FROM CARLISLE TO BRADFORD: THE MEDIA STEREOTYPES, FOOTBALL, AND AMERICAN INDIANS

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FROM CARLISLE TO BRADFORD: THE MEDIA, STEREOTYPES, FOOTBALL, AND AMERICAN INDIANS

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Abstract: Racial stereotypes were a prominent issue in the media's coverage of American Indians throughout the twentieth century. In this study, it is football, both collegiate and professional, that the media used to base their racial attitudes. By using the examples of well-known American Indian football players such as Jim Thorpe, Wahoo McDaniel, Sonny Sixkiller, and Sam Bradford one can ascertain the evolution of racial stereotypes in the media's coverage, and how those individuals reacted to that exposure. American Indian football players throughout the years dealt with stereotypes that portrayed them as warriors, savages, and, sometimes, as control drunkards. For many of these players, they also had to contend with the shadow of the great Jim Thorpe, as many members of the media drew comparisons between all of these Native American football players in their stories.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO STEREOTYPES AND AMERICAN INDIAN FOOTBALL PLAYERS

> The historical image of the Indians is pretty well set, we are the bad guys who burned the wagon trains and images are the white man's game.[1]
>
> Vine Deloria in *Custer Died For Your Sins*

> Of course the Indian is always to blame. He neither writes nor owns a newspaper. His opinions are never consulted. He has been starved, robbed, and lied to until he has no right to expect anything else and he should at once be put to death or lamely submit to an unending succession of Royers that will be inflicted upon him whether he wants them or not.
>
> From an editorial about the Wounded Knee massacre in the January 4, 1891 edition of *Omaha World Herald*.

Sam Bradford stood on the stage at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, next to the National Football League (NFL) Commissioner Roger Goodell as flash bulbs popped and television cameras relayed the scene to millions of viewers throughout the United States. The St. Louis Rams had just drafted the former University of Oklahoma quarterback number one in the 2010 NFL

[1] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 266.

amateur draft. When the Rams chose Bradford, he became the first American Indian[1] to be chosen number one overall. However, the national media covering the draft hardly mentioned Bradford's heritage. Instead, they focused on Bradford's 2008 Heisman Trophy award as the best college football player; they recounted the quarterback's troublesome 2009 season in which he injured his throwing shoulder against Brigham Young University, and subsequently re-injured the shoulder weeks later ending his season. The portrayal of Bradford stood in stark contrast to how the press depicted American Indian football players in the past. The media used many of the classic stereotypes of American Indians, such as the war-like savage, the drunken outlaw, and the nature-loving Indian.

Bradford was not the first American Indian football player. Many native athletes stepped on the gridiron since the game's earliest days in the late nineteenth century. Men like Jim Thorpe, Ed McDaniel, Sonny Sixkiller, and Bradford are just a few notable football players with American Indian ancestry. Throughout the twentieth century, the media covered them diligently, and not surprisingly, that coverage perpetuated racial stereotypes. By the end of that century, these stereotypes disappeared for the most part from coverage of all

[1] The word American Indian is used in this study to describe the indigenous population of the United States.

minorities, including American Indians; however, the media still could not resist the urge to single out minorities and distinguish them from mainstream society.

For American Indians, the stereotypes derived from an oversimplification that this group of people shared the same characteristics; that they were all the same. The stereotype was often an unfair and untrue belief that all things and people held the same characteristics. For some American Indian football players they were singled out simply for their race. In the case of Jim Thorpe, he was the central figure in comparisons to every football player publicly acknowledged to be of Native American descent. Later, Sam Bradford was singled out by the media because he was the only "known" Native American football player in the game. However, American Indian football players were given the war-like savage stereotype mostly.

Almost since European "discovery" of Native Americans, others have socially set this group apart.[2] These stereotypes did not begin in the nineteenth century; they existed from the moment that Christopher Columbus set foot in the New World. The stereotypical and sometimes overt racist characterizations of American Indians had not disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century.

[2] Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins*, 11.

Historian Robert Berkhofer Jr. wrote,

> For most Whites throughout the past five centuries, the Indian of imagination and ideology has been as real, perhaps more real, than the Native American of actual existence and contact....although modern artists and writers assume their own imagery to be more in line with 'reality' than that of their predecessors, they employ the imagery for much the same reasons and often with the same results as those persons of the past they so often scorn as uninformed, fanciful, or hypocritical. As a consequence, the basic images of the good and bad Indian persist from the era of Columbus up to the present without substantial modification or variation.[3]

The images that Europeans had of the New World were largely medieval ones. The settlers believed that monsters, giants, dragons, and savage peoples haunted the land.[4] When the Spanish made their way into what is now Mexico, they sent reports back of the strange people inhabiting the lands. These people would become known as the Aztecs and to Christian Europeans the natives lived an ungodly life. The Aztecs practiced human sacrifice, and in some instances, cannibalism. Their stories spread throughout the European continent. Naturally, rumors about the immense gold and wealth piqued the interests of fortune seekers. However, the tales of debauchery and heinous

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[3] Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 71.

[4] Mary Ann Weston and John M. Coward, "The Native Americans," in *U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities: A Sourcebook, 1934-1996* eds. Beverly Ann Deepe Keever, Carolyn Martindale, and Mary Ann Weston (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 23.

behavior seemed to confirm the myths that savage peoples inhabited the New World.[5]

As the years passed and more people ventured across the Atlantic Ocean, the imagery of the American Indian did not change. In 1690, America's first newspaper, *Publick Occurences*, went to print in Boston, Massachusetts, and much of its news involved Indians. For the next several centuries, relations between American Indians and White Americans appeared frequently in the headlines. These first American newspapers portrayed the American Indian either positively or, more often than not, negatively. The positive articles viewed the American Indian as hospitable in accordance to the Thanksgiving tradition. The more numerous negative stories depicted Native Americans as "barbaric" and "butchers." These were just a few of the racial images and stereotypes disseminated by the media in the twentieth century.[6]

Over the course of the next two centuries, more stereotypes of American Indians worked their way into the public domain through the media. Of course, the media was not the only place where non-native people acquired their imagery of the natives.

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[5] Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, 71.

[6] John P. Sanchez, "American Indian News Frames in America's First Newspaper, *Publick Occurrences Foreign and Domestick*," in *American Indians and the Mass Media* eds. Meta G. Carstarphen and John P. Sanchez (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2012), 9-17.

These images have come from fiction novels, the education system, and society. More recently, in the twentieth century, these images have come from television and movies. Joseph E. Trimble, Professor of Psychology at Western Washington University, states that the common stereotypes associated with American Indians include "laziness, drunkenness, childishness, savagery, irresponsibility, immorality, spiritualism, and mysticism."[7] Some of these characteristics found their way into newspaper articles involving American Indians and football.

While the media used several of the stereotypes in their headlines and articles involving American Indians and football, the primary one remained the savage and barbaric Native American. Many aspects of the game of football include references to war. Even comedian George Carlin used the martial characteristics of the game in his routine. He mused,

> In football, the object is for the quarterback, also known as the field general, to be on target with his aerial assault, riddling the defense by hitting his receivers with deadly accuracy in spite of the blitz, even if he has to use the shotgun...with short bullet passes and long bombs, he marches his troops into enemy territory, balancing this aerial assault with a sustained ground attack that punches holes in the forward wall of the enemy's defensive line.[8]

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[7] Jesse J. Morris, "The Stereotyping of American Indians: Where Do We Currently Stand at the University Level," *The Journal of Multiculturalism in Education* 7 (December 2011): 2. Accessed 15 May 2013. http://www.wtamu.edu/webres/File/Journals/MCJ/Volume%207-3/Morris%20Jesse%20-%20Native%20American%20Stereotypes.pdf.

[8] George Carlin, *Brain Droppings* (New York: Hyperion Books, 1997), 50-52.

To the media, and, by association, the American public, the stereotypical image of the American Indian is that of a ferocious warrior set on horseback with a tomahawk in one hand and a bow and arrow in the other. These images, set largely during the nineteenth century, were standard fare in newspapers when the game of football first developed. Comparisons between football and war were around from the beginning, when young men from Ivy League college campuses formed their version of the English game of rugby. Symbolically, the game's development occurred on the same campuses that produced decision makers who spurred manifest destiny and wars against western American Indian tribes. The sheer brutality of the early game of football mirrored the vicious struggle between the United States Army and the American Indian in the West.

Throughout the twentieth century, the game of football became an integral part in the media's use of racial images and stereotypes. In his book *American Myth, American Reality*, James Oliver Robertson stated that this is why Americans are fascinated with football. "It ritualizes the moving frontier, and the teamwork, cooperation, and individual heroism necessary to resist the moving frontier."[9] After all, was football not an

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[9] James Oliver Robertson, *American Myth, American Reality* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing Company, 1980), 95.

indirect replication of manifest destiny? If manifest destiny was the United States' right to claim the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, was it not Yale University's right to claim all of Harvard's corresponding territory in Saturday afternoon's football game?

War, like football, involved a group deliberately trying to use force to attain a goal, most often land. Robertson's depiction of football is a notable one. At the root of the football/war analogy is the use of violence to achieve a stated goal. In football, both the defense and offense clash so that they can either gain valuable yardage or to stop that acquisition of territory. Caspar Whitney, a late nineteenth-century sports journalist wrote, "The game is a mimic battlefield, on which the players must reconnoiter, skirmish, advance, attack, and retreat in order."[10]

The news media of the nineteenth century utilized many of the stereotypical images that surrounded the American Indian. Newspapers punctuated their stories with an emphasis on the violence between White Americans and Native Americans, rather than focusing on the mutual respect and admiration that existed between the two entities. John Coward has noted that the

[10] David Wallace Adams, "More than a Game: The Carlisle Indians Take to the Gridiron, 1893-1917," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Spring 2001): 28.

"newspaper Indian" undertook many different guises in the print media during this period. Because of the American Indians' savage and warlike portrayal in the media, Native Americans seemed to be more dangerous in print than in fact. In many ways, real bullets eliminated Native Americans and now they were revived and killed off again by the reporter's ink.[11]

Many travelers to the West attested to peaceful interaction, but those stories seldom found their way into print. Newspaper articles of peace and harmony simply did not sell at the newsstand; the tales of the violent "bad Indian" did.[12] Profits overtook truth.

One example that helped expand the marauding American Indian stereotype in the nineteenth century was "Custer's Last Stand." When a band of Lakota and Cheyenne warriors vanquished George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry at the Little Big Horn River in June 1876, the news spread across the nation. The stories told the tale of a massacre. The *Chicago Tribune* used the headline "The Appalling Tale of Indian Butchery Officially Confirmed."[13]

Headlines in the Omaha *Daily Herald* blared "The Savage War" with subheadlines that stated "The Army of the North Who Were to

[11] Feagin and Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations,* 203.

[12] Coward, *Newspaper Indian*, 13.

[13] Ibid., 135.

Sweep the Indians from the Field Meet With Fearful Disaster" and "Three Hundred Soldiers Killed and Fifteen Wounded Strew the Battle Ground, Presenting a Sad and Sickening Sight."[14] Perhaps no other historical event contributed to the nation's racial imagery quite like Custer's defeat at the hands of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. In the twentieth century, the destruction of Custer and the Seventh Cavalry found its way into newspaper stories involving American Indian football teams upsetting clubs composed of White Americans.

Another event often mentioned in conjunction with American Indian football players and teams was the Wounded Knee massacre that occurred in December 1890. Supposedly the last "battle" in the Indian Wars, Wounded Knee found its way into many newspaper articles, books, and other media that were fascinated by the Carlisle Indian schools gridiron rivalry with the United States Military Academy. For the various journalists and authors, the American Indians were seeking vengeance against the Army cadets for the earlier carnage in South Dakota.

Stereotypes and racial images of American Indians were intrinsically a part of the Indian Wars. At the same time, the rise of the mass media transpired and transformed American

[14] Hugh J. Reilly, *Bound To Have Blood: Frontier Newspapers and The Plains Indian Wars* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 50.

culture significantly.[15] While most Americans became more literate, they failed to sever their prejudices. In many ways, the press perpetuated preconceived notions of race. The use of stereotypes in conjunction with an "emphasis on crime and scandal" led the masses to demand new literary sources and helped increase newspaper circulation.[16]

In the twentieth century, journalists did not maintain the status quo when it came to stereotyping. In the twentieth century, as the media changed, so did its portrayal of American Indians. One of the first changes occurred in the 1920s. In April 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) met in Washington, D.C. and adopted the Canons of Journalism, its first code of ethics.[17] Although the Canons of Journalism did not mention race or Native Americans explicitly, the Canons outlined the press responsibility to the public welfare, which meant journalists had an obligation to report facts free from opinion or bias.[18] In other words, the press continued to do a

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[15] Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), xiv.

[16] John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 13.

[17] Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of the Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 4.

[18] Ibid., 4.

disservice to not only the American Indian, but also harming the public by perpetuating those racial images.

Another important change took place after the Second World War. The Commission on Freedom of the Press, or the Hutchins Commission, expressed concern over the media's representation of race in the news. The commission's report stated,

> Factually correct but substantially untrue accounts of the behavior of members of one these social islands can intensify the antagonisms of others toward them. A single incident will be accepted as a sample of group action unless the press has given a flow of information and interpretation concerning the relations between two groups such as to enable the reader to set a single event in its proper perspective.[19]

The report went on to declare that people made decisions based on favorable or unfavorable images. Whether it is correct or not, stereotypes affect a person's mindset.[20] The Hutchins Commission's report failed to make any long-term changes until the 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement brought the race issue to the forefront of the national consciousness.

In 1968, then Illinois Governor Otto Kerner chaired a commission that produced the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. President Lyndon B. Johnson formed the commission after race riots took place in Newark,

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[19] Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 23.

[20] Weston, *Native Americans in the News*, 7.

Detroit, and in other municipalities across the United States in 1967. The Kerner Commission criticized the media for its representation of race by writing,

> The media reports and writes from the standpoint of a white man's world. The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, the Negro's burning sense of grievance, are seldom conveyed...[The Press] repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America...It is the responsibility of the news media to tell the story of race relations in America, and with notable exceptions the media have not yet turned to the task with the wisdom, sensitivity, and expertise it demands.[21]

The Kerner Commission's findings had become the standard by which the media covered those persons outside the mainstream--including Native Americans.

The last two decades of the twentieth century and the first ten years of the twenty-first century, saw the media drift more towards cultural concerns when dealing with American Indians.[22] The stereotypes of the past no longer were allowed, as minority groups refused to accept them. The continued evolution of equal rights for minorities helped change society's attitudes on stereotypes.

However, one issue at the forefront of the media's recent attention dealt with team mascots in collegiate and professional sports. The mascot issue divides many people with the question

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 14.

of is it a matter of legacy or racism? Unlike the stereotypes surrounding American Indian athletes, names like "Redskins" prevailed.

For its part, sports journalism, paralleled the development of modern sports, including football. The golden age of sports journalism was the 1920s. The most famous of these early sports writers was Henry Grantland Rice, who wrote under his middle name. Rice's hyperbolic prose featured great detail and verbiage in a time when only a select few could witness these sporting events. These accounts also used racial stereotypes. For example, while covering the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin, Rice described the success of African-American participants as "Darktown on parade." He also wrote, "America will be okay until it runs out of African entries.... We may have to comb Africa again for some winners."[23]

One of Rice's greatest accounts appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* of the October 17, 1924, Notre Dame-Army game that took place at the Polo Grounds. Rice used a biblical reference in his description of the Notre Dame backfield. The sports writer wrote,

> Outlined against a blue-gray October sky the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore, they are known as famine, pestilence, destruction, and death. These

[23] Tommy Craggs, "Why Grantland Rice Sucked," < http://deadspin.com/5810019/why-grantland-rice-sucked>. 8 June 2011 [accessed 10 May 2013].

> are only aliases. Their real names are: Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley, and Layden. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds this afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down upon the bewildering panorama spread out upon the green plain below.[24]

Rice's "Four Horsemen" quote was emblematic of this era in sports journalism, which stressed the inspirational and heroic qualities of athletes. But, the press and the public still viewed American Indians as villains. Examples of this varied; for instance, when the Carlisle Indian Industrial School installed "trick" plays into their offense the press dubbed the Indians "sneaky marauders."[25]

Not only did sports journalism of this era stress the heroic qualities of the athletes, it also used colorful language to entice the reader or listener. This helped sell more newspapers or ads on the radio. It also gave the media an excuse to use stereotypes or racist imagery. While sports such as baseball and football gained popularity, sports coverage grew in importance. Radio broadcasts of the games and sports sections in newspapers increased. Early periodicals such as *Sport* and *Sporting News* diversified their coverage from baseball and boxing to incorporate football.

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[24] Grantland Rice, *New York Herald Tribune,* 18 October 1924.

[25] Sally Jenkins, *The Real All Americans* (New York: Doubleday Publishing Co., 26), 185-219.

It should also be noted that sports journalism, especially on football, had its own distinctive language. According to Joe Posnanski, writing in *Sports Illustrated*, "There are so many words you only hear during the football months." Words like roughshod, gunslinger, blitz, shotgun, and long-bomb are used in relation to football. While the more martial words have disappeared, you may read or hear one any given Saturday or Sunday from broadcast booths or on the pages of the newspapers.[26]

When assessing whether the images presented in describing American Indian football players could be considered racial imagery and stereotypes, these following factors are necessary:

- Was and is the vocabulary demeaning? Some of the keywords and phrases that sportswriters used within their articles included "heap big," "Lo, the poor Indian," "on the warpath," and many other words or phrases that can be associated with the act of war.

- Another way that sportswriters demonstrated stereotypical and racially demeaning attributes in their treatment of American Indian football players was by associating all Natives with one cultural group, which, more often than not, were the Plains tribes.

- Even as late as 2013, the media were often incredulous that an American Indian was participating at a high level of competitive football. For many, the American Indian was a vanished race.

- Throughout the twentieth century, a reoccurring theme of the American Indian was their portrayal as either the noble Indian or the savage Indian by the sports media.

[26] Joe Posnanski, "Prose Football," *Sports Illustrated* 12 (September 2011), 72.

- Finally, when dealing with American Indian football players, the media often used a patronizing tone in their coverage.[27]

By establishing these criteria, this study uses specific eras when American Indian football players were most prominent. The media evoked many racial stereotypes when covering the football teams of Carlisle, Haskell, and Chilocco. The most notorious stereotype, the warrior, occurred when Carlisle faced the United States' Military Academy. This match of young Native Americans against soldiers-in-training occurred within twenty-five years of the last conflict in the Indian Wars.

However, the media used the warrior stereotype as late as the 1970s. Sonny Sixkiller's name made it an easy target for the media to create racial imagery involving the quarterback. Sixkiller fought not only the warrior stereotype, but also the stereotype most common during the late 1960s and the early 1970s: the American Indian as a social activist.

Certain American Indian football players transcended stereotypes, however. Arguably, the greatest football player to come out of the American Indian boarding schools, and one of the greatest athletes in the first half of the twentieth century was

[27] Raymond William Stedman, *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 240-250.

Jim Thorpe. Thorpe, himself, became a constant presence for generations of American Indian athletes that followed him.

The media also portrayed Thorpe as the prototypical "natural" athlete, which was the prevailing attitude of the white-dominated press about American Indians. Another product of the American Indian boarding school system, John Levi, was also labeled a "natural" athlete. He was an American Indian football player at the Haskell Indian Institute with just as much talent as Thorpe. Levi, a young man of Arapaho descent, was an All-American fullback in 1923. Yet, Levi never enjoyed the same reputation as Thorpe in the media. The press simply could not have two Native American athletes as the world's greatest. However, Levi's foray into professional football with the all-Indian team, the Hominy Indians, proved to be more successful than Thorpe's years with his Oorang team.[28]

By the 1920s and the 1930s, the American Indian football players who participated in the sport at the off-reservation boarding schools made an impression throughout the collegiate and professional ranks, both playing and coaching. This was also a time of transition for American Indian football players. They were not as identifiable or prominent because of the

[28] Frank W. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell* (Lawrence, KS: The World Company, 1972), 10.

absence of all-Indian teams at the collegiate and professional levels.[29]

Later, an issue that plagued the coverage of Native Americans was the absence of numerous American Indian football players. In the college and professional ranks, American Indian players were noticeably absent after some of the boarding schools shuttered, and other schoolds changed their direction academically. As Philip J. Deloria pointed out in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Native Americans were singled-out based solely on their ethnicity and for their uniqueness in an athletic world where not many American Indian athletes participated. Thus, the vanishing American Indian also became a stereotype.

The quintessential stereotype of American Indians and football, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century and the first part of the twenty-first, was Native Americans as team mascots. For years, many collegiate teams and several NFL football franchises used American Indian imagery to promote their teams. While many colleges have eliminated these stereotypical images, several have not, including the Florida State University Seminoles. The primary organization in relation to the mascot issue continued to be the Washington

[29] John Bloom, *To Show What An Indian Can Do* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 11-14.

Redskins in the NFL. The Redskins nickname infuriated many American Indians and was a divisive issue for the rest of American society. Those people who do not see why the name upset Native Americans remain steadfast that the name should remain, while American Indians and their supporters continued to demand change.

Devon Mihesuah of the University of Kansas writes that stereotyping American Indians presents significant issues for not only those who are stereotyped, but also for those doing the stereotyping. For the victims of stereotypes, this imagery may cause a wide-range of emotional distress, including anger, frustration, insecurity, and feelings of helplessness. For those who perpetrate the stereotyping, the results are more understated. Predominantly, they have cheated themselves of learning about a people who have many things to offer, both past and present.[30]

In general, American Indian football players and the sportswriters who covered them often fell into these conveniences of using stereotypes. Over the course of the next several chapters, one will be able to trace the progression of

[30] Devon A. Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities* (Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 1996), 118.

how the media presented stereotypes in the twentieth century by focusing on the coverage of Native American football players, and, in doing so, discover the racial imagery behind the headlines.

CHAPTER II

IN THE BEGINNING: RACIAL STEREOTYPES, FOOTBALL, AND AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

> First, (you must promise) that you will never, under any circumstances, slug. That you will play fair straight through, and the other fellows slug you will in no case return it. Can't you see that if you slug, people who are looking on will say, 'There, that's the Indian of it. Just see them. They are savages and you can't get it out of them.' If you can set an example of that kind for the white race, you will do a work in the highest interests of you people.[1]
>
> Richard Henry Pratt, reminiscing about the start of Carlisle Indian School's football team from his autobiography, *Battlefield & Classroom.*

When American Indians first started playing competitive football in the late nineteenth century, they were not far removed from fighting against the United States Army to preserve the Native American way of life. Lakota physician and author Charles Eastman recalled in his 1915 book *The Indian To-day*, that he implored Richard Henry Pratt to introduce football at

[1] Robert M. Utley, ed., *Battlefield & Classroom: An Autobiography by Richard Henry Pratt* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 316.

the Carlisle Indian School at a time when the school's superintendent was reluctant to do so. Pratt responded by stating, "'Why if I did that, half the press of the country would attack me for developing the original war instincts and savagery of the Indian! The public would be afraid to come to our games!'" Eastman replied by saying, "'Major that is exactly why I want you to do it. We will prove that the Indian is a gentleman and a sportsman; he will not complain; he will do nothing unfair or underhanded; he will play the game according to the rules, and will not swear-at least not in public!'"[1]

The greatest battle for American Indians who played football for the federally-run boarding schools was overcoming stereotypes. The most dominant stereotype the media used to portray these American Indian players, was that of the war-mongering savage. To evaluate the media's stereotypical characterization of the American Indian, one must first understand the unique relationship between football, war, and American Indians. For generations, American Indians across North America played lacrosse and other variations of stickball as a symbolic method of war. In many ways, the nineteenth-century development of football symbolized a replacement for

[1] C. Richard King, "Identities, Opportunities, Inequities: An Introduction," in *Native Athletes in Sport and Society,* ed. C. Richard King (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), xi.

warfare. In the late nineteenth century, as the American government pressed Indians to assimilate into White society, many natives were forced to give up their traditions, especially stickball.[2] In the boarding schools, where assimilation took place for the younger generation, American Indians, instead, took up football.

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, was the first of almost one hundred off-reservation boarding schools. Those students who played football at these schools were often subjected to stereotyping from the preceding era. Such was the case when Carlisle played Yale University on October 23, 1897 at the Polo Grounds in New York City. The *New York Times* seemed more concerned with the ethnic warfare of the game than the actual contest. The headline read, "White and Red Men in Mimic Warfare on Polo Grounds." The article continued to use phrases such as "this was a notable struggle which enlisted all the elements of physical power and many of the qualities of the scientific and successful warrior." The reporter continued to write that "War

[2] Many of the boarding schools outlawed lacrosse and stickball games. Instead the students were allowed to play another stickball game, baseball.

Cries Mingled."[3] With the frontier wars in the not-so-distant past, the media continued to use the war stereotype.

However, as American Indian players challenged and eventually defeated the best teams in collegiate football, sportswriters grudgingly began to write about the American Indian's athleticism and focused less on racial stereotypes. Native American boarding schools produced some of the greatest football talent during the early days of the sport. Those stars had a pronounced influence for many years, not only on the game of football, but also on how journalists and the public viewed American Indian athletes. Some of these athletes, such as Jim Thorpe, became famous throughout the world. Others, like William Lone Star Dietz, played a significant role in football well into the twenty-first century.

From the beginning, when Carlisle ventured on to the football field, the public and the media were interested in the Indian's participation in football. Since the last so-called battle between the Western Indian tribes and the United States Army had only taken place three years before the school program was established, the fascination with an Indian football team thrilled observers. That interest, especially in the gridiron "battles" between Carlisle and the United States Army's Military

[3] "YALE BEATS THE INDIANS; White and Red Men in Mimic Warfare on the Polo Grounds Yesterday Afternoon." *New York Times*, 24 October 1897.

Academy at West Point, created lasting images of stereotypes and frontier warfare that continue today.

In 2007, Sally Jenkins, a sports writer for the *Washington Post*, authored *The Real All Americans: The Team That Changed a Game, a People, a Nation.* Jenkins wrote that football became a substitute for war in those early years. She drew a connection between the massacre at Wounded Knee in December 1890 and the football game pitting Carlisle Indian School against the United States Military Academy in 1912. For Jenkins, twenty-two years was a short time, even though most of the participants in 1912 were not alive in 1890. Like the journalists of an earlier era, Jenkins used the Wild West imagery of the American Indian locked in battle with the United States' Cavalry to attract readers.[4]

When Richard Henry Pratt, the founder and longtime superintendent of the Carlisle Indian School, allowed his students to participate in football he could never have imagined the publicity that would result. Initially, Pratt banned football when a Carlisle student broke his leg during an exhibition game. Pratt eventually relented when he found forty of the most athletic male students standing in his office ready to plead their case for the game's reinstatement. The superintendent realized that if he gave into their demands, it might be a way to garner attention for his educational programs.

[4] Jenkins, *The Real All Americans*, 2.

Pratt was aware that by using football he was taking a huge risk, because if one of his students acted inappropriately on the field, the incident would make headlines. However, establishing a successful football program was a risk worth taking. The publicity allowed him to continue his mission of "civilizing" the American Indian by showing the public, and more importantly, government officials the progress being made at the boarding school.[5]

For his experiment in educating the American Indian to succeed in civilizing Native Americans, Pratt knew that he had to counteract the public's perception of them portrayed in the ultimate stereotype, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. As David Wallace Adams noted in "More than a Game: The Carlisle Indians Take to the Gridiron, 1893-1917," the Wild West Show represented Indians as treacherous and savage.[6] Pratt's idea was to eradicate those perceptions, by having his students become "brainy, self-disciplined, and gentlemanly athletes."[7]

Besides Pratt, the man who brought the Carlisle football team to the public's attention was Glenn Scobey "Pop" Warner. Never shy about promoting himself or his teams, Warner wrote

[5] Utley, ed., *Battlefield & Classroom*, 217.

[6] David Wallace Adams, "More Than a Game: The Carlisle Indians Take to the Gridiron, 1893-1917," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32, 1 (Spring 2001), 26.

[7] Ibid.

several articles for *Collier's Weekly* during the 1930s about his teams at Carlisle. In "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast," published in the October 24, 1931 issue, Warner chastised the federal government for their treatment of American Indians. He claimed that he had the same prejudices as most white people before coming to Carlisle, but gained an admiration for his charges during the fourteen years he taught and coached at the school.[8] Warner's insight of American Indians was undoubtedly influenced by the images and stereotypes most people held of the nineteenth- century Indian. It was only after coaching these young men that Warner appreciated them for who they were. Ironically, the title of the article perpetuated racial stereotypes.

Warner's tales of his Carlisle teams always portrayed his players as underdogs. He described them as undersized and while they were notorious for their "trick" plays, they were also able to play power football. According to Warner, he never had any players who could not tackle or block and they competed physically against bigger players. Warner developed a mythology around his players. They were honorable, humorous, and courageous. While Warner highlighted their positive attributes, he also mocked the way they talked by stressing their broken

[8] Glenn S. Warner, "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast," *Collier's Weekly* 24 (October 1931), 18.

English and noting that he considered them, at times, to be lazy.[9]

Warner followed up "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast" with "Red Menaces" in the next issue of *Collier's*. In this article, Warner declared that the Indians were the most natural athletes he had ever seen. He wrote about the greatness of Frank Mt. Pleasant and Jim Thorpe, as well as the lesser-known Hawley Pierce. These articles highlighted Warner's appreciation of the Carlisle male students' natural athletic ability and, of course, his abilities in harnessing their talent.[10]

The racist nature of these stories stemmed not from their content; rather, it came from the titles of the articles: "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast" and "Red Menaces." The likelihood that Warner composed those titles was remote, as editors write most headlines. Thus, Coach Warner probably did not perpetuate these racial stereotypes. However, he must assume some blame for allowing these stereotypes to be associated with his stories.

Pratt's initial anxiety about how the press and, by extension, the public would react to American Indians playing a violent sport such as football was well founded. From the 1890s until the school closed in 1918, the media often provided

[9] Ibid., 18-19.

[10] Glenn S. Warner, "Red Menaces," *Collier's Weekly*, 31 October 1931, 16-17.

similar coverage comparing the nineteenth century Indian Wars to Native Americans playing football. The media resorted to using frontier mythology. The use of the frontier and football as racial imagery at Carlisle is not an unexplored topic. Michael Oriard analyzes this cultural interpretation in his 1993 book *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* in which he likened the Carlisle football team locked in a Darwinian struggle.[11] And, David Wallace Adams wrote about the Carlisle football team in *Education for Extinction*. Adams noted that football was an opportunity for American Indian students to not only to equal white society on the gridiron but in "civilization" as well.[12] The football players at Carlisle played in a time close to the end of the western Indian Wars that these comparisons were inevitable.

To gain credence (and notoriety) for his goals of "civilizing" the American Indian, Pratt scheduled Carlisle to play some of the notable squads on the East Coast during the late nineteenth century. The Carlisle team took on the very best teams on the East Coast, including Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Pennsylvania, and Columbia. As

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[11] Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 234-247.

[12] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 184-185.

Carlos Montezuma, who was a physician for the Carlisle Indian School, wrote, "What has made the Carlisle football team strong and famous? The answer is by playing strong and superior teams, and by being gentlemen."[13]

In Michael Oriard's *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*, the author notes that the *New York Evening World* described a Carlisle-Yale game played in 1897 as a "reenactment of King Phillip's War." The newspaper wrote,

> Wily, wiry redskins from the fortresses of Carlisle went on the war path this afternoon for the sons of Eli. Puritan and savage came together in a new and modernized phase of the Indian question. The scene of the new struggle for supremacy was the gridiron, at the Polo Grounds. Touchdowns and goals were the strategic points, runs, kicks, tackles and passes the weapons of offense and defense. There were assaults en masse and individual onslaughts, ambushes successful and unsuccessful. Every yard of the gridiron was stubbornly contested. So paleface warred with redskin from after the dinner hour until the going down of the sun.[14]

The article contains many of the stereotypes that plagued American Indians through the years. Words such as redskins, warpath, savage, ambushes, and, by association, paleface were words commonly used in the Wild West caricature of American Indians. These stereotypical images were the elements that the boarding school system hoped to eradicate by educating and

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[13] Utley, ed., *Battlefield & Classroom*, xx.

[14] Oriard, *Reading Football,* 238.

assimilating the Indians into White society. But, the media hoped to sell more newspapers by resorting to the dime novel images of violent conflicts from the past.

While this "Wild West" description was not uncommon in the late nineteenth century, the blatant racial imagery had unintended consequences. Walter Camp, the man who became known as the "Father of American Football," wrote that the Carlisle team was a favorite of the New Yorkers who attended the games. Camp could not identify why they had become smitten with the team; was it a combination of "fascination, admiration, condescension, or racism?"[15]

The media carefully acknowledged Carlisle's abilities; they made it known who was superior on the football field. Carlisle football historian, Tom Benjey, wrote that newspapers alternated between romanticizing the boarding school team and disparaging it. Sometimes, newspaper correspondents praised and demeaned the players in the same article.[16]

For example, in a brief article describing a contest between Princeton and Carlisle, the headline stated, "The 'Tigers' Play with Indians." The author went on to write that the score was 22-6 in favor of the Princeton Tigers, and that

[15] Ibid., 236.

[16] Tom Benjey, *Doctors, Lawyers, Indian Chiefs* (Carlisle, PA: Tuxedo Press, 2008), 8.

the Indians were only able to score on a "fluke" play. Yet, the game was Princeton's hardest fought of the year. The headline implied that the Tigers should have won by a larger margin. However, the text contradicted that notion by stating that it was a tough game.[17]

The early days of Carlisle football were not very successful, even though many of the players were talented.[18] The team became much improved with the hiring of Glenn Scobey "Pop" Warner in 1899. Even though the media knew Warner had been successful at the University of Georgia and Cornell University, they did not give the coach much chance of success at Carlisle. Many observers were surprised when Coach Warner left Cornell. The Indians had only three winning seasons to that point and they continued to play the best teams in the country. The job looked to be an impossible one.[19]

One of the more intriguing games Carlisle played matched them up with the Haskell Institute, another all-Indian school located in Lawrence, Kansas. The game was played during the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis. The contest underscored the racist nature of the event as the Olympic Games coincided with

[17] "The 'Tigers' Play with Indians," *The New York Times*, 15 October 1896.

[18] Carlisle became active in intercollegiate football in 1893.

[19] Jenkins, *The Real All-Americans*, 186.

the World's Fair that highlighted the infamous Anthropology Days.[20]

The game took place in front of twelve thousand spectators, which included international dignitaries and a large contingent of the press. Both Carlisle and Haskell proved to be formidable teams. Carlisle had only lost to traditional Eastern powers: the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University. Haskell entered the game undefeated beating the state universities of Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Nebraska.[21]

The media noted to dramatic effect that this game matched two premier American Indian boarding schools, but the reporters also acknowledged that it was a contest of a top-notch eastern school facing one the best football programs in the Midwest. In this early era of collegiate football, regional bragging rights mattered. The *New York Times* billed the matchup as the first football contest between American Indian boarding school students in the United States. In its report of the game, the

[20] Anthropology Days displayed persons from "primitive" nations competing in native sports. Foreign participants engaged in "primitive" sports like spear throwing and pole climbing. By Olympic standards, their performances were poor which convinced the spectators of the physical superiority of Anglos and especially American whites. The United States' had recently occupied the Philippines and the World's Fair reinforced United States expansionism and imperialism and justified the need to "civilize" countries seen as backward. http://www.mmbolding.com/Olyball/Olympic_Football.htm [accessed 21 October 2011].

[21] "Football by Indians at World's Fair," *New York Times*, 27 November 1904, 10.

New York Times declared Carlisle was the superior team based on its 38-4 victory over Haskell. Even though one would expect that the article would be full of stereotypes, those elements were absent.[22] On the other hand, the *Youngstown* [Ohio] *Vindicator* previewed the game by writing "The Red Men from Carlisle and Haskell clash at St. Louis this afternoon."[23]

American Indian versus American Indian did not necessarily appeal to the masses; however, the image of Carlisle against the soldiers of West Point did pique the interests of many fans and the media. The November 1905 game, the first between Army and Carlisle, featured extensive media coverage. The Secretary of War needed to approve the game, as he was anxious about staging a contest due to the lingering feelings over the 1890 massacre of the Lakota at Wounded Knee.[24]

James G. Sweeney, a lawyer, football historian, and a fan of the West Point football team for a half century, notes that

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[22] Ibid.

[23] "The Red Men from Carlisle and Haskell clash at St. Louis this afternoon," *Youngstown* (Ohio) *Vindicator*, 26 November 1905, 1.

[24] Recent accounts of the Army-Carlisle rivalry focused on the Wounded Knee massacre. Two books published in 2007, Sally Jenkins's *The Real All Americans: The Team That Changed a Game, a People, a Nation* and Lars Anderson's *Carlisle vs. Army: Jim Thorpe, Dwight Eisenhower, Pop Warner, and the Forgotten Story of Football's Greatest Battle* both focus on the narrative of Wounded Knee and draw connections to the 1912 football game. Jenkins, *The Real All-Americans*, 1-8; Lars Anderson, *Carlisle vs. Army, Dwight Eisenhower, Pop Warner, and the Forgotten Story of Football's Greatest Battle* (New York: Random House, 2007), 5, 258.

authors Jenkins and Anderson focus on the more famous 1912 game and fail to recount the earlier 1905 game. As Sweeney points out, it makes sense that if any game would have inflamed the passions of the Indians from Carlisle it would have been the 1905 game, not the 1912 contest. Most of the participants in the 1905 football game would have been young children in 1890; they would have known of the events of Wounded Knee.[25]

Even though the media covered both the 1905 and 1912 games extensively, there was little mention of Wounded Knee. The media did not cover the 1905 game extensively. The press did not even report that Carlisle's superintendent at the time, Major William A. Mercer, had been a member of the Seventh Cavalry at Wounded Knee Creek.[26]

Days before the contest, the reporter for the *New York Times* wrote, "Coaches Woodruff and Kinney intend to give every one of the twenty-five redskins who will go to West Point on Friday a chance to try their skill against Uncle Sam's embryo officers." The author continued that the Carlisle students were

[25] James G. Sweeney, "Jude and the Prince," www.aafla.org/SportsLibrary/CFHSN/CFHSNv22/CFHSNv22n3d.pdf. [accessed 24 October 2011], 10.

[26] Ibid., 10.

"stirring" with hope because this was be the first athletic meeting between the War Department's "protégés and the redman."[27]

In attendance at the game were dignitaries from both the United States and Great Britain, including generals, admirals, and Prince Louis of Brattenberg. Over eight thousand fans attended the contest on that brisk November afternoon.[28] According to Sweeney, every important newspaper in the country covered the contest.

While the 1905 game lacked the "star" power that Jim Thorpe and Dwight Eisenhower provided, players like Albert Exendine and Joe Guyon suited up for Carlisle and All-Americans Henry "Pappy" Weeks, Harry Torney, and William "Red" Erwin played for Army. The game featured two evenly-matched teams in a defensive struggle. Unheralded Frank Jude of Carlisle was the hero of the game, recovering two fumbles and running one of them back for a touchdown. Jude's touchdown and the point after conversion proved to be the difference as the final score ended up Carlisle 6, Army 5.[29]

Even though the final score favored Carlisle, the *New York Times* found a way to slant the story to praise West Point. Two

[27] "Indians Preparing for West Point," *New York Times*, 8 November 1905, 11.

[28] Sweeney, "Jude and the Prince," 11.

[29] Touchdowns in this era counted for 5 points. Sweeney, "Jude and the Prince," 11-14.

days after the game, the headline read "Indian Football Team Crippled." The article stated that Carlisle "arrived home in badly crippled condition." However, the newspaper did not mention if the Army team sustained any injuries.[30] In essence, West Point might have lost the battle, but won the war.

Seven years later, Carlisle and West Point tangled again. This game played in November 1912 is the more famous of the West Point-Carlisle contests. However, at the time, it was just another game on the schedule. In previewing the game, a reporter for the *New York Times* wrote, "The gridiron programme [sic] today offers many unusual attractions for the football enthusiasts, and there are many promising games and interest in the pigskin warfare is pretty well divided."[31] It is interesting to note that the *New York Times* used the phrase "pigskin warfare" in describing all of the football games to be played that day, and not just the Army-Carlisle contest. This use of "warfare" stereotyped the game of football, rather than just the contest between the players at West Point and Carlisle.

For some, the results of the 1912 game between Carlisle and Army constituted one of the greatest upsets in football

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[30] "Indian Football Team Crippled," *New York Times*, 13 November 1905.

[31] "Feast of Football for Gridiron Fans: Severe Tests Today for Yale, Harvard, Cornell, Army, and Pennsylvania," *New York Times* 9 November 1912.

history.[32] Even though Carlisle came into the game undefeated, many observers believed them to be an underdog. The results on the field were different. The Carlisle Indians dominated the Cadets in all facets of the game. Luckily, Army only found themselves down by one point, 7-6 at halftime. The final score ended up 27-6 in favor of Carlisle.[33]

The outcome spawned headlines across the country. The headline in the *Baltimore Sun* read, "Captain Thorpe Outwits West Point's Cadets." The article's author stated that Carlisle "outplayed Army in every stage of the game."[34] The *New York Times*' headline read "THORPE'S INDIANS CRUSH WEST POINT; Brilliancy of Carlisle Redskins' Play Amazes Cadets and Spectators." The reporter for the New York paper used of racial imagery by using phrases such as "Jim Thorpe and his redoubtable band of Carlisle Indian gridiron stars invaded the plains this afternoon." The reporter continued to use words such as the

[32] Bill Mayer, "Carlisle's Stunner Still Best," *Lawrence Journal World*, 7 September 2007, http://www2.kusports.com/news/2007/sep/07/mayer_carlisles_stunner_still_best/. [accessed 2 April 2012].

[33] John Hall, "The Greatest Grudge Game Ever," *State College Magazine*, 4 December 2009, 15.

[34] "Capt. Thorpe Outwits West Point's Cadets," *Baltimore Sun*, 10 November 1912, A3.

warlike "gladiators," as well as, "reservation," and "redskins."[35]

The victory over Army proved to be Carlisle's apex as a football powerhouse and an institution. The stereotypes used during those games also proved to be one of Carlisle's enduring legacies. The West Point-Carlisle matchups captured the imagination of the public through the years. The stereotypical images of the Plains Indian wars became part of the retelling of the 1905, and more prominently, the 1912 contest. Carlisle's loss in 1905 did not necessarily make a good story, but their victory in 1912 made up for over two hundred years of atrocities, and, more importantly to the writers such as Jenkins and Anderson, as revenge for the Wounded Knee massacre.

Even though Carlisle closed its doors in 1918, it was not the end of football at the American Indian boarding schools. Many of the other schools tried to replace Carlisle as the "Indian" football power. A November 1919 story in *The Oklahoman* extolled the virtues of the Chilocco school taking the place of Carlisle as a gridiron powerhouse. According to *The Oklahoman*,

> Football is enjoying one of the greatest years in the history of the game, but there is something lacking-at least in the circuit of eastern gridirons. The fans miss the Indians.

[35] "THORPE'S INDIANS CRUSH WEST POINT; Brilliancy of Carlisle Redskins' Play Amazes Cadets and Spectators," *New York Times* 10 November 1912, 51. The *New York Times* description of the game is the best account on record.

> The famous Carlisle team is no more. Its glory has faded.
> All of which is causing eastern lovers of the game to wonder if the Indians will come back. Cato Sells, commissioner of Indian Affairs, has announced that Chilocco, the northern Oklahoma Indian school which heretofore has been known only as a sort of prepatory institution, is to succeed Carlisle as the chief school in the Indian system of education. Chilocco has attained a local reputation of its own in athletics and, with the impetus of larger enrollment and broadening vision, it may leap in the spotlight of a new football greatness. But Chilocco's location will likely confine its activities to the native haunts of the tribes its students represent-contending with schools of western conferences only; it would mean long days and nights of travel if teams from the western seat should hit the trail in search of scalps once sought by Carlisle.
> The Indians were the greatest drawing cards of football in the old days. They were interesting, colorful and popular-and how they could play football! It was their game. Every instinct of the redskin came into play. They were sly, tricky and unafraid. The Indians were always ready to play anybody, any time, any place. They never knew an easy schedule-such as is often sought by many of the leading colleges today. As a result, they did not always win-but they always let their opponents know they'd been in a football game.[36]

The Chilocco Indian Agricultural School located in Northern Oklahoma along the Kansas border, became the third off-reservation boarding school in the nation to educate Native American children and young adults. Chilocco was established in 1884, five years after Pratt's Carlisle Industrial School and four years after Chemawa Indian School in Oregon became the

[36] "Chilocco May Know Some of Carlisle's Grid Glories as Great Indian School Passes," *The (Oklahoma City) Oklahoman* 23 November 1919, 15.

second school. Chilocco came into existence to educate the Cheyenne, Caddo, Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita, Pawnee, and Arapaho students in what was then Indian Territory.[37]

Possibly due to its remote location, Chilocco did not replace Carlisle. If any school came close to matching Carlisle's success and notoriety, it was their adversaries from the 1904 Olympic exhibition game, Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas. For the most part, Haskell played schools from the Midwest such as the University of Oklahoma, the University of Texas, the University of Nebraska, and Oklahoma A&M University. A large part of Haskell's schedule was composed of smaller schools from Kansas with the Indians competing against Fort Hays State University, Emporia State University, Wichita State University, Ottawa College, Washburn University, and the University of Kansas.[38]

On rare occasions, Haskell ventured east to play teams like the University of Alabama or Boston College.[39] Notably, the Indians engaged the University of Notre Dame in a series of

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[37] K. Tsianina Lomawaima, "Chilocco Indian Agricultural School," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, http: //digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/C/CH042.html. [accessed 27 October 2008].

[38] Many of these schools were known under different names in the early twentieth century. They are listed in this work under their current titles unless otherwise noted.

[39] They did play the rare game in New York City against a team of United States Marines and also played Brown University.

football games during the first half of the twentieth century. This came at the height of Notre Dame's prominence as a national powerhouse, specifically in the 1920s and the 1930s.[40]

A game between Haskell and Notre Dame in 1932 grew out of a speech Notre Dame head coach Knute Rockne presented at the Indian school to the student body. F.W. McDonald, the athletic director at Haskell, considered it an honor to be placed on Notre Dame's schedule. McDonald stated it was recognition of Haskell's importance in athletic competition.[41]

The newspaper in Lawrence, Kansas, displayed restraint when it came to its story about the football game, but other papers around the country were not as sensitive. The *Baltimore Sun* ran the headline, "Notre Dame Scalps Haskell Indians by 73-0 Score." The reporter followed that headline with the sentence, "Haskell's Indians ran the Notre Dame football gauntlet today and got their worst licking since they invaded Nebraska way back in 1918."[42] The *Chicago Daily Tribune*, used the headline "THE MARCH IS ON! IRISH MASSACRE INDIANS, 73 TO 0."[43] The *New York*

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[40] Frank W. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell* (Lawrence, Kansas: The World Company, 1972), 20.

[41] "On Irish Schedule: Haskell Indians face 10 games next year including Notre Dame," *Lawrence Journal-World,* 6 March 1931, 1.

[42] "Notre Dame Scalps Haskell Indians by 73-0 Score," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 October 1932, 14.

[43] "THE MARCH IS ON! IRISH MASSACRE INDIANS, 73 TO 0," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 October 1932, A2.

Times proved to be more diplomatic. The newspaper's headline stated "Notre Dame Opens Football Campaign By Crushing Haskell Indians, 73 to 0."[44]

No other American Indian boarding school would ever attain the national prominence of Carlisle. However, the media's coverage of the boarding school football teams played a significant role in perpetuating racial stereotypes of American Indian football players for several generations. While these stereotypes remained a substantial obstacle in the coverage by the news media for American Indian football players such as Wahoo McDaniel, Sonny Sixkiller, Sam Bradford, and many others, another considerable burden haunted them...the world's greatest athlete, Jim Thorpe.

[44] "Notre Dame Opens Football Campaign By Crushing Haskell Indians, 73 to 0," *The New York Times*, 9 October 1932, S1.

CHAPTER III

THE SPECTER OF JIM THORPE

> In the interest of scholarship, you will no doubt carefully analyze all stories that come to your attention. Some ridiculous stories concerning Thorpe have been published in magazines and books and have been solemnly repeated by reliable writers such as Grantland Rice and Arthur Daley. I repeat, watch carefully what you write because more lies have been written about Jim Thorpe than about any player in football history.[1]
>
> Colonel Alexander M. Weyand in the first page of Robert Wheeler's *Jim Thorpe: World's Greatest Athlete.*

In evaluating American Indian football players, one must immediately consider Jim Thorpe. His athletic exploits on the football field and in other arenas made him the most recognizable Native American of the twentieth century. His place in American sports history as well as in American folklore is undeniable. According to Mark Rubinfeld, a Professor of Sociology at Westminster College, the myth of Thorpe stemmed

[1] Robert Wheeler, *Jim Thorpe: World's Greatest Athlete* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 2.

from the only medium of the time, newspapers.[1] By perpetuating the Thorpe myth, the newspaper writers created a new stereotype that was applied to all subsequent athletes of American Indian descent.

Thorpe's legacy endured beyond his play on the football field or any other athletic venue. Thorpe's shadow eclipsed his contemporaries such as John Levi, all the way to present day American Indian football players like Sam Bradford. No matter what the accomplishments of these Native athletes, comparisons to the "world's greatest athlete" were inevitable.

The reasons for the Thorpe stereotype are many. In Rubinfeld's opinion, the mythmaking of newspapers was only exacerbated when Thorpe and his Carlisle teammates defeated the United States Military Academy in 1912. A reporter for the *New York Times* wrote that Thorpe "ran wild" while all eyes of the spectators were on this "athletic marvel." Thorpe's outstanding performance notwithstanding, the real story was that the Indians finally had their revenge against the United States Army and Thorpe, playing the role of Crazy Horse, was the leader of this massacre.[2]

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[1] Mark Rubinfeld, "The Mythical Jim Thorpe: Re/presenting the twentieth century American Indian," *The International Journal of History of Sport* 23 (March 2006), 170.

[2] Ibid., 172.

Arguably, no other athlete represents his or her race quite like Jim Thorpe. Thorpe excelled in many athletic ventures, not just football. He competed at a high level in baseball and track and field. Native athletes in those sports also endured Thorpe comparisons. For example, 1964 Olympic Gold Medalist in the 10,000m and Oglala Sioux, Billy Mills, bore comparisons to Thorpe and his Olympic accomplishments. Likewise, Boston Red Sox outfielder, Jacoby Ellsbury, a member of the Colorado River Navajo Indian tribe, has been compared to Thorpe, who also played professional baseball. And, numerous football players have found themselves shadowed by the "world's greatest athlete."[3]

In some respects, comparing different generations of athletes in particular sports is what fuels public interest. Not every African-American boxer is compared with Muhammad Ali or are all White baseball players likened to Babe Ruth.[4] For American Indian athletes, Jim Thorpe's name is always mentioned. By not letting Native American athletes escape from Thorpe's shadow, the media continues to rely on comparisons rather than accomplishments. This may not be the classic example of stereotyping, but in the case of Jim Thorpe and the subsequent

[3] C. Richard King, *Native Americans in Sports* (New York: M E Sharpe Reference, 2003).

[4] Those comparisons are somewhat far-fetched; however, the boxing media searched for the "next great white hope" in its heavyweight division for quite some time.

generations of Native athletes, it is. Just like being an American Indian assured that the press would look at the athlete differently, the media would make comparisons between Thorpe and other Indians.

In athletics, one's legacy is determined at the end of the career. In the case of Jim Thorpe, his legacy was secured early in his athletic career. Sportswriters surmised from the beginning that Thorpe was a special athlete. Part of their analysis was due to the concept of the noble savage. This stereotype, in part, meant that because of an American Indians' closeness with nature, he or she was also a natural athlete.[5] This became a key factor in developing the myth that surrounded Jim Thorpe and, subsequently, the Thorpe stereotype.

The Thorpe stereotype would not have existed without those individuals who embellished his exploits.[6] Early twentieth-century sportswriters, such as Grantland Rice, were mythmakers as much as they were reporters. Arthur Daley, a sportswriter for the *New York Times*, helped establish the Jim Thorpe legend. Along with another Thorpe mythologist, Glenn "Pop" Warner, who coached Thorpe at Carlisle, Daley wrote an article in 1947 detailing Thorpe's athletic achievements. Warner stated that

[5] Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 120, 210.

[6] This is not to say that Thorpe did not deserve the accolades he received, but the sportswriters of the time had a penchant to make sports figures god-like, i.e. Babe Ruth.

Thorpe was a natural talent who did not need coaching. The coach declared that Thorpe, like all Indians, had "powers of observation that were keenly developed through the generations."[7]

Warner declared Thorpe the greatest runner and punter, yet the coach could not bring himself to proclaim his protégé the greatest of them all. Perhaps, Coach Warner believed that if Thorpe would have accepted more instruction, he could have been even greater. Warner helped establish the mythology of Thorpe by consistently elaborating on his athletic accomplishments through various media outlets.[8]

Thorpe deserved every honor he ever received; however, other American Indian football players deserve equal recognition. Take, for example, John Levi, the 1920s star of the Haskell Institute. Levi, a member of the Arapaho tribe, was born in Bridgeport, Oklahoma in 1898. He attended Haskell in the early 1920s after a short stint at the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School. At Haskell, he participated in football, baseball, and track. Many observers believed that Levi equaled Thorpe on the gridiron, if not in other athletic ventures. Thorpe himself proclaimed Levi the greatest athlete he ever saw.

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[7] Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: Pop Warner Discusses Jim Thorpe," *New York Times*, 20 November 1947, 43.

[8] Ibid.

On the football field, Levi could do everything Thorpe could do except punt.[9]

According to Tom Benjey, a historian of American Indian football during the boarding school era, Thorpe was not the only American Indian to lead the nation in scoring. Thorpe scored 198 points in 1912, while Levi scored 149 points in 1923 and 112 points in 1924. Benjey believed that the lack of notoriety Levi received was because Haskell did not play before the eastern media. This prevented the press from naming him to some of the prestigious all-American teams that included Thorpe.[10]

When Haskell played away from home, Levi was a popular topic in the press. After a game between Haskell and the University of Minnesota, a Minneapolis-St. Paul area newspaper wrote, "There is probably not a faster [running] back of his weight, 190 pounds, on the American collegiate gridiron today."[11]

When Haskell ventured to New York City to play a team of Marines at Yankee Stadium, the Yankees talked with Levi about playing baseball. They believed that it was a marketing dream to import an athletic American Indian whose last name was also

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[9] http://americanindianathletichalloffame.com/johnlevi.php [accessed 25 August 2011].

[10] http://tombenjey.com/category/frank-cayou/. [accessed 25 August 2011].

[11] Frank W. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell* (Lawrence, KS: World Company, 1972), 18.

Jewish. The fans in New York City would have streamed through the turnstiles at Yankee Stadium. Levi eventually signed a contract to play baseball with the Yankees, but like Jim Thorpe, football was his best sport.[12]

Nevertheless, despite Levi's accomplishments, he was unable to escape the shadow of the Carlisle All-American. When Haskell and Levi earned, perhaps, their greatest victory against Brown University in 1924, the *Providence Journal* declared Levi the modern Jim Thorpe even though Thorpe himself was still an active player.[13] The Thorpe stereotype claimed its first victim.

Thorpe contributed to the stereotype. Jim Thorpe and Walter Lingo, financed an early National Football League franchise, called the Oorang Indians. The entire roster was made up of American Indians; most had played at Carlisle or other Indian boarding schools. The team featured Thorpe as its leading player and main attraction, as he was the most well-known.[14] The Oorang Indian football club shortly after its inception became a prime example of stereotypes including: drunkenness, laziness, and, sometimes, of the natural athlete.

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[12] Ibid., 28.

[13] Ibid., 35.

[14] Bob Braunwart, Bob Carroll, and Joe Horrigan, "The Oorang Indians," *The Coffin Corner* 3 (1981), 1. http://www.profootballresearchers.org/Coffin_Corner/03-01-057.pdf.

During the 1922 and 1923 NFL seasons, the Oorang team traveled around the country playing football games and showcasing Lingo's dogs at halftime. When Thorpe advertised that he needed Indian football players for his new professional team, many came from throughout the United States. Most had not played football for several years. Some were even older than Thorpe, who, by that time, was thirty-four. A few players trying out were reportedly to be in their early fifties.[15] Presumably, Thorpe and Lingo wanted to recapture the magic of the Carlisle football team, professionally. But, the two men also understood that they needed more than just a team of American Indians football players to attract attention.

The way that Lingo and Thorpe constructed the team doomed it from the beginning, as it was more about entertainment than football. The pregame and halftime shows revolved around live exhibitions that featured Airedale dogs trailing and treeing a live bear, shooting demonstrations by the players, Indian dances, tomahawk work, and knife and lariat throwing. The finale featured Indian scouts and the Airedales performing first aid to "injured" people.[16]

The actual on-field product, however, proved embarrassing. In their two seasons as an NFL franchise, the Oorang Indians

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

went 3-6 and 1-10. After one game in which they lost to the Akron team, a newspaper headline read "Jim Thorpe's Indians Loaf."[17] Combined with the stereotypical halftime shows, such headlines highlighted the underlying racial nature of the Oorang team. Even though the team was not very good, the media automatically used a stereotype to explain its failure--the "lazy" Indian.

Thorpe coached the squad and played. However, he was not a good coach and he did not know how to discipline his teammates. Some of the discipline issues existed because of alcohol use and partying by the players. One story described the players carousing in a bar in Chicago after the bartender wanted to close. The team, intent on drinking where they were, tossed the bartender into a telephone booth, turned it upside down, and drank until dawn. Their performance against the Chicago Bears the next day was disastrous.[18]

The combination of having Thorpe on the team and the novelty of being an all-Indian franchise, created publicity during its short existence. It also made them a popular topic for the newspapers. Football fans bought tickets to see the legendary Thorpe play, while others came to see a mini-Wild West

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

show, complete with Native American headdresses and other apparel. Coupled with the team's propensity for alcohol-fueled parties, the players fell into the classic trap of being stereotyped by the press and the public. The war-bonnet wearing, alcohol-consuming "savage" was one of the prototypical stereotypes common of American Indians at that time.[19]

"'They thought we were all wild men, even though almost all of us had been to college and were generally more civilized than they were,'" former Oorang player and member of the Chippewa tribe, Leon Boutwell, once said. "'Well, it was a dandy excuse to raise hell and get away with it when the mood struck us. Since we were Indians, we could get away with things the white men couldn't. Don't think we didn't take advantage of it.'"[20]

Boutwell's comments intimated that the team was a participant in the traditional stereotype. The Oorang Indians attracted curious fans to the burgeoning game of professional football, which had not yet become the national pastime it is today. Robert Whitman, author of *Jim Thorpe and the Oorang Indians: NFL's Most Colorful Franchise*, states, "I personally think that the Oorang Indians, the Canton Bulldogs, and the

[19] Jimmie Tramel, "NFL's Indians were rich in Oklahomans," *Tulsa World* 13 September 2009 http://tulsaworld.com/. [accessed 25 August 2011].

[20] Ibid.

Massillon Tigers were three teams that probably introduced people to pro football."[21]

While Thorpe and the Oorang Indians received all of the publicity, another all-Indian professional football team was formed. A team from Hominy, Oklahoma became a successful pro football franchise, although not at the NFL level. This was another example of the specter of Jim Thorpe overshadowing John Levi, who was, at various times, a member of the Hominy Indians.[22]

Unlike the Oorangs, the Hominy Indians did not capture the popular imagination. Perhaps, one can attribute this to an East Coast bias, or because the Hominy franchise did not belong to the National Football League.[23] The Osage Indian tribe organized the Hominy Indian football team in late 1923. The team initially played games against regional squads such as Joplin

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[21] Robert L. Whitman, *Jim Thorpe and the Oorang Indians N. F. L.'s Most Colorful Team* (New York: The Hubbard Company, 1984), 5.

[22] Arthur Shoemaker, "Hail to the real 'redskins': All Indian team from Hominy, Okla., took on all comers," *The Coffin Corner* 14, 5 (1992), 1. <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/157381772/THE-COFFIN-CORNERVol-14_-No-5---Professional-Football>.

[23] The American Professional Football Conference, the forerunner to the National Football League (NFL), established itself in the early 1920s as a confederation of football clubs in the upper Midwest, which also included bigger cities such as New York City. Other professional football teams and leagues existed throughout the United States. If players were paid, then it was deemed professional football. The Hominy (OK) Indians were considered such a team. Today, it would be considered semi-professional.

and Sarcoxie in Missouri; Coffeyville, Elk City, and Fredonia in Kansas; and Stillwater, Avant, Bartlesville, and Fairfax in Oklahoma.[24]

Hominy's connection to Haskell and John Levi came about in 1924 after the Indian school's football season ended. As part of a plan to help raise money for a new stadium, the Haskell football team played an exhibition game in Muskogee, Oklahoma. One of the players on the Haskell team was John Levi, who had exhausted his college eligibility. After the game, several members of the Osage tribe approached him about playing for Hominy. He agreed and took several of his teammates, including his brother, George. Another famous player for Hominy was Johnnie "Pepper" Martin, better known as a baseball player for the St. Louis Cardinals "Gas House Gang."[25]

Hominy used Haskell for recruiting. The influence and money of the Osage leaders made it advantageous for the former Haskell players to play football for a paycheck. In many ways, it was a matter of pride for the Haskell graduates to "play for pay" with an all-Indian pro football team.[26]

Just as many former Carlisle players joined Thorpe at Oorang, Haskell players lined up to play for Hominy. While the

[24] Arthur Shoemaker, "Hail to the real 'redskins'," 1.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 2.

Oorang Indians were known for their antics and futility on the field, Hominy claimed one of the greatest triumphs in football history. In 1927, the NFL champion New York Giants played the Hominy Indians the day after Christmas in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. During this era, baseball and football champions barnstormed across the United States playing regional teams in exhibition games to supplement their income.[27]

Football fans from around the United States congregated in Pawhuska. Betting on the game was heavy, with most people leaning towards the favored Giants. Hominy had never before played a team the caliber of the New York football club.[28]

Newspaper accounts of the game suggested that the Giants brought in several ringers. The game saw the bigger and stronger Giants evenly matched by the quicker Indian squad. New York scored the first touchdown, and Hominy answered back. Levi threw a 60-yard pass to Joe Pappio for the deciding score. The game ended in a 13 to 6 victory by the Hominy. The Levi brothers, Pappio, and George Nix led the Indians to victory. Four years later in 1931, during an East Coast barnstorming tour, the Giants got their revenge, destroying Hominy 53-0.[29]

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Arthur Shoemaker, "Hominy Indians," *Oklahoma Today* 17 (Autumn 1967), 7.

[29] Ibid., 8.

Unlike Oorang, Hominy tried to stay away from stereotypical sideshows that featured American Indian traditions. However, when the Great Depression struck, more creative marketing was needed to attract fans. When Hominy played on the road, the team dressed in their tribal costumes and put on a "pow-wow" dance before the game. Accompanying the dancing were drums, whoops, chants, and feathers, all of the things that would draw the crowds, especially in the eastern United States.[30]

Though the Oorang Indians led by Jim Thorpe are now a footnote in football history, the Hominy Indians are rarely mentioned for their defeat of the New York Giants and other achievements. Selective memory by the press is just one of the reasons why Thorpe overshadowed other American Indian football players. This faulty recollection influenced Thorpe's rankings at the end of the twentieth century as the greatest football player and greatest athlete.[31]

Thorpe gave football one last try at forty-four years old. He suited up on Thanksgiving Day 1928 for the Chicago Cardinals against the rival Chicago Bears. He only played for a few minutes, and by all accounts, he did not play well. Some said

[30] Ibid.

[31] Associated Press, "Jim Thorpe Named Greatest in Sport," *New York Times*, 12 February 1950, 142.

he looked too muscle-bound, but that might have been a kind observation.[32]

While the last years of his football career were not generous to Thorpe, his athletic feats on the field were not ignored. The media kept the Thorpe stereotype alive. At mid-century, the Associated Press named Thorpe as football's greatest player, as well as the greatest athlete in all of sports from 1900 to 1950. Thorpe far outdistanced Babe Ruth in the voting for the other category. Red Grange was the next closest football player on the all-athlete list.[33] In 2000, ABC's Wide World of Sports named Thorpe its Athlete of the Century. The Associated Press had Thorpe third on their list of top athletes of the century.[34] ESPN ranked the top one hundred North American athletes of the twentieth century in 1999. The list consisted of men, women, as well as three racehorses. Thorpe placed seventh behind Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Wayne Gretzky, and Jesse Owens. While Jordan, Ali, Brown, and Gretzky were all born or made their marks in their individual sports after the Associated Press's 1950 poll,

[32] Associated Press, "Jim Thorpe, 44 Years Old, Plays Football in Charity Game, but His Team Loses, 34-0," *New York Times*, 30 November 1928, 31.

[33] Associated Press, "Jim Thorpe Named Greatest in Sport," *New York Times*, 12 February 1950, 142.

[34] "ABC Names Thorpe Athlete of the Century," *Indian Country Today*, 9 February 2000, A1.

Ruth and Owens were on the 1950 poll behind Thorpe. Yet, Thorpe found himself behind both of them fifty years later. With the ESPN poll, Thorpe's legacy has proven to be longstanding.[35]

The residents of the state of Oklahoma also remembered Thorpe. In a 1979 Associated Press article, the people of the Sooner State chose Thorpe as Oklahoma's favorite son; he received 373 out of 924 votes.[36] When *Sports Illustrated* featured a poll on the favorite sports teams and athletes from each state, Oklahomans voted Jim Thorpe the greatest athlete from or played a sport in Oklahoma. He outpaced such luminaries as Barry Sanders, Mickey Mantle, Troy Aikman, and Johnny Bench.[37]

Thorpe's legacy went beyond the state of Oklahoma. The NFL Network put together a list of the greatest players in the league's history and Thorpe came in at number thirty-seven of a hundred.[38] Thorpe was part of the inaugural class of individuals inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1963. The NFL

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[35] http://espn.go.com/sportscentury. [accessed 30 August 2011].

[36] "Thorpe Voted Oklahoman's Favorite Son," *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate*, 30 November 1979, 13.

[37] "The Poll," *Sports Illustrated* http://sivault.com/. 29 December 2009 [accessed 24 August 2011].

[38] The NFL Network did find footage of Jim Thorpe punting in the pregame ceremonies for the Oorang Indians.

also awards the Jim Thorpe Trophy to the league's most valuable player as voted upon by the Newspaper Enterprise Group.[39]

The Thorpe documentary that aired on ESPN in conjunction with its poll was different than most of the others. No footage existed of Thorpe playing football, baseball, or competing in track and field. Instead, the documentary opened with a nighttime tribal dance, and while those who spoke about him did so eloquently, they reduced Thorpe to another Indian stereotype.[40]

Unfortunately, Thorpe's later life became stereotypical. After his athletic career, he found it difficult to find steady work. He struggled with alcoholism. While he was paid $15,000 for the rights to his story that became the Warner Brothers feature film, *Jim Thorpe All American*, the money disappeared quickly. A popular rumor was that Thorpe needed to borrow the money to see the movie in Oklahoma City when it appeared there. In reality, Thorpe took part in the premiere in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. However, Thorpe and his third wife, Patsy, spent money rapidly and were destitute at times.[41]

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[39] Greg Botelho, "Roller-coaster life of Indian icon, sports' first star," CNN.com, July 14, 2004, [accessed April 23, 2007].

[40] Richard Sandomir, "TV Sports: Top Athletes Countdown Is a Big Step Up for ESPN," *New York Times*, 14 December 1999, D6.

[41] Kate Buford, *Native American Son: The Life and Sporting Legend of Jim Thorpe* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2012), 381.

Thorpe passed away on March 28, 1953 from heart failure in Lomita, California. He was scheduled to be buried in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and during a three-day burial ceremony Patsy snatched the body from a rental tomb. Patsy sold her husband's body to Mauch Chuck, Pennsylvania. The price remains a secret, but the township of Mauch Chunck changed its name to Jim Thorpe. The townspeople built a memorial honoring Thorpe's athletic accomplishments and interred his body at the site.[42]

Since 2010, the town and the heirs of Jim Thorpe have engaged in a legal battle. Thorpe's heirs and the Sac and Fox tribe would like to bring his body back to Oklahoma so he can be laid to rest according to his ancestral customs. Jack Thorpe, Jim's son and the leader of the lawsuit, just "wants to bring his father home." According to Jack, there is no desire to have the town change its name; the Thorpe family just wants the body of their loved one.[43]

The stereotypes that the press stuck on American Indians stayed with Jim Thorpe his entire life. In many ways, he became a stereotype himself. Thorpe became so prominent that every American Indian athlete faced comparisons to him. The media drew comparisons between him and other American Indian football players, often overshadowing the other athletes'

[42] Selena Roberts, "Who Owns A Legend?" *Sports Illustrated*, 12 July 2010, 72.

[43] Ibid.

accomplishments. The burden of these comparisons haunted native athletes well into the twenty-first century.

During the era after Thorpe, the media focused its attention on the Indians on the sidelines rather than on the field. Although the quantity of American Indian football players seemed to decline, several high-profile stars emerged. Even though they contended with the legacy of Jim Thorpe, all made an impact in their own way.

CHAPTER IV

TOO MANY "CHIEFS," NOT ENOUGH INDIANS: ALBERT EXENDINE, LONE STAR DIETZ, GUS WELCH, AND THE END OF AN ERA

> They thought I was the Indian I was only pretending to be. After a while, I started believing it too. How could I not? They wanted me to be a certain kind of Indian, and when I acted like that kind of Indian...those white people loved me.
>
> From Sherman Alexie's *Ten Little Indians*[1]

While the 1930s and 1940s did not produce high profile American Indian football players such as Jim Thorpe, there were Native Americans who participated in football at all levels. One of Carlisle's legacies was that several former football players became coaches on both the collegiate and professional levels. Former Carlisle players such as Albert Exendine, William Lone Star Dietz, and Gus Welch were just a few who coached at prominent colleges, in the National Football League or its predecessor.

Members of the press viewed the development of American Indians coaching white football players as a significant

[1] Sherman Alexie, *Ten Little Indians* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 42.

advancement in the process of civilizing Native Americans. An anonymous reporter for the Lewiston, Maine *Daily Sun* wrote,

> The Indian has made another step forward. The country is familiar with the athletic prowess of the redskin through his many achievements as a school star, but it is not generally known that LO[1] has passed beyond the stage of being athletic material, but is today in many fields of sport actually guiding and directing his white brethren.

The author attributed the success of the American Indian football coaches to their training at Carlisle and the tutelage of the legendary Glenn "Pop" Warner, their head football coach.[2] Besides the stereotypical usage of redskin and LO, the article's author ignored the fact that men like Exendine and Welch earned law degrees and were natural leaders.

Whenever an American Indian achieved a position of authority, the media often attached the misnomer "Chief" to his name. The use of "Chief" dated back to the colonial era when government officials wanted something (usually land) from various tribes. Many of them did not have one leader, so government officials appointed or identified a "Chief." This

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[1] The term LO is derived from the 1734 poem "Essay on Man" written by Alexander Pope. LO is taken from the first line of the poem, "LO the poor Indian." The phrase, "LO the poor Indian," became popular during the 19th century, when people used it to describe the condition of the American Indians sarcastically and stereotypically. David Cody, "Alexander Pope's Essay on Man: An Introduction," http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/pope/man.html. July 2009 [accessed 31 August 2013].

[2] "Indians Good Coaches: Carlisle Coaches Make Good Tutors in all Sports," Lewiston (Maine) *Daily Sun*, 1 December 1914, 9.

was a way to recognize that someone was in charge, and while the American Indian coaches did not encourage the use of the title, they did not discourage it.

When the press did not identify a coach as "Chief," they often identified him as an American Indian. Exendine, Welch, Dietz, and other American Indian coaches were more often linked as members of the Carlisle Indians football team or as a teammate of Jim Thorpe rather than simply a coach. By using the stereotypical "chief" the press played a role in establishing the stereotype and by not discouraging its use, the coaches were active participants. In some cases, such as with Lone Star Dietz, by being labeled "chief," it made the coach a more prominent symbol authority, or simply more attractive for endeavors outside of football.

One of the first Carlisle graduates to become a well-known coach was Albert Exendine, who played football at Carlisle from 1905 to 1907 under Warner. When assessing Exendine's abilities as a football player and leader, Warner used the words, "'sheer brilliance.'" Exendine and Warner did not initially have a good relationship. Exendine did not play football his first year at Carlisle and the young student incurred the wrath of Coach Warner. Warner expected all male students at Carlisle to at least tryout for the football team. For not playing football his first year, Warner forbid Exendine to join the team.

Eventually, the coach relented and allowed the Delaware Indian to play.[3]

Exendine justified Warner's decision by captaining the 1906 team, while being honored as an All-American on Walter Camp's team of 1907. While Exendine's play exemplified hard work, his greatest attribute was his leadership. Many of his teammates celebrated Exendine's abilities to lead the team on and off the field. He became Jim Thorpe's personal football tutor and the two men developed a strong bond. In fact, it was Exendine, as Warner's assistant, who brought Thorpe back to Carlisle after he left to play minor league baseball.[4]

When an assistant coach position opened up, Exendine joined Warner's staff in 1908, and "Pop" assigned his former star to coach the second team known as the "Hotshots." While coaching the "Hotshots," Exendine developed his trademark forward passing game, a novel idea in the early twentieth century. According to a biography of the coach by John Johnson, Exendine's use of the "forward pass as an offensive weapon indicated that he had a flexibility of thinking and his readiness to adopt new methods." Coach Exendine's offensive schemes ran counter to the thinking

[3] John L. Johnson, "Albert Andrew Exendine," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 43 (Autumn 1965), 321.

[4] Ibid., 322.

of Warner, who preferred the "grind-it out" system of offense that precluded the forward pass.[5]

While the passing game did not become an integral part of football until 1913, Exendine convinced Warner to add elements of the pass into Carlisle's game plan. Carlisle used the passing game in 1907, one year after the forward pass rule changed, to defeat the reigning Big Ten conference champions, the University of Chicago, under Amos Alonzo Stagg.[6]

In 1909, Otterbein University located in Westerville, Ohio, approached Warner to help find a new football coach. Warner recommended Exendine. His old coach had one piece of advice for his pupil, "'Ex, you will become a good football coach if you remember that football is football, and not basketball.'" Despite the advice, Warner adopted Exendine's passing game.[7] Carlisle's use of the forward pass resulted in another classic stereotype. The forward pass was viewed as a trick play, something Carlisle had the reputation for already.[8] The forward

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 323.

[7] Ibid., 325.

[8] Jim Morrison, "The Early History of Football's Forward Pass," *Smithsonian Magazine* < http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Early-History-of-Footballs-Forward-Pass.html>. 28 December 2010 [accessed 16 July 2013].

pass solidified Carlisle's reputation as "tricksters," which harkened back to another stereotype of American Indians.[9]

Exendine held the head coaching position at Otterbein for three years during which time he obtained his law degree. After his last season at Otterbein, the school newspaper, the *Aegis*, opined, "A great many things might be said of Albert A. Exendine, who has so efficiently coached the Otterbein football team for the past three seasons. But in leaving Otterbein, Exendine needs no eulogizing, for his work here has given him a reputation that is almost national in scope."[10]

Exendine left Otterbein at the request of his former coach. Once again, he took a position as an assistant coach at Carlisle. The week prior to playing the University of Virginia, Georgetown officials asked Warner if he could spare Exendine to prepare their team for the showdown with the Virginia squad. Exendine led Georgetown to victory. The win over Virginia led Georgetown officials to offer Exendine the head coaching position, which he accepted. He held that job until 1922.[11]

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[9] Gerald R. Gems, "Negotiating a Native American Identity Through Sport: Assimilation, Adaptation, and the Role of the Trickster," in *Native Athletes in Sport and Society: A Reader*, ed. C. Richard King (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2006), 1-21.

[10] Johnson, "Albert Andrew Exendine," 325.

[11] "Intercollegiate Football Ends at Georgetown," *Chicago Tribune* 23 March 1951, B2.

In 1922, Exendine left his position at Georgetown. The faculty decided that all athletic coaches should also be faculty members. Exendine concluded he could no longer continue in his position. Georgetown officials tried to persuade him to join the faculty of the Law School, but his business interests as a lawyer precluded such a move. A *New York Times* article suggested that Exendine might become the new coach at Columbia University or the University of Alabama, but neither position worked out.[12]

Instead of staying on the East Coast, Exendine ventured to Washington State College in Pullman, for his next coaching job. The student body at Washington State showed their respect for him in the 1924 annual publication, *The Chinook*, by writing, "In Exendine we have a coach second to none on the Pacific Coast. He knows football from A to Z and has a way about him 'that' makes a fellow want to get in and give everything he's got-and then some."[13]

The student body praised Exendine, but the result on the field did not turn out as well. He left Washington State with a losing record at the end of the 1925 season. From Washington, Exendine headed to California to coach at Occidental College. A

[12] "Will Leave Georgetown: Exendine Declines Offer to Continue as Football Director," *New York Times*, 13 December 1922, 32.

[13] Johnson, "Albert Andrew Exendine," 328.

story after his becoming head coach stated his American Indian name was "Tos-Pon-Ne-Hein" which translated to toss up and catch it.[14] By also giving the coach an "Indian" name, the newspaper writer stereotyped Exendine.

Exendine departed Occidental College in 1927 and headed home to Oklahoma. He coached football at Northeastern Oklahoma State Teacher's College in 1928, before accepting an assistant coaching position with Oklahoma A&M University in 1929. Exendine coached the Oklahoma A&M baseball team as well. Exendine served under Coach Lynn Waldorf on the football team until 1933 and then took over as the Aggies head coach for the 1934 and 1935 seasons.[15]

When the Oklahoma A&M administration promoted Exendine to the head position, the *Lawrence Journal-World* wrote that Oklahoma A&M College's "circus" was under new management. The newspaper noted that Exendine was a Delaware Indian and a former teammate of Jim Thorpe at Carlisle. The *Journal-World* covered athletics at the University of Kansas and the Haskell Indian School, both located in Lawrence. The article also noted that Oklahoma A&M would play Haskell during the upcoming season. The game would match Indian coach versus Indian coach. Exendine's

[14] Paul Lowry, "Exendine Lands Oxy Coaching Job," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 March 1927, B1.

[15] Johnson, "Albert Andrew Exendine," 330.

team took on Haskell head coach Gus Welch team, who played quarterback at Carlisle from 1910-1914.[16]

The 1935 season saw the end of Exendine's collegiate coaching career. In his two years as head coach in Stillwater, Oklahoma, Exendine compiled a 7-12-1 record, which led to his firing. He then took a job with the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a Field Agent, which sent him to Anadarko, Oklahoma where he found time to coach the local high school team of American Indian players.

Bob Considine, a noted newspaper columnist in the 1930s, asked Exendine about the absence of great American Indian athletes. Considine theorized that with the closing of Carlisle and the reduction of Haskell to a high school, there were no more "training grounds" for American Indian athletes.[17] Exendine replied that American Indians were no longer restricted to specific schools. He also held a more controversial view: that inter-marriage between Europeans and American Indians made it hard to tell who was Native American. Exendine continued by pointing out that there were now more American Indians in the country then when Columbus arrived.[18]

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[16] "Indian Veteran Directs Sooner Aggies on Gridiron," *Lawrence Journal-World*, 6 September 1934, 8.

[17] Johnson, "Albert Andrew Exendine," 331.

[18] Ibid.

Albert Exendine's career took him many places and he established himself as a gentleman coach. He became an Indian activist and continued his career in law after football. He worked out of Pawhuska, McAlester, and Tulsa, Oklahoma while establishing his practice. College Football Hall of Fame coach Bud Wilkinson, who guided the University of Oklahoma, said of Exendine, "'Ex knew more football than any man who ever stepped foot on Oklahoma soil. His mind was too far advanced in theories for most players to understand, and he knew offense better than any man who ever lived.'"[19]

One man who held similar coaching positions as Exendine, Gus Welch, also pondered the question of where all of the American Indian athletes had gone. Welch quarterbacked the Carlisle Indians during the years that Jim Thorpe played and Exendine assisted Warner.[20] In addition, Welch earned a law degree from Dickinson College and coached at Washington State University and Georgetown like Exendine.[21]

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[19] Sally Jenkins, *Real All Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, a People, a Nation* (New York: Doubleday Publishing Co., 2008), 306.

[20] Like Thorpe, Gus Welch was a member of the 1912 United States Olympic team. He made the trip to Stockholm, Sweden, but did not compete due to illness. Gus Welch, "Archive for Gus Welch Category,"< http://tombenjey.com/category/gus-welch/>. [accessed 13 May 2013].

[21] Tom Benjey, *Doctors, Lawyers, Indian Chiefs* (Carlisle, PA: Tuxedo Press, 2008), 189-201.

Welch also coached at another university in the nation's capital. As the head coach at American University, Welch lamented the disappearance of the American Indian athlete in the *Miami* [Florida] *News*. In the article entitled, "Lo, the poor Indian; Gus Welch seeks Redskin who will make All American," Welch commented, "'The Indian is disappearing from football just like he disappeared from the forests.'"[22] Welch continued by saying that there used to be many good Indian athletes: "'Most of the Indians we see in athletics today are impostors, or at best half-breeds. And they might as well be cigar store Indians in so far as I am concerned.'"[23]

Welch declared he would venture to the "old west" to visit the "two fiercest tribes" that lived there. The former Carlisle quarterback said, "'I am going to the Sioux reservation first to look over their crop of babies. If they don't have anything to my liking, I am going to pay the Cheyenne a call. I'm determined to find a real all-American and restore the Indian to his proper place in football.'"[24]

Welch, known as the premier storyteller, drew the attention of the media with his comments, which were distributed in

[22] "Lo, the poor Indian; Gus Welch seeks Redskin who will make All American," *Miami News*, 2 March 1937, 17.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

newspapers throughout the United States. He used classic stereotypes when he referred to the terms "old west" and "fiercest tribes" to illustrate his point that football lacked Indian players. Furthermore, by stating that the American Indians in football during this era were either "impostors or half-breeds," Welch ignored the fact that the greatest American Indian football player to that time was not a full-blood. Jim Thorpe was a mixed blood, as his mother was part French, and his father was part Irish. Thorpe admitted that he was 5/8th Indian, 1/4th Irish, and 1/8th French.[25] Welch's comments showed that even American Indians were able to use stereotypes to make a point.

Welch's goal was to bring back the glory days of Carlisle; but, in his statements to the press, he ignored the real problem. Once the federal government closed Carlisle and mandated a new educational direction for American Indians, collegiate football did not have many Native Americans on their rosters. Without Indian schools, fewer American Indians were going to college; therefore, American Indians were not active on the professional level either.

While American Indians would not populate the ranks of collegiate and professional team as they had earlier, a Native

[25] www.jimthorpefilm.com/guide/guide01.pdf. [accessed 13 September 2011].

American would play a huge role in the game well into the twenty-first century. William Henry "Lone Star" Dietz, who coached the Boston (now Washington) football team from 1933-34, was the "Redskin" in the franchise's nickname. The derogatory stereotype surrounding the "Redskin" nickname and mascot were controversial, as was Dietz's life.

Dietz's father, William Wallace Dietz, brought home an American Indian baby to his wife, Leanna Ginder Dietz after the couple gave birth to a stillborn child. Reportedly, that child was his illegitimate son from a local Sioux woman, Julia One Star.[26] Another story persisted about Lone Star Dietz's origins. According to Lone Star, his father, a German civil engineer, was helping build a railroad across South Dakota's plains when Red Cloud captured his party. Due to his boldness in approaching Red Cloud, the chief gave Julia One Star to Lone Star's father to be his wife. Red Cloud allowed the family to stay with the Oglala Sioux.[27]

No one questioned Dietz's race when he appeared at Carlisle as a twenty-three year old student in September 1907. Dietz played football for Warner, but initially found himself on the

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[26] Benjey, *Doctors, Lawyers, and Indian Chiefs,* 184-186.

[27] Bart Ripp, "The Legend of Lone Star," *The News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA) 18 December 1997. For more on the controversy surrounding Lone Star's heritage see Tom Benjey's biography of Dietz, *Keep A-Goin': The Life of Lone Star Dietz* (Brentwood, MD: Tuxedo Press, 2006).

second team. After assisting Warner on the staff at Carlisle for three years, major coaching changes took place. Warner left for a coaching position at the University of Pittsburgh. The former Carlisle coach asked Dietz to join his staff at Pittsburgh, but Lone Star believed it was time to move on. Warner recommended Dietz for the Washington State College head-coaching job and the Washington State administration hired him for the position.[28]

His arrival in Pullman took everyone by surprise; he showed up in top hat, tails, spats, and carried an ivory-handled cane. He looked like a rich entrepreneur getting ready for a night on the town, not an American Indian football coach. The citizens of this rural area in Eastern Washington did not know what to think about their new football coach.[29]

Washington State's football team had no success prior to Dietz's arrival. The 1915 football season turned that around when Washington State went undefeated. This unprecedented success earned the school an invitation to the Tournament of Roses East-West game in Pasadena, California on New Year's Day 1916.[30]

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[28] Benjey, *Keep A-Goin'*, 181.

[29] Ibid., 182.

[30] Ibid., 183.

Washington State defeated Brown University in that game, but Dietz's actions before and after the contest were interesting. While preparing for the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Dietz negotiated a movie deal for his players. Each member of the team received $100 for playing the game on camera and Dietz negotiated a small role for himself. The lure of acting in Hollywood kept Dietz in Los Angeles after the game. His bid to land an acting contract failed when the studios tried to cast him in stereotypical Indian roles that presented his race negatively. However, Dietz did not give up on his dream of showbusiness, which led to some consternation among the administration at Washington State when the team did not do as well the next year.[31]

The irony of Dietz refusing to play a stereotypical Indian in Hollywood, contradicted his image on the football field. At various times, Dietz dressed in full Indian regalia while coaching. While he would not allow Hollywood to stereotype him, he constructed his own image using the same stereotypes.[32]

The First World War interrupted Dietz's success at Washington State in 1917. Many student-athletes joined the military and the depleted collegiate athletic programs shut down for the war's duration. A mutual agreement between Washington

[31] Ibid., 183-184.

[32] Ibid., 184.

State's athletic council and Dietz secured his job until the war's end. However, the issue of Dietz's race resurfaced. While eating in a Spokane diner, a local man confronted Dietz for over indulging in sugar, a rationed staple during the war. The man, J.C. Argell, headed up the local draft board for military service. Using his position, Argell investigated Dietz's draft status, which as a non-citizen American Indian made him ineligible for the draft.[33]

In his investigation, Argell discovered an old article from the Portland *Oregonian* that repeated rumors that Dietz was not an Indian. Shortly before a grand jury passed down an indictment for falsely registering for the draft, Washington State fired Dietz. Even though documents from Carlisle verified his heritage, Dietz pleaded no contest to the charges, as he could not afford legal representation due to failed investments and his employment status. The federal judge recognized the injustice of Dietz's predicament and, instead of sentencing him to the maximum term, ordered him to serve thirty days in jail.[34]

The next decade saw Dietz wander from job to job. He coached at Purdue University, Louisiana Tech University, the University of Wyoming, and the Haskell Institute. At the first

[33] Rob Jackson, "Wicarhpi Isnala 'Lone Star'" *The Coffin Corner* 26 (2004), 3 <http://www.profootballresearchers.org/Coffin_Corner/26-01-1014.pdf>.

[34] Ibid.

three coaching positions, Dietz had limited success. Things brightened for him at Haskell as he compiled a 30-9 record over a four-year period. His successful stint at Haskell led to a better opportunity.[35]

Dietz's decision to accept George Preston Marshall's offer to coach the Boston Braves of the National Football League led to a long-term controversy involving stereotypes of American Indians. The NFL's Braves played football in the same stadium as professional baseball's Boston Braves; but, during Dietz's first season, the owner decided to move to Fenway Park, the home of the Boston Red Sox. The football team needed to change its name as it were not prudent to claim the nickname of the Red Sox crosstown rivals. Marshall chose the name Redskins, supposedly to "honor" his head coach.[36]

The mascot issue is perhaps the most controversial one surrounding Native American football players. While the use of American Indian mascots extends from youth programs to high school and collegiate teams, the Washington Redskins are the most notable franchise still using the pejorative nickname. If

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

one would look up the word "Redskin" in a dictionary, the definition would be described as "usually offensive."[37]

Furthermore, an argument exists that the use of the word violates federal law. According to the Lanham Act of 1946, Congress outlawed trademarks that disparaged any persons, living or dead. In *Harjo et al. v. Pro-Football, Inc.*, a group of American Indians filed a motion with the United States Trademark Trial and Appeal Board against the parent company of the Washington Redskins regarding six trademarks using the word Redskins. In April 1999, three judges for the Patent and Trademark Office ruled unanimously for the plaintiffs. In response, Pro-Football, Inc. filed an appeal with the United States District Court, and in this case, the court ruled against *Harjo et al.* on the grounds that the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board's decision was based on unsubstantiated evidence. *Harjo et al.* appealed to the United States Supreme Court, but the higher court refused to hear the case.[38]

If, albeit indirectly, Marshall changed the name of his team from Braves to Redskins to honor Dietz, then the franchise's name did not violate the Lanham Act. The key word

[37] Richard Leiby, "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee," *Washington Post*, 6 November 1994.

[38] Warren Richey, "Washington Redskins Can Keep Team Name: Supreme Court Refuses Native Americans' Suit," *Christian Science Monitor* 16 November 2009. http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2009/1116/p02s07-usju.html>. [accessed 13 May 2013].

in the football team's argument was "honor." The various owners of the franchise through the years have declared that the Redskins name honors American Indians rather than disparages them, and furthermore, the nickname is protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.[39]

Dietz only lasted a few seasons as the coach of the Redskins, but his legacy continues. The various owners of the Redskins have refused to change the team's name and logo. However, several modifications were made through the years to soften the racist imagery. The lyrics of the team's fight song, "Hail to the Redskins," underwent several changes. The words, "Scalp 'em, swamp 'em, we will, Take 'um big score, Read 'um, weep 'um, touchdown, We want heap more," were replaced. "Beat 'em" took the place of "scalp 'em," and "Touchdown let the points soar fight on, fight on 'til you have won" replaced the rest. However, the line "braves on the warpath" remains.[40]

The mascot issue continued to resurface over the years. In a *New York Times* article published in 1971 on mascots, Bill Yellowknife, a student in the American Indian Studies Program at

[39] Leiby, "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee," 2.

[40] "The Fight Song: Hail to the Redskins History," <http://www.thehogs.net/History/fightSong.php>. 2013. [accessed 25 July 2013].

Dartmouth College, chided the administration at his school for using a Native American as a mascot.[41] Yellowknife stated,

> Too many people in this country still think of Indians as savages doing war dances and wearing feathered headdresses and having two-word vocabularies: 'How and Ugh.' People in sports are as responsible as anybody for perpetrating these illusions. I've often wondered to myself if the people who owned these teams ever stopped to think what goes through the mind of a 10 year old Indian kid on a reservation in North Dakota when he picks up a sports page and reads a headline, 'Redskins Scalp Chiefs.'[42]

In the same article, another member of Yellowknife's group was asked if Indian children looked up to and identified with athletes in the United States. That person responded,

> that he didn't think so for two reasons, first, there are very few of their own kind in sports, a Sonny Sixkiller, a Jim Plunkett, a Johnny Bench, maybe, and that's about it, and second, how can you expect an Indian kid to identify with sports people when he can't identify with his own.[43]

Several newspapers from around the country took steps to eliminate the use of Redskins in articles pertaining to the Washington NFL franchise. The editor of the *Kansas City Star* stated, "I see no compelling reason for any publisher to reprint

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[41] Dartmouth has never had an "official" mascot. Until 1974, their teams went by the Indians, a nickname that probably originated with sports journalists. Due to protest by the school's American Indian population the Indian nickname was banned.

[42] Marty Ralbovsky, "An Indian Affair: American Indian Students Concerned About Nicknames, Mascots in Sports," *The New York Times*, 14 November 1971, 59.

[43] Ibid.

an egregiously offensive term as a casual matter of course."[44] Editors of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* banned the use of all Native team names and mascots in 1994. *The Oregonian*, the *St. Cloud* (Minnesota) *Times*, the *Journal Star* in Lincoln, Nebraska and the *Portland Press Herald* in Maine took similar positions.[45]

Individual journalists also declined to use Redskins in their articles in various publications. Peter King, who covers the NFL for *Sports Illustrated* and runs the SI.com Monday Morning Quarterback Internet site, confirmed that he would no long use the term in his writing for the magazine or online. King wrote

> I've decided to stop using the Washington team nickname. It's a name you won't see me use anymore. The simple reason is that for the last two or three years, I've been uneasy when I sat down to write about the team and had to use the nickname. In some stories I've tried to use it sparingly. But this year, I decided to stop entirely because it offends too many people, and I don't want to add to the offensiveness. Some people, and some Native American organizations—such as the highly respected American Indian Movement—think the nickname is a slur. Obviously, the team feels it isn't a slur, and there are several prominent Native American leaders who agree. But I can do my job without using it, and I will.[46]

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[44] Derek Donovan, "Star Policy on Washington's NFL team name," *The Kansas City Star*, 24 September 2012.

[45] Kathleen Rutledge, "Nebraska newspaper will no longer call D.C. football team 'Redskins'," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 28 January 2003.

[46] Sarah Kogod, "Peter King will no longer use 'Redskins' on Monday Morning Quarterback," http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/dc-sports-bog/wp/2013/09/06/peter-king-will-no-longer-use-redskins-on-mmqb/. 6 September 2013 [accessed 16 September 2013].

Christine Brennan, a writer for *USA TODAY* sports, decided to stop using the term in 2013 as well. Brennan, who between 1985 and 1987 was the Washington NFL team's beat writer for the *Washington Post*, claimed to have used the word over "10,000 times." Brennan wrote that, whether people would admit it or not, the word was racist. She pointed out that an expansion team could not enter the NFL using the word as a nickname in 2013. Brennan was hopeful that someday that the team would have a new nickname.[47]

The outcry against the nickname started after the 2012 football season. In the spring of 2013, the Redskins mascot became a national headline when several groups, other than the numerous Native American entities, called for the team to change its name and mascot. In June 2013, ten members of the United States Congress signed a letter asking the Washington football club to rename the team. One of the signers of the letter, United States Representative Tom Cole (R-Oklahoma), a member of the Chickasaw Nation, called the name equivalent to the "Washington N-words" and that it "diminishes feelings of

[47] Christine Brennan, "It's time I stopped calling team Redskins," http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2013/09/11/christine-brennan-washington-nfl-team/2802075/. 12 September 2013 [accessed 16 September 2013].

community and worth among the Native American tribes."[48] In response, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell defended the name by issuing a statement calling the term "a unifying force that stands for strength, courage, pride, and respect."[49]

The Commissioner of the NFL may support the name, but several former players of the Washington franchise believed it was time to change the name. Former Pro Bowl offensive lineman Tre' Johnson said, ""It's an ethnically insensitive moniker that offends an entire race of displaced people. That should be enough to change it.'"[50] Two Hall of Fame members who played for Washington also stated that the team should consider changing its name. Art Monk and Darrell Green both made statements supporting a name change. Monk told WTOP Radio in Washington, D.C., "'If Native Americans feel like Redskins or the Chiefs or (another) name is offensive to them, then who are we to say to them 'No, it's not?'" Green also told the radio station, "'It deserves and warrants conversation because somebody is saying 'Hey, this offends me.'"[51] Several days after the radio station interviews, Green clarified his statement. He told another

[48] Dave Zirin, "Enough," www.grantland.com. 13 June 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] "Monk, Green: Mull name change," www.ESPN.com. 23 July 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

radio station, "'In no way do I want to see the Redskins change their name. So that just makes that clear. And I will speak for Art, there's no way he wants it, and I guarantee he didn't say it, and I know I didn't say it.'"[52]

The team's owner, Daniel Snyder, has repeatedly stated that he will never change the name. A poll conducted in 2013 showed widespread support for the Redskins name. The Associated Press-GFK poll showed that the team's name enjoyed overwhelming support nationally. The survey found that four in five Americans did not think Washington should change its name. The percentage of Americans who approved of the name was 79 percent, while 11 percent thought it should be changed, 8 percent were not sure, and 2 percent did not answer.[53]

David Grosso, a member of the Washington, D.C. city council, submitted a resolution that called for the Redskins to change their name to Redtails, in honor of the Tuskegee Airman, a pioneering group of African-American pilots who served in World War II.[54] Most pundits remain convinced that the team will not change its name. Robert Passikoff, President of Brand Keys, a research firm that measures consumer attitudes toward sports

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[52] "Actually, Darrell Green Doesn't Want the Redskins to Change their Name," www.deadspin.com. 26 July 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

[53] Dan Graziano, "Owner: Redskins will 'never' change," www.espn.com. 10 May 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

[54] Ibid.

teams and athletes, wrote that a change is unlikely because of strong fan loyalty built on history and tradition. According to Brand Keys, the Washington team is the NFL's third most valuable franchise at $1.6 billion, and ranks thirteenth out of the league's thirty-two clubs in a sports loyalty index. Passikoff noted that is only slightly above average, but the team ranked seventh in the "history and tradition" category component, equaling franchises like the Green Bay Packers, the Dallas Cowboys, and the Chicago Bears.[55]

According to Michael Tomasky, a special correspondent for *Newsweek*/the Daily Beast, the nickname "Redskins"

> lasts only because white people don't know it's offensive and don't particularly care to stop and think about how and why it might be. They don't know that it refers to the scalps (and skulls and corpses) of Native Americans, butchered by bounty hunters and delivered by the wagon-full to collect their payments from local authorities who'd authorized the kills. This recent poll that 79 percent of Americans aren't bothered by the team's name doesn't impress me. All it means is that 79 percent of Americans need a history lesson.[56]

Tomasky appealed to Redskins owner Daniel Snyder to change the team's name out of common decency and no longer honor the owner

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[55] Tom Van Riper, "Why the Washington Redskins will Never Change Their Name," www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanriper/2013/06/14/why-the-washington-redskins-will-never-change-their-name/. 14 June 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

[56] Michael Tomasky, "Racist Redskins," < http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/06/01/the-racist-redskins.html>. 1 June 2013 [accessed 7 August 2013].

who originally gave the club the Redskins name, George Preston Marshall, a renowned racist.[57] In the article, Tomasky also noted that Snyder is Jewish, and wondered if he would like a NFL franchise named after various Jewish stereotypes.[58]

While the Indian and the mascot issue attributed to Dietz extended from the 1930s until the second decade of the twenty-first century, the first Native American football players who did not play for the boarding schools emerged and the media took notice. The most notable American Indian player during the 1940s era was "Indian" Jack Jacobs. Jacobs came to the University of Oklahoma from Holdenville, Oklahoma. Jacobs, a member of the Creek tribe, played quarterback and punted for the Sooners from 1939 to 1941. At the professional level, Jacobs played for the Cleveland Rams, the Washington Redskins, the Green Bay Packers, and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in the Canadian Football League.[59]

The media gave Jacobs the nickname "Indian Jack" when he gained prominence in college and it stuck with him throughout his life. The *Street & Smith's 1940 Football Yearbook's* profile

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[57] As the owner of the Redskins, Marshall had the team's band play "Dixie" before the National Anthem. He was also the last owner to integrate his team with African Americans.

[58] Tomasky, "Racist Redskins."

[59] Joseph B. Oxendine, *American Indian Sports Heritage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 275.

of Jacobs, stated, "palefaces took land from his forefathers, and winning it back, yard by yard, for the Oklahoma team is Jack Jacobs."[60] That description exemplified the continued racial stereotypes.

Some observers of the University of Oklahoma football program described Jacobs as the "best natural athlete" ever on campus. Claude Arnold, who played for the Sooners in 1942, and then again in 1948-50, declared Jacobs the greatest punter of all-time. Darrell Royal, who played at OU from 1946-49 and later coached the University of Texas Longhorns, stated that, "Indian Jack Jacobs was my hero." According to Royal, when he attended Oklahoma games as a youth he would watch Jacobs warm up punting the ball before the game. When asked what made Jacobs special, Royal replied, "'He would kick the hell out of the ball.'"[61]

In the NFL, Jacobs's talents at quarterback were never fully appreciated--an unfortunate reality for many minority quarterbacks. When brief stops with the Cleveland Rams, Washington Redskins, and Green Bay Packers did not work out the Winnipeg Blue Bombers signed Jacobs for $6,000, a sum comparable

[60] Olin Buchanan, "Oklahoma's Bradford Serves as Role Model," <collegefootball.rivals.com/contentasp?CID=860229> [accessed 7 October 2011].

[61] Claude Arnold served in the military during World War II, which is why his enrollment at OU was split between 1942 to 1948. History of Oklahoma Football, DVD, 2010.

to what players in the NFL were making at the time.[62] For decades, the CFL has been a refuge for minorities who never had a chance to play quarterback in the NFL. Because of the sometimes harsh winter conditions in Canada, a more athletic quarterback who could run with the ball, as well as pass was in demand. Whereas, in the NFL, a quarterback's arm strength became a more desired attribute.[63]

Jacobs's time with the Cleveland Rams was cut short when he joined the United States Army in 1942. The *Reading* [Pennsylvania] *Eagle* reported, "the career of probably the greatest Indian football player since Jim Thorpe was ended for the war's duration." Rip Norbwen, the author of the article, called Jacobs a "passing, punting fool," but more egregious would be using the word "Injun" to describe the former star of the Oklahoma Sooners.[64]

While Norbwen's words constituted stereotyping at its worst, Jacobs also participated in the process. Jacobs told Norbwen, "'When I was in college I always figured I'd play pro ball with the Washington Redskins. That would be a natural-an

[62] Bob Irving, "Jacobs: The House that Jack Built," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 12 September 2008, http://www.cfl.ca/article/jacobs-the-house-jack-built.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Rip Norbwen, "Pro Football Loses Great Indian Star as Jack Jacobs Joins Army," *Reading* [Pennsylvania] *Eagle*, 14 November 1942, 21.

Indian playing with the Redskins, wouldn't it?'"[65] Jacobs eventually played for the Redskins in 1946, but the match did not prove successful.

According to Bob Irving of the *Winnipeg Tribune*, Jacobs's strong arm and pinpoint accuracy changed Canadian football.[66] Jacobs played for four years in the CFL before retiring in 1954. His athletic play attracted fans. So many came to see him play that the city tore down the old, dilapidated Osborne Stadium and replaced it with a new facility, which is present-day Winnipeg Stadium.[67]

Not only was Jacobs a masterful quarterback in Canada, but he also played defense and punted. Jack Wells, a Winnipeg-based radio and television personality, reminisced, "'Oh, how he could hit,'" when questioned about Jacobs's toughness. Jacobs also proved his mettle in other sports as one summer he captured the Manitoba Amateur golf championship.[68] While this might have

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[65] Ibid.

[66] The field size is drastically larger in the Canadian version of the game. The field is 110 yards long, plus 2 20 yard end zones, and the width from sideline to sideline is 65 yards. In the American game, the field is 100 yards long, has 2 10-yard end zones, and is 53.5 yards from sideline to sideline. The bigger field allowed Jacobs to use his strong leg in the kicking and punting game. Field statistics from, http://www.13thman.com/cflvsnfl.html. [accessed 12 April 2012].

[67] Irving, "Jacobs: The House that Jack Built."

[68] Trent Frayne, "Indian Jack's Mark a Passing Footnote," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 2 November 1987.

sparked comparisons to Jim Thorpe in the United States, there was no such comparison among the Canadian press corps. Perhaps, this was due to the Canadian press treating indigenous people with more respect than their United States' counterparts.

Jacobs's desire to play for the Washington Redskins to exhibit his ethnicity weakens the notion that the media was solely responsible for stereotypes surrounding American Indian football players. Dietz faced a similar decision when he promoted his career as a coach and potential movie star. Dietz and Jacobs would not be the last to promote their ethnicity to reap notoriety or financial rewards.

The careers of Albert Exendine, Gus Welch, and Lone Star Dietz all followed a similar career trajectory. They played football at Carlisle and subsequently coached at comparable institutions throughout the United States. These men endured stereotypes as players and coaches. However, both Welch and Dietz used those stereotypes to pursue their own agendas. Jack Jacobs would do the same in his desire to play for the Washington Redskins. The era of the 1930s and 1940s showed that American Indians involved in football could ascend to positions of power; however, fewer individuals played the game. The media still used stereotypes in many of their descriptions of these men, but the American Indians used stereotypes for their own gain. This would only be the beginning of that practice.

CHAPTER V

BECOMING THE STEREOTYPE

> The playground at Sam Houston Elementary School was next door to Midland Memorial Stadium, where the great Wahoo McDaniel played. He was our hero. The best player on the high school team ... we spent our Friday nights cheering for Wahoo and his teammates at the stadium.
>
> Former United States President George W. Bush in his autobiography *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House*[1]

Throughout the 1930s and 40s, the media continued to use the standard stereotypes to describe the American Indian athletes who participated in football, whether as players or coaches. However, as the words and actions of Lone Star Dietz, Gus Welch, and Jack Jacobs indicated, the American Indian also understood how to manipulate the stereotypes to their advantage. While the number of noteworthy American Indian football players declined after the closure of Carlisle and the reassignment of the boarding schools' mission, several prominent athletes with Native American ancestry stood out after the 1950s. Several of

[1] George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House* (New York: William Morrow, 1999), 16.

these players knew how to manipulate the stereotypes to their advantage, and subsequently the media turned the stereotypes around to the player's disadvantage.

Edward McDaniel was one such American Indian football player. Ed "Wahoo" McDaniel became a standout on the football field at Midland, Texas High School, the University of Oklahoma, in the American Football League, and then the National Football League. McDaniel later reached greater prominence as "Chief" Wahoo McDaniel in various wrestling organizations from the 1960s through the early 1990s. McDaniel's notoriety came through his controversial actions off the gridiron rather than on it. He became famous because of his Native American heritage and his rebellious nature rather than his athletic ability. Years after he retired from football and wrestling, people in all walks of life have vivid memories of Wahoo McDaniel.[1]

Growing up in Midland, another President Bush, George W.'s father, George Herbert Walker Bush, coached McDaniel in Protect Our Nation's Youth (PONY) League baseball in the early 1950s. "'I remember Wahoo McDaniel well,'" said the 41st President, "'He was a good kid and a pretty fair baseball player, too. He had his ups and downs, but I'll always remember him as a wonderful

[1] Don Yaeger, "Q&A: George W. Bush," *Sports Illustrated*, 29 September 2003, < http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1029913/5/index.htm>. [accessed 10 March 2013].

kid who captured the imagination of West Texas in the 1950s. He was idolized and worshipped by everyone who knew him.'"[2]

McDaniel's associated with elite families in his early years, some of which gave credence to his already legendary life and career, first on the gridiron and then later in professional wrestling. However, much of McDaniel's life was not spent with the country's elite, but rather on the periphery as an outsider and often as a rebel, using stereotypes to his financial advantage. Wahoo's portrayal in the media took place over four distinct periods: his high school and collegiate career, his time spent in the American Football League and the National Football League, his pro wrestling career, and the last years of his life.

Edward McDaniel was born on June 19, 1938, in the small Louisiana town of Bernice. His father, Hugh was one-sixteenth Choctaw Indian and one-sixteenth Chickasaw Indian; his mother was of German heritage. Young Ed received the moniker "Wahoo" from his father, as he too was known by that nickname.[3] During the younger McDaniel's early years, the family moved frequently. Wahoo, Sr. worked as an oil field welding contractor.

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[2] Mike Shropshire, "Wahoo McDaniel," http://www.forttours.com/pages/wahoo.asp. (accessed 17 November 2009).

[3] The nickname "wahoo" for some is considered a racial slur. In the case of the McDaniel family, the elder McDaniel passed the name down to his son. It is derived from a supposed American Indian war cry.

Eventually the McDaniel family settled in the booming West Texas oil town of Midland.[4]

Midland was the place where Wahoo first established his legendary athletic prowess. On the football field, he excelled on both offense and defense, as well as at punter. Like Jim Thorpe before him, McDaniel also excelled in track and field. Wahoo stated, "'I could run and jump, finished second in the state in the shot put with a toss of 58-feet plus, and third in the discus. I never met [Jim] Thorpe, but his times and distances in the 1912 Olympics were scarcely better than mine in high school.'" A fear of heights kept McDaniel away from the pole vault, and precluded him from becoming a decathlete like Thorpe.[5]

In foreshadowing his run-ins with the authorities later in his life, McDaniel found trouble both in the classroom and outside of it; many observers saw a bleak future for him without athletics. A baseball scholarship seemed unattainable when the high school baseball coach suspended him for skipping practice during his senior year. The coach later reinstated McDaniel. In the next game, Wahoo entered the contest late, hit the game-winning home run, and after running around the bases, he gave the coach the middle finger. McDaniel never put on a baseball

[4] Shropshire, http://www.forttours.com/pages/wahoo.asp.

[5] Ibid.

uniform again.[6] The football field became Wahoo's savior and it was there that he thrived.

While attending Midland High School, he earned All-American honors as a senior and was voted all-state his sophomore and junior seasons while playing fullback and other positions. In baseball, he was an all-state catcher, leading the state of Texas in home runs with fourteen his senior year. Several professional baseball teams were interested in him.[7] Midland High School's 'M' club named McDaniel "Outstanding Athlete" upon his graduation in 1956. The high school's athletic director Audrey Gill noted that, "'McDaniel brought more recognition to Midland High School than any athlete in the school's history.'" The article, which *The Oklahoman* published, misidentified McDaniel as a Cherokee.[8]

Wahoo McDaniel's talents as a collegiate football player were in demand as schools including the University of Michigan, Rice University, Baylor University, Texas A&M University, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Texas all offered the burly high school star a scholarship to play football. A

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[6] Mike Shropshire, *Runnin with the Big Dogs: The Long, Twisted History of the Texas-OU Rivalry* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 52.

[7] Mike Mooneyham, "Mat Legend Wahoo McDaniel Dies," http://www.mikemooneyham.com/2002/04/20/mat-legend-wahoo.meda.... (accessed 2 July 2011).

[8] "Midland Honors OU-Bound Star," *The Oklahoman* 12 May 1956, 36.

recruiting war developed between Texas A&M University coached by Paul "Bear" Bryant and their neighbors across the Red River, the University of Oklahoma, coached by Charles "Bud" Wilkinson. The Oklahoma Sooners eventually won the services of McDaniel. The Sooners were in the midst of putting together one of the greatest winning streaks in sports history, winning forty-seven straight games.

After his freshman year at Oklahoma, McDaniel started for the team in 1957, 1958, and 1959 at end, guard, and punter.[9] *The Oklahoman's* coverage of McDaniel rarely mentioned his Indian heritage. Game coverage showed no obvious racial bias. Depending on McDaniel's play that particular Saturday, the paper either wrote about the player in a positive or negative light.

One of the few feature articles *The Oklahoman* ran on McDaniel involved his run from Norman to Chickasha. The newspaper posited that Wahoo had started a trend of running and many other students had taken it up.[10] McDaniel stated,

> I'd been running 10 miles a day, training for the OU wrestling team and I accepted a challenge from some people in the athletic dorm. The bet was that I could run from the front steps of the dorm in Norman to the city limits of Chickasha, without stopping. So I put on shorts and a T-shirt and took off right at noon. They followed me in a car to make sure I didn't stop.

[9] At the time freshman were not allowed to play varsity athletics in college.

[10] Associated Press, "Wahoo Starts Marathon Fad," *The Oklahoman* 14 February 1959, 28.

> Uphill. Downhill. God, it was brutal. But finally I reached the top of a hill and below, there was Chickasha. Thirty-six miles in exactly six hours flat. I collected $185 for that. And later, after word of that Chickasha stunt got around, I started running shorter distances, from Norman to Oklahoma City, just 20 miles, against fraternity relay teams. I'd given them a half-mile head start. Bud didn't like the long haul running, either.[11]

While many people questioned McDaniel's saneness, they definitely examined it after another stunt, drinking motor oil. He offered a grim smile to the reporter over the incident,

> That oil made me sick. I finished about half the quart and for months afterward, every time I'd sweat, I could feel the stuff oozing out and I smelled like an old pickup truck. Remember this. In those days, I'd do anything on a bet. Eat a gallon can of jalapeno peppers. It didn't matter.[12]

His behavior made life miserable for his coaches, as he would skip classes and drink alcohol in large quantities, especially after games, often finding trouble with the local authorities in Norman. In one incident, McDaniel heaved the Coke machine from a fifth floor dorm window because it took his money.[13]

These incidents did not endear him to many people, especially members of the coaching staff. While Wilkinson and McDaniel were never close, the head coach's patience was exhausted on more than one occasion. "'He was kind of distant, and after some newspaper reported that I was drinking in a

[11] Shropshire, http://www.forttours.com/pages/wahoo.asp.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

private club, he kicked me off the team. Then Bud allowed the team to vote me back,'" said McDaniel. Wilkinson believed in ability and tolerated McDaniel's antics, much to the dismay of several of his teammates. A few described him as overrated and a troublemaker.[14]

Controversy followed McDaniel. In 1956, the Sooner football squad integrated when Prentice Gautt, a high school running back from Oklahoma City, joined the team.[15] According to Jim Dent, the author *The Undefeated: The Oklahoma Sooners and the Greatest Winning Streak in College Football*, Gautt overheard McDaniel uttering racial slurs. When a teammate confronted McDaniel and chastised him, he promised to make amends by taking Gautt to the movies and apologizing. McDaniel also suffered verbal abuse, including when one of his professors made the comment to him "that the only good Indian is a dead Indian."[16]

With the addition of Gautt, the local media focused on the novelty of integration, rather than on McDaniel. Also, an American Indian playing football in Oklahoma did not create much of a stir as an African American playing college football in a

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[14] Jim Dent, *The Undefeated: The Oklahoma Sooners and the Greatest Winning Streak in College Football* (New York: Thomas Dunn Books/St Martin's Press, 2001), 232.

[15] Gautt was the first African American to integrate Oklahoma high school football as well.

[16] Dent, *The Undefeated*, 200-201.

state that was still segregated. McDaniel was not the lone American Indian on the team, Jerry Thompson, a Choctaw Indian from Ada, Oklahoma, also played for the Sooners.[17]

McDaniel's controversial time at the University of Oklahoma coincided with the team's first loss in forty-seven games and a decline in national prominence. Jim Dent, among others, attributed this to McDaniel's attitude and lack of discipline. However, he was just one of the many personnel problems within the football program, which included Joe Don Looney. McDaniel later found it troubling that the football historians confused his exploits with those of the "Supernatural Sooner," Looney.[18] "'I was loonier than Looney on his craziest day,'" declared McDaniel.[19]

McDaniel's college career at Oklahoma ended and it was time to enter professional football. However, no teams in the

[17] Furthermore, Kirk Kickingbird, a Cherokee-Ojibway, portrayed the Sooners mascot "Little Red," a practice the university discontinued in the early 1970s. Harold Keith, *47 Straight: The Wilkinson Era at Oklahoma* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 269.

[18] Joe Don Looney was quite the character in the early 1960s. He started college at the University of Texas, but received 4 F's and 1 D and had to drop out. He enrolled at Texas Christian University and was kicked out which led him to junior college. From there he went to the University of Oklahoma and became an All-American, but his exploits there are legendary, one of which was punching an assistant coach and getting kicked off the team. Jack Murphy, "Looney is Playing a New Tune," http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1082669/. 4 August 1969 [accessed 15 June 2010].

[19] Shropshire, http://www.forttours.com/pages/wahoo.asp.

NFL drafted him in 1960. McDaniel did go to training camp as a free agent with the Dallas Cowboys. Due to an injury, he did not make the team. McDaniel soon found his way into the upstart American Football League, a burgeoning rival professional league. After a short stint with the Los Angeles Chargers, he made the roster of the Houston Oilers as a hard-hitting linebacker for the 1960 season. The Oilers traded him to the Denver Broncos the next year. He played in Denver for the next three years.[20]

It was not until he joined the New York Jets in 1964 that McDaniel enjoyed his greatest success on the gridiron, in the press, and among the fans. The *New York Times* introduced McDaniel in a profile in September 1964. *Sports Illustrated* soon followed, and the linebacker rose from obscurity to national attention. The headline in the *New York Times* proclaimed "Wahoo Hopes to Put Indian Sign on Big Town." In the article, McDaniel talked about finally making it to the so-called "big time" by coming to New York. He hoped to parlay his notoriety on the football field into lucrative bookings as a professional wrestler. McDaniel made it known that he would use his heritage to capitalize on opportunities in New York. "'There's an incentive being an Indian, part of a people that's

[20] McDaniel's football statistics can be found at: http://www.databasefootball.com/players/playerpage.htm?ilkid=MCDANWAH01.

always been pushed around,'" he said. "'The Choctaws came from Georgia and the settlers pushed them out to Oklahoma, on an acre-for-acre deal, and then they took most of the Oklahoma land.'" He said that watching American Indians going hungry around the country drove him to be successful. Besides the headline, the *New York Times* story contained few racist overtones while highlighting McDaniel's ancestry.[21]

The New York fans supported McDaniel vociferously in his first month with the Jets, and *Sports Illustrated* ran a story profiling his popularity, which began during the introductions at Shea Stadium before the first game of the season. Even before the public address announcer finished with his name, the crowd of fifty thousand chanted in unison: "Wahoo! Wahoo! Wahoo!" Many observers believed that McDaniel replaced New York Giants icon Sam Huff as New York City's favorite linebacker. Denver Broncos head coach Jack Faulkner, who traded McDaniel to the Jets, said at the time, "'I told Wahoo if he went to New York and did a good job he could make a fortune. He has a great sense of timing both on the field and off.'" By the second game, the Jets had given McDaniel a jersey with "Wahoo" stitched across the back.[22]

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[21] Robert Lipsyte, "Wahoo Hopes to Put Indian Sign on Big Town," *New York Times*, 27 September 1964, S3.

[22] Edwin Shrake, "Wahoo! Wahoo! Wahoo!," *Sports Illustrated* 26 October 1964.

In the same *Sports Illustrated* article, the author wrote several stereotypical comments about McDaniel. Describing McDaniel's average physical ability, but tremendous heart, Edwin Shrake penned the following: "Undoubtedly, the New York Jets own better athletes than Ed McDaniel, a 240-pound Choctaw-Chickasha Indian who plays middle linebacker as if it were the last wild charge at the Little Big Horn." Shrake followed up with a comment about McDaniel's detractors putting him "in the mood to attack a wagon train." This racial imagery, so common during the earlier era of the boarding schools, exploited Wahoo McDaniel's heritage.[23]

Shrake's writing was not the only questionable part of the article. Several people quoted within the article made racist remarks. Denver Bronco Coach Jack Faulkner commented on McDaniel's penchant for finding trouble by saying, "'He was a wild Indian.'" Cowboys' trainer, Clint Huoy also remarked that Wahoo had an "'Indian stoicism toward pain.'"[24]

The *Sports Illustrated* article brought out two underlying issues about McDaniel. Several observers believed that his popularity did not equal his on-the-field performance. The

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http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1076535/index.htm. [accessed 22 January 2009].

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

author claimed the cheers for McDaniel were the fans needing a replacement for Sam Huff. Shrake quoted McDaniel, "'This place isn't big enough for me and Huff. It's lucky for him he moved.'" After the initial outrage in the press, McDaniel followed by being somewhat contrite and saying, "'When I said that about Huff, it was a rib. I sure didn't mean to be sarcastic. But everybody picked it up, and that was fine, too. Right away they knew I was out there.'"[25] While the press interpreted the comments as McDaniel disrespecting Huff, McDaniel used it as a way to make himself more well-known. Additionally, McDaniel was an aspiring professional wrestler. Partaking in the pseudo-sport during football's offseason, often entailed promoting one's self. The second issue was money. *Sports Illustrated* highlighted McDaniel's penchant for causing trouble when it came to money. In January 1965, the *New York Times* examined his finances following McDaniel's first professional wrestling match at Madison Square Garden. The article contained the usual hyperbole surrounding a professional wrestling, but then strayed into football when McDaniel mentioned that he wanted an increase in his salary from the Jets.[26]

[25] Ibid.

[26] Arthur Flink, "Wahoo Grunt-and-Groan Success," *New York* Times, 26 January 1965, 46.

The *New York Times* ran a story on March 17, 1965, detailing Wahoo's contract demands with the headline "Wahoo on Warpath for Wampum." In addition to the racist nature of the headline, the opening paragraph mentioned McDaniel's occupation as a wrestler before discussing him as a football player. The reporter quoted McDaniel as saying that eight to ten teammates wanted 30 percent raises. McDaniel stated that the Jets would have to make it "worth his while" to continue playing football. "'Don't get me wrong,'" he said. "'I want to play [football], if I can afford it. I figure I need about a 60 percent raise so I don't lose money when I stop wrestling to go to training camp.'" McDaniel estimated that if he quit football and concentrated on wrestling full-time he might be able to defeat the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF) champion Bruno Sammartino. Sammartino earned around $125,000 in 1964. In the end, the article portrayed McDaniel as greedy, even though he was the leading draw for the Jets during the 1964 season.[27]

Another story in the *New York Times* cited McDaniel's contract dispute with the Jets' management. In this article, which featured the linebacker/wrestler promoting a match at Madison Square Garden, McDaniel reiterated that he needed a

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[27] William N. Wallace, "Wahoo on Warpath for Wampum," *New York Times*, 17 March 1965, 57.

significant raise from the Jets to make it desirable to set aside professional wrestling. He stated, "'I've made $20,000 since the football season ended. How can I give this up to make less money?'" He restated that he enjoyed football and that he was optimistic that terms of a new contract could be reached before the season began.[28]

As McDaniel's notoriety grew, the national press focused on him more. *Sport* magazine profiled the Jets' linebacker for its May 1965 issue. The story revolved around McDaniel being a good but not great linebacker and as a fan attraction. The author, Jerry Izenberg, entitled the article "The Making of a Pro Football Hero," and he wrote a more positive story than the earlier articles in the *New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated.* Izenberg emphasized McDaniel's achievements on the field and in the ring without referring to his race. Izenberg drew out the "real" McDaniel. He told the reporter of his desire to be successful. Commenting on his move from Denver to New York, McDaniel stated, "'If you make it in Denver, well, then you only make it in Denver. If you make it here [New York City], then they know about you everywhere.'" The article went on to state

[28] "Curfew Pins Wahoo, But He Gets in Plug for More Jet Pay," *New York Times*, 18 May 1965, 48.

that while he was neither the highest paid player on the team nor the best player, he undoubtedly was the most popular.[29]

When training camp opened in mid-July 1965, McDaniel was absent. The Jets and their starting linebacker were still far apart on his contract and he threatened to sit out the season and continue wrestling. However, by the first week in August the two sides reached an agreement that, according to a Jets spokesman, "'McDaniel was very satisfied with.'" Neither the team nor McDaniel disclosed the terms of his contract, so it was not known if he received the amount he requested.[30]

The Jets needed to sign McDaniel. His popularity with the fans proved unmatched and the team had very few superstars. By the end of the 1964 season, the public address announcer would ask the crowd after a defensive play "tackle by who?" with the crowd shouting back "tackle by WAHOO that's who!"[31]

The 1965 season changed both the Jets and McDaniel. The arrival of rookie quarterback Joe Namath from the University of Alabama diminished McDaniel's value as a promotional tool. Namath's $400,000 rookie contract provided a story for the press in light of McDaniel's salary demands. McDaniel responded to

[29] Jerry Izenberg, "The Making of a Pro Football Hero," *Sport* May 1965, 52-55.

[30] "McDaniel, Jets' Linebacker, Finally Signs 1965 Contract," *New York Times*, 1 August 1965, S3.

[31] Ibid., S3.

the press queries about his relationship with Namath by saying, "'I don't worry about that. I've been playing better football this year than last year-that's what I worry about. You play good football you get the fans. More people know me now. People still watch me.'" The reporter followed up by asking the linebacker if the Jets made an effort to limit his publicity, to which McDaniel responded, "'I wonder.'"[32]

The relationship between Namath and McDaniel was complicated. In training camp, McDaniel taunted the rookie quarterback repeatedly. While quarterbacks wore the "no-touch" red jersey during scrimmages, McDaniel ignored the warning when Namath was on the field. Jets linebacker Larry Grantham said, "'Wahoo used to give Joe a hard time in practice.'" McDaniel's harsh treatment of Namath extended beyond scrimmages, as Wahoo once jumped the rookie from behind when the team was running laps. Apparently, the hard feelings towards Namath extended beyond McDaniel; none of the veterans rushed to help the quarterback.[33]

Years later, after McDaniel retired from football and professional wrestling, stories about his carousing and partying became legendary. One of the stories had him bar hopping with

[32] Associated Press, "Someone Presents Wahoo Big Trophy," *The Oklahoman*, 2 November 1965, 15.

[33] Mark Kriegel, *Namath: A Biography* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 156-161.

Namath and partaking in New York City's nightlife. This influence on Namath led the Jets to expose McDaniel in the 1966 AFL expansion draft held for the new teams joining the league.[34]

In 2004, Mark Kriegel, a sportswriter for the *New York Daily News*, penned an updated biography of Joe Namath. Kriegel wrote about several ugly incidents involving McDaniel and his interactions with African-American teammates. One incident involved a mock lynching of wide receiver Alphonso Lawson. Lawson denied the event took place but did say that McDaniel was one of several teammates who used racial epithets frequently and was one of the team's worst bigots. Unfortunately, the allegations of racism fit into a pattern McDaniel displayed at the University of Oklahoma.[35]

For his part, Namath made derogatory comments about McDaniel using the word "Injun." Kriegel wrote, that after the team drafted Namath nobody "gave a shit" about a wrestling Indian anymore. The biography cast McDaniel in an undesirable light in the same way the New York writers had earlier.[36]

Kriegel's book was not the first exploration of the Namath-McDaniel animosity. In Namath's 1969 autobiography

[34] When expansion teams come into the league, the existing teams make available players they do not want for the new team to draft. Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 161.

[36] Ibid., 129, 156-161.

(ghostwritten by Dick Schaap), the quarterback reacted negatively towards the linebacker. Namath called McDaniel inhuman and remarked that if the linebacker worked on his tackling as much as he talked he would have had a "helluva" a year. Namath's rookie year was the end to McDaniel's time in New York, as the Jets left the linebacker exposed in the supplemental draft.[37]

McDaniel reported to the Miami Dolphins for the 1966 season. *The Oklahoman* featured an article, written by the Associated Press, on McDaniel and his new team. The not-so-subtle headline stated "Wahoo After Jets' Scalps," and focused on McDaniel's desire to get even with his former team. The opening paragraph was filled with stereotypes such as "Chief Wahoo doesn't walk around with a tomahawk in each hand," and "there's little doubt that in his tepee every night he's thinking about making Shea Stadium another Little Big Horn." The imagery continued as the author proclaimed that the Jets stripped McDaniel of his headdress. *The Oklahoman* featured stereotypes that it had avoided when McDaniel played in Norman.[38]

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[37] Joe Willie Namath and Dick Schaap, *I Can't Wait Until Tomorrow…'Cause I Get Better Looking Every Day* (New York: Random House, 1969), 162.

[38] Associated Press, "Wahoo After Jets' Scalps," *The Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), 14 August 1966, 27.

McDaniel's football career took a downturn. He could not recapture the magic that he had with the fans in New York. McDaniel played for Miami during the 1966, 1967, and 1968 seasons with less than spectacular results. Alcohol started to play a significant role in his life. The May 3, 1969 edition of *The Oklahoman* reported that old "enemies" Joe Namath and McDaniel were both in court in Miami for alcohol-related incidents. The court fined Namath $50 for speeding, but found the Jets quarterback innocent of drunken driving. The court fined McDaniel $78.50 for destruction of private property. The court dismissed the charges of public drunkenness and resisting arrest.[39]

The charges came after the Dolphins suspended McDaniel for an altercation with a police officer in Denver. The Dolphins also fined McDaniel $600 for being arrested for public intoxication, resisting a police officer, and malicious destruction of property. It took an off-duty police officer, three Regis College students, and a bellman to subdue McDaniel.[40]

When the Dolphins suspended McDaniel, the *New York Times* picked up the story and William N. Wallace ran a headline that read "Tomahawk Falls on McDaniel, First in the Jets' New Breed."

[39] "Namath Fined $50," *The Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), 3 May 1969, 53.

[40] Associated Press, "Wahoo Jailed, Fined $600," *The Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), 27 October 1968, 38.

The headline used the common "tomahawk" stereotype, while highlighting his role as the first Jets superstar. Wallace delighted in McDaniel's fate as he saw the linebacker as nothing more than a sideshow attraction during his time in New York. The article noted that even though the Dolphins dropped the defensive star from their roster and he had retired, McDaniel left open the possibility that he would try to get on with another good team.[41] However, by July 1969, McDaniel made it official; he retired from professional football.[42] He then focused on his more lucrative career in wrestling.

McDaniel told the Charleston, South Carolina *Post and Courier* in a 1982 interview,

> I was just making so much money wrestling, I decided to quit football, I made $42,000 my last year in pro football. That was a big contract back then. I made 11 grand the first year I played and worked my way up to 42 grand. But it wasn't until later that they started paying the real big contracts.... at 29 years old, I was the oldest guy on the team [the Miami Dolphins]. After a while, football takes a toll on you and it ceases to be fun. You lose a lot of that 'gung-ho' college spirit.[43]

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[41] William N. Wallace, "Tomahawk Falls on McDaniel, First in Jets' New Breed," *New York Times*, 1 November 1968, 59.

[42] "Ed McDaniel," < http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1048057/bio>. 1990-2013 [accessed 26 May 2013].

[43] Mike Mooneyham, "Mat Legend Wahoo McDaniel Dies," http://www.mikemooneyham.com/2002/04/20/mat-legend-wahoo-mcdaniel-dies/. [accessed 2 July 2009].

Wahoo's career in wrestling lasted longer than his time in football. For over thirty years, McDaniel headlined wrestling cards around the country. According to rival wrestler "Superstar" Billy Graham, McDaniel always regretted not working more in the New York area.

> He was always bothered by the fact that he could never get into New York, that was because Chief Jay Strongbow was always there. [Strongbow was the resident "Indian" in the WWWF and later WWF, even though he was really an Italian named Joe Scarpa]. That always bothered him. I didn't have any answers for him, but I knew that pained him. That would have been a crowning achievement for his career back then.[44]

McDaniel was famous for his so-called tomahawk chops that he landed to his opponent's skull or chest. His most notable matches were "Indian strap matches," in which a leather strap is used to whip one's opposition.[45]

Ten years after *Sports Illustrated* and the *New York Times* first profiled McDaniel, Rich Koster of The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, wrote an article for *Pro Football Digest*, in which he highlighted McDaniel's football career. Besides mentioning his race in the first paragraph, Koster detailed McDaniel's career without any additional references to his race and did not employ any stereotypes. The article is an evenhanded and fair

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[44] Mike Mooneyham, "Tomahawk Chops and Sledgehammer Blows," http://www.mikemooneyham.com/2002/04/28/tomahawk-chops-and-sledgehammer-blows/ [accessed August 21, 2012].

[45] Ibid.

representation of McDaniel's career even though the author brought up the usual stories of McDaniel in trouble with his bosses and legal authorities. The article also discussed McDaniel's issues with money.[46]

Koster's tone was dramatically different from a decade earlier. Race relations in the United States had changed significantly by 1974. The civil rights movement forced not only the press to become more introspective, but also Americans in general. While racism remained an element of the social fabric of the United States, progress was being made.

Since the arrival of Wahoo McDaniel on the scene at the University of Oklahoma in 1956, many changes occurred in the lives of American Indians. The termination and relocation policies of the federal government ended and the rise of the American Indian Movement meant Native Americans took control of some aspects in their lives. They also thrust themselves into the American and international press by staging an occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, seizing the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Washington, D.C., and by staging a seventy-one day standoff with federal law enforcement authorities at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.[47]

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[46] Rich Koster, "Who was the First Miami Dolphin? Wahoo, that's Who," *Pro Football Digest*, November 1974, 77-78.

[47] See Joane Nagel's *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University

By the time McDaniel retired from football, Native Americans and their image in the press changed dramatically. The increasing importance and influence of television led to a changing definition of the press. Newspapers and magazines no longer used extreme imagery to capture the attention of the consumer as the viewer of television news programs could see the images for themselves. In addition, the consumer held the press accountable due to the changes in American society after the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal.[48]

Even though McDaniel fell from the mainstream media's attention after his retirement from football, the press occasionally recalled his football career. Whenever discussions turned to the early days of the American Football League, his name came up. As William C. Rhoden described the AFL's alumni in the *New York Times*: "They were castoffs, rejects, and has-beens." According to Rhoden, Wahoo McDaniel fit this profile perfectly.[49]

Press, 1997) and Hazel W. Hertberg's *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan Indian Movements* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997) for more on these important events in American Indian history.

[48] Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 127-152.

[49] William C. Rhoden, "Sports of the Times: Winding Paths to Glory," *New York Times*, 28 January 1995, section 1, 25.

From time to time, sportswriters such as Blackie Sherrod and Rich Crimini mentioned McDaniel in their columns. In 2000, Ric Russo of the *Orlando Sentinel* published the article "How Could You Forget Wahoo?" The article reviewed McDaniel's time with the Sooners, Jets, Dolphins, and as a professional wrestler. McDaniel spoke of the wrestling feuds that surrounded his race and the tribal headdress that he wore into the ring.[50] Inevitably, his opponent stole the ceremonial feathers and destroyed them and in the process enraged McDaniel. He admitted to exploiting his race to make a good living for himself and his family. The story also made McDaniel look human for the first time; it told of him raising a 10-year old son as a single parent and undergoing dialysis for kidney failure. While his ailment altered the lifestyle of most men, McDaniel played golf, fished, and hunted with his son.[51]

The next year, *Sports Illustrated* featured McDaniel in their annual "Where are they now" issue. Again, the article attempted to bring out the personal elements of his life with only a slight hint of the persona that the media and McDaniel had created earlier. Mike Shropshire wrote, "McDaniel was a figure larger than life and scarier than death. He was a pro

[50] As for his ceremonial headdress, McDaniel was part Choctaw and Chickasaw, neither of which used ceremonial headdresses.

[51] Ric Russo, "How Could You Forget Wahoo?," *The Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), 31 July 2000, 23.

linebacker and a world-renowned wrestler with a resume that included more than 1,000 matches and, by his estimation 2,000 to 3,000 stitches."[52]

Shropshire blended the human-interest aspect of McDaniel needing a kidney transplant with a retrospective that covered both his football and pro wrestling careers. Shropshire's article focused on the disparity between Wahoo McDaniel the person and the image he created. McDaniel's ultimate ambition was to lie beneath a gravestone inscribed "Proud Father and Role Model." Shropshire wrote that McDaniel's fans would insist on such remembrances as "Bigfoot With Cleats." "Paul Bunyan In A War Bonnet." Perhaps, they would even declare him "The Jim Thorpe of the Oil Patch."[53]

For his part, McDaniel embraced the stereotypes that the media created when he played football and used them to further his career in wrestling. Inside the ring, he became not only Wahoo McDaniel, but "Chief" Wahoo McDaniel, who wore a headdress made of dyed eagle feathers. He danced around the ring and used his signature move, the tomahawk chop. McDaniel's feuds and rivalries in the ring often involved his Indian heritage.

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[52] Mike Shropshire, "Wahoo McDaniel," *Sports Illustrated*, 2 July 2001.

[53] Ibid.

These images are the dilemma that haunted McDaniel until his death. The press labeled him with racial images and stereotypes, which McDaniel openly encouraged. The image of the renegade Indian stood in direct contradiction to the legacy that he wanted to pass on to his son. The feuds with football owners over money, the alcohol-related arrests, and the incident when he pistol whipped a baseball bat wielding fan (and accidentally shot fellow wrestler Dick Slater) coupled with the racist imagery presented by the media all threatened to jeopardize his legacy.[54]

Wahoo passed away from complications of renal failure and diabetes at the age of sixty-three on April 18, 2002. Newspapers from around the United States and Canada carried his obituary and other articles eulogized him. They all noted his American Indian heritage, his wild persona, and his penchant for getting in trouble. The *New York Times* wrote, "At a time when sensibilities about ethnicity were not as pronounced as they are today, McDaniel himself, news media representatives, teammates, and fans readily spoke about 'being on the warpath' or 'wanting more wampum' in contract disputes."[55] Florida sportswriter Dave Hyde rhetorically asked after McDaniel died, "Who wasn't he? An

[54] Ibid.

[55] Gerald Eskenazi, "Wahoo McDaniel, 63, a Wrestler and a Folk Hero for Fans of the Early Jets," *New York Times*, 25 April 2002, section B, column 2, 8.

American Indian, an expansion Dolphin, a legendary wrestler, an old-timer carouser, a full-time personality, an Oiler, a Bronco, a Jet, a guard, a linebacker, a kicker – he was the kind of figure we lost long ago on the sports pages: an original."[56]

McDaniel often played into the wild savage Indian stereotype, both willingly and unwillingly, throughout his football and professional wrestling careers. At a time when the country focused on racial imagery and stereotypes, McDaniel used those elements for his own advantage. McDaniel's notoriety spanned five decades, all the while interacting with two Presidents of the United States, football Hall of Famers, and professional wrestling legends. For their part, the media created an image based on stereotypical images that were allegedly dying out due to the civil rights movement. While a new era was to begin in the treatment of racial minorities, the media could not resist using stereotypes when it came to presenting Native Americans.

[56] Steve Johnson, "Hall of Heroes Class of 2009: Wahoo McDaniel," http://www.midatlanticgateway.com/hoh/inductees/2009_wahoo/2009... (accessed 2 July 2009).

CHAPTER VI

SONNY SIXKILLER'S FIGHT WITH RACIAL STEREOTYPES

He was born one morning 'neath the sun and the heat.
The proud grandson of an Indian chief.
The Cherokee tribe from which he came
Was the first to learn of his famous name.
Sonny Sixkiller.
He grew up strong into a proud young man.
Determined breed, he left his land.
Put down his arrows, hung up his shield.
And became a warrior on the football field.
Sonny Sixkiller.

"The Ballad of Sonny Sixkiller"
Thunder Tummy Records (BMI)

Unlike Wahoo McDaniel, who often used his race for personal gain, Sonny Sixkiller tried to avoid the Indian persona. Sixkiller, blessed with, or, at times, cursed with his unusual last name, became a target of the media not only for his play on the field, but also because of his race and surname. While McDaniel wanted to be an active participant in exploiting racial imagery and used every opportunity to exploit his race, Sixkiller wanted nothing more than to excel on the football field. However, even Sonny Sixkiller could not escape the stereotypes the media created for him.

Attitudes about portraying Indians as savages slowly changed, but those stereotypes had not totally disappeared by the early 1970s. Author Mary Ann Weston calls this period the "high-water mark" of native activism, including the takeover of Alcatraz Island, the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in Washington, D.C. in 1972, and the standoff at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973.[1] Sonny Sixkiller fought against stereotypes and racial imagery to help usher in a new era for American Indian football players.

Alex "Sonny" Sixkiller was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma on September 6, 1951. His family moved to Ashland, Oregon when he was a young boy. In Ashland, Sonny's father, Alex, worked as a mill-hand and his mother, Stella, held a job as a maid in a dormitory on the campus of Southern Oregon University. Sixkiller was Cherokee on both his father and mother's side. The family related that on their way to Oregon Sonny's mother wanted to stop at an Indian reservation because she was curious to see what one looked like. Stella was disappointed that there were no wigwams.[2]

Growing up in Ashland, Sixkiller never thought of himself as an Indian. He grew up in a middle-class family and

[1] Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 127.

[2] Roy Blount Jr., "The Magic Number is Sixkiller," *Sports Illustrated*, 4 October 1971, 34.

participated in the usual childhood activities. On the playground, Sixkiller played cowboys and Indians like other children, and, at times, he assumed the role of the cowboy. Sixkiller said, "'It was really strange. I mean, I was a cowboy sometimes. You have to switch off. That's how far away I was from the real thing-I didn't know I was an Indian then. I just thought I was a...little person.'"[3]

In high school, Sixkiller was an all-state quarterback, as well as an all-conference basketball player and baseball pitcher. Even though he was an honored prep athlete, Sixkiller's lack of height and weight (5'10" and 155) precluded many Division I-A scholarship offers. Eventually, the University of Washington Huskies offered Sixkiller a scholarship to play football.[4] After playing on the freshman team during the 1969 season, Sixkiller found himself battling for the starting position. As a freshman, he struggled with the wishbone offense, which the coaching staff dropped in favor of the pro-style offense for the 1970 season.[5]

Sixkiller became the starting quarterback at the beginning of his sophomore season in 1970. He played well in his first few games and the media flocked to the Washington football

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 35.

[5] Ibid., 34.

games. Sixkiller's athletic feats unfortunately did not take precedent to the media's fascination with his surname. "'I was dumbfounded,'" says Sixkiller, shaking his head. "'One guy asked if people gave me any trouble over my name—like I'm supposed to get mad and stab 'em in the back or set a trap for 'em. Jeez.'" One writer even made up the scenario that Sixkiller's father killed six bison and earned the family name, eventually passing it down to his son.[6]

Sixkiller's race and unique name meant that the media harkened back to the stereotypes that beset the Carlisle football team: that of the war-like savage. The stereotypical image of the American Indian is that of a ferocious warrior set on horseback with a tomahawk in one hand and a bow and arrow in the other. These stereotypes, coupled with the fact that quarterbacks were the focal point of the offense, made Sixkiller's last name even more fascinating to the media. The Sixkiller name and his Cherokee ethnicity made it easy for the media to conjure up stereotypical images when writing about his on the field exploits. His passes became shooting arrows into the opposition's defenses. Various newspapers noted he was "making good heap medicine, scalping the opposition, and

[6] Ibid.

massacring people all up and down the Pacific Coast."[7] The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* even wrote that the quarterback was "the most celebrated redskin since Crazy Horse," ignoring such luminaries as Jim Thorpe and Wahoo McDaniel, and World War II hero Ira Hayes.[8]

Even local newspapers used racial stereotypes. The *Seattle Times* wrote, "Warm were the words of the fans for all the Husky players who helped crack team records all over the place. But most were for Sonny Sixkiller, the Indian sophomore quarterback and now the blood brother of thousands of fans who have beseeched the Great Spirit to send them down a passer with an arm like a hickory bow."[9] Looking back on his college career at Washington, Sixkiller recalled in 2003, "'I used to go to schools, and they'd have SCALP SIXKILLER banners on the walls. Then you had newspapers saying CHEROKEE CHUCKER SLAYS STANFORD. Would that fly today? No. I don't know how it flew then.'"[10]

The football program at Washington was not new to racial turmoil. In 1968, thirteen African-American football players

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[7] Ibid.

[8] David Eskenazi and Steve Rudman, < http://sportspressnw.com/2011/10/wayback-machine-sonny-sixkiller-becomes-an-icon/>.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Grant Wahl, "Sonny Sixkiller, Quarterback," *Sports Illustrated*, 17 November 2003, 21.

publicly protested and made demands of the university and the athletic department. They wanted a black coach hired, a trainer fired for using the word "nigger," and an athletic committee established to review Coach Jim Owens and his practices of moving African-American players down on the depth chart. Two of the demands were met, most notably the hiring of African-American former University of Washington player Carver Gayton onto the coaching staff and a committee was established to review the actions of the coaching staff.[11]

During Sixkiller's freshman season, more racial unrest enveloped the team when several African-American players refused to travel to the University of California at Los Angeles due to, what they perceived, as racist remarks by Coach Owens. The turmoil led to the resignation of Gayton and a season when the varsity team won only one game. The university's Human Rights Commission launched an investigation into the athletic department but did not draw any significant conclusions about Owens or his staff's behavior. In these difficult circumstances, Sixkiller assumed control of the Husky offense.[12]

Sixkiller's exploits on the field that first year made him a gridiron star and a popular cultural icon. By November 1971,

[11] Richard Linde, "Jim Owens, The Big Fella," < http://www.4malamute.com/Jim Owens.html>. [accessed 28 July 2011].

[12] Ibid.

his junior year, local Seattle disc jockey, Rex Parker, composed a song honoring the quarterback and it played often on local radio stations. "The Ballad of Sonny Sixkiller" even received some national attention.[13] A song that was supposed to honor Sixkiller could not escape racial imagery with stereotypical overtones in the lyrics and an Indian drum in the background. The lyrics included that he was "the proud grandson of an Indian chief," that he was of "determined breed," Sixkiller "put down his arrows, hung up his shield," and finally how he "became a warrior on the football field."

As the song gained prominence, the national media ran stories about the song's popularity. The United Press International composed a story about Sixkiller and the song and several newspapers around the country picked-up the story.[14] One expected these images of Native Americans in newspapers and periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but not at a time of self-determination for Native American rights.

In a live internet chat with football fans at seattletimes.com in 2010, Sixkiller stated that he did not want to see the song "come to life." He remembered the producer

[13] Wahl, "Sonny Sixkiller, Quarterback," 21.

[14] United Press International, "Legend of Sonny Sixkiller: Latest Football Ballad," *St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times*, 14 November 1970, 33.

playing it to get his approval to play, but, Sixkiller told him that he would have to get back to him. Sixkiller related that he never actually approved the song, but the radio station played it anyway.[15]

The UPI article, which reprinted the lyrics, extended the racial imagery and stereotypes even further. The opening paragraph used the phraseology "pale faces" as just one example of a stereotype. The writer mentioned the American Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island by stating that Fort Lawton, which had also been the scene of Native American protests, should be wary because Sixkiller might "invade." The article finished by asserting that Sixkiller saved Coach Jim Owens's "scalp" and mentioned that the quarterback could fish the Puyallup River, which was the site of American Indian "fish-ins," protesting a violation of American Indian treaty rights.[16]

The song and the corresponding article were examples of the stereotypes which surrounded Sixkiller. As he continued to excel on the field, his notoriety spread. Sixkiller's popularity proved to be a curse as his name expanded from the local level to national prestige. He was no longer just a

[15] "Sonny Sixkiller talks of his movie role, his song and his life after UW," seattletimes.com. 3 November 2010 [accessed 21 August 2012].

[16] United Press International, "Legend of Sonny Sixkiller Latest Football Ballad," *St. Petersburg Times*, 14 November 1970, 33.

small-town athlete achieving his dream of playing college football.

In October 1971, Sixkiller made the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, and Roy Blount Jr., profiled the Washington Husky quarterback in an article. Blount mentioned that drawing parallels between different ethnic groups was tricky. According to Blount, "American Indian history, when you think about it, is not a great mine of surefire yoks and sprightly references, especially from the point of view of the Indians."[17]

At the time, Sixkiller told Blount, "'If I'd been a black quarterback people wouldn't have been writing that kind of stuff. The blacks wouldn't have let them get away with it. Or even if I'd been a Chinese quarterback.'"[18] Sixkiller recognized that using stereotypes was acceptable for American Indians, but not for other minority groups.

Blount's profile of Sixkiller hinted that the quarterback was tiring of the publicity surrounding his name; but, the clamor made him more aware of his responsibilities as an American Indian. He checked out books about American Indians from the library; but, he told Blount he did not want to get political. Except for his contributions to raise money for a

[17] Blount, Jr., "The Magic Number is Sixkiller," 31.

[18] Ibid.

kidney machine for a American Indian man in Seattle, Sixkiller remained inactive in social causes.[19]

By being non-political, Sixkiller also expressed disapproval of his African-American teammates who quit the football team during his freshman year. Blount wrote that Sixkiller attended campus protests over the American invasion of Cambodia. Opponents of the protesters tried to disperse the crowd and hit the quarterback with clubs. These issues did not politicize Sixkiller, according to the article, as he simply looked at himself as a normal college student who wanted to play football.[20]

Blount's article mentioned the media's use of racial imagery and stereotypes, but, at the same time, used similar tones by singling the quarterback out for his race. In the last paragraph, Blount criticized Sixkiller for not telling the press to quit using racial stereotypes. The author wrote that if Sixkiller did not allow the situation to progress further, "he might start showing the nation a little something in the way of Cherokee brass."[21] Blount did not realize that Sixkiller was not the problem; it was the journalists.

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[19] Ibid., 34.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

Years later, Sixkiller stated that he did not want to be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. He believed that it would distract the team and their quest for a successful season. However, the University of Washington media department overruled him and gave it permission to proceed.[22]

The same month the *Sports Illustrated* article appeared, *Boys' Life* ran a feature on Sixkiller. The official publication of the Boy Scouts of America contained articles that focused on items that caught the attention of boys from six to eighteen years old. The Sixkiller article focused on his rise from obscurity.[23] The article's writer, Robert Deindorfer, described Sixkiller as a "Cherokee so full-blooded that he can claim a tribal chief as a great-grandfather." As Deindorfer continued his summary of Sixkiller's "Indianness," he wrote that,

> even if his name happened to be, say, Lane-Phillips instead of Sixkiller, there is no mistaking the fact that the youngster came from real Native American stock. High cheekbones, a big blade of nose, and long hair as dark as night all give him the look of a Remington oil painting.

The story mentioned that Sonny could handle the good-natured "razzing" by his friends and teammates, but he became more agitated when the media focused on his ancestry. Did he ever

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[22] "Sonny Sixkiller talks of his movie role, his song, and his life after UW," http://seattletimes.com. 3 November 2010. [accessed 21 August 2012].

[23] Robert G. Deindorfer, "Sonny Sixkiller: A Real All-American," *Boys' Life,* October 1971, 8.

live on a reservation? Had he ever worn a feathered headdress? Did he know how to do a rain dance? All of these questions aggravated Sixkiller. He told Deindorfer that when the conversation turned to his heritage, Sixkiller tended to ignore the reporters.[24]

While Deindorfer concentrated on Sixkiller's race, the author spent most of the article on Sixkiller's life at the University of Washington campus and his play on the field. Sixkiller talked to Deindorfer about the importance of practice. Deindorfer pointed out succinctly, Sixkiller won games and that is the most important thing for a competitive athlete.[25]

The content of the *Boys' Life* article exemplified the quandary for many journalists covering American Indian football players in the early 1970s. Human interest stories were prevalent and considering that *Boys' Life* was not a magazine solely devoted to sports, Sixkiller's profile was significant. The dilemma many journalists faced was how to profile players like Sonny Sixkiller without focusing on their race?

Sixkiller's popularity continued to grow nationally. Newspapers with a national readership, like the *New York Times*, knew about the strong-armed quarterback in Seattle. Over the course of his collegiate career, the *New York Times* reported on

[24] Ibid., 9.

[25] Ibid.

Sixkiller's performance and did not use racial stereotypes. Associated Press sports writer Herschel Nissenson, however, wrote such headlines as "Will Sonny Sixkiller Scalp Southern California Tonight to Keep Trojans from Rose Bowl." He followed that headline with a lead paragraph that again used the word "scalped." Nissenson used this racial stereotype to make Sixkiller not only a football threat, but conjured up images of a battlefield menace.[26] Nissenson had previously nicknamed Sixkiller the "Slayer of the Half-Dozen."[27]

Nissenson was not alone. The San Bernardino County *Sun* wrote that Sixkiller "laid in wait, ready to ambush" the University of Southern California Trojans after the Stanford Indian "scalped" USC the previous week.[28] Some newspapers like the *Sarasota [FL] Herald-Tribune* portrayed Sixkiller as the "Great Red Hope," in a September 1970 article. Once again, the Associated Press writer identified Sixkiller as a grandson of a Cherokee chief, but also noted that the quarterback was the best

[26] Herschel Nissenson, "Will Sonny Sixkiller Scalp Southern California Tonight to Keep Trojans from Bowl," *Gettysburg Times*, 17 October 1970, 5.

[27] Herschel Nissenson, "Sonny Sixkiller Grid Standout," *The* (New London, CT) *Day*, 23 September 1970, 17.

[28] Associated Press, "Huskies' Pivot Sits in Ambush," *The Sun*, 17 October 1970, 23.

hope for Washington's on-field success.[29] No matter his accomplishments on the field, Sonny could not escape the labels of Indian quarterback, Cherokee quarterback, or grandson of an Indian chief. Sixkiller believed the writers were using his name and ancestry as a gimmick, trying to get their readers to laugh at him.[30] The writers were not trying to get their readers to laugh at Sixkiller; more than likely, the editors were hoping to attract more readers. By using headlines and wording that were stereotypical, the editors were trying to attract readers by using what they thought were "catchy" words and phrases, and did not necessarily see the phrases as stereotypes.

The *Native American Times* interviewed Sixkiller in 1986. He talked openly about his portrayal in the newspapers. "'Whenever we would win,'" stated Sixkiller, "'the west coast media would print stories that would say something like 'Sixkiller slays Stanford' or they would give me nicknames like 'Cherokee Chucker.'" He reported that at one point his teammates had enough of the racist analogies and nicknames and

[29] Associated Press, "Huskies Sixkiller Passes for Three to Slay Spartans," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 20 September 1970, 13.

[30] Associated Press, "Wins Top Rated By Husky Soph," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 22 September 1970, 97.

sent a letter to the editors of area newspapers asking them to stop using such language.[31]

The freewheeling, journalistic analogies that compared American Indian attacks on frontier settlers and football always seemed to increase when Sixkiller led his team against the Stanford Indian. Stanford University had used the American Indian as a mascot since 1930, but replaced it with the Cardinals and later a tree named the Cardinal in 1972. The 1971 Washington-Stanford game received the headlines of "Stanford's Indians tomahawked Sixkiller," and "Huskies Scalped by Indians."[32] The Wilmington, North Carolina *Star-News* wrote that the "Stanford defense quelled an uprising" of the Sixkiller-led offense.[33]

The 1972 game played in Palo Alto, led to headlines not directly linked to Sixkiller, but nonetheless involved American Indians. He played sparingly in the 24-0 loss, which McClatchy Newspapers Service writer Don Bloom referred to as a "massacre." Sixkiller hurt his knee during the first quarter. The bigger news, however, involved the Stanford band's efforts to honor the

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[31] Gerald Wofford, "Cherokee Athlete Still a Hero in Washington," *Native American Times*, 27 October 2006, 11.

[32] United Press International, "Huskies Scalped by Indians," *Anchorage Daily News*, 9 October 1971, 17.

[33] United Press International, "Stanford Nabs Win," Wilmington, North Carolina *Star-News*, 10 October 1971, 16.

school's former American Indian mascot Prince Lightfoot at halftime. Stanford's administrators rejected the band's request because the demonstration revived a "dead" issue. The school had replaced the Indian mascot prior to the start of the 1972 season. Bloom wrote, "Cherokee, Sonny Sixkiller, is on crutches today after discovering that American Indian demonstrations of any kind are against the school administration's policies." That sentence alone insinuated that Sixkiller had an opinion on the mascot controversy at Stanford.[34]

Due to Sixkiller's status as a prominent American Indian quarterback, many non-traditional periodicals followed him and the Washington Husky football team. The San Francisco Bay Area's African-American *Sun Reporter* wrote that the Stanford Indians would match wits with "an honest-to-goodness real Indian" in Sonny Sixkiller when they visited Seattle to play Washington.[35] In its coverage, the *Sun Reporter* used phrases such as "spiritual leader" and "slings and arrows" to describe the quarterback and his ability.[36] Even minority newspapers used racial stereotypes because they helped to sell newspapers.

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[34] Don Bloom, "Sixkiller is Injured as Cardinals Blank Huskies," *Modesto Bee*, 15 October 1972, 8.

[35] "Stanford Seeks Sixkiller," *Oakland Sun Reporter*, 9 October 1971, 35.

[36] "Sixkiller Gets Last Chance," ibid., 14 October 1972, 31.

Sixkiller played twenty-eight games from 1970 through 1972 at the University of Washington. When is career ended, he was the school's passing leader with 385 completions out of 811 attempts, a 47.5 percent completion percentage. He threw for 5,496 total yards and 35 touchdowns.[37] While these numbers pale in comparison to today's pass-happy offenses, they were remarkable statistics in the early 1970s.

Sixkiller's desire to play professional football in the National Football League never came to fruition. NFL teams rarely played minority quarterbacks in the early 1970s. They were either not big enough, or lacked the "intelligence" to play the position according to team executives and coaches.[38] The then-Los Angeles Rams signed Sixkiller to try out for the team in 1973 after not being chosen in that year's amateur draft; but, the roster was already loaded with quarterbacks. Starter John Hadl and Ron Jaworski made the team at quarterback. An African-American quarterback also made the team. Rams Head

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[37] S. Lee Kanner, "Question Box," *New York Times*, 24 August 1981, 11.

[38] There was a prevailing attitude that White quarterbacks were better leaders and smarter, while minority quarterbacks were better athletes. While an athletic quarterback would succeed in the collegiate ranks, he might not in the NFL, which required a smarter quarterback with better leadership skills. Eugenio Mercurio, "Roughing the Passer: The Framing of White and Black Quarterbacks Prior to the Draft," Unpublished Conference Paper. < http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/7/1/3/8/pages271383/p271383-1.php>. [accessed 30 May 2013].

Coach Chuck Knox said of Sonny, "He's a heck of a guy with great character, but we have three better quarterbacks in camp and four is just too many to work with."[39] Sixkiller attributed his failure to make the roster to being too small and having a lingering shoulder injury. He told the weekly Puget Sound sports writers and broadcasters luncheon that he probably would return to school at Washington or find a job and do some traveling.[40]

A unique opportunity then presented itself because of Sixkiller's Cherokee heritage. During Sixkiller's sophomore year, actor Burt Reynolds introduced himself to Sonny and his teammates. Reynolds, who was 1/8th Cherokee, had played football at Florida State University. Reynolds invited the Husky football team to dinner at his house in Los Angeles whenever the team traveled to play UCLA or the University of Southern California. When the Rams cut Sixkiller, Reynolds called to offer the quarterback a small part in Reynolds's latest movie about prisoners battling prison guards on the football field.[41]

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[39] United Press International, "Rams Can't Find Place on Roster for Sixkiller," *New York Times* 12 August 1973, 196.

[40] United Press International, "Sixkiller Accepts Invitation for a Tryout with Rams," ibid., 4 April 1973, 51.

[41] Sonny Sixkiller and Bob Condotta, *Sonny Sixkiller's Tales From the Huskies Sidelines* (Champaign, IL: Sports Publishing LLC, 2004), 145-146.

The movie's name was *The Longest Yard*. Sixkiller played the role of "Indian," a curious name choice, alongside several former and current NFL football players. The movie became the first non-baseball or boxing sports movie to draw at the box office.[42] Sixkiller counted his experience on *The Longest Yard* as one of the greatest in his life, but at that point, he did not think that his football career was over and he wanted to keep trying to make a NFL squad.[43]

Not one team in the NFL inquired about Sixkiller's availability after his shoulder healed. Monday Night Football broadcaster Howard Cosell, at Reynolds urging, checked with numerous teams on Sixkiller's behalf but to no avail. When the NFL front offices decided that a quarterback was too small to play, players had several choices. The first was to change positions, usually to wide receiver or defensive back. If they continued to play quarterback, their only option was to head to the Canadian Football League or the upstart World Football League.[44]

In 1974, Sixkiller signed to play with the Toronto Argonauts in the CFL. His job was to replace Joe Theismann who

[42] Roy Blount Jr., "The 'In' Game in Hollywood is Sports," *New York Times* 10 June 1979, D1.

[43] Sixkiller and Condotta, *Sonny Sixkiller's Tales From the Huskies Sidelines*, 146.

[44] Ibid., 147.

had made his way back to the NFL with the Washington Redskins. However, the Argonauts cut the Washington alum. Sixkiller then turned to the WFL, where he played briefly for the Philadelphia Bell. When that opportunity ended, The Hawaiians, also a WFL team, called and Sonny ventured to Honolulu.[45]

The WFL went bankrupt during the 1975 football season and many of the players did not receive the money owed them. Sixkiller received 30 cents on the dollar for the remainder of his contract. Some of the Hawaiians were not as lucky; they did not collect enough money to fly home.[46]

The San Diego Chargers signed Sixkiller for training camp in 1976. On the verge of realizing his NFL dreams, Sixkiller's injuries prevented him from joining the team. A torn rotator cuff in his throwing arm hampered his range of motion and his ability to play. Knowing that the odds were long in making the Chargers, Sixkiller retired from football and returned to Seattle to find a job outside of football.[47]

From time to time, Sixkiller helped American Indian athletes in Washington and Oregon by appearing at football camps. In 1979, he worked with football players at Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. Rick Tendore, a football player

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 149.

[47] Ibid.

at the school, said that he learned how to be a more mobile quarterback with Sixkiller's help.[48]

The American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame in Lawrence, Kansas inducted Sonny in 1987. The *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate* covered the event. The newspaper noted Sixkiller's struggle with the media. The paper offered one passage as an example by reprinting this *Los Angeles Times* comment, "'The Cherokee quarterback has captured the town [Seattle] without a struggle, because his arrows have hit often enough to bring the Washington Huskies back to football respectability.'"[49]

In November 2003, Grant Wahl a reporter for *Sports Illustrated* interviewed Sixkiller. The former University of Washington quarterback told Wahl that at the time Sixkiller had no idea how much impact he would have on Native Americans by playing college football. The article noted that he had supported American Indian charities since his playing days. His oldest son, Casey, spent two years working as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. for the Cherokee Nation. Sixkiller became an analyst on the Washington Huskies sports telecasts and he officially joined the media that he once found so frustrating.

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[48] "Shinin' Star," *Sho-Ban News* (Idaho), 17 January 1979.

[49] "Sixkiller Chosen for Indian Hall of Fame," *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate* (Tahlequah, OK), 28 February 1987, 7.

"'The fun part of broadcasting,'" he said, "'is having that teamwork you used to have when you were playing.'"[50]

The problem Sonny Sixkiller had with journalists such as Nissenson and Bloom was that he was virtually alone as an American Indian sports figure. In a story published about American Indians fighting back against Native American mascots, Marty Ralbovsky quoted Jeffrey Newman of the Association for American Indian Affairs as saying that American Indian children did not look up to and identify with athletes because there were very few "'Sonny Sixkiller's, Jim Plunkett's, or Johnny Bench's'" out there. All they see are Indian mascots and racist headlines. These battles are what Sixkiller tried to overcome once he emerged on the national scene.[51]

Sixkiller's role as a quarterback at Washington came during a tumultuous time when race relations were at uneasy state on campus. His outstanding play on the field and the way he handled himself off the field enabled other minority quarterbacks to play the position after Sixkiller left. African-American Warren Moon starred at UW from 1976-77, while Marques Tuiasosopo, who was of Pacific Islander descent, played quarterback for the Huskies from 1997 to 2000. However, none of the minority quarterbacks who followed Sixkiller endured similar

[50] Wahl, *Sonny Sixkiller, Quarterback*, 21.

[51] Marty Rabolvsky, "An Indian Affair," *New York Times* 14 November 1971, S9.

stereotypes thrust upon them by the media. When the next familiar quarterback of American Indian descent appeared, the media and the world had changed dramatically.

CHAPTER VII

SAM BRADFORD'S RISE TO PROMINENCE

> The usual task of these representations is to cast us as part of a distant past, rather than a dynamic present. Or, if we are in the present, then it is only if we are good or bad role models — rather than human beings.
>
> Native Filmmaker Loretta Todd[1]

Three decades after Sonny Sixkiller made headlines at the University of Washington, Sam Bradford emerged as a national figure at the University of Oklahoma. While all of the aforementioned American Indian football players received significant media coverage, not since the days of Jim Thorpe had the media focused on a Native American gridiron star as it did on Bradford. The media's revelation that Bradford was a descendant of Cherokee ancestors enabled tribal leaders to name the University of Oklahoma quarterback the "savior" of American Indians everywhere.[2] While Bradford did not have to contend

[1] Robert Schmidt, "Quotes on Native Stereotyping," http://www.bluecorncomics.com/stquotes.htm. 2007 [accessed 2 September 2013].

[2] Steve Wieberg, "Heart of Oklahoma, Pride of Cherokees: QB Bradford is 'like Obama' for many Native Americans," *USA TODAY*, 10 December 2008, 1C.

with the racist overtones that permeated the coverage of Sixkiller and the others, he did have to cope with a media that reported his every move. When one considers the level of media coverage in which Bradford received, the fact that the quarterback played in his home state of Oklahoma, with the second largest Native population in the United States, is a noteworthy factor.[1] Another aspect that saw Bradford's rise to prominence was his uniqueness as the only American Indian quarterback playing major college football, notwithstanding his talented play on the football field.[2]

One other issue played a role in the coverage of Bradford, and it was not directly influenced by the quarterback or his play on the field. The "invisible" Indian stereotype stated that American Indians were swallowed up by society, that they were integrated into everyday society. The media only recognized those who looked like an American Indian such as Bradford. Other players, such as, Brett Favre, had American Indian ancestors, but were not designated so by the media. Favre's paternal grandfather was a mixed-blood member of the

[1] United States Bureau of the Census. States Ranked by American Indian and Alaska Native Population. Online. 2010. Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/rank/aiea.txt. [accessed 2 September 2013].

[2] At least in the eyes of the media.

Mississippi Band of the Choctaw.[3] When an athlete such as Bradford, who looked like an American Indian, made a name for himself, the media gravitated to the story. This happened not just on the local level, but nationally as well.

Bradford's transition from local star to national American Indian celebrity, began when he became the starting quarterback at the University of Oklahoma after red-shirting his first year. His life was altered significantly. After Bradford's first successful games during the 2007 college football season, the national media became enamored with the young quarterback due to his ability, as well as his Cherokee ancestry. From that point, Bradford became not only the quarterback at Oklahoma, but the Cherokee quarterback for the Sooners.

Sam Bradford grew up in the suburban Oklahoma City town of Putnam City. His father, Kent, played football for OU during the 1970s for legendary Coach Barry Switzer. Kent, an insurance agent, claimed that while growing up, Sam wanted to excel at everything he did, including athletics and academics. He played football, basketball, hockey, and golf. The only thing his

[3] "Mississippi Choctaw Chief to speak at Brett Favre Day," http://www.indianz.com/News/2004/001648.asp. 7 May 2004 [accessed 12 September 2013].

parents told him was that they loved him and they wanted what was best for him.[4]

The one thing rarely discussed among the family was Bradford's ethnicity. Sam knew that they were Cherokee, but his heritage did not play a significant factor in his life. He concentrated on sports, school, and the things that dominated suburban, middle-class kids' lives. He finished high school in the top 10 percent of his class. However, he only made second team all-state in football his senior year. Putnam City North High School finished with a .500 record.[5]

Bradford received little attention from Division I recruiters. The national recruiting service, Scout.com, ranked Bradford the seventeenth best quarterback in the nation. His first scholarship offer came from Texas Tech Head Coach Mike Leach. Leach liked Bradford's tall frame and ability to learn. The University of Michigan also showed some interest, but then the University of Oklahoma offered a scholarship at the behest of Bradford's high school coach. Bradford accepted the chance to play for his father's alma mater.[6]

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[4] "First Class; on and off the field," *The Oklahoman*, 18 June 2006, 3I.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Thayer Evans, "Seeking Depth, Oklahoma Got Much More," *New York Times*, 6 December 2008, D2.

The Sooner coaching staff intended to sign Bradford as a back-up quarterback, but as they tell every recruit, he would have a chance to compete for the starting job. The starting quarterback during the 2005 football season was the highly-touted true freshman Rhett Bomar. Many expected Bomar to start for the Sooners for at least the next three seasons, possibly a fourth. However, shortly before the start of the 2006 football season, Coach Bob Stoops dismissed Bomar from the team for violating NCAA rules. He accepted money from a nearby car dealership for work he never performed. Wide Receiver Paul Thompson, a former backup quarterback for the team, transitioned back to quarterback for his senior season. The future was wide open for the Sooner quarterback position.[7]

In Bradford's second year at Oklahoma, he won an intense battle for the quarterback position, beating out highly-recruited quarterback Keith Nichol and junior college transfer Joey Halzle. When Head Coach Bob Stoops announced the decision, he stated,

> We are going with Sam because he earned the position. We expect both Joey and Keith to continue working hard and competing for playing time just like all our players do at every position. There may be an opportunity for them at some point and it will be important for them to be ready.[8]

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Bradford Named Starting Quarterback," *USA TODAY*, August 21, 2007.

Immediately after the announcement, Bradford faced a different media than what haunted Sonny Sixkiller three decades earlier. A 24 hour, 7 day a week, 365 days a year news cycle, the Internet, and cable news supplemented print media. Coverage did not initially mention Bradford's race, but it was not long before reporters discovered his Cherokee heritage.

An initial article written by the Associated Press, highlighted Bradford's successes at Putnam City North High School and mentioned that his father played football for the Sooners in the 1970s. The article went on to describe the Sooners' previous season and the vacated quarterback position. The author kept to the facts and, for the most part, this was a standard preview article of a college football team with a new quarterback.[9]

The *Tulsa World* featured an article on the young quarterback prior to the season opener. The sports writer, John E. Hoover, wrote that Bradford's first love was the game of hockey. "'He was adamant we move to Canada so he could play hockey,'" said Bradford's mother, Martha. The article focused on Bradford's unique athleticism, as he was

[9] "Redshirt freshman Bradford named Sooners' starter," < http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=2984592>. 21 August 2007 [accessed 10 December 2010].

a good baseball and basketball player, as well as a scratch golfer.[10]

The Sooners opened the 2007 football season with an impressive win against North Texas University. In the 79-10 rout, Bradford was near perfect, passing for 363 yards and 3 touchdowns, while completing 21 out of 23 pass attempts. In his first game, Bradford broke school records for the most passing yards in a game and tied the team mark for consecutive completions.[11]

The coverage of Bradford's first game remained largely regional. Part of this had to do with the opponent; the mid-major college was not a football powerhouse. Oklahoma faced the University of Miami the next week. The game against the Hurricanes thrust Bradford, and his ancestry, onto the national stage.

Bradford completed 19 of 25 passes for 205 yards and 5 touchdowns leading the Sooners to a win over a highly-respected Miami team. For his effort, several

[10] John E. Hoover, "Bradford Trades Ice for Turf," *Tulsa World Sports Extra*, August 26, 2007.

[11] Jake Trotter, "Miami is Bradford's Next Big Test, the Real Mean Green Resides in Florida," *The Oklahoman*, September 2, 2007.

organizations named Bradford the Walter Camp Player of the Week and Big XII Offensive Player of the Week.[12]

Stewart Mandel, a college football reporter for *Sports Illustrated*, mentioned Bradford in his column highlighting the importance of offensive line play and its direct correlation to a quarterback's success. Mandel's piece focused on the game and did not mention Bradford's heritage. The media portrayed Bradford by his play on the field not the color of his skin.[13] That would soon change.

The next two weeks saw Bradford and the Sooners face two more mid-major teams in Utah State and University of Tulsa. In the Utah State and Tulsa games, Bradford's numbers were comparable to his two previous games. The Sooners had risen to number three in the nation according to the Associated Press poll and the opening game of the Big XII season was against the University of Colorado.

Going into the game against the Colorado, Bradford's spectacular early season play had many members of the media mentioning the redshirt freshman as a candidate for the Heisman Trophy, an honor never bestowed upon a freshman. The Sooners' season, as well as Bradford's Heisman push, took a turn for the

[12] "Bradford Earns Honors," www.soonersports.com. September 9, 2010.

[13] Stewart Mandel, "Degrees of Protection," *Sports Illustrated,* 19 September 2007, http://si.com. [accessed 27 October 2009].

worse against the Buffaloes. The Sooners lost 27-24, and Bradford had the worst game of his young career completing only eight out of nineteen passes. He also threw two interceptions.[14]

Bradford rebounded against the University of Texas in the annual Red River Rivalry. The Longhorns, coming off a loss to Kansas State, never challenged Bradford and the Sooners. Bradford outplayed Texas sophomore quarterback Colt McCoy.[15]

While the whispers of a Heisman candidacy faded after the loss to Colorado, Bradford's race began to make the news. *The Oklahoman* featured Bradford in a news story comparing him to Jim Thorpe. According to the article, the Cherokee quarterback had become a cultural icon to many of the state's Native Americans; Bradford, the story related, was the great, great grandson of Susie Walkingstick, a full-blooded Cherokee. Overnight, the younger Bradford and his father were registered members of the Cherokee Nation. The starting Oklahoma quarterback had an intense fanbase in his home state.[16]

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[14] Jake Trotter, "Struggling Sam: Bradford Throws Two Costly Interceptions," *The Oklahoman,* 30 September 2007.

[15] Mike Yorkey, *Playing with Purpose: Inside the Lives and Faith of the NFL's Top New Quarterbacks—Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy, and Tim Tebow* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2010), 10.

[16] Jenni Carlson, "OU quarterback brings memories of Jim Thorpe for Indian athletes, Sam stirs a sense of pride," http://newsok.com/article/3152502/1192861670. October 20, 2007 [accessed October 5, 2010].

Until the Carlson article, there had been scant mention of Bradford's heritage in the media. Now, the spectre of Jim Thorpe and the trappings of Bradford's race followed the Sooners' quarterback everywhere. He shrugged off the comparisons to the legendary Thorpe; Bradford knew they were inevitable. Every American Indian athlete, especially football players, found themselves compared to the Sac and Fox star at some point.[17]

After beating the Longhorns, Sam Bradford was a national media phenomenon. Steve Wieberg, a reporter for the *USA Today*, wrote a story with the headline "OU's Bradford an emerging force; Freshman quarterback embraced by Sooners, Cherokee Nation." The first part of the story concentrated on Bradford's achievements on the field. It mentioned that at 6'5", Bradford stood out as the tallest quarterback in Oklahoma football history. Unlike criticisms of Sonny Sixkiller's slight stature, Wieberg described Bradford as having "loads of desirable physical tools."[18]

For the first time in the national press, a reporter drew comparisons between Bradford and Sixkiller. It was at this point in the article that Wieberg transitioned to Bradford's

[17] Ibid.

[18] Steve Wieberg, "OU's Bradford an Emerging Force; Freshman Quarterback Embraced by Sooners, Cherokee Nation," *USA Today*, 9 October 2007, 1C.

heritage. Wieberg noted that beating Texas was enough for the state of Oklahoma to embrace Bradford, but with 8 percent of the state's population belonging to various American Indian tribes, the young man was on the verge of becoming an icon within the state. The article skillfully connected Bradford's leadership on the gridiron with his Cherokee background. J.R. Cook, executive director of the United National Tribal Youth, explained that he attributed "'Sam's quiet poise and confident leadership to his Indian heritage.'"[19]

To gain a better insight into Bradford's football abilities, Wieberg interviewed Oklahoma quarterbacks coach Josh Heupel, who applauded his young charge's mental aptitude for the game. Heupel, a former Heisman Trophy runner-up, who led the Sooners to the 2000 national championship, stated that Bradford was a lot better than he was. Head Coach Bob Stoops limited Bradford's access to the media in an effort not to overwhelm the young quarterback.[20] But, the articles still came out and the quarterback had fans from all elements of society.

American Indian football fans, regardless of tribal affiliation, supported Bradford. "'I'm glad he's Native American,'" said Anthony Beaver, a part Choctaw and Creek

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

student at the state's premier Indian school Sequoyah-Tahlequah; "'I really hadn't ever seen any high-profile Native American athletes since, like, Jim Thorpe.'"[21] While Beaver forgot or never knew about players like Wahoo McDaniel and Sonny Sixkiller, the Sequoyah-Tahlequah student's thought process illuminated a critical element in the media's coverage of Bradford. It covered only superstars and conveniently forgot other former players especially.

Two other Native American football players joined Bradford. Deep snapper Ben Hampton was also Cherokee and fellow deep snapper Derek Shaw claimed Ponca and Osage heritage. In fact, when players entered the OU football program as freshman, the public relations staff specifically asked them if they had American Indian heritage. The university took great pride in the state's native ties and promoted that connection whenever possible. The local media wrote longer stories about OU's Indian players, where the national media focused on superstar players. If those players had a unique personal story, like Bradford, all the better.[22]

The media's focus on superstars was one of the reasons why they seldom mentioned other American Indian football players.

[21] Jenni Carlson, "OU quarterback brings memories" http://newsok.com/article/3152502/1192861670. October 20, 2007 [accessed October 5, 2010].

[22] Ibid.

The media identified Bradford as the first Native American quarterback since Sonny Sixkiller, which was not true. Ira Vandever, a Navajo from New Mexico, took snaps at Drake University.[23]

Vandever's move to Iowa was a culture shock. He recalled that when he told people he was an American Indian, they responded by asking where his headdress and tomahawk were. Vandever talked about using his heritage to focus on American Indian issues and his desire to publish a magazine. He said,

> I want it to be circulated throughout the United States, I think the perception of Native Americans is what they see on the [Washington] Redskins' helmets, that's what a Native American should look like, or what they see on cartoons, or in the movies. I want to project us in a good light. See us as we really are, and what we are really about. We're just like you.[24]

Vandever was ready to challenge stereotypes. Unfortunately, the media continued to focus on superstars. Vandever's statements showed Indian athletes wanted to be taken seriously, not in caricature. Unfortunately, other Indian athletes remained virtually unknown.

The press also never mentioned James Madison University quarterback Greg Maddox, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, when they proclaimed Bradford the first American

[23] Andrew Bagnato, "Drake QB forges legacy as rare Native American QB," *Chicago Tribune*, 21 November 2002.

[24] Ibid.

Indian player at quarterback since Sixkiller. Maddox predated Vandever and played at James Madison University from 1996 to 1998. The *New York Times* was forced to run a correction to this when they ran a story comparing Bradford to Sixkiller.[25]

In the Oklahoma City area, Bradford had been well-known since his sophomore year at Putnam City North High School. Yet, it was not until he stepped on the football field for the Sooners that his Cherokee blood became public knowledge. The media in Oklahoma lagged behind in acknowledging Bradford's heritage. However, Bradford himself admitted that he had little knowledge of his heritage. "'We actually have never been active in Indian affairs or culture,'" Kent Bradford said. "'Not that we aren't proud of the Cherokee ethnicity, but we were simply raised as middle-class, Oklahoma City people.'" Even though the Bradford family had never been active in American Indian affairs or the culture, Cherokee principal Chief Chad Smith said, "'It's still part of your identity. You are, even though you may not have the depth of the knowledge of it.'"[26]

Larry Grigg, the athletic director at Sequoyah-Tahlequah High School, believed that there are or have been many American Indian athletes involved in sports at all levels, but few are

[25] Thayer Evans, "Bradford Nation," *New York Times*, 11 October 2008, D1.

[26] Carlson, "OU quarterback brings memories."

identified by their race.[27] For example, Brett Favre is of Choctaw descent. The media, however, failed to mention Favre's ethnicity throughout his twenty-year career.[28]

By the end of Bradford's first year as quarterback of the Sooners, college football analysts from around the country lauded his ability to run an offense and his leadership skills. Ivan Maisel of ESPN.com wrote that Bradford made the college game look easy. Maisel argued that Bradford's statistics for the season warranted more recognition than he received.[29] Bradford failed to make either first or the second team All-Big XII, and received little mention for any national quarterback awards after the team's loss to Colorado.

Maisel's article exemplified the major change in the coverage of American Indian football players. The story pointed out that Bradford's athletic talents transcended his play on the football field. Growing up in the suburbs of Oklahoma City, he played on the same Amateur Athletic Union basketball team as future number one overall draft pick Blake Griffin of the Los

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[27] Ibid.

[28] "Mississippi Choctaw Chief to Speak at Brett Favre Day," http://www.indianz.com/News/2004/001648.asp. 7 May 2004 [accessed 10 December 2010].

[29] Ivan Maisel, "Oklahoma's Rookie Quarterback Makes College Game Look Easy," http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/columns/story?columnist=maisel_ivan&id=3134076. 30 November 2007 [accessed 30 May 2013].

Angeles Clippers. Maisel mentioned all of this without tying it into Bradford's racial background.[30]

The media scrutiny surrounding Bradford intensified in his second year leading the Sooners. His heritage and personal life played an even bigger role in the media's coverage. The *New York Times* profiled the signal-caller in one of its October 2008 issues. Thayer Evans wrote an article with the headline "Bradford Nation" about Bradford's growing popularity among members of the Cherokee Nation.[31]

Similar to Jenni Carlson's article spotlighting Bradford's Cherokee roots, Evans went to the Sequoyah Indian Boarding school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, to focus on the Oklahoma quarterback's appeal among his fellow Cherokees. The school's football players, Evans noted, wanted to be Bradford, while the female population swooned at the mention of his name. One female student responded with, "'He's cute, he's like perfect.'" Chad Smith, the principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, said that Bradford's success had provided much-needed inspiration for Cherokee youth. The fact that the media presented Bradford as a humble, quiet leader without resorting to stereotypes helped. One student even relayed those sentiments when he stated that

[30] Ibid.

[31] Evans, "Bradford Nation," D1.

Bradford's play has "'helped Indians shed stereotypes that have haunted them.'"[32]

The *New York Times* article again linked Bradford to Sixkiller. Sixkiller, first took notice of Bradford while browsing through the OU media guide in 2006. "'To me he looked like he was a Cherokee,'" Sixkiller related to Evans. Sixkiller also imparted some advice to Bradford on how to handle the media attention. Sixkiller said, "'You're not a messiah. You're just well thought of and respected being who you are.'"[33]

Sixkiller's statement looked prophetic after the release of a December 2008 article in the *USA Today*. The headline read "QB Bradford is 'like Obama' for many Native Americans." Many American Indians looked to Bradford as an inspiration in the same manner that African Americans looked to President Obama. Steve Wieberg, the author of the article, mentioned that a century had passed since Jim Thorpe shaped the legend that made him as one of the greatest athletes in the world; forty-four years had gone by since Billy Mills, a Sioux, captured a gold medal in the 1964 Olympics; and, now, Bradford stood among the pantheon of American Indian greats.[34]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Wieberg, "Heart of Oklahoma," 1C.

American Indians admired Bradford because he was the quarterback and the unequivocal team leader of one of the top collegiate football teams in the United States. In addition, Bradford was one of the front-runners for the 2008 Heisman Trophy. For many Native Americans, the notoriety and positive publicity shown to Bradford was something they had never witnessed with an Indian athlete.[35]

Despite the media and public attention, Bradford remained ambivalent about his heritage. Chad Smith, the Cherokee Nation principal chief, said that, in the future, Bradford would want to know more about his Indian heritage and that the Cherokee Nation would accept him at that time. "'It's inevitable,'" Smith said. "'What ultimately drives people is their sense of identity. When we're younger we don't think about it as much. As we grow older, the cosmos in the universe becomes a little bit clearer.'"[36]

The Sooners had lost a tough game against Texas in early October 2008, but easily won against the rest of their schedule. Somehow, the team played itself back into competition for the Big XII title. Bradford led his team to a devastating victory over the Red Raiders of Texas Tech University winning 65-21 on national television. The win made the Sooners' quarterback the

[35] Evans, "Bradford Nation," 1.

[36] Ibid.

frontrunner for the Heisman Trophy. Sam's father, Kent, recalled that prior to the Texas Tech game, the media hardly mentioned his son for the Heisman. After that game, his wife Martha declared that they might need to buy him a suit for the Heisman ceremony in New York.[37]

The game against Oklahoma State sealed Bradford as the favorite for the nation's highest individual honor as the Sooners beat the Cowboys 61-41. ABC televised this game to a national audience in primetime. Bradford's so-called "Heisman moment" occurred when the cameras replayed his spectacular dive into the end zone in which the Cowboys defender flipped him upside down.[38]

By defeating Oklahoma State, the Big XII South title was a three-way tie. According to conference rules, the team with the highest ranking in the Bowl Championship Series standings would play the North Division champion Missouri. Oklahoma beat out both Texas and Texas Tech for the honor to play the Missouri Tigers.

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[37] Jenni Carlson, "Interview with Kent Bradford," *The Oklahoman*, 12 December 2010, 2B.

[38] The winner of the Heisman Trophy sometimes has what is called a "Heisman moment" which is usually a play that is memorable or outstanding that leaves a distinct mark in the public's mind. The ultimate Heisman moment might be Doug Flutie's Hail Mary pass to beat the University of Miami in 1984.

Bradford had suffered torn ligaments in his non-throwing hand during the Oklahoma State game. He postponed surgery until after the Big XII title game. The injury did not prevent another fantastic game from the record-breaking quarterback; the Sooners rolled to a 62-21 victory. The Sooners finished the season as the number one team in the country and played the University of Florida Gators in the national title game on January 8, 2009.[39]

Bradford's whirlwind season continued. He had surgery on his hand and, then, ventured to Orlando, Florida for the ESPN College Football Awards. He won the Davey O'Brien Award as the best college quarterback. He also collected the Sammy Baugh Award as the nation's best college passer. He then won the Associated Press College Football Player of the Year Award, the *Sporting News* Co-Player of the Year Award, and the Touchdown Club of Columbus Quarterback of the Year Award.[40] However, doubt still lingered whether he could beat out reigning 2007 Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow then of Florida for the 2008 award.[41]

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[39] Dick Weiss, "BCS Picks Florida and Oklahoma for national title game," *New York Daily News*, 8 December 2008, S1.

[40] http://www.sambradford.org/. [accessed 1 December 2010].

[41] "Making the final case for the Heisman," http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=3763413. 12 December 2008 [accessed 1 June 2013].

On December 17, 2008, Sam Bradford was inducted into one of college football's most exclusive clubs, he won the 2008 Heisman Trophy. Bradford beat out fellow quarterbacks, Tebow, and Colt McCoy of the University of Texas, to win the most prestigious award in college football. *Sports Illustrated* writer Phil Taylor proclaimed Bradford a "Fortunate Sooner" for his win. He noted that Tebow had more first place votes, and McCoy could very well have garnered the trophy if not for a last-second Texas loss to Texas Tech. At the time, the 2008 Heisman voting was the closest in the trophy's history. Taylor wrote that Bradford certainly deserved the honor, as he passed for forty-eight touchdowns during the regular season. While the article reads as an anti-Bradford story, its biases, come from an on-the-field competition and not a racial one.[42]

The *Cherokee Phoenix*, on the other hand, celebrated Bradford's win with an even-handed article. Wesley Mahan, the author, used the opportunity to run a profile piece that underscored Bradford's race, his career at OU, and his statistics.[43]

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[42] Phil Taylor, "Fortunate Sooner," *Sports Illustrated*, 22 December 2008 http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1149823/index.htm [accessed 10 March 2011].

[43] Wesley Mahan, "Heisman Cherokee," *Cherokee Phoenix* 1 January 2009, A1-A2.

The Heisman win broadened Bradford's appeal beyond anything he could ever have imagined. At the trophy ceremony in New York City, Bradford said, "I feel like that's another blessing that God's given me. I have a great platform, especially within the Cherokee Nation. And for me to be an example for those kids, I look at it as a great opportunity."[44]

Along with the usual pregame hype surrounding any BCS title contest, the media highlighted Bradford's heritage. *The Daily Oklahoman* ran the now customary "Bradford as an inspiration to Indian Country" story. It stated that American Indian youth leaders saw messianic qualities in Bradford's emergence and his ability to change the lives of American Indian youth. The article focused little on the upcoming game; rather, it proclaimed that Bradford's legacy was on the verge greatness.[45]

Cherokee Nation sent representatives to Miami to hand out T-shirts with graphics to promote the tribe and Bradford. The shirts were crimson, the University of Oklahoma's signature color, with OU written in the Cherokee alphabet along with Cherokee Nation written in both English and Cherokee. On the

[44] "Native American Football Player Sam Bradford Wins Heisman Trophy," http://www.diversityspectrum.com/. [accessed 28 October 2009].

[45] Randall Mell, "BCS National Championship: OU Quarterback Sam Bradford Inspiration to American Indians," *The Oklahoman*, 6 January 2009 http://newsok.com/bcs-national-championship-ou-quarterback-sam-bradford-inspiration-to-american-indians/article/3335545. [accessed 2 September 2013].

back of the shirts, the tribe's official seal was affixed, below that lay Bradford's first name translated into Cherokee, his number 14, and the phrase "lead by example" written in English and Cherokee. The Cherokee representatives gave out the shirts to the media and fans prior to the National Championship game. The cost of the shirts came from the tribe's discretionary budget. The tribe secured free media attention, but forced the media to focus on Bradford's race. While universities usually frown upon unauthorized merchandise coopting the team's logo, OU President David Boren and Bradford's family were aware of the shirts. Cherokee Nation Communications officer Mike Miller said, "OU Athletics were aware of the shirt. We worked with them to be sure that our congratulatory shirt was in compliance with NCAA bylaws."[46]

The game against Florida did not go as planned for Bradford and the Sooners. They fell to the Tebow led Florida Gators 24-14. Bradford played well, completing 18 passes out of 30 attempts for 256 yards and 2 touchdowns. However, he threw two interceptions, including one when OU was close to scoring.[47]

[46] Jami Custer, "CN Distributes Bradford T-shirts," *Cherokee Phoenix*, February 2009, B2.

[47] Berry Tramel, "BCS National Championship: The Magic Disappears," *The Oklahoman*, 10 January 2009 http://newsok.com/bcs-national-championship-the-magic-disappears/article/3336792. [accessed 2 September 2013].

Bradford's season ended in a disappointing fashion. Nevertheless, he had one of the greatest seasons in NCAA history. He finished with over 4,400 yards passing and 48 touchdowns. Many NFL draft analysts projected him as the number one overall pick in the April amateur draft, if he decided to forego his junior season.[48] One of the biggest decisions of his young life lay ahead.

The disappointment in losing the title game influenced Bradford's decision to return to Oklahoma for his junior year. Bradford stated, "'I've dreamed about playing at Oklahoma since I was little and my three years here have been probably the best years of my life. I really feel there is no need to cut this experience short.'"[49] As a result, many picked the Sooners as an early favorite for the national title game again the next year.[50]

As OU prepared for the 2009 season, Bradford split his time between training and accepting his new responsibilities as an emerging icon. He signed thousands of autographs during the Sooners' spring game in April. Security guards eventually

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[48] "Heisman winner Bradford decides to stay at Oklahoma," *USA TODAY*, 15 January 2009, C3.

[49] "Bradford passes on NFL for another title shot," *The Dallas Morning News*, 15 January 2009, 11.

[50] Ibid.

pulled him away.[51] At one autograph session, a young couple even asked him to sign their baby.[52]

The first game of the 2009 season matched the Sooners against the Brigham Young University Cougars at the new Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. Several issues arose during the pre-season. A few offensive linemen suffered injuries, and one of Bradford's main passing targets, tight end Jermaine Gresham suffered a season-ending knee injury. These factors did not bode well for a quarterback who depended on these offensive players to ensure his safety.[53]

Right before halftime of the BYU game, Bradford completed an 18-yard pass to Brandon Caleb, breaking Jason White's career record for most passing yards. On the next play, a BYU defender drove the quarterback into the turf shoulder first. Bradford could not get up and had to have the trainers help him into the locker room. He never returned; the Sooners lost 14-13.[54]

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[51] Berry Tramel, "Bradford a True Hero," *The Oklahoman*, 13 April 2009, 2B.

[52] "Sign Here," *Sports Illustrated* 10 August 2009 http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1158611/index.htm. [accessed 2 September 2013].

[53] Pat Forde, "BYU Sends Bradford, OU Down and Out," < http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/columns/story?columnist=forde_pat&id=4450174&sportCat=ncf>. 5 September 2009 [accessed 1 December 2010].

[54] Ibid.

The medical prognosis explained that he suffered a 3rd degree sprain of the AC joint in his throwing shoulder. He would not play for the near future. Many questioned whether he threw away millions of dollars by returning to school instead of entering the NFL draft. The experts predicted that after an injury of this sort, his draft stock would plummet.[55]

Bradford rehabilitated his shoulder and returned several weeks later to help the Sooners beat Baylor University. The next game was against fierce rival, the University of Texas. Unfortunately, Bradford's comeback was short lived. He reinjured his shoulder in the first half. Several days after the Texas game, he declared that he would have season-ending surgery and would enter the 2010 NFL draft.[56]

In the months between the surgery to fix Bradford's shoulder and the NFL draft, the press projected many different outcomes for him in the draft. Some analysts questioned his toughness. Even though he stood close to 6'5", some believed that his small frame would not last long in the NFL.[57]

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[55] Jean-Jacques Taylor, "A major hit to Bradford's season, draft stock are in jeopardy," *The Dallas Morning News*, 6 September 2009, 1CC.

[56] Kevin Sherrington, "Joy and pain, talented Bradford deserved better than to go out like this," *The Dallas Morning News*, 18 October 2009, 1CC.

[57] "NFL Draft 2010," < http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/football/2010/draft/players/54621.html>. {accessed 1 December 2010].

Bradford's first test came at the NFL draft combine in February. There, he told the media that his shoulder would be 100 percent before the draft in April and probably stronger than before the injury.[58] Not only were scouts concerned about his injuries, some doubts also existed about the type of offense he played at Oklahoma and whether those skills would translate to the NFL.[59]

In the 2010 draft many NFL teams needed a quarterback, especially the losing teams who drafted in the 1-10 slots. The St. Louis Rams held the first pick in the draft. The Washington Redskins, Cleveland Browns, and Buffalo Bills also needed a quarterback; Bradford was on all of their draft boards. The early mock drafts had Bradford slated to go to the Washington Redskins at the number four spot.[60]

The possibility of Bradford in Washington, D.C. created a firestorm among American Indian activists who protested the use of Native American mascots. One unknown person created a

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[58] Dan Patrick, "Just My Type," *Sports Illustrated,* 22 February 2010. http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1166083/3/index.htm. [accessed 22 April 2011].

[59] "NFL Draft: Mel Kiper talks Sam Bradford," *The Oklahoman,* 22 February 2010. http://newsok.com/nfl-draft-mel-kiper-talks-sam-bradford/article/3441274. [accessed 22 April 2011].

[60] Jonathan Bales, "Top 90 NFL Draft Prospects, Post Combine," http://thedctimes.com/tag/sam-bradford/. 16 March 2010 [accessed 30 May 2013].

Facebook page that pleaded with Bradford not to sign with the Washington Redskins if they drafted him. The anonymous person implored Bradford to take a stand against the offensive use of American Indians (and Redskins, specifically) as mascots by refusing to join the team.[61]

Regarding the chances that the Redskins would draft Bradford, *Indian Country Today*, a media outlet that caters to American Indians, published an article on whether Bradford could preemptively sue so that the Redskins would not draft him. The article's headline read, "Top Indian footballer contemplates Redskins suit," which led the reader to believe that, in fact, Bradford was considering that option. However, nowhere in the story did Bradford state the possibility of doing so. When asked by a reporter if he considered asking the Redskins to not draft him, Bradford replied, "'Uh, no.'" Native activists orchestrated the whole controversy.[62]

Through March and early April 2010, it became clear that Bradford's shoulder had healed. His workout for NFL scouts in Norman startled many observers. His arm strength and accuracy

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[61] http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sam-Bradford-please-don't-sign-with-the-Redskins/. [accessed 10 February 2010].

[62] Rob Capriccisioso, "Top Indian Footballer Contemplates Redskins Suit," *Indian Country Today*, 5 March 2010. http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/ictarchives/2010/03/05/top-indian-footballer-contemplates-redskins-suit-81918. [accessed 1 June 2010].

were above the level many scouts anticipated. The draft rumors now had the St. Louis Rams drafting Bradford number one.[63]

Press coverage of Bradford increased dramatically in the weeks leading up to the draft. *Gentleman's Quarterly* sought him for a photo shoot. The photographer suggested that they get some girls over to his house and take a picture of Bradford with them in his hot tub, but he refused.[64] Bradford entered into a celebrity status that no other American Indian football player held before him, except perhaps Jim Thorpe.

Sports Illustrated featured Bradford on the cover of its draft preview issue heading into the 2010 draft. The headline accompanying his picture stated "Call to Arms: Franchise QBs are there for the taking – and Oklahoma's Sam Bradford tops the list."[65] His rise to the top of the draft stood in stark contrast to what Sonny Sixkiller endured on draft day in 1974.

Inside the draft preview issue of *Sports Illustrated*, NFL columnist Peter King wrote that, at times, Bradford's throwing mechanics were lazy because he had so much time to throw the

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[63] Jake Trotter, "Sam Bradford's 'Picasso' effort draws rave reviews at OU pro day," *The Oklahoman*, 30 March 2010. http://newsok.com/sam-bradfords-picasso-effort-draws-rave-reviews-at-ou-pro-day/article/3450029. [accessed 3 September 2013].

[64] Jim Corbett, "Bradford Poised to Shoulder Load; QB is Armed, Ready if Rams Call His Name with Top Pick," *USA Today*, 15 April 2010, 1C.

[65] Jake Trotter, "Bradford on cover of SI for 2nd time," *The Oklahoman*, 21 April 2010, 3C.

football. King also stated that Bradford possessed an NFL-caliber arm that could make all the necessary throws to succeed in the league. According to King, Bradford proved worthy if the Rams decided to make him their number one pick.[66]

In another story that profiled Bradford in that same issue, Damon Hack underscored the hard work Bradford put into his comeback from shoulder surgery and how he now stood on the threshold of being immortalized as a number one draft pick. Hack documented the long hours of rehabilitation Bradford went through. The one thing missing from Hack's story, as well as King's assessment of Bradford, was any mention of his ethnicity.[67] In just a few short years, the media made significant strides in their coverage of American Indian football players. Rather than focusing on Bradford's race, the pre-draft articles focused on his physical and mental tools that would ultimately determine whether or not he succeeded in the NFL.

The Rams selected Bradford with the number one overall pick. By the time training camp started, he had signed a $78

[66] Peter King, "Four For The Show," *Sports Illustrated* 26 April 2010. http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1168634/index.htm. [accessed 8 August 2011].

[67] Damon Hack, "A Shoulder To Lean On," ibid.

million dollar deal, with a $50 million dollar signing bonus. It made him the richest rookie in NFL history.[68]

Just as he did at Oklahoma, Bradford made the most of his opportunity with the Rams and became the starting quarterback. He led the Rams to within one game of making the National Football Conference playoffs and he garnered NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year honors. While there is always a certain amount of media attention on NFL quarterbacks, few reports dealt with Bradford's race. Perhaps, its novelty had dissipated while he was still in college, or the bigger story was Bradford's play on the field.

While the press had virtually forgotten about Bradford's Cherokee roots, he did not forget. Since his initial apprehension about getting involved in American Indian affairs, Bradford reached out to learn more about his heritage. He teamed with the United States Department of Agriculture and First Lady Michelle Obama in their "Let's Move! In Indian Country" program, a measure that helped kids remain active so that they can have a healthy future. The program brought together federal agencies, communities, nonprofit organizations, corporate partners, and American Indian tribes with the goal of ending childhood obesity in Indian Country within a generation.

[68] It will remain a record as well. In the 2011 collective bargaining agreement between the National Football League and the National Football League Players Association, the two sides set limits on rookie contracts.

Bradford and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack pointed out that a study of four year-old children found that obesity was more than twice as common among American Indian/Alaska Native children than among whites or Asians. The 2002 study also stated that nearly 15 percent of those receiving care from the United States Indian Health Services had diabetes.[69]

As part of the Let's Move in Indian Country initiative, Bradford joined the First Lady along with American Indian youth in harvesting crops from the White House garden. They also planted corn, squash, and beans, otherwise known as the three sisters of Indian agriculture. The Let's Move in Indian Country challenged twenty-five thousand American Indian children to earn the United States Presidential fitness award.[70]

Bradford also participated in public service announcements with Tahnee Robinson, the first female American Indian athlete to be drafted in the Women's National Basketball Association. Both Bradford and Robinson were also Nike N7 ambassadors.[71] The Nike N7 program provides economic support to Native American and

[69] "QB Bradford Urges Youth to be Active," *Sho-Ban News* (Idaho), 5 May 2011, 7.

[70] "First Lady Launches Let's Move! In Indian Country Initiative," *The Circle: News from an American Indian Perspective*, June 2011, 6.

[71] Besides Bradford and Robinson, Head Coach Craig Robinson of Princeton University, Jacoby Ellsbury, Boston Red Sox outfielder, long distance runner Alvina Begay, 2010 Winter Olympian Caroline Calve, and Chicago Bear offensive lineman Levi Horn are all Native ambassadors to the Nike N7 program.

Aboriginal communities in the United States and Canada. Nike N7 hoped to inspire the children of these groups to grow up healthy.[72] When asked about being a role model, Bradford replied, "'I've learned more about that in the past couple of years than I thought I would in my entire life. I think being a good role model to kids for me is continuing to be who I am and just continuing to be humble and set a good example, and just try to lead by example.'"[73]

Bradford's exceptional play on the field took precedence in the media over his race. While he did not endure the stereotypical coverage that earlier American Indian football players had, his race initially attracted significant media coverage. The media had made progress, nevertheless, in its portrayal of American Indian football players since the early days of the Carlisle Indian School. The portrayals of American Indian football players as wild savages were gone and replaced with infrequent mention of race. Initially, Sam Bradford did not know much about his heritage; he showed maturity, gaining the knowledge that he needed to become a role model for Native Americans.

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[72] http://www.niken7.com/ [accessed 22 August 2011].

[73] "Five Minutes with Sam Bradford," *Cherokee Phoenix* May 2009, A2.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

"It's a Trail of Tears in Oklahoma tonight."

> ESPNNews Anchor Todd Grisham in reference to the University of Oklahoma's loss to Texas Tech in football during the 2011 season[1]

American Indian football players throughout the years dealt with stereotypes that portrayed them as warriors, savages, and, sometimes, drunkards. For many of these players, they also had to contend with the shadow of Jim Thorpe, as many members of the media drew comparisons between him and all other Native American football players. All of them, at one time or another, had to deal with stereotypes and racial images perpetrated by the media. The media portrayed some American Indian football players as wild, warlike savages. That stereotype extended from the late 1800s of the American Indian boarding schools to Sonny Sixkiller who played football in the 1970s.

One would expect that the stereotypes would evolve with society but in many ways they did not. The negative stereotypes

[1] Mel Bracht, "ESPNEWS anchor apologizes for 'trail of tears' comment," *The Oklahoman*, 24 October 2011.

associated with American Indians lasted until Sam Bradford took the field for the Oklahoma Sooners, and even then he was forced to standout by the media because of his race. In the early years of minorities (specifically American Indians) in football, racism was pervasive. Yet, even in the modern era racism is still active in sports. However, reactions are different. Phil Taylor, a columnist for *Sports Illustrated*, wrote in his Point After column regarding Asian-American basketball player Jeremy Lin, "Any comment remotely related to race or ethnicity is studied under a microscope for trace amounts of bigotry, and it doesn't take much to build an instant groundswell of rage."[1] For the most part, the media has become aware of its responsibilities when it comes to depicting minorities. The dynamic of society changed as well. The United States public is now one-third Latino, Asian American, African American and American Indian. The United States census says that by 2050 the country will be half minority.[2] Stereotypes came under scrutiny because of these reasons.

While a minority of the American public disparaged the media's political correctness, the media has learned to show

[1] Phil Taylor, "Going on the Offensive," *Sports Illustrated*, 12 March 2012, 64.

[2] Sally Lehrman, "Unconscious Stereotypes Slow Newsroom Diversity," http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=8&t=diversity. [accessed 16 September 2013].

sensitivity when dealing with minorities, including American Indians. The advent of the twenty-four hour news cycle has lessened the use of pejorative language. Instantaneous news spawned by the development of the Internet and social media has also made it easier for the public to express outrage on the use of stereotypes.[3]

A case in point is the elimination of Indian football players as warriors and the warlike stereotype. In general, the use of war and football together has been tempered in the twenty-first century. American Indians and the war stereotype were long intertwined. When it came to American Indian football players the war stereotype started with the boarding school football teams in the 1890s and ended with Sonny Sixkiller in the 1970s.

American Indians, football, and war all seem to have a unique bond. Football at its core is a gladiatorial war game. Unfortunately, it was only natural for the media and other observers to attach American Indian football players to the war stereotype. Those analogies of Indians and war worked for football because it was a war game. It could not work in baseball, tennis, basketball, or in any other sport outside of boxing. While boxing is a martial sport, it did not carry the

[3] Ibid.

same warlike symbols as football. The various words and phrases used and the game's manifest destiny-like gain of territory all proved to be additives when associated with American Indians as they took to the gridiron.

The American Indian boarding school era of football was not far removed from the Indian wars of the late nineteenth century, and while that did not make it right to stereotype Native American football players, one could see the reasons for that connection. The war stereotype continued to play a small part in American Indian football player's careers until Sonny Sixkiller stepped on the field. Due to his aggressive-sounding surname, the media used racially stereotypical language related to war when describing Sixkiller's gridiron exploits.

When the next high-profile American Indian football player stepped on to the field in 2007, the media had eliminated the war stereotype for most part. After years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the American public tired of war analogies. A certain element of political correctness also removed mentions of war when it came to football. But, from time to time, a member of the media will make a mistake and compare a final score to a massacre.

While slip-ups are known to happen, the media must continue to work diligently in its portrayal of American Indians and eliminate stereotypes and racial imagery. While these elements

have been toned down, it has not been totally eradicated. One way to abolish stereotypes is to highlight American Indians at all levels of the sport. By having more American Indians participating in football, the media will have less of a chance in singling them out. "'There are black people in the NFL, so younger black kids want to be football players. If there aren't any Native American idols or celebrities, what's the motivation for our kids? I think there's a huge audience for it,'" said Ira Vandever, a Navajo and former quarterback of Drake University. Vandever refused to become another caricature like the one on the side of the Washington Redskins football helmet.[4] However, there needs to be more Ira Vandevers participating in athletics to make a difference. Only then will American Indians be able to overcome stereotypes and racial imagery.

The fact that too few American Indians participate in not only football, but also all sports makes them an easy target for media stereotypes. If more American Indians participated in football, the perception of them being the "other" would eventually wither away, just as it did for African Americans who participated in professional football and baseball. The American Indian community needs to become more visible. In the *New York Times*, Selena Roberts wrote, "American Indians have won

[4] Andrew Bagnato, "Scrambling from Stereotypes," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 November 2002.

less recognition in athletics than most ethnic or racial groups in the United States. They have not found their niche among the millionaires of sport or produced role models for children whose self-esteem can become threadbare."[5] The statistics in Indian country bear that out:

- About 40 percent of Native American children live in poverty.
- In the United States, Native American children live in single-parent families at the highest rate of any other group.
- Despite making up only 2 percent of the population in the United States, Native Americans make up an estimated 8 percent of the homeless.
- The suicide rate for Native American youths is three times greater than that of Caucasians.
- Native American children are twice as likely to become victims of child abuse than non-Hispanic Caucasian children.
- Native American youth have higher rates of mental-health and substance-abuse problems than any other ethnic group.[6]

Sam Claphan, a Cherokee who played for the Oklahoma Sooners in the mid-1970s, long advocated an athletic lifestyle for American Indian children.[7] Claphan stated that he believed the problem was that Indians were not exposed to athletics at an

[5] Selena Roberts, "In the Shadows: A special report; Off-Field Hurdles Stymie Indian Athletes," *The New York Times*, 17 June 2001, 1.

[6] Olin Buchanan, "Oklahoma's Bradford Serving as Role Model," http://collegefootball.rivals.com/content.asp?CID=860229. [accessed 23 October 2008].

[7] Claphan was the largest member of the Oklahoma Sooners national championship teams in 1974 and 1975. He also played for the NFL's San Diego Chargers. Chris Cobbs, "He's Chief of the Chargers: Offensive Tackle Sam Claphan, Half Cherokee, Is Committed to Helping Indian Cause," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 July 1986, 4.

early age and that the kids did not have role models in sports. Claphan looked up to Sonny Sixkiller.[8]

Unfortunately, American Indian athletes have had to combat stereotypes not only from the media, but also from college coaches. Russell Archambault, a Lakota Sioux and basketball player for the University of Minnesota 1997 Final Four team said, "'I didn't even go to high school on the rez, but when I was at Minnesota on a recruiting visit, one of the coaches said to one of my best friends, 'Don't take him out too many places, because you know how Indians are, they like to drink.'"[9] The same stereotypes followed American Indian athletes who participated in other sports.

Hopefully, there will be fewer stereotypical images like American Indian drunkenness in the twenty-first century. Bradford's rise to superstardom could be the catalyst that encourages more American Indians to play football. Shortly after Bradford won the Heisman Trophy, Steve Wieberg wrote, in the *USA Today*, to look no further than Anadarko, Oklahoma's Riverside Indian School, the nation's oldest federally-operated Indian boarding school to see the repercussions of Bradford's fame. Riverside had approximately six hundred students from

[8] "Claphan Likes Playing Football; Being Cherokee," *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate*, 31 December 1977, 17.

[9] Roberts, "In the Shadows," 1.

over twenty-five different states enrolled in fourth grade through high school. Through the years, Riverside's football program struggled to maintain sufficient student participation and the administration dropped the team for several seasons. In 2008, the team was reestablished and attracted more than forty students on its varsity squad.[10] Wieberg noted that Bradford inspired the students to play football, because he played quarterback, was a team leader, and his peers and coaches admired him. Jim Sutteer, Riverside's head football coach, suggested that Bradford directly influenced the Riverside players who signed up for the team. Sutteer said,

> They see him perform, and people tend to think they can do the same thing. Or at least want to try. The guy's carrying a 3.95 (grade point average). Never gets in trouble. Is well-spoken. Puts off the impression that he's danged-near perfect.... Something we hopefully can inspire these kids to do is not only look at him but look at good people like that in general.[11]

Administrators like Sutteer and many elders of Native American tribes are hoping that Bradford will inspire American Indian youth. In 2006-07, the National Collegiate Athletic Association tracked 306,000 athletes in their three main divisions. They found that just one-half of 1 percent were American Indians. In major college football, the percentage

[10] Steve Wieberg, "Heart of Oklahoma, pride of Cherokees; QB Bradford 'like Obama' for many Native Americans," *USA Today*, 10 December 2008, 1C.

[11] Ibid.

dropped to 0.4 percent.[12] With any luck, those numbers will increase with Bradford's influence.

Perhaps, that influence has already paid off. Jordan Eagle Road, from Talihina, Oklahoma, joined the University of Oklahoma football team as a preferred walk-on in the fall of 2011. Eagle Road received scholarship offers from smaller schools such as the University of Central Oklahoma and Northeastern Oklahoma State Oklahoma University, but had only lukewarm interest from the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, and Texas Christian University.[13] Cedric Sunray, an adjunct instructor in American Indian Studies at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, took an interest in Eagle Road after learning of his performance during his senior year in high school. Eagle Road quarterbacked the Talahina Golden Tigers to a 12-1 record while passing for 770 yards and 11 touchdowns, as well as rushing for 1,890 yards and 29 touchdowns. In his career, Eagle Road scored over one hundred touchdowns.[14] Bacone College, a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)[15] school, offered Eagle Road a

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Michael Kinney, "Walk-on is hope of a Nation: Talahina Choctaw shuns full scholarship to play for D-I OU," *The Norman Transcript*, < http://normantranscript.com/headlines/x151680906/Walk-on-is-hope-of-a-nation-Talahina-Choctaw-shuns-full-scholarship-to-play-for-D-I-OU/print>. 28 August 2011 [accessed 11 December 2011].

[14] Ibid.

scholarship. Sunray noticed that not one Division I school had offered a scholarship. Sunray said, "I thought to myself, a kid that scores 112 rushing touchdowns in his four-year (high school) career, has a 3.5 grade point average, a 25 ACT score, he's an identifiable straight up Indian boy, and he didn't have any D-I offers?" Sunray met with OU head coach Bob Stoops and Bruce Kittle, the football team's recruiting coordinator. Sunray presented the coaching staff with Eagle Road's information and game tapes. Not long after the meeting, Jordan Eagle Road had an offer to walk-on at Oklahoma.[16]

In some cases, the American Indian football players are not easily identifiable to the mainstream media. Tyler Bray, who played quarterback for the University of Tennessee from 2010 to 2012, is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Unlike Sam Bradford, Bray played college football in relative anonymity even though the University of Tennessee team was equal to Oklahoma's football program. This was possible because Bray did not look like a Native American. Throughout his playing career, Bray's race was ignored in news articles. Even when he was involved in several alcohol-related incidents, the media did not

[15] The NAIA is a considerable step down from NCAA athletics.

[16] Kinney, "Walk-on is hope of a nation."

mention that he was an American Indian.[17] This was in contrast to how the media responded to Wahoo McDaniel.

The media's coverage of Bray illustrated another difference in identifying American Indians involved in football. The difference between Tyler Bray and Sam Bradford is that Bradford looks like an American Indian, while Bray does not. The common link between all of the Native American football players profiled in this study is that they looked like Indians. They had dark hair, dark eyes, and a dark complexion. The fact that the media highlighted those men who looked the part and ignored the racial aspect of those who did not is significant. For the media, if one does not look like an Indian, then one is not an Indian.

Optimistically, American Indian football players will become a more prominent part of the game, both at the collegiate and professional levels. Perhaps, their accomplishments will stand on their own and not be compared to Jim Thorpe or Sam Bradford. This does not mean that a Thorpe or Bradford should not be an inspiration for young American Indian athletes.

Over the course of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the media reduced the racial language and stereotypes they perpetrated on American Indian football players. That was

[17] Patrick Brown, "Tennessee Vols' Tyler Bray Linked To Vandalism," http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2012/jul/26/uts-bray-linked-to-vandalism-tennessee/. 26 July 2012 [accessed 15 March 2013].

in stark contrast to how the media presented the Carlisle football team from the 1890s to 1918 or even Sonny Sixkiller in the early seventies. As seen in the case of Sam Bradford, the stereotypes associated with American Indian football players of the past have all but been eliminated in the twenty-first century media due to the evolution of society that no longer accepts negative stereotypes and racial images. While the stereotypes applied to American Indian football players are absent, Native Americans are still singled out for their ethnicity by the media. While stereotypes and racial imagery in football has improved dramatically, work remains.

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