

# The Thundering Herd

By John W. Heisman

*Football's steam-roller era was on. First Princeton gave us the V, which was bad enough. But then Harvard gave it wings and we had the flying wedge. Then came Pennsylvania's retort with the flying interference and guards back.*

*Of such ponderous days does John W. Heisman, the famous coach of Georgia Tech, Pennsylvania, Auburn and other team producers, write in his second article. In more than forty years of football he has seen it all*

AS FAR as we know, William Webb Ellis of Rugby, England, started it. In one of Rugby's ivy-clad halls there is a tablet hallowing his spectacular defiance of the rules of his distant day:

This Stone  
Commemorates the Exploit of  
William Webb Ellis  
Who with a Fine Disregard for the  
Rules of Football  
As Played in His Time  
First Took the Ball into His Arms and  
Ran with It  
Thus Originating the Distinctive Feature of  
The Rugby Game  
A. D. 1823

After him the deluge. Following in the train of Billy Ellis, over American fields, came a horde of youth paying splendid tribute to his daring. To be sure, they came far in his wake—Camp, Terry, McClung, Hinkley, Thorpe, Lamar, Lake, Ames, Heston, Hare. I mention too few.

Football carriers as great as they (or greater?) followed them in a generation. But to William Webb Ellis go the pioneer's laurels.



Heffelfinger of Yale comes through—as usual. He's wrecking the center of the line, his right arm extended toward his victim

All that he did was to surrender to that yearning that is the hottest desire of every true football player; that yearning to snatch the ball and race toward and across the enemy's goal line. The sensation that he sprang came to have many American cousins, one of the first of which was born on the afternoon of October 18, 1884.

Princeton and Pennsylvania were playing one of their early games. There was a fierce rivalry between them. Later, unhappily, it was to become too bitter. But on this afternoon the moment came when the ball was given by the Princeton quarterback to the great Henry Lamar, right halfback.

His great speed and dodging carried him 18 yards around his own end. No interference preceded him. None was permitted under the rules of his day.

## They'll Try Anything Once

On the next play, Princeton fumbled. Penn, smashing at Princeton's line and flanks, got nowhere. Penn punted and a Princeton man made a fair catch at mid-field.

Here Hodges, Princeton's quarter, is struck by inspiration. A dazzling idea, coming from heaven knows what or where, has seized him, and dancing in his excitement he calls Bird, his captain. Bird listens, grins and asks for time out and gets it. The entire Princeton team swarms around Hodges, who repeats his plan.

There is a vigorous nodding and a nervous rubbing of hands. Sure, they'll try anything once. If they can get away with it—

So Princeton elects a free kick which is their privilege inasmuch as the man who made the catch held one arm aloft as the ball descended toward him, thus serving notice upon Penn that he intended only to catch the ball and not try to advance it.

Penn scatters to await the free kick, its thin line 10 yards away from the ball. And then Penn is amazed to see ten of Princeton's men form a V with the point aimed at them. Between the two sides of the V is Baker, an even stronger runner than Lamar although not as elusive. At the point of the V is the Princeton center and the ball is at his feet.

The center picks up the ball and touches it to his toe—a "constructive" kick, satisfactory to the rule book. He passes it to Baker. Penn, fascinated, sees the V move toward her line with Baker within it, the ball under his arm.

The first mass play in American football is under way. . . .

That wild-goose formation, the famous V, plowed through Penn's thin line and the two sides of it maintained their alignment for 50 yards. A Penn player threw himself under the new car of Juggernaut, five yards from his own goal, wrecking it.

Hodge's inspiration was the forerun-

ner of the flying wedge, the secondary wedge, the revolving wedge and a wide variety of momentum plays for years to come. They were ponderous, but the game too was ponderous. Back in the thundering herd days when mass plays were legal, brute strength, even if heavy-footed, held the ascendancy over fleetness and rapidity of mind. We consistently travel lighter, faster and farther today.

## Flattery Does It

But the V's, the wedges, the guards-back tandems and all the rest of those crushers were deadly. The football casualty lists became long and saddening. Throughout the land there arose protests of many parents who had lusty sons in college. Professional humanitarians worked on college deans, some of whom capitulated and either abolished the game or threatened to.

Particularly did those parents who every September began fearing for the necks of their sons protest against the crushing qualities of the game, although there were many of them like Tim Barton's father.

I call him Tim Barton because he might object to the use here of his real name. He was one of Penn's great backs, not a Grange nor a Thorpe, but no list of first-class football stars would be quite complete without his name.

His father, who had never seen a game, was bitterly opposed to his playing but at the boy's long and almost tearful solicitation he consented to come out one afternoon before definitely prohibiting football.

We placed a chair on the sidelines for the old man and two of our most diplomatic students were appointed to sit at his sides during the game. They deftly filled the father's ears with nice words about his son and talked dark pictures of the calamity that would be Penn's were the university to be deprived of the boy's football services.

The old man was human. That a son of his should be so valiant, so valuable, so fleet, so strong was flattering. Was he not his father?

He arrived on the field sternly and impressively clad—frock coat, silk hat, striped trousers, white spats, square-toed patent leathers, gloves and gold-headed cane. His thin patrician face was flanked by whiskers, glossy and luxuriant. He was hardly seated when our cheer leader called for an ovation for Tim Barton. I think, too, that Barton père got a long "Ye-a-a-a-a-a."



The rib-crushing flying wedge. Simply the V with a flying start. Gangway! The flying wedge was invented by Lorin Deland of Harvard, right, who never played football





Hector Cowan of Princeton was probably the greatest of all tackles



He was quite an important person after all.

Well, Tim Barton was that afternoon's hero for Pennsylvania. He had to be. We worked harder to help Tim be great than we did to defeat our opposition. We gave him interference that would have brightened the life of any coach. We gave him the ball whenever a touchdown was unavoidable. And all this interspersed frequently with long rals for Barton.

We opened the second half (we played 45-minute halves in those earthquaking days) with a flying wedge, Tim carrying the ball. From the opposition's safety man came the startled cry:

"Here he comes again. Kill him. Kill the son of a mackerel."

Tim's father, whose face had grown pink and whose eyes had taken on a high polish under the influence of his son's great work, arose. He snatched off his tall hat and threw it into the mud. Our wedge swept down the sideline, past the old man, a full 50 yards.

The safety man, in hot pursuit, was still imploring his teammates to kill Tim Barton when Tim broke loose from the formation and went it alone with that sanguinary safety man in full cry, four yards behind. And then the old man joined the race.

Then we knew where Tim Barton had got his speed. The old man, running like a sprinter, joined the chase, waving his cane. He closed up on the howling safety man until when Tim crossed the goal line he was only five yards astern.

#### The Secondary V

Tim fell to earth. He had made another touchdown. On one side of him stood the safety man. On the other side stood the father flourishing his cane.

"Kill him, hey," he panted at the safety man. "Kill him, hey. Well, you kill him and, by gosh, I'll kill you."

And football had won over another

member of the opposition.

Defenses against wedges became common. Generally speaking these counter-attacks were as menacing to life and limb as the mass offensives. But the point is that auxiliaries to the V's and wedges had to be developed.

At Oberlin, in 1892, I evolved a smaller, secondary V which was to form when the primary wedge was destroyed. We used it first against Western Reserve University and the dividends it paid were huge. With Fred Savage, for many years a member of the National

Rules Committee, carrying the ball this secondary wedge had its premiere and Fred scurried 55 yards for a score and something new had appeared beneath the October sun.

Until that year the wedges started from standstill. Naturally their crushing properties were far greater than their speed. Speedy assaults upon the wedge were

lessening its menace and, apparently, fetching its life to a close. And then Lorin DeLand came to its rescue by giving its wings—the flying wedge.

DeLand was at Harvard helping her to prepare for the Yale invasion. Yale's first glimpse of this new bruising machine was had early in the game. Two lines of Harvard men, five in a line, fell back 20 yards along either boundary of the field. Trafford of Harvard was standing over the ball in the conventional position of a center man.

Yale, scattered over the field, ten yards away beheld this interesting spectacle with something of the awe and apprehension that must have been Pennsylvania's when Hodges of Princeton had his celebrated brainstorm.

Blithely Trafford waved his arm and the two lines of his teammates started running toward him in Indian files. By the time they had reached him their momentum was terrific. Trafford scooped up the ball, thereby putting it in play, stepped back between the two leading runners, the two lines instantly converging, and ran within this flying V with Yale men being hurled hither and yon like spray from the prow of a battleship. He ran 25 yards before the wedge got its 20 legs hopelessly tangled and collapsed. Now, one of the remarkable features about the flying wedge was that its inventor, DeLand, had never played football.

But the momentum play was to be doomed. The human frame was unequal to it. Besides, a number of great running and kicking players—bright individual stars who needed no assault and battery to assist them to fame—had appeared and were continuing to appear—Camp, Terry and McClung of Yale, Henry Lamar and Snake Ames of Princeton, for example. Speed, strong straight-arming, clever dodging and agile brains had come to football, naturally making stupid the exploits of the steam-roller tacticians.

Yet the mass play and assault and battery tactics continued for the average college team. The average varsity was an all-sub outfit by the end of the season. Surely few coaches have had a more impressive array of mass play casualties than I had at Oberlin in 1893. Even such men as I was able to impress into service were bandaged almost beyond recognition. Football was a serious occupation. A team played at least twice a week and maybe more. It used up men.

One Saturday my Oberlin men overcame Alonzo Stagg's mighty Chicago squad, 33 to 12, and were reduced to crutches, canes, splints and yards of plaster thereby. On the following Monday we staggered off the field at Champaign, Ill., the very groggy victors over Hall's University of Illinois team, 34 to 24.

#### Brave Days But Rough

That Monday night I had the cauliflowered ears of three of my warriors lanced. Eight other members of my team were under the hands of surgeons although none of them was seriously injured—that is, seriously for those days. Homeward bound, we took day coaches because we had to change trains at Toledo at midnight. The more exhausted of the players slept anyway—heavily, nervously.

We dragged through the station gates at Toledo, some with arms in slings, some on crutches. I don't think there was one of them that did not have his head bandaged and his face court-plastered. And to lend an even deeper hue of gloom to the picture the team's manager was carried off the train on a stretcher. His injuries had, however, been acquired indoors. He had so lost control of himself that he had eaten himself into a painful attack of acute indigestion. There was a considerable crowd at the station for midnight, but they had not gathered to cheer us.

A mob closed in upon us clucking and murmuring solicitude and pity.

"Good heavens," cried a woman standing near one of my total wrecks, "look at this one. He must have been underneath."

"I was, madam," he groaned. "Every time, it seems."

A go-getter interne from a hospital came scurrying over to me.

"All right, sir, all right," he cried. "The ambulances are over this way."

"See here," I said a bit peevishly, "we did get bounced around a little but you people are overdoing this. We can make it under our own steam."

And about that time newsboys arrived carrying still warm newspapers.

"Heee yah, heee yah. Yextraaaa. . . All abouta wreck ona Clover Leaf. . . Yaaaaaaah."

So it is just as well that we did not accept the interne's invitation. The ambulances were needed more by the survivors of the Clover Leaf wreck who arrived in a few minutes.

Brave days, those, but a trifle rough.

That was the era that we of an older generation of football love to think upon, not perhaps that better football was played but because of its giants. Individual genius stood out more prominently then because the mass play was the customary ground-gainer.

But those days produced Gill, Heffelfinger, Butterworth, Thorne and Winter of Yale, Newell of Harvard, Cowan of Princeton, Osgood of Cornell and Penn, Brooke of Penn, Bunker of the Army, Weeks of Columbia and Hubbard of Amherst. There has never been a lineman the superior of Hector Cowan. I have seen him plunge on for 10 and 15 yards, the ball clamped to his ribs and three and four earnest young athletes struggling to fetch him down. Occasionally he would fail—occasionally only—and then he would utter his favorite oath, "Oh, sugar!" I saw the man gain more than 300 yards against Penn in 1889.

Do you blame me, a coach, for gloating over such memory?

#### Keep Out of His Way

Similarly I like occasionally to think of a lad named Willie Heston, who played for Yost at Michigan in those stupendous "Hurry-up" days at Ann Arbor. I have had dreams of a trio of backs—Heston, Thorpe and Grange. Think of that array in your backfield. And a line with Glass and Brown of Yale, Bemus Pierce of Carlisle, Rinehart of Lafayette, Glaze of Dartmouth and Dewitt of Princeton in it.

And of course William Heffelfinger of Yale. He was six feet four. He weighed two hundred and one pounds.

Once I said to a teammate:

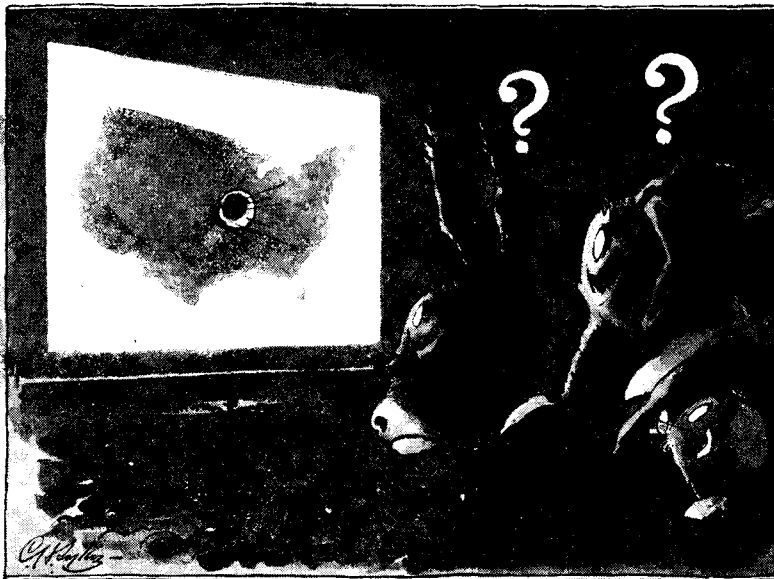
"Listen, old man, we're going at his side of the line this time. Can't you somehow get through him—just this once?"

"Get through him!" wept the battered warrior. "Hell, man, I can't even get out of his way."

I too have played against Heffelfinger. The black and blue bruises his shoulders left upon me and the dents I had from his hips and knees have gone long since but the memory of them will be with me always. As an interfering guard the game has never seen his equal. One learned much watching Heff. One learned (Continued on page 59)



First of the mass plays—the V. The ball passes to a man within. Then the ponderous trampling began. Heads up!



THE scene is a Movie House frightfully wide with millions and millions of people inside. It's garnished with stripes, and it's studded with stars; a Paul Whiteman concert plays music from *Mars* and the management smiles while the patrons throng in to see the Big Thriller "They Cannot Both Win."

#### CHORUS OF USHERS

Diplomacy's our doxy,  
At etiquette we're foxy,  
We've all been trained by Roxy  
For this cam-paign.  
We censor each oration  
And can vituperation—  
And if you can't refrain,  
BAM-BAM  
Git off the train!

(The Ushers dance a step or two when at the door appear on View an Elephant with swinging snoot, a Donkey in a Palm Beach suit. The Ushers come to a salute.)

#### DONK AND GOP

We are not really truly beasts,  
Though quaintly we resembl' 'em.  
One is the Donk and one's the Gop  
And each a Party Emblem.

#### USHER

Oh welcome, Brute of G. O. P.  
And Mammal of Democracee!

(They pry their way through well-packed rows. The mighty Gop walks on the toes of one poor Indiana Rep who, loving Watson, lost his pep. What matters it? He's out of step. Beside his huge and hated Chum the Donkey sits and chews his gum. The air is full of sparks and pins. The lights go out. The Show begins.)

PROLOGUE (Loud Speaker, a terrible squeaker):  
This Melodrama which we demonstrate  
Differs from any other up to date  
In that it has Two Heroes persecuted  
By Two big Villains, equally well suited.  
And in this Talkie, novel to the arts,  
The Villains double for the Hero parts,  
So One is playing dirty half the time,  
The other Half is perfectly sublime. . .

(A silver sheen shows on the Screen. But look! The Talking Movie has begun. They Can't Both Win. We ask you, pick the One!)

(First scene displays the Stanford Bowl with lots and lots of people packed. H. Hoover, blushing like a rose and by a mile of Bunting backed, faces with sinews like a bouncer the Big Republican Announcer.)

## Songs for the Stump

### THE TALKING MOVIES

By Wallace  
Irwin

#### BIG REPUBLICAN ANNOUNCER

I've come, sir, with news, sir—  
It's sudden, I confess—

#### H. HOOVER

What izzit? Your visit  
Puzzles me none the less.

#### BIG REPUBLICAN ANNOUNCER

You see, sir—well, We, sir—  
I mean the Boys and I,  
We sort of thought you really ought  
To give the game a try.  
They've sent me here with this idee;  
To break the News so fated.  
I'll come through clean, be blunt, I mean—  
Bert, you've been nominated!

(The Stanford yell begins to swell, the Cardinal to wave. "We thought he would! We knew he could!" shrills forth from many a brave. But Herbert stands with folded hands and looks amazement-swept. "You should have told me this before," he says. "But I accept.")

(Slow fade-out and wild applause, save

for the Donkey's gruff hee-haws. He doesn't like the scene. "You wait till Al comes on," says he, "then we shall see what we shall see." All eyes are on the Screen.)

(Close-up of Alfred looking wise at Several Distinguished Guys.)

#### DISTINGUISHED GUYS (chanting):

Alfred Emanuel Smith,  
Champion of an Undivided South—

(Thunder and lightning from the direction of Dallas.)

Reincarnation of Thomas Jefferson,  
Replica of Abraham Lincoln—

(SOLID DEMOCRAT: "Hey? What's yer Party?")

Alfred Emanuel Smith, we are here today to—

#### ALFRED EMANUEL SMITH

Baloney, baloney! Cut out the old phoney  
Patrick's Day eulogy stuff.  
I know why you've came. Sure, go on,  
use my name  
To give the Big Ticket a puff.

You wise-cracking guys thought you'd ring a surprise—

Huh, I heard of it way back in June.  
Bill, see what the Boys in the Back Room will have—  
Now, Bandmaster, strike up a tune.

COLD-WATER CHORUS (from Asheville, N. C., singing Al Moody's best Rum-Chasing Glee.)

North vote, South vote,  
All around the map.  
While Dixie's scared of the nigger California dreads the Jap.  
Raskob pulls the money,  
Alfred pulls the cork—  
You cannot run the Southland

#### FROM

The Sidewalks of New York.

(Down in the Audience the Gop giggles as though he couldn't stop. The Donk, appearing very glum, plants a large horseshoe in his tum and honks, "Shut up, you G. O. P. That ain't a funny song to me.")

(Now on the Screen the Candidate makes his Acceptance Speech—it's great. So full of this and full of that and almost always Democrat. In language guardedly emphatic it fills the radios with Static, Al's stately maxim to repeat, "Huh. Hoover won't be hard to Beat.")

(The Ringling Brothers next come in, leading their animals in dozens. Come hippos fat and dik-diks thin and zebras—they're the Donkey's cousins. Come reindeer tame and chimpanzees, come Kangaroos with agile knees and Twenty Educated Fleas.)

#### RINGLING BROTHERS

We know you're fond of animals;  
You photograph so well,  
One arm around a Pet giraffe,  
One Fondling a gazelle.

#### A. EMANUEL SMITH

My zoölogic mood may win  
An ultimate election—  
It never fails to get me in  
The Rotogravure Section.

(Now William H. DeMille arrives with cameras a scud. Al wears his Photographic Grin and looks extremely glad. A Polar Bear is on his knee, a Wombat on his arm. And now the Tiger Tamman-ee, not meaning any harm, sneaks up. The Candidate cries, "Scat! I won't be photographed with That!")

#### THE TIGER

Gully! Wunst he usta lumme.  
Wotta woi! I'm gotten gummy.  
(Continued on page 58)



Illustrated by  
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