

THE QUEBEC RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

1883-1906 – Part 4

By Robert Sproule

1898: BACK TO THREE

It's not that there were any signs of wear in the Quebec Union or that there were a lack of teams, but suddenly the Executive found themselves with only two teams, and one of them was out of province. The Kingston Granites formed a team and for the moment there was something new on the playing fields. The Executive had a three-team league before, in 1892, and had a very competitive season with those teams, so there was no concerns.

The first game of the season on October 1 was the old against the new: Montreal against Kingston. From the start the Black & Red had their way with the newcomers, scoring two tries and kicking one goal-from-try to lead 10-0. But then Montreal found that Kingston had several good players. The Granites fought back, with Clark scoring twice, and the goals-from-tries gave the new boys a surprising 12-11 halftime lead. But after the break, Montreal's combination plays and kicking game started to prevail. Soon they recaptured the lead, increased it and finally won the hard fought match 27-19.

The next game was Montreal and Ottawa College, with the advantage clearly going to the defending Dominion champions from the Capital. However, it was the old Black & Red that gave the students a lesson on how the game was to be played. Right from the start Montreal controlled the wingline and sent three runners over the line in quick succession. When Ottawa tried to mount an attack they were first thrown back over the line for a safety touch and then Maxwell picked up a fumble and returned to make the halftime score 23-0.

The second half was no better for the students. Montreal scored at will and when Ottawa tried in desperation to get on the board, they fumbled in key situations with Montreal returning two fumbles for more points. When Clifford Jack ran over the line for the last converted try of the match, Montreal had scored 9 tries enroute to a 47-0 thrashing of Ottawa College.

Already there were grumblings about who was a player and who wasn't. Several times there were familiar faces on the field that had been seen in university games the week before. On October 8, the Executive prohibited players of the Inter-Collegiate Union from playing on any team in the QRFU.

In the return match between Montreal and Kingston the fans expected a great game. Montreal was certainly the stronger of the two, while Kingston was competitive and could put points on the score sheet. However, if Montreal had their way with Ottawa College the week before, it was now Montreals' turn to eat humble pie.

Kingston changed their tactics and confused the Black & Red right from the start. Their trick plays and combination runs when executed seemed to confuse the Montreal-15. When they expected the Granites to run, they kicked over the line for rouges. When the Granites were expected to kick, they ran. Varney picked up a loose ball and returned it to the line and the rout was on. At the halftime call, Montreal fans couldn't believe the score...33-0 for the newcomers.

They came right after the break and punched Fry over the line but their rally was short lived. Nothing they tried in the last half seemed to work for them. Finally at about 6:00 PM with darkness falling and 2 minutes left in the match, the referee ended the misery. Kingston had ran all over a pitiful Montreal team. It was

their biggest defeat in history 44-8.

Now, whatever special plays that Kingston had that defeated Montreal, they failed to work against Ottawa College. It was a hard fought game right from the start. Little by little the students gained the better field position and soon had a rouge. Then another and finally Pat Murphy was over the line for a 8-0 halftime lead. Kingston tried to make a game of it with a rouge and a try to narrow the score 8-5, but another run over the line and two Pat Murphy rouges gave the students an upset win 14-5.

But the return match a week later was a completely different story. Both sides fought for victory with fierceness and determination. Ottawa College relied on their strong running game, but several times the Murphy boys were tackled just as they received the pass-out. They made key errors in play and judgment calls that led to Kingston points. The Granites were decidedly rough in all departments, but in spite of the lumpy field condition they adjusted better and took advantage of the Ottawa errors. Twice the students tried to dribble loose balls out of bounds, only to see a Kingston man pick up the ball and over the line for a commanding 10-1 halftime lead.

When play resumed Ottawa was no better off. They were losing ground on exchange of kicks. On one kick the ball fell into a bunch of players. Eddie Murphy of Ottawa got it on the bounce, dodged the immediate tacklers, then broke into the open for a spectacular 65 yard punt return. But it was too late as Kingston won 12-5.

Perhaps that play inspired the students in the final game of the season. Both Ottawa and Montreal's wingline controlled the other and limited any gain by the other. The match bogged down to a simple kicking game and the team with the last kick over the line would win it. First Montreal drew first blood, then Ottawa came back with two rouges to lead at the half 2-1. Montreal then came back to tie it and each took turns running out the kicks over the line. Finally a Pat Murphy kick was well over the line and the Montreal half failed to get out. At the whistle Ottawa had won 3-2 but the victory created a traffic jam in the standings.

All three teams had identical 2 and 2 records and meant playoff time, with Kingston getting the bye.

Now for whatever reason that has yet to be explained, as noted, Montreal blasted Ottawa College 47-0 and then in turn was thrashed by Kingston 44-8. Perhaps the Kingston game hinted at tell-tale weakness in the Black & Red lineup and perhaps injuries to key players in the last game of the season went unnoticed. Whatever the reason, the famous Montreal-15 were not the same as on opening day.

In the first playoff game, with a small size gale blowing, Ottawa College won the toss and took the wind. They controlled the tempo of the game. Their combination passing plays to Eddie and Pat Murphy moved the ball for huge gains. Whenever Montreal tried to shut down the Murphy boys, the Garnet and Grey kicked over the line to lead 19-0 at the break. In the second half, owing to the wind, they did little kicking and kept the ball in scrimmage. Several plays later Big Bob McCreadie was passed the ball and went over the line. When given a free kick, Arthur Fry punted for their only point. The Montreal-15 were outplayed and beaten badly 23-1.

And now for some bickering between the boys. First of all one

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must remember that at this time, at this level, Canadian Rugby football is strictly amateur and played as a sport by "gentlemen." Politics and personal agenda are kept out and the game is a genuine sport. However, Kingston, the new kids on the block, took exception not to Ottawa College but rather to an official. They refused to play with ex-Ottawa College player Joe McDougall as the referee. Of course Ottawa accepted Joe as the assigned official and failed to understand Kingston's view. Regardless who was considered as a replacement, neither team could agree on who should be the referee nor who even be the umpire. So at 3:30 PM Referee Joe McDougall started the game, and as Kingston refused to go on the field, the game and the season was awarded to Ottawa College.

1898 FINAL STANDINGS

	W	L	T	For	Agt	Pts
MONTREAL Football Club	2	2	0	84	66	4
KINGSTON GRANITES	2	2	0	80	54	4
OTTAWA COLLEGE	2	2	0	22	66	4

1898 SCORING LEADERS

	trys	goals	p-fk	goals	sin	pts
Robert Macdougall, Montreal	3	7	0	0	0	26
Pud Hamilton, Kingston	2	3	0	0	6	20
Clark, Kingston	4	0	0	0	0	16
Arthur Fry, Montreal	2	0	0	0	6	14
McRae, Kingston	0	5	0	0	3	13

For the Dominion Championship, Ottawa College had to wait one extra week because the CRU said that the ORFU winner had to play the winner of the new Inter-Collegiate Union. And that was Varsity and Ottawa City. Ottawa City? Yes, but not the 1897 team that left the Quebec Union. The team, now reorganized and with better players, applied for and was accepted by the Ontario Union with open arms. Now known as the Rough Riders, the were undefeated in the ORFU and played off against Varsity. In spite of a game played with College rules in one half and then ORFU rules, Varsity took a 3-0 score at the break. After the rest, the Riders took command of the game with their running. Captain Dick Kenny scored a try, Robert Shillington booted two rouges before Kenny kicked the last point for a hard fought 7-3 victory.

On Thursday November 24 the two Ottawa teams played for the Championship of all Canada. And one look at the Riders said who would win. It was estimated that some \$2,000 changed hands. The Riders simply had too many horses to contain. Not only had they scored a record 170 points for the season with only 20 against but also they had one of the strongest and best disciplined wing lines in Canadian history. If their line couldn't beat you on strength then they would in strategy. Their runners executed precise passing and combination plays as well as power bucks up the middle.

While mainly a scrummage contest, the game was marred by foul work on both sides. There was simply no end to the scrapping and several players were ruled off. The tackling was vicious and in some cases brutal. A series of scrimmages took place and the teams traded punts. A bad fumble was made near the student line on a punt and George Young, who was right on the college man, picked up the loose ball and was over for the try. Hats were thrown into the air and men, women and children cheered with delight. The goal was a difficult one as Rayside failed to convert. Several plays later Stuart Cameron punted over the line for a rouge and the Riders were up 5-0.

After the break the students managed to gain field position on a series of runs by the Murphy brothers. Now, only five yards from the line, they decided to buck for the touchdown that would tie the game. But in three scrimmages the tough Rider defense carried the Collegians back some twenty yards. From that reversal, College lost heart. A fumble that brought the ball near the Ottawa line allowed Pat Murphy to kick for College's only point. Then a series

of gains by Ottawa resulted in a brilliant 35-yard scoring run by Billy Powers. The kick cemented the title for the Ottawa Rough Riders 11-1.

Of course at the AGM on December 3, Kingston withdrew from the Quebec Union (and joined the ORFU). The Britannia Football Club decided to make a comeback and rejoined after a two year absence. Brockville decided to enter the senior loop and field a team to make a four team league.

1899: BROCKVILLE

The opening game was the new Brockville team and Ottawa College. Neither team, it seemed, wanted to score. Bad play selection and untimely fumbles caused missed opportunities. However, an unexpected punt over the line gave the students a 1-0 score at the half. Defenses forced the game into a dull affair in the second half and Ottawa held on for the victory.

The Montreal-Britannia game was another hard fought contest. A loose ball was returned over the line and the Brits had an unexpected 5-3 halftime lead. But then Montreal decided to make a game of it. A few good runs for field position and they won the close battle 10-6.

The fans thought Montreal was playing like old. They kicked evenly with Ottawa College 3-3 at the half and then simply overpowered the student body with better plays and fewer fumbles. Irving's punt return for a major and a brilliant 60 yarder by Massey gave the Black & Red a convincing 15-3 win and two back to back wins.

Britannia knew they could stay even with Brockville on moving the ball between the lines and returning punts. Tied 1-1 with several minutes left to play, a runner failed to get out and the rouge gave Brockville its first win of the season 2-1.

The Brits gave it another try against College. They traded runs, kicks, fumbles and play selection. They got behind but came back on a converted run for a slim 11-10 score at intermission. But they couldn't hold the student rally and lost a thrilling contest 16-11.

Brockville was an eager host with Montreal and once the match started they soon found holes in the Black & Red line. They could do no wrong. Montreal could do no right. Their punts forced Montreal back. Their line made big holes and they carried a surprising 22-0 lead into the last half. Montreal managed to score a few points but they couldn't control the fast "Brock" runners. Three more trys, including a well executed outside kick, and the Island City Fifteen had a shocking 38-6 win.

Ottawa College, it seemed, was peaking and Britannia was its next victim. They simply outplayed, outran and out kicked the Brits. The students booted the ball high and deep and limited any good returns. When they had good field position either a well place kick or a timely run resulted in a score. Another two rouges and a short run by McCreadie gave the students an expected 14-0 shutout.

Now the Old Guard wanted revenge. At the AAA Grounds, Brockville met unexpected opposition from the Black & Red. They controlled the first half 3-0, but Montreal played even with them in the kicking game and stole their thunder for a well earned 4-3 win.

Britannia found that they could play even with the Black & Red in their November 4 game. They gave kicks but no halfback crossed their line. The second half was all theirs as they scored two converted trys to win their only game of the season 12-4.

Although the rain made for a muddy field and slippery conditions, Brockville adjusted better than Ottawa College. It was John MacLaren Day as the game started and ended with him. He scored three trys, including a punt return before the half, and kicked a goal-from-try to end the victory 24-6.

If the Brits found a weakness in the Montreal-15 wingline then so did students from Ottawa. Fans were treated to a first as Eddie Murphy set a record, by returning his own short punt for a try. Montreal made it a close game to come within 2 points at one time but the College Kids scored 5 unanswered points by McGuicken to

win 15 to 8 and to momentarily hold first place.

Britannia knew they were playing against a better team. Brockville scored twice in the first half to go up 8-0. The Brits played better defense, managed two kicks over the line, but a converted fumble return by MacLaren gave him the scoring title and his team the easy victory 15-2.

It was a defensive game between Brockville and Ottawa College for the championship on November 18. First Island City men scored to go up 6-0. Then Ottawa did the same to tie it. There were many kicks over the line and many runs to get the ball out. But today the students had the longer kicks and tackled better. They controlled the kicking and squeaked out a tight 11-9 victory for the Provincial Championship.

1899 FINAL STANDINGS

	W	L	T	For	Agt	Pts
BROCKVILLE Football Club	4	2	0	82	20	8
OTTAWA COLLEGE	4	2	0	55	58	8
MONTREAL Football Club	3	3	0	47	77	6
BRITANNIA Football Club	1	5	0	32	61	2

1899 SCORING LEADERS

	trys	goals	p-fk	goals	sin	pts
John MacLaren, Brockville	4	1	0	0	2	20
Eddie Murphy, Ottawa College	2	2	0	1	2	19
Frank Ritchie, Brockville	3	1	0	0	0	14
Tommy Martin, Brockville	1	0	0	0	10	14
Browne, Britannia	1	2	0	0	6	14

There was no Dominion Championship game this year as Ottawa College voted not to play the ORFU champions for the title. Once again politics reared its ugly head to control the sport. First of all Ottawa refused to play later than November 25. Father Fallon, manager of the team, would not allow his men to play in December as it was not a winter pastime and "*...the line must be drawn somewhere.*" Kingston, in spite of using four Queens men in the ORFU final to defeat the Ottawa Rough Riders 8-0, was ready to play, but there would be no grounds after November 28 as they would be turned into ice rinks. And Kingston refused to abide by any CRU attempts to schedule any game in Montreal for November 25.

1900: RITCHIE'S RAIDERS

Brockville fans knew they had one of the better teams in the union but nobody anticipated a season like this one. The first game of the new century was between Captain Frank Ritchie's Men and the Britannia Football Club. The team took turns running and kicking against each other until, late in the game, Brockville took charge and won an easy 8-1 victory.

The Montreal-15 at Ottawa College. Both teams took turns dominating a half. First the Black & Red kicked for a 7-0 lead. Then the students came back to tie it, but a Hedley Suckling kick into the end zone and out the side won it for Montreal 8-7.

Brockville was content to let Ottawa College play their kicking game for they had the run. And oh how they ran, through and around the student wingline as if they were frozen in their positions. Combination passing plays worked to perfection as runner after runner ran for scores. First the Rev. H.H. Bedford Jones ran over the line (of course Men of the Cloth could play. After all it was a "gentlemen's" game). Then Tommy Martin and then Doran for two majors. Charles Wilkinson was over three times and MacLaren had one try and equalled a record four goals-from-trys. Ritchie's Raiders scored a record 9 trys by the run as they soundly whipped the students 46-0.

It was another typical Britannia-Montreal game. The strong against the weak. As usual the Brits tried to make a game of it and kept the score close at the half, behind by two, 6-4. But Montreal pressed after the break, scoring three trys to win the easy match 22-

6.

Britannia surprised themselves at Ottawa College on a rare Thursday afternoon game. They held the students running game and grassed two runners to lead 2-0 at intermission. But a fumble return jump-started the college boys. Fourteen points by Eddie Gleeson on singles and a goal-from-field gave them a great come-from-behind victory 27-12.

This was the battle for first place between Brockville and Montreal. Each was determined to win and the tackling was rough and fierce at times. Brockville's Tommy Martin was lost for the season when he was accidentally kicked and had his cheek bone broken in three places. Neither got away any long runs and both sides kicked away when in doubt. Brockville scored first, then allowed Jimmy Craig to return his own punt to narrow the halftime score 6-4. In the second half the "Brocks" kept the leather in scrimmage until it was finally passed out to Phillips, who went over the line for a hard fought 10-4 win.

What a difference a week makes. If the Montreal-15 found the Brockville game a difficult one then their next encounter with Ottawa College was a "light workout." Hedley Suckling sparked the game with his running, passing and fine kicking as Montreal led 12-0 at the break. Then Montreal found several holes in the student wingline. Three more touchdowns and the College kids were beaten 28-2.

Brockville kept on winning to stay ahead of Montreal in the standings. Britannia was no match but they tried to keep the score down to earthly numbers. The Bullies scored first on two rouges and a Charles Wilkinson run. The Brits came back to make it 6-4 but that was as close as they got. Fifteen unanswered points put Brockville 21-4 at the break. There were some great passing plays in the second half but the highlight was a beautiful goal-from-field by Bedford Jones. Brockville clobbered the hapless Brits 36-4.

In spite of the drubbing from Brockville the week before, Britannia upset a slightly favored College team. Attacking a weak student wingline, the Brits passing game gave them huge gains and great field position. Although the first half was a tight contest, the second half belonged to one William Christmas. His first of two touchdowns broke the game open as Britannia won their only match of the season 17-2.

The first meeting between Brockville and Montreal was a tight contest, but the return match for first place has yet to be fully understood, as Brockville demonstrated their superiority over the Montreal-15. Although the visitors stubbornly fought from start to finish they could not contain the Brockville attack. Captain Ritchie, who also played at the scrimmage position, turned his Bullies loose and they ran through, over and around a surprisingly weak Montreal defense. His team won the scrimmages, controlled the wingline and executed a series of mass plays, bucks and great passing combinations. Montreal could only watch.

Two trys by Phillips and then a goal-from-field by Fraser put the Island City Men ahead by fifteen. Several more scrimmage plays made it 24 zip at the break. By now the game was turning into a rout. Brockville wingmen rushed the halfbacks so frequently that they failed to get off their plays, and the remainder of the game stayed in Montreal's end. Brockville made gains on kick returns, bucks, mass plays and pass-outs. And there was no stopping them. On mass plays Charlie Wilkinson was carried over the line time and time again. His team more than doubled their points.

By the time Referee Clancy called the game the Brockville Bullies had beaten up on the Montreal players. In total, Fraser set a record 2 goals-from-field. John MacLaren set a record 5 goals-from-trys and Wilkinson equalled the record with 5 trys by running. Brockville scored a record 39 points in the second half as well as a record ten trys, all by the run. Captain Ritchie's men had scored the most points in Quebec Union history, the highest shutout, and thrashed the Montreal club 61-0!

The following week it was Montreal's turn. Although playing against a weaker Britannia club, they failed to provide any real

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offense in the first half. A converted fumble return gave them the first score and they were content to return to their kicking game until a late run gave them an easy 11-1 victory.

The last game of the season was of little concern for Brockville as they already had first place. The Bullies controlled the first half against a tough Ottawa College team that was going nowhere and were happy to lead 4-0 at the break. However, the students gave Captain Ritchie's men a scare as they came back on some fine running to go ahead 6-4. Realizing their first loss of the season, Brockville resorted to some of their tactics from the Montreal game. Their scrimmage kept the ball in play as they moved toward the line. On a pass-out, MacLaren was over the line and his convert gave his team the provincial title 10-7.

Three Brockville players finished 1-2-3 in scoring. Wilkinson scored a record 11 tries, MacLaren a record 11 goals-from-tries, and the team set two new records – a Canadian record 171 points, 16 against and 28 tries, all from the run.

1900 FINAL STANDINGS

	W	L	T	For	Agt	Pts
BROCKVILLE Football Club	6	0	0	171	16	12
MONTREAL Football Club	4	2	0	73	87	8
OTTAWA COLLEGE	1	5	0	45	121	2
BRITANNIA Football Club	1	5	0	41	106	2

1900 SCORING LEADERS

	trys	goals	p-fk	goals	sin	pts
Charles Wilkinson, Brockville	11	0	0	0	0	44

John MacLaren, Brockville	3	11	0	0	1	35
Horold Fraser, Brockville	3	0	0	2	6	28
Eddie Gleeson, Ottawa College	0	1	0	1	13	20
Hedley Suckling, Montreal	1	5	0	0	5	19

Brockville had to wait an extra week for the Argos and Ottawa playoff game, which the Rough Riders won handily. Then they had to endure a Rider attempt to bulldoze the team into playing the game on the 17th and in Ottawa. But the CRU said it was in Toronto on the 24th, and in Toronto on the 24th it was! Played at Rosedale Field, Ottawa won the toss and played with the wind. Their strategy was simple – go offside on purpose, give Brockville a free kick into the high wind and recover the loose ball – and it worked! Two punts and free kicks by Brockville carried the ball over the line. Ottawa's game plan was working as it was able to turn these plays into scores to lead 13-0 at the break.

When play resumed Brockville advanced near the Ottawa goal when a costly fumble was returned almost to the line. On the next play Jim McGee went over for his third try and Ottawa was up 17-0. Again Brockville moved up toward the Rider goal and an inside kick that Marquis turned into a score seemed to settle the visitors down. A fumble return by Graham made the game close but at the whistle the Riders won the title 17-10. In spite of the win there was controversy with the timer's watch. It seemed to lose 2 minutes and 20 seconds in the first half and five minutes 40 seconds in the second half. With the ball near the Ottawa line in the last few minutes, Brockville supporters wonder if the outcome would have been different with another 5 minutes to play.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame's Top Twenty PASS RECEIVERS

The PFHOF's display is updated weekly throughout the NFL season. It differs slightly from other similar lists because statistics from the All-America Football Conference (AAFC)-which operated from 1946 through 1949-are included.

Leading Lifetime Receivers (At the start of the 2001 season)

Rank	Player	League	Yrs	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
1	(1) JERRY RICE	NFL	16	1,281	19,247	15.0	176
2	(4) CRIS CARTER	NFL	14	1,020	12,962	12.7	123
3	(2) ANDRE REED	NFL	16	951	13,198	13.9	87
4	(3) Art Monk	NFL	16	940	12,721	13.5	68
5	(7) IRVING FRYAR	NFL	17	851	12,785	15.0	84
6	(8) TIM BROWN	NFL	13	846	12,072	14.3	86
7	(5) Steve Largent*	NFL	14	819	13,089	16.0	100
8	(6) Henry Ellard	NFL	16	814	13,777	16.9	65
9	(9) James Lofton	NFL	16	764	14,004	18.3	75
10T	(10T) Charlie Joiner*	AFL-NFL	18	750	12,146	16.2	65
10T	(10T) Michael Irvin	NFL	12	750	11,904	15.9	65
12	(12) ANDRE RISON	NFL	12	741	10,173	13.7	84
13	(13) Gary Clark	NFL	11	699	10,856	15.5	65
14	(--) LARRY CENTERS	NFL	11	685	5,683	8.3	25
15	(20) HERMAN MOORE	NFL	10	666	9,098	13.7	62
15T	(14) Ozzie Newsome*	NFL	13	662	7,980	12.1	47
17	(15) Charley Taylor*	NFL	13	649	9,110	14.0	79
18	(16) Drew Hill	NFL	15	634	9,831	15.5	60
19	(17) Don Maynard*	NFL-AFL	15	633	11,834	18.7	88
20	(18) Raymond Berry*	NFL	13	631	9,275	14.7	68

2000 Notes: Larry Centers entered the Top 20 during the season. Rob Moore (628 receptions) was displaced.

Next in Line: Players active in 2000 who rank closest to a Top Twenty ranking: Shannon Sharpe (619), Terance Mathis (615), Tony Martin (556), Carl Pickens (540).

* — Indicates Pro Football Hall of Fame member () — Indicates rank at the start of the 2000 Season
CAPS — Indicates active in the 2000 season