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BEFORE THE SEMINOLES: FOOTBALL AT FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE, 1902-1904

by RIC A. KABAT

WHEN Coach W. W. Hughes looked out at his football team in the autumn of 1902, he was under no pressure to improve on the previous year's season. Recently hired to teach Latin at Florida State College (FSC), Professor Hughes had played football at Vanderbilt University and, when he arrived in Tallahassee, had volunteered to coach FSC's fledgling team. Practicing on the newly graded gridiron west of campus (a renovated cow pasture), the FSC Eleven prepared for their first game against a city team from nearby Bainbridge, Georgia. Hughes, pleased with the team's progress, anticipated success.¹

FSC was beginning its football program in the early years of the twentieth century, but collegiate competition already was three decades old. Following the first intercollegiate contest between Princeton and Rutgers in 1869, the game increasingly had become popular and, inevitably, subject to rules and regulations. Professional coaches replaced student captains, and formal intercollegiate organizations devised game regulations. The Intercollegiate Football Association, consisting of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the University of Pennsylvania, was created in 1876. The Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association was organized in 1894, and the midwestern Big Ten Conference followed two years later.²

The unpredictability and inherent violence of early football drew most of the spectators and swelled the gate receipts. Success depended on brute strength, and the sport lacked the intricate strategy of the modern-day game. In 1902, approximately ten deaths and seventy injuries occurred nationwide from football

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1. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 14, 1902.
2. Douglas A. Nover and Lawrence E. Ziewacz, *The Games They Played: Sports in American History, 1865-1980* (Chicago, 1983), 11, 83.

play; two years later, fourteen young men died and 296 were injured.³ Despite the casualties, the game reflected important values in American society. College boosterism and student hoopla became an integral part of the contest. Cheering the local team to victory strengthened the social bonds between the college and the larger community.⁴ Participation was fully rationalized, and the explanation remains virtually unchanged today. "A football game is a trying ordeal," explained one southern newspaper in 1902, "but when a man comes out of a game he not only has pluck and grit, he has an immense reserve force which he can in further years summon to his aid at any critical moment when strength and endurance may mean everything to him."⁵ In other words, football provided values that men needed to survive in a competitive society.⁶

Not everyone enthusiastically supported the game, however. Broken bones and bloodied bodies symbolized it for some protesters. "What is needed," one critic wrote, "is a common set of rules for all reputable colleges."⁷ President Theodore Roosevelt agreed, and in December 1905 he hosted a White House conference to discuss football regulations with the leaders of the nation's

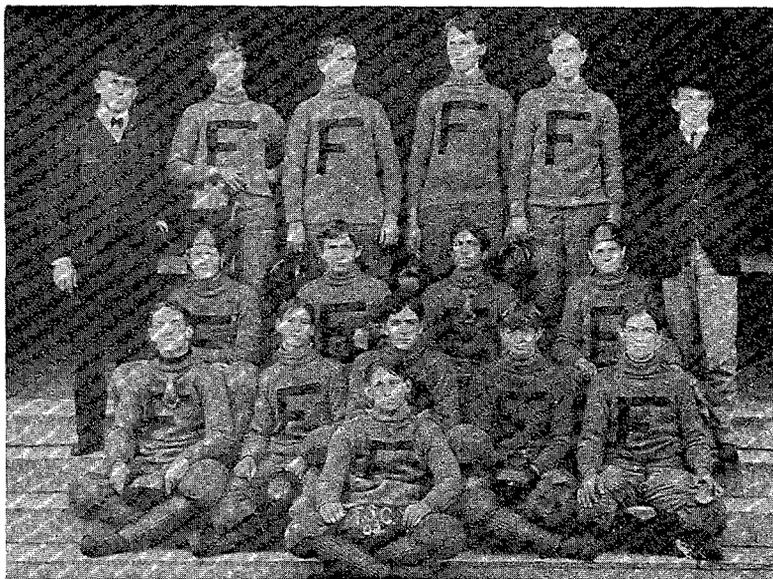
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3. Before the 1880s, American football players moved the ball up and down the field by kicking and hitting it with their hands and feet. Pushing the ball into the opponents' end zone four times scored a point. A player could not run with or throw the ball, and catching it allowed the recipient a free kick. In 1883, a touchdown equaled two points; a field goal, five; a post-touchdown kick, two; and a safety, one. The following year the touchdown was increased to four points and the safety to two. After 1900, a touchdown equaled five points. The points allotted for a touchdown changed from five to six in 1912. Noverr and Ziewacz, *Games They Played*, 26-27; Alexander M. Weyand, *The Saga of American Football* (New York, 1955), 99; John S. Watterson III, "The Football Crisis of 1909-1910: The Response of the Eastern 'Big Three,'" *Journal of Sport History* 8 (Spring 1981), 33-49; Bainbridge (GA) *Searchlight*, December 5, 1902.
 4. Football soon proved to be more profitable than other college sports, and by the early 1900s it was bringing in much-needed revenue for many institutions. Noverr and Ziewacz, *Games They Played*, 30; David L. Westby and Allen Sack, "The Commercialization and Functional Rationalization of College Football: Its Origins," *Journal of Higher Education* 47 (November-December 1976), 625-47.
 5. Bainbridge (GA) *Searchlight*, December 5, 1902.
 6. Glenn C. Altschuler and Martin W. LaForge, "From Brawn to Brains: Football and Evolutionary Thought," *Journal of Popular Culture* 16 (Spring 1983), 75-88.
 7. William P. Few, "The Excessive Devotion to Athletics," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 5 (January 1906), 46.

largest universities. The following year the educators formed the Intercollegiate Football Rules Committee (later renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association). The new rules committee stressed safety and ethical conduct. As a centralized regulatory body, the committee revised and softened the game.⁸

Florida's first intercollegiate football game was played in Jacksonville on November 22, 1901. Stetson College of DeLand defeated Florida Agricultural College (FAC) of Lake City by a score of 6-0.⁹ The contest aroused much excitement and inspired the state's other schools to seek intercollegiate competition. The following year, four schools— Florida Agricultural College, Rollins College of Winter Park, Stetson College, and Florida State College— formed “a collegiate league to make arrangements for a series of . . . football contests.” The *Weekly Tallahasseean* predicted that “some hotly contested games will be pulled off in Tallahassee.”¹⁰

Tallahassee had been the site of an institution of higher education for over forty years. Known as the West Florida Seminary from 1857 to 1901, the school's name was changed in the latter year to reflect its growing status. “All the higher branches are taught in the Florida State College,” noted a Tallahassee newspaper, “[and] the instructors are gentlemen and ladies of the highest integrity and morality.”¹¹ With an enrollment of 252 students in 1902, FSC was coeducational. The student body was divided about evenly between men and women. They participated in extracurricular activities ranging from debating societies

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8. Before 1906 football was oriented to defense, and many games were decided by one touchdown or field goal. A brutal contest often would end without either team having scored. The rule committee made significant changes: the forward pass was legalized with a twenty-yard limit; running backs had to remain five yards behind the scrimmage line; the offensive line had to have six men (none could drop back and carry the ball); first-down yardage was increased from five to ten; and downs were changed from three to four. A four-year eligibility rule and a one-year residency requirement also were established. Altschuler and LaForee. “From Brawn to Brains,” 75-88; John Hammond Moore, “Football's Ugly Decades, 1893-1913,” *Smithsonian Journal of History* 2 (Fall 1967), 60-61.
 9. Samuel Proctor and Wright Langley, *Gator History: A Pictorial History of the University of Florida* (Gainesville, 1986), 20.
 10. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, September 19, 1902.
 11. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1901.



The 1902 Florida State College football team. Coach W. W. Hughes is on the far left; A. B. Clark, team captain, is standing to his left. *Photograph courtesy Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives.*

to athletic clubs. Before 1902, the men played intramural football but did not challenge other colleges or city teams.¹²

Football was not new to Tallahasseeans. The game had been played there since at least 1890. On Christmas Day of that year the “Get There” football club had divided into two teams and played “a match game of hard kicking” with their new “fine four-dollar ball.” Everyone was “invited to witness the game,” and the local newspaper proudly asserted that the team was “open to any challenges from any other football clubs in Florida.”¹³ The team thereafter dropped from public notice. Still, local residents likely scheduled games among themselves. The early teams were not affiliated with the college and were primarily involved in local municipal competition. As the game’s popu-

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12. William G. Dodd, *History of West Florida Seminary, 1857-1901; Florida State College, 1901-1905* (Tallahassee?, 1952?), 100; *West Florida Seminary, The Argo of the Seminary West of the Suwannee* (Tallahassee, 1900), 85; James P. Jones, *FSU One Time! A History of Seminole Football* (Tallahassee, 1973).
 13. *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, December 24, 1890.

larity increased, however, FSC students clamored for a team. Football— with its action-packed allure, its appeal to school spirit, and its ability to galvanize loyalty— undeniably was collegiate. At least, FSC’s President Albert A. Murphree thought so, and in 1902 he strongly supported the new squad.¹⁴

The Olympian Athletic Association administered all forms of sport at FSC in 1902. The club was divided into the “Young Women’s Department” and the “Young Men’s Department.” The women played Ping-Pong, lawn tennis, basketball, and croquet. The men participated in more physically demanding contests such as baseball, football, and “racing.” W. W. Hughes presided over the men’s division and was “determined to have a winning [football team].”¹⁵ The gridgers “lost no time” and began practicing every afternoon that fall.¹⁶ For the faculty and parents, wary that athletics might supersede academics, the *Weekly Tallahasseean* promised that sports would “in no way interfere with regular studies.” By the end of October, the team had new uniforms costing \$325, and its members were “confident of success.”¹⁷

Word soon spread that FSC was preparing for gridiron battles. In response, H. E. Stockbridge, secretary of the State Fair Association, invited the team to play FAC at the state fair in Lake City. Besides the honor of the invitation, Stockbridge offered \$50 to the winning team. Coach Hughes informed the players, however, that the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) restricted cash prizes for college games. If they wanted to preserve their amateur integrity and perhaps play teams belonging to the SIAA, they must refuse the offer. The team agreed but asked Stockbridge if it could play in return for a percentage of the gate receipts. Stockbridge refused.¹⁸

Undaunted, the players continued their daily workouts in the humid, almost unbearable late days of summer. To express further their manly intentions, they signed a pledge to refrain from unhealthy habits. The promise made was to avoid “use [off tobacco in any way, shape or form]” and “not [to] indulge in the use of any spiritous or malt liquors.” A local reporter noted, “[I]f

14. Dodd, *West Florida Seminary*, 105.

15. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, October 3, 1902.

16. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1902.

17. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1902.

18. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1902.

the boys do succeed in breaking a few limbs and one or two necks, the damage will be more than equalized by the results of this oath."¹⁹

The squad's first game was scheduled for November 21. The red-and-white-clad Bainbridge Giants arrived by train, and they reportedly hoped to "hammer the life" out of the FSC Eleven. The Giants were "much heavier" than the college team and had four football veterans from the University of Georgia, as well as one University of Virginia alumnus. As the *Argo*, FSC's student yearbook, put it, "[I]f the truth be told, we were scared."²⁰ The home Eleven, unfortunately, had "never seen a game much less participated in one." Nevertheless, they were determined to give Bainbridge "a good hard tussle."²¹

The two teams trotted onto the field at 3:30 p.m. Earlier that day the gridiron had been marked off, and impromptu goal posts tottered in the breeze. Admission was fifty cents, and throngs of cheering students and fans lined the field shouting:

Boom-a-lacka, boom-a-lacka, bow, wow, wow!
Ching-a-lacka, thing-a-lacka, chow, chow, chow!
Boom-a-lacka, thing-a-lacka! Who are we?
We are the boys of FSC!²²

The FSC men wore gold-covered suits with a large purple F emblazoned on the front. As yet, they had no nickname. Their trousers were lightly padded, but their upper bodies were largely unprotected. Leather helmets with ear guards covered their heads, and shoehorn-shaped metal nose guards were strapped across their faces. Reflecting the game's casual atmosphere, Coach Hughes refereed, and E. E. McLin, a Bainbridge resident, was the umpire.²³

Bainbridge lost the toss and kicked off to FSC's thirty-yard line. FSC responded quickly with a fifteen-yard gain. The Eleven lined up for their first offensive with A. B. Clark, quarterback; R. F. Bradford, right end; W. W. Dickey, right tackle; G. P. McCord, right guard; C. W. Peters, center; W. Mullin, left guard;

19. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1902.

20. Florida State College, *The Argo* (Tallahassee, 1903), 71

21. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 21, 1902.

22. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1902.

23. *Argo* (1903), 61.

E. P. Watson, left tackle; L. M. Murray, left end; W. H. Provence, right halfback; Dan Williams, left halfback; and F. W. (Fritz) Buchholz, fullback.²⁴ The original line-up played the entire game, both offense and defense. Substitutes replaced injured players.

According to a reporter from the *Weekly Tallahasseean*, FSC moved the ball “[b]y a rapid succession of downs” into Giant territory. After several “buck runs,” the home team was “within six inches of Georgia’s goal.” The Giants held FSC for two downs, but on the third Buchholz “barely pushed through Georgia’s right tackle for a touchdown.”²⁵ Provence attempted an extra-point kick, but it failed. After sixteen minutes of action, FSC led 5-0. Before the ball again was “advanced any great distance by either side,” the first half ended.²⁶

During halftime the teams assembled at opposite ends of the field while the crowd shouted “cheer after cheer.” Professors L. W. Buchholz (father of Fritz Buchholz), Arthur Williams, H. L. Hargrove, and President Murphree “were . . . yelling like demons and doing a cakewalk to the college Boola.”²⁷ The “Florida Boola March” was the school’s lengthy fight song. Whether anyone knew all the words, some of which obviously had been added just for the occasion, is doubtful; perhaps copies were handed out. In any event, during the halftime festivities the students and professors allegedly joined in singing:

In Florida we have a school
 Just such another school there never was
 Our boys can play, our girls can dance,
 But we don’t fool our pas and mas
 In learning a temple high and fair
 We strive to take our stand:
 But lessons done and honors won,
 We sing and play “to beat the band.”
 Boola, Boola, Boola, Boola,
 Boola, Boola, Boola, Boola,

24. Ibid., 60; *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 28, 1902.

25. The term “buck” was used to describe a mass-momentum play

26. Ibid.

27. *Argo* (1903), 72.

And we'll "rough house" old Bainbridge,
 Poor Bainbridge - Boola, Boo
 Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah!
 Well here we are! Well here we are!
 Just watch us rolling up a score
 We'll leave those fellows behind so far
 They won't want to play us anymore!
 They'll fail to beat our boys and Hughes—
 To try there is no use!
 Well, a Boola, Boo, Boola, Boola, Boo
 Boola, Boo, Boola, Boola, Boola, Boo!
 Now isn't it a shame, now isn't it a shame,
 To do those fellows up so bad
 We'll roll up the score so very high
 That you will never hear them sigh,
 Boola, Boola, Boo, Boola, Boola, Boo
 Boola, Boo, Boola, Boola, Boola, Boo!
 O-o-o-h! - one more job for the undertaker,
 One more casque for the cabinet maker,
 Dig her grave and lay her 'way gently!
 O-o-o-h! Poor Bainbridge!²⁸

McCord, of FSC, kicked off the second half sending "the pigskin spinning to Georgia's twenty yard line." Bainbridge did not advance the ball, and FSC took possession at mid-field. After several "line bucks," the Eleven were at the Giant's twenty-yard line. There, FSC turned the ball "over on downs," and Bainbridge started marching up the field. Jacques, the Giant's right halfback, made a twenty-yard end run, the team's "only long gain of the game." With Georgia on FSC's fifteen-yard line, "things began to look black for Florida." But "the FSC line held firm" and the Giant's field goal attempt "was foiled." Following Georgia's failed offensive, "the whistle was blown" and the game ended. The FSC Eleven had defeated the Bainbridge Giants 5-0.²⁹

FSC students were jubilant, and "great was the rejoicing" throughout the campus and the city. Singing victory songs and "wailing . . . the Boola," they crowded around their successful

28. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 21, 1902.

29. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1902.

gridders.³⁰ “[E]very man did his utmost,” the local newspaper declared.³¹ The Bainbridge *Searchlight* supported its defeated team and explained the Giant’s shutout to those unfamiliar with football scoring practices. “This score [5-0] does not indicate such a victory as it would in baseball,” reported the paper. “The Tallahasseeans scored only once against our men and we consider this a splendid showing for the home boys.”³²

An anonymous FSC student later composed a poem to commemorate the college’s first football game. Entitled “The Bainbridge Game,” it was printed in the *Argo* and read:

‘Fore that eventful game was passed
 Young Sheats got full of nectar,
 And Murphree let the rascal off -
 His ever kind protector -
 And Winthrop danced himself to ruin
 Until his hair was hoary
 Like chimpanzees a measure tripped
 In his primeval glory
 No; ne’ar was such a tumult heard
 At FSC again
 As Freshmen, Prep, and Seniors raised
 The evening of the game
 It kept old Bainbridge lay awake,
 Her team at last got rattled,
 And Georgia’s sympathizers quaked
 For those who with us battled.
 Before their bitter cup was drained
 ‘Mid our victorious yell,
 The Georgia team was crimson stained
 By Pete and Asa Bell
 Full many a hostile football man
 The flattened grass had measured
 But Florida played to beat the band,
 Her hopes of victory treasured.
 The ball is held on Georgia’s ground,
 Then, like a mighty bubble,

30. *Argo* (1903), 72-73.

31. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 28, 1902.

32. Bainbridge (GA) *Searchlight*, November 28, 1902.

Through center Buchholz makes a bound,
 Ten yards with little trouble;
 On, on, to where the goal post stands,
 And now with line close forming,
 A rush, and Murray around the end
 Right up the field goes storming.
 See the fierce players! What a glimpse
 of shin guards, pads, and leather,
 As both the teams, like full-grown imps,
 Play low against each other;
 A minute's play, a touchdown made,
 Ye Gods! Just hear the rooting!
 The game is ours, the ball is o'er,
 A score of five to nothing.³³

Coach Hughes quickly scheduled another home contest for Friday, December 5. The opponent was the Florida Agricultural College. One report stressed that the team was “doing some hard work to get in trim for the game with Lake City [FAC] Friday afternoon.”³⁴ Unfortunately, heavy rains postponed the match-up for one week. In the meantime, the *Weekly Tallahasseean* informed its readers of football's importance: the game illustrated “the value of the positive” and developed integrity and good morals. “In short, football makes a manly man.”³⁵

On December 12, the FSC Eleven met FAC on a rain-soaked field in Tallahassee. The students were there “with colors flying and songs and yells in abundance to cheer on the home team.” FSC fielded the same roster as in the first game. The team from Lake City kicked off into the “wind and rain.” FSC moved forward, but the ball “was forcibly taken from [left halfback Williams's] arms by one of the Lake City players.” FAC quickly fumbled the ball, and “Williams, of Tallahassee, dropped on it.” The Eleven tried to advance, but FAC “woke up and got into the game” by pushing FSC back. After several possession changes, Lake City made some “end runs” putting them on the FSC four-yard line. FAC then “pushed over the goal line for a

33. *Argo* (1903), 95.

34. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 28, 1902.

35. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1902.

touchdown,” but the extra-point attempt was a “miserable failure.” At the end of the first half, FAC led FSC 5-0.³⁶

During the second half “Lake City seemed to be getting tired,” reported the *Weekly Tallahasseean*, “while the home boys were still fresh.” Perhaps that was why the FAC players began “slugging” the Tallahassee men. The “dirty work” started when Taylor, FAC’s quarterback, struck FSC’s right end J. T. Howard “in the temple and was promptly disqualified.” Lake City also suffered a five-yard penalty. FAC’s actions did not intimidate the Eleven, and the Tallahassee team pushed forward. Murray “took twenty yards around [the] right end,” and Buchholz “went through [the] center for five yards.” With the ball on FAC’s sixteen-yard line, Lake City was penalized for improper formation and lost five yards. Then Clark, FSC’s quarterback, “called his off side trick play.” The opponents were “caught napping” and lost another five yards. FAC immediately protested, but the referee would not relent. In response, the Lake City players “held a caucus” and decided “to leave the field.” The officials asked the team to return, but it “refused to do so.” The game was forfeited in favor of FSC 6-0. Evidently, the referee revoked FAC’s touchdown and gave it to the Eleven.³⁷

Not surprisingly, “the result of the game . . . was unsatisfactory to both sides,” and another contest was scheduled for the following week. The aborted game “was in many respects an interesting one,” remarked the *Weekly Tallahasseean*, “but for the deplorable conduct of the visitors.” Through the next week the Eleven prepared to seek redress from the Lake City men whom they considered guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct.³⁸

The FSC and FAC teams gathered at Baseball Park in Lake City on December 20. The game started at 3:00 p.m. “Although [it] was hotly contested from the very first,” the Lake City newspaper asserted, “it was plain that the local team was stronger.”³⁹ FAC’s C. H. Maguire ran twenty yards for a touchdown, and the extra point conversion was successful. At halftime, Lake City led 6-0. “The second half was more or less a rendition of the

36. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1902; *Lake City Citizen-Reporter*, December 19, 1902.

37. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, December 19, 1902; *Lake City Citizen-Reporter*, December 19, 1902.

38. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, December 19, 1902.

39. *Lake City Citizen-Reporter*, December 26, 1902.

first," according to the *Weekly Tallahasseean*, and the game "resulted rather disastrously" for FSC with a 6-0 loss.⁴⁰

That evening the Eleven attended "a dance at the [FAC] College Chapel," and the two teams reconciled their gridiron differences. The FSC "boys won themselves many kind remarks." Mrs. Thomas H. Taliaferro, wife of the FAC president, commented, "[T]hey not only know how to play football but are thorough gentlemen and know how to dance as well."⁴¹

The next night the FSC faculty banqueted their team in the private dining room of the Leon, Tallahassee's leading hotel. The players were treated to an eight-course meal, and President Murphree and Coach Hughes toasted them. The celebrants then joined in singing several rounds of "My Lady Sleeps" and "Who Did." All agreed that Florida State had the "most gentlemanly and cleanest football team in [their] part of the country." When the festivities were over, the gridders returned to their dormitories, and FSC's first intercollegiate football season ended.⁴² They had played three games, winning two and losing one.

Following the football season, FSC students continued their athletic endeavors. "Since the cessation of football," noted the local newspaper, "tennis has become more popular with the students." In addition, "the boys have organized a dancing class among themselves, and impromptu hops are held every afternoon." A reporter laconically noted that "visitors and girls [were] not allowed" to participate.⁴³ The school had a baseball team, but it did not play intercollegiate games. Perhaps Tallahasseans considered the city baseball team adequate. At any rate, the city ball club played a series of games against teams from Bainbridge, Georgia, and Madison, Florida. The most noteworthy contest was against the "Bloomer Girls," a professional all-woman team that had defeated "everything . . . they had been up against in Florida." They came into town on January 11, 1903, "in their special [railroad] car," and were beaten by the local "Heavy Hitters" 4-3.⁴⁴ Baseball was entertaining, but by the end of summer students and local residents were eager for gridiron action.

40. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, December 26, 1902.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1903.

44. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1903.

The football team chose new officers in May 1903. T. M. Shackelford was elected manager and Ed Watson captain; Professor Hughes remained as coach. Shackelford was in charge of scheduling, and he had arranged a six-game slate. The most ambitious contest was against Georgia Tech in Atlanta. A game against the "Baptist Boys" of Mercer University at Macon, Georgia, was scheduled, but later it was canceled. By September, the FSC men were practicing every afternoon.⁴⁵

The season started in Tallahassee on October 16, with a contest against the Bainbridge Giants. "Quite a party went down with the team wearing the red and white," reported the Bainbridge newspaper, "encouraging them to victory." Even so, their support was to no avail. The FSC Eleven crushed the Giants 22-0. Yet, the Georgia team planned to redeem itself at the following week's rematch. "The home boys have blood in their eyes and [are] determined to repay Tallahassee for that stunning defeat," wrote the Bainbridge *Searchlight*.⁴⁶

The second game was controversial. The Tallahassee team rode the train to Bainbridge, but the local sportswriter stayed home because of rainy weather.⁴⁷ Thus, the Bainbridge press provided the contest's only account. The game started at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, October 23, at the Bainbridge fairgrounds "and was witnessed by an enthusiastic crowd." Neither team scored during the first half, but the "Tallahasseeans succeeded in pushing the ball over the line" in the second.⁴⁸

During the second half, an "unpleasantness" occurred. According to a Bainbridge reporter, Hughes, who was officiating the contest, refused to surrender the duty after the first half. The Giants protested several of his decisions and demanded that he step down. "An unusual amount of wrangling" resulted, and after the game Hughes did not allow his team to attend the prearranged dance. In fact, the Florida team left Bainbridge immediately after the game. FSC had won 5-0. Bainbridge citizens were outraged and considered Hughes's conduct "not that of a man who was trying to promote good feeling between the two towns." The Georgians wondered: "Who ever heard of a

45. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1905, August 14, 1903.

46. Bainbridge (GA) *Searchlight*, October 16, 23, 1903.

47. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, October 23, 1903.

48. *Ibid.*, October 30, 1903.

football game where there was not some wrangling or unpleasantness?"⁴⁹ Apparently, Hughes considered the Georgians too unpleasant, and the two teams never met again.

A week later FSC challenged the East Florida Seminary of Gainesville. "A large crowd [at Tallahassee] witnessed the game," reported the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, "[and] the visitors had the home team beat at every point."⁵⁰ Tallahassee's "mighty gladiators" lost 16-0. With a 2-1 record, the Eleven prepared for their toughest opponent yet— the Georgia Tech Blacksmiths, later nicknamed the Yellow Jackets.⁵¹

FSC confronted Georgia Tech on November 7, a sunny-and-mild autumn day. The teams gathered at Piedmont Park. The Blacksmiths were "determined to win decisively" to "boost their stock" for an upcoming contest against Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University). The Georgia team considered FSC a weak opponent assuredly bound for defeat, and its members were not disappointed.⁵² They made two touchdowns in the first half after "easy gains." In the second, Clarke, Georgia Tech's left tackle, "made one of the prettiest bucks . . . which had been seen" and scored a third time. Clarke's run inspired Coach Hughes to comment, "[T]hat was a beautiful buck." By the final whistle, Georgia Tech had defeated FSC 17-0. Although the score was lopsided, the *Atlanta Constitution* urged the Florida players "not to be discouraged." After all, "Tech [had] been playing football for immemorial years" and simply was more experienced.⁵³ Ever a team booster, the *Weekly Tallahasseean* believed "the football boys covered themselves all over with glory in Atlanta [even] if they did get beat by the Georgia fellows."⁵⁴ After two consecutive defeats, however, the FSC gridders were eager for victory.

The Tallahassee team won the following week in a home game against Lake City's University of Florida (Florida Agricultural College had changed its name). In a contest "full of surprises

49. Bainbridge (GA) *Searchlight*, October 30, 1903.

50. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, November 1, 1903; Jones, *FSU One Time!*, v.

51. Gainesville *Star*, November 6, 1903; Jack Newcombe, *The Fireside Book of Football* (New York, 1964), 71-74.

52. *Atlanta Constitution*, November 7, 1903.

53. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1903.

54. *Weekly Tallahasseean.*, November 13, 1903.

from start to finish,” FSC overpowered UF by a score of 12-0. The game was a good one “but for the squabbling,” wrote a Tallahassee reporter. The argument arose when the teams accused each other of using professionals. When “some enterprising citizen of Tallahassee” informed the visitors from Lake City that FSC planned to use ex-Clemson football star Jack “Pee Wee” Forsythe as fullback, Lake City’s captain “objected strongly . . . and threatened to call off the game.” FSC’s captain, A. B. Clark, agreed not to use Forsythe provided his opponents drop their physical director, J. D. Jeffery, from the line-up. The university team at first refused, even though under the SIAA rules Jeffery was “considerably more of a professional than Forsythe.” Both Forsythe and Jeffery likely were professionals; certainly, neither was a student. Finally, Lake City acquiesced, and the game went on as scheduled, ending with FSC’s victory.⁵⁵

That evening FSC’s Platonic and Anaxagorean Debating Societies— both members of the Florida Intercollegiate Oratorical Association— discussed the topic, “Resolved: That debating societies are more beneficial to colleges than football teams.” The question was “hotly contested,” a local report stated, “as the whole football team [was] present.” The press did not comment further on the clash between the scholars and athletes, but the intellectual debate may have been one-sided.⁵⁶ The importance of football measured against academics soon became a national issue.

FSC finished its 1903 season with a contest against Stetson College in DeLand. Hanging in the balance was the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union’s* Championship Cup. “The object of this contest,” announced the paper, “[is] to encourage college football among college boys.”⁵⁷ Because both FSC and Stetson had beaten the University of Florida, the winner of the battle would be crowned state champion. The contest ended in a 5-5 tie— Stetson scored in the first half and FSC the second. Still, the DeLand team took the championship trophy because it had defeated the East Florida Seminary, giving it the best intrastate record. FSC

55. Jack Forsythe in 1906 became the coach of the University of Florida football team. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 20, 1903; *Lake City Citizen-Reporter*, November 20, 1903; Proctor and Langley, *Gator History*, 32.

56. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 20, 1903.

57. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, November 15, 1903.

protested Stetson's good fortune, but because of their earlier loss to the East Florida Seminary, FSC's claims were ignored.⁵⁸

Several days after the DeLand game the FSC faculty once again treated the gridgers to a banquet at the Leon Hotel. "These banquets have become a feature of the football season," proclaimed the *Weekly Tallahasseean*, "and the event is looked forward to with the greatest interest by every member of the team." The college's pigskin heroes shared gridiron anecdotes, while the "faculty quartet interspersed the evening with music." The football enthusiasts looked back on stirring memories and anticipated future success.⁵⁹

FSC students formed a baseball team in the spring of 1904 and played games against the University of Florida and Alabama Polytechnic Institute. The team, composed mainly of men from the football squad, challenged local pick-up clubs.⁶⁰ During the summer Professor Hughes handed his coaching duties over to Jack Forsythe, and in September the Clemson veteran started preparing his team for battle. Why Hughes surrendered his position is unclear, but that autumn his salary was increased, perhaps signifying that his academic role had broadened.⁶¹ Whether Forsythe was paid for his coaching position is not recorded, but he probably was. Forsythe was a player-coach, and his presence at FSC fit the growing pattern of professionalization of college football coaching.

FSC opened the 1904 season against Georgia Tech in Atlanta on October 8. Despite losing 35-0, "the Florida team made a splendid showing in the game," noted the *Atlanta Constitution*. Georgia Tech scored six touchdowns and extra-point goals and completely "demoralized" FSC. Nevertheless, "the time will come," wrote a Georgian, "when Florida State will be listed as high in the college firmament as any other stars in the southern football skys."⁶²

The Tallahassee team was idle the following Saturday, October 15. The Eleven had a game scheduled for that date against the East Florida Seminary in Gainesville, but for unstated reasons

58. DeLand *Volusia County Record*, November 28, 1903; DeLand *Weekly News*, December 11, 1903.

59. *Weekly Tallahasseean*, December 25, 1903.

60. *Ibid.*, March 4, April 8, 1904.

61. Dodd, *West Florida Seminary*, 114.

62. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 9, 1904.

EFS canceled the event. Having a week off may have helped the Tallahassee team. On October 22, they easily defeated the University of Florida in Lake City 23-0. Lake Citians were “greatly disappointed,” according to a local report, and believed that the “University team should be made stronger before it [attempts] to play again.”⁶³

A week after its victory in Lake City, FSC challenged a city team at Savannah. The Georgians were larger and more experienced than the college men, but their 6-0 victory was hard won.⁶⁴ FSC suffered another defeat a week later against the Jacksonville Consolidated team. Neither squad scored during the first half, but Jones, Jacksonville’s right tackle, returned the second-half kickoff ninety-five yards for a touchdown. “It was a great play,” related the Jacksonville paper. Jones’s run was the only score, giving Jacksonville the win 6-0.⁶⁵

With a record of 1-3, FSC earnestly prepared for a tough match-up with Stetson on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, in Tallahassee. As the contest again would determine the state championship, the media announced that it was the “most important football game of the season.” Twelve minutes into the game Stetson “crossed Florida’s goal,” making the score 6-0. Then the Eleven “seemed to wake up.” Vincent Green, a substitute at left end, scored FSC’s first touchdown “by a magnificent buck.” Later FSC’s right end, J. K. Johnston, ran forty-five yards to make the score 12-6. Shortly before halftime, Guyte McCord scored FSC’s third touchdown. In the second half “neither side succeeded in scoring,” and the Eleven won 18-6. “[The] victory [made] the Florida State College champion of Florida for the season of 1904,” reported the *Florida Times-Union*. Captain Dan Williams was “borne off the field in triumph by his comrades.”⁶⁶

The 1904 season was FSC’s last; the Eleven’s overall record for three years was 7-6-1. The Florida Legislature passed the Buckman Act the following year which reorganized the state’s higher education system. Florida State College was renamed the

63. Lake City *Citizen-Reporter*, October 28, 1904; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, October 23, 1904.

64. Jones, *FSU One Time!*, vi; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, October 30, 1904; *Weekly Tallahasseean*, November 4, 1904.

65. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, November 6, 1904.

66. *Ibid.*, November 26, 1904.

Florida Female College (later Florida State College for Women), and the all-male University of the State of Florida was located on a new campus in Gainesville.⁶⁷ Many former FSC men finished their education at the university. A few of the Eleven attended Grant University at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and five played on its football team. They also started a "Florida Club" where "all the Florida news [was] read and old times at FSC discussed."⁶⁸

In 1909, several FSC gridiron veterans started a city football team called the Tallahassee Athletics and played the University of Florida and Columbia College of Lake City. Unfortunately, the club folded after one season. Thus, barring one year, organized and collegiate football was not played by a white team in Tallahassee from 1904 to 1947 when the new coeducational Florida State University fielded its first team. The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes (in 1953, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University), however, had a football team that played against other black college teams throughout those years.⁶⁹ Although FSC's gridiron deeds largely have been forgotten, the members of its teams were the true pioneers of Florida State football in Tallahassee.

67. *Laws of Florida* (1905), 37-61.

68. *Tallahassee Weekly True Democrat*, October 20, 1905.

69. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1909; Leedell W. Neyland and John W. Riley, *The History of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University* (Gainesville, 1963), 124-28, 200-07.