

THE HISTORY OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL AT GREENSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA (1894-1900)

By Robert B. Van Atta

The era of professional football at Greensburg (Pa.), about 35 miles southeast of Pittsburgh – where the concept of paying players began two years earlier – spanned the years from 1894 through 1900, with the exception of 1899. Actually, the Greensburg Athletic Association apparently had only one salaried performer in 1894, Lawson Fiscus, with a team composed primarily of local talent before several paid players were added for 1895.

That short-lived pro history came to a rather ignominious end, as reported in the Monday, November 26, 1900 issue of the Greensburg Daily Tribune under a headline of “LOCAL ELEVEN DISBANDED – Doom of Professional Football in Greensburg Sealed.”

Financial problems, accelerated by a weather cancellation of a scheduled next-to-last game, November 24, reached a crisis when neighboring Latrobe, a heated rival with whom games always drew large crowds, withdrew from a scheduled Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 29) game. The final throes were not without controversy. The details, as reported in the November 27 Daily Tribune:

The story given out to the Pittsburgh morning newspapers by some of the Greensburg football players who stopped off in the city on the way to their homes does a great injustice to the members of the local football committee, who treated the players with all fairness, even going down into their pockets to the extent of over \$700 to pay the players every cent that was due them.

The contracts with the players were carried out to the letter, and yesterday morning they received every dollar coming to them under said contract. Their pay started on the first day of October, and they were supposed to play the game during the months of October and November. With the exception of the local men none of them reported on time – several of them showing up as late as the 10th. Not a cent was taken off for time lost at the opening of the season.

When it was impossible to get a Thanksgiving game the committee decided to disband Saturday night; one week's pay was deducted. The committee had a right to release a man at any time. Had the work of the team been what was required and expected, Greensburg would have had a Thanksgiving game, and the burden of proof rests with the players.

Where a contract called for transportation to and from a player's home, it was paid. Where a contract called for transportation one way, it was paid, but where a contract only called for room and boarding, transportation was not paid.

When these contracts were signed the players knew what they were signing, and every part of said contract was fulfilled by the Greensburg committee. Had some of the players from a distance been paid according to the touchdowns they made, they would have walked home.

Thus wrapped up a colorful chapter of Greensburg sports history that began with an 1890 informal amateur team and nourished a lively decade with the city's brief but historic role in professional football annals.

The Formative Period, 1890-1893

What became pro football at Greensburg emerged from the sport's beginning in 1890, when the community athletic association's first grid team tied Indiana (Pa.) Normal, 6-6, and lost to the Kiskiminetas Springs School (Kiski Prep), 34-4, the latter its first home game. A group of college boys home for Thanksgiving vacation supplemented the team for a game with a Pittsburgh club eleven at the Fairgrounds (later Lynch Field), and lost by a narrow margin.

Three known games were played by the association team in 1891. The score of the Indian Normal game has not been found, nor has the score of a game with Pittsburgh Athletic Club. However, the Pittsburgh game undoubtedly was a loss, since that club team was known to have been undefeated in seven games that season. The third game resulted in a 10-0 loss to another prominent Pittsburgh club, Allegheny Athletic Association.

Two losses were recorded in 1892, 6-2 to Western University of Pennsylvania (which shortly became the University of Pittsburgh), and 28-0 to Pittsburgh Athletic Club.

For 1893, a more dedicated approach to quality football was made, along with an effort to schedule more games. One game was slated for September 30 at Altoona, but newspaper reports gave details of an 8-8 intrasquad match played on that date. No accounts have been found for two other planned games, October 7 at Kiski School and October 21 with Western University of Pennsylvania.

A known score for 1893 was a 10-0 loss again at Pittsburgh Athletic Club. That game was played "in cold wind and rain on miserable grounds. PAC did not indulge in their annual slugging tactics," a Greensburg newspaper reported. "Lalus, the big policeman who plays left guard (PAC), was seen to emerge from several scrimmages with a mixture of mud, blood, and bewilderment." P.A.C. was referred to as "the crack team of western Pennsylvania." For Greensburg, Lawson Fiscus "put up a very good article, repeatedly bucking the centre for good gains and tackling like a fiend."

In summary, the first four years of Greensburg Athletic Association football that began with the 1890 season, through 1893, were not particularly successful. Lack of local opponents, rivalries which did not develop until later, and the relatively few experienced players available locally were drawbacks.

The Year of 1894

It was in 1894 that the Greensburg Athletic Association hired its first professional player, Lawson Fiscus, for \$20 a game plus expenses. Fiscus played for Greensburg as an "amateur" in 1893, but was sought by other teams as the professional concept spawned by the Pittsburgh clubs increased in tempo.

A native of Indiana County, Fiscus played informal football at Indiana Normal (now

Indiana University of Pennsylvania) before it fielded a school eleven. In 1891, Lawson and his brother Ross were recruited by and played for Allegheny Athletic Association, a prominent pioneer Pittsburgh team, with whom Lawson played halfback. In 1892, Lawson played football for Princeton, then in 1893 he taught school at South Fork, near Johnstown, while he played for Greensburg. A powerful runner and defensive hitter, Lawson continued to teach school and commute by railroad, a fairly easy process in those days of frequent main line trains from the Johnstown area through Greensburg to Pittsburgh.

In 1894 the Greensburg Athletic Association team got off to an impressive start, winning its first five games, all of which were at home. The opener, Saturday, October 13, was a 24-0 victory over Kiski School in "unfavorable weather," followed by a 21-0 conquest of Indiana Normal characterized by one local newspaper as the "second consecutive game over a crack team."

A 36-0 triumph over West Virginia University followed October 27, then a 24-0 win over Carnegie Athletic Club of Braddock November 3. Holy Ghost College (which became Duquesne University) was the first to score against the Greensburg defense in the collegians' 6-4 loss.

For the Saturday, November 17 game at Altoona, the team was accompanied on a special railroad car by about 100 fans, but Greensburg suffered its first and only defeat of the season there, 10-0.

The following Saturday (November 24), a scoreless tie with Jeannette was ended at half time by a disagreement. In that game, Lawson Fiscus was accused of kicking or stepping on the face of one of the Jeannette players.

About 2,500 fans were on hand November 29 for the Thanksgiving Day return game with Altoona coming to Greensburg, at which the home team hoped to avenge its only loss. This time, the Maroon and White of Greensburg prevailed, 6-4, to finish a highly successful season with a record of 6-1-1. In those days, a touchdown accounted for four points and the "goal after" for two.

Momentum had been achieved for Greensburg football. The fans were turning out for games in large numbers, and even accompanying the team by train to games away from home. And the one paid player on the 1894 team was to increase by several for the following year.

The Year of 1895

A number of new names were featured in Greensburg lineups for the 1895 season, in which an eleven-game schedule was played that opened and closed with Latrobe. The first game with the new Y.M.C.A. team of that city was October 5, several weeks after Latrobe had pressed John Brallier into service as a replacement quarterback for its opener as its first paid player. But Greensburg won handily at home, 25-0, as Lawson Fiscus was awarded a hat offered by a local clothier for the first touchdown. Playing coach Charles Atherton, a former Penn State star, drop kicked a field goal for Greensburg, cited in newspaper accounts of the game as "a rare feat."

Another former Penn State star, halfback Fred Robison, "was a superior article" in the

42-2 walloping of Western University of Pennsylvania in rain and mud at home, October 12. The next week, three Greensburg players – Atherton, Fiscus, and Robison – turned down an offer of \$125 a month each, a tidy sum in those days, to play for Duquesne County and Athletic Club of Pittsburgh. Helping to make this decision was the raising of an extra “purse” of guaranteed funds “by a number of interested parties in Greensburg.”

The third game of the season demonstrated the importance of that threesome to the team. The second win since 1890 over Altoona, October 19, was decided in the second half when Fiscus dived through the line for a touchdown and Atherton kicked the goal to decide a 12-6 game. Robison and the other two “were in the right place at the right time” as Greensburg’s standouts in the game, according to the press.

Robison also featured in the 44-0 contest, October 26, of Carnegie Athletic Club of Braddock, scoring the first TD after a minute and a half of action and highlighting the game with his running and tackling. Some spectators at Greensburg’s Athletic Park (later known as Offutt Field) were “so hilarious over the rout that they threw their hats in the air and some went in the creek” that ran past a corner of the field.

Two first half scores, November 2, whipped the Wheeling (W. Va.) Tigers, 12-0, and the sixth home game of the six played thus far that year was little more than a warm up, Tuesday, November 5, when Connellsville was submerged, 40-0.

The six-game winning streak was interrupted in the mud and rain at Pittsburgh’s Exposition Park November 9, as a scoreless tie with Pittsburgh Athletic Club was played on a “very slopping and slushy” field. Great defensive work by Richard Laird and Adam Wyant held P.A.C. on the Greensburg five-yard line. Fiscus, Atherton, and “little” Robison also starred. Another 1895 addition, Laird had captained the Grove City College team that won the “western Pennsylvania championship” the year before.

It was back to Pittsburgh again the following Saturday, November 16, along with 300 fans for what turned out to be a quite controversial loss to Duquesne Country and Athletic Club. D.C. & A.C., who like Greensburg, had played a scoreless tie with P.A.C., won 14-0. A home team man was substituted for the scheduled official, resulting in what the Greensburg Daily Tribune called bad officiating and “thievery.” A touchdown said to have been scored after time was called contributed to the dissatisfaction, along with rough play.

Greensburg regained the winning touch, November 23 at Juanita Park, Altoona, when the host city eleven lost 17-4 to the 13-player Greensburg traveling squad. Atherton and Edward Mechling of the visitors gave Altoona fans an impressive drop kicking exhibition before the game. After Altoona was stopped near the Greensburg goal at one point in the game, Robison ran 105 yards around right end on the then 110-yard field, aided by “splendid interference” for “the greatest run on record.”

For Thanksgiving, November 28, Grove City College cancelled its planned trip to play at Greensburg, but Beaver Falls was secured as a last-minute opponent. Joe Donohoe scored the first touchdown and Richard Coulter kicked four goals after in Greensburg’s 24-0 victory.

Two days later, on Saturday, there is some confusion as to what happened in a disputed result. While Greensburg and Latrobe records both indicate a 4-0 Greensburg win, both

acknowledge some dispute over the result. One Pittsburgh newspaper reported that “it was a great day for Latrobe, for its football team had beaten the famous Greensburg aggregation.” The score was 4-0, on Welsh’s 30-yard run around right end, according to that version.

The season’s tally of 8-2-1 was the first of a four-season string of similar winning records.

Although there were probably others, members of the 1895 squad who were known to have been paid to play were Fiscus, guard-quarterback Adam M. Wyant of Bucknell and the University of Chicago, and fullback Charles Atherton and halfback Fred Robison, both of Penn State. Wyant was cited by his coach at Chicago, Amos Alonzo Stagg, as “one of the best men that ever donned the canvas jacket” (then part of the uniform). Wyant also served at one time as principal of the Greensburg schools and became a U.S. Congressman from the Greensburg area. Atherton, whose name remains today at Penn State in the name of a main street and a campus building, rose to the presidency of that university.

The Year of 1896

The 1896 team, with many of the same players as the year before, was cited early in the season by Pittsburgh newspapers as “perhaps the best in western Pennsylvania.” For that year, Alfred Sigman was added as captain/coach and fullback. From Lafayette, he was also known for his track accomplishments at the Penn Relays. He became a Greensburg school teacher and helped coach there.

After an inaugural 22-0 win over Jeannette September 6, the Greensburg eleven did not play until October 3, when the Wheeling Tigers were hosted. Ross Fiscus scored on a first-half plunge, Donohoe tallied a second-half touchdown, then Lawson Fiscus scored the final TD on a “run from the center of the field with beautiful interference.” Sigman’s goal after made the final score 14-0.

Ross Fiscus declined an offer from Jeannette to join its team after that game, and was still in the Greensburg lineup for the October 10 game, and 18-0 home conquest of Beaver Falls, scoring one of the touchdowns. Lawson Fiscus tallied twice, and Tom Donohoe ran 44 yards with an intercepted pass for the fourth four-pointer.

Saturday, October 17 was a great day at Greensburg’s Athletic Park, as the locals defeated the Pittsburgh Athletic Club for the first time in history, 14-0 before 1,500 fans. Lawson Fiscus scored all three touchdowns, one on a 30-yard run and another on an 80-yard jaunt around end, “one of the longest ever at the field.” Robison and Atherton, Greensburg stars of the year before, were in the P.A.C. lineup, making the triumph even more satisfying.

After that impressive performance, Geneva College decided to cancel its October 24 game with Greensburg. The next game, October 31, was a 10-4 win for Greensburg at Latrobe, as Sigman and Lawson Fiscus scored touchdowns and Sigman booted a goal after. The Princeton grid immortal and later coach, Doggie Trenchard, tallied the Latrobe points. Since there was considerable betting whether Latrobe would score or not, the newspaper from that community gloated afterward that “Greensburg got the game and Latrobe got the cash.”

A practice game with the “scrubs” was played the following Saturday afternoon, but then tragedy struck November 14 at Pittsburgh’s Exposition Park. A special train took the team and its followers to the city, where the Greensburg fans were among 3,000 spectators who saw the powerful Duquesne Country and Athletic Club earn an 18-4 decision. Local newspapers used the terms “badly beaten” and “teamwork was rank” in mourning the first loss of the season for Greensburg.

It was followed November 21 by a scoreless tie with Pittsburgh Athletic Club, also away from home, in “an interesting game.” A disagreeable day produced much water and mud on the field. Lawson Fiscus had 20- and 25-yard runs around end, and Richard (Bo) Thomas, Greensburg center, recovered a fumble with a clear field ahead, but was overtaken.

Thanksgiving Day came November 26, and with it a 10-0 repeat win over Latrobe before a crowd of 2,500 at Athletic Park. After a scoreless first half, Ross Fiscus reached the goal line with a 35-yard left end run. His cousin and teammate, David Campbell, a former Allegheny Athletic Association player, tallied the other touchdown. The game was delayed an hour by a discussion over the eligibility of a Harvard star added to Latrobe’s squad for the game, then featured by a crowd demonstration of “fully two minutes” after a Ross Fiscus touchdown. Latrobe quarterback John Brallier was knocked out during the game.

A 6-1-1 season was the team’s final report card for 1896.

The 1897 Season

The 1897 season brought Greensburg’s greatest success, with a 10-1 record, best in its history, and its highest scoring team as well. That year’s squad of 27 players was large by the standards of the times, with a number of new players added. Principle among these was the fleet former Bucknell and Lafayette halfback, George Barclay of Milton, Pa., who served as captain-coach in addition to playing. Barclay later played major-league baseball, and was known as “Deerfoot” because of his speed.

The first eight games were decisive victories. The September 25 opener was a 22-6 triumph over Swissvale A.C. as Robison, back with Greensburg, Sigman, and Barclay all scored in the first 15 minutes, and W.A. Sterrett, a new player from Geneva College, went over for a later touchdown.

A week later, many runs “from 50 to 80 yards” featured a 14-touchdown and 9-goal after offensive outburst, a 74-0 rout of Jeannette. Among the ten Greensburg players producing the TD’s, Barclay had three and Joe Donohoe and Sterrett two each. It was “the largest score ever on the home grounds,” to that point.

Washington and Jefferson captain and guard William Ingles joined the team for its October 9 game with the Pittsburgh (Allegheny) Imperials, “a team not in a class with Greensburg” according to the Daily Tribune. That was obvious from the resounding 90-0 Greensburg win. The 16 touchdowns included three by Barclay. Of the 14 goals after, Sigman kicked 13.

Geneva College became the fourth victim, 34-0, October 16, despite the collegians

having former Greensburg standout Ross Fiscus as playing coach. Barclay scored touchdowns on an end run and a pass, and fed Robison on a "criss cross" to account for three of the scores.

Altoona was the next to fall, dropping a 28-0 game in which all the points were scored in the first half. Robison made the first three touchdowns, and Sterrett and Barclay the other two. It became six wins in a row October 30, when the Wheeling Tigers went down 30-0, as Robison again scored three times. Adam Wyant ran ten yards with a fumble for another touchdown.

Robison, however, was injured four days later when Greensburg whipped Western University of Pennsylvania (Pitt), 47-0, on a slippery field. A 25-yard field goal by Sterrett was the first on Greensburg's field since the 1894 game with Indiana Normal.

After seven wins in as many games at home, the Greensburg team entrained for Pittsburgh November 6, for the third game in eight days. There, 3,500 at Exposition Park saw what the Greensburg Daily Tribune called "the best foot ball game of the year" as Duquesne Country and Athletic Club fell, 24-6. Although still suffering from injuries, Robison scored twice and Barclay and McKenzie had a single touchdown each. The game was held up for over three minutes early in the first half when Barclay was kicked "deliberately" in the head after being downed. He stayed in the game, but lost some effectiveness.

There was no game the following Saturday, a scheduled contest with Latrobe being postponed due to the large number of injured Greensburg players. The week's layoff helped little, however, as Greensburg lost, 12-6, to Latrobe November 20. The game was headlined on page one of the Daily Tribune: "WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND WE ARE THEIRS! – Latrobe Drags the Maroon and White in the Mud at Athletic Park." On a warm day, fans from Pittsburgh and Latrobe swelled the crowd to 5,000, the largest in the community's early football history.

The opening kickoff went into a creek which ran by the field

Dunsmore [Greensburg tackle] following it like a demon. He took to the water like a duck and brought the ball forth dripping with the slime of Jacks Run

according to the Greensburg newspaper version. In contrast, a Latrobe paper reported that

the ball bounded merrily into the creek, where half a dozen long-haired fellows followed it head first. Okeson [Latrobe playing coach] waded out with the ball and a smile of heavenly forgiveness. It was Latrobe's ball.

Near the end of the first half, Barclay made the first score, going off guard, for Greensburg. But second-half touchdowns by Gass and Walter Okeson (grabbing a punt touched by Greensburg) for Latrobe won the "remarkably clean game, as remarkably fierce."

Five days later, at Pittsburgh on Thanksgiving Day, Greensburg easily measured Pittsburgh Athletic Club, 16-0, before 3,000 fans. Then, two days later the Maroon and White, acknowledged champions of western Pennsylvania football for 1897, traveled to

Latrobe for a return game.

Top competitors for the western Pennsylvania title that year were Greensburg, Latrobe, Duquesne Country and Athletic Club, Pittsburgh Athletic Club, and Washington and Jefferson College. Greensburg defeated both Duquesne and P.A.C. and split with Latrobe, which lost to Duquesne. W. & J. didn't play either Greensburg or Latrobe, and lost to the University of Pennsylvania, which didn't help the Prexy claim.

Barclay was the only Greensburg player among the eleven named by the Pittsburgh Times to the "All-Western Pennsylvania" team.

The 1898 Season

Two losses in three fiercely contested games with Latrobe and scoreless ties with both Duquesne and Pittsburgh athletic clubs marred the 1898 season, despite optimism at the start and the return of Atherton to help offset some other personnel losses. Some of the players from the prior year had bigger offers from elsewhere. Providing sufficient financial inducements for out-of-area stars was difficult in a relatively small city, an effect that became even more pronounced at the end of the '98 season.

Only ten points were scored against Greensburg in ten games, all by Latrobe in two wins over the Greensburg eleven.

The opener, October 8, was the season's highest scoring tilt, a 49-0 win over neighboring Jeannette in a game which could have gone much higher had not Greensburg used the competition to perfect plays and interference. That paid off in the second victory, October 15, in which excellent teamwork was the highlight as Greensburg whipped the New Castle Terrors 47-0.

The first of the three Latrobe games, October 22, was a 6-0 loss for Greensburg in the mud (4-0 in some accounts). "Doggie" Trenchard scored the Latrobe touchdown despite "a slimy ball and a slippery field," which caused Atherton to fumble a punt. The game was delayed at one point as mud was removed from the eyes, nose, mouth and ears of Latrobe's Ed Abbatichio, buried in the mud on one of his carries. He was the same Abbatichio who played nearly a decade of major-league baseball, incidentally.

The game was marred by a dispute beforehand, won by Latrobe when four Washington and Jefferson players signed by Greensburg for the game were not permitted to play. A lengthy poem written and published in a major Pittsburgh newspaper, the Chronicle-Telegraph, concluded with this stanza:

Gay Latrobe's bold pigskin chasers
Now are the owners of the town,
And upon his head each hero
Wears the victor's laurel crown.
They have shown to all Westmoreland
That they're skilled in football tricks,
For the Greensburgs drew a cipher
While Latrobers tallied six.

A week later, the Greensburg eleven was back on the winning track with a 25-0 triumph at the West Virginia home field of the Wheeling Tigers, a pair of touchdowns by McFarland setting the scoring pace. He actually crossed the line a third time, but fumbled and the Tigers recovered in the end zone.

Pittsburgh College was an 11-0 victim November 2, as coach Barclay played cautiously in anticipation of another Latrobe game just three days away. Bird's 37-yard run and Donohoe's goal after produced a first-half 6-0 lead, and McFarland scored what that year had become a five-point touchdown on a second-half plunge (goal after reduced to one point).

Latrobe was again the victor on its home field by a 6-5 margin in the year's second meeting, November 5, in a pouring rain. Abbaticchio's kick spelled the difference before nearly 3,000 doused fans. When his kick was successful, the quite partisan Latrobe newspaper's enthusiasm exceeded all bounds as it reported "the wild enthusiasm of the moment before paled into insignificance before the demoniacal demonstration, the wildest orgies of howling dervishes!"

Greensburg's score, in the first half, came on a fumble recovery with which Barclay ran 35 yards, but the goal-after kick hit the crossbar and bounced back. Latrobe's second-half touchdown was disputed, since halfback Lang ran almost 90 yards unmolested with the ball after Greensburg's Barclay was believed downed by his teammates.

As an indication of gate receipts from such games, there was 2,200 paid at the wet game, Greensburg getting \$447 on a percentage guarantee, and Latrobe retaining over \$900.

The following Saturday, November 12, over 150 Greensburgers traveled with the team to Exposition Park in Pittsburgh, where the visitors played the favored Duquesne Country and Athletic Club to a scoreless tie. The most spectacular play of the game was Bird's punt return for Greensburg, a 44-yard run during which he dodged nearly every D.C. & A.C. player to reach midfield.

The offense regained its punch on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, with a 35-0 victory over Grove City in a raw, cold wind and falling snow. Bird's one-yard plunge on Greensburg's first possession started the scoring. Barclay set up the third TD, scored by Bird from five yards out, with a 70-yard sideline run. A second-half touchdown came when a Grove City punt receiver fumbled and Greensburg's Thomas caught the ball in midair coming downfield and continued across the goal line.

Anticlimactic was Greensburg's 6-0 win over Latrobe, November 30, under very poor field conditions. Eleven minutes after the start at Latrobe, Bird scored on a plunge of less than a yard and kicked the goal for the game's only points. The end of the game was marred by stoning and spitting on Greensburg players and fans, "boorish conduct by ruffians," according to the Greensburg Daily Tribune. Stones, sticks and snowballs were thrown at Greensburg carriages, and one player was injured when he was hit on the head by a rock.

Barclay and Rinehart were Greensburg players selected for an all-star post-season game at Exposition Park, Pittsburgh, December 4, in which Duquesne Country and Athletic Club topped the all-stars 16-0. When the season ended, coach Barclay

announced that he would not be returning, since he planned to attend medical school.

The Year of 1898

Professional football at Greensburg underwent a one-year hiatus in 1899, after an apparent decline in financial resources and interest. At the close of the 1898 season there was little optimism expressed for continuing the sport on a professional basis, various news items in Greensburg newspapers revealed. De-emphasis of the sport at Latrobe after the 1898 season also removed a spirited and lucrative rivalry.

In mid-August some efforts were made to reorganize a team around a nucleus of local members of the previous year's squad and abetted by obtaining some Latrobe players. However, this did not materialize, and when the season got underway, most of the top Greensburg players of the year before were playing for former rivals in Pittsburgh or for other teams as far away as Newark, N.J. As a consequence of the absence of both Greensburg and Latrobe that year, the Pittsburgh elevens completed their schedules by playing teams in eastern Pennsylvania.

The Year of 1900

By mid-August of 1900, plans were complete for the return of professional football to Greensburg for that fall. Enough stockholders subscribed money to finance the team, and an organization of stockholders made the plans, under the direction of president Morris L. Painter, Greensburg industrialist and business entrepreneur. A quest for personnel was underway throughout the eastern United States, and the situation had further promise since Dave Berry was reorganizing a team at Latrobe.

By mid-September, contracts had been sent to a number of prospective players and a schedule had been arranged which provided for a home-and-home Latrobe series, with a third game at the site which drew the largest crowd.

A roster of players for the team, "men of brawn and muscle gathered from the stars of the American gridiron," was announced under a banner page-one headline in the Greensburg Daily Tribune September 26. Many of the players were from eastern and midwestern colleges and universities.

Announced as captain and coach was Ralph L. Hutchinson of Princeton, "in greater demand this season than any player in the country." He was further cited as "the most brilliant quarterback playing the game last year," and as "a thorough student of the game; neither drinks, smokes, nor chews the weed; and is an excellent handler of men." Just before the opener, he said that he had decided to return to Princeton for another year, then again changed his mind and arrived in town after the first game.

Interest in the games of those days was more than local. On some occasions, the Pittsburgh sporting editors came to Greensburg to cover the games. Western Union telegraph facilities were provided at Athletic Park, and reports were provided to Pittsburgh and other points as the games progressed.

A football parody of a popular melody of the times at the turn of the century was frequently heard:

After the (foot)ball is over,
After the field is clear,
Straighten my nose and shoulder
And help me to find my ear.

The season opened Saturday, October 6, at 3:30 p.m. (Admission was 50 cents.) Without the team having a practice beforehand, Altoona was easily defeated, 23-0, with short halves played. Isaac Seneca, the Carlisle Indian All-American of the year before, made several substantial gains and scored one touchdown on a 50-yard run. McFarland tallied once and Robison twice, once after Seneca's 25-yard run set up the score.

The following Wednesday, Indiana Normal lost to Greensburg 11-0 in a disappointing game to the Greensburg team and fans, since a much larger score was anticipated. Poor blocking and frequent fumbling marked the game, in which Seneca and Robison scored first-half touchdowns.

Hutchinson was at quarterback for the third game, October 13, for a scoreless tie at Pittsburgh Athletic Club's East End grounds, three days later. Fumbles were costly, especially Robison's at the P.A.C. three-yard line.

The following Wednesday, Greensburg lost, 6-5, to Pittsburgh Cottage Club. Then on Saturday, October 20, they played the team's fifth game in 15 days. Result was another 6-5 loss, to Homestead, a Pittsburgh-area "super power" reportedly financed by substantial contributions of Carnegie Steel officials. It was acclaimed as a satisfying result, headlined "GREATEST EVER WAS" in the Greensburg Daily Tribune. An enthusiastic journalist's accolade of "the greatest contest ever witnessed on the Greensburg gridiron" was viewed by over 2,200 fans.

Seneca "showed up the great Poe by skirting his end at will," Hutchinson showed "remarkable generalship," and a player from each team was "retired to the sidelines" for a fight. The play of the game, although it didn't decide the outcome, was Hutchinson's 40-yard drop kicked field goal on the last play, the only points scored against Homestead all year.

The third straight loss at home was sustained a week later, October 27, with Latrobe the victor by 6-0, its "guards back formation" too much for Greensburg. A 25-yard run by Hutchinson was one of the few bright spots, as the team suffered somewhat from injuries sustained in the Homestead game. Over 2,000 witnessed the battle, which also included a fight between Seneca and Latrobe quarterback Kennedy that triggered a donnybrook. As a result, the county sheriff decided on a special police corps for the return game.

Four days later, Wednesday, October 31, the injury-plagued Greensburg eleven suffered a fourth consecutive loss, 24-0, to Duquesne Country and Athletic Club at Pittsburgh's Exposition Park. Newspaper accounts were not kind, the Daily Tribune referring to "a tinge of yellow in the locals' play," although Hutchinson was praised for his kicking and tackling. Former Greensburger Bird was a D.C. & A.C. standout.

A victory came Tuesday, November 5, by 22-0 over Altoona. But a second game with Homestead, November 10, with a changed Greensburg lineup, was less successful than

before. Homestead triumphed 12-0 at home on wet and slippery grounds “covered with tanbark, which was detrimental to successful play,” the Daily Tribune asserted.

A muddy return game at Latrobe November 17 attracted less than 1,000 fans, giving the third game to Greensburg. But Latrobe won the “Westmoreland County championship” with its 11-0 victory, the shutout barely preserved, since Greensburg was less than a yard from scoring when the game ended. Hutchinson, Seneca, Donohoe, and Steckle “were in every play for Greensburg.”

That game, however, turned out to be the last professional game for a Greensburg football team. Latrobe paid a \$400 forfeit and withdrew from the Thanksgiving Day game at Greensburg to play another opponent, and the scheduled November 24 game with Duquesne Country and Athletic Club had to be cancelled because of extreme weather conditions.

Summarizing the year that began with high hopes, the Greensburg Daily Tribune said “Greensburg quits the season a loser...up against a chain of unfortunate circumstances from the first. A late start, bad weather, and bad faith form a combination that is hard to beat.

The combination ended professional football at Greensburg. The final season record of 3-7 was especially disappointing in view of a number of outstanding players brought in, and wrote the final chapter. Perhaps appropriate was a poem used in connection with one of the games that year:

After the game is over
After the goals are won
After the players' leaving
After the umpire's gone
Many the limbs are aching
If you could feel how lame
Many the hopes that have vanished
After the game.

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[**Ed. Note.** Bob Van Atta is one of the recognized experts on the early history of pro football in Western Pennsylvania. This article is a companion piece to his “Latrobe, Pa.; Cradle of Pro Football,” which appeared in the first PFRA Annual (1980).]

Greensburg Football Player Roster, 1894-1900

Name	Position	Years	School
Atherton, Charles H.	E	95-98	Penn State
Barclay, George	H	97-98	Bucknell/Lafayette
Barclay, Morrison	G	97-00	
Bayne, William C.L.	C-G	95	
Bessler		98	
Bird, Walter	B	96-98	Washington & Jefferson
Borlin	H-E	97	
Blank	G	95	Washington & Jefferson
Campbell, David	T	96	
Carr, "Pop"	G	98-00	Michigan
Cherry, Joseph	E	96-97	
Cope, Harry	T	94-97	
Copeland, Charles	G-T	94-95	Franklin & Marshall
Core		97	Washington & Jefferson
Coulter, Richard	G-T-E	94-96	Princeton
Crookston, Judson	E	97	Princeton/Washington & Jefferson
Dalby	G	96-97	
Darragh, Frank	E-G	96-97	Pennsylvania
Donohoe, Joseph	E-F-H	95-00	Fordham
Donohoe, John	E	95	Lehigh/Stanford
Donohoe, Tom	E-F	95-97	
Dunsmore	T	97	
Duvall, R.H.	E	00	Cornell
Eicher, Alexander	E	97	Washington & Jefferson
Feightner, William	T	96-97	
Fiscus, Lawson	H	94-96	Indiana Normal/Princeton
Fiscus, Newill	T-H	94-96	Indiana Normal/Wash. & Jeff.
Fiscus, Ross	H	95-96	Indiana Normal/Wash. & Jeff./Geneva
Flowers, Jack	Q-E	94, 97-98	Penn State/Westminster/Wash. & Jeff.
Furtwangler, Leo	E-H	94-95, 97	
Gass, Jack	E	00	Lehigh
Hall		97	Dickinson
Hanley, Frank	T-H	00	Notre Dame
Harrold	T	94	
Hassett	T	98	Niagara/Vanderbilt/Kansas
Hewitt		00	
Hutchinson, Ralph L.	Q	00	Princeton
Inglis, William	C	97	Washington & Jefferson
Irwin, John	E	95-97	
Jamison/Jimeson	H-E	98	
Johnston	G	96	Michigan
Kiehl, Frank	C-E	95-97	
Kish		96	
Koehler	H	00	Purdue
Laird, Richard D.	Q	94-95, 97	Grove City
Lang, Edwin	E	97	Washington & Jefferson
Lentz		00	
Long	Q	96	

Name	Position	Years	School
Machesney	E	95-96	Penn State
MacKenzie, Dr. R.H.M.	G	97	
McAndrews	H	98	
McDermott	T	98	Princeton
McDonald, A.D.	F	00	Notre Dame
McFarland, "Tiger"	T-G	97-00	Washington & Jefferson
Mechling, Edward D.	F	94, 95-97	Indiana Normal
Mullen			00
O'Hara	Q	97	
Parks	T-C	94-96	
Peters		96	
Rinehart, Charles R.	G	98-00	Lafayette
Robison, Fred	H	95, 97-98, 00	Penn State
Ryan		97	
Seigmund, Richard S.	T-G	00	Michigan
Sigman, Alfred	F	95-00	Lafayette
Shearer, Vic	E	00	
Smith		00	
Speer	Q	97	West Virginia
Steckle, A.G.	T	00	Michigan
Sterrett, W.A.	F	97	Geneva
Studebaker	G-F	00	Lafayette
Tarr		97	
Theurer, William	G-T	94-95, 97-00	Indiana Normal/Washington & Jefferson
Thomas, Richard (Bo)	C-G	94-00	Indiana Normal/Chicago
Vincent, Victor V.	Q	95-96	Lafayette
Whitmyre	G	97	
Wirsing	E	95	
Worthington	E	98-00	Lehigh
Wyant, Adam M.	Q-C	95-97	Bucknell/Chicago

Note: Player nicknamed "Choctaw" in 1898 was a prior attendee of Bloomsburg Normal (Pa.) and Lafayette.