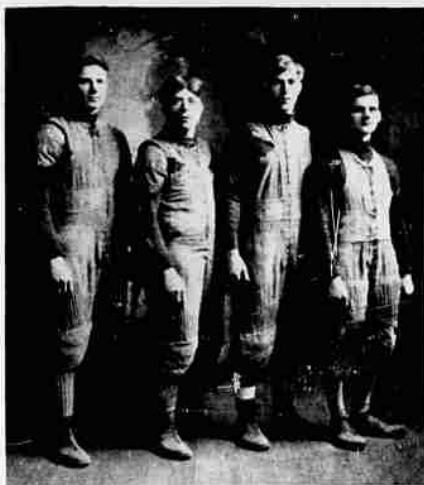




These 1906 uniforms typify old-time displays.

The new museum for play-for-pay football in Canton, Ohio, is loaded with smiles, sentiment—and action

By **RICHARD McCANN**

Director of the National Professional Football Hall of Fame

as told to Chuck Such

whose use on a football team I still can't fathom.

We have championship pennants, too, one from the Providence (R.I.) Steamrollers of 1928. In those days, players on championship squads received gold footballs. Now that's one item I have yet to find to add to the museum.

Speaking financially, you've probably heard how the old stars played for as little as \$5 a game. That's true, but there was big money to be had, too. Back before the deflated dollar, Jacksonville, Fla., paid Ernie Nevers \$15,000 for signing a contract. Two games later the club went bankrupt, but Nevers had the cash.

College coaches played pro football on Sundays to pick up extra money. Knute Rockne is associated with Notre Dame, but graybeards in Massillon, Ohio, will tell you: "Rockne?—oh, you mean the fellow who played with the old pro Tigers." Of course, the Nesser brothers, great players for the Columbus (Ohio) Panhandles, will dispute this. They played pro games against Rockne six times in a row, and each time Rockne was on a different team. But in the Hall of Fame, we have Rockne's helmet, and it's one he used at Massillon.

WE ALSO have probably the most extensive collection of old team photos in the world. But not all the star players are shown; some were camera-shy in those days. You see, on Saturdays they were simon-pure amateurs at some college and aiming for Walter Camp's All-American list. On Sundays they were miles away butting heads for bucks. Guy Chamberlain was a college coach who used to play end for the Canton Bulldogs to fatten his wallet. Against Can-

ton's great rivals, the Massillon Tigers, he found to his astonishment that the player opposite him was his star college lineman, a six-days-a-week amateur.

Although we've accumulated enough historical items to give visitors a completely new show every six months, we're still looking for relics of the era of Red Grange, Bronko Nagurski, and Jim Thorpe. I want two Thorpe items in particular.

ONE is the shoulder pads Thorpe wore. Many opponents claimed that Thorpe had sheet-metal or iron ribs fitted into them; no man, they said, could hit as hard as Thorpe did with just human muscle. But Jack Cusack, now a Texas oil millionaire but once Thorpe's mentor, denies this. He bought Thorpe's equipment and says it was the same as other players used. Everybody is pretty sure the equipment still exists, but nobody knows where.

And the other Thorpe treasure we want is his collection of Olympic medals. The medals were taken away from him when it was discovered he had once played baseball for \$50. Football is very proud of Thorpe and the role he played in developing the game, and we'd give those medals proper honor. Once we received a tip they were in a Washington, Pa., shop where they had once been displayed, and we wasted no time in trying to track them down. Unfortunately, all we found was the placard on which they had once been mounted.

Somebody else had long since taken the medals. We wonder where they are today—and how we can get them for Pro Football's Hall of Fame.



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first president of major pro league. Thorpe carries ball for Canton against Columbus Panhandles in 1919 game (right).

