“The New Carlisle of the West”

Haskell Institute and Big-Time Sports, 1920–1932

by Keith A. Sculle

Sports in America responded to the complex needs of a society undergoing fundamental changes at the start of the twentieth century. Industrialization and urbanization introduced leisure and swelled the country's population nearly twofold in the thirty years before 1900. Transition to a consumer-based culture brought into question the traditional values of work, self-denial, group responsibility, and production. Sports contrastingly embodied traditional values with tangible results where heroes symbolically certified these same values. They became one mechanism for subcommunities to bring order to group participation in a valued activity. Football became especially significant; its code of teamwork and controlled aggression dramatized values dear to capitalist elites. School sports raised special controversy about competition whose emphasis on winning against prominent rivals often led to professionalism in a non-professional and educational environment. While this professionalism was a function of those so-

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Advertisement for a 1928 football game between Haskell Institute and St. Xavier College.

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Amherst groups that could attend college, the educators who were the arbiters of school sports rejected professional emphasis as subversive to their educational mission. Recurring scandals in the sports departments, however, testify that this edict was essentially disregarded. Anxieties about school sports for a society in profound transition intensified when the stakes involved Native Americans on whom the dominant society intended to impose its values.

Assimilation through education was one of the nation’s principal solutions to the “Indian problem.” Assimilationists held that Indians could learn to rise from savagery by adopting white culture, that is, by becoming “civilized.” Indian education became a national concern in the 1870s when the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) established several types of schools, including mission schools on reservations that offered either day schools or residential boarding, and off-reservation boarding schools. However, Richard Henry Pratt’s off-reservation boarding school founded in 1879 at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, became the model for Indian education. It spawned a highly publicized big-time sports program, the reputation of which still outshines the school’s other accomplishments in popular memory. This was one of two times that sports placed Indian schools in the national limelight.

The second episode occurred between 1920 and 1932 when, because of the remarkable success of its sports program, Haskell Institute of Lawrence, Kansas, won fame as “The New Carlisle of the West.” Although little remembered today, Haskell’s athletic achievements during this time provoked strong reactions. Unaware of the impending clash between Haskell’s white supporters and critics, the school’s athletes had but a short time to show their talents in spectacular performances from coast to coast and abroad.


Including sports as a part of the overall educational program—a philosophy later adapted by Haskell Institute—was first developed at Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Richard Pratt enthusiastically sponsored football as part of Carlisle's program believing that it, as well as baseball and music, would elicit "compelling respect" for Native Americans' capacity to fulfill the assimilationist dream. To assist Carlisle's rising football fortunes, Pratt hired an equally promising young coach, Glenn S. "Pop" Warner. Warner developed a distinctive style of play for the young men whose remarkable results led to a popular reputation for Native American football prowess in the "Warner system." Relying on numerous drills to achieve rapid play execution, this system compensated for the sizes of the players, who usually were smaller than their opponents. The Warner system created the impression of an open style in contrast to the dominant wedge formations and mass plays in the days when football required player bulk and often led to violence. Carlisle players kicked many field goals during an era when their point value varied from season to season—equal to or only one point less than a touchdown. As a result, a special formation later evolved into the single- and double-wing, and highly memorable occasional trick plays further highlighted Warner's system. Absolutely no proof exists of an inherent racial predisposition among Indians for this fluid and clever kind of play, although some anecdotal claims have been made for learned cultural tendencies toward it. In a race-conscious society, however, victorious Indian football became a spectacle highlighted by sports journalism. Results were incredible in their own right. Carlisle won 103 games, lost 40, and tied 8 in the thirteen seasons Warner coached between 1899 and 1914. (He did not coach Carlisle between 1904 and 1906.) The legendary Jim Thorpe can be listed with numerous other Carlisle stars including Gus Welch and Bill Dietz, who later coached Haskell football.

Big-time sports, however, tested the limits of propriety. Even under Pratt's benevolent superintendency, for example, the school extended its national search for talented youth to athletes and scheduled games against distant teams, which removed players from classrooms for long durations. This latter practice was rationalized on the grounds that travel was an excellent teacher. After Pratt's retirement in 1904, less principled superintendents allowed significant excesses in big-time sports including an athletic fund separate from the school budget that paid Warner a salary twice that of the school's head. Players were subjected to verbal and occasional physical abuse, and they received a better diet than did other students. Congress quietly closed Carlisle in 1918 partly due to these excesses.

Haskell Institute was founded in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1884 to serve the Indian students who, as children, generally had been denied access to public schools with a standard curriculum either by the schools' distances from their homes or by racial discrimination. Haskell echoed Carlisle's pattern of both education and eventually big-time sports. As with Carlisle's Pratt, one educator, Hervey B. Pearis, was integral to the school's developments due to his length of service. He served the school for thirty-three years, beginning in 1887 as a twenty-one-year-old teacher. By the mid-1890s Haskell offered eight grades of "industrial" training for boys (bakery, blacksmithing, and carpentry) and girls (cooking, dressmaking, and housemaking) and two additional two-year normal and business courses.

Pearis repeated the assimilationist rhetoric of his day: But beyond this superficial acceptance,
his thoughts must be Induced from his deeds and from select speeches; most of his writing amounted to narrowly administratively correspondent and speeches characteristically platitudinous for one who frequently presided over formal occasions. Peairs was foremost a practical administrator. His long and extensive first-hand experience with Native Americans convinced him of their diversity and humanity and of the impossibility of facile generalization. His manner did not extend to elaborate statements born of rigorous theoretical examination. Thus he probably felt no need to reconcile the logical contradiction between the racial stereotype inherent in assimilationism and his respect for his students' capacities. Despite his philosophical inconsistency, his practical aims for Haskell became clear soon after he was appointed superintendent in 1898.

In the aura of administrative efficiency and reorganization that marked Peairs' early years, student enthusiasm for games was channeled to organized sports. Students had played varsity baseball and football since at least 1897. Organizing a track team, however, awaited the decision of the athletic association that Peairs formed in 1900, and early 1901 appears to mark the beginning of varsity basketball. In 1898, two years after Haskell graduated its first class, the alumni, faculty, and students founded an alumni association. Two of its officers long remained key boosters of their school's sports: George Shawnee and Frank O. Jones. Haskell's first paid coach was hired in 1898 for the football team in hopes that "the team will be stronger than any Indian team ever organized in the West"—an obvious reference to the incipient rivalry with Carlisle. The school also organized a second-string team with its own schedule of off-campus games. After Haskell compiled a winning record that included games against full-fledged college teams, Peairs launched the next season with an address to the team. He saw no contradiction between big-time sports and Haskell's educational mission, and he announced he would do everything in his power to provide a "first class team" including offering the players "training tables, which will be separated from the pupils' dining room."

Peairs exemplified his lifelong views on Indian education in a speech to Native American advocates gathered at Lake Mohonk, New York, in 1900. He repeated the prevailing belief that off-reservation boarding schools should offer practical education but allowed that the students who attended these schools had greater potential. Like the realists of the turn of the century who backed away from the earlier assimilationist dream of full equality for Indians once they were "civilized," Peairs believed special schools for Indians would be necessary for years to come. However, he insisted on these schools' present efficacy: "I never saw a Haskell graduate who was back in the blanket." Peairs acknowledged that some might not respond to Haskell's teaching but concluded, "We mean to have them so well trained that they can not only go back to the reserva-
tion and do work, but that they may be able to compete anywhere the same as other people do.” Although patronizing, Pearl was hardly an exemplar of the new assimilationism that consigned Native Americans to a marginal social role.

While students gradually progressed toward Pearl's educational aims in the classrooms, their achievements on the gridiron were almost instant. Under John H. Outland, who previously had coached at the University of Kansas, the 1902 team achieved Haskell's first regional fame. Players Emil Hauser, his sixteen-year-old brother Peter, and Chauncey Archiquette thrilled the press and spectators alike with their runs and kicks in a comparatively long season (eleven games) that included competitions against several state universities. Pearl affirmed his faith in the educational advantages of long-distance travel to games. The 1903 and 1904 teams repeated a pattern marked by individual stars and winning seasons of long duration against several major teams. Sensational press reports much like those that had lauded Carlisle's successes told of the Haskell team's impressive record despite the small sizes of its "dusky players." However, Haskell's 38–4 loss to Carlisle on the 1904 World's Fair grounds the day after the event closed was a crushing defeat amidst national publicity.

Haskell football's reputation ebbed and flowed. Following the 1904 game with Carlisle, both Haskell and Carlisle were designated as colleges although they served as schools for a wide age-range of children. This created a double standard: white high school players were permitted four years of competition in college whereas Native Americans were barred from competition after playing for Carlisle or Haskell. In 1907 Bemus Pierce, a former All-American from Carlisle, coached Haskell, but in 1909 Pearl came under fire for alleged administrative wrongdoings. He was exonerated, but the football program had been charged with financial misappropriations to pay a coach and players, some of whom were not students, and with giving dietary advantages to the players that the majority of the student body did not receive. Supervisor of Indian Schools Charles L. Davis concluded his investigation by questioning whether sports should be emphasized at the larger Indian schools. But football's reputation rose again with the great 1913 team, which won nine games, lost one, and outscores its opponents 419 to 31. Triumph propelled the coach to give an end-of-season oration that afforded the most complete rationale ever presented for Haskell's emphasis on football, replete with claims that triumphant football raised the school's standing in educational circles. Thus Haskell tasted big-time sports with its notoriety and exhilaration very early in the twentieth century.

In 1910 Pearl left Haskell when he was appointed superintendent of all Indian education for the BIA, but his views remained consistent. He assumed responsibility for developing the uniform curriculum that his predecessor believed was essential for improving Native Americans within their supposed limited capacities. Pearl guided the development of this curriculum, but no evidence has been found to suggest that he accepted its implications of an Indian ghetto. The great diversity of lifestyles and beliefs among Native American peoples enabled him to appreciate and work with the inherent difficulties in a uniform course for their betterment. But the BIA's ceaseless change of direction in educational matters frustrated him. While overseeing Indian education for the BIA, Pearl emphasized the aspects in the uniform course that he believed to be positive; once this curriculum was es-

11. Ibid., March 2, 1900. "Back in the blanket" was the vernacular reference to the practice of Native Americans who finished their education and returned to a traditional lifestyle.
13. The Indian Leader, November 14, 1902, October 2, 1903; New York Times, November 27, 1904.
14. The Indian Leader, December 9, 1904.

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John Levi, recruited for Haskell’s 1921 football season, was perhaps the school’s greatest athlete. Following his years as a student, Levi briefly played professional baseball before returning to join Haskell’s coaching staff.

Established, he requested reassignment to Haskell. Pears was reappointed superintendent of the Lawrence school in April 1917. A year later, with the simultaneous end of the wartime moratorium on program development and Carlisle’s demise, Pears’ notions that education should include a heavy athletic component could come into full play.

Pears augmented Haskell’s prominence among the surviving off-reservation boarding schools with the help of Lawrence’s chief newspaper, businessmen, politicians, and his own status as a BIA educator. He continued a booster’s alliance between Haskell and the Lawrence business community. As Rotary president in 1920–1921, for example, Pears spread the gospel of civic improvement. As superintendent, he placed Haskell’s resources at the disposal of local events such as providing floats for parades and offering the school’s dining hall for large banquets. Advantage proved reciprocal: the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce lobbied Congress for higher BIA teacher salaries, the Kiwanis Club advertised the school as one of Lawrence’s tourist attractions, and prominent businessmen campaigned for Pears’ promotion to commissioner of Indian Affairs in early 1921.

As the BIA emphasis shifted from off-reservation boarding schools toward a more balanced policy that included day schools, Pears persisted in defending off-reservation boarding school education as the pinnacle of Indian education. Although he lost his bid to become the commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1921, he was appointed chief supervisor of Indian education headquartered at Haskell. As the local press bragged that Haskell would become the national center for Indian education, Pears convened a meeting that recommended salary increases for teachers, a uniform high school curriculum, and a junior college normal course for off-reservation boarding schools. He also initiated a request that Haskell receive high school accreditation in Kansas. Although accreditation was not granted until 1928, Haskell experienced an immediate influx of students from schools that did not have the high school course. Thus by the early 1920s Pears had made Haskell prominent in—if not central to—Indian education. Pears’ dedication to education and his long-standing faith in the off-reservation boarding school concept refutes the idea that Haskell’s high school or junior college status was engineered for big-time sports. However, recruitment of older players seeking a high school or junior college education did serve the superintendent’s aspirations.


17. The Indian Leader, November 24, 1916, April 6, 1917.
Peairs was committed to sports personally and in principle. He demonstrated his enthusiasm in small ways such as by cheering with memorable ferocity at a girls' basketball game. And, after one boys' football season, the school paper reported:

he spoke briefly, but in his forcible, interesting way, he called attention to the fine work of the coach, captain, and team, and said success had come largely because they had been willing to deny themselves and to practice regularly in order to keep in condition. Mr. Peairs also commended the clean playing and good reputation they had earned during the season. In closing he stressed the fact that the same determination and teamwork that makes a good football team successful will bring success in one's daily life and business. 21

Peairs' pretensions for Haskell as heir to Carlisle's athletic fame appeared in the local newspaper's pages in early January 1920 as Haskell's competitive reputation advanced. The school athletic director's plan to schedule games with schools such as Marquette University, the University of Missouri, and even the "mighty" Harvard was reported during the first three months of 1920. 22 Memories of past football glory were kindled in the local press. Thus, when Haskell's third-year coach left the notoriously low-paying Indian service in midsummer for a more lucrative small-college position, Peairs seized the opportunity to reform Haskell's coaching staff. He searched for a well-known man who could also introduce the Warner system, and he hired Madison "Matty" Bell, who had graduated several months earlier from Centre College in Kentucky. Athletic fame was at least as much of Bell's qualifications as was Peairs' faith that the young man would make a fine coach. Far more was written about Bell having achieved national stardom at several positions on the "Wonder Eleven" of 1919 and having played three other sports than about how his talent might be transmitted to others. Bell not only assumed the vacant job of football coach but also took over the duties of athletic director, replacing Alfred M. Venne who had held that position for seven years. Further indication of Peairs' serious intent was the appointment of an assistant coach, Frank W. McDonald, a spring graduate of Baker University who had starred in three sports and was an acquaintance of Bell. 23

Bell began his term with the proclamation that he would help make Lawrence the "football center of the [Missouri] valley," and Peairs avowed several weeks later that Haskell had mobilized the best team since the glory days of 1902 and 1903. The eve of football season, however, found Bell and McDonald working furiously behind the scenes to overcome an athletic budget in arrears by relying on their own mechanical talents to repair the dilapidated and expensive equipment. Both coaches also began recruiting players as time permitted amidst training. 24

Haskell's first season of promised glory ended with evidence that future greatness was a reasonable possibility. Summary statistics boasted stunning triumph: seven wins, two losses, one tie, and 228 points to their opponents' 72 points. Program growth, however, would be a slow process replete with highs and lows. Discrimination, too, had to be overcome, but public relations dividends began to show in the second football game of the 1920 season when Haskell came from behind to earn a final tie score, thus contradicting the prejudice that Indians would not apply themselves when at a disadvantage. 25 Unfortunately, playing the game as part of the Douglas County Fair made it seem something of a side show and dramatized how much the team's reputation had to be enhanced to achieve prominent scheduling. Additionally, the season's play was not characterized by the finesse and spectacular plays that had become the hallmark of the Warner system, probably because

23. Ibid., March 9, June 15, July 28, August 6, September 4, 1920; McDonald, John Levi of Haskell, 10.
it demanded a precise teamwork beyond the reasonable capacity of the recent aggregation of players. Mass plays secured one victory, however, thereby earning praise for Haskell's courage in spite of the team's weight disadvantage; in this respect, part of the Carlisle publicity formula had reappeared. Few individual players stood out by season's end—success had been a team accomplishment, and the contributions of all starting players were recognized. Yet in retrospect, Haskell's hopes for the season as a whole outran its reality. The school newspaper's season summary testified to some students' zeal for football as the "greatest collegiate game" and the sport's virtue in allowing players and fans alike to submerge themselves and their prejudices to achieve school-wide fame on the gridiron. But throughout the season, adult enthusiasm advanced—and perhaps set too high—the expectations of athletic glory.26

That fall the Haskell Athletic Association and the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce joined forces to raise funds sufficient to offer a percentage of the earnings from a game in Lawrence to attract renowned opponents. Midseason reports of the team's victories were augmented by news that powerful Washington State University asked for a post-season game in Lawrence. "If the Indians should be able to win before a home crowd the game would be the means of popularizing Haskell athletics to an extent they have never enjoyed before," the press exclaimed in the rising mania. Pears declared the school's eagerness to compete against its illustrious visitor by arranging for the event to be in the shortest time possible following Haskell's last regular season game. Undaunted when plans for the contest with Washington State failed to materialize, Haskell's athletic boosters spawned even more grandiose plans for the next season with talk of scheduling opponents that could "enable Haskell to graduate into faster company." Probably due to Bell's connections, they announced one of those to be Centre College, which Bell fancied Haskell could beat.27

Assistant Frank McDonald's emergence as more than a technician was a point of major significance in the realization of Pears' athletic dream. McDonald had proven himself an excellent coach of the junior football team whose record—the best in four years—promised that its players would admirably fulfill their roles as the "reserves" and the future senior varsity athletes. Just as importantly, however, McDonald's capacity for charismatic leadership first showed itself in December when Pears called on him to quell a student protest against the quality of food that the many Carlisle transferes claimed inferior to their old school's menu. "Mac's" rapport with the students had risen quickly in the few months since he had come to Haskell, and it enabled him to appeal convincingly to the disgruntled students to focus in-


stead on school pride, which he equated with the athletic department's goal "to have Football Teams comparable to those of the former great Indian School." Football glory became a unifying force, and McDonald's talents earned him assignments to coach basketball and track.

The "minor" winter and spring sports of basketball, track and field, and baseball remained in football's shadow, but they provided an interlude for varsity athletics before graduation. In early 1921 Coach Mac's sensationalized reporting of his teams commanded much of the school's sports news, but football nonetheless garnered continued attention. With final arrangement of the 1921 sports schedule, characterized as "the heaviest in 5 years," the coaches recruited to meet the challenge. Baseball coach Matty Bell also announced his efforts to arrange a summer-long tour for the baseball team against college, town, and semiprofessional teams. The tour not only was good baseball practice, but it was a means to keep key football players in shape and make "Haskell known in athletic circles as Carlisle was once known." When the tour was canceled just after graduation amidst disavowals of having taken on players who were not Haskell students, the new glory era faced its first allegation of impropriety.

Varsity athletics did not divert Haskell from its educational mission. An extensive intramural program benefited the great mass of boys and girls throughout the school year. According to Haskell's creed, physical and intellectual education were professed as necessary halves for a whole student. "The How and Why of Trade Training At Haskell" delivered at the 1921 commencement by Nicholas Lassa, who had played football for both Carlisle and Haskell, resonated with unquestioning acceptance of the BIA's latest policy shift toward Indian self-dependence and implied that even for Haskell's best players, athletics was an activity coincident with their time there, not the primary reason for it.

The remarks of Tom St. Germain, whose former football days at Haskell and current law practice likely made him a voice of Indian authority, probably typified the feelings of many Indians fondly wishing for Haskell's succession to Carlisle: "Haskell is the only school we have to look up to, now." Haskell alone, he noted, gave "real Americans" the chance to show the world their abilities, including those in sports. "It is St. Germain's idea that the race should and does look to Haskell to carry the honors for the redskin like the United States looks to its Olympic team to 'bring home the bacon,'" reported the Lawrence Daily Journal-World. Sports helped diversify Indian talent and provide leadership; it probably offered an outlet for the feelings of many Native Americans about the need for role-modeling among a depressed minority in general and about Haskell's service in particular.

Hopes for Haskell's athletic glory would be satisfied. Girls were awarded their first basketball sweaters in 1921, a sign of that sport's renewed popularity. And student enthusiasm quickened, permitting a heretofore unthinkable uniformed cheerleader at basketball games in 1922, despite the biggest sport's unrealized ambitions the previous fall. Football's 1921 schedule, tougher than the previous year's, yielded modest results: five wins and four losses. Nonetheless, personnel improved. John "Skee" Levi, recruited from nearby Chillicothe Business College for the 1921 football season, flashed a few signs of his great running and throwing skills in his first season. While spending the summer of 1922 on campus preparing for the next football season, he also hit a baseball farther than anyone before on Haskell's field. Matty Bell left for a better-paying coaching job in March 1922, and he was replaced in July by Richard Hanley, who would coach a succession of Haskell's greatest football teams.

Hanley arrived with impressive credentials. He had splendidly quarterbacked the Washington

29. Lawrence Daily Journal-World, March 5, April 28, May 26, June 3, 1921.
30. Catalogue of Haskell Institute, June 1921 (Lawrence, Kans.: Haskell Institute, 1921), ii, 42, 44; Lawrence Daily Journal-World, November 4, 1920; The Indian Leader, June 11, 1920, June 3–17, 1921.
32. The Indian Leader, March 3, June 3–17, 1921; Lawrence Daily Journal-World, October 31; November 30, 1921, March 2, July 18, 25, 1922.
Haskell's homecoming celebration in October 1926 marked the dedication of the school's new stadium.

State University team where he had learned the Warner system. Warner's recommendation secured Hanley the primary job of football coach, but he also coached basketball and track and field, and he assisted in the boys' half of the physical education curriculum that had been added to the junior college in the fall of 1922.33 A relatively short but powerfully developed man, Hanley had fine player rapport, which was key to his exceptional success. For example, he challenged every player to increase the latest training room record in bench pressing by himself raising repetitions by one each time he passed by a workout station. His brother LeRoy, the assistant football coach and head baseball coach beginning a year after "Dick" came to Haskell, was talkative and consoling in contrast to his brother who stalked the sidelines during games "like a mad bull."34 Drilled, physically fit, and inspired, the team's single- and double-wing formations often awed reporters:

It is open, fast, and full of deception trick stuff. When the Indians line up there is no way in the world of knowing which way they are going to go or whether they are going to wind up running the end, bucking the line or forward passing, or maybe a combination.35

Talent had arrived by various routes and with different personalities. Some key players were recruited. Egbert Ward, a twenty-two-year-old Yakima, entered Haskell in 1923 at Hanley's invitation after the coach had seen "Egg" play high school football in Toppenish, Washington. Ward's leadership and teaching capacities first appeared under Hanley's close personal tutelage of him as quarterback (1924–1926). Following graduation, Egg chose to stay as Haskell's baseball and assistant football coach, and he coached through the spring of 1934. By contrast, Mayes McLain was a nineteen-year-old lured from Pryor, Oklahoma, with financial support to play fullback (1925–1926). The "blonde Cherokee" was a bullish "line plunger," whose incredible 254 points scored in his second year was publicized by McDonald as a college record. Apparently, however, he was a "tramp athlete"—one who sought athletic opportunity from school to school.36 Further

33. The Indian Leader, September 29, 1922; Lawrence Daily Journal-World, September 4, 1922.
35. Statement from one of several unidentified Los Angeles newspapers, quoted in The Indian Leader, January 4, 1924.
36. Egbert Ward, letter to author, June 5, 1991; McDonald, John Levi of Haskell, 57. McLain later attended Iowa University where he starred for two years in football but was denied additional eligibility because of his time at Haskell; George Hillman to Henry Roe Cloud,
contrast Elijah Smith, a twenty-one-year-old Oneida who came from an Indian school in South Dakota to take Haskell's unique curriculum for older students. The gifted "Eli" earned starting places in football, baseball, and—to his great surprise—on the track team, where he starred (1923–1926). He later observed:

I didn't go down there for athletics. I just went to go to school. And, then one of the things they were interested in down there was athletics. So I remember when they called for volunteers, I went out there with 'em. 37

This eclectic group of football players amassed season results that amazed observers: forty-three wins, nine losses, four ties, and 1,492 points to their opponents' 350 during Hanley's five seasons through 1926. That their schedules included many small colleges as well as some large ones tempers the evaluation only slightly.

Several starring players emerged: linemen Tom Stidham, Theodore Roebuck, Jack Norton, and Albert Hawley; ends Ansel Carpenter, Jerry Killbuck, and George Kipp; and backs Elijah Smith, Egbert Ward, and George Levi. These were the most reported players in various seasons, although George Levi's brother John is now best remembered. John's eighty-five-yard kickoff return for a touchdown on October 13, 1923, against the University of Minnesota highlighted one of his finest games, although Haskell narrowly lost (13–12) due to players' injuries. 38

Big-time sports at Haskell climaxed in 1926. That year the football team traveled across the nation, played several strong teams, and emerged with eleven wins, no losses, and one tie. This proved to be Haskell's single finest football team in the big-sports era. The five-day-long Pow Wow culminating in the first game played in Haskell's new stadium on October 30, 1926, highlighted the glorious season. Haskell whipped worthy opponent Bucknell Institute 36–0 to cap the frenzy. McDonald estimated that 125,000 visitors streamed through the homecoming, which included an encampment of four thousand Indians in native costume and tips covering the equivalent of twenty city blocks south of the campus and a continual succession of media events. 39 McDonald had arranged and promoted the entire extravaganza.

The 10,500-seat stadium with its monumental entrance, overwhelming every building on the campus to this day, engendered its own pride. The $250,000 construction cost was paid entirely from funds raised during a two-year campaign that McDonald headed and for which he and John Levi toured Oklahoma Indian country in early 1924 and early 1925. Haskell students of the 1920s and 1930s regularly tell with pride that no federal money was used to pay for the stadium. Oklahoma Indians paid for most of it. They might be viewed as "Oklahoma alumni," and for them McDonald scheduled a post-season game in 1924 against Oklahoma Baptist University. Oklahoma Indians drove long distances to the game's site in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and they outnumbered all other spectators to watch their local Haskell students play in the 55–0 victory. A spontaneously-arranged Haskell baseball game for Hominy, Oklahoma, against a team representing the nearby Fairfax community furthered the area's ties to Haskell. When it was learned that rival Fairfax had hired a Kansas City professional team to play for Fairfax in a heavily wagered contest against the local players manning the Hominy team, the Haskell players and their coaches impulsively decided to play for Hominy. Haskell's victory won the Quapaws' and Osages' lasting esteem along with their huge donations to the stadium fund from their vast mineral and oil wealth. Levi accompanied the 1925 tour, conjuring more legend with his upcoming tryout for the New York Yankees baseball team, thus furnishing the local hero greater luster. To many the dedication of Haskell stadium amidst the pag-

March 15, 1933, Central Classified Files, 2380/1924-Amusements and Athletics-750, RG 75, National Archives; The Indian Leader, December 24, 1926.

37. Elijah Smith, interview with author, February 14, 1992. After graduating from Haskell, Eli received a college athletic scholarship followed by a career as coach and teacher at the Sherman Institute in California.

Haskell's track team peaked in the mid-1920s with acclaimed runner Philip Osif (second from left). Osif appears with his 1927 two-mile relay teammates (left to right) John Roberts, Simon Manuel, and Cyrus Walking, and coaches Arthur R. Stark (far left) and Dick Hanley (far right).

entrance of the 1926 homecoming also symbolized Indian progress. Track as a team sport peaked simultaneously with football. On occasion individual runners previously had gained prominence and recognition for Haskell. In 1924 John Levi nearly qualified for the Olympics in the decathlon, but an injury to his leg received playing baseball forced him to drop out of the final selection for the United States team. In 1926 Haskell's tradition for long-distance relay teams blossomed under the leadership of Lutz Whitebird and Philip Osif, the latter an eighteen-year-old Pima and one of the many small endurance runners from the Southwest. The one- and two-mile teams ran with great credit in the series of regionals track meets held each spring. Osif's first place in July in the Amateur Athletic Union's six-mile meet, however, was the high-water mark. Performance declined somewhat the following year when Whitebird's four-year eligibility expired, and appendicitis forced Osif to withdraw.

Indian policy, meanwhile, was approaching its first fundamental reform in forty years. The secretary of the interior contributed in June 1926 by ordering a comprehensive survey of Indian life, published in 1928 as the Meriam Report. It began with Haskell's inspection only two weeks after the exultant stadium dedication. "A far more splendid memorial and contribution could have been made to this school if the same amount of money had been used to reconstruct the living quarters," the 847-page report scolded. Moreover, typical of big-time sports' corruption, Haskell had been "harboring athletes of the most dubious kind"; and although these flagrant abuses had been stopped since the survey was conducted, athletic recruiting continued. While the stadium "can doubtless be defended," why permit past abuses in a national school when "schools everywhere in the United States are engaged in a clean-up of athletics," the reporters asked. Haskell was not the only large boarding school that the Meriam commissioners found guilty of big-time sports excesses, but it was the only one singled out for attack.

A distinguished group of educators and social scientists authored the report's sweeping proposals to replace the assimilationist policy that they believed responsible for comprehensive In-
dian degradation. Chief among those who proposed educational remedies was W. Carson Ryan who had graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University (1907) and held a Ph.D. from George Washington University (1918), paragon of the white college intelligentsia and spokesman for a pluralistic society. His series of educational surveys proposing solutions to many social ills earned him a prestigious government service record since 1912, and he advocated the progressive educational philosophy. Thus he insisted that Native Americans would not be better educated by tinkering with the existing system. It must be wholly reordered in response to the global poverty and ignorance threatening “native peoples” adjustment to industrialization. Off-reservation boarding schools should be restricted to high schools that teach skills readily marketable upon graduation or preparatory for integrated colleges. For younger children, the uniform curriculum should be replaced with community schools where children could grow up with their families and learn tribal culture. School sports were another realm of Ryan’s expertise, and in a 1929 report he sermonized especially against the evils of overemphasized intercollegiate football created by the alumni and allied promoters. In policy and procedure Ryan and Pearls were poles apart. When the Hoover administration adopted the Meriam Report as manifesto and then hired Ryan as mentor for Indian educational reform, Haskell’s big-time sports program was living on borrowed time.44

The latter 1920s and early 1930s witnessed the last vestiges of Haskell’s big-time sports era. Although Pearls had been transferred in 1926 to Washington, D.C., Haskell sports thrived under his successor Clyde M. Blair. In 1927 Haskell reduced its primary and intermediate grades and added four junior college curricula, the most popular and publicized being physical education created especially to furnish teachers and coaches for the unspecialized Indian day-school staffs. In 1927 McDonald was promoted to athletic director and given charge of the new athletic curriculum. Blair probably did persuade the athletic association, however, to stop supporting athletes, as it had done since the inception of its own treasury during the 1924 stadium fund raising.45 That same year Haskell recruited one of its finest and most versatile athletes, Wilson “Buster” Charles, who starred in football, basketball, and track and field. Because Charles wanted to attend Haskell, he refused lucrative offers to several other schools.46

Football slumped in 1927 and 1928 under John Thomas, who succeeded Dick Hanley. Coach Thomas’ two-year record of ten wins, nine losses, and one tie, the weakest during the big-time sports era, was due partly to the graduation of most of the 1926 champions; but it was also attributable to Thomas’ coaching. Although he had a fine reputation as both player and coach, Thomas introduced an unfamiliar formation and a complicated system of signals. Eventually he adopted the Warner system, but it did little good. Thomas took the exception- al way out by resigning one game before the end of his last season.47

William “Lone Star” Dietz coached the grand finale. Hired in 1929, Bill satisfied not only the standard requirements of great player and coach, but he was Native American and personally linked with the reputation Haskell sought. He had starred at Carlisle where he learned the Warner system from its master. He had also coached Dick Hanley. A man of great depth, Dietz was an artist as well as master football strategist. He is remembered as a coach of coaches who motivated variously by personal understanding, either inventive or compassionate, and dramatic public flair. Dietz assembled an all-Indian coaching staff with Egg Ward and John Levi, and his teams won twenty-three, lost fourteen, tied one game, and

45. Lawrence Daily Journal-World, August 19, 1927; The Indian Leader, May 20, 1927; McDonald, “Unusual Background for Beer Distributor,” 27.
46. Charles interview.

"THE NEW CARLISLE OF THE WEST"
As the glory days of \hu{Haskell's big-time sports} drew to a close, the 1931 football coaching staff poses near the stadium's monumental arch. \hl{Left to right are John Levi, Bill Dietz, Frank McDonald, and Egbert Ward.}

scored 629 points to their opponents' 431. Accomplishment again depended on split-second timing and occasional deceptive plays honed in perpetual practice, although weight disadvantages began to be exaggerated for reporting's sake.  

Athletic prowess was the players' most common denominator. Robert Holmes, for example, was an Ottawa who had run away from Haskell as a fifteen-year-old in 1926. He eagerly enrolled three years later after his ex-Haskell track coach rewarded his small boarding school team by allowing them to watch Haskell defeat Tulsa University. Although it was his cousin who was recruited, it was the slight, 135-pound Bobby whose incredible speed and coordination raised Haskell's distinction. He ran the one-hundred-yard dash in 9.5 seconds and broke the school's javelin record on his first throw. As a fleet football halfback (1930–1933) Bobby especially excelled. Football paved his way for an education at a succession of colleges following Haskell. After an injury shortened his time in professional football (1943), he turned to a teaching career in the BIA.  

Contrast the anticipated prominence of John Crow, a seventeen-year-old Cherokee from Oklahoma who was recruited for football and track and starred in football (1930–1932), rising to captain, a sign of peer respect, in his last year. The combination of a free education during the Great Depression, a chance to play, and an opportunity to earn a little money (fifteen dollars every three months in Haskell's Kansas National Guard unit) attracted Crow. After graduation he played professional football under Dietz at Boston (1933–1934) until he pursued a more stable career in the BIA where he became a top-ranking administrator in Washington, D.C. Of the five ex-Haskell players Dietz brought to the Boston professionals in 1933, Crow was one of only two rehired for a second season.  

Due to Crow's fine play, Geronimo Alexander, a Creek who McDonald recruited to build the team after the graduation of numerous 1926 players, was restricted to the reserve team as center (1927–1930). Alexander had intended to enter Haskell before McDonald's invitation, but he had


50. Crow interview. Born John Oren Crow, he regularly used the name John Crow when he began working for the BIA. Newspaper sports reports, however, use the name Oren Crow; for example, see Lawrence Daily Journal-World, October 11, 1932.
not been offered a scholarship. Entering as a twenty-two-year-old who gained fifteen pounds as a result of Haskell's "training table," Alexander nonetheless contracted pneumonia and pleurisy by 1930 and was forced to leave Haskell.51

Jack White, Arapaho-Cheyenne, nephew of the Hauser brothers and a letterman at end and fullback (1930–1935), came to Haskell as an eleven-year-old with his mother, a school cook. He played football at several colleges after Haskell and earned a master's degree in guidance counseling which he used with the BIA. White is not alone in remarking on the sense of family that pervaded Haskell in the big-time sports era and persists especially among its Albuquerque alumni to this day.52

The more often reported players in various seasons included linemen John Crow, Lawrence Johnson, and Victor Costa; end James Grant; and backs Robert Holmes, Walter Johnson, Buster Charles, Pete Shepherd, and Louis Weller. Charles' passing, running, and punt labeling him a "triple threat" (1927–1930), while Louis Weller's long "broken field" runs (1928–1931) became legendary and earned him the nickname "Rabbit." Haskell boasted his 105-yard touchdown run against Creighton on October 26 as the longest college run of 1929.53

Weller became the fourth Indian football coach in 1932, and he also coached the 1932 basketball team.

Another episode of athletic glory came in 1930. McDonald arranged a sports spectacle for the annual football banquet at the end of March. More than 350 athletic directors, coaches, sportswriters, and retired Indian athletes—from Carlisle and Haskell—were invited not only to celebrate the past season but to hear Pop Warner. Warner recited glories of Carlisle's sports past, urged Haskell to carry on for the Indian race, and crowned Haskell "the new Carlisle." Dick Hanley appeared unexpectedly, and the conviction watched Haskell drub Pittsburg State Teachers College in a game according to experimental rules of Warner's devising. Buster Charles won the decathlon in the Kansas Relays in April with a record-breaking score. Peairs was reappointed superintendent in July and immediately disclosed his plan for Haskell to become an accredited junior college with two full years. A record 1,240 students enrolled in the 1930–1931 school year. Sports' stature rose with a scheduled October game against the University of Kansas. Haskell lost but had staged a great pageant. Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne named Weller to his All-American team and furthered Haskell's image by scheduling a game for 1932.54

But Haskell's glory was short lived. Over his request for an extension in his position, Peairs was retired at age sixty-five in June 1931, according to new BIA requirements. The BIA press release at once announced an end to Haskell's junior college standing and tried to allay fears for the school's future as an educational institution. Indians' best interests in higher education would be with integrated rather than separate schools, the BIA declared. Dietz, fearing the demise he had witnessed at Carlisle, claimed alarmists had magnified isolated cases of recruiting excesses and professionalism in sports and announced that he was available for another job. At season's end in 1931, new superintendent Robert D. Baldwin told McDonald that the BIA was restricting future football schedules to eight games to allow players to concentrate on classroom work. McDonald's protest that such arrangements would weaken the athletic association's treasury was ignored. In September 1932 W. Carson Ryan, addressing the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, announced some changes in athletic policy including possibly removing two of the three coaches from athletic association salaries and placing them on faculty salaries. With the termination of junior college course offerings, many players were unable to return to Haskell, and the school suffered its poorest football season in the big-time.

53. The Haskell Annual (n.p., 1930), 93.
54. Lawrence Daily Journal-World, March 31, July 1, October 11, December 6, 1930; McDonald, "Unusual Background for Bose Distri-

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sports era. At the close of 1932 when the Baldwin-controlled athletic association board refused to renew McDonald’s contract, a sad exchange of recriminations between friends of the Indian divided by their view of big-time sports became front-page news in Lawrence and Topeka. Bronson Cutting, U.S. senator from New Mexico, requested an investigation of the imbroglio, forcing Ryan to explain the BIA’s purposes. In another press report, the BIA acknowledged its opposition to Haskell’s “commercialized inter-institutional athletics,” and it declared the matter officially closed. Superintendent Baldwin left Haskell, and the alumni association pressed for a favorable replacement. Former superintendent Clyde Blair was reappointed, probably to soothe and reassure Haskell’s constituents. McDonald did not further contest his release. Coach Dietz left in March 1933.

Varsity sports continued thereafter but without reaching the same heights as it had during the thirteen years through 1932.

Whites cheered, organized, debated, and twice quashed big-time Indian sports. The programs’ endurance either stands as dramatic testimony to the Indian capacity for success in the white man’s ways or as a waste of resources better spent educating the greater mass of Indian people struggling to live in two worlds. Thus whites framed their alternative views of big-time Indian sports. Lifelong commitment to the assimilationist dream without a record of brutality attests to Pears’ humanity, and lifelong friendships attest to McDonald’s bonding with those who attended Haskell in the big-time sports era. Their work was not merely self-aggrandizing manipulation; it was a deeply satisfying service reciprocated in genuine gratitude. How else to account in part for the “Oklahoma alumni”? How else to account for Mac’s popular esteem? On the other hand, cases of big-time sports excesses identified during the long national controversy over school sports revealed liberalism’s impulse for broad social betterment rather than for advantage to the few. Romantic exaggeration of Indian spiritualism and community as therapeutic alternatives to “American industrialism with its mass production and mass living,” Ryan’s words, reveals more of the BIA’s added reformist ideology. Big-time sports threatened the very values supposedly cherished in Indian culture. Both sides’ benevolent aims, nonetheless, were conceived without Indian self-determination.

Contemporary scholarship aims less at analysis of Indian policy formation and calls for attention to Indian accommodation of white policy and appreciation for Indian success in two worlds. Contemporary surveys were too biased with assimilationist intent or opposition to it to offer objective information for or against big-time sports. But subsequent interviews of the period’s athletes reflect their genuine and unquestionable joy in athletic self-expression and teamwork at Haskell. Ambition to prove racial capacity or lay claim to Carlisle’s heritage were not the players’ purposes, but many adults did assert these goals. Some Native Americans lament the opportunity to boost Indian morale, which they believed was lost when big-time sports ended at Haskell; others point to the reduced chances for Indian athletes since that time. Some believe talent will reemerge in sports that match Indian skills. Whatever the reality, sports have long been an important social concern for many Native Americans, and the amazing record of Indian athletes during Haskell’s big-time sports era is uncontestable.

