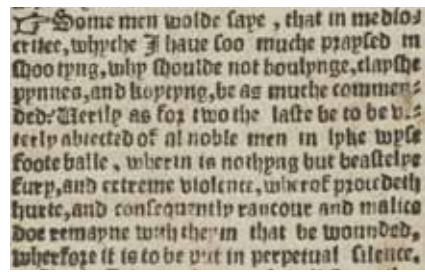
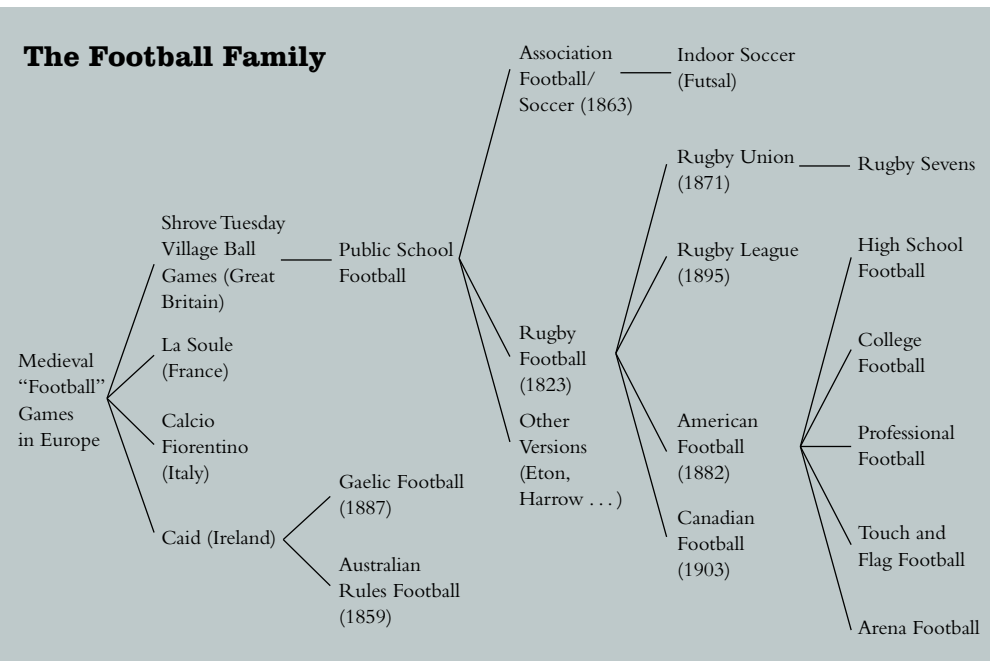


Ancestors and Cousins—Early Football



For a millennium, football has been played in various forms, and in the twenty-first century some member of the football family is the most popular sport in almost every country in the world. The earliest known record of “football” (Latinized as “*lusum pilae*”) appears in William Fitzstephen’s twelfth-century history of London. Towns throughout Europe developed distinctive versions of the game for intra-village competition. In 1314 the Lord Mayor of London issued a decree on behalf of King Edward II banning the disruptive game of football, but play continued. For the next 300 years, at least thirty local and royal edicts forbade the sport in Great Britain, citing adverse effects on society and interference with military training.

In the early nineteenth century, when these village mob ball games became an accepted part of the physical curriculum in British public schools, each school established its own rules for intramural contests. Competition between schools led to some standardization of rules. Thus, football was exported in different forms to other countries. However, countries that were still loyal to the British crown had less impetus



Major Football Leagues

	National Football League	Canadian Football League	Association Football/Soccer	Rugby Football Union	Australian Football League	Gaelic Football
Year Formed	1920	1958	1863	1871	1858	1887
Object of Game	Score touchdowns by carrying ball into opponent's end zone or kick field goals through posts	Score touchdowns by carrying ball into opponent's end zone or kick field goals through posts	Score goals by kicking ball into opponent's net	Score tries by touching ball down in opponent's goal area or kick ball through posts	Score goals by kicking ball between goalposts	Score goals by kicking ball into net or points by kicking or fisting ball over crossbar
Major Skills Required	Passing, catching, running, blocking, tackling, kicking	Passing, catching, running, blocking, tackling, kicking	Kicking, dribbling, striking (no hands)	Running, passing (only backward), kicking, tackling	Kicking, running, dribbling (with hands), tackling	Running, dribbling (with hands), kicking
Predominant Countries	United States	Canada	Worldwide	Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa	Australia	Ireland
Major Championship	Super Bowl (annual)	Grey Cup (annual)	FIFA World Cup (every quadrennial)	Rugby World Cup (every quadrennial)	AFL Grand Final (annual)	All-Ireland Senior Championship (annual)
Players per Team	11	12	11	15	18	15
Field	100 yards long by 53.3 yards wide	110 yards long by 65 yards wide	100–130 yards long by 50–100 yards wide	110 yards long by 77 yards wide	Ellipse 148–202 yards long by 120–170 yards wide	142–159 yards long by 87–98 yards wide
Ball	Prolate spheroid with pointed ends, brown, 11 inches long	Prolate spheroid with pointed ends, brown, 11 inches long	Sphere, white, 8.5–9 inches in diameter	Prolate spheroid with rounded ends, white, 11–12 inches long	Prolate spheroid with rounded ends, red (day) or yellow (night), 10.5–11 inches long	Sphere, white, 10 inches in diameter
Time of Match	15-minute quarters	15-minute quarters	45-minute halves	40-minute halves	20-minute quarters	35-minute halves



to create a uniquely native version. As a result, football in Canada remained more faithful to its rugby roots. Yet Canada would ultimately borrow from the United States to establish its own football identity; in particular, the “snapback” used in American football replaced the rugby “scrum” in 1882, and in 1931, the Canadian Rugby Union adopted the forward pass that had been instituted in American football twenty-five years earlier. Notably, American and Canadian football are the only two versions that allow players to throw the ball forward.

At the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, the United States shared its brand of football with the world as a demonstration sport. One German athlete declared, “Nobody in Germany would go out to see this. Not enough action.” He would have been surprised to learn that in 2011, nearly one million people in Germany watched the Super Bowl live in the middle of the night.

—Jonathan Horowitz

(Opposite, inset) Detail of text from *The Boke Named the Governour*, by Sir Thomas Elyot, London, 1557 edition. Originally published in 1531 and dedicated to King Henry VIII, Sir Elyot’s educational treatise regards “foote balle” as a beastly, violent activity that “produceh hurte” and ought to be discontinued, left in “perpetual silence.”

(Above) “The Early Days of Football: The Game a London Street Nuisance Under Edward II,” by A. Forestier, *London Illustrated News*, 1905. This depiction of a lively game in the early fourteenth century shows a style of play that remained little changed over the next 500 years in England and colonial America, and suggests why Edward II saw fit to ban the sport in 1314.

A Thanksgiving Tradition



There was time when football was incidental to Thanksgiving Day; nowadays, Thanksgiving is incidental to football. —Ladies Home Journal, November 1895

Thanksgiving is one of the two major holidays that are too sentimental to be delegated to a Monday. That's why we observe it the fourth Thursday of every November during a beer commercial of the Dallas-Washington football game. —Erma Bombeck, humorist and syndicated newspaper columnist, 1978

What is the most “American” holiday? An author and one of the best-known reporters of his generation, Richard Harding Davis passionately wrote in the *New York Herald* in 1894, “We could spare the Fourth of July, we could give up Labor Day gladly, but how can we exist through a long hot summer if it were not that the Thanksgiving Day game comes to us as a reward in the fall!” The holiday had strong religious overtones when Abraham

Lincoln proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving in 1863, during the Civil War. Since the American centennial, however, college football has been played on Thanksgiving Day, a custom that eventually expanded to include everything from NFL contests to neighborhood “Turkey Bowls.”

In 1876, the Intercollegiate Football Association hosted a Yale and Princeton matchup on Thanksgiving Day in Hoboken, New Jersey. It marked the first college football game played away from a campus, a precursor to the modern bowl games. The choice of game day proved an instant financial success and brought New York to a standstill where “legitimate gambling on the floor of the Stock Exchange is neglected for the greater interest of betting on the game.” In Davis’s view, the Thanksgiving Day game was “the greatest sporting event and spectacle that this country has to show.”

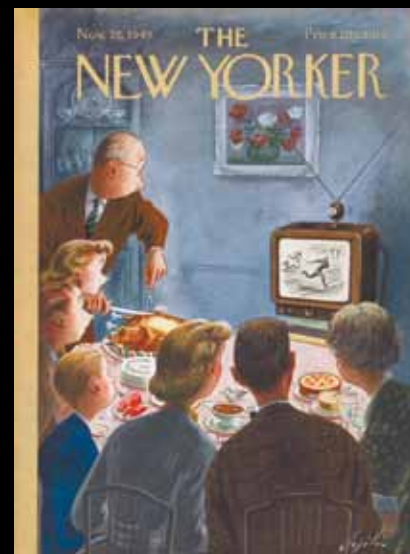
Not everyone was in favor of pigskin on turkey day. Ministers in New York City churches shortened, postponed, or even canceled religious services “on account of the great football match,” prompting Rev. Charles W. Millard to lament in 1892, “As a great home reunion day, delightful and profitable as it was beautiful, it has been wrecked in this city by college football.”

By the turn of the twentieth century, an estimated 10,000 games were being played on Thanksgiving by high school, college, and athletic-club teams, many between traditional rivals. In 1926, the Army-Navy game was the dedication game at Soldier Field in Chicago, and a record-breaking crowd of 110,000 attended in the snow. It was the

first sporting event broadcast overseas on radio, and American soldiers abroad tuned in. Domestic fans could listen in while enjoying their Thanksgiving meals, and thousands who couldn’t telephoned the *Chicago Tribune* switchboard in record numbers to get the score. The NFL began playing on Thanksgiving in its first season, but since 1934, the day has been most strongly associated with the Detroit Lions. The team’s owner began the tradition hoping to carve out a niche in a city whose sports landscape was dominated by baseball’s Tigers. The Motor City soon built a holiday trifecta around its famed parade (1924), the Lions game, and dinner. Since 1966, the Dallas Cowboys and their fans have usually celebrated the day on the field as well.

In the 1970s, football expanded its domination of the holiday by scheduling televised games the day after, on Friday afternoon, to hold fans over for the weekend cornucopia of college and NFL offerings. And the words of the *New York Herald* in 1893 are just as true now as they were then: “It is a holiday granted by the State and the nation to see a game of football.”

—Jonathan Horowitz



(Opposite, top) *Saturday Evening Post* magazine, November 24, 1928.

(Opposite, bottom) *New Yorker* magazine, November 26, 1949. Fewer than 10 percent of American households had a television set that year, but for those that did, televised football was already on the Thanksgiving Day menu.

(Above) Football game on Thanksgiving Day, Meeker, Colorado, ca. 1910. Spectators watch an offensive charge, at right, during a holiday game on the town’s old army garrison parade grounds.

(Right) “Thanksgiving Scene in Ye Old Plymouth Colony,” by Samuel D. Ehrhart, *Puck* magazine, November 20, 1912.





GAME CHANGERS: Pete Rozelle and Joe Namath

With Pete Rozelle as the sport's top decision-maker and Joe Namath as its poster child on the field, football became the most popular sport in the United States in the 1960s and the blueprint by which all other professional sports leagues would operate for the rest of the century. With Rozelle's savvy as NFL commissioner and Namath's bravado as celebrity star quarterback of the New York Jets, football was transformed into a business empire, from sporting industry to entertainment industry. Ironically, both men became football's most influential figures during this period of change because of the "non-football" qualities they each infused into the sport.

At thirty-three years old, Rozelle was elected NFL commissioner on January 26, 1960, on the owners' twenty-third ballot after seven days of voting. Rozelle thought his election "was the most ludicrous thing I ever heard of."

"They finally picked Pete as a compromise because both sides [owner factions] thought they could control him," Dallas Cowboys president and general manager Tex Schramm said. "But they were wrong. Pete was a lot stronger than any of them realized."

When Rozelle began his tenure, he inherited a league that was growing but also facing internal threats. Owners operated individually, and Rozelle convinced them to work together for the NFL's collective benefit by negotiating a league-wide television deal. He consolidated the league's merchandising, advertising, and media efforts through NFL Properties and NFL Films.

(Above) NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle and New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath, New York City, by Ron Frehm, July 18, 1969. The two men who most shaped the NFL as it rose to dominate American sports meet the press.

(Right) Joe Namath awaiting knee surgery, accompanied by Miss Sunken Gardens, Karol Kelly, AP Photo, 1966.



Under Rozelle's strong leadership from 1960 to 1989, average team values increased from \$1 million to \$100 million, the NFL merged with the AFL, the league expanded from twelve teams to twenty-eight, the Super Bowl grew to be the biggest annual sports spectacle in the world, *Monday Night Football* became the second-longest-running prime-time television show after *60 Minutes*, and increased television ratings demonstrated how the NFL had altered America's viewing habits on Sundays. "Rozelle took us out of our old football phase and made us what we are today, which is big business," said Art Rooney, the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers from 1933 to 1988.

Five years after Rozelle started convincing owners to change their operational outlook, Joe Namath entered professional football and similarly revolutionized how owners could market the on-field product. The New York Jets did not draft Namath out of Alabama in 1965 just because he was a top quarterback prospect. In fact, the team already held the rights to plainspoken Jerry Rhome, but the Tulsa University QB was "not the guy I need," said Jets owner David "Sonny" Werblin. Werblin had discovered stars such as Liberace and Dean Martin while at the Music Corporation of America talent agency, and while he wanted a good football player, he also craved an entertainer who would shine under New York's brightest lights.

Namath negotiated what was then the richest rookie contract to play in the upstart AFL, and no other football player had ever stepped into the shoes worn by "Broadway Joe" (quite literally, since he was the first to use pearly-white cleats, shunning the standard shoe-polish black). "Mr. Werblin didn't seem like he was a real football person," Namath said. "He believed in a star system. Stars are what brought people in." Namath became a celebrity as much for his lifestyle off the field as for his performance on it. He brashly guaranteed a Jets victory in Super Bowl III despite his team being a seventeen-point underdog, similar to Babe Ruth calling his famous home run shot. As a celebrity, he projected an appealing image as a member of a biker gang in the movie *C.C. and Company* (1970), in memorable commercials for Beautymist pantyhose and Noxzema shaving cream, and in a heroic appearance on television's *The Brady Bunch*. As a contrarian, he was the only athlete on President Richard Nixon's "enemy list." As a ladies' man, he made housewives "nudge their husbands and whisper, 'Introduce me,'" said Werblin's son Tom, who noticed Namath's star power even among his father's many prodigies. As a fur-coat-wearing, headline-grabbing superstar and restaurant owner, Namath blazed a glittery trail for the flamboyant, blinged-out players who would follow.

New York Giants observe a moment of silence, Yankee Stadium, November 24, 1963.
After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated two days earlier in Dallas, Commissioner Rozelle ordered NFL games scheduled for Sunday to go ahead as planned. The AFL opted not to play. Rozelle later regretted the decision to play during a period of national mourning, and in 2001, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the league suspended play the following weekend.



Rozelle and Namath changed football in particular and the American sports scene in general. One built the infrastructure, the other performed on it, and the two were essential in creating what the *New York Times* referred to as "the greatest success story in the modern American entertainment industry."

—Jonathan Horowitz

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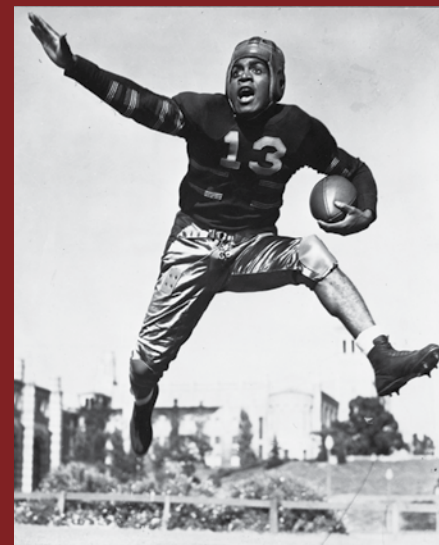
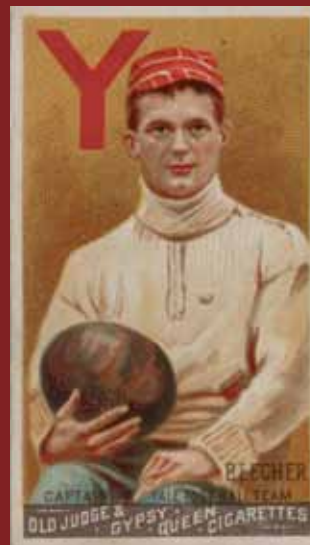
Jacket front: The Buffalo Bills' Paul Costa hauls in a pass from Jack Kemp over Boston Patriot defensive back Ron Hall, 1965 (Robert L. Smith).

Jacket back: (clockwise from top left) Michigan Wolverines, 1890; Captain Edward Beecher, Yale, football card, 1888; Kenny Washington, UCLA, ca. 1939; Lawrence Herkimer, demonstrating the "Herkie" jump, ca. 1950; Washington's Robert Griffin III, 2012 (Cliff Owen); six-man football, Cleveland High School, New York City, 1941 (William C. Greene); Cowboys Stadium, 2011 (G. Newman Lawrence); New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath accompanied by Miss Sunken Gardens, 1966 (AP); Easter Monday football game, 1754 (William Howitt).

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