

Dear Odus:

I have your letter requesting me to tell you something about football as I remember it at Wake Forest College from 1888 to 1893. I have also a copy of your interesting letter from Judge W. A. Devin, Oxford, N. C. Judge Devin had the reputation in his college days of being able to prepare an assignment during the five minutes allowed to reach his classroom. Judging by his later record and those of his teammates, I can see why the Walter Camp rule book was sufficient to teach them football. They did literally learn it that way. They had no coaches, nor had anyone played the game in North Carolina before. Wake Forest's first intercollegiate game with University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was in 1888 when the captain was W. C. Dowd of Charlotte. In 1889 the Captain was Oscar Riddick of Asheville, in 1890 and 91 Vernon Howell of Smithfield, and 1892 I, George Blanton of Shelby, captained the team.

In 1889 we had a student body of approximately 150 from which to select a team. We had poor fields and no seats, but since in those days we had little in the way of amusement at Wake Forest, when football season came around most of the students and a good number of the members of the faculty, townspeople, were on the field to watch practice. And the boys who wanted a try at the new game played after tentative team was selected. The varsity backs would play on one side against the varsity line on the other, the two elevens filled out with other students out for an afternoons exercise. This was the only way we had enough players to get opposing teams for practice.

It was the custom for each team to choose one official, to referee in one half and to umpire in the other. Since these chosen representatives usually had strong loyalties, this naturally produced numerous differences of opinion.

Each boy had to purchase his equipment - a lady on the campus made the uniforms out of canvas and be responsible for his expenses on trips. The captain had all responsibilities for selecting and running the team. The manager arranged the games and looked after finances.

We had no coach until the beginning of 1889. Oscar Riddick was then Captain. He induced his relative, W. C. Riddick to stop by on his way to Lehigh. W. C. Riddick was a member of Lehigh team. After two weeks of coaching he suggested a lineup for the 1889 team. He used the returning members of the 1888 team. The back field was composed of John E. White, as quarterback, Vernon Howell and Oscar Riddick at halfback, and George Blanton at fullback.

Our first game in 1889 was against U. N. C., at Chapel Hill. We traveled by train and because of the inconvenient schedule and the changes in Raleigh and Durham we had to be away from the campus 2 nights and 3 days. We won the game 18 to 8, and when we returned to Wake Forest we were met by our fellow students with a wagon into which we were thrown and drawn through the campus, forbidden to wagons, to the ball field on Faculty Avenue. When I was called on for a speech, next after Capt. Riddick, I was much more frightened than I had been playing in the game, my first match. From that time on for 4 years I played the entire time in every Wake Forest game for 3 years as fullback, and one^{year} as Quarterback (by then weighing 136 pounds) and captain of the team of 1892, ~~which played three games~~

Substitutes were few in 1892. The team started off for Virginia to play 3 games in one week end with 3 substitutes. We used them all in our first day when we played an exceedingly tough game against V.M.I, ending in a tie at 12 to 12. V.M.I. used a member of their boxing team as center and I think he used our tem for boxing practice. Three of our men were laid out: Walter Sikes got a cut above one eye though he did not quit the game. Will Jones and Carl Pridgen did not fare so well. The game was very close all the way through. The score was 6 to 6 until 3 minutes before the end when V. M. I. made a touch down. To put the ball back in play, instead of kicking off as now, the team which was last scored against took the ball and ran it behind a flying V formation. We varied this by putting our swiftest man, who was Tom Crudup, in the center of the V then using the left wing with all the backs as interference. On this play Crudup reached the 10 yard line. Thus encouraged we made the touchdown and kicked

goal with one minute left. The score was 12 to 12. That evening a group of us went over to Washington & Lee where we were initiated into the K. A. Fraternity.

The next day, Saturday, we played Washington & Lee. Sikes continued playing with his cut over the eye, but Pridgen and Jones were not able to play. John Mills who had graduated from W. F. the year before and was working in Virginia, dressed in Pridgen's uniform and played for us. We won the game.

On Sunday we went to Richmond where we won against Richmond College on Monday. Two wins and one tie game in a weekend with only 3 substitutes and one ex-player to relieve us must appear a ~~rugged~~ ^{played} schedule to ~~teams~~ today.

I have had a great deal of pleasure in seeing the picture of Wake Forest's first intercollegiate football team of 1888 and in reading the interesting comments of Rev. John E. White written in 1925. As I look back today my ~~happiest~~ ^{most pleasant} memories of good times center around wonderful friends, and people like Dr. Charley Brewer, and Dr. W. L. Poteat with their kindness, my fine boarding house lady, Mrs. Dickson with her friendly interest, in my four years roommate, E. B. Lattimore, and that favorite citizen of all the boys, our druggist and baseball player, Mr. T. E. Holding. My days at Wake Forest meant a great deal to me, and it is a joy to recall them.

Yours sincerely,