

HAMMOND CLABBYS – 1915

By Roy Sye

The 1915 season for the Clabbys started with Manager John Hartley putting out a “call for players”. This was published in the Saturday, September 4th edition of the Lake County (IN) *Times*. All candidates were to report to Harrison Park the next day promptly at 9:30am. This same “call for players” was also published in the Detroit papers, as some of last year’s players were from the Detroit area.

The Clabby Athletic Association sponsored the team. The Association got its name from Jimmy Clabby, a famous boxer of the time. Clabby won the World Welterweight Championship in 1910 and was one of Hammond’s most prominent citizens.

Many changes were in store for the Clabbys this year – one of which was new uniforms. The new uniforms were blue and white. Since most of last year’s players were anticipated to be back this year, the buzz around town was that this year’s team was going to be something special. The Captain of this year’s Clabby team was Ted Blocker.

By September 15th, the Clabbys were ready for a challenge. An ad was placed in the *Times* looking for a practice game. The first practice game was scheduled for September 19th. Another practice game was scheduled for September 26th, but that game was cancelled due to bad weather.

The Clabbys opened up their 1915 season on October 3rd against the Lincoln AC of Chicago. Newspaper reporting was much different in 1915, as the *Times* referred to the Lincoln AC as: “Lincoln AC, a colored team from Chicago”. Hammond expected a larger than normal turnout to see a novelty game; the Clabbys playing a “colored” team.

For this game, “paste boards” were sold for 25 cents. The boards listed the number and name of each Clabby player. Each player had sewn on the back of his jersey, an 8-inch number, for easy identification.

The Clabbys won the game 19-0, but not without one of their star players being injured. Adolph Kohl received a broken cheekbone and had to leave the game. Touchdowns were scored by Volkman (blocked punt returned for a TD), and rushing TD’s by Miller and Seliger. Later in the week, the captain on the Lincoln team sent a letter of sympathy to the Clabbys giving their regrets for the unfortunate injury to Kohl.

The Clabbys next game was the Monarch AC of Chicago, set for October 10th. The Clabbys crushed the Monarchs 88-0. The Clabbys used the same lineup as the Lincoln game, except for Heimke moving to LG, Reese moving to C, and Boyle replacing the injured Kohl at RG. Five different Clabby players scored touchdowns. Miller scored 4, Phrommer, Seliger and Hirsch each scored 3 and Volkman added another. Miller also kicked 4 extra points. The weather was perfect for football and the hometown fans saw a lot of scoring in this one-sided game.

The following week the Clabbys scheduled a game with the Silent AC of Chicago, a deaf-mute team. In another interesting piece of newspaper reporting by the *Times*, the article in the October 12th edition was titled, “We Hope No One Steps On Their Hands”.

However, 2 days before the game was to take place, the captain of the Silents contacted the Clabbys to cancel the game. The Silents captain said, “the Silent AC would not be a match for them...and would result in a one-sided game”.

The Clabbys were quickly able to arrange a 3pm game with the Standard AC of Chicago to fill the vacant spot on the schedule. As game time rolled around, the weather was getting worse. Just an hour before kickoff, the game was called due to bad weather. This was the second cancellation so far this season for the Clabbys.

Next up for the Clabbys was their long-time nemesis, the Gary Techs. The Clabbys played their only road game of the year, as they traveled to Gary. Scoring in the first 5 minutes of the game, the Clabbys took an early 6-0 lead. The Clabbys tacked on another touchdown early in the 3rd quarter and that ended the scoring for the day, with the final being a 12-0 victory for the visitors.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 23, No. 4 (2001)

For the fourth time this season, Hammond kept its starting backfield intact; with Hirsch at quarterback, Miller at fullback and Phrommer and Seliger at the halfbacks. The only lineup changes were a few replacements on the offensive line. Playing in his first game of the season was "Clink" Meyers, a fan favorite, who had just moved his family from Detroit and was planning on playing in the rest of the games for the Clabbys.

On Halloween, the First Regiment Armory team of Chicago came to Hammond to do battle with the Clabbys. The soldier team dated back to 1908 and was one of the oldest and strongest military teams in the area. In past years, the soldier team usually tied or narrowly defeated the Clabbys. However, this year, even though out-weighted, the speedy Clabbys were expecting a victory. The game had a 2:30pm start time and a crowd of over 2000 attended.

The Clabbys received the opening kickoff and scored on their first drive on a 25-yard run by Miller. The soldier team never came close to scoring and had to punt the ball on every 4th down. Meanwhile, the Clabbys scored in every quarter and ran away with a decisive 38-0 victory. The Clabbys again used the same starting backfield and only brought in subs when some of their starting offensive line went out with injuries.

Next up for the Clabbys was a re-match with the Gary Techs at Hammond. This time, the game was no contest, as over 1500 hometown fans watched the Clabbys overwhelm the Techs and bury their chances for a state championship. Gary made few first downs and only once pinned Hammond back near the goal line. The Clabbys quickly punted out of danger. The first half ended with a 20-0 score and the Clabbys piled on 27 more points in the second half to finish with a decisive 47-0 victory. Captain Ted Blocker was the star with 3 touchdown runs and added 5 of 7 extra points. Reese chipped in with a 35-yard interception return for a touchdown, while "Clink" Meyers added 2 touchdowns and "Hugs" Volkman added another.

In the November 14th contest, the Clabbys welcomed the Great Lakes Naval recruits from Waukegan. The recruits out-weighted the Clabbys by almost ten pounds to the man. Mother Nature let it be known that football is an outdoor sport; she dipped the temperature below freezing and dusted the field with a light snow.

The cold weather and the snow were the wake-up call that the Clabbys needed. After forcing the sailor boys to punt, the Clabbys marched down the field for their first of many scores. Seliger added a fumble recovery for a touchdown and the first quarter ended with the Clabbys leading 13-0. The Clabbys bruising defense continually stopped line plunges attempted by the recruits, eventually knocking out their star halfback Barber. He went out with 3 lost teeth and a ripped open upper lip resulting from a collision with one of the Clabby lineman. That left a bad taste for the recruits. Adding another touchdown in the second quarter and 2 more in the 2nd half, the Clabbys sent the sailor boys back to Great Lakes with a 33-0 defeat.

The big Thanksgiving day match-up with the Twin City (East Chicago and Indiana Harbor) Gophers was still up in the air. The Clabbys had received a challenge from the Greenfield elevens. Greenfield, a town about 30 miles east of Indianapolis, had previously beaten Wabash and Marion and laid claim to the southern state championship of Indiana and wanted to challenge the Clabbys for Indiana's top honors.

Even though out-weighted by ten pounds a man, the Clabby players still wanted to accept the challenge. The Clabby team took it to a vote and elected to keep the game with the Gophers. Clabby manager John Hartley and Gopher manager Hale signed the contract the Saturday before the upcoming Tornado game after finally agreeing on a 60-40 split for the winners with fifteen percent of the gate receipts taken off the top for Hammond Park grounds rental.

With the Thanksgiving day schedule set, the Clabbys turned to the task at hand, the tough Roseland (from the Pullman section of Chicago) Tornadoes. The Tornadoes were one of the top heavyweight teams in the Chicago Football League. With the Clabbys owning a perfect 6-0 record and not having been scored upon, the stage was set for a tough game with the Tornadoes. In the Tornadoes last game, they defeated the Gary Techs by the score of 20-0. The Clabbys were expecting their toughest game of the season.

The Tornadoes blew by the Clabbys with 3 quick scores in the first quarter. The Hammondites didn't know what hit them. In the second quarter the Clabbys settled down the Tornadoes and held them scoreless, but the damage was already done. Hammond went back to old-time football and marched down the field to the 1-yard line and Quarterback Adolph Kohl went over for the score. The first half ended at 21-6.

With the skies darkening and the temperature below freezing, the frozen field was unforgiving. Player after player on the Tornado team went out with injuries. The Tornadoes were weakening. "Clink" Meyers executed a perfect drop kick from the 15-yard line to bring the score closer at 21-9.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 23, No. 4 (2001)

With darkness setting in, some of the Tornado players wanted to quit, but an agreement was made and the game continued. Spectators went to their cars and turned on their headlights to illuminate the field. Then Seliger of the Clabbys added another score to bring it to 21-16. With the last 5 minutes of the 3rd quarter and the first 5 minutes of the 4th quarter played in darkness, the officials finally called the game. All bets were called off and the 2500 fans went home dissatisfied.

The Clabbys welcomed the Gophers to Hammond Park for a Turkey day game. With the Gophers expecting to bring hundreds of fans, the crowd was expected to be the season's largest. Over 3000 enthusiastic fans came out to root for their team.

From the starting whistle to the end of the first half, both teams battled for yardage but could not dent the scoreboard. The fans anticipated a tough battle in the second half. The Clabbys came out with fire in their eyes to start the 3rd quarter. Stopping the Gophers on the first 3 plays, the Gophers tried an ill-fated pass attempt. Mace Roberts hit the quarterback so hard that it caused a fumble and Roberts picked it up and ran in the final 8 yards for the first score of the game. With an extra point tacked on, the score was 7-0. Holding the Gophers on downs, the Clabbys then exchanged fumbles. The Gophers last fumble proved costly, as the Clabbys Seliger fell on the loose ball in the end zone for the second score. That put the Gophers in a hole in which they could not dig out of. The Clabbys executed a long drive and scored on the tired Gophers. The game ended with a 26-0 shutout for the Clabbys.

The Clabbys scheduled one final home game on the last Sunday in November. This game was scheduled against the Racine Regulars, who just recently won the Wisconsin State Championship by defeating Oshkosh 26-0 on Thanksgiving Day. However, rain and snow in the 2 days preceding the game made the field a muddy mess. Clabby management contacted Racine on Saturday to cancel the game due to poor field conditions.

The Clabbys ended a very successful season with a 7-1-0 record. The only blemish being a 21-16 darkness-shortened loss to the Tornadoes. While the Clabbys had defeated most of the Chicagoland teams, the bar was about to be raised for 1916. The Clabbys were to seek out stronger teams, to the likes of: Rockford, Fort Wayne, Racine, Davenport, Detroit, Cincinnati and Pine Village. No longer would they prey on the local athletic clubs and military teams.

Game Results for 1915 Hammond Clabbys

Sun 10/03	H	Hammond	vs	Lincoln AC	Won	19-0
Sun 10/10	H	Hammond	vs	Monarch AC	Won	88-0
Sun 10/17	H	Hammond	vs	Standard AC	cancelled	– weather
Sun 10/24	A	Hammond	at	Gary Techs	Won	12-0
Sun 10/31	H	Hammond	vs	1 st Regiment Armory	Won	38-0
Sun 11/07	H	Hammond	vs	Gary Techs	Won	47-0
Sun 11/14	H	Hammond	vs	Great Lakes Naval	Won	33-0
Sun 11/21	H	Hammond	vs	Roseland Tornadoes	Lost	16-21
Thu 11/25	H	Hammond	vs	Twin City Gophers	Won	26-0
Sun 11/28	H	Hammond	vs	Racine Regulars	cancelled	– weather

Final Record 7-1-0 Points Scored: 279 Points Allowed: 21

Lineups and Scores for 1915 Hammond Clabbys

	Oct 03	Oct 10	Oct 24	Oct 31	Nov 07	Nov 14	Nov 21	Nov 25	College Attended (if known)
Blocker, Frank								*	Purdue
Blocker, Ted (Captain)	LT	LT	LT	LT	FB	FB	*	*	
Boyle, Bernard	LG	RG	LG		RT	#	*	*	
Dawson, F.	*								
Dawson, J.	*	*	RG	*	*				
Ford, Johnny								*	
Ford, Sam								*	
Green F.			C	C	C	C	*	*	
Heimke, H.	C	LG							

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 23, No. 4 (2001)

Hirsh, L.	QB	QB							
James, Tommy				*		LE			
Kohl, Adolph "Dutch"	RG	+	RT	*	QB	QB	QB	*	
Kohl, G.	RE	RE	QB						
McGuire, O.	*								
Meyers, F. "Clink"			*	*	*	*	*	*	
Miller, Ervin	FB	FB	FB	FB	+	+	FB	*	
Nolan, J.	LE	LE	LE	LE	LE	*	LE	*	
Phrommer, F.	LHB	LHB	LHB	LHB	+	*	*	*	
Reese, F.	*	C	*	*	*	RE	*	*	
Roberts, Mason	*	*	RE	*	*	*	*	*	
Seliger, L.	RHB	RHB	RHB	RHB	*	*	*	*	
Volkman, Hugo "Hugs"	RT	RT	*	*	*				

* – played in game, position unknown or did not start or cannot verify position played

+ – injured, did not play # – could not attend game

Team Scoring Summary

Player	Touchdowns and Type	Extra Points & FG	Total Points
Seliger	9 TD's (2 run, 1 pass, 4 unknown, 2 Fumble Rec)		54
Miller	7 TD's (3 run, 4 unknown)	4 of 5 extra points	46
?Unknown ?	5 TD's (unknown)	7 of 27 extra points	37
Blocker	5 TD's (4 run, 1 unknown)	5 of 7 extra points	35
Meyers	3 TD's (run, unknown, Int Return)	1 field goal	21
Hirsch	3 TD's (unknown)		18
Phrommer	3 TD's (unknown)		18
Kohl	2 TD's (runs)		12
Reese	2 TD's (Fumble Rec, Int Return)		12
Volkman	2 TD's (run, unknown)		12
Ford	1 TD (run)	2 of 4 extra points	8
Boyle	1 TD (Punt Block)		6

Sources

Arlington Heights (IL) Public Library – Chicago Tribune
 Gary (IN) Public Library – Gary Daily Tribune
 Hammond (IN) Public Library – Lake County (IN) Times
 Racine (WI) Public Library – Racine Times-Call