
FOOTBALL

The most popular game at this season of the year is Football, and it is the oldest game played today by school teams, having been played in Sparta 2,500 years ago.

The game was played on a rectangular field marked by side-lines and a goal line. There was no limit to the number of players upon a side except that both sides had equal numbers. The ball was put in play at the beginning of the game by a long forward pass by a player standing at the centre of the field. The ball could be kicked, passed, or carried. The defensive side blocked, tackled and held.

When the Romans invaded Greece they found and adopted this game as a military sport for their legions. When the Roman legions in turn invaded England they took the game with them. There it was adopted by the Britons, Celts and Gauls, and there it has flourished for almost 2,000 years.

Originally in England the ball was a pig's bladder. Hence its oval shape and its name "pig-skin." Today the ball is made of grain leather. Some lines from an old poem quoted in the Scholastic support these facts.

"And now in winter when men kill the fat swine,
They get the bladder and blow it great and thine,
With many beans and peasen put therein
It rattleth, soundeth and slimeith, cleere and fayre,
While it is thrown and caste up in the ayre;
Each one contenteth and hath a great delight
With foote and with hande the bladder for to smite;
And if they fall to the ground they leap up again,
And this way to labor they count it no payne."

Shakespeare, Burns, Scott and other writers refer to the game of football. In early times in Great Britain one town would challenge another some miles away. Every citizen of each town was eligible to play. The ball would be kicked off mid-way between the two towns. The object was to drive the ball into the market place of the opposing town. This battle would rage an entire day and at times would cover a distance of ten miles or more. Frequently one parish would challenge another and then the game would rage up hill and down dale, across field and stream until the ball was driven against the walls of the rival church.