of "Army's seven Sherman tanks." Blaik later said this was his greatest team.⁷

The 1944-45 Army elevens raised to new heights the cliché equating football and combat. "Mighty armies blend power, speed and a healthy dose of opportunism in battering their opponent in a willful process across the battlefield. What teams better fit that description than the West Point gang of late wartime?" asked *The Sporting News* book naming college's all-time best. Army earned consecutive national titles and a combined 18-0-0 record, played no close games, outscored opponents, 916-81, and fielded one of the greatest legendary backfields in college history.⁸

Some observers rated them superior to any service or professional team. "Once asked to select the best game he saw these teams play, Blaik responded, 'That's easy. It was a Wednesday afternoon in October when they scrimmaged each other. Each scored two touchdowns, but the intensity and execution were the best I have ever seen on any gridiron, any place.'"⁹

1942 ARMY (6-3-0)		1943 ARMY (7-2-1)	
Lafayette	14-0	Villanova	27-0
Cornell	28-8	Colgate	42-0
Columbia	34-6	Temple	51-0
Harvard	14-0	Columbia	52-0
Pennsylvania	0-19	Yale	39-7
Notre Dame	0-13	Pennsylvania	13-13
Virginia Poly (VPI)	19-7	Notre Dame	0-26
Princeton	40-7	Sampson NTS	16-7
Navy	0-14	Brown	59-0
		Navy	0-13

1944 ARMY (9-0-0, 504-35)	1945 ARMY (9-0-0, 412-46)
North Carolina 46-0	Pers Dist Comd 32-0
Brown 59-7	Wake Forest 54-0
Pittsburgh 69-7	Michigan 28-7
CG Academy 76-0	Torpedo Boat Base 55-13
Duke 27-7	Duke 48-13
Villanova 83-0	Villanova 54-0
Notre Dame 59-0*	Notre Dame 48-0†
Pennsylvania 62-7	Pennsylvania 61-0
Navy 23-7	Navy 32-13‡
Avg. Score: 56.0-3.9	Avg. Score: 45.8-5.1
*at Yankee Stadium; 74,430	†at Yankee Stadium; 75,000
	‡at Philadelphia; 102,000

Camp Davis (Holly Ridge, N.C.) Fighting AA's/ Blue Brigade

Sports fans in Wilmington, my hometown, followed the Camp Davis eleven which played five games there in 1942. Located up U.S. 17 some 35 miles, the anti-aircraft artillery training base provided jobs and a huge economic boost to a Southeastern North Carolina escaping the Depression when the army built the post in 1941. Many officers lived in Wilmington, and every weekend the city's restaurants, theaters, bars, USO's, warehouses, and churches teemed with khaki uniforms on passes.

Only two officers dotted coach Captain Henry A. Johnson's (Michigan State) 35-man roster in 1942, and one, Captain Edwin Holloway, a back, also coached. In what would be a familiar ring throughout wartime army football, "The squad [members] have volunteered eagerly to play the game, knowing that they will receive no extra privileges."¹⁰

The 1943 45-man roster of four officers and eight returning veterans averaged 189 pounds (line 196, backs 178), 5'10.7" in height, and 22.5 years old. The biggest players were tackles Thornton (6'0"/250) and Dan Solomon (6'1"/225). Acting captain, T John Mellus (6'0"/210, All-America Villanova, New York Giants), directed the defense. "High flying" high schooler G Ralph Primavera (5'9"/190) sought out "fast and furious" action. "He's the original holler guy and when you hear that familiar 'Let's knock 'em dead, fellers,' it will be No. 27 egging his AA mates on."¹¹ This squad earned the unofficial Carolinas army championship. Its leading players were Mellus, first team Associated Press All-Service, and FB Norm Standlee (Stanford, Chicago Bears) who scored 61 points and rushed for 571 yards. The talented, well-rounded



Camp Davis (N.C.) backs Lieutenants Norm Standlee (Stanford) and George Breeding (right) led the Fighting AA's to an 8-2-0 record in 1943, earning the squad the unofficial army Carolinas championship (provided by John Gunn).

"Standlee Steamer" reputedly could play, distribute programs, usher, and deliver an orientation lecture at the same time. The army closed the AA base in late 1944 and canceled that season.

1942	CAMP DAVIS (4-3-2)	1943	CAMP DAVIS (8-2-0)
	Citadel		Wake Forest
	0-32		24-20‡
	Appalachian St		Charleston CG
	13-13*		25-0
	Catawba		N.C. State
	14-21*		27-0
	High Point College		North Carolina PF
	20-0*		18-23
	North Carolina Navy B†		Davidson
	2-0		27-0
	Presbyterian		Camp Lejeune
	6-26*		0-14
	Cherry Point MCAS		Fort Monroe
	37-0		31-6
	Daniel Field		Presbyterian
	21-7*		32-0
	North Carolina Navy B†		Daniel Field
	6-6		41-0
			Fort Bragg
			42-0§

*at Legion Stadium, Wilmington, N.C.

†a.k.a. North Carolina PF B squad

‡at Camp Davis; 20,000

§at Camp Davis; 30,000

Camp Grant (Rockford, Ill.) Warriors

The army opened Camp Grant during World War I, closed it, and then reopened it in 1940 as a recruit reception center and medical replacement training center. Playing under coach Lieutenant Glen Rose (Arkansas), the Warriors warrant noting because of their heavy Big Ten and collegiate opposition ("perhaps the most pretentious schedule of all") and 1943 wins over Illinois and Wisconsin.¹²

Athletes received no special treatment. "The soldier gridders arise in early morning with their fellow soldiers and perform their regular duties until mid-afternoon." Then came grueling practices "which usually last[ed] until after the other soldiers [were] through for the day ... the training equivalent of the usual marching, classroom work, etc., for the gridders."¹³ The camp fielded no varsity teams in 1944-45.

1942 CAMP GRANT (6-6-0)	1943 CAMP GRANT (2-6-2)		
Chicago Bears	6-32	Illinois	23-0
Milwaukee Falks	22-0	Michigan	0-26
Wisconsin	0-7	Wisconsin	10-7
Milwaukee Falks	20-0	Marquette	7-7
DeKalb Teachers	43-0	Purdue	0-19
Iowa	16-33	Minnesota	7-13
Bradley Tech	26-7	Fort Riley	13-13
Fort Knox	20-0	Great Lakes NTS	0-12
Great Lakes NTS	0-33	Iowa PF	13-28
St Norbert's	40-0	Fort Riley	6-10
Marquette	0-34		
Illinois	0-20		

Fort Francis E. Warren (Cheyenne, Wyo.) Broncos/ Fighting Quartermasters

Fort Warren trained almost 20,000 Quartermaster Corps personnel in 280 wooden, temporary buildings constructed without insulation and interior walls to house the onrush of troops. The harsh Wyoming winters jolted them. Just waking up often meant shaking snow from one's blanket before heading for the freezing communal showers. The fort also contained a prisoner-of-war camp.

The 1943 coach, Captain Willis M. Smith (All-America Idaho), gave the ball to QB Earl Meneweather (160, Humboldt State, San Francisco Packers),

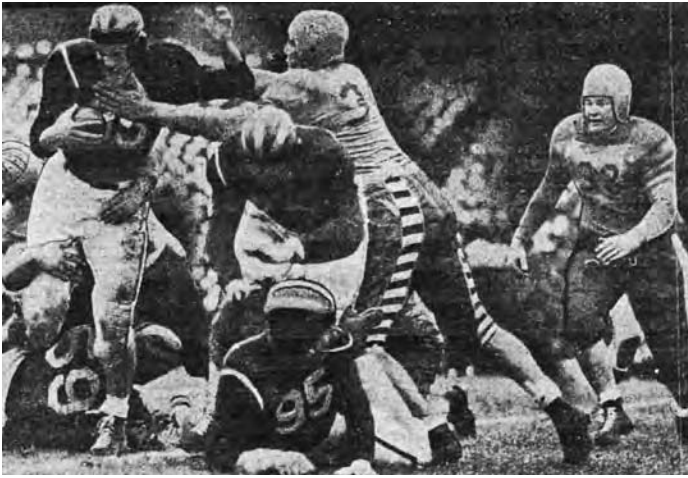
who excited fans and publicists alike. "A rangy, fleet footed Negro boy [with] lightning fast runs," Meneweather reputedly was "a veritable ebony eel in his ability to writhe through the arms of tacklers in open field," and "the shiftiness and change of pace that goes with it makes him Fort Warren's most formidable threat as a broken field runner." He "combines uncanny broken field running with sufficient power to crack the line when the distance is short."¹⁴

Facing tough military and collegiate schedules in 1944-45, Fort Warren gained respect as one of the most steadfast non-flying army elevens.

1943 FORT WARREN (4-3-0)	1944 FORT WARREN (5-4-1)
Lowry Field 0-7	Brooklyn Tigers 21-20
Colorado 0-38	Colorado 7-6
Utah 60-0	Lincoln AAB 5-14
Kearney AB 26-6	Colorado College 33-13
Kearney AB 33-6	Southern Idaho 66-0
Salt Lake AB 10-0	Iowa PF 0-30
Fort Riley 7-14	Lincoln AAB 19-6
	2nd AF 0-20
	Great Lakes NTC 7-28
	San Francisco Clippers 21-21
1945 FORT WARREN (4-6-0)	
Colorado 6-0	
4th AF 0-25	
2nd AF 0-19	
Colorado St 61-6	
Minnesota 0-14	
Hondo AAF 28-26	
Fleet City 9-21	
Farragut Navy 27-0	
Great Lakes NTC 14-47	
El Toro MCAS 7-40	

Fort Riley (Kans.) Replacement Training Center Centaur

After two solid seasons, Fort Riley's program lapsed into futility, the 1945 squad ranking 71st among service elevens. Their two best performances were a 1943 one-point road loss to Great Lakes Naval Training Station before



Fullback Ken Roskie (35) surges for a first down for Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center against Fort Riley (Kans.) in 1943, aided by blocking from Dick Stealy (59) and George Perpich (95). The powerful Bluejackets edged the 6–2–1 Centaurs, 20–19 (*Great Lakes Bulletin*, September 17, 1943).

15,000, and a crushing defeat of Denver when they outrushed the Pioneers, 345 to minus 51 yards. Denver “tried and tried and tried again,” but failed to withstand the “mighty, heavy, massive, immovable, fleet-footed” Centaurs.¹⁵

1942 FORT RILEY (7–3–0)	
Missouri	0–31
Emporia Teachers	39–14
Kansas St	21–7
Creighton	7–34
Missouri “B”	13–6
Wichita	6–0
Washburn	13–0
2nd AF	6–54
Kansas Wesleyan	39–6
Wichita Pros	10–0

1943 FORT RILEY (6–2–1)	
Great Lakes	19–20
Lowry Field	60–20
Norman NAS	39–0
Denver	47–0
Camp Grant	13–13
Iowa PF	2–19
Fort Warren	14–7
Camp Grant	10–6
Kansas	22–7

1944 FORT RILEY (0–3–1)	
Kearney AFB	7–19
Kearney AFB	0–16
Olathe NAS	0–20
Olathe NAS	6–6

1945 FORT RILEY (1–6–0)	
Kearney AFB	0–20
Washburn	0–19
Kansas “B”	0–12
Wichita	13–38
Hutchinson NAS	0–39
Kearney AFB	18–13
St Louis	7–14

Fourth Air Force, a.k.a. 4th AF and March Field (Riverside, Calif.) Flyers

March Field trained many bombardment and fighter groups before they deployed to the Pacific, and at its peak strength trained some 75,000 troops in the Fourth AF's 25 main air bases in five Pacific Coast states. Called "the Buck Rogers Outfit" for its vast new developments in air warfare, the command "built up one of the most intricate aerial defensive systems ever devised," dispensing fighters along the entire coast, ringing targets with antiaircraft weapons, and utilizing thousands of civilian volunteers in aircraft-detecting radar stations, filter centers, and observation posts.¹⁶

Major Paul Schissler (coach Oregon State) magnificently coached this "G.I. Juggernaut" collection in 1943-44. Schissler picked not one first team but two, "and turn[ed] them loose [one at a] time," alternating periods of play. The "A" team ran the ball, the "B" team passed it. They played home

games in the Los Angeles Coliseum. The 1943 team, loaded with "fast, experienced behemoths who don't like to get beat,"¹⁷ recorded five shutouts, including a rout of Rose Bowl-bound Southern California, then the Trojans' worst defeat in history. The star of stars, HB "Indian" Jack Jacobs (All-America Oklahoma), a "pass master, rated one of the three top passers in football," tossed three touchdown passes against the Trojans.¹⁸ The AP ranked the Flyers No. 10



The Fourth Air Force "G.I. Juggernaut" from March Field, Calif., recorded a composite wartime 32-7-3 mark playing home games in the Los Angeles Coliseum. Major Paul Schissler (coach, Oregon State), shown here with back Bob Defruiter (Nebraska), coached the 1943-44 squads. He alternated "A" (run) and "B" (pass) teams and in 1943 routed Rose Bowl-bound Southern California, 35-0 (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

each season, and a premiere sports organization charted them No. 2 nationally behind Notre Dame in 1943.

Professionals did not play on the 1944 team, but Jacobs repeated, joined by All-Americans HB Jimmy Nelson (Alabama) and FB Leo Cantor (UCLA). For the season showdown finale against powerhouse Randolph Field, before 50,000 in the Coliseum, March Field offered no excuses for losing but had limited service from the injured Jacobs and Nelson. For 1945, almost all the 1943-44 Flyers were overseas or assigned outside the Fourth AF area. Coach Lieutenant John Baker (Southern California) replaced the Notre Dame box with the T formation, requiring adjustments by many new players previously out of football on other duties.

1942 FOURTH AF (11-2-0)	1943 FOURTH AF (9-1-0)
Bombers 18-0	Pacific All-Stars 45-13
Redlands U 25-14	Redlands 40-0
Fresno St 0-20	UCLA 47-7
San Diego St 39-6	San Diego NTS 7-0
Los Alamitos Navy 47-0	Washington 7-27
Mather Field 21-3	St Mary's PF 7-6
San Diego Bombers 33-12	Pomona Ord Base 72-0
San Diego NTS 26-0	Southern California 35-0
Santa Ana AB 16-7	San Diego NTS 13-2
Hollywood Bears 19-7	College of Pacific 19-0
2nd AF 13-26	
Pro All-Stars 14-12	
San Diego Bombers 28-14	
1944 FOURTH AF (7-1-2)	1945 FOURTH AF (5-3-1)
Washington Redskins 3-7*	Fort Warren 25-0
San Diego Bombers 56-7	2nd AF 17-14
Fleet City 39-0	Air Transp Comd 21-14
Alameda CG 20-20	St Mary's PF 20-7
El Toro MCAS 21-14	AAFTC 7-19
St Mary's PF 7-0	1st AF 6-6
UCLA 35-13	Pers Dist Comd 7-9
Washington 28-0	Fleet City 10-20
San Diego NTS 7-0	3rd AF 10-7
2nd AF 0-0	
Randolph Field 7-20	

*exhibition

Keesler Field/Air Force Base (Biloxi, Miss.) Commandos/Fliers

First Lieutenant George B. Huffman coached both the 1943 and 1944 Keesler Field teams, both led by B Herman Rohrig (All-America Nebraska, Green Bay Packers), "Hurryin' Herman," a "chunky little man with the buggy-whip passing arm and swift-movement hips and legs." In demolishing Camp Gordon, Rohrig played only six minutes and the Keesler defense held Gordon to one first down, one yard net rushing, and 11 passing.¹⁹

Keesler dominated the Gulf Coast in 1944 while blanking eight of eleven opponents. Gulfport Army Air Field officials offered a war bond to their first player who scored, but Keesler prevailed 39-0 in "the Gulf Coast Classic." Gulfport didn't invade Keesler territory until the final minute. The Commandos' most valuable player was end Robert E. "Bob" Witt (6'0"/200, Mississippi Southern).

1943 KEESLER FIELD (3-1-0)	1944 KEESLER FIELD (8-1-2)
Camp Gordon 56-0	Algiers Navy 40-0
Gulfport Seabees 51-0	SW Louisiana Inst 13-0
Arkansas A&M 7-19	Selman Field 20-20
Houma AB 47-0	Gulfport AAF 20-0
	Fourth Infantry 7-7
	Selman Field 20-0
	3rd Infantry 19-0
	Mississippi Ordnance 67-0
	Gulfport Navy 39-0
	Gulfport AAF 41-0
	Fort Pierce 7-34

1945 KEESLER FIELD (4-6-1)	
AAF TC	0-29
Alabama	0-21
2nd AF	13-2
Missouri	7-41
Fort Benning	7-26
Fort Benning	0-0
Gulfport Field	14-0
3rd AF	0-42
Maxwell Field	14-7
Fort Pierce	7-21
Cherry Point MCAS	41-0

Randolph Field (San Antonio, Tex.) Ramblers, and Army Air Forces Training Command (Fort Worth, Tex.) Skymasters

Opened in 1930 and known as the "West Point of the Air," Randolph Field mowed through a mix of high- and low-caliber opponents en route to a 21–1–1 mark in 1943–44. Fourteen victories came on shutouts, and only three teams scored against them — just 19 points — in 1944. Randolph used officer-players in contrast to the navy's general, but not exclusive, policy of suiting up officers only against military teams. In 1945 the center's name changed to the Army Air Forces Training Command Skymasters in Fort Worth, but the successor perpetuated the football prosperity.

The whiplash arm of QB Glenn Dobbs (6' 3"/200, All-America Tulsa) headlined the 1943 aggregation whose lone defeat was by the one-season Cinderella phenomenon Southwest Louisiana Institute. Dobbs's statistics: 105 passes completed for 1,402 yards; seven touchdowns in one game and 20 overall; 29 pass completions in one game; and total yards 2,157. He played in three bowl games, two with Tulsa and with the Ramblers in the cold, rain-drenched Cotton Bowl when he saved the day with peerless kicking and expert passing of the soaked ball. Army aviation thrived from the attention. Airmen worldwide championed their own team, "the Notre Dame of service football."²⁰

Lieutenant Frank M. Tritico's (Southwest Louisiana Institute) "sheer power," three-deep squad was the obvious army champion in 1944, led by TB William "Bullet Bill" Dudley (5'10"/175, Walter Camp Award Virginia, Pittsburgh Steelers), recipient of the Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club's Robert B. Smith Trophy as the



Quarterback Glenn Dobbs (All-America Tulsa) sparked mighty Randolph Field (Tex.) in 1943 (9–1–1). The Ramblers, who battled Texas to a 7–7 tie in the 1944 Cotton Bowl, lost only to Southwest Louisiana Institute, one of the "Cinderella teams" comprised of V-12 trainees. Airmen everywhere proclaimed Randolph as "the Notre Dame of service football" (*The Football News*, November 27, 1943).

top service player. Dudley, who later saw action in the Pacific, and end Jack Russell (Baylor) made service All-America. Randolph ranked No. 1 in the Williamson military team ratings and was ranked No. 3 overall by the AP. Tritico previously coached only in high school.

Rambler fans boasted that the "star-spangled roster" was the nation's finest and more than capable of holding their own against professionals. Players included backs Frederick "Dippy" Evans (Notre Dame) and Pete Layden (Texas), and E Martin Ruby (Texas A&M). Guard "Burly" Lou Yank came home from 30 bomber missions over Nazi-held Europe, including the first daylight raid and six altogether on Berlin, while earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters.²¹

The Ramblers demolished preseason Southwest Conference favorites Rice, Texas, and Southern Methodist. "It just didn't fit the dignity of those schools to lose by such scores," *Football Prevues 1945* said, causing Randolph unfair and unjust criticism. "Never in the South has such a glittering assortment of big name football talent been corralled on one squad." Authorities wondered if the team was "too good" for its own good.²²

Keeping the players interested with sufficient playing time was Tritico's only problem. Twenty-two scored. The Ramblers wasted little yardage and charted only 111 first downs (touchdowns did not count as first downs then). Touchdown plays averaged almost 30 yards and only 21 developed inside the opponents' 10-yard line. In NCAA rankings, Randolph earned No. 3 in total offense (377 yards per game), No. 2 in total defense (110.8), No. 8 in rushing (257.4), No. 1 in rushing defense (29.6), and No. 9 in passing offense (121.3).

Major Doug Fessenden (Illinois) coached the 44-man, 1945 AAFTC eleven to a military ranking of No. 4. By then, the AAFTC operated a nationwide network of flying and technical schools, including Randolph. Through V-J Day it produced more than 200,000 pilots, 100,000 bombardiers and navigators, and 300,000 aerial gunners.

1942 RANDOLPH FIELD (2-8-0)		1943 RANDOLPH FIELD (9-1-1)	
North Texas Aggies	0-20	Bryan AFB	30-0
Texas Fr	0-66	Rice	6-0
San Marcos St	0-25	Bryan AFB	47-0
Tulsa	0-68	Ward Island	39-9
Corpus Christi Navy	0-52	Blackland Field	7-0
Allen Academy	7-21	Mexico City	34-0
Ellington Field	8-0	Blackland Field	26-7
Southwest Teachers	0-21	Ward Island	53-14
Wichita Aero		North Texas Aggies	20-13
Commandos	0-55	SW Louisiana Inst	0-6
Stinson Field	12-6	Texas	7-7*

*Cotton Bowl at Dallas, Tex.

1944 RANDOLPH FIELD

(12-0-0, 508-19)

Abilene AAF	67-0
Rice	59-0
Texas	42-6
Southern Methodist	41-0
Camp Polk	67-0
3rd AF	19-0
North Texas Aggies	68-0
SW Louisiana Inst	25-0
Southwestern (Tex)	54-0
Amarillo AAF	33-0
4th AF	20-7
2nd AF	13-6*

*Treasury (Bond) Bowl, New York

1945 AAFTC (8-3-1)

Keesler Field	29-0
Fort Benning	27-0
Fort Pierce	19-7
Air Trans Comd	14-0
4th AF	19-7
El Toro MCAS	0-7
1st AF	6-24
3rd AF	7-7
Maxwell Field	45-7
2nd AF	37-7
Pers Dist Comd	14-0
4th AF	0-27†

†Legion Bowl, Memphis, Tenn.

Second Air Force, a.k.a. 2nd AF (Spokane, Wash., and Colorado Springs, Colo.) Superbombers

Wearing uniforms of the official air force colors — red, blue, gold — the 1942 squad topped Far West military squads, ranked No. 1 nationally among army teams, and defeated Hardin-Simmons in the Sun Bowl. "A real titan in army football circles" and "mythical" army champion, the Superbombers suited up Tony Calvelli (Stanford), Hal Van Every (Minnesota), Vic Spadaccini (Minnesota), Don Williams (Texas), Bob Townsend (Northwestern), and Billy Sewell and Bill Holmes (Washington State).²³ The command played no games in 1943.



Georgia All-America and 1942 Heisman Trophy recipient quarterback Fran "Flat-foot Frankie" Sinkwich suffered a career-ending knee injury in 1945 playing for the Second Air Force against the El Toro (Calif.) Flying Marines. Ironically, his high school teammate, end Bob Dove, made the injury-causing tackle on the former Detroit Lion (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1943*).

In 1944 the team renamed itself Superbombers to coincide with its mission to train B-29 Superfortress crews for the Pacific Theater after sending 14,000 heavy bombardment crews to Europe. It also trained fighter pilots. The team, coached by Major William "Red" Reese, "played on fields carved in salt beds, in a desert and in tiny southwestern and western towns. They ... played from coast to coast, Los Angeles to New York" before 175,000 fans.²⁴ The "flash and excursion"²⁵ 35-man roster, composed of players from 40 air bases in 14 states, included "the arm," HB Glenn Dobbs, who played at Randolph Field in 1943, and Washington State All-Americans E Nick Suseoff (6'1"/210) and HB Billy Sewell (6'1"/175). The Superbombers topped the nation in scoring with 513 points (34.2).

Other army commands adopted the Second AF program which culminated in the 1945 air force command league. The Second AF commanding general kept his team around after the war ended, but it produced only a losing record under coach Major Ed Walker (Stanford, coach Mississippi and Princeton) and three straight shutouts to other air force elevens. Having stalwarts such as B Frank Sinkwich (5'11"/200, All-America, Heisman Trophy Georgia, Detroit Lions), C-LB Clyde "Bulldog" Turner (6'2"/250, Hardin-Simmons, Chicago Bears), T Fred Davis (Alabama, Washington Redskins), E Tom Fears (Santa Clara), and B Ray Evans (Kansas) made little difference for this double-wing team. Maybe the thrill was gone, but Sinkwich injured his knee against El Toro and Turner took leave to play for the Bears.

1942 SECOND AF (11-0-1, 359-65)		1944 SECOND AF (10-4-1, 513-76)	
St Martin's	21-0	Peru Navy	38-0
Eastern Washington	19-7	Colorado College	24-0
Idaho	14-0	Idaho Southern	45-0
Fort Douglas	37-0	Whitman	78-0
Portland U	20-13	Colorado	33-6
College of Idaho	75-0	Iowa PF	6-13
Kansas Wesleyan	37-0	New Mexico	89-6
Fort Riley	54-6	North Texas Aggies	68-0
Washington St	6-6	Norman NAS	6-13
Arizona	27-13	Amarillo AAF	46-6
4th AF	25-13	Fort Warren	20-0
Hardin-Simmons	13-7*	Washington	47-6
		4th AF	0-0
		3rd AF	7-14
		Randolph Field	6-13

*Sun Bowl at El Paso, Tex.

1945 SECOND AF (3-7-0)

4th AF	14-17
Fleet City	0-7
Fort Warren	19-0
Keesler Field	28-13
El Toro MCAS	9-20
Pers Dist Comd	13-0
3rd AF	0-33
Air Trans Comd	0-15
1st AF	0-15
AAFTC	7-37

Third Air Force, a.k.a. 3rd AF and Morris Field (Charlotte, N.C.) and Drew Field (Tampa, Fla.) Gremlins

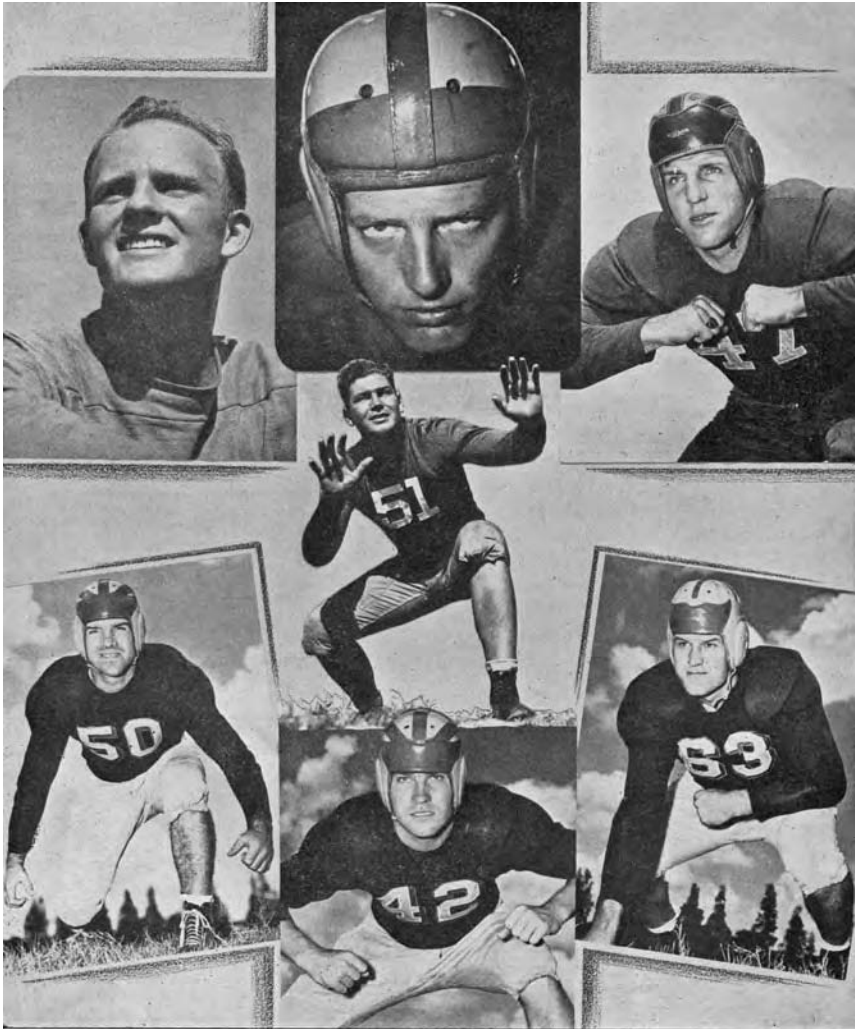
The Third Air Force headquarters opened at Morris Field and moved to Drew Field in 1945. The command peaked at 180,000 military and civilian personnel with 4,000 planes at bases in 17 states, and trained more than 250,000 pilots and crews for overseas duty in every type of army combat aircraft. Breakaway runner B Charley Trippi (All-America Georgia), selected to the 1944 AP All-Service first team, headlined the Gremlin stars.

1944 THIRD AIR FORCE (8-3-0)

Charleston CG	31-0
Chatham Field	45-0
Fort Benning 3rd Inf	32-0
Georgia PF	19-7
Cherry Point MCAS	29-7
Randolph Field	0-19
Georgia PF	34-12
Great Lakes NTC	10-12
Maxwell Field	41-7
Fort Pierce	6-7
2nd AF	14-7

1945 THIRD AIR FORCE (7-2-1)

Pers Dist Comd	27-9
Miami NAS	39-0
1st AF	19-0
Cherry Point MCAS	20-0
Fort Pierce	12-26
2nd AF	33-0
Keesler Field	42-0
AAFTC	7-7
Air Transp Cmd	15-6
4th AF	7-10



The Third Air Force Gremlins played in 1944 (8-3-0) at Morris Field near Charlotte, N.C., and in 1945 (7-2-1) at Drew Field near Tampa, Fla. Featured players included, top left clockwise: halfback Bob Kennedy, tackle Stan Krall, fullback Ventan Yablonski, tackle Chester Lipka, end John Karmazin, tackle Frank Lopp. Middle: tackle Frank Merritt (game program, Third Air Force vs. Fourth Air Force, December 2, 1945).

CHAPTER 8

“Rollicking, Boisterous, Macho”: Flying Marines and Sea Lions

The 1945 team “was a rollicking, fun-loving, boisterous, rough, macho group — about half officer, half enlisted.” Some had fought in the Pacific. “[Elroy “Crazy Legs”] Hirsch said there was a ‘great togetherness among the officers and enlisted. We never wore our bars.’”¹

Obviously intent on fielding its finest football team, and one to challenge for service supremacy, seemingly overnight the Marine Corps assembled its aviation football-playing elite at the El Toro Air Station in Southern California in 1944. The gridgers came from combat assignments, V-5, and V-12 college programs, and transfers from other commands, most of whom logged significant wartime pigskin experience before checking in to El Toro — by design.

By 1943, a publication noted, football’s best players for the most part were “Marine Reserve chattels,” wrecking expectations of powers Texas and Rice and giving nova births to Southwestern and North Texas. Marines “supplied the sinews” for Michigan and Notre Dame, the “Muscle-Men of the West. The Leatherneck banners may not fly in the headlines, but their horny-handed scappers, as usual, are very apt to decide how and where the ride of battle will run.”²

The aggressive Corps recruited players like they fought, zeroing in on Heisman Trophy winning quarterbacks Frank Sinkwich (Georgia 1942) and Angelo Bertelli (Notre Dame 1943), and each year’s runner-up, QB Paul Governali (Columbia 1942) and HB Bob Odell (Pennsylvania 1943). The latter two won the Maxwell Trophy as the East’s best player.³

With fewer establishments than the other services, the Marine Corps fielded competitive two-year programs at North Carolina’s Camp Lejeune



While probably only eight of the football Flying Marines of El Toro (Calif.) Air Station themselves were aviators, during the war's final season the team flew to road games in military transports. Here the 1945 team is shown en route, stuffed into what appears to be a C-54. The Marine Corps, by design, overnight assembled this elite group of highly skilled players into a dynamite two-year program (provided by John Gunn).

Marine Corps Base and Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, and with a smattering of temporary teams. These included ones at Quantico, Va.; outlying air fields at Oak Grove, Bogue Field, and Kinston in North Carolina; rehabilitation centers such as Klamath Falls, Ore.; and on Hawaii. There ad hoc all-star squads played other island teams with some success, and in 1945 served as a way station for homecoming Marines suiting up one last time in both uniforms.

The Klamath Falls and Pocatello, Ida., stations recruited interesting prospects. Klamath's players drew from among some 85 wounded or sick men recovering from malaria, filariasis, mumu, elephantiasis, and other tropical ailments. The navy gathered tropical-disease specialists who used sports, hunting, and fishing in the treatment process. The Pocatello Naval Ordnance Plant

Marine Barracks had 50 combat veterans released from a naval hospital on limited duty for afflictions similar to those at Klamath. Two dozen Marines and some sailors agreed to play. The athletic officer "scrounged the Pocatello area for enough helmets, pants, jerseys, pads and shoes to field a team." Idaho State provided cast-off gear and equipment. Residents "got behind the team.... The scores did not tell the real story of 'these brave combat veteran, physically impaired Marines ... against young, physically fit football players.'"⁴ Marines who played V-12 football received two Navy Crosses, seven Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars and numerous other decorations for valor on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.⁵

Each service had its doormat programs, where it took guts and a liking for pain to dress out and play. The Marines' doormat candidate was the 1943 Norfolk, Va., detachment which went 0-9-0 and scored only 25 points against their opponents' 390.

During the war the Coast Guard, the smallest service, technically served in the Department of the Navy and not separately. Because so many of its personnel trained and played with navy and Marine activities, including in the V-5 and V-12 programs, the Coast Guard fielded competitive teams only at Alameda, Calif., and at the Coast Guard Academy. Other establishments fielding temporary teams included the Coast Guard Receiving Station, San Francisco Bay (Berkeley, Calif.), whose 4-2-1 season in 1944 balanced with a 13-0 win over College of Pacific and a 60-0 loss to El Toro; Curtis Bay, Md.; Charleston, S.C.; Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, N.Y. (6-0-1 in 1942); and Wilmington, N.C.

Some noteworthy teams are described below.

Alameda Coast Guard (Alameda, Calif.) Sea Lions

As the Coast Guard's strongest station team, the Sea Lions did not shrink from tough opponents. They loaded up on teams



Coast Guard Lieutenant Joe J. Verducci mentored the Alameda Coast Guard Sea Lions to a combined 8-4-3 record during 1943-44. Alameda, which played three seasons against California-based elevens, was the country's strongest Coast Guard program (provided by John Gunn).

in California, whipping College of Pacific and California twice, and took on pre-flights at St. Mary's twice (one a tie) and Del Monte, UCLA, Fleet City, and the Fourth Air Force (a tie).

The 1943 roster contained enlisted men only, but almost all had some college experience with western schools. Lieutenant Joe J. Verducci, who coached the 1943-44 squads, in 1944 said, "We have one of the strongest teams on the Coast at present, but we never know from day to day which ones will be shipped out."⁶

1942 ALAMEDA COAST		1943 ALAMEDA COAST	
GUARD (1-7-1)		GUARD (4-2-1)	
San Francisco Packers	0-7	College of Pacific	7-14
California Ramblers	0-0	Del Monte PF	7-34
St Mary's PF	0-40	San Francisco U	26-0
Loyola	6-38	St Mary's College	21-7
Mather Field	0-27	Pleasanton Navy	46-6
San Jose St	0-9	St Mary's PF	13-13
College of Pacific	13-7	California	7-0
San Francisco U	6-44		
St Mary's College	0-26		

1944 ALAMEDA COAST GUARD (4-2-2)

Fleet City	7-7
Nevada	35-0
St Mary's College	18-0
4th AF	20-20
College of Pacific	19-0
UCLA	13-26
California	12-6
St Mary's PF	13-32

Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base (Jacksonville, N.C.) Marines

First opened in 1941 as New River Marine Corps Barracks and renamed Camp Lejeune in 1942, the Corps' largest eastern facility provided advanced training for officers and recent graduates of boot camp at Parris Island, S.C. The 1st Marine Division, the Corps' initial division-sized unit, formed here for later Pacific assaults on Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, Peleliu, and Oki-

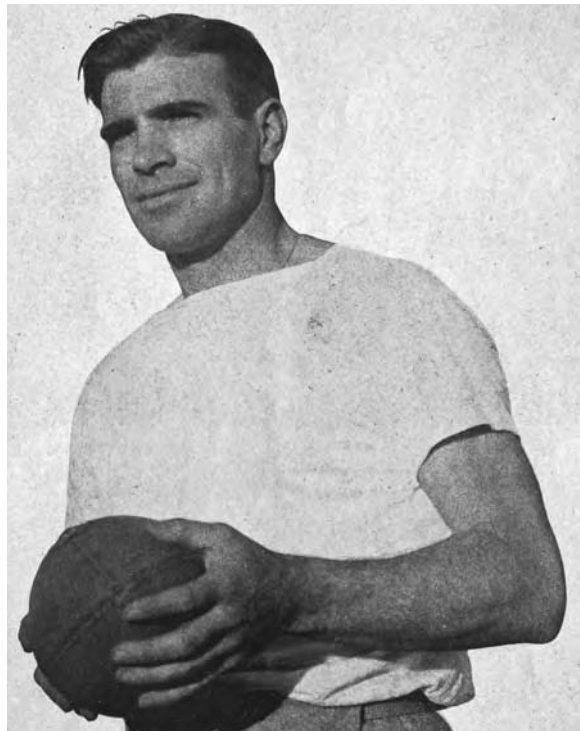
nawa. The station later became home for the 2nd Marine Division which fought on Tulagi, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa.

Lejeune's inaccessibility (in the "boondocks") created the need for \$3 million worth of recreation facilities. By 1944 these included 12 theaters, nine baseball diamonds, 18 tennis courts, three football fields, and 11 softball fields. The base cooperated with character-building agencies in neighboring communities, including physical fitness, and musical and dramatic arts activities.

Marine football historian John Gunn found that authorities wanted a "big-time" team, a "million-dollar club on paper," to entertain the trainees and keep them on post — provided it did not interfere with military duties. Players could practice only in their spare time. In 1943 175 tried out; 48 made it. The Bainbridge game drew 20,000 to the new field.⁷ Former professional and collegiate players, including four from Notre Dame's 1942 squad, composed the Devil Dogs eleven.

Commentators considered the 1943 eleven, coached by Lieutenant Colonel William Stickney and Lieutenants Marvin Bell and Jack Chevigny (All-America Notre Dame, coach Chicago Cardinals), as one of the top military teams. Half were officers. The Leathernecks defeated nearby Camp Davis, the Southeast's best army team. Lejeune's standout players were Coast Guard E Bob Fitch (6'3"/215), a member of the Associated Press All-America Service team, who trained there, and Murphy.

Lejeune also served as both a troop staging area



First Lieutenant Jack E. Chevigny (All-America Notre Dame, head coach Chicago Cardinals), USMCR, lost his life on Iwo Jima in 1945. He coached at Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base in 1943 (provided by John Gunn).

and officer candidate halfway house. Gunn learned that many trainees from the football-oriented 1943 V-12 class finished boot camp at Parris Island in June 1944 and transferred to Lejeune for officer training. At first they were prohibited from playing football. After the 53–7 loss to Bainbridge Naval Training Station, the commanding general allowed prospective officers to play. Coach Private Frank X. Knox (Illinois, Detroit Lions), fielded two teams: one of candidates, the other the old camp team.

Coaching instability caused by officer transfers paralyzed both the 1943 and 1944 squads. Lieutenant Bill Osmanski took over as head mentor in 1944 while playing, followed in mid-season by Knox, nephew of the Secretary of the Navy. End Johnny Yonakor (6'5"/230, All-America Notre Dame, Philadelphia Eagles) was massive for his era. Other notables included C "Black Mike" Kerns (235, Penn State, Eagles) and fullbacks George "Potsy" Graves (5'11"/215, Pennsylvania) and Ken Davis, Georgia Pre-Flight in 1943. Quarterback Bruce Locke, a Marine Raiders player in the South Pacific against army teams, saw action on Guadalcanal, Makin Island, and Bougainville.

The Leathernecks finished 1944 unbeaten except for two blowouts by Bainbridge (outscored 13–86). Injuries plagued an otherwise quality season, although they ranked only thirtieth among military elevens. Women Marine reserves acted as cheerleaders. The banged-up, dazzling Hirsch (6'1½"/188, All-America Wisconsin, Michigan) finally played in early November, but could not keep up with the Commodores' sensational back Charlie Justice in what had to be one of the classic wartime downfield chases. "The high school star ... more than lived up to his pre-game ballyhoo. The kid handled the ball seven times from scrimmage for 145 yards and three touchdowns. His speed was proven beyond all doubt in the third quarter as he outran Elroy 'Crazy Legs' Hirsch during an 80-yard scoring sprint around left end."⁸

These players passed through, including five No. 1 National Football League draft picks: Hirsch, QB Bertelli, FB Osmanski (All-America Holy Cross, Chicago Bears), B Johnny Podesta (All-America College of Pacific), B Tony Butkovich (All-America Purdue), T Pat Preston (All-America Duke), and Yonakor. Ends Behan and Murphy, and guard Aurel Bachiak (Eastern Kentucky) died on Okinawa, where much of the 1943 team ended up. Some men played only one or two games before shipping out, but Bertelli, Butkovich, Preston, and back Alvin Dark (Louisiana State) weren't allowed to play. In 1944 at least 105 Marines — some of them Guadalcanal veterans — participated in games. Lejeune announced an impressive 1945 schedule but demobilization and a probable impending invasion of Japan caused its cancellation.



Former Notre Dame players participating at Camp Lejeune (N.C.) Marine Corps Base in 1944. Kneeling, left to right: Joe Signaigo, Jim Sullivan, Mike Hines, Bernie Meter. Standing: Gaspar Urban, Julie Rykovich, Bob David, John Yonakor (provided by John Gunn).

1943 CAMP LEJEUNE MCB
(6-2-1)

Duke	0-40
Bainbridge NTS	0-9
North Carolina B	26-0
Fort Monroe	51-0
Jacksonville NAS	20-7
Camp Davis	14-0
Norfolk Marines	55-6
North Carolina PF	14-14
Jacksonville NAS	13-6

1944 CAMP LEJEUNE MCB
(6-2-0)

Duke JV	6-0
Bainbridge NTC	7-53
Camp Detrick	38-0
Kinston Marines	33-0
Bogue Field	41-0
Fort Monroe	26-0
Bainbridge NTC	6-33
Camp MacKall	52-6

Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station (Havelock, N.C.) Leathernecks/Marines/Flyers

The 1943-44 Cherry Point teams played representative tough schedules, but never scheduled their companion station Camp Lejeune. Although "gen-

erally outweighed and outnumbered [they] did establish character." The 1943 eleven, coached by Lieutenant Bill Hopp, had future professional Hall of Famer tackles Leo Nomellini and Ernie Stautner.⁹ Lieutenant Joe Bottalico was killed in action on Iwo Jima.

Master Tech Sergeant James T. McMurdo (All-America Pittsburgh, Philadelphia Eagles) mentored the 1944 Flyers. Injuries decimated his squad, as key linemen and backs dropped off "in the dismal procession. Each fracas has been costly." Newcomer G Ray Vranka (American International) emerged as the star.¹⁰

The 1945 team scrimmaged the Washington Redskins twice. Bogue Field, a Cherry Point auxiliary, "made more headlines by losing one game than it did in the remainder of its two abbreviated seasons" by losing to Duke (6-2-0) 76-0 in 1945.¹¹

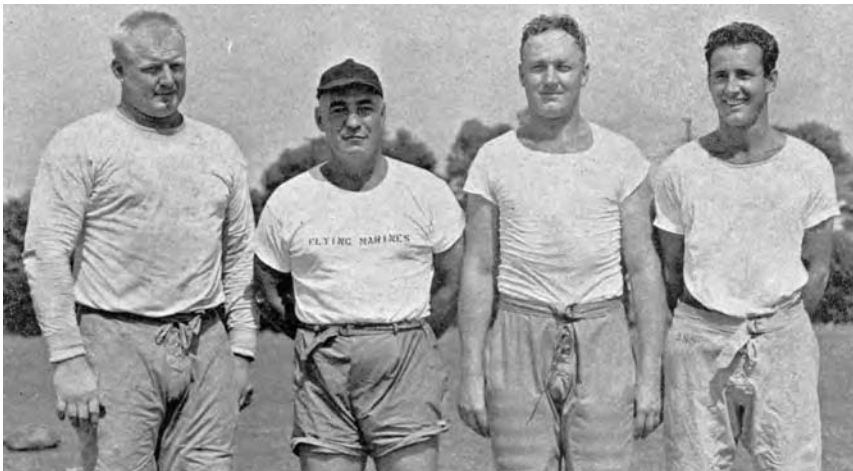
1943 CHERRY POINT MCAS (4-2-0)		1944 CHERRY POINT MCAS (3-7-0)	
Camp Lee	0-20	North Carolina PF	14-27
Wilmington CG	39-0	Camp Peary	0-20
Wake Forest Army	68-6	Georgia PF	0-38
Richmond AAB	20-0	North Carolina	14-20
Camp Butner	40-0	3rd AF	7-29
Greensboro ORD	0-19	Camp Lee	6-0
		Jacksonville NAS	0-33
		Bainbridge NTC	7-50
		Chatham Field	35-0
		Camp Lee	13-0
1945 CHERRY POINT MCAS (3-7-0)			
Jacksonville NAS	0-26		
Oak Grove Marines	6-0		
Camp MacKall	29-0		
3rd AF	0-20		
Air Trans Cmd	0-27		
Camp Peary	0-27		
Camp Lee	7-27		
Camp Peary	7-0		
Keesler Field	0-41		

El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (Irvine, Calif.) Flying Marines

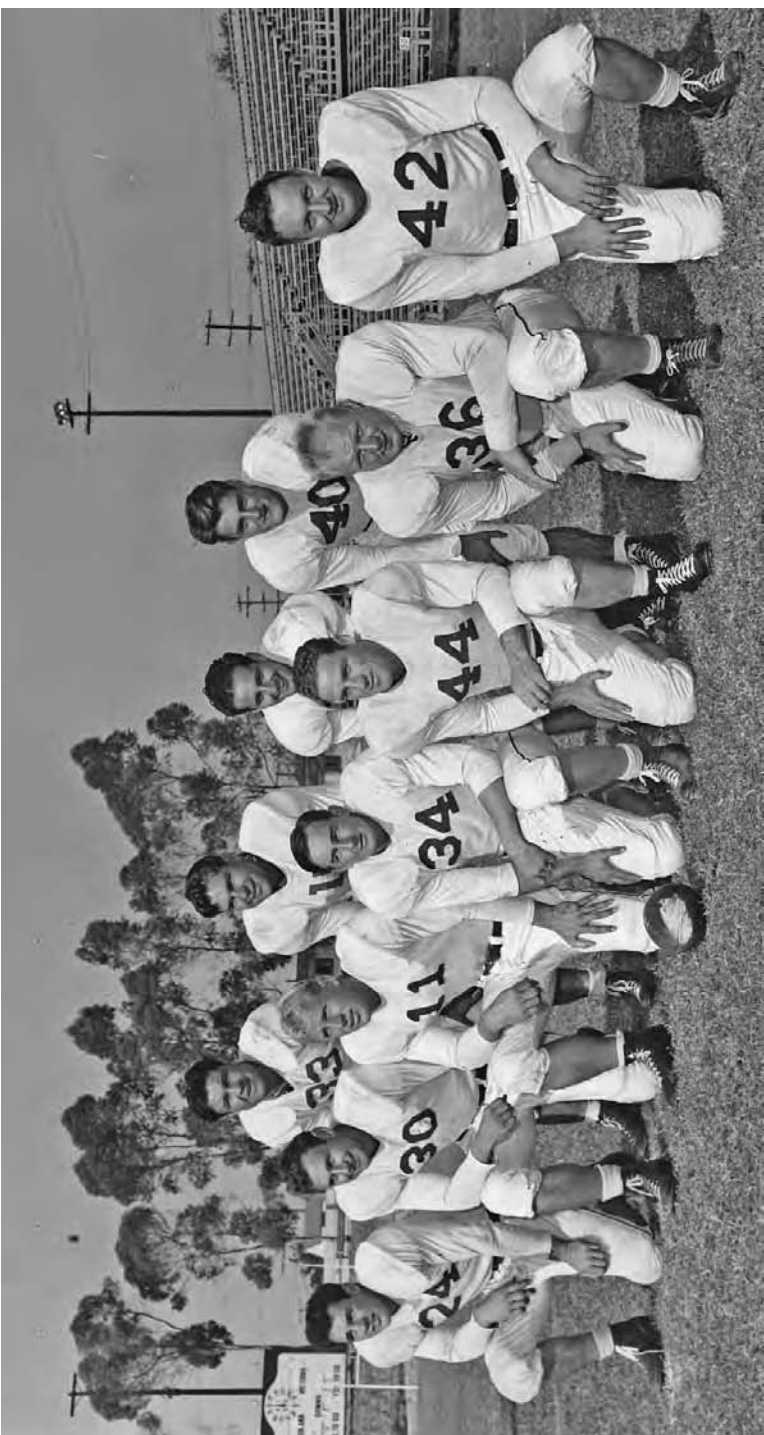
Established in 1942, El Toro served as the Corps' principal West Coast aviation facility as an expansion of the San Diego Marine Corps Air Station and Marine Fleet Air West Coast. In fact, it also grew into the military's largest tactical wartime airfield on the coast. Its name came from a nearby village of 130 residents. Walt Disney designed its patch, the "Flying Bull," in 1944. It closed in 1999.

The team's immediate football prowess matched the station's great size and mission. Officially Lieutenant Colonel Richard E. "Dick" Hanley (coach Northwestern), who mentored the two seasons, was director of combat conditioning for the Marine Corps. This gave him access to the best officers and enlisted men on the coast, and thus "might have had as much effect on the outcome of the war as anyone in Washington or Hawaii." Considered a Neanderthal, he employed the double-wing in 1944-45 but also employed a two-platoon offense, the other the T. "But he pleased neither side."¹²

The 1944 eleven, led by superb QB Paul Governali (All-America, Maxwell Award Columbia), finished No. 16 nationally. The one-touchdown loss to Fourth Air Force, "a mighty scare," prompted some observers to call it "the roughest, toughest grid-battle in Coast history."¹³ Reportedly the 1945 all-



The coaching staff at El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station in 1945 included, left to right: tackle Wilbur "Wee Willie" Wilkin (St. Mary's, Washington Redskins), head coach Lieutenant Colonel Dick Hanley, USMCR (coach Northwestern), end Bob Dove (All-America Notre Dame), and back Mickey McCardle (Southern California). All except Hanley also played (provided by John Gunn).



The El Toro Flying Marines' starting lineup in 1945. Kneeling, left to right: Vern Gagne, Chuck Huneke, Tony Sumpter, Sam Brazinski, Bill Kennedy, Wee Willie Wilkin, Bob Dove. Back row: Walt Clay, Ernie Lewis, Mickey McCardle, Elroy Hirsch (provided by John Gunn).

star eleven included only eight actual flying Marines, but instead 36 past and future pros (26 in 1944), and both squads produced three NFL Hall of Famers and five College Hall of Famers. "This was the era of two-way players and small rosters." Los Angeles radio station KMPC broadcast the games. Fame spread nationwide. For example, the *Chicago Tribune* extensively covered the games, partly because of Hirsch and the many Midwesterners.¹⁴ El Toro likely would have won more than eight games in 1945 if nine teams had not canceled for various reasons.

Some men played every game in 1945 and several joined the team after action on Iwo Jima, including G Jim Percy (Marshall), who received two Bronze Stars, C Don Johnson (Northwestern), and B Bill Kellagher (Fordham). The gyrenes presented a gigantic lineup, including ends Frank Quillen (225, Pennsylvania), Verne Gagne (210, Minnesota), and Bob Dove (205, Notre Dame); tackles Wee Willie Wilkin (6'6"/270 or 290—recorded as both and huge for those days—St. Mary's, Washington Redskins), Harley McCollum (240, All-America Tulane), John Wickham (245, Tulsa), and Bob Tulis (238); and backs Frank Balasz (225, Iowa) and Kellagher (212).

The 1945 "star-of-stars" was Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. A wartime pigskin-playing vagabond, Hirsch enjoyed his 1942 sophomore season at No. 3-ranked Wisconsin where he acquired the famous nickname. Following a 13–7 win over Great Lakes, the *Chicago Daily News* reported, "Hirsch ran like a demented duck. His crazy legs were gyrating in six different directions all at the same time." In 1943 he played at Michigan as a Marine Corps trainee and paced the No. 2 team with 68 points and also lettered in track, baseball, and basketball. He participated at Camp Lejeune in 1944 as duties allowed. El Toro officials pulled strings to have his orders changed from nearby Camp Pendleton in September 1945. "What the hell, the war was over," said the El Toro business manager.¹⁵ Hirsch repaid with 15 touchdowns.

1944 EL TORO MCAS (8–1–0, 307–34)		1945 EL TORO MCAS (8–2–0)	
Fleet City	13–7	Hollywood Rangers	13–12
Fairfield	56–0	Los Angeles Bulldogs	68–0
Beaumont	51–0	Fleet City	7–21
San Diego NTC	6–0	Camp Pendleton	61–0
4th AF	14–20	2nd AF	20–9
Fleet City	14–0	AAFTC	7–0
San Diego ATB	51–7	San Diego NTC	20–0
Fort Bliss	42–0	St Mary's PF	7–0
San Francisco CG	60–0	Fort Warren	40–7
		Fleet City	25–48

Coast Guard Academy, a.k.a. Coast Guard (New London, Conn.) Bears

The 1942 Coast Guard team paced New England independents. The 1943 squad, considered the equal of any predecessor in talent, played their most ambitious schedule in history but could not match the strong Ivy League competition. The Academy reigned supreme among New England colleges in 1944, playing five "big boys," defeating Brown and Dartmouth after a shelling by Army. Brown transfer B Tommy Dorsey, "one of the East's most able climax runners," sparked the Bears.¹⁶ Lieutenant Commander J. S. Meriman coached both 1943-44 elevens.

1942 COAST GUARD (6-2-0)	1943 COAST GUARD (3-6-0)
Wesleyan 14-6	Bates 25-6
Worcester Tech 40-0	Yale 12-20
Colby 14-12	Dartmouth 0-47
Norwich 0-13	Holy Cross 0-32
Trinity 35-7	Rensselaer Poly Inst 7-0
Rensselaer Poly Inst 33-0	Bates 27-6
Middlebury 52-0	Tufts 7-20
Connecticut 0-16	Worcester Tech 12-19
	Brown 31-34
1944 COAST GUARD (6-3-0)	1945 COAST GUARD (0-7-1)
Bates 33-0	Tufts 6-14
Tufts 40-7	Virginia 0-39
Yale 3-7	Scranton 0-0
Worcester Tech 39-0	Rensselaer Poly Inst 7-18
Rensselaer Poly Inst 38-6	Harvard 0-25
Army 0-76	Brown 6-33
Holy Cross 14-26	Holy Cross 6-39
Brown 20-0	Yale 6-41
Dartmouth 19-0	

CHAPTER 9

“Around the Globe the Message Winged”: The 1942–45 Seasons

*“Battling Mars, the blue-whiskered barbarian now swaggering the globe, has muddled the maps of both war prophets and football prognosticators with the same quick thumb. In a gridiron situation so scrambled, only a reckless oracle would venture predictions — but this forecaster was always one to climb out on a limb and saw it off behind him. So, war or no war, here goes!”*¹— George Trevor

When previewing a “who knows?” season, sportswriters rolled the dice blindfolded, without certainty or pride. George Trevor, in the *Illustrated Football Annual 1943*, stabbed wildly but cleverly, like the rest. The season unraveled more recklessly than forecast into wartime football’s low point, a hectic elevator ride of peak nova teams and games and valleys of despair. At least most colleges played, and more military teams formed, if only temporarily.

Topsy-turvy 1943 nevertheless produced the war’s most exciting college-military spectacle, the amazing 19–14 last-minute victory by Great Lakes Navy over Notre Dame on December 2. “Bluejacket Eleven Ends Season in Blaze of Glory — Wins Service Title Claim,” the station’s *Bulletin* proclaimed. “Around the globe the message winged, to navy men, to Notre Dame men, to fighting men everywhere who prize football as a bit of the American way of living they are fighting to preserve.”² Armed forces radio carried the broadcast to an estimated one million listeners. And the sportswriters anointed Notre Dame No. 1 in the nation regardless.

1942

When America entered the war obvious questions arose concerning the continuation of sports and other forms of entertainment. For institutions, players, coaches, programs, systems, and fans, what forms and who would stay, and what and who would go? For those staying, how could they be manipulated to work? Prior to the 1942 season, football commentators began conjecturing wildly on the unclear road ahead. "Overall the wisecracs predicted tackling and blocking would be harder," the National Collegiate Athletic Association wrote in its review, "as the future servicemen of our country would throw off all shackles, prior to entering the 'big fight.' Coaches would inspire men to outdo themselves in their assignments, and the war fever promised a reckless, daring form of play. No one was disappointed. The 1942 brand of football had a noticeable freshman blend." Teams shortcut peacetime comforts and normal conditioning routines "by playing right up to the hilt. Call it pent up energy, call it American resourcefulness, call it wartime fever or what you may, college football asked for no quarter and gave none."³ Yet somehow 1942 produced more scoring punch than in the previous 12 years.

Navy-base teams and colleges using navy and Marine Corps student-players immediately leaped in front of military football. En route to a No. 1 service ranking, Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Station (8-3-1) played all 12 games away against major opponents, spurring recruiting drives in each city and campus visited. Among military teams, the navy pre-flight schools grabbed headlines. But navy officials prohibited its teams from postseason play for the duration. Navy players filled 100 percent of the all-service squad chosen by *Collier's* magazine. No military elevens made the Associated Press top ten. Sports journalist voters had not experienced their enormous impact.

The newly formed Second Air Force (11-0-1), strongest West Coast military eleven, whipped undefeated Hardin-Simmons in the Sun Bowl. The seasons' best college teams were national champion Ohio State, Wisconsin, and unbeaten Georgia. Wisconsin kept its tentative title hopes alive when Jack Wink intercepted a Great Lakes pass and ran the length of the field to score in a 13-7 victory. He later said "he would never have intercepted the pass had he known he had one foot in the end zone," and admitted "for an instant he was 'lost' on the field and that instinctively he kept the ball instead of batting it down. 'I never knew 101 yards was that long, either.'"⁴

Minnesota, winners of six of the previous eight Big Ten championships, lost to the Iowa Pre-Flight Seahawks coached by its former mentor, Marine Major Bernie Bierman. Georgia beat UCLA in the 1943 Pasadena Rose Bowl. Missouri edged Iowa Pre-Flight 7-0 on a snow-covered field in Kansas City in December on a 58-yard run by B Bob Steuber (All-America), "more than



Quarterback Otto Graham (Northwestern), shown here carrying the ball in a 1942 game, played for North Carolina Pre-Flight as a Coast Guard trainee in 1944 where he learned the T formation under assistant coach Lieutenant Commander Paul “Bear” Bryant. Ranked No. 1 among service teams on November 5, the host Cloud-busters then lost to Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Center, 45–20 (Street & Smith’s *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1943*).

200 pounds of speed and power,” on the game’s second play.⁵ Steuber also booted the extra point.

Harvard and Pennsylvania lost most of their players, causing Harvard to close its program. Pennsylvania coach George Munger worked in a defense plant each morning and coached in the afternoon. Among the 1,200 V-12 trainees reporting he looked for “a few lads not unacquainted with the bounce-

ful ways of a prolate spheroid."⁶ At the Rocky Mountain schools, only a handful of 1942 players remained on campus for the spring semester and most awaited calls to duty.

Four teams toppled the modern total-offense high of 375.4 yards per game. "This unprecedented fierceness of attack left defenses groggy and for the first time in modern history no eleven was able to hold its foemen to an aggregate of less than a thousand yards total net gain for the season," the NCAA stated.⁷ Georgia led in total offense: 11 games, 4,725 yards (average 429.5), and 186 first downs. In the top 10, Iowa Pre-Flight (10, 3,356) was the lone military team. Texas led total defense: (10,1173 allowed) and opponents first downs, 63. North Carolina Pre-Flight (10,1428) ranked No. 5, and Great Lakes (12,1917) No. 10. Hardin-Simmons led in rushing (307.4). Military top 10 teams: Iowa Pre-Flight (No. 6, 249.3) and Great Lakes (No. 8, 242.2). Boston College led rushing defense (48.9). The military leaders: pre-flights at North Carolina (No. 8, 84.2) and St. Mary's (No. 10, 85.2).

Star 1942 players included quarterbacks Otto Graham (Northwestern), "Pitchin' Paul" Governali (All-America, Maxwell Trophy Columbia); and Bob Waterfield (UCLA); and backs Glenn Dobbs (All-America Tulsa); Frank Sinkwich (5'10"/185, Heisman Trophy 1942, All-America Georgia), the "Georgia Fireball"; Rudy "Little Doc" Mobley (155, Hardin-Simmons); Ray Evans (Kansas); Bob Steuber (Missouri); and Mike Holovak (Boston College).

The Washington Touchdown Club annual award to the Outstanding Armed Forces player went in 1942 to HB Bruce Smith, Great Lakes; in 1943, to HB Richard Todd, Iowa Pre-Flight; and in 1944, to HB "Bullet Bill" Dudley, Randolph Field. The trophy eventually was named the Lieutenant Robert B. Smith Memorial Trophy, for the club's first member killed in action (Sicily, July 7, 1943, air force).

"What might have been a drab campaign was surcharged with new vigor, new excitement by the competition of these dynamic soldier and sailor arrays," the *Illustrated Football Annual 1943* summarized. Throughout football "these amply manned and admirably coached outfits" won most of their games against big-time college competition.⁸

1942 COLLIER'S (GRANTLAND RICE) ALL-SERVICE TEAM
(The Associated Press did not select a 1942 all-service team)

- E Jim Poole (Mississippi, New York Giants), Georgia PF; Ed Fruitig (Michigan, Green Bay Packers), Corpus Christi NAS
- T Steve Hudacek (Fordham), North Carolina PF; Bill Davis (Texas Tech, Chicago Cardinals), Georgia PF
- G Buddy Jungmichel (Texas), San Diego NTS; Joe Huetz (Notre Dame), St. Mary's PF

- C George Svendsen (Minnesota, Packers), Iowa PF
 QB Frankie Albert (Stanford), St. Mary's PF
 HB George McAfee (Duke, Chicago Bears), Jacksonville NAS; Dick Fisher
 (Ohio State), Iowa PF
 FB Bruce Smith (Minnesota), Great Lakes NTS

A word about polls and rankings: beside the AP, considered the standard, several other national pollsters offered postseason rankings. The AP 1942 poll listed only collegiate teams; for other years it listed mixed collegiate-military. Dr. L. H. Baker, a noted student of the game, issued the most reliable mixed poll. Baker was research director of the Baker Football Information Service in New York City, a well-respected football historian and statistician, and the author of *Football Facts and Figures* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1945). Paul B. Williamson issued "The Williamson National Football Rating and Prediction System" of military teams. The *Red and Green Sport Star* also published rankings.

1942 AP SERVICE TEAMS RANKINGS

1 — Great Lakes NTC	11 — Second Air Force
2 — Iowa PF	12 — Fort Knox
3 — Georgia PF	13 — Lakehurst NAS
4 — North Carolina PF	14 — Fort Monmouth
5 — St. Mary's PF	15 — Fort Riley
6 — Jacksonville NAS	16 — Camp Davis
7 — Camp Grant	17 — Fourth Air Force
8 — Pensacola NAS	18 — Mather Field
9 — Manhattan Beach CG	19 — Fort Totten
10 — Corpus Christi NAS	20 — Spence Field

1942 ARMY TEAMS STANDINGS

	<i>W-L-T</i>
2nd Air Force	10-0-1
4th Air Force	11-2-0
Minter Field	6-2-0
McClellan Field	5-2-0
Fort Monmouth	5-2-2
Fort Riley	6-3-0
Fort Douglas	5-3-0
Mather Field	3-2-0

	<i>W-L-T</i>
Albuquerque AB	4-3-0
Camp Davis	4-3-2
Santa Ana AB	5-4-0
Camp Grant	6-6-0
Will Rogers Field	4-4-0
Carlisle Barracks	3-3-1
Daniel Field AB	4-6-0
Fort Totten	3-5-1
Patterson Field	3-6-1
Fort Knox	2-7-0
Camp Pickett	1-6-0
Colorado Springs AB	1-6-0
Indiantown Mil Reservation	0-5-1
Hill Field	0-5-0
Fort Benning	0-5-0
Fort Hamilton	0-6-0

1942 NAVY TEAMS STANDINGS

	<i>W-L-T</i>
Georgia PF	7-1-1
North Carolina PF	8-2-1
Jacksonville NAS	9-3-0
Great Lakes NTS	8-3-1
Iowa PF	7-3-0
California (St. Mary's) PF	6-3-1
Corpus Christi NAS	4-3-1
Lakehurst NAS	4-4-1
Grosse Isle NAS	4-4-1
Iowa PF "B"	3-3-0
Pensacola NAS	3-5-1
Wahpeton NTS	0-4-1

1943

"Undoubtedly one of the most difficult years for college football since 1905," stated a national publication about 1943. It cited "marked inequalities in material and competition ... lagging interest at all except those few fortunate schools" with the navy's "lend-lease material," and some criticism "that



Meryl Toepfer (29) and George Martin of Ottumwa (Ia.) Naval Air Station block the punt of Fort Crook's (Neb.) Al Dunagan, in 1943. Ottumwa (5-1-0) prevailed, 29-0 (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1944*).

the spectacle of a football game should be permitted at all in the strenuous times of war." It cited everyone's constant doubting, coaches not knowing what players would be available next week, "the boys themselves who faced the grave uncertainties of war, of the public distracted by the intensity of the fighting and the enormity of operations in the coming invasion of Europe."⁹

The NCAA noted that the 1943 season was the longest to date, from the

annual College All-Star game in August in Chicago until the final reported overseas military game in March 1944. And this didn't include June practices. Again the scribes hesitated to venture into preseason minefields. "Not even the gamblingest Forty-Niner would risk an easy-come easy-go fortune on the chances of any one Pacific Coast team in this unpredictable season," sports-writer Bill Leiser said.¹⁰

As the national emergency war effort shifted into high gear, college football slipped to its lowest ebb. Men left for the service, schools struggled to field teams, and approximately 150 abandoned football. Teams held summer practice of three weeks of light drills and one week with contact, because the season started earlier than ever, by September 11. Traditional spring practices essentially served as conditioners for players about to enter active duty.

As the college quality diminished, military quality blossomed. Service teams dominated the AP poll, with six of the top 12, along with three colleges, Michigan, Purdue, and Duke, dotted with former professional and college players in navy and Marine Corps training programs. Michigan's All-Big Ten backfield featured trainees Bill Daley (Minnesota) and Elroy Hirsch (Wisconsin). Approximately 80 percent of the Cornell varsity came from other schools.

National champion Notre Dame played seven games against top-13 teams. After ascending to No. 1, the Irish held on with victories over the No. 2 squads, Michigan (35-12) and then Iowa Pre-Flight (14-13), and beat both Army and Navy when each ranked third. Fighting Irish QB Angelo Bertelli received the Heisman Trophy for playing only six games before entering the Marines. In his final game, "the Springfield Rifle" Bertelli threw three touchdown passes, ran for a score, and kicked three conversions while leading the Irish over Navy, 33-6. It mattered little to the AP that Notre Dame's season ended with that last-minute loss to Great Lakes.

Michigan (8-1-1, No. 3), with mostly V-12's, and Purdue (9-0-0, No. 5), the only unbeaten-untied school playing a full schedule with Marines and sailors from other league teams on their first two squads, shared the Big Ten crown. Boilermaker Fullback Tony Butkovich (Illinois) transferred into the V-12 program, made All-America, led the nation in rushing, and set a Big Ten scoring record with 78 points. He later lost his life on Okinawa. Marine reservists from Minnesota helped Northwestern (6-2-0, No. 9) to one of its best-ever seasons. Duke's powerful V-12 squad went three or four deep with top-quality college players and ran away with the Southern Conference championship, losing only to Navy by one point.

Marine reservists from Texas helped "Cinderella" Southwestern University to 10-1-1, including a win over their benefactor. The Longhorn "Lend-Lease huskies" used military trainees otherwise to sweep through the

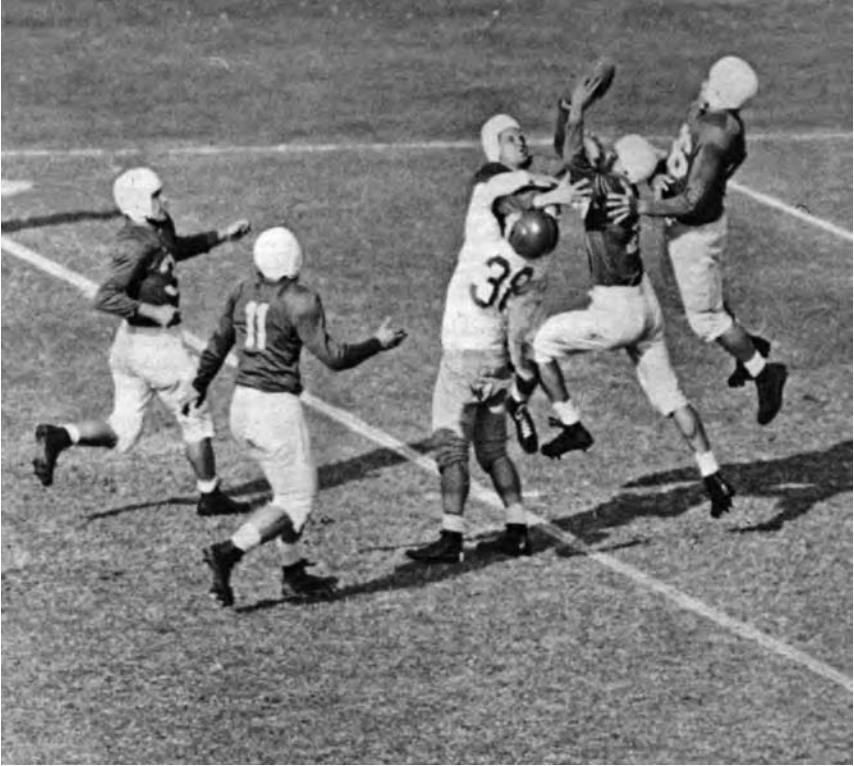
Southwest Conference. “The fortunes of wartime wiped out the fine degree of balance” that the league ordinarily possessed. The navy’s decision to let aviation candidate FB James Ross Calahan (185, Texas Tech) play for Texas in November on five-days notice turned “Texas from a fair ball club into a genuinely good one.”¹¹ North Texas Agricultural College, loaded with V-12’s, was considered equal to the Southwest elevens. Colorado College, with V-12’s, dominated in the Rocky Mountains, whose football “wasn’t so much as a shell of normal times.”¹²

Big Six teams, playing far below their standards even from 1942, lost 13 of 19 non-conference games. The conference eliminated all scouting because of coaching shortages, and agreed to exchange offensive formations a week before each game. “Of course, some of the boys may not line up exactly as they’re supposed to,” observed Oklahoma’s Dewey ‘Snorter’ Luster. ‘They may surprise their own coach as much as the opponents.’¹³

On the West Coast, observers rated the service teams superior to most collegiate ones, headed by the Fourth Air Force command (March Field) and the pre-flights at St. Mary’s and Del Monte. The College of Pacific bolstered “Mr. Amos Alonzo Stagg’s Season” (coach of the year) with victories over strong military elevens at Alameda Coast Guard, the two pre-flights, and Yuma Air Base.¹⁴ V-12-manned Southern California (7–2–0) used its great defensive line and pass interceptions (13 in the first four games) to capture its first six games without surrendering a point before San Diego Navy (10–7) and Fourth Air Force (35–0) brought them to earth.



Marine Corps Tony Butkovich (Illinois) made All-America while a V-12 program trainee playing varsity football at Purdue in 1943. The bruising fullback is shown checking into Parris Island, S.C., for boot camp in 1944. He lost his life on Okinawa in 1945 (provided by John Gunn).



Fourth Air Force, a.k.a. March Field, headed West Coast military teams in 1943 (9-1-0). In its 35-0 victory over Southern California, back "Indian" Jack Jacobs (All-America Oklahoma) goes high to catch an air force aerial (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

"In what [was] perhaps the recruiting coup of the century," some 175 two-year starters converged on Southwestern Louisiana Institute in 1943 for V-12 training. The state banned SLI from intercollegiate football, but players formed all-star teams which went 5-0-1, including a win over Randolph Field. Back Alvin Dark (Louisiana State) and lineman Weldon Humble (All-America Rice) starred.¹⁵

Camp Davis posted one solid season in three, 1943, before dropping football. The AA's edged unbeaten Wake Forest 24-20 before 20,000 on base when T Johnny Mellus (All-America Villanova, New York Giants), an all-service selection, recovered a last-minute Wake Forest fumble. In whipping Fort Monroe 31-6, "There was nothing the Virginians could do about it," the Davis newspaper declared. "To begin with, they had no manpower. Only six substitutions attest to that. But they did have plenty of guts." Monroe's

48-man squad contained only four college players, nine semi-pros, and the rest had high school experience only. All 41 Davis players saw action.¹⁶

Having V-12 students guaranteed no success. Redlands, with many Marines, gave up the most points, blaming it on the "coach's unique 'Y' formation. The quarterback often got sacked before he could get rid of the ball."¹⁷ Some schools, like Temple, without military trainees, pulled together a squad of 17-year-olds, but paid a financial price as attendance dropped two-thirds from 1942. Ohio State's athletic director, with only civilians, announced, "We'll play football just so long as there are eleven boys who want to put on shoulder pads."¹⁸ So they did, finishing 3-6-0 and hanging tough against Iowa Pre-Flight and Great Lakes. Buckeyes coach Paul Brown prohibited water buckets on the field, or a player from lying down unless hurt. "When Paul Brown sends a team on the field it is as tough mentally and physically as any commando unit."¹⁹

Whereas the 1942 Great Lakes roster contained almost all players with expired collegiate eligibility and several National Football League veterans, the average 1943 player equaled a freshman-sophomore, and no officers could play. Never mind. The Bluejackets soared as armed forces champions. When the sailors traveled a short distance to Evanston to meet Northwestern, the station's welfare and athletic fund paid for transporting 6,000 recruits.

Fielding informal teams, Boston College and Harvard tied 6-6 in front of 30,000 paying 50 cents per head at Harvard. Record keeping among "unofficial" team slipped a bit. Another account reported 40,000. Big Ten games drew 1,639,249 spectators (average 29,194) for 58 games, despite travel and transportation difficulties. The Columbia Lions (0-8-0) of coach Lou Little, an outspoken proponent of football as a combat conditioner, were outscored 33-313. Pennsylvania's back Bob Odell took the Maxwell Trophy as the best collegiate player.

Great Lakes 19, Notre Dame 14, December 2, 1943, Great Lakes, Illinois. This monster game originally was scheduled for Chicago's Comiskey Park in Chicago as a Fighting Irish Thanksgiving Day home game. University president Reverend J. Hugh O'Donnell generously offered to play the game at Ross Field on the station to entertain the sailors. Stadium seats were borrowed in part from the University of Chicago or constructed right there. Three times as many fans would have seen the game in Comiskey. Consequently, the Notre Dame athletic department lost some \$50,000.

Lieutenant Paul Hinkle's inspired Bluejackets in every department outshone the Irish team hailed as one of the best in its history. "While millions listened in or awaited the news, nearly 22,000 officers and men of the station watched the making of a champion and the end of Notre Dame's dream of its first perfect season since [coach Knute] Rockne's last team in 1930."²⁰

Rivalry between the two teams began in 1918 during World War I when Great Lakes opened.

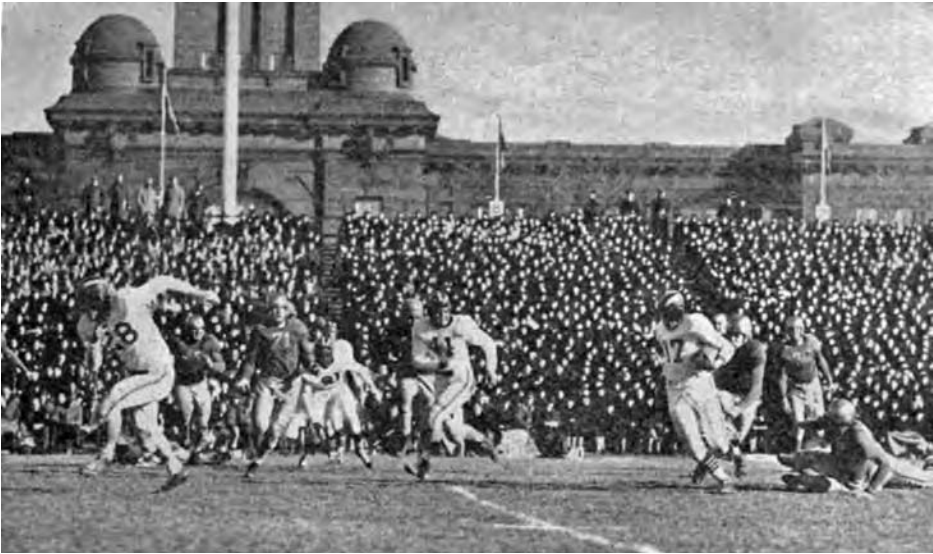
Quarterback Steve Lach (6'1"/200, All-America Duke, Chicago Cardinals) played sparingly until the Irish went 80 yards in 20 plays to take a 14–12 lead with 66 seconds remaining. Told to pass, within 33 seconds Lach threw to Cecil Pirkey for 15 yards and to Paul Anderson for 55 for the winning touchdown. The Bluejackets snuffed the Notre Dame hopes when B Emil Sitko, recently a Notre Dame player, intercepted QB Johnny Lujack's desperation pass to end the game. Sitko and B Dewey Proctor scored the other touchdowns for Great Lakes.

Statistically speaking, the service teams performed well in the 1943 NCAA mix. "The freshmen war babies of college football's most difficult modern season ... completely upset expert predictions that they would rush to the air lanes because of inability to [master] of the ground attack." To the contrary: teams combined for less passing than any other recent season.²¹ Notre Dame led the nation in total offense (10 games, 734 plays, 4,180 yards, 418.0 average). Iowa Pre-Flight was second (10, 583, 3,929, 392.9) and Army sixth (354.5). In rushing offense, Iowa Pre-Flight led with 324.4, followed by Army sixth (256.8) and Navy ninth (240.6).

In total defense, Duke led (9 games, 121.7), with Army seventh (152.5) and Navy eighth (161.2). In rushing defense, Navy (74.1) and Army (76.5) ranked seventh and eighth. No service teams placed in the top 10 for passing offense, passing defense, or punting. Army intercepted 29 passes (second) for 515 return yards. Navy was first in kickoff returns (14 for 28.8). Depauw's V-12 student Bob Steuber topped individual scoring (19 touchdowns, 15 conversions, 129 points). Among service teams, Len Eshmont of Del Monte Pre-Flight scored 73, Harvey Johnson of Bainbridge 68, and Tex Aulds of Randolph Field, Norm Standlee of Camp Davis, and Smith of Lubbock Field, 61.

1943 ASSOCIATED PRESS TOP 20*

<i>Team</i>	<i>Record</i>	<i>Coach</i>	<i>After Bowls</i>
1 Notre Dame	9–1–0	Frank Leahy	—
2 Iowa PF†	9–1–0	Don Faurot	—
3 Michigan	8–1–0	Fritz Crisler	—
4 Navy†	8–1–0	Billick Whelchel	—
5 Purdue	9–0–0	Elmer Burnham	—
6 Great Lakes NTS†	10–2–0	Tony Hinkle	—
7 Duke	8–1–0	Eddie Cameron	—
8 Del Monte PF†	7–1–0	Bill Kern	—
9 Northwestern	6–2–0	Pappy Waldorf	—



In what observers generally considered the most exciting big-name wartime game, Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center defeated mighty Notre Dame, 19–14, on December 3, 1943, on a last-minute touchdown pass from quarterback Steve Lach to back Paul Anderson. The Fighting Irish had gone up 14–12 with 66 seconds remaining. Here former Irish back Emil Sitko (17) gains ground against his old team. Originally scheduled for Chicago's Comiskey Park, the game was moved to Great Lakes, with extra bleachers installed. Despite its loss, the Associated Press named Notre Dame No. 1 in its final poll (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1944*).

<i>Team</i>	<i>Record</i>	<i>Coach</i>	<i>After Bowls</i>
10 4th Air Force*	9–1–0	Paul Schissler	—
11 Army†	7–2–1	Red Blaik	—
12 Washington	4–0–0	Ralph Welch	4–1–0
13 Georgia Tech	7–3–0	Bill Alexander	8–3–0
14 Texas	7–1–0	Dana X. Bible	7–1–1‡
15 Tulsa	6–0–1	Henry Frnka	6–1–1
16 Dartmouth	6–1–0	Earl Brown	—
17 Bainbridge NTS†	7–0–0	Joe Maniaci	—
18 Colorado College	7–0–0	Hal White	—
19 College of Pacific*	7–2–0	Amos Alonzo Stagg	—
20 Pennsylvania	6–2–1	George Munger	—

*Fourth Air Force defeated College of Pacific 19–0 after final poll released

†Military team

‡Texas tied Randolph Field 7–7 in Cotton Bowl

Ten organizations and publications selected All-America squads in 1943: Associated Press; *Colliers* (Grantland Rice); *The Sporting News*; *The Football News*; United Press; *Look Magazine* (Bill Stern), *Stars and Stripes*; International News Service; *New York Sun*; and Carlson's 3-Deep.

1943 CONSENSUS ALL-AMERICA

- E Ralph Heywood, Southern California; John Yonakor, Notre Dame
- T Donald B. Whitmire, Navy; James J. White, Notre Dame
- G Alex Agase, Purdue; John W. Weber, Georgia Tech; Pat Filley, Notre Dame
- C Casimir Myslinski, Army
- B Creighton Miller, Notre Dame; Angelo Bertelli, Notre Dame; Otto Graham, Northwestern; William Daly, Michigan; Bob Odell, Pennsylvania

1943 AP ALL-SERVICE TEAM (AP ALSO SELECTED REGIONAL TEAMS)

- E Robert Finch, Camp Lejeune; Jack Russell, Blackland AAB
- T John Mellus, Camp Davis; Raymond Bray, Del Monte PF
- G Marion Rogers, South Plains AAB; Garrard Ramsey, Bainbridge NTS
- C Vince Banonis, Iowa PF
- QB Glenn Dobbs, Randolph Field
- HB Richard Todd, Iowa PF; Leonard Eshmont, Del Monte PF
- FB Bruce Smith, St. Mary's PF

1943 ALL-NAVY ALL-AMERICA (*COLLIER'S*/GRANTLAND RICE)

- E Jim Poole, Georgia PF; Ed Frutig, Corpus Christi NAS
- T Steve Hudacek, North Carolina PF; Bill Davis, Georgia PF
- G B. Jungmichel, San Diego NTS; Joe Ruetz, St. Mary's PF
- C George Svendsen, Iowa PF
- QB Frank Albert, St. Mary's PF
- HB George McAfee, Jacksonville NAS; Dick Fisher, Iowa PF
- FB Bruce Smith, Great Lakes NTS

1944

After characterizing 1943 as "wallowing in this mire," the same national magazine saw an entirely different 1944. Football "knew at last where it stood,

what it could expect, and it started forward," mostly expunging inequalities. Even schools with navy students lacked "the good, veteran, carry-over material.... Crowds were bigger. Criticism of the game died down." Freshmen proved they could compete on the varsities, and coaches better understood the landscape.²²

Forty-four schools returned to football: Princeton, Alabama, Mississippi State, Kentucky, Auburn, Tennessee (undefeated till losing the Rose Bowl to Southern California), Florida, Michigan State, Southern Illinois, Syracuse, New York University, and Boston College among others. As traditional, the season opened with the College All-Stars versus the NFL champion, that year the Chicago Bears. Gate receipts of \$78,000 went to the Army Air Forces Aid Society and the Chicago Service Men's Center. Hundreds of war veterans starred upon returning to gridiron action, including Joe Saia (Mississippi State), Buzzy Gher (Yale), George Savitsky (Pennsylvania), and Bon Turner (Rice). The Second Air Force suited up 19 combat veterans.



Military football, and consequently the college game, zoomed to its finest season in 1944. Clever coaches donning service uniforms mentored sparkling professional and collegiate talent on bases and in the officer trainee programs. Called "gladiator giants," the service personnel "set a standard of play that bristled with cleated brilliance from warm autumnal openings through frigid New Year's Day." Saddled with curtailed practices

Quarterback Frankie Albert (All-America Stanford) made the Colliers/Grantland Rice first team, all-navy squad in 1943, at St. Mary's Pre-Flight. He learned the T formation under coach Clark Shaughnessy, considered the offense's father (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1942*).

because of duty and study obligations, service elevens sometimes lacked a competitive preparation for Saturday's games, tending to offset their edge in material.²³ For many colleges, sea duty and the draft beckoned "Lend-Lease" talent and recent high-school graduates respectively, leaving green players and substandard football to complete ambitious schedules.

Randolph Field (Tex.) and Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Center topped the military elevens. "Never in the South has such a glittering assortment of big name football talent been corralled on one squad as the West Point of the Air [Randolph] boasted in 1944."²⁴ Some observers felt the sailors earned No. 1 for their consecutive unbeaten campaigns. But aside from Bainbridge and Fleet City (Calif) Navy, the numbered air force commands took front and center, and within the military mix, beat up on each other. Randolph (11-0-0) outscored the opposition 508-19. The Third Air Force, around HB Charlie Trippi, lost to Great Lakes and Randolph. The Fourth Air Force,



leaning on triple-threat "Indian" Jack Jacobs, tied Alameda Coast Guard and Second Air Force (which led the nation with 513 points), and lost only to Randolph. Second Air Force did not hesitate to schedule the best. Its 15 games, enormous for the time, saw losses to Iowa Pre-Flight, Norman Naval Air Station (6-0-0), Third Air Force, and Randolph.

Army stockpiled young players as Navy collected a number of outstanding college players. Neither lost a player to the draft. West Point climaxed a season of total domination which still invokes notoriety as the greatest college team of all time. They administered

Back Linus Parker "Bullet" Hall (Mississippi, Cleveland Rams) starred at Del Monte (Calif.) Pre-Flight in its only season, 1943, and at St. Mary's (Calif.) Pre-Flight in 1944 (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1945*).

each opponent's worst defeat of the season while earning the Williams Trophy as national champions and the Lambert Trophy for eastern "gridiron supremacy." Coach Earl "Red" Blaik remarked: "Seldom in a lifetime's experience is one permitted the complete satisfaction of being part of a perfect performance.... To the squad members, by hard work and sacrifice, you superbly combined ability, ambition, and the desire to win, thereby leaving a rich heritage for future Academy squads. From her sons West Point expects the best — you were the best. In truth, you were a storybook team."²⁵

Both North Carolina Pre-Flight, behind QB Otto Graham (Northwestern), and Georgia Tech, beat Navy early. The Midshipmen whipped Notre Dame before losing 23–7 to Army's gridiron machine before 70,000 in Baltimore for the national championship, the Cadets' first ever. Going in, the academies ranked No. 1 (Army) and 2, with Navy favored against Army's untried line. The Cadets celebrated the Point's 150th anniversary by breaking a five-game skid to the Midshipmen. Army had "speed and power to burn ... equipped with the greatest array of talent in contemporary football," but Navy was "the riddle of 1944."²⁶

Two all-time greats scored touchdowns in the 7–6 win by Fourth Air Force over St. Mary's Pre-Flight. The naval Air Devils' B Bruce Smith (All-America Minnesota, previously Great Lakes) scooped up a bouncing punt and ran 58 yards for a first half score. Then followed a sensational kick-off return and lateral play characteristic of that era's style. Back "Indian" Jack Jacobs (Oklahoma, Cleveland Rams) grabbed the kick at his three, cake-walked up the middle and fought hard to get to midfield before being cornered. "With a deft flip," he lateraled to Morris Buckingham (San Jose State, Washington Redskins), who "careened to the sideline where he lateraled in turn to Ollie Day (Southern California). Day zipped around Buckingham's neat block to the end zone." Hank Norberg (Stanford) booted the winning point after.²⁷

Creative scribes piled on the South. Its 4-F players were the "Loose Ear Drum and Tight Ulcer Society," the Southern Conference region "the cigarette factory section" that "loves its football regardless of quality." Duke, coached by Eddie Cameron, dominated again, "a veritable rhapsody in blue ... supplied by those swashbuckling, navy-subsidized Blue Devils from the Grand Duchy of Durham." Stars like Tom Davis, a Marine dischargee, Jim LaRue, Cliff Lewis, Gordon Carver, and George Clark led Duke over Alabama in the Sugar Bowl, 29–26. Other quality coaches included Tom Young (North Carolina), Doc Newton (South Carolina), Frank Murray (Virginia), Beattie Feathers (N.C. State), and Peahead Walker (Wake Forest), who fielded perhaps the country's strongest all-civilian team (8–1–0), losing only to Duke.²⁸

Saddled with army trainees prohibited from playing, eight Southeastern Conference ("the Hot Biscuit Belt") members had dropped football. Seven returned for 1944 with civilians, but Vanderbilt again played junior colleges. Georgia Tech doubled its season ticket sales and defeated Navy 17–15 in what might have been the year's best game, tabbed by Grantland Rice and others as a "sizzeroo ... the all-time tingler" at the top of pigskin thrillers. Navy's B Bobby Tom "Bob" Jenkins carried the opening kickoff 85 yards for a score, and Tech intercepted a goal-line pass in the last second. A late 18-yard field goal by Dinky Bowen provided the margin. Navy had just jumped ahead 15–14 on a safety.²⁹

Perhaps the most exciting New England game saw the Melville Patrol



Always a classic matchup, the 1944 game between Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center and Notre Dame failed to produce an encore nail-biter as the Irish romped, 29–7 (game program, Great Lakes vs. Notre Dame, December 2, 1944).

Torpedo Boat team edge Holy Cross, otherwise unbeaten, 13-12. Man for man, the PT Boaters possibly fielded the most powerful players in the East. Their decorated veterans of fighting against the Japanese, former college stars, physically towered over smaller foes. Coach Leo "Dutch" Meyer's Texas Christian eleven (7-3-1), "a small, rugged band of opportunists," took the Southwest crown.³⁰ In the Rockies, 1943 doormats Denver and Utah pieced together entertaining squads of returning combat veterans, freshmen, and 4-F's.

The Big Ten staged perhaps the year's finest gridiron classics before large crowds, typical of the prewar environment. League champion Ohio State (9-0-0) set an attendance record using civilians. Playing mostly freshmen, Notre Dame (8-2-0) attracted half a million fans and lost only to Army and Navy. Iowa Pre-Flight rebounded from an opening loss to Michigan, 12-7, with ten straight wins.

Only four of the Pacific Coast Conference teams — Washington, UCLA, Southern California, and California — played, and depreciated material meant deteriorated quality. Coach Jeff Cravath built a Trojan team of navy and Marine trainees paced by HB Gordon Gray to capture their eighth consecutive Rose Bowl. San Diego Naval Training Center gave the Trojans their toughest game before losing 28-21. The hardest-fought military games matched Fourth Air Force over El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, 20-14, and the 0-0 air force deadlock between the Fourth and Second commands. Future Supreme Court justice B Byron "Whizzer" White (All-America Colorado, Pittsburgh Steelers, Detroit Lions), a navy man, played for Fort MacArthur.

Field goals won games for North Carolina Pre-Flight over Georgia Tech 3-0, and Atlantic City Naval Air Station over Swarthmore 3-0. Atlantic City, behind "All-around Tony Veteri," also beat Princeton, 31-6. Appropriately named FB Randall Rushing rushed the ball for Iowa Pre-Flight. But John Sailers played with the Third Air Force. Fullback Mark Major and HB Alex Minor played for Tennessee and Army. William Penn played at Yale, and Sgt. Harvard Yale Princeton was a paratrooper player at Fort Benning. Game attendance jumped to 5,555,000, for 333 home games played by 67 colleges covered in the AP's annual canvass, an increase of about 1.5 million (273 by 57) in 1943.

1944 ASSOCIATED PRESS TOP 20

<i>Team</i>	<i>Record</i>	<i>Coach</i>	<i>After Bowls</i>
1 Army	9-0-1	Earl Blaik	—
2 Ohio State	9-0-0	Carroll Widdoes	—
3 Randolph Field	11-0-0	Frank Tritico	—
4 Navy	6-3-0	Oscar Hagberg	—

<i>Team</i>	<i>Record</i>	<i>Coach</i>	<i>After Bowls</i>
5 Bainbridge NTC	9-0-0	Joe Maniaci	—
6 Iowa Pre-Flight	10-1-0	Jack Meagher	—
7 Southern California	7-0-2	Jeff Cravath	8-0-2
8 Michigan	8-2-0	Fritz Crisler	—
9 Notre Dame	8-2-0	Ed McKeever	—
10 4th Air Force	7-1-2	Paul Schissler	—
11 Duke	5-4-0	Eddie Cameron	6-4-0
12 Tennessee	8-0-1	John Barnhill	8-1-1
13 Georgia Tech	8-2-0	Bill Alexander	8-3-0
14 Norman NAS	6-0-0	John Gregg	—
15 Illinois	5-4-1	Ray Eliot	—
16 El Toro MCAS	8-1-0	Dick Hanley	—
17 Great Lakes NTC	9-2-1	Paul Brown	—
18 Fort Pierce	9-0-0	Hampton Pool	—
19 St. Mary's Pre-Flight	4-4-0	Jules Sikes	—
20 2nd Air Force	7-2-1	Bill Reese	—

1944 TEAM RATINGS & RANKINGS,
COMPILED BY DR. L. H. BAKER

<i>Natl. Rank</i>	<i>Coll. Rk.</i>	<i>Svc. Rk.</i>	<i>Coach</i>	
1		1	Frank Tritico	11-0-0
2	1			
3		2	Jack Meagher	10-1-0
4		3	Joe Maniaci	9-0-0
5	2			
6		4	Paul Schissler	7-1-2
7	3			
8		5	John Gregg	6-0-0
9	4			
10	5			
11		6	Jules Sikes	4-4-0
12	6			
13		7		
14		8	Dick Hanley	8-1-0
15	7			
16	8			
17	9			
18	9			

	<i>Natl. Rank</i>	<i>Coll. Rk.</i>	<i>Svc. Rk.</i>	<i>Coach</i>
19	Fleet City		9	
20	3rd Air Force		10	
21	North Carolina Pre-Flight		11	
(25)	Great Lakes NTC		12	Paul Brown 9-2-1
27	Georgia Pre-Flight		13	
27	San Diego NTC		14	
30	Alameda CG		15	

1944 WILLIAMSON RANKINGS—SERVICE TEAMS

(By 1944, the only ranked army teams of consequence were air force commands or airfield teams.)

1 — Randolph Field	10 — 3rd Air Force	19 — Melville PTB
2 — Iowa PF	11 — El Toro MCAS	20 — Maxwell Field
3 — Bainbridge NTC	12 — 2nd Air Force	21 — Lincoln AAF
4 — Camp Peary	13 — San Diego NTC	22 — Jackson AAB
5 — Norman NAS	14 — Shoemaker Field	23 — Daniel Field
6 — North Carolina PF	15 — St. Mary's PF	24 — Fort Warren
7 — 4th Air Force	16 — Amarillo AAF	25 — Lubbock AAF
8 — Great Lakes NTC	17 — Alameda CG	
9 — Fort Pierce	18 — Georgia PF	

1944 CONSENSUS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

- E Philip Tinsley, Georgia Tech; John Dugger, Ohio State; Paul Walker, Yale
 T Don Whitmire, Navy; John Ferraro, Southern California
 G William C. Hackett, Ohio State; Benjamin S. Chase, Navy
 C Caleb Warrington, Auburn; John Tavener, Indiana
 B Leslie Horvath, Ohio State; Robert T. Jenkins, Navy; Glenn Davis, Army;
 Felix Blanchard, Army

1944 AP ALL-SERVICE TEAM

(AP ALSO SELECTED REGIONAL TEAMS)

- E Jack Russell, Randolph Field; Nick Suseoff, 2nd AF
 T Joe Stydahr, Fleet City; John Woudenberg, St. Mary's PF
 G Garrard Ramsey, Bainbridge NTC; Russell Letlow, Camp Peary
 C George Strohmyer, Iowa PF
 QB Otto Graham, North Carolina PF
 B Charley Trippi, 3rd Air Force; Leonard Eshmont, Norman NAS;
 William Dudley, Randolph Field

1944 CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

Big 10	Ohio State 6-0-0
Big 6	Oklahoma 4-0-1
Ivy League	Army 3-0-0
Missouri Valley	Oklahoma A&M (now State) 1-0-0
Pacific Coast	Southern California 3-0-2
Skyline	Vacant (World War II)
Southeastern	Georgia Tech 4-0-0
Southern	Duke 4-0-0
Southwestern	Texas Christian 3-1-1

1944 OFFICIAL NCAA RECORDS (SELECTED)
(YARDS PER GAME)

<i>Total Offense</i>			<i>Total Defense</i>	
1	Tulsa	434.7	Virginia	96.8
2	Army	430.8	Randolph Field	110.8
3	Randolph Field	377.0	Michigan State	115.3
4	Auburn	365.2	Army	129.1
5	Ohio State	362.7	Wake Forest	129.6
9	Navy	351.0	Navy	136.3
12	Great Lakes NTC	328.0		

<i>Rushing Offense</i>			<i>Rushing Defense</i>	
1	Army	298.6	Randolph Field	29.6
2	Tulane	296.3	Navy	53.8
3	Illinois	294.0	Virginia	55.4
4	Auburn	292.0	Army	57.6
5	Ohio St	278.4		
8	Randolph Field	257.4		
10	Navy	240.7		
14	Great Lakes NTC	230.8		

<i>Passing Offense</i>		
1	Tulsa	206.3
2	Georgia Tech	142.0
3	Georgia	138.2
4	Army	132.2
5	Oklahoma A&M	126.0
9	Randolph Field	121.3
13	Navy	110.3

1945

Because the season swung into motion before August 14, 1945, the war's end failed to raise the level of college football. The armed forces did not rush to release players, nor did many colleges with suspended programs immediately restart them. Servicemen counted their discharge points and anxiously awaited civilian life. Lifting gasoline rationing helped attendance to soar. But what about the talent? "Mistakes, due to inexperience, will mark every game — and the people, they love it. There's nothing duller than perfection."³¹

Some players enjoyed a fifth year of competition versus three allowed prewar. Texas Christian's roster carried 17 discharges. Many navy-Marine trainees hailed from combat fleets and the "hell-blasted atolls of the Pacific. Few of them have high-test football experience, and none are superstars.... Most of the better yearlings are bordering 18, and service needs will thin them with every call-up."³² Those coaches and players back on campus were "mature and relaxed, relieved to get on with football after their experiences in uniform ... a release from the emotions of war, a chance to show off some of that know-how they had picked up playing with old pros and old collegians." These effects sustained through the 1950 College All-Star game when the last of the "war veteran" players upset the NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles.³³

Before 102,000 in Philadelphia, Army sank Navy, 32-15 to maintain its second straight undefeated season as No. 1. Scalpers sold tickets for many times their face value. Five games earlier, a woefully underdog Melville (R.I.) Motor Torpedo Boat squad, loaded with Pacific veterans but short of bodies, shocked the gridiron world by leaping ahead of Army 13-0 before succumbing to the cadets' depth, 55-13.

Two of the sport's fastest backs dueled for a "stirring play." Navy's Clyde "Smackover" Scott scored on a 62-yard reception, but only after Army's Glenn Davis missed the interception. "Davis started from seven yards behind and the chase was on. Who can say which player was faster? ... There was a split second before Scott could reach full speed.... Davis caught Scott at the goal line and they both tumbled into the endzone. It's safe to say no other back in America at the time, over 40 yards, could have survived pursuit by Davis to paydirt."³⁴

Three weeks prior, the Midshipmen, "stumbling like an awkward giant through most of the season," tied Notre Dame 6-6 in the final quarter as Scott blazed in with a long interception return.³⁵ However, a third-string halfback, Anthony "Skippy" Minisi (Pennsylvania), saved Navy's day in the last minute by tackling Irish HB Phil Colella at the goal line in the season's most controversial call. Was he over? Navy then stopped bucks by QB Frank Dancewicz

and HB Terry Brennan on the final plays. The NCAA opined that "many seasons will pass before the grandstand quarterbacks cease debating whether or not the Irish pushed over the last period touchdown which the camera proved was shy a hair or two."³⁶

Scott, who was on the field, remembered the controversial play and believes the ball carrier was stopped short. "Tony Minisi came across at the right angle and hit the guy. In those days there was nothing like reaching the ball across the goal line. He tucked the ball under him and fell. The play was legitimate. If I'd have been on the Notre Dame side, I would have hollered touchdown! Touchdown!"³⁷ Notre Dame was suffering: HB Elmer Angsman lost 11 teeth, FB Frank Ruggerio entered the university infirmary with 13 stitches in his chin, FB John Panelli went out for the season with a separated shoulder, and G Vince Scott had a concussion.³⁸

Fleet City 48, El Toro 25, Dec. 9, Los Angeles (Calif.) Coliseum, before



55,000 spectators — this decided the national military championship. *Los Angeles Times* writer Al Wolf called it "the wildest scoring duel the Coliseum ever witnessed," the College Football Historical Society notes. Wolf added: "Touchdowns piled up so rapidly for a while that the scoreboard smoked." One account stated as many as 60,000 attended, and another that more than 90,000 attended when servicemen were admitted free at half-time. Undoubtedly it was the biggest West Coast game of 1945.³⁹

After El Toro QB Paul Governali tossed a scoring pass to HB Elroy Hirsch, sailor B Buddy Young retali-

El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station quarterback Paul Governali (All-America, Maxwell Trophy Columbia) passed the Flying Marines to a 16-3-0 mark in 1944-45 (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1945*).

ated with a 94-yard kickoff return and 88-yard punt return for two lightning strikes. Governali's pass put the Flying Marines ahead at halftime, 18–14. Fleet City's 78-yard drive made it 21–18, but the gyrenes forged ahead with another Hirsch scoring catch, 25–21, their final points. Young ran 20 yards as the third quarter ended, 28–25. Then the sailors poured it on with three fourth-quarter touchdowns. "Never have I seen an individual [Young] totally humiliate 11 top-flight performers so woefully," stated the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. "He ran away from them. Made them look like novices."⁴⁰ Governali completed 29 of 45 for 228 and three scores.

Before the game Flying Marine coach Lieutenant Colonel Dick Hanley said, "There had been charges the week before that Fleet City was loading up by importing the nucleus of the Pearl Harbor navy team. I want it known that we are not complaining about the addition of these men. More power to the sailors." Afterward: "We just ran out of gas. They had too much reserve strength for us and wore us down. Do you realize they employed 16 backs?" The war was over, of course, but reportedly in a fit of pique, Marine commander Lieutenant General Roy Geiger shipped a number of key El Toro players to Japan or China for occupation duty.⁴¹

"The last hurrah for the training center teams" came on the final Saturday. Starless Great Lakes, playing mostly high schoolers, enlisted men, former college reserves, and small college stars, stunned football by lashing Notre Dame, 39–7, with 26 fourth-quarter points. Some Great Lakes players were long overdue for a discharge. The Bluejackets completed their World War II gridiron record "with a blaze of triumph."⁴²

Numerous bases canceled schedules. The Second Air Force claimed QB Frank Sinkwich (5'11"/200, Heisman Trophy 1942, All-America Georgia, Detroit Lions), T Fred Davis (Alabama, Redskins), and lineman Clyde "Bulldog" Turner (6'1"/250, Hardin-Simmons, Bears). However, Sinkwich injured a knee against El Toro and went out for season. Turner took five days leave to play for the Chicago Bears. The *Denver Post* reported team dissension because the Superbomber coaches would not use the T formation.⁴³

Attendance rose considerably, with 7,927,000 in 1945, an increase of 2.4 million over 1944. St. Mary's College, led by All-America QB Herman Wedemeyer, achieved the No. 7 ranking using 22 17-year olds. No gridiron deaths occurred in college games.

Sportscaster Bill Brandt selected an "All-Purple Heart Collegiate All-America" team, then perhaps the most noteworthy all-star eleven ever. The selectees, who had recovered from combat wounds to star for their colleges, included ends Bill Hearn (Texas Christian) and Bob Korte (Nebraska); tackles Bill Schuler (Yale) and Chan Caldwell (Tennessee); C Jack Miller (Georgia); backs Bob Cain (Virginia), Ernie Case (UCLA), Bob Ravera (Nevada),



Playing mostly high schoolers, previous military power Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center immediately skidded into unaccustomed mediocrity (6–4–1) in the final wartime season, yet crunched Notre Dame 39–7. Here Ohio State’s back Dick Flanagan scores a one-yard touchdown against the Bluejackets (9–2–1) in 1944. The No. 2-ranked Buckeyes (9–0–0) won, 26–6, before 73,477 in Columbus (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1945*).

and Merrill Frost (Dartmouth) . Hearn lost an eye in the South Pacific. Korte was severely wounded twice in Germany. Combat pilot Schuler was badly burned in an air crash. Caldwell was shot in the stomach invading Italy. Miller was shot down over St. Lo, France. Cain was wounded at Tinian and Iwo Jima. Case was shot down in a B-26, severely wounded, and captured by the Germans. Ravera lost his left hand and wrist in France. Frost was shot down over Italy, almost burned to death, was in a hospital 18 months, and had new face grafted, including ears. The most courageous college player was Army’s “Blondie” Saunders, who lost his left leg after being shot down in Burma on his 241st combat mission.⁴⁴

1945 AP POLL (NO SERVICE TEAMS EXCEPT ARMY/NAVY)

1 Army	8 Pennsylvania	15 Louisiana State
2 Alabama	9 Notre Dame	16 Holy Cross
3 Navy	10 Texas	17 Tulsa
4 Indiana	11 Southern California	18 Georgia
5 Oklahoma A&M		19 Wake Forest
6 Michigan	12 Ohio State	20 Columbia
7 St. Mary’s College (Calif.)	13 Duke	
	14 Tennessee	

1945 CONSENSUS ALL-AMERICA

- E Max Morris, Northwestern; H. Richard Duden, Jr., Navy; Hubert Bechtol, Texas; Bob Ravensberg, Indiana
- T Dewitt "Tex" Coulter, Army; George Savitsky, Pennsylvania
- G John F. Green, Army; Warren Amling, Ohio State
- C Richard Scott, Navy; Vaughn Mancha, Alabama
- B Herman Wedemeyer, St. Mary's (Calif.); Bob Fenimore, Oklahoma A&M; Glenn Davis, Army; Felix Blanchard, Army

1945 AP ALL-SERVICE TEAM

- E Hampton Pool, Fort Pierce; Nick Susoeff, 4th AF
- T Bruiser Kinard, Fleet City; Fran Merritt, 3rd AF
- G Rocco Canale, 1st AF; Jack Freeman, AAF Training Command
- C Bulldog Turner, 2nd AF
- B Paul Governali, El Toro MCAS; Claude "Buddy" Young, Fleet City; Bill Paschal, 1st AF; John Stryzkalski, 4th AF

1945 WILLIAMSON SERVICE RANKINGS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Fleet City (Shoemaker Field) | 11 Air Transport Command |
| 2 El Toro MCAS | 12 Hutchinson NAS |
| 3 3rd AF | 13 Personnel Distribution Center |
| 4 AAF Training Command | 14 1st AF |
| 5 Jacksonville NAS | 15 2nd AF |
| 6 4th AF | 16 EFTC |
| 7 San Diego NTC | 17 Fort Pierce |
| 8 Corpus Christi NAS | 18 Fort Benning |
| 9 Great Lakes NTC | 19 St. Mary's PF |
| 10 Little Creek Navy | 20 Camp Cooke |

As the final wartime season kicked off, a national magazine cast doubts on military football on the West Coast, which could be interpreted as having national application. Many coaches had "failed to get the most out of their men," it stated, "some of whom haven't been particularly interested in playing football anyway." Of course. Understandably. What mattered most to the boys in uniform was discharge, home, family, and future. The war was over. Time to get on with life. The magazine sarcastically made one final prediction: Service football "will pass with little regret among the dyed in the wool ... football filberts who have displayed a strange apathy to their big

name stars all along." Those stars "will be only a war memory by this time next year."⁴⁵

Maybe so, but many of those stars played on and gathered fame for self and team. What has been easily forgotten or simply ignored is how the sport itself played on, overcoming or coping with innumerable obstacles, and its vital role in helping to win the war.

CHAPTER 10

“All America Will Cheer a Champion, Whether He Is Black, Brown, Yellow or White”: Black Players and Professional Football

“Fourth Air Force had a black player named Woody Strode. Ernie Nevers — the only game he played — was supposed to block Strode but he hadn’t blocked him yet. Our colonel [coach Dick Hanley] was yelling at me. Walter Clay said ‘put me in, I’ll get him.’ Clay threw him an uppercut and he went down. We didn’t know why everyone was booing us. We were the only players on that side of the field. We thought we were going to need an armed guard to get off the field.”¹—Julian Pressly

For Woodrow Wilson Woodwine Strode, former UCLA lineman and future Los Angeles Ram and long-time movie character actor, surely it would not be his last time on the deck.

For Pressly, El Toro (Calif.) Flying Marines guard and white, this 1944 experience with a superb opponent never faded. Besides, Fourth Air Force (7–1–2) administered the powerful Marines’ only loss in an 8–1–0 season, 20–14.

Strode was among a number of military wartime or postwar standout black football players. Determining the extent of black player participation in World War II military football, however, is difficult. I found scant records, and the annual National Collegiate Athletic Association guides among publications provided limited details about black players in the military or at black schools. Even then the reviews or previews focused on collegiate programs.

For certain, though, by 1945 black college football was institutionally

secure. "Athletics exemplify America's democracy and have done more to break down racial barriers and discrimination than any other organization in the world," a commentator claimed. "All America will cheer a champion, whether he is black, brown, yellow or white."²

Racial segregation in the South necessitated separate teams on any base fielding a white team, although military officials formed far fewer black teams. Those segregated elevens played limited "black schedules" primarily among other southern bases, and only a handful sponsored multiple seasons. Racially mixed teams were confined to northern, Midwestern, and western bases. Identifying a black player on such a roster is possible if a sportswriter or observer noted it, particularly if that player excelled. Yet overwhelmingly whites dominated military rosters, either 100 percent or close to it. And blacks did not play at southern white schools participating in the navy and Marine Corps V-5 and V-12 officer training programs.

Besides Strode, HB Claude "Buddy" Young (5'5"/160, Illinois) of Fleet City (Calif.) Navy ran rings around the opposition, as Pressly also recalled. "I spent the whole [1945] game chasing him all over the field. We never caught him. We were aware Fleet City was bringing another team from Pearl Harbor. They outsmarted us. They brought 10-12 players from the All-Stars. We were literally just worn out. We were aware of QB Charlie O'Rourke [All-America Boston College], but not Buddy Young."³ The sailors defeated El Toro (8-2-0) twice that year, including 48-25 in the game considered to be the greatest all-military matchup of the war. After Illinois tied perennial wartime power Great Lakes at 26 in 1944, the Bluejackets agreed that the sprint champion Young and black HB Paul Patterson (5'9"/185) "were two of the fastest men they ever faced."⁴ Patterson also suited up for a navy team the next season.

We don't know how many blacks played on white service teams outside the South. Roster, game program, and football publication photographs I examined rarely showed black players. For instance, the great Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Center 1943-44 elevens apparently had none. In 1942 four blacks played for Fort Knox in Kentucky, including HB John Foston (6'1"/190, Alabama State) and FB Ed Perkins. Quarterback Earl Meneweather (Humboldt State) created a journalistic buzz with his lightning runs for Fort Warren (Wyo.) in 1943. End Sam Baker was shown in the *Great Lakes Bulletin* playing against Michigan in 1945.

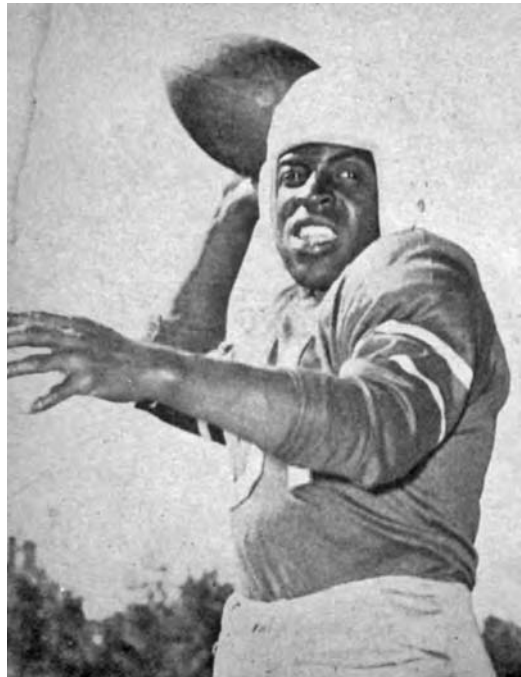
Those blacks who starred burst on the national scene in 1944-45 and included a number who achieved postwar collegiate or professional recognition. They included Strode, Young, and FB Marion Motley (6'1"/210, South Carolina State, Nevada) at the Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center.

The 1943 *NCAA Guide* reported on the first wartime black collegiate

season. "The Great War boosted football morale and fighting spirit. The slogan for all teams was VICTORY. Believing their team could win awakened 'the do or die' spirit in players and kept them fighting determinedly throughout games. The military draft claimed many star players, broke up several schedules, and caused the disbandment of a few teams."⁵ Thus small schools such as St. Paul's, St. Augustine's, and Shaw could not execute their schedules. In 1943 rosters were smaller than usual and schedules shorter. Army elevens at Camp Butner (N.C.), Camp Pickett (Va.), Bryan Air Field (Tex.), Camp Holabird (Md.), and Camp Swift (Tex.) played one-and-done seasons. For instance, opponents outscored Butner (0-4-0) 155-6.

The number one collegiate team, Morgan State College (5-0-0 and unscored-on), beat Florida A&M in the Capitol Classic in Washington, D.C., 50-0. Hampton scared Morgan, before losing on a safety, 2-0. Clarence Gaines, later the Hall of Fame basketball coach at Winston-Salem State, was a Morgan All-America tackle. Attempting to sustain football interest and morale and continue traditional rivalries, several teams played each other twice. Winston-Salem and Allen University of Columbia, S.C., met three times. Allen prevailed 33-0 and 12-6; the other game ended 6-6. Wilberforce, the only black Midwestern school playing, defeated West Virginia State twice. Only the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which operated with only six of its 14 members, and the Southwestern Association played as conferences.

In 1944 more black colleges fielded clubs than in 1943. Rail and motor transportation restrictions did not hurt attendance.



The 1943 Fort Francis E. Warren (Wyo.) Quartermasters featured black quarterback Earl Meneweather (Humboldt State), who created a journalistic buzz for his lightning runs. He was "a veritable ebony eel in his ability to writhe through the arms of tacklers in open field" and "the shiftiness and change of pace that goes with it makes him Fort Warren's most formidable threat as a broken field runner" (provided by John Gunn).

Eight CIAA schools fielded teams in 1944. The league took "pride in the belief that it [was] doing a small part on the home front in bolstering morale and in giving at least some mental diversion for those who [were] carrying the ball in that all-important game on foreign fields." Again fielding teams, Howard and Lincoln resumed their traditional Thanksgiving classic which highlighted the season.⁶



Black football that year surpassed 1943 but failed to reach prewar levels. Teams resuming the sport generated more interest and better schedules, and attendance surpassed any in history for two reasons: "(1) higher incomes; (2) the Negro colleges carried their games to the public rather than waiting for the public to come to their games." Most of the black schools were located in small, remote towns. Transportation difficulties and gasoline rationing restricted their drawing power. Tuskegee and Wilberforce played in bigger cities twice, including their annual game in Chicago. Wiley and Prairie View played their annual state-fair match in Dallas, Tex., before 16,000. Tuskegee (6-3-1) and Florida A&M (7-3-0) switched their game to heavily black-populated Jacksonville, the Aggies prevailing, 14-13.⁷

"Negro football," a national publication stated, "is no longer a tug-of-war or a push-and-shove, but is played scientifically, and with much skill and color. Each year brings about an increase in white patronage, one of

One of the multitude of future great professionals donning the military uniform was fullback Marion Motley (South Carolina State, Nevada) of Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center. The bruising runner later entered the National Football League Hall of Fame after a stellar Cleveland Browns career (*Great Lakes Bulletin*, November 9, 1945).

the signs that the game has improved."⁸ Black coaches remained longer at their institutions than white coaches at theirs, perhaps because of relatively equal salaries at black schools among both faculty and coaches.⁹

A description of some representative military black teams appears below.

Camp Lejeune (Jacksonville, N.C.), a.k.a. Montford Point Panthers

For 1944, a late-fall, seven-game schedule was arranged, but war requirements limited the team to a 2-1-0 record. The coach was William Porter (South Carolina State). Ben Whaley is believed to have been the first black Marine in pro football.

1945 MONTFORD POINT (5-3-1)

Tuskegee AAF	0-27
Tuskegee AAF	0-26
Godman Field	0-12
Benedict College	46-0
Fayetteville State	20-0
Charlotte Bees	21-0
Charlotte Bees	13-6
Atlanta All-Stars	7-7
Atlanta All-Stars	33-6

Camp MacKall (Hoffman, N.C.) Chutists

Camp MacKall, located near the Fort Bragg complex, served as the black airborne training station. Although without a victory in two seasons, the 1945 club still ranked 63rd among Williamson's service rankings.

1944 CAMP MACKALL (0-3-0)	1945 CAMP MACKALL (0-5-0)
Johnson C Smith 0-20	Kinston Marines 0-6
Morgan State 0-39	Presbyterian 20-34
Camp Lejeune 6-52	Cherry Point MCAS 0-29
	Oak Grove Marines 6-20
	Fort Bragg 0-20

Tuskegee (Ala.) Army Airfield Warhawks

The Warhawks, representing the future legendary Tuskegee Airmen on the gridiron, trained at Tuskegee Institute and Moton Field. In 1943 the team posted a 9–1–1 mark, losing to Clark 7–0 and tying Morris Brown 0–0, but avenged those games later by beating Morris Brown 32–13, and Clark in the postseason, 12–7.

The 1944–45 coach was Lieutenant William N. Bell (Ohio State). The NCAA called the 1944 team the year's top black military eleven. Tuskegee's 2–0 victory in Washington, D.C., over powerful Morgan State, their only loss, was reported as "one of the best games ever played by colored football teams." Thousands of fans from Virginia and Maryland joined Washingtonians in a crowd of 22,000. Some 20,000 attended the 13–all deadlock with Wilberforce in Chicago. On Thanksgiving Day in 1945, Tuskegee edged the white New London (Conn.) Submarine Base 14–7, before 20,000 in New York's Polo Grounds.



Ed Perkins (43) and F.E. Magar (61) shared fullback duties at Fort Knox (Ky.) in 1942. Four blacks played on that squad. How many blacks played on white military teams outside the South is impossible to determine. None played on white teams in a segregated South. Roster, game program, and football publication photographs rarely showed black players (provided by John Gunn).

1944 TUSKEGEE AAF (5-0-2)		1945 TUSKEGEE AAF (6-2-0)	
Algiers Navy	32-12	Camp Lejeune	27-0
Wilberforce	13-13	Camp Lejeune	26-0
Fort Benning (4th Inf)	0-0	Fort Benning	0-26
Fort Benning (4th Inf)	7-6	Fort Benning	18-7
Daniel Field	34-0	McDill Field	0-6
Montgomery Teachers	21-0	Fort McClellan	33-0
Morgan State	2-0	N.C. College	14-0
		New London Sub Base	14-7

Other bases fielding black teams in 1944 included Columbus AAF (Ga.), Bryan AAF (Tex.), Fort Benning (Ga.), Fort Riley (Kans.), Norfolk NTS (Va.), Aberdeen Proving Ground (Md.), Selman Field (La.), Randolph Field (Tex.), MacDill AAF (Ala.), Daniel Field (Ala.), and the 56th Engineers Training Battalion (Wash.).

In 1945 they also included Godman AAF (Ky.), MacDill, Fort Benning, Randolph Field, Fort Leonard Wood (Mo.), Jacksonville NAS (Fla.), Norfolk NTS, Galveston Naval Station (Tex.), Robins AAF (Ga.), Aberdeen Proving Ground, Fort McClellan (Ala.), and Camp Plauche (La.).

Professional Football

Professional football reached its watershed in 1940, according to historian Robert W. Peterson, with the first game radio broadcast. Popular Red Barber announced the Chicago Bears' 73-0 trouncing of the Washington Redskins for the National Football League championship. Among the 36,034 spectators were 150 sportswriters. The year "heralded a revolution in offenses" — the T — which trickled down to colleges and high schools. In 1941 the league owners named as commissioner Elmer Layden, of the famed Notre Dame "Four Horsemen," and "sought to change pro football's image from a working stiff's sport to high-class entertainment."¹⁰

After December 7, Layden stuck with the regular schedule, but stated "everything we decide today may have to be abandoned tomorrow." "While we believe professional football has a definite place in the recreational program of a nation at war, nothing connected with it should or will be permitted to hinder the war effort."¹¹

Preseason scrimmages and exhibition games formed the wartime relationship between the NFL and military football. A number of East Coast service elevens scrimmaged area NFL teams, such as the New York Giants and Redskins, often giving a worthy accounting. Veteran NFL players in uni-

form sometimes battled their former employers. In Hawaii and on the West Coast, without NFL teams, military and minor-league pro or semi-pro teams and service elevens played regularly scheduled games. A handful of eastern pro clubs dotted military schedules.

Several minor leagues folded or suspended operations, including the American Football League (the 1940-41 incarnation), the American Association, and the Dixie League. The Pacific Coast Professional Football League, founded in 1940 and one of the top minor leagues, continued operating and reached its zenith. Like other pro leagues, it suffered from a dearth of players. In 1944 a rival area league opened play, considered probably the only pro football league organized from scratch during wartime. The PCPFL faded after 1946 when the NFL expanded to California, but for a while it was probably second only to the NFL.¹²

Some teams, such as the San Diego Bombers, hired military players in their off-duty hours under assumed names. One of these was Marine Bob Dove (El Toro). "The Marines didn't want us playing outside ball. They didn't care if we got killed or got our leg broken playing football in the Marine Corps, but they didn't want us doing it on Sunday."¹³

As war siphoned the NFL ranks, by 1943 clubs desperately attempted to field adequate rosters. Several all-star players long-ago retired laced up the cleats again, including FB Bronco Nagurski, QB Arnie Hebner, and HB Ken Strong. The Brooklyn Dodgers greeted only seven returnees at training camp. The Cleveland Rams canceled the season. The Pittsburgh Steelers and Philadelphia Eagles became the "Steagles" and split the home schedule between cities.

In 1944 the NFL experienced severe problems recruiting players and bottomed out. College players facing military duty no longer could look ahead to entering the pros after graduation. Philadelphia regained its identity, but Pittsburgh merged with the Chicago Cardinals and were known as Card-Pitt Combine (0-10-0), jokingly called the "Carpets." The next year both Pittsburgh and Chicago operated separately, but the Boston Yanks and the Brooklyn Tigers (nee Dodgers) merged and played the 1945 season as the Boston Yanks, or just the Yanks.¹⁴

By 1944, "[f]ortified by the experience of two seasons of wartime operations, major league owners no longer wince at mention of the manpower problem. Selective Service had leveled the quality of material to a point where there are more favorites in the championship divisional than liberated towns in a Russian communiqué."¹⁵ The season opened with 445 players on its ten clubs. Rosters contained only men "who actually participated in championship contests and who were active in the league at the time of their induction." Despite losing proven material to the services, the league believed "sufficient first class" could sustain competition.¹⁶

The NFL regrouped in 1945 with these franchises: the Yanks, Bears, Cardinals, Cleveland Rams (would move to Los Angeles in 1946), Detroit Lions, Green Bay Packers, Giants, Eagles, Steelers, and Redskins.

The following tables show the 1942–45 standings and champions.

1942 REGULAR SEASON

<i>Eastern Division</i>		<i>Western Division</i>	
Washington	10–1–0	Chicago Bears	11–0–0
Pittsburgh	7–4–0	Green Bay	8–2–1
New York	5–5–1	Cleveland	5–6–0
Brooklyn	3–8–0	Chicago Cardinals	3–8–0
Philadelphia	2–9–0	Detroit	0–11–0

CHAMPION: Washington 14, Chicago Bears 6

1943 REGULAR SEASON

<i>Eastern Division</i>		<i>Western Division</i>	
Washington	6–3–1	Chicago Bears	8–1–1
New York	6–3–1	Green Bay	7–2–1
Phil-Pitt Combine	5–4–1	Detroit	3–6–1
Brooklyn	2–8–0	Chicago Cardinals	0–10–0

CHAMPION: Chicago Bears 41, Washington 21

1944 REGULAR SEASON

<i>Eastern Division</i>		<i>Western Division</i>	
New York	8–1–1	Green Bay	8–2–0
Philadelphia	7–1–2	Detroit	6–3–1
Washington	6–3–1	Chicago Bears	6–3–1
Boston Yanks	2–8–0	Cleveland	4–6–0
Brooklyn	0–10–0	Card-Pitt Combine	0–10–0

CHAMPION: Green Bay 14, New York Giants 7

1945 REGULAR SEASON

<i>Eastern Division</i>		<i>Western Division</i>	
Washington	8–2–0	Cleveland	9–1–0
Philadelphia	7–3–0	Detroit	7–3–0
Boston Yanks	3–6–1	Green Bay	6–4–0
New York	3–6–1	Chicago Bears	3–7–0
Pittsburgh	2–8–0	Chicago Cardinals	1–9–0

CHAMPION: Cleveland 15, Washington 14

Six hundred thirty-eight active players served in the armed forces, and 69 were decorated. Twenty-one lost their lives: 19 active or former players, an ex-head coach, and a team executive. Of these, perhaps the best known player was Giants T Al Blozis (6' 6"/250, all-league) killed in action in the Vosges Mountains, France, just six weeks after playing in the 1944 NFL championship game. The NFL donated the \$680,383 in revenues from 15 exhibition games to military charities, the USO, and the Red Cross, and also raised \$4 million in war bond sales in 1942.

That the NFL continued through the duration likely is due to the most famous players in the country, QB Sammy Baugh (Washington), QB Sid Luckman (Bears), and E Don Hutson (Green Bay), who remained with their clubs.

CHAPTER 11

“Not Satisfied to Listen to Short-Wave Broadcasts”: Overseas Football, Postseason Games, and the Postwar

“The American fighting man was not satisfied to listen to short wave broadcasts from bowl games played in the States. He wanted to play in a game or else be an actual spectator. Thousands of soldiers, sailors and Marines in Europe and the Pacific war areas put on their own football bowls with uniformed teams, cheering sections, regulation officials, bands and parades modeled after real American college football games.”¹

During World War II, American armed forces transported freedom and football around the globe. Whenever space, time, and conditions allowed, the sport helped war-weary GI’s maintain touch with home. From the desert to jungles to the ruins of the atomic bomb, officials organized pickup games for morale and entertainment and did their best to provide stateside gridiron news. After the war, some American occupying forces in Europe, particularly army units led by the 3rd Infantry Division, in 1945 traveled to play each other before the soldiers mustered out of service.

Overseas Football

The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI), tasked with supplying news for troops overseas, soon found itself swamped with requests for football facts. Before the 1942 season ended, the OWI sent by cable and wireless about 7,500 words daily plus scores of hundreds of games, photographs, weekly roundups

of college and professional leagues, and feature material for publication in military newspapers such as the *Stars and Stripes*.

The material circulated worldwide via hand, newspapers, mimeographed copies, headquarters directives, and short- and long-wave radio. Distribution showered without letup on troops stationed in or passing through New Guinea, North Africa, the Mediterranean, England, the Central Pacific, and Japan and in foxholes, barracks, and crew mess decks. The boys and girls in uniform wanted more, especially about the military teams. The official prevailing feeling: if they were home in peacetime, they would probably spend Saturdays or Sundays attending games.

On November 14, 1942, in what may have been the first overseas game played by U.S. forces, 8,000 in Belfast, Ireland, watched Hale defeat Yarvard, 9–7. That's right, Hale and Yarvard.

By 1943, the army organized a Special Services Division within the Army Service Forces to facilitate getting both the news and football equipment abroad. The troops introduced global football informally without fanfare. For one, the army formed teams which played in London's White City Stadium on May 8, 1943, with proceeds to a British charity.

Except for Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand, Marines lacked rear-echelon areas in the Pacific suitable for football. To keep in shape for football, the gyrenes once took on an Australian club in a half-football, half-rugby match. "You never saw such a donnybrook and melee in your life, and it continued after the game followed by a few Australian beers." In February 1943 the artillery 11th Marines defeated the 5th Marine Raiders 6–0 for the First Marine Division championship at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. A packed house of 35,000 experienced American football for the first time, complete with a band and cheerleaders.²

Southwest Pacific Marines in 1944 invented "Ocean Football" around a 40-yard "field" of water. A team had to advance the distance under water in four downs. When a ball carrier surfaced, it was a down. Nevada traveled 1,650 miles by air to play the Alaska Clippers of the Army Air Transport Command.³

Hawaii Teams

During the war, the U.S. Territory of Hawaii was considered overseas duty. Fourth Marine Division teams training on Maui could not use the division name for security reasons until after the Iwo Jima campaign in 1945, where at least four members died and eight were wounded. Thus, as Marine football historian John Gunn pointed out, its Central Pacific Armed Forces League (Hawaii teams) champions called themselves the "Maui Marines."⁴



Before 25,000 on Oahu, Hawaii, a navy all-star eleven beat the army stars 14–0 for the Pacific Ocean championship on January 7, 1945. Sailor Jack Fields (Texas) carries. Sixteen All-Americans and 16 ex-professionals played in that game. Football after the war ended included sterling groups of military all-stars playing on Oahu. In 1945 military officials assembled ad hoc all-star teams of available personnel with snazzy new uniforms to entertain the troops and civilians (*Pacific Fleet at Play*, U.S. Navy postwar publication).

Football after the war ended included sterling groups of military all-stars playing on Oahu. In 1945 military officials assembled ad hoc all-star teams of available personnel, outfitting them with snazzy new uniforms to entertain the troops and civilians. Nearly every fall weekend saw a glamor game in Furlong Field at Pearl Harbor. Sailors played Marines, Marines played soldiers, soldiers played sailors, and sailors played airmen. Many stateside facilities had been shut down or curtailed as victory neared. So the services transferred many pigskin-playing servicemen to the West Coast and Hawaii in preparations for the planned invasion of Japan. Football welcomed them.

Navy all-stars included a number who had played for Bainbridge—B Charlie Justice (5'10"/175), B Dewey Proctor (5'11"/200, Furman), G Buster Ramsey (6'1"/200, William & Mary), C Lou Sossaman (6'1"/200, South Carolina), B Lloyd Cheatham (6'1"/200, Auburn)—plus B George McAfee (5'11½"/175, Duke), B Steve Lach (6'1½"/195, Duke, Chicago Cardinals), T Frank Hrabatin (6' 4½"/215), T Bill Young (Washington Redskins), C Al

Matusa (Chicago Bears), B Bob Sweiger (6'0"/195, Missouri, Chicago Bears), and FB Bob Morrow (Chicago Cardinals). Lieutenant Jack White (Manhattan, Philadelphia Eagles, Providence pros) coached the group.

Marine stars included backs Alvin Dark (5'11"/175, Louisiana State), Bill Gray (Southern California), Bob Perkins (Rice), Rajah Rodgers (Alabama), John Podesto (5'11"/175, College of Pacific), Don Kasprzak (5'11"/165, Dartmouth), Chalmers Elliott (5'11"/175, Purdue), Hosea Rodgers (6'1"/192, North Carolina), and E John Yonakor (6'5"/215, Notre Dame).

An October clash between sailors and Marines prompted this message: "The battle is over. Victory is ours. But the spirit of the valiant Leathernecks and of courageous Bluejackets carries on. The scene of the never-to-be-forgotten sneak attack of nearly four years ago has been transformed into a field of friendly strife."⁵

Several representative pro and semi-pro teams formed to play military elevens and among themselves, notably the Honolulu or Hawaii Bears. The Bears signed former college and club players including B Edgar "Special Delivery" Jones (5'11"/200, All-America Pittsburgh) for \$100 per game. But Jones performed only once, received his paycheck, and was dismissed along with B Harold Stratton. "Bear management told them it did not like their attitude," a newspaper revealed.⁶ The Hawaii Senior Football League later validated the dismissals.

The Seventh Air Force fielded the most stable island military program against mostly pro and semi-pro teams. Established in 1940 and decimated by the attack on December 7, 1941, the command later played key roles in the aerial bombardments during the Battles of Midway and Wake Island, the assault on the Marshall, Gilbert, and Mariana Islands, and against Iwo Jima.

An interesting sidelight: Coach Captain Charles Erb, Jr., cared less for the huddle and instructed his 1943 team to call plays from their formations, and sought an old-fashioned quarterback/field general. His 36-man team had few college stars but some with collegiate or pro experience. Others played for the first time. Three hundred showed up for first practice. Lieutenant Mun Charn Wong of the Seventh Air Force, born and educated in Honolulu, had never played football but made the squad. Lacking the size and experience of his teammates, "this slender, unimposing chap has been coming along fast under Coach Erb's tutelage. His specialty is the rifling of a forward pass. Wong is one of those gridiron technicians who can add airmail to special delivery, to the great delight of the fans who like their football out in the open."⁷ The non-conventional Erb was not shy. He wanted a ditty composed in Hollywood and recorded by his friend Bing Crosby. He phoned Crosby long distance and asked him for it, and immediately the crooner responded.⁸

The Seventh Air Force motto: "Attack and attack again ... paramount in

the minds of every officer and man, from the commanding general to the newest yard bird. No exceptions."⁹ For a January 1944 benefit game against the defending league champion Rainbows, Erb recruited Edgar Jones and several other military stars.

1943 SEVENTH AIR FORCE (2-3-0)		1944 SEVENTH AIR FORCE (7-1-0)	
Honolulu Bears	13-10	Hawaiian Pine	18-6
Hawaii U	14-13	Boulevard AC	41-0
Kaalas	6-19	Lanakilas	56-0
Hawaii U	6-28	Healani	19-6
Healani	13-47	Hawaii U	27-10
		Kaalas	37-0
		Sr League All-Stars	13-6
		All-Navy	0-14



End Robert Witt (Mississippi Southern), who previously played for Keesler Field (Miss.) and was one of many service veterans playing for teams in Hawaii, suited up one last time for the Hawaiian Flyers air force eleven in 1945 (provided by John Witt).

Postseason and Bowl Games

The armed forces staged at least 27 bowl and all-star games following the 1944 season, 11 within the United States and 16 known games around the world. Combat action dictated when those games took place, with dates running from November 4 through January 21, 1945. Some of the postseason and bowl games included:

1943 GAMES

- Sun Bowl, El Paso, Tex., January 1— Second Air Force 13, Hardin-Simmons 7 (before 14,000)
- Lily Bowl, Hamilton, Bermuda, January 3 — Army 19, Navy 18
- London game, London, England, White City Stadium, May 8 — Crimson Tide Artillerymen vs. Fighting Irish Engineers

1944 GAMES

- Cotton Bowl, Dallas, Tex., January 1— Randolph Field 7, Texas 7
- Potato Bowl, Belfast, Ireland, January 1— Navy 0, Army 0
- Arab Bowl, Oran, Algeria, January 1— Army 10, Navy 7; second game, Oran Refrigeration Termites vs. Casablanca Ordnance Rabchasers. The Arab Bowl was described, "Here, in San Phillipe Stadium beside the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean, some 15,000 grid-hungry generals, admirals, nurses, WACs, soldiers and sailors — and a fair-sized sprinkling of high French and Arab dignitaries — witnessed the first doubleheader football bowl game ever



Major General William S. Key, the acting U.S. commander, European Theater of Operations, meets players prior to the game between the Crimson Tide (artillerymen) and Fighting Irish (engineers) in White City Stadium, London, England, May 8, 1943 (*National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Guide 1943*).

played." Actress Rosalind Russell and four army enlisted women were queens. The day included camel and burro racing with WACs as jockeys, WAC drills and reviews, martial music and a camera field day.¹⁰

- G.I. Bowl, London, November 12 — Army G.I.s 20, Navy Bluejackets 0 (60,000)
- Parc des Princes Bowl, Paris — Ninth Air Force vs. First General Hospital (20,000)
- Tea Bowl, London — Air Service Command vs. Eighth Air Force (12,000)
- Tea Bowl, London — Canada 16, USA 6 (30,000)
- Coffee Bowl, London — USA 18, Canada 0
- Bambino Bowl, Bari, Italy, November 23 — Technical School 13, Playboys 0
- Iranian Bowl, Tehran, December 12 — Camp Amirabad 20, Camp Khorramshahr 0 (9,000)
- Treasury Bowl, New York City, December 16 — Randolph Field 13, Second Air Force 6 (8,356)
- Lily Bowl, Hamilton, Bermuda, January 2 — Navy 19, Army 0
- Chigger Bowl, Dutch Guiana — two army air forces teams
- Poi Bowl, Honolulu, Hawaii, Pacific Ocean Area Service Championship — Navy 14, Army Air Forces 0 (29,000). The game program trumpeted, "King Football graciously bows his head today amid pageantry and color.... Even while the war rages ... the leaders of our fighting forces also realize this fact because they have cooperated to their utmost in seeing that all the color and splendor of a bowl gridiron contests are made available."



Oran, Algeria, was the scene of one of the most exotic military football bowl and postseason games. On January 1, 1944, the Arab Bowl doubleheader between army and navy elevens attracted 15,000 to San Phillipe Stadium. On a day of camel and burro races, famed actress Rosalind Russell and four army enlisted women were crowned queens (*Illustrated Football Annual 1944*).

Both teams came loaded. Navy posted nine All-Americans: Backs Lach, Edgar Jones, Charles Timmons (5'11"/215, Clemson), Andy Uram (5'11"/185, Minnesota); G Garrard Ramsey (6'1"/200, William & Mary), C Ki Aldrich (6'0"/210, Texas Christian); and tackles D. F. Palmer (6'2"/230, Texas Christian), Bob Suffridge (210, Tennessee), and C. W. Schultz (6'2"/225, Minnesota). Ten others had professional experience. The losers sported seven All-Americans, including backs John Kimbrough (6'2"/210, Texas A&M), Joe Williams (5'6"/175, Ohio), Jimmy Nelson (5'11"/180, Alabama), "Indian" Jack Jacobs (6'1"/190, Oklahoma), and Glenn Dobbs (6'4"/200, Tulsa); G Dick Barwegan (6'0"/200, Purdue); and E Harold Newman (6'1"/210, Alabama), plus five others with professional experience. Lieutenant Commander Tex Oliver (Oregon coach) coached the winners. Authorities prohibited civilians from attending but admitted service personnel free.¹¹

The *Honolulu Advertiser* reported the navy dominated practically the entire distance and outplayed the air force everywhere. "Vicious line play turned the game into a battle of forward walls for most of the way." The Tars' ground attack generated 155 yards against the Bombers' 11, and "Special Delivery" Jones threw two touchdown passes.¹²

- Jungle Bowl — All-Stars 49, Marines 0
- Coconut Bowl, New Guinea
- Mosquito Bowl, Guadalcanal, Solomons, December 24 — 4th Marines 0, 29th Marines 0 (more about this game below).

1945 GAMES

- Spaghetti Bowl, Florence, Italy, January 1 — Fifth Army 20, 12th Air Force 0 (25,000). "When the victorious U.S. troops successfully invaded Sicily and then Italy, football went along with the boys. The name of the [bowl] game had to coincide with the presiding atmosphere."¹³
- Riviera Bowl, Marseille, France, January 1 — R. R. Shop Battalion 37, Army All-Stars 0 (18,000)
- Lily Bowl, Hamilton, Bermuda, January 7 — Navy 39, Army 6
- Manila Bowl, Manila, Philippines, July 4 — Army vs. Navy
- Rice Bowl, Tsingtao, China, November 10 — 3rd Battalion/29th Marines 7, 3rd Battalion/22nd Marines 7 (5,000; a semi-touch game)
- Brooklyn Bond Bowl Game, Brooklyn, N. Y., November 11 — First Air Force 24, Army Air Force Training Command 6
- Legion Bowl, Memphis, Tenn. — Fourth Air Force 27, AAFTC 0

1946 GAMES

(The services organized only a handful of post-1945 bowl games because too many personnel were transferring from former combat zones back to the States.)

- Tokyo Bowl, Tokyo, January 1—11th Airborne Division 26, 41st Division 12 (15,000)
- Army Pacific Olympics championship, Tokyo, January 27 —11th Airborne Angeles 18, Honolulu All-Stars 0
- Bamboo Bowl, Manila, Philippines, Philippine Olympic title, January 1—Clark Field Acpacs 14, Leyte Base 12 (40,000)
- China Bowl, Shanghai, January 27 — Navy 12, Army 0
- Atom Bowl, Nagasaki, Japan, January 1—Isahaya Tigers 14, Nagasaki Bears 13. Attention focused on the game site relative to where the second atomic bomb detonated. Snow covered the field and flurries fell. "The command [Second Marine Division] had no trouble finding a level surface to use as the playing field, which is how devastating 'The Bomb' actually was." Bill Osmanski and Angelo Bertelli captained the squads. Osmanski scored both touchdowns and booted the winning extra point.

Perhaps the most unusual bowl or overseas game was the Mosquito Bowl, played on the island of Guadalcanal, site of the first major American Pacific land victory, which by 1944 operated as a major Marine Corps depot and rear-echelon training base. On December 24, two infantry-regiment pickup teams from the 4th Marines and 29th Marines of the Sixth Marine Division met on a coral-base, dirt and gravel field, with temperature in the eighties and horrible humidity, and without helmets or shoulder pads. But tackling was disallowed so as "to preserve the men for more important things ahead." In other words, they could just be Marines.¹⁵

To the participants, it might as well have been the Rose Bowl, discarding the fact that the slugfest produced only a scoreless deadlock before 10,000 standing-room-only service personnel and island natives with nowhere else to go. "The outcome mercifully made academic the payoff of many thousands of dollars bet by the Marines on a game held on a Sunday, the day before Christmas," noted John Gunn in his meticulous research of this game.¹⁶

The "Mosquito Network" of the armed forces radio service broadcast the game throughout the South Pacific. Regimental bands played and a public address system blurted the action. Division commander Major General Lemuel Shepherd, Jr., attended, and, along with the regimental colonels, occupied the only folding chairs. Shepherd changed sides of the field at halftime. The 4th wore green T-shirts with a stenciled number on the back, and the

29th wore white similarly. Cut-off dungarees at the knees and field boots resembled football pants and cleated shoes.

The idea started as members of the 4th Marines enjoyed a few beers and boasted to the 29th about their great players. "Pretty soon, we each had bet \$100 on the game. By game time, I'd bet \$200," one Marine recalled. Then \$100 was two months pay for some Marines.¹⁷ Lacking sufficient practice time, both sides squandered opportunities to score within the 5-yard line. Players later remembered the games as one of the roughest they had ever played, as hard blocking and physical contact produced serious bruises and scraped knees and elbows.

Gunn determined for these players the game "had a life-or-death aspect. Within three and a half months, they would be fighting on Okinawa and twelve would die on the war-ravaged island." Almost all survivors received wounds and Purple Hearts or injuries. Two posthumously received the Navy Cross, two the Silver Star, and three the Bronze Star. Rosters shone with former professionals or NFL draftees, All-Americans, college players, and decorated combat veterans.

Those who died in Okinawa included:

4th Marines: E Jim Quinn (Amherst); E David Nathan Schreiner (All-America Wisconsin); T Bob Bauman (Wisconsin); and T Hubbard Hinde (Southern Methodist).

29th Marines: E Chuck Behan (DeKalb Teachers, Detroit Lions, Camp Lejeune 1943, Navy Cross); E George Edward Murphy (Notre Dame, Lejeune 1943); T Ed Van Order (Cornell); T John Hebrank (Lehigh); C Red DeGreve (Michigan); B Tony Butkovich (Illinois, All-America Purdue); B Wayne "Rusty" Johnston (Marquette); and B Johnny Perry (Wake Forest, Duke, Navy Cross).¹⁸

Two must be singled out. First Lieutenant Schreiner died of mortal wounds leading an assault on the last Japanese stronghold near the Kiyuma Gusuku castle just 12 hours before Americans secured the island on June 20, 1945. The former rifle platoon leader, elevated to company commander because of casualties, had gone forward of his unit to observe the terrain, and fell to grenades and small-arms fire.

First Lieutenant Murphy's rifle platoon was one of the first ordered against the heavily fortified Sugar Loaf Hill near Naha. Repelled, he helped evacuate wounded to an aid station. There a mortar shell killed him.

Postwar

From August 1945 through 1949, “pent-up consumer demands” rejuvenated all sports.¹⁹ As football charted a new era, thousands of young men entering colleges in 1946 after being discharged immediately turned to competitive athletics by nature, training, and instinct. Football boomed. “What you had after the war was about four classes’ worth of teams all backed up and released at once,” stated the College Football Hall of Fame historian.²⁰ Veterans came in all sizes and ages. “It was the strangest thing,” future Kansas coach Don Fambrough said. “We had two types of players on the [Kansas] team. You had us 24- and 25-year guys who were married with kids and your 17- and 18-year-old freshmen who were calling us ‘sir.’ You never saw a happier bunch of guys than we were on those teams. We were so happy to be out of the service, back in school, and getting back with normal lives.”²¹

Service football experience immediately impacted collegiate programs as dynasties continued at Notre Dame or were built at Oklahoma. The 1946 Fighting Irish national champs would include at least 11 military players, including HB Emil Sitko, FB Gerry Cowhig, T Luke Higgins, QB Johnny Lujack, and T Ziggy Czarboski. Taking nothing for granted, veterans everywhere fought for starting positions along with the youth who had recently finished high school.

One widely read 1946 preview magazine predicted the veterans would be “bigger, stronger, more experienced.... Whether they will have the zip and dash of the teenagers may be strictly up to the coaches,” but competition for varsity jobs would be keen.²² On campuses, officials thanked those who served and who came back ready to resume an interrupted career, or launch a new one. Optimism and enthusiasm prevailed and ticket sales zoomed. Coaches no longer worried about suiting up enough practice players, only having adequate equipment for them.

CHAPTER 12

Clyde “Smackover” Scott and Bob Steuber: Personalities, Vignettes, and Anecdotes

“Only a world war could have created a situation where Steuber was allowed to play again in college and nobody made a fuss.”¹

Bob Steuber’s odyssey was a trip and a half. An ace halfback (6’2”/190) for Missouri from 1940 to 1942, All-Big Six, All-America in 1942, he then played one game for the Chicago Bears in September 1943 before being drafted. The navy sent the future Hall of Famer to DePauw University in 1944 in the V-12 officer-candidate program, where he and his team exploded. With one collegiate season of eligibility left, he returned to play at Missouri in the late 1940s and is probably the only known man in the game’s history to play collegiately after playing professionally.

In whipping the National Football League champion Washington Redskins 27–7, the 1943 College All-Star team fielded perhaps the finest backfield in the history of the series: QB Otto Graham, FB Pat Harder, halfbacks Bob Kennedy, Glenn Dobbs, Charlie Trippi, Steve Filipowicz, and Steuber. All later played service ball.

Once Steuber reported to DePauw, the team outscored opponents 206–6 over the final five games. “Apparently nobody questioned Steuber’s right to play with the team, and none of DePauw’s five remaining opponents, only one a service club (Fort Knox, 40–0), voiced an objection,” wrote historian Bernie McCarty. He “literally ran wild and compiled a record so incredible that he may rank as the greatest ‘small college’ player of all time,” with 19 touchdowns and 15 points-after for 129 points, and he led the nation in both scoring and rushing. “Imagine what Steuber’s figures would have been if he had played a full season’s schedule.”² Only a world war....

An attempt to introduce American football at a German prisoner of war

camp in Breckinridge, Ky., failed. "Both teams made after the ball-carrier and almost killed him."³

Touch football became popular at redistribution and rehabilitation centers. Two such stations in 1944 organized unusual rosters. They were the Klamath Falls (Ore.) Marine Corps Rehabilitation Center team (2-2-1, see Chapter 8), and the Pocatello (Idaho) Naval Ordnance Plant (1-5-0) Marine barracks team. The latter scrounged the Pocatello area for jerseys and equipment to suit up two dozen combat-hospitalized Marines and sailors. The game scores didn't matter.

"This souvenir program was designed especially for your entertainment and information," read the program for the game between Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Center and Camp Peary (Va.) in 1944. "Mail it home to the folks with your next letter, they'll enjoy it too."⁴

The NCAA rated the best civilian teams of 1944 as Ohio State, Tulsa, and Wake Forest. Many schools without military trainees were hard hit in mid-season. Northwestern lost 14 men, including two to Minnesota. Notre Dame lost six players.

In 1944 Aberdeen (Md.) Ordnance School tied Lincoln University, 2-2.



Back Bob Steuber (All-America Missouri, Chicago Bears) was drafted after one professional game in 1943. The navy sent him to V-12 training at DePauw University where he and his team exploded offensively, outscoring opponents 206-6 over the final five games. With one year of eligibility remaining, he returned to Missouri after the war, thus being perhaps the only man ever to play collegiately after playing professionally (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1942*).

Cornell beat Sampson (N. Y.) Naval Training Station in a 7–6 “story-book finish,” on a touchdown pass with three seconds left. Tulsa beat Arkansas 33–2 with 33 points immediately after starting the second half. It then refused to take the offense, punting on first down each series.

Apparently soldiers were more sports-minded and more in favor of the continuation of sports in wartime than civilians, according to an *Esquire* magazine poll for its December 1943 issue. Voting yes to the continuation of sports were 96.5 percent. When put to civilians in the recent regular *Esquire* poll, numbers ran 10–15 percent lower. Football led with 45.77 percent polled saying it was the best combat-conditioning sport.⁵

Dave Rankin

Dave Rankin offered a different perspective on playing wartime football. The Chicago Bears drafted the 6'0"/175, Purdue All-America end (1939–40) on graduation, but he never played pro ball. He was captain of the college all-star team in 1941. Rankin received his naval aviator wings at Corpus Christi (Fla.) Naval Air Station and a Marine Corps commission in 1942, but played no football. He recalled that Sonny Franck and others asked him “why don’t you come play with us?” on the NAS team, but his commanding officer told him, “We are training people to fight the war, not to play football.” In the Pacific, “I didn’t have a chance to follow football and lost track of it.”⁶

Rankin flew F4F *Wildcat* and



Guard Alex Agase, one of the era’s most dominating linemen, earned an unprecedented All-America honors at two Big Ten schools during the war: Illinois in 1942 and Purdue in 1943 after entering Marine Corps V-12 training. He received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart in Pacific action. In 1946 he made All-America again at Illinois (Street & Smith’s *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).



"I wish the colonel would stop making these bets" (Bo Brown in game program, First Air Force vs. Army Air Forces Training Command, November 11, 1945).

F4U *Corsair* fighters (VMF-214 and VMF-221) in two tours in the Solomon Islands. His was the first squadron to land at Yokohama, Japan, when the war ended. After the war he returned to Purdue and coached track and field for 30 years. The Purdue track stadium is named for him.

When Fort Knox visited Ohio State in 1942, spectators were advised: "Drinking in the Stadium ... of intoxicating liquor will not be tolerated.... Drinking or drunkenness will cause your ejection from the game. Patrons disturbed will assist in solving this problem if they will call an officer at the first annoyance."⁷

A 1943 Parris Island (S. C.) boot camp photo pictured former college players Tom Davis and Pat Preston (Duke), Mike Micka (Colgate), Johnny Podesta and Bart Gianelli (College of Pacific), Buck Jones (Franklin & Marshall), Alex Agase (5'10"/210, All-America Illinois, All-America Purdue), Ralph Heywood (Southern California), Angelo Bertelli (Notre Dame), Tony Butkovich (Purdue), and Mickey McCardle (Southern California). Not a team; just a photo.

The National Football League drafted at least 160 Marine V-12 trainees, 16 from Duke and North Carolina, 12 from Michigan and 10 from Southwestern Louisiana Institute. Future All-Americans who played as Marines included G Agase, T Tom Hughes (Missouri, Purdue), and B Bump Elliott (Purdue, Michigan).

The Great Lakes (Ill.) Naval Training Center's 62–0 win in September 1944 was Fort Sheridan's (Ill.) second and last game of the season. After losing 67–6 to Western Michigan the week before, officials cancelled remaining games "because of numerous injuries and lack of manpower." Against the Bluejackets Sheridan suited only 28 players, half with only high school experience and one former Chicago Bear (T Ed Watkins).⁸

V-12 trainees joked that V-12 stood for "victory in twelve years or we fight" and said "Join the V-12: release a WAVE for active duty." They sang to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean": "Take down your service flag, Mother; your boy is safe in V-12; he'll never get hurt by a slide rule; he'll always stay happy and well."

Julian Pressly

El Toro G Julian Pressly, involved in the Woody Strode incident described in chapter 10, remembered that his 1944 El Toro (Calif.) Marine Corps Air Station eleven was "getting a reputation in Washington, D.C. about playing dirty. They sent two generals down to watch us. They were sitting on the bench. My job was to hit the punter. I knocked him into the bench right into the two generals. The colonel [Coach Dick Hanley] made a point of telling me to get my seabag packed — he was going to send me to the Pacific islands. 'You damn stupid Texans — that was a great block.' We had orders not to get a 15-yard penalty under my conditions. Our group was real close, even with the officers. Forty percent of our team was officers."¹⁰

Pressly scored 12 points against Fort Bliss (Tex.) in 1944 (42–0). "Tony Canadeo (Gonzaga, Green Bay Packers) threw two interceptions which I ran back for touchdowns." El Toro used two different platoons. QB Paul Governali (All-America Columbia) ran the single wing, and QB Mickey McCardle (Southern California) the T. Pressly played 75 percent of the time although he didn't start. "I never even thought about being an aviator." After the 1944 season, the colonel wanted eight players to return for 1945. Pressly was among those who enrolled at Santa Barbara Junior College. He had no previous college education.

Pressly recalled the 20–9, 1945 win over the Second Air Force. "They had [Frankie] Sinkwich, [Bulldog] Turner, [Don] Fambrough, [Jay] Berwanger. They had beaten Fleet City and had a good ball club. Sinkwich and Dove were high school teammates. Wilkin hit Sinkwich, who was then hit by Dove. I don't believe [Sinkwich] ever played again. Our planes almost hit a mountain going out of there, and also when trying to land at Long Beach." Later, when traveling to Denver, they went by train. Wilkin wore no pads. "I played behind him. He was so big anybody could play behind him. He

had to be the biggest guy who ever played in our games, so strong." Pressly called HB Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch (Wisconsin, Michigan) El Toro's best ever. Pressly was right: Sinkwich never played again.

Pressly turned down an opportunity in 1946 to play with the Chicago Rockets of the All-America Conference because of an injured knee. Hanley coached the Rockets. Ninety percent of the roster were former El Toro players. Pressly graduated from Texas A&M and later coached high school football and baseball at Odessa, Tex., the subject of the book and TV series *Friday Night Lights*.

Commander William R. "Killer" Kane

"He is there for the full sixty minutes."¹¹ Reporting in 1945 on combat courage and leadership among naval aviators in the Pacific, Commander William R. "Killer" Kane, USN, head of naval aviation physical and military training, wrote:

Being a football player is by no means a prerequisite for leadership, but I shall wager that more leaders will be produced from a group of football players than from any other kind of group.

Aggressiveness? There are so many tales to illustrate that characteristic — the boy who being out of ammunition, flew the Jap into the ocean ... the pilots who carried out a beautiful attack against the Jap fleet in the Philippine Sea, knowing full well that a water landing after dark would be the result because of the extreme range.

Flying tight formation, fighters weaving over the bombers, strafing dives by fighters coordinated with the attacks of dive bombers and torpedo planes all call for timing and coordination that is duplicated on the football field by the offensive play of the linemen, the interference of the backs ahead of the ball carrier, the open field running of the ball carrier, himself.

We cannot all be ball carriers. Some of us must block. As it is in football, so it is in combat flying. Orders must be followed strictly. There is no room here for an individualist, a non-conformist, for he becomes a menace to his own mates. Teamwork in the air is as necessary (perhaps more so) as it is on the gridiron. The lad who wanders off to do a little hunting on his own usually enjoys a short career. But far worse he weakens the team....

Toughness? Well, if the pilot is not tough he will not last. There are to substitutions to be made in the air over Tokyo. He is there for the full "sixty minutes." ... Quick reaction, physical condition, esprit [d] corps, a sense of humor when the going is rough (one of the greatest characteristics of our American boys) eagerness to get into the game, these and many more characteristics are to be seen every day in the combat zone. All of these characteristics are to be seen every day on the gridiron.... Football in naval aviation as a training device to develop the characteristics desired in our combat pilots *has paid off*.

Kane, a 1933 Naval Academy graduate and football right-tackle letterman (1931-32), flew fighters in VF-10 (the "Grim Reapers") in the Pacific from the USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) from 1942 to 1944, serving as squadron commander in 1943-44. His eight kills earned him the designator "ace," the Navy Cross, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and a Presidential Unit Citation. In 1942 he was shot down in the Battle of Santa Cruz. A rising naval star, he died in a jet aircraft accident in 1957.

Camp Grant (Ill.) took on the Big Ten to record its only two wins of 1943. In the opener, "a courageous, determined little group of 17- and 18-year olds, constituting a sort of impromptu lineup, went up against veteran ex-college stars and professionals Sep. 11 to open the Illinois season.... A few hours before, four of the best men in the Illini camp ... were declared ineligible. Three hadn't taken entrance exams, the fourth's credits hadn't arrived. So coach Ray Eliot switched a right end to left end, found Eddie Nemeth back from the army on a furlough and rushed him into uniform." Grant scored on three interceptions and a safety to win, 23-0.¹²



Camp Grant (Ill.) unabashedly took on the Big Ten big boys in 1942-43, its lone seasons, defeating Illinois 23-0 and Wisconsin 10-7 for its only two 1943 wins. Here the home-field soldiers stop a Wisconsin back in that game (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook 1944*).

"Rockford, Ill., Sep. 26, 1943 — Wisconsin's football team, a lamb supposedly being led to slaughter here Saturday afternoon, roared and kicked like a lion instead and held Camp Grant's heavy, hard-running soldiers to a skimpy 10–7 victory. It was a disheartening licking of the worst kind.... [Wisconsin] hurled back most of Camp Grant's heaviest charges, at least in the danger zones, and lashed out itself with a touchdown drive of 70 yards.... It was the toughest kind of break that it had to lose."¹³

Camp Davis (N.C.) opened the 1943 season by hosting Wake Forest (24–20) "in a typical World Series football atmosphere." An overflow crowd of 10,000 at the new field featured the 3rd Army Ground Forces band, an officer candidate school review, Women's Army Corps cheerleaders, and female civilian workers — plus lineman Ralph Primavera, "aggressive almost to a fault, [who was] nevertheless a spirited and inspirational factor up front."¹⁴

North Carolina, my alma mater, began V-12 with 796 sailors and 298 Marines. The navy version ended in October 1945, the Marine Corps program in June 1946. Trainees occupied 12 fraternity houses and seven older dormitories — 2,000 V-5 cadets already occupied the newer and better-equipped dorms. In 1944 authorities tightened discipline, with duty watches, compulsory study hours, and bed checks. V-12's comprised most of the Tar Heel athletic teams; 37 Marines manned the 1943 football squad. Both civilians and V-12's operated on a trimester schedule. Profits from the canteen, called the "Scuttlebutt," supported social activities. British Ambassador Lord Halifax reviewed trainees in February 1944. Carolina V-12's included three admirals and one general, U. S. Sen. Robert Morgan, and Tom Wicker of the *New York Times*. Numerous signs of the navy presence on campus remain, including Navy Field where I played lacrosse for four seasons, the swimming pool, and the building containing the navy and air force ROTC programs.

George "Sonny" Franck

For the Corpus Christi (Fla.) Naval Air Station Comets in 1942, B George "Sonny" Franck (All-America Minnesota, New York Giants) was rated the outstanding back in Texas and made Service All-America. "If the Texas sports-writers said you were the outstanding back in Texas, you were an automatic," he recalled. "I played in the prehistoric days. You stayed on the field all the time. I was a wingback but also played safety. I ran the 100-yard dash in 9.6 and 9.7. I was the fastest guy who ever played college or pro football at that time."¹⁵

"We played against the Texas teams. At the Texas A&M game, most of our guys were out partying the night before." (Corpus won 18–7.) The day

of the Texas game was hot. "We just ran out of gas [and lost 40-0]. If you were a football player the base commander grabbed you and put you on the football team. Some of the Randolph Field players stayed around a long time like that." Phil Ragazzo, a New York Giants teammate and earlier a teammate of Bainbridge Navy phenom Charlie Justice, told Franck: "He's [Justice] the best halfback I've ever seen in my life.' I knew of him at the time."

The most valuable player in the 1941 College All-Star game, Franck played a few games with the Giants in 1941 before entering naval aviation that fall with Dave Rankin, and reporting to Corpus Christi for flight training. Halfway through he had to select either the navy or Marines. His coach at Minnesota, Bernie Bierman, was a Marine and that influenced him. Franck flew F4U *Corsair* fighters in the Pacific, and was shot down once. "After I crashed seven of them they decided I was a lousy pilot," he said, and was placed in an aviation support position on the carrier USS *Hornet* (CV-12).

Franck saw action with El Toro in three 1945 games, then rejoined the Giants after being discharged. On his 87th birthday on September 2, 2005, he said: "I wanted to give back to kids. Football got me into college, the service, and the pros; so I went into teaching." Franck taught high school math and biology in Illinois, and is in the College Football Hall of Fame.

Ticket prices for the Alameda Coast Guard-California game at Berkeley in 1944 ranged from 55 cents to \$2.40, servicemen admitted for half price.

Tony Veteri of Atlantic City (N. J.) Naval Air Station punted 100 yards in a 31-6 win over Princeton (1-2-0) in 1944.

Northern Illinois State Teachers, unbeaten and untied in 1943, had a normal enrollment of 450. It dropped to 90 the next year. Georgia coach Wallace Butts dressed only rookies in 1943. No varsity or freshman player from 1942 returned because of regulations and the draft.

"Teen-aged, peach-fuzzed lads found themselves playing beside and against their heroes, All-Americans and All-Pros they had read about in the newspapers," Furman Bisher wrote. Players moved around like free-agent baseball players. The former Clemson captain, a center, later donned the uniform of hated rival South Carolina, and became the Gamecocks captain. The star Wake Forest tackle moved 15 miles away to arch enemy Duke.¹⁶

Coach Frank Murray of Virginia on 1943 wartime football: "Frankly, I am not greatly alarmed about this year. If football is in the way of all-out effort, suppress it for the duration. But the letters I receive from my former players on every front say that the sport is too valuable to be side-tracked. I am not afraid of Hitler spiking the guns in our sports set-up. The biggest danger to college football is not planning for the future."¹⁷

Duke's 1943 team was "set back about two months by the clean-sweeping Marine detachment orders which sent 23 of their top varsity players off to more advanced training centers.... Where the Dukes once had three excellent fullbacks ... [coach Eddie] Cameron will now have to rely upon a couple of boys from the Jayvees."¹⁸ In 1943 the campus hosted a 1,600-man navy/Marine Corps unit and only a handful of regular student players.

Think of what might have been. Fullback Felix "Doc" Blanchard "ran riot in Kenan Stadium" at North Carolina as a freshman before going into the army after failing to qualify for the Naval Reserve. "Service calls have watered down what might have been a really great team."¹⁹



"Hogan, you go in at right tackle, and you, Simpson, go along and explain the signals to Hogan" (Bo Brown in game program, Texas Tech at Lubbock Army Air Field, September 13, 1943).

The *Bainbridge* (Md.) *Mainsheet* wove poetry into football.

"Football Hero"²⁰

*An end who's fast
And plenty tricky
Is that Arkansas guy
We call Red Hickey.*

"He's Top Man"²¹

*A player who carries
His share of the burden
is that Oregon flash
Who's known as Don Durdan.*

Clyde "Smackover" Scott

Clyde Luther "Smackover" Scott (6'0"/175) played five years of varsity football, 1944–45 at Navy and 1946–48 at Arkansas. He of the colorful, indelible nickname overnight became "one of the premier college performers of the Fabulous Forties. Extraordinary speed and a fearless attitude resulting in



flaming headlines one week, and confinement to the bench with injuries the next week. Few football players ever ran faster or performed more heroically on defense with complete disregard for personal safety." He made All-America mention each season and consensus first team in 1948. Scott started as a Navy plebe because the team "needed a dependable operative at fullback who was also mean on defense." During his Annapolis service, the Middies equaled arch rival West Point in talent but lost both times.²²

Halfback Clyde Luther "Smackover" Scott of Navy picked up the most colorful, indelible wartime football nickname based on his Arkansas home town, just edging out Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice of Bainbridge (Md.) Naval Training Center. Maybe that was a reason the author took to Scott as his football hero in 1945, the reward coming in their 2006 long telephone interview (Street & Smith's *Football Pictorial Yearbook*, 1946).

Accolades fit Scott naturally, and attention riveted on his extemporaneous nickname. Following Navy's 26–0 victory over Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in 1944, Harold Classes of the Associated Press said, "Navy put the foot back into football Saturday and with little Clyde Scott of Smackover, Ark., doing the key work.... It was a tremendous 73-yard quick kick by the 175 pounder that set up the first touchdown and it was his consistent long-range punting that set up the second." Scott recalled when the Middies quick-kicked, a common offensive ploy then but extremely rare today. "I'm not a punter but I kicked the ball. It got into the air and kept going, a long one, probably the only thing I did. A great play for Navy. After the game I was interviewed. 'Where are you from, mister?' the reporter asked. All midshipmen were called mister. I said 'Smackover.' There was silence. They were waiting for the punch line. 'No, no, I am from Smackover, Ark.' Check the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. That's when they hung the handle on me. From then on I was 'Smackover' Scott."²³

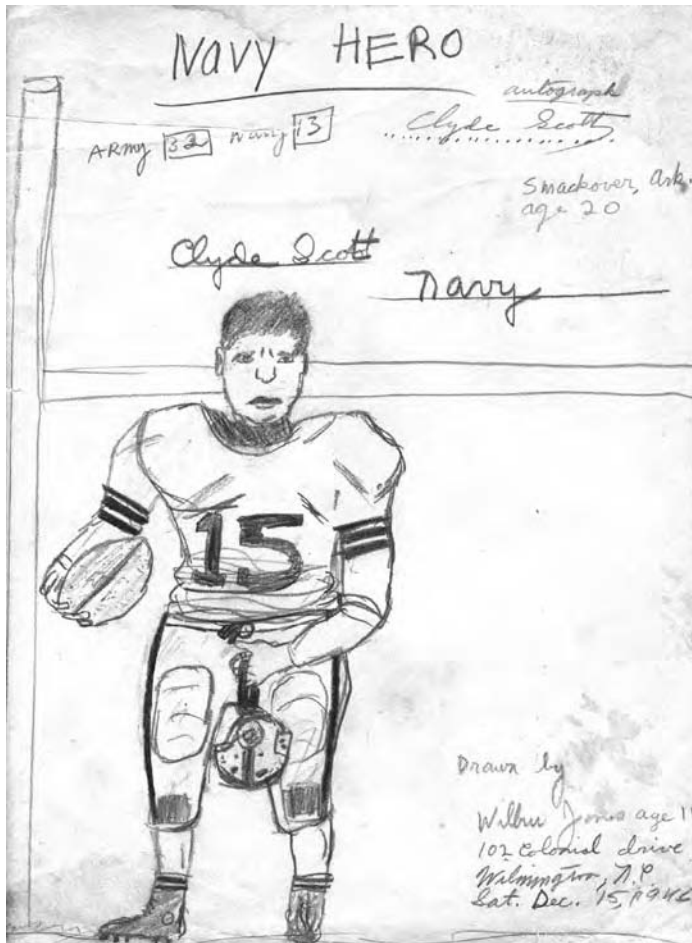
The following week the Mids blanked Notre Dame, 32–0, behind Scott's two first-quarter scores. Added Whitney Martin of the AP, "If there was one outstanding Navy man, it was the kid from Smackover, Clyde Scott, who was a demon on defense as well as offense."²⁴

Bernie McCarty wrote that by running the T formation, the 1945 team enabled Scott, "a terrifically fast starter, to bust loose off tackle and leave grasping, gasping tacklers in his wake.... Not a fancy-Dan broken-field runner, he relied on pure acceleration, pure speed, and strength.... He changed direction in an open field to make the use of blockers, but no sideline scrambles. Defenders had only one shot at him."²⁵

How did Smackover itself get its name? "The Naval Academy tracked it down, sent someone there to check it out," Scott said. "The most practical name was based on the sumac plant which covers the whole country around Smackover. They got the name from sumac that covered the ground." His parents are buried there (population about 2,500) and he visits occasionally. In the middle of Main Street the town erected a metal monument to him.²⁶

On the 1945 Army game: "They were a better team than we were, no doubt. The best running backs then, a great line. I honestly think it [difference between teams] was the coaching. After a play you would see all the Midshipmen on the turf." He tried tackling Doc Blanchard once and bounced off him. "We had some good football players on those Navy teams. The Army leaders, the coaches, they did a much better job." The team always traveled by train. On coach Commander Oscar E. Hagberg, who coached Navy in 1944–45 after commanding the submarine USS *Albacore* (SS-218) in Pacific combat: "He was a nice guy but limited in coaching ability." On E Dick Duden: "He was a gentleman type, a nice guy to be around."²⁷

Scott married Leslie Hampton of Lake Village, Ark., the 1944 Miss Arkansas. She and Scott fondly reconstructed their story. En route to Atlantic City for the Miss America pageant, the state queens alternated stopping between West Point and Annapolis. As a plebe he was picked to escort her around campus, but the day she arrived found him practicing football. His roommate met her at the gate and brought her over to sit in the stands to watch. On meeting her, Scott remembered saying, "Gee whiz, oh my gosh! I dressed rather hurriedly. We visited and talked and corresponded. She was so faithful, writing a letter every day." She came to the Army game. He



A sketch of Smackover Scott drawn by the author at the age eleven, following the Navy win over Duke in Durham, N.C., on October 6, 1945.

visited her in Lake Village later that year, and soon they decided to get married.²⁸

"I immediately turned in my resignation but it was denied. I moved in with coach Captain [Tom] Hamilton. Football was over. The war was over. And I wanted to get married. Maybe my letter wasn't written properly." He wrote a second letter. The commandant of midshipmen helped him. Her father called a congressman "and we got some action." In August 2006 they celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Scott left the Academy in early 1946. "There were coaches literally standing outside the gate when I got out. I didn't have time to spend with them, and said they'd have to do it in Arkansas. All the returning veterans were sought after. I was not thinking about any school, but yeah, I really wanted to go to Arkansas. I was only thinking about getting married. Some of the coaches were very convincing." Arkansas coach John H. Barnhill recruited him, and from there he enjoyed a storybook college career.

His other achievements included the 1948 Olympics silver medal in high hurdles, and tying the 100-yard dash world record at 9.4. "I'm within three pounds of my Olympic weight," he boasted 58 years later. He played four years with the Philadelphia Eagles and Detroit Lions before embarking on a career with the Stevens, Inc., insurance firm in Little Rock.

Postscript: Smackover Scott was my wartime, boyhood football idol. It must have been the name and uniform. After watching Smackover Scott's Navy team defeat Duke 21-0 in Durham on October 6, 1945, at age eleven, I made a sketch of the Middies' star halfback. The drawing was stashed away for years with my boyhood wartime memorabilia. In 2006 I sent him a copy.

JOHN GUNN'S GREATEST WORLD WAR II MILITARY TEAMS²⁹

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 — 1945 Fleet City | 14 — 1944 Fort Pierce |
| 2 — 1945 El Toro | 15 — 1944 Great Lakes |
| 3 — 1944 Randolph Field | 16 — 1943 Randolph Field |
| 4 — 1944 Bainbridge | 17 — 1943 Bainbridge |
| 5 — 1943 Iowa PF | 18 — 1944 Camp Peary |
| 6 — 1942 Georgia PF | 19 — 1942 Great Lakes |
| 7 — 1944 Iowa PF | 20 — 1942 North Carolina PF |
| 8 — 1943 Great Lakes | 21 — 1942 Iowa PF |
| 9 — 1944 4th AF | 22 — 1944 El Toro |
| 10 — 1943 4th AF | 23 — 1942 StMary's PF |
| 11 — 1943 Del Monte PF | 24 — 1943 Greensboro AAB |
| 12 — 1942 2nd AF | 25 — 1943 San Diego NTS |
| 13 — 1944 2nd AF | |

"A Switch in Lullabies"
 An Ode to Navy Flyers
 by Grantland Rice³⁰

*Somewhere beyond the Southern Cross above the Seven Seas,
 Along the bitter far-off roads, their pinions catch the breeze.
 Their wings are black against the sky, by desert, surf and dune,
 An ancient lullaby is lost against a rougher tune —*

*Some flew east— some flew west—
 And some will fly no more,
 Far, far out from the eagle's nests
 Their mighty motors roar.
 And wing by wing their rule will grow
 Above all sea and sod,
 Until they strike the final blow
 For Country and for God.*

*Faintly, I hear the old, old song when golden dreams were young.
 But louder still I hear the wings where sudden death is flung.
 Bravely the eagle rides the air, but in my fading dreams,
 The dim, lost lullaby returns — how far away it seems —*

*Some fly east— and some fly west—
 They take an endless track.
 Through flame and steel they face the rest
 Around the world and back.
 Their golden youth blots out the sky,
 They let the comets plod,
 As each one flies to live or die
 For Country and for God.*

Amen.

Former Naval Academy superintendent and athletic director Admiral Jonas H. Ingram, who commanded the wartime South Atlantic task force, once laid the foundation for military football participation. "The closest thing to war in time of peace is football," he said.³¹ And so it turned out.

Glossary: Wartime Football Expressions, Abbreviations, and Jargon

Keys

TEAM RECORDS: Team records are shown parenthetically as won-lost-tied, and occasionally points for-against.

PLAYERS AND COACHES: Players and coaches are identified parenthetically, when known, by their wartime height/weight, pre-military football experience: college, All-America and award honors; and National Football League team or other professional experience.

PLAYER POSITIONS: B — Back; C — Center; E — End; FB — Fullback; G — Guard; HB — Halfback; QB — Quarterback; T — Tackle; TB — Tailback.

Abbreviations

AAB — Army air base
AAF — Army air field
AAFTC — Army Air Forces Training Command
AB — air base
AF — Air Force
AFB — Air Force base
Amphib — Amphibious base
CG — Coast Guard
Cmd — Command
Coll — College
Ctr — Center
Fr — Freshmen
Inf — Infantry
Inst — Institute
JC — Junior college

JV — Junior varsity
 MCAS — Marine Corps air station
 MCB — Marine Corps base
 NAS — Naval air station
 NS — Naval station
 NTC/NTS — Naval training center/station
 ORD — Overseas replacement depot
 Pers Dist Comd/Ctr — Personnel distribution command/center
 PF — Pre-flight
 St — Saint or State
 Trans — Transportation
 Trng — Training
 U — University
 UCLA — University of California at Los Angeles
 USC — University of Southern California

Terminology

aggregation Team, squad, eleven, outfit
All-America(s) Nation's top-ranked football player(s)
APO Army post office; usually assigned to units overseas
armed forces The military: army (USA), army air forces (USAAF), navy (USN), Marine Corps (USMC), Coast Guard (USCG) (in wartime)
army General reference to army branch of the armed forces
Army U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.
Army Air Forces Part of the army; redesignated from Army Air Corps on June 20, 1941; includes Army Air Corps (on paper only), combat command, training commands, and numbered air forces
array Lineup, grouping of players (e.g., backfield)
balanced line Seven-man line, from left to right: end, tackle, guard, center, guard, tackle, end (see also "unbalanced line")
Big Six Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association: Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Iowa State, Kansas State, Missouri; now Big 12 with Texas, Texas A&M, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, Colorado, Baylor added
Big Ten *see* "Western Intercollegiate Conference"
birdmen Aviators, namely pilots but also crewmen
blocking back Primary blocker in single and double-wing offensive formations
booters Placekickers and punters
boy(s) Contemporary usage: any male not one's father or grandfather; civilians and military
cakewalk An easy victory
colleges Includes universities, schools, military academies, other institutions of higher learning

- contest** A football game
- crack** Top-notch, high-quality
- Department of the Navy** Includes office of the Secretary, the navy, the Marine Corps, and Coast Guard (see Navy Department and Marine Corps)
- dope** The “latest facts,” “straight scoop” on a story
- double lateral** lateral used twice in one offensive possession
- double wing (wingback)** Similar to single wing with two wingbacks spread in backfield as blockers and receivers (blocking back became wingback), tailback handling the ball as principal runner and passer, and fullback (No. 2 runner)
- dreadnaught** Predecessor to battleships as principal capital warship
- drop kick** Kick made by dropping the ball to ground on end and booting it straight on; occasionally used for field goal attempts
- duration** U.S. period of wartime: December 7, 1941 to August 14, 1945
- eleven** Team, squad, outfit, aggregation (based on playing a total of eleven players on a team at one time in the era before the platoon system, when players tended to play both offense and defense)
- enemy** Opponent, foe, opposition
- flanker** Potential pass receiver or blocker positioned wide of the line
- flash** Fast runner (ball carrier)
- fleet/fleet-footed** Very fast, swift runner
- flip** Short pass from tailback or quarterback to receiver
- forward wall** Seven-man front line from end to end, in era where both ends played on the line rather than split
- 4-F** Selective Service (draft) classification for a man physically or mentally disqualified from being inducted; conditions ranged from flat feet, missing teeth, and color blindness to mental instability
- game officials** Usually four: referee, umpire, linesman, field judge; wore bow ties but usually no caps
- GI(s)** American servicemen (not women); primarily used to connote army soldiers; stood for “government issue”
- GI Bill** Passed by Congress and signed by the president, the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944” law provided veterans with college expenses and favorable home and business ownership conditions; considered one of the nation’s most important statutes, it helped propel the United States into a world power, and remains in effect.
- girl(s)** Contemporary usage: any female not one’s mother or grandmother; civilian and military
- green/greenies** Inexperienced young players
- griddet/gridster** Football player (played on the gridiron)
- gridiron (grid)** Football playing field
- gyrenes** Marines
- high-flying** Energetic, fast, vocal, robust, ready to roll

- intramurals** Internal college sports activities; no off-campus or outside encounters
- juggernaut** High-powered football team which wins most or all of its games
- KP** Kitchen police; non-cooking duty in the kitchen or mess
- lateral** Offensive team player shoveling ball backward to teammate to continue the play
- leather-lugging** Hearty, rugged back who carried the ball often and well
- line buckler** Hard-running, straight-ahead ball carrier
- line plunge** Basic "T" formation dive play with back carrying into hole in the forward wall
- loop** League or conference
- lulu** Nice play, player, team, or situation
- Marine Corps/Marine(s)** Always capitalized; a Marine was neither a soldier nor associated with the maritime (merchant marine) service or ocean sciences; see Department of the Navy
- military** see armed forces; primarily referred to army and army air forces, but for this book, the generic term for the services and service personnel
- moleskins** Football uniform pants
- navy** Ships, aircraft, craft, and shore establishment of the Navy Department; general reference to the navy
- national emergency** Official term given to U.S. involvement in World War II during the first year or so
- Navy Department** The navy
- Notre Dame box** Most common formation shifted into after lining up in T; similar to single wing with balanced line; relied on deception rather than power
- outfit** Unit, organization, team
- oval** Football, pigskin
- PATs** Points after touchdowns
- Pacific Coast Conference** Southern California, Washington, UCLA, California; inactive: Washington State, Idaho, Stanford, Oregon, Oregon State
- paydirt** Touchdown territory beyond the goal line
- phenom** Phenomenon, a truly gifted and great young player
- pigskin** A football
- plunge** Ball carrier hitting the line, usually for short yardage
- press** newspapers and magazines, and their writers; radio stations and broadcasters
- prognosticator** Sports journalist who dared to predict
- PT boat** Patrol-torpedo boat
- quick-kick** Punt out of running or passing formation on less than fourth down
- ROTC** Reserve Officer Training Corps; army and navy programs instituted at college and high school levels
- scamper** Quick, speedy run with ball
- scatback** Shifty, agile, athletic, swift ball carrier

- scribe** Sportswriter
- scuttlebutt** Navy jargon for rumors or gossip
- sea services** Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard
- service(s) (military)** *see* armed forces; generic term referring to all or any one of them
- single wing** Most popular offensive formation entering World War II football: seven linemen; backfield composed of tailback (primary ball handler, runner, and passer), fullback (blocker and No. 2 runner), blocking back (primary blocker), and wingback (receiver and No. 3 runner); similar to modern shotgun formation
- 1630 hours** (for example) Military time (4:30 p.m.)
- skivvies** Underwear, usually underpants
- sorties** Rushes or carries with ball
- Southeastern Conference** Georgia Tech, Tennessee, Mississippi, Mississippi State, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana State University, Tulane, Florida, Kentucky, Auburn
- Southern Conference** Duke, Clemson, North Carolina, Wake Forest, North Carolina State, William & Mary, Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia Military Institute, Richmond
- Southwest Conference** Texas Christian University, Texas, Arkansas, Texas A&M, Rice, Southern Methodist University
- speedster** Very fast player
- squad** Team, aggregation, outfit, eleven
- stanza** Playing quarter or period
- star-studded** Loaded with great players
- stateside** Within the continental United States (48 states)
- stint** Individual's turn or time at something; e.g., a coach's tenure at a college, or player's at tailback
- swivel-hipped** *see* scatback
- tailback** *see* "single wing"
- T-formation** Offensive formation that gained popularity and proved to be dominant by end of war: seven linemen; backfield composed of quarterback (primary ball handler and passer, took snaps under center), two halfbacks (running backs, No. 1 ball carriers and also receivers), fullback (blocker and No. 2 ball carrier)
- T.H.** Territory of Hawaii, prior to statehood
- tilt** A football game
- triple-threat** Tailback who could run, pass, and punt well
- trounced** Defeated, usually badly
- unbalanced line** Seven linemen positioned with four or more to either the left or right of the center (*see* also "balanced line"); "strong side" was that with four or more
- VMF** Marine Corps fighter squadron

- War Department** The army and army air forces, headed by the Secretary of War (member of president's cabinet); reorganized in 1947 as Department of the Army and separate Department of the Air Force
- WAVES** Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (navy)
- Western Intercollegiate Conference** Big Ten: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Northwestern, Ohio State, Purdue, Wisconsin; today: original colleges plus Penn State
- white hats** Enlisted navy male personnel
- wingback** *see* "double wing" and "single wing"

Chapter Notes

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