

The Chicago Athletics' tour of major cities earned it more coverage than any non-college football team had ever received before. The Chicago-Boston game was front page news. Was Billy Crawford planning a nationwide pro football league? The year was 1892.

CAPTAIN CRAWFORD AND THE 1892 CHICAGO ATHLETICS

by Mark L. Ford

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL TALK

CHICAGO, Oct. 5.- Certain Chicago patrons of athletics are said to be interested in the organization of a professional football league. Their idea is that the game can be made to take the place of baseball in public favor. This scheme, it is alleged, is to be backed financially by wealthy members of the University Club, whose interest in football dates back to college days.

From the *New York Times*, October 6, 1892, p. 3.

I. Right Place, Right Time -- The Chicago Athletic Association

Nearly three decades before the meeting at the Hupmobile showroom in Canton, a young Chicago lawyer had dreams of taking the game of football beyond the college level. Billy Crawford, a Yale graduate, was acquainted with many of the Ivy League's greatest players, and in Chicago, he knew many of America's richest men.

The *New York Times* article quoted above was only partially accurate. The idea for a pro football league was supported by former members of Chicago's University Club who had founded their own organization, the Chicago Athletic Association, in 1890[1]. Among the reasons for the schism were disagreements on the sponsorship of amateur teams. Athletes playing for the CUC received no fringe benefits, save for free club membership, and when the CAA was created, it reimbursed its athletes' expenses. No mere neighborhood gym was the CAA. Its well-to-do patrons included some of the most successful businessmen of the day ---sporting goods manufacturer A.G. Spaulding; department store magnate Marshall Field; and International Harvester president Cyrus McCormick Jr.[2]. Crawford, at ease with both jocks and tycoons, was a link between the worlds of sports and money.

Chicago in 1892 was an auspicious place and time for creating a football league for college graduates, for many reasons. Chicago was planning to host the Columbian Exposition, a world's fair bringing exhibitors and visitors from allover the world to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. Chicago had a financially successful professional baseball franchise -- 1892's "Colts" would later be renamed the Cubs- operating in the twelve team National League. In 1892, college football was only

beginning to get a foothold in Chicago-Northwestern University in Evanston had operated a program for a few years, and the University of Chicago would open its doors and play its first football games (under Amos Alonzo Stagg) later that year .

Finally, the Chicago AA was the first football team from "the West" to do what eastern athletic clubs had been doing for several years: arranging matches against the "Big 3" colleges (Harvard, Yale and Princeton). Among the members of "high society", attending football games was fashionable and large cities had a fan base that could support pro football. Billy Crawford was selected as the captain for the new Chicago Athletics' team.

II. Billy Crawford, The Man Who Would Be King

Who was Billy Crawford? He's been referred to by pro football historian Beau Riffenburgh as "a man 28 years ahead of his time"[3] because of his idea for creating a national pro football league. In many ways, he was the Lamar Hunt of his day -- born to a wealthy family, a scrub football player for a major college, an ambitious young businessman rebelling against the established order. Here's what is known about him, with the invaluable assistance of Christine Connelly of Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library.[4]

William Randall Crawford was born on November 11, 1864, in New Albany, Indiana. After the Civil War, his family moved to Chicago, where his father set up a successful law practice. Billy Crawford attended Yale University, graduating in 1886. Contrary to press accounts of the day,

Crawford was not a star player for the Bulldogs, although he was a substitute on the 1885 team in his senior year. He was the captain of the university's bicycle club in an era when bike racing was extremely

popular .

After graduation, he attended Harvard Law School for the 1887 –1888 year and furthered his Ivy League contacts and his legal knowledge, then became an attorney in his father's Chicago office, and served as general counsel for the Wabash Railroad Company. By 1892, Attorney Crawford was finding loopholes in the rules of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and testing the limits of amateur athletics. After a number of years in legal practice, Crawford moved to Seattle and in 1907, bought that city's interurban streetcar business and extended its lines into neighboring cities in King County, Washington. It may well have been that experience in the rail industry that gave Crawford a shot at luring football's most famous player out of retirement.

III. Dream Team 1892 -- Heffelfinger and Company

In 1892, Billy Crawford was 27 years old and established as a lawyer in his father's Chicago firm, as well as the captain of the Chicago Athletic Association's new football team. Walter W. "Pudge" Heffelfinger had taken a railroad job in Omaha after graduating earlier in the year. The Crawford law firm was counsel for Wabash Railroad, which had a line extending into Omaha, and that may have been the critical link that made Heffelfinger's post-college career possible. "Heft" was the most famous football player in America up to that time. Enshrined now in the College Football Hall of Fame, he gained notoriety by single-handedly dismantling the wedge offense, also known as the V formation. Simply stated, a ballcarrier would rush behind the protection of a 1,500 pound mass of nine armlocked teammates, tearing through defensive lines toward the goal line until someone could stop the ballcarrier from behind. Heffelfinger's solution was to crash into the frontrunner and to bring down the entire pack.

In the days before television and radio, sports fans received their play by play from the daily newspapers (which in turn operated off of a telegraph network) and the mental picture of man taking down eight made Heffelfinger one of the sports' first popular stars. With Heffelfinger's days of greatness apparently behind him, Crawford offered inducements sufficient to persuade Heff to return to the public eye. Heffelfinger would later deny that he did it for anything but love of the game ("It was amateur football at its best- amateur in every sense of the word. We didn't even get travelling expenses!", he would write in his autobiography, "But look at all the fun we had." [5])

Until his death in 1954, Heffelfinger publicly denied being anything but an amateur. Since then, it has been proven that he was paid \$500 to participate in a football game in Pittsburgh- also in 1892 --and he is now considered to have been be the first pro football player. Until a month after Heff completed his tour with Chicago, the AAU didn't have a rule prohibiting players

from receiving their expenses, and it is unlikely that any of the stars played simply for Ifun"[6].

Landing the services of Pudge Heffelfinger was a major coup, and it enabled the Chicago Athletics to negotiate, on very short notice, meetings with Harvard, Pennsylvania and Princeton. Crawford set up matches with three amateur clubs along the travel route in Cleveland, Rochester and Brooklyn, and used the trip to bargain for a noteworthy team to meet the Athletics in Chicago for Thanksgiving Day.

In all, 32 players participated at different times on the six game tour. Crawford and Heffelfinger played in all six contests at quarterback and left guard, respectively. The players seen most frequently were:

Left End - Ben "Sport" Donnelly (Princeton '89). Known for starting a fight when the referee wasn't looking, then drawing enough retaliation for a key player to get booted from the game, Sport was one of the game's great players and, like Heffelfinger, is enshrined in the College Hall of Fame. He was coaching football at Purdue University when asked to join the tour.

Left Tackle - Oliver Rafferty (Lehigh U.) was already on the CAA team before it toured the nation.

Left Guard - Walter "Pudge" Heffelfinger (Yale '91) was the game's most famous player. When Crawford brought them together, Heffelfinger and Donnelly were on the same team for the first time.

Center - "Stevey" Stevenson (Purdue) was playing college ball and was recruited for the tour by his coaches.

Right Guard - William C. Malley (Michigan '90) had been captain of the Wolverines football team.

Right Tackle - H.O. Stickney (Harvard '89) would later coach the University of Wisconsin football team.

Right End - James Van Inwagen (Michigan '91) was captain of the Wolverines football team and played in four of the games.

Halfback (left) - Bert Alward (Harvard '90)

Halfback (right) - J.A. Smith was a CAA original.

Fullback - Knowlton "Snake" Ames (Princeton '89), another College Hall of Famer, earned his nickname by slipping through tight defenses. He and his Tiger teammate Donnelly were both coaching at Purdue, and he joined the team for its last three games.

Quarterback - Billy Crawford, captain of the CAA team, had attended both Yale and Harvard, but hadn't played ball there. At 130 pounds, he was the lightest man on the team.

Other football greats on the Chicago Athletics were Billy Bull of Yale, Dudley Dean, George Harding, Vic Harding and Frank Remington of Harvard, Billy Bull of Yale; and Jimmy Studebaker of Purdue. Never before had so many former college football stars been assembled into a single team, and the national press followed their every move. Ultimately, however, the concentration of so many outstanding players would lead to strife.

IV. A Circuit of Six Cities

Having put together the best squadron ever of college football legends for a tour of the biggest cities in the United States, Crawford was prepared to sell the concept of "football after college" to the American public, he would be making contacts with the major athletic clubs in every city along the way.

The National League had 12 major league baseball teams in 1892, located in Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Louisville, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Washington. Crawford arranged for his team to appear at six of those 12 markets -- Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia- and national publicity reached other areas not along the route. Of the other NL cities, Pittsburgh, which had two bitter rivals, (the Allegheny Athletic Association and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club), was too far out of the way to merit a stop by Chicago, but would eventually lure his top stars away.

IV. Rumblings of Professionalism

The Athletics were officially amateurs, but when famous names began joining an all-expense paid barnstorming tour, Chicago area colleges had reason to believe rumors that pro ball was next. Northwestern University had played a match against the CAA on October 8, losing 10-0.

When Crawford began luring players from secure jobs, it seemed to go too far beyond the rules for amateur ball. North-western's faculty held a meeting and voted to call off a match set for October 19. "The chief reason assigned for the refusal to allow the collegians to play the local team is that the members of the latter are professionals, because they take expense money in travelling around the country to play games with various teams," noted a skeptical Tribune, which editorialized that "If receiving a share of the gate receipts for expenses was a violation of the amateur rule, there would be no amateurs in the country in a year's time." [6]

For the University of Chicago, playing in its first season and coached by Amos Alonzo Stagg, a meeting with a club rebelling against amateur athletics was out of the question. The established programs in the East,

however, had played other non-college teams without running afoul of the rules and saw no danger in hosting Crawford's tour --or, perhaps, realized that they needed to control their own destinies without serving the Amateur Athletic Union. Heffelfinger arrived in Chicago on the evening of October 21, and the team rode the train to its first stop in Cleveland.

V. Football Rules 1892

If a pro football league had been successfully launched in 1892, today's game might have looked very different. Football's greatest reformations occurred before well before the founding of the NFL, which has made only slight changes to the basic rules since 1920.

Points of the Game.

The field, 330 feet long by 160 wide, is marked off at intervals of five yards each, with the last lines running parallel with the posts of the two goals, which are planted at the end of the field, facing each other. When the ball is put into play it is started at the center of the field, one or the other team having possession of it, the matter being decided by toss. The object of the play is to carry the ball up to the goal lines and touch it down behind them. A touchdown scores four points. A goal kicked from a touchdown scores two points more. When a player is tackled a "down" is scored against the team having the ball, and if, after four downs, a team has not advanced five or lost twenty yards the ball goes to their opponents. The ball can also be lost for foul tackling and other play of the kind, including off-side play. The game lasts an hour and a half, each team playing forty-five minutes from each side of the field.

(from the *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1892)

Among other major differences in the game 110 years ago:

(1) There was no forward pass. The quarterback received a "snapback" from the center (who heeled the ball backward on the ground), and either rushed forward with the protection of his line, or made a handoff or a lateral to another back. A key method for gaining long yardage was to punt the ball deep into opposing territory and to try to force a fumble.

(2) The goal kick after a touchdown had to be made from a point in front of where the TD was made. Thus, a sideline play meant a difficult kick from the side of the field. In the free kick, the holder had to lie on his stomach, arms outstretched, to prepare the ball for a kick. A field goal was worth 5 points, more even than a touchdown, but was seldom attempted, let alone successful. Since lying prone to hold the ball was not a wise move in the middle of a game, field goal attempts were drop kicked.

(3) The first possession of a drive began at the 55 yard line, with the opposing side on its own 35. With the teams 20 yards apart, the team with the ball would try to get as deep into opposing territory as possible, after which the squads would line up against each other on first down.

(4) The ball was a yellow, leather-covered spheroid, and because of its size and covering, fumbles were common. Helmets and padding were non-existent, though some players, like Sport Donnelly, wore canvas jackets over their jerseys. Some players grew their hair long and wore stocking caps to provide some padding for their skulls.

(5) The wedge -- that 1,000 pound V-formation chain - was legal and a popular rushing play. In between plays, the action was even more violent, since striking a player was illegal only if the ball was in play.

(6) Though spectators could verify from their own watches how much time was left in a 45 minute half, the referee was the official timekeeper. A play in progress when time expired was whistled dead.

(7) A penalty for rough play, or even for offensive holding or being offside, meant a turnover, rather than a loss of yardage.

V. The Selling of Post-College Football

Game One: Chicago Athletics 28, Cleveland 0

Cleveland, like Chicago, didn't have a college with an established football program, but its citizens were fans of the game. The Chicago Colts (later the Cubs) already played baseball games against the Cleveland Spiders, and Cleveland would have been a natural rival for the Athletics.

The Clevelanders had an established star, Billy Rhodes of Yale, described in the Tribune as "a foxy player...with some humorous ways about him"[7]. His fun included snapping fingers out of joint, stomping on feet and making an opposing player's neck "creak like a rusty hinge". --all while maintaining a constant smile.

Heffelfinger's arrival in the "Forest City" brought out a crowd that included the wealthy members of Cleveland society, who, according to the Tribune, "turn out here to football like New-Yorkers to one of Ward McAllister's soirees. It's the proper thing and you must do it... or you will be out sure the next time you meet Cleveland's 400." With Heffelfinger and Malley as guards, and Donnelly at left end, Chicago set up "a rush line as solid as a wall".

In its first drive, Cleveland had been held to its own 10 yard line on three downs. Instead of punting, however, the team decided to "go for it", and failed.

Chicago took over on downs and pushed to the five, after which J.A. Smith ran behind a wedge for the first touchdown.

"Chicago now realized its strength," wrote the Tribune, while "The Cleveland rush line grew weaker and weaker." Repeatedly, Cleveland refused to punt the ball in a 3rd down situation and failed in one drive after another. Chicago's strategy was to have Studebaker punt deep into Cleveland territory, and, upon recovering on downs, sending Smith through the center. Smith scored four of the team's five touchdowns that day, and Studebaker was successful on all but one conversion.

At Cleveland, October 21, 1892

CHICAGO AA	12	16-	28
CLEVELAND	0	0-	0
Chi-Smith, 5 yd run (Studebaker kick)			
Chi-Smith, 5 yd run (Studebaker kick)			
Chi-Smith, 1 yd run (Studebaker kick)			
Chi-Smith, 2 yd run (kick fails)			
Chi-Crawford, 2 yd run (Studebaker kick)			

Game Two: Chicago 35, Rochester 0

It is unlikely that Rochester, New York, was anything more than a convenient railway stop in the Athletics' trip east. The fictional "Rochester University" was recognized as a hastily assembled team to give the Athletics practice before facing its first Ivy League opponent. "Nobody had ever heard of the Rochester football club, but it is made up of a lot of plucky chaps with some ability in a football line..." noted the Tribune's correspondent.[8]

Rochester never came closer than 25 feet from the Chicago end zone. Pudge Heffelfinger scored two touchdowns, and Sport Donnelly kicked all of his team's extra points. Apparently by agreement of the teams, conversions were worth one point rather than two. Chicago tallied four TDs in the first half, and three more in the second.

A Rochester, October 25, 1892

CHICAGO AA	20	15-	35
ROCHESTER	0	0-	0
Chi-Rafferty, 5 yd run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Seixas, 55 yd run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Rafferty, 55 yd run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Heffelfinger, 5 yd run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Heffelfinger, run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Donnelly, run (Donnelly kick)			
Chi-Alward, run (Donnelly kick)			

Game Three: Harvard University 28, Chicago AA 0

The Boston metro area was the key stop in the Chicago Athletics' tour of the East. Besides perennial champion Harvard University (located in nearby Cambridge), the city had what was probably the best non-college team in the east, the Boston Athletic Club.

In 1892, Harvard was a close second to Yale. A victory against Harvard might have been the key to selling the concept of "football after college" to the American public, but it was not to be. The Crimson pulled out all the stops in a game before "the fashion and wealth of the Hub", as Boston society turned out en masse on a Wednesday afternoon to see the return of Pudge Heffelfinger.

In the first half, Chicago was on its own 25 when Harvard's "Slugger" Mason punched Chicago's Stickney "in truly Sullivan style"[9], i.e., in the manner of boxer John J. Sullivan, while the referee was not looking. The ref, a Harvard grad, was watching when Stickney hit back, and awarded Harvard possession, as well as half the distance to the goal line, and Harvard then scored.

Sport Donnelly tackled so well that, reportedly, the Boston crowd gave him a standing ovation. Harvard's men gave Donnelly a dose of his own medicine in the second half, tearing off his jersey so that he was "clothed only in deep thought from the waist up", then poking him in the eye to force his departure.

Harvard scored five TD's, and was rushing for a sixth when time expired.

At Cambridge, MA. October 25.1892

CHICAGO AA	0	0.	0
HARVARD U.	12	16	28
Har- Mason, 20 yd run (Trafford kick)			
Har- Gray, 12 yd run (Corbett kick)			
Har- Lee, run (kick failed)			
Har-. Gray, run (Corbett kick)			
Har- Hallowell, 30 yd fumble return (Corbett kick)			

Game Four: Pennsylvania 12, Chicago AA 10

The Chicago Athletics had four chances to tie or even defeat an Ivy League team on its home turf, but two controversial calls and two missed kicks prevented an upset of a college by an athletic club. By agreement, the first half was 45 minutes long, the second half only 30 minutes. In the first half, Penn was leading 6-0 when it attempted a punt from its 15 yard line. Billy Crawford blocked the attempt, however, and Finney ran the blocked punt back for a TD.

Late in the half, Penn was leading 12-6. Chicago drove seven yards in three plays, enough for a first and goal situation on the one yard line- but the referee ruled that the Athletics hadn't made five yards, and turned the ball over to Penn, which then punted it far down the field.

In the second half, Finney ran 20 yards for a Chicago TD, but Billy Bull missed a tying conversion kick and the score was Pennsylvania 12, Chicago 10. Chicago got another chance to tie the score when its punt bounced off of a Penn player and was downed in the end zone- enough for a 2-point safety rather than a

touchback -- "but the umpire did not see the ball strike Thayer and Chicago again lost the two points needed to tie the score"[10]. In the game's final minutes, Bull attempted a field goal- which would have given Chicago a 15-12 win if it had been successful- "but the ball went two feet under the bar" according to the Tribune.

At Philadelphia. October 29.1892

CHICAGO AA	6	4 -	10
PENNSYLVANIA	12	0 -	12
Pen- Knipe, run (Thayer kick)			
Chi- Finney, 15 yd fumble recovery (Bull kick)			
Pen- Knipe, 10 yd run (Thayer kick)			
Chi- Finney, 20 yd run (kick failed)			
A- 2,500			

Game Five: Princeton 12, Chicago AA 0

The final stop on the Athletics' tour was the New York metropolitan area. Princeton University played in New Jersey, and New York City supported three athletic clubs --Manhattan AC, NY AC and the Brooklyn Crescents --with big time aspirations. All three met Yale and Princeton. Manhattan and NY AC faced Rutgers. Manhattan also challenged Cornell and the Crescents played against Pennsylvania U. Talent in the Big Apple had been spread thin, and three not only lost all 10 of the contests, they didn't even score.[11]

In the Princeton game, Chicago got to the Princeton 15, and in a third down situation, Snake Ames drop kicked to attempt a field goal, which would have been worth five points. The ball fell short, and Poe of the Tigers caught the ball and tried to gain yardage. Poe was pushed back into the end zone and tackled, which should have meant a two point safety, but the officials- both Princeton graduates- ruled that it was a touchback. Princeton got the ball down to the Chicago 5 and Poe pushed through for the team's first TD.

In the second half, darkness fell and "the struggling players in the line could scarcely distinguish friend from foe"[12]. Chicago was 10 yards away from a touchdown, when an offside penalty cost it the ball. In the final minute, Poe --described as "eel-like in the way he squirms, kicks and crawls through the opposing line" --ran 50 yards for another touchdown.

At Princeton. October 31.1892

CHICAGO AA	0	0 -	0
PRINCETON	6	6 -	12
Pri- Poe, 5 yd run (Homan kick)			
Pri- Poe, 50 yd run (Homan kick)			

Game Six: Chicago Athletics 41 Brooklyn Crescents 4

The Brooklyn Crescents were the 1891 AAU football champs and were best of three choices for a New York opponent. However, Brooklyn refused to play Chicago unless Sport Donnelly (who had played for Manhattan in '91) was barred from the game. Crawford agreed, an exercise in bad judgment that would tear the Chicago team apart. Donnelly had been injured in the game

against Penn, and was already limping from a badly strained right leg. He played briefly in the second half of the Princeton game before having to come back out, and would have missed the Crescents game in any event.

This final game of tour was a disaster that may well have ended any possibility of organizing a pro football league. The game was uninteresting. The Chicago Tribune called it "probably the worst of the year between clubs of such prominence"[13]. The New York Times sportswriters- who broke the news a month earlier about a possible pro league- concluded that America wasn't ready to watch post-college football. "One of the most attractive things about college football," wrote the Times, "is its desperate earnestness, and when the game is robbed of this feature, there is little left for Americans. Such was the case with yesterday's match. Neither team had in mind the football prestige of a college, and consequently, the struggle was mild."[14]

To make matters worse, the pre-game agreement to bar Sport Donnelly from playing in Brooklyn literally added insult to injury, and split the team right before it was to make a triumphant homecoming. Already hurt, when Donnelly got word of his betrayal by Chicago, "he was mad clean through"[15], declaring that he would never play another game for the Athletics. Donnelly and Heftelfinger declined to appear for the Athletics' piece de resistance, a Thanksgiving game in Chicago against Boston. In the following weeks, Heft, and then Sport, became the first and second known pro football players in history as members of Pittsburgh's Allegheny AA team. Chicago would host the biggest non-college football game in history, but without the "dream team" that had toured the East.

At Brooklyn, November 5, 1892

CHICAGO	0	4 -	4
BROOKLYN	0	0 -	4
Chi- Finney,	5 yd run (kick failed)		
Bkn- Fauss,	7 yd run (kick failed)		

VI. "The Best Football Game Ever Played West of New York City"

While touring the east, Captain Crawford was negotiating for a prominent football team to come to Chicago for a game on Thanksgiving Day, November 24. He cut a deal with the Boston Athletic Club, hoping, perhaps, that the "Beaneaters" would include some of the Harvard University team. Harvard's season would be over by the 19th, closing with the annual Yale game.

Even without Harvard players, however, Boston AC was a tough opponent in the post-college ranks. It had defeated Dartmouth 30-8, and narrowly lost 16-12 to Harvard, making it the best AC in the East. The only athletic clubs that had even scored against a college team in '92 had been Boston, Chicago AA and

Washington D.C.'s Columbia club, which had managed a 6-6 tie with Rutgers. The other 8 teams- Crescent, NY AC, Manhattan, Syracuse, Temperance, Hyde Park (Kansas City), M.A.C. (Detroit) and PAC (Pittsburgh) --had been shut out in 18 matches against colleges.[17]

Thus, the stage was set for an East-West matchup between the two best non-college football teams in the nation, which the Tribune promoted as "what is certain to be the best football game ever played west of New York City.[18] The game was arranged for the South Side baseball park and the cheapest admission was \$1 for the right to stand behind the north end zone. Upper level seats were \$2, and box seats for parties of 3 or 5 patrons were \$7.50 and \$12.50. The really well to do could park a buggy in a reserved stall next to the field, the best spots going for \$17.50. In today's dollars, the equivalent prices would have ranged from \$20 to \$350.

Chicago's biggest celebrities braved the cold to see the game, including Mayor Washburne, industrialist W.R. Grace, and actress Florence Ziegfeld[18]. As late as the day before the game, Heftelfinger and Donnelly were expected to appear for Chicago. It is known, now, that the two had gone professional with Pittsburgh's AAA club only days earlier. Whether their non-appearance was a consequence of the slight to Donnelly in the Brooklyn game is not certain -- it is a matter of record that "Snake" Ames played the big game. Boston's players included Frank Peters (Yale '85), R.P. Waters (Harvard) and Frank McNear of the University of California, and the team came to town in a specially outfitted Pullman car that doubled as their lodging.

The crowd- officially 4,669 --was less than expected, but enthusiastic[19]. In addition to college pennants, the spectators waved streamers for the Chicago and Boston colors. Boston wore dark blue and yellow. Interestingly, the Chicago Athletics' uniforms were red, white and black --colors later adopted by the Bears. Their logo was a "C" inside a circle, worn on the left.

The game began at 2:00. Chicago won the toss and drove five yards in its opening possession from midfield. Facing a 3rd and 8 situation, Snake Ames punted the ball downfield. Boston's McNear fumbled, and Stickney scooped up the ball at the 25 and ran into the end zone for the Athletics' first score. Victor Harding's placekick made it Chicago 6, Boston 0, with 41 minutes left in the half.

Boston's Anthony gained twenty yards in the team's opening possession and in the next five plays, was within the 25 yard line. The Bostons failed to get a first down, however, and Chicago got the ball. Going for a better field position, Snake Ames punted the ball away, but Boston held tight. A 35 yard gain by Peters got Boston to the 30, and after a couple of plays, Anthony

ran 22 yards for his team's first TD. McNear's kick made a 6-6 tie. By now, it was apparent that the Boston team outweighed the locals.

Chicago's next possession bogged down at the Boston 45, and Ames punted again, down to the 15. The ball remained deep in Boston territory. After a few plays, Frank Peters' fumble was recovered by Stickney on the 18 yard line. No gain was made on the next three downs, and Boston took back over, driving down the field. A 35-yard run by Peters was a key to getting deep into Chicago territory, and Anthony scored from the 15. McNear's kick made the score Boston 12, Chicago 6. On Chicago's next possession, Oliver Rafferty lost the ball. Boston had driven to the 25 when referee John Fillmore blew his silver whistle to end the first half.

Boston ran two big plays, wedging its way to the 25 within minutes after the second half started. Despite losing two yards on a fumble, Boston got down to the 12 and faced 3rd down and 4 to go. Peters rushed for five and Anthony scored the visitors' third TD, but McNear missed the conversion. The score was now Boston 16, Chicago 6.

Now down by a couple of touchdowns before the local fans, Chicago fought back, gaining 15 yards from the midfield possession. Stickney's 30-yard rush brought the Athletics to a first and goal situation on the 5 yard line. In two plays, Alward only gained three. Third down and goal to go, Stickney lost the ball, but Remington recovered in the end zone. Vic Harding's kick made it Boston 16, Chicago 12.

Boston drove all the way down to the ten, but failed to get a first down after three tries. The game was now in its final 15 minutes, and Chicago needed to drive up the field. On the second play, though, Vic Harding fumbled and recovered the ball in the end zone for a safety, and Boston 18, Chicago 12. The subsequent free kick from Chicago's 25 yard line was almost recovered by the Athletics, but Boston recovered. The guests pushed all the way to the 3 yard line, but then Boston was called offside- and the ball was turned over to Chicago, now 107 yards away from tying the game.

Time was running out, and only the referee knew how much was left. "Then Chicago, driven to desperation by the lack of time, tried a neat trick which might have resulted in a tie score," wrote the Tribune. Crawford dropped back into the end zone to an unprotected side, and "Harding tried a long pass," -- actually, a lateral -- "and could Crawford have come up to the ball he would have had a clear field." Instead, the ball hit a goal post and only the quick action of J.A. Smith kept it from being downed there for another score for Boston. Chicago settled for punting the bailout to midfield, where it stayed as time expired. The teams and their wealthy enthusiasts then repaired to Kinsley's

Restaurant where "Victors and vanquished sat down to Thanksgiving turkey", orchestras played, and after dinner speeches were made. The next day, the game was front page news in the Tribune, which recognized the spectacle as a major sporting and social event.

At Chicago. November 24. 1892

BOSTON	12	6 -	18
CHICAGO	6	6 -	12

Chi- Stickney, 25 yd fumble recovery (V. Harding kick)

Bos- Anthony 27 yd run (McNear kick)

Bos- Anthony 15 yd run (McNear kick)

Bos- Anthony 7 yd run (kick failed)

Chi- Remington, 1 yd plunge (V. Harding kick)

Bos- Safety, V. Harding tackled in end zone

VII. Epilogue: Right Place, Wrong Time

Billy Crawford had shown that there was a market for football after college, and his Chicago Athletics had exploited every available opening in the rules of the Amateur Athletic Union to make the tour possible. Though there was never a record of payment of money in exchange for services, the Chicago Athletic Association gave its players an all expense paid tour of the east- and the expense account was generous indeed. "The team, then, was in effect composed of professionals," wrote football historian Marc S. Malt by, II and it achieved a certain amount of notoriety for its efforts. "(20]"

Too much notoriety, as it turned out. Chicago and Boston openly lived in greater style than any amateur football teams were ever accustomed to, but Attorney Crawford had followed the letter, if not the spirit, of the AAU rules. The AAU Board of Governors found no fault in Chicago's actions, but passed a resolution for the 1893 season, prohibiting any allowance of expenses for traveling teams. Crawford could not have been unaware that his daring experiment would lead to a response from the AAU, and was gambling, perhaps, on getting enough athletic clubs to form a league that could play football without subservience to that organization.

In later years, the gamble might have succeeded. In 1892, however, the major athletic clubs were still able to play against the big colleges, and clubs like Boston and the Crescents would have sacrificed a good deal of revenue in departing the AAU. Worse than that, any possibility that Crawford, as a Lamar Hunt figure, might have found a Bud Adams, was ruined by the Panic of '93- a Wall Street crash that made even the richest billionaires call a halt to new investment. While 1892 Chicago may have been the right time and the right place to create a pro football league, 1893 America was not.

For want of a nail, a "Columbian Football League" with franchises in Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington might have been in place at the dawn of the 20th century, and the pro game might be radically different

from what we know now- assuming that a pro league could have survived the 1906 public outcry against the sport.

As for Crawford, he retired from being the mass transit czar of Seattle and moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where he died on September 6, 1933, at the age of 68.

Crawford lived long enough, not only to see Chicago host another world's fair, but also to see a pro football league go from smaller towns into the nation's biggest cities. In that year of 1933, the NFL added franchises in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to existing teams in Chicago, New York, Brooklyn and Boston. It had taken another generation to realize what Billy Crawford, the man "28 years ahead of his time" had hoped to accomplish in 1892.

[1] Bob Carroll and Bob Braunwart, Pro Football: From AAA to '03. The story of Pittsburgh AAA's 1892 season can be seen at www.footballresearch.com.

[2] See www.chicagoathletic.com for the CAA's current webpage

[3] Beau Riffenburgh, The Official NFL Encyclopedia (1986). Riffenburgh's description of Crawford's dreams to organize a pro league inspired further research.

[4] Francis R. Cooley, Thirty-Year Record of the Class of Eighteen Eighty-Six, Yale College (Yale University Press, 1916), and Bulletin of Yale

Universi--: Obituary Record of Graduates Deceased During the Year Ending July 1, 1934, 31st Series, Number Three, October 15, 1934

[5] W.W. Heffelfinger and John McCallum, This Was Football (A.S. Barnes and Company, 1954) Heffelfinger's memories differ in many respects from current accounts, and he recalled playing Case University and Syracuse University rather than the Cleveland AC and Rochester.

[6] Chicago Tribune, October 19, 1892, "Declare Them Professionals"

[7] Chicago Tribune, October 23, 1892, "Won The First Game"

[8] Chicago Tribune, October 25, 1892, "Chicagos Win Again"

[9] Chicago Tribune, October 27, 1892, "Beaten By Harvard"

[10] Chicago Tribune, October 30, 1892, "Lost By Two Points"

[11] Soren Sorensen's compilation of the scores of all college football games is part of a larger project that can be seen at <http://lrlhip.phys.utk.edu/cfr/cfr/CF-History.html>

[12] Chicago Tribune, November 3, 1892, "Strung Out Tigers"

[13] Chicago Tribune, November 6, 1892, "Played A Weak Draw"

[14] New York Times, November 6, 1892, "Crescent and Chicago Tied"

[15] Chicago Tribune, November 8, 1892, "Thanksgiving's Game Arranged"

[16] Carroll and Braunwart, op cit.

[17] Sorensen, op cit.

[18] Chicago Tribune, November 16, 1892, "Football Prices Arranged", and November 20, 1892, "Thousands Will Go"

[19] Chicago Tribune, November 25, 1892, "Boston The Victor". The Tribune made the Boston-Chicago game its front page story the day after Thanksgiving.

[20] Marc S. Malt by, The Origins and Early Development of Professional Football, (Garland Publishing, 1997)