

How the Football Was Invented

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The football was invented by Hezekiah G. Futz in April of 1843. Mr. Futz was a leatherworker and tanner who lived in Frogkisser, AR. The rival town of Boodwasher often challenged Frogkisser to various athletic events. Only the year before, 'Boodwashers' quartet of prized Arabian horses had galloped to victory in chariot races. On this occasion, they challenged the 'Kissers to a basketball game. (Basketball was invented by the Druids during the Roman occupation of England and was brought to this country in 1491.) The Boodwasher-Frogkisser game would be played for the right to stand first in line at the grease mill when it came time to oil squeaky wheels and frommes.

Boodwasher agreed to provide the court because they had the only hardwood floor in the county. It was up to Frogkisser to provide the ball. After a diligent search, the Frogkisser Ball Search Committee announced that the closest they could come to a ball was an anvil.

The mayor objected: "It'd be okay for ball bearing," he said, "but did you ever try to dribble an anvil?" When it was discovered that the anvil also presented several unforeseen difficulties with rebounding, the city fathers commissioned Hezekiah Futz to manufacture a better ball.

Futz worked on the ball for three days. When it was perfect, he placed it lovingly on a chair in his workroom and raced off to tell the city fathers it was ready.

Alas! He was barely out of his shop when Mrs. Futz entered and spotted the ball. Mrs. Futz suffered from an unfortunate malady, or as she often explained, "It hurts to sit down." In those days Preparation H had not yet reached the wilds of Arkansas and Preparations E, F, and G had proved ineffective. Mrs. Futz surmised that her loving husband had constructed a leather pillow just for her. She sat on it until it was time to go feed the only horse in town.

Mrs. Futz weighed 305 pounds. When her husband returned with the city fathers, they discovered the ball was no longer a perfect sphere but elongated.

"M'gosh," said the mayor, "it's a prolate spheroid!" The sheriff immediately arrested him for obscene language. (This was the mayor's second offense; two years earlier he'd been jailed for masticating in public.)

Harlon Moody, the Frogkisser mortician, suggested that since they had the ball they should practice with it. "Don't forget how their chariot skunked ours last year."

"Hey," the sheriff insisted, "if I'd a had even two more horses . . ."

As he was being hauled out the door, the mayor yelled, "Don't do it! If we start practicin' with the ball, they'll start practicin' with the floor!"

The basketball game was hotly contested. The Boodwasher home crowd jeered at the visitors, inferring that Frogkisser was a one-horse town. The Frogkisser's responded that they had fifty-seven cats. Unfortunately, fifty-five lived with the sheriff's dotty elder sister.

Neither side was able to score through the first three quarters. Although the Futz ball dribbled better than an anvil, it still had problems. However, as time ran down, the real problem was discovered – the peach baskets at either end of the court had been installed upside down! By the time the error was repaired, only a few seconds remained. The sheriff, playing point guard for Frogkisser, inbounded to Futz who turned and drew back his arm to throw a long pass to an unidentified, unindicated, and unindicted Frogkisser racing down the floor.

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"Sack him!" screamed the Boodwisher crowd. An opponent hurled a burlap container into Futz's face, throwing off his aim. The ball spiraled out of control high above the crowd.

Mary Futz looked up and remarked, "If it goes any higher, it'll bring rain. Or maybe snow."

The sheriff's wife, watching in awe as the ball crested, said, "Or hail, Mary."

Down came the Futz ball. Down. Suddenly, cheers turned to groans, groans turned to cheers, and Mary Futz turned to see if the concession stand was still open. SWISH! The ball went through the peach basket!

After a three-day celebration in Frogkisser, Futz's oblong ball was retired to an honored place on the wall of the local tavern. Over the years, through the slurred speech of various imbibers, Futz's Ball became Futball.

Years later, someone or other invented a game called "Run-Around-and-Smash-into-Each-Other-While-Carrying-an-Anvil." When the kids of Frogkisser couldn't find an anvil for their new game, they substituted the Futball, and it worked so well they kept it.
