Development

BUCKNELL ATHLETICS

Historie

By Dr. William C. Bartol

In the Beginning:

The first athletic game, played by Bucknell, of which we have record, was the game of Barn-ball, so named by Dr. George R. Bliss, Bucknell's first Professor. His story about the game makes us know that the game he tells us about was the game that we, today, call Hand-ball.

In the first issue of the College Herald, May, 1870, Dr. Bliss says: "By the beginning of the year 1850-1851, the West Wing of the University edifice was completed. . . . . The new building, having for several years, an east-end wall blank, where the main building was to be joined on, gave an excellent opportunity for playing 'Barn-ball', in the rude period before our national game of Base-ball had been invented.

The retired situation with no window to watch it, perhaps offered some temptation to neglect the rule about 'Study-hour,' but as there was a single door in the lower hall, opening through that wall, it happened that if one of the Professors ever did show his face there, at an unlucky moment, the surprise to the ball player was complete."

In those early days, Robert Lowry '54, and numerous companions, had made, at the base of that east end of West Wing, an earthen surface as smooth as a tennis court; and here with closed
hand they drove the rebounding ball with skillful repetitions.

Professor Tustin '56, when Tustin Gymnasium was building, thought that it should have an end wall, solid and windowless, to be used for the rebounding Hand-ball, just as the end wall of West Wing had been in the days of 1850 and a few years later.

In those early days, at Bucknell, athletics consisted, for the most part, of crude games without organization to back them. There was sock-ball, corner-ball, town-ball, a crude foot-ball, etc.

Base-ball came to our campus in the early sixties. The first historical mention of it that I have seen, is in the diary of J. Sexton James '68, son of Professor James. His diary, on page 314, reads: "Saturday, September 28, 1867, the Freshman team played base-ball against the first nine of the rest of the college and beat it 47-19. I played 1st base on college nine."

This turned out to be a very important game; for there came out of it the famous varsity team called the Olympians who played four seasons of base-ball with the loss of only one game.

The Bucknellian, of February 2nd, 1928, published the following story about this team:

"In 1867, the college had an organization called the Olympian Base-ball Club. It had a method of selecting a 'first nine,' as it was then called, which was simple enough but it sometimes failed to select the best nine in the Olympian ball organization.

The procedure was as follows: The club, by vote, selected three players for the first nine. These three chose another three. These six elect, picked out a final three and the first nine was then
complete. This team, thus made up, was for the most part composed of upper classmen. But it so happened that this time among the Freshmen were star players, unknown and untried, who soon found themselves. In a few weeks they chose a nine of their own and challenged the Varsity to a test game. The game was played, Saturday, September 28, 1887. (It was the game mentioned by J. Sexton James in his diary on page 214). In this game the Varsity was badly beaten. The sequel was a reorganization, - a "first nine" made up for the most part of Freshmen. This new "first nine" played successful ball. It became the first edition of that long remembered Olympian team, that season after season, for four years, lost only a single game."

These early Olympians became, by their success, the great, the encourage factor, in the development of athletics in that early period when we had no gymnasium whatever.

It should be noted, however, that for about two years, or more nearly twenty months before the game, we had an out-door gymnastic device, in very popular service. J. Sexton James, in his diary, states the following:

"January 18, 1886, I helped hoist a Gymnastic pole to rest on the tops of two trees, cut off eighteen feet from the ground. To this elevated pole were fastened five strong ropes which hung to within about seven feet of the ground. At the lower ends of the ropes were fastened leather covered iron rings, heavy and about eight inches in diameter. The ropes were about eight feet apart. Something like this:

A --- B

C

(The trapeze was added a little later)

(The trapeze is here marked C)

(The "pole" named above was a heavy tree cut.)
Dr. Loomis dispensed with recitation so that the work might be finished. I felt pretty tired toward night and went home and went to bed."

This out-door gymnasium stood centrally back of Old Main for about six years. The Bucknellian, April 26, 1925, says:

"On this gymnasium the performance betimes was circus-like but risky. In December, 1870, the heavy crossbar fell from its lofty perch. After that disaster, the only gymnasium that attracted notice was a private one, constructed by an enterprising Senior. Here he might be seen, out of 'study hour,' going through some self-taught stunts. This gymnasium was, for the most part, made out of a pair of old-time bed posts."

"Exercise to be of proper advantage to the student is to be enjoyed" said President Thwing of Western Reserve. It appears that gymnasium exercise that has nothing in view beyond exercises, does not quite measure up to that ideal. The country is full of gymnasiums. They are made or used in large measure for the training of Basketball teams, and for contests in boxing, wrestling, in fencing, These contests have in them a competition that makes them enjoyable.

The first college to establish a gymnasium was Harvard; this she did more than a hundred years ago when she established one in her dining hall. The students at Lewisburg asked for a gymnasium, seventy years ago. By keeping at it for thirty years they finally got one in 1890. We got our gymnasium not long after President Harris came to rule the campus. It was the gift of the alumni and was named "Tustin gymnasium" in honor of Francis Wayland Tustin, A.B. '58, who died April 15, 1867.

The University Mirror, of May, 1887, makes the following statement: The Alumni committee, to raise money to build the proposed gymnasium, is faithfully pushing forward its work. The sum required
is $10,000. The amount already subscribed is $1800. Since the recent death of Professor Tustin, it is the desire of many that the gymnasium be called Tustin Hall. No one was more anxious for or labored more earnestly for means to build it. How fitting then it would be to call it by his name. The committee desires your name and the amount you intend to give, immediately. You can send your subscription to D. P. Leas, 400 South Fortieth Street, Philadelphia, or to the editor of The Mirror.

"Lewisburg merchants contribute to the Gymnasium:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. W. Himmelreich</td>
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<td>Charles F. Hood</td>
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<td>J. W. Wensel</td>
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<td>W. Brady Marsh</td>
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<td>J. E. Cornelius</td>
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<td>J. B. McLaughlin</td>
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<td>T. G. Evans</td>
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<td>A. M. Noll</td>
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<td>T. D. Baker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Wolf (cash)</td>
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<td>John Walls &amp; Co.</td>
<td>20.00</td>
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<td>W. E. Bartholomew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summers &amp; Lepley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Wolf</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. D. Himmelreich</td>
<td>50.00</td>
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Other dealers are considering giving athletic furniture."

Professor Martin '71, was made the head of the Committee to secure funds for the proposed Gymnasium. As early as November 1887, he reported, in The Mirror of that date, the names of the subscribers to this fund. There were sixty-one names reported. In the January Mirror he reported twenty-one additional names, the amounts subscribed were very small.

The Bucknell Glee Club gave a concert in behalf of the Gymnasium Fund. It was a decided success and made a respectable addition to the fund.

The New York Club of the Alumni, had a sumptuous banquet given by Alfred Taylor. There were twenty-one graduates there and they
contributed $1000 to the Gymnasium Fund.

The Mirror tells us, in its July, 1888 number, that the class of '88 gave $100 to the Gymnasium Fund.

The Mirror tells us in its October number 1890, that the Rev. J.W. Putnam is about to give a course of lectures for the benefit of the Gymnasium Equipment, also that the building is now completed. Ground was broken for the building November, 1889, and work on it pushed by Contractor, W.H. Waltz of Williamsport.

The Following Found

In University Mirror, notes here and there: "Dr. Conwell's lectures netted a very large sum of money for the Gymnasium."

"Dr. G.M. Philips gave, during the fall, before the students, lectures for the benefit of the Gymnasium Fund."

"Anderson '96 contributed $35 more to the Fund, making his total contribution $60."

"Gretzinger is in Philadelphia soliciting funds for the Gymnasium."

"All praise to chairman Martin, who advanced over $1000 of his private funds for the completion of the Gymnasium."

In University Mirror April, 1891, we have: "Gundy Wolf, put down the ground floor of the Gymnasium; on it we have; Boiler-room, Director's Office, Bowling-alley, Lavatory, Bath-room, Dressing-room; care has been taken to secure, in all rooms, plenty of light and ventilation. The Gymnasium is now completed."

Tustin, after whom it was named, was made a Professor in the University three years after his graduation from college and he
served as such for twenty-eight years. He was the first alumnus to
be elected to a Professorship in the University.

When the gymnasium was complete, President Harris made
Charles W. Allen, a Senior in college, the director. Charlie was
the University's star athlete. He was a big fellow, hard as nails.
He was tennis champion and captain of the varsity football team. He
took his team to Ithaca in 1891 and won a game from Cornell. Score
4 to 0. He was widely known as "War-horse Allen".

President Harris continued to appoint, from year to year,
a star Bucknell athlete as director of the gymnasium. Among these
early directors was Harvey F. Smith '94. Harvey, like Allen, was a
champion tennis player. At one time he captained the football team.
At another he captained the baseball team. He was our strongest
baseball pitcher — a very successful strike-out pitcher. He later
played ball on the Washington team of the American League. In a game
with Williamsport, Smith had 18 strikeouts to his credit.

The gymnasium drills under these student directors were
required, of all the boys in college, three times a week during the
winter term. We may infer what these drills were and meant, from the
following program of an exhibition held in the gymnasium, March 18,
1894. Harvey F. Smith was then director and carried out the following
program:

First came — Hand Drill;  Second came Parallel bars;
Third — Horse and Buck;  Fourth — Clubs;
Fifth — Horizontal bars;  Sixth — Pyramids;
Seventh — Anvil chorus;  Eighth — Specialties.

This exhibition held the interest of a large audience for
two hours.
Emmanuel Cobor was director in 1896. He was a member of the class of 1899, and was another famous football captain.

On Washington’s birthday he gave a public exhibition as follows:

- An indoor track-meet;
- A pole-vault contest;
- A fencing contest between Allen and Gilchrist;
- A sparring match between McQuisition and Bartholomew;
- A dozen other stunts of like nature.

Nothing, however, thrilled an audience in the gymnasium, like the contests held later, when the basket-ball teams raced over the floor.

The initial game of basket-ball at Bucknell with an outside team, was played during the winter term of 1895. The opposing team was the Y. M. C. A. team from Danville, Pa. The resulting score was 3 to 2, in favor of the Danville team.

Foot balls were kicked about the campus, and games played under local rules long before 1883; but we have no record of any game played under the rules of organized foot ball in general, before the year 1883. Then it was that Lafayette college sent the Bucknell boys a formal challenge to play a game of foot ball on the Bucknell campus on Thanksgiving Day, 1883. Our boys promptly accepted the challenge. Our campus then was quite rough, not level, and full of stones, large and small from recent rude grading.

The Faculty was appealed to, and it freed all students from a study and recitation period of three hours, giving them that time to pick off the stones and put the ballfield into better shape for the game.

This game of ball proved to be, then, and in the long run of years, a big step in athletic development at Bucknell.

Lafayette had a well trained team; Bucknell, just then
had no team at all. The game, to her, was a new venture. She had
never played the game, had never seen it played, and did not know a
thing about the rules of the game; but she had football courage. She
at once picked out of both college and Academy the physically best
men available. The boys obtained a football book. They learned the
printed rules of the game, — laid out a gridiron and began practice
for the Thanksgiving game.

Carl Lew was made captain. He was thought to be Bucknell's
all-round athletic star, but he had never played in a game of football
under the rules of the proposed game.

Thanksgiving day came; the game began promptly; our boys
gave it all they had but lost the first half by a score of 44 to 0.
Bucknell had learned quite a little football in playing that first half.
In the second half the score against Bucknell was 15 to 0. Those Buck-
nell boys were learning the game which proved to be a fundamental step
in our athletic development.

Tennis at Bucknell, in the beginning.

I have a letter from John Y. Schreyer '86, of Milton, Pa.,
dated November 30, 1931. This letter says: "Tennis was brought to me,
at Milton, by Newel Johnson, a Princeton man and Ed Davis, an Annapolis
Cadet. They taught Will Chamberlin and me, on a court made in our yard,
about in 1884 ......."

A letter from Professor Harry M. Kelly '86 of Cornell College,
Mount Vernon, Iowa, says to Schreyer, "We, spent Decoration Day, Will V.
Hayes and I, at your home in Milton (Schreyer's home) and there we were
initiated into our first game of Tennis. Schreyer's father, (a merchant)
when buying store goods in New York, had seen the new game and so 'bot'
and brought home rackets, to the family, and a court was soon set up in
the yard.
Hayes and I spent some time in studying the rules of the game from a Tennis pamphlet and then set out to play. Later, Hayes and I ordered a set of rackets, and got together a group for play. In this group, as I remember now, were Charles Clingan, Will Wilkinson, Harry Hankin and I think Joe Wolfe.

The first court, located as a ground court, was just south of Dr. Bartol's lot or home. Dr. Bartol took to the game strongly from the start and made more out of it than the rest of us.

This comes vividly to my memory: The set of rackets arrived one summer afternoon late. Word got round to our group, and that very evening, in the dim light of a low moon, we measured out the proper lines and marked with twine the location of our first court on the grass. This was located, just at the foot of the Hill on the campus, between the paths leading to the Main building and to the Academy, close to the former. The rackets we used were then called the Horseman Rackets."

From my own personal mix-up in these initial games of Tennis, I know that the game first came to the Bucknell campus in the late summer of 1884, and that then a ground court or two was added to the one on the grass, as named in Harry Kelley's letter.

In the University Mirror, May 1885, we have this note: "Lawn Tennis has come to be a very popular game at the University."

In the Mirror, of June 1886, we may read: "The Lawn tennis courts are making preparation for a series of games during Commencement week."

The May, 1886, Mirror says: "The lawn tennis courts have been cleaned and repaired for the season. The game has become more popular than ever, as is evident from the number of new rackets, and the enthusiasm of the players."

The October 1886, Mirror says of tennis: "The striking
rapidity with which this game has become popular, and its continued
and widespread prevalence, lead us to say that Bucknell University should
be represented in an inter-collegiate Lawn Tennis Association. The present
association of this college is considering the feasibility of having a
tournament between this college and others, during the coming spring." Also, it says in an other item: "Our lawn tennis players are very expert."

In 1891, the Mirror says: "The tennis tournament this year
was one of unusual interest, not only because of the wonderful progress
made by some of the players, but also because of the very large numbers
of entries made for the tournament. The championship was won by war-
horse Aller."

In July 1892, the Mirror says about the Tournament "The
games were well attended. The tournament opened on the 11th of July and
closed on the 20th. Harvey Smith and Mary Bartel won the championship
in mixed doubles."

I remember quite well the tennis play of those early days.
I believe that it became then, and has so remained ever since, the
most attractive game to the player, on the campus.