

Collegiate football's centennial

Collegiate sport started in 1874 still reigns supreme

By the CANADIAN
INTERCOLLEGIATE
ATHLETIC UNION

The McGill Rugby Football club in Oct. 1874 hosted the Harvard University team from Cambridge, Mass. Following that first Canadian university football game the sport was to reign supreme for 50 years at the college level.

During the 1880's, the big three -- McGill, Queen's and Toronto -- began to compete on an annual basis with each other and later on in that decade were joined by the Royal Military College and the Ontario Agricultural College. During the 1890's Ottawa College, Queen's and the University of Toronto won the Canadian Rugby Union Championship five of the first six years the Dominion Final was played.

The 1898 season opened with the universities competing under the banner of the newly formed Canadian Intercollegiate Rugby Football Union. The Yates Cup, the oldest annually awarded football trophy in Canada, was donated for the competition.

The Intercollegiate Union in 1900 withdrew from the Canadian Rugby Union but returned in 1905. When Lord Grey put up his \$50.00 trophy for annual competition in 1909, it was to become the property of the universities for seven of the next nine years the cup was awarded.

The University of Toronto won the first three--1909, 1910 and 1911. From most accounts the McGill teams of 1912, 1913 and 1919, with the late great Frank "Shag" Shaughnessy, Canadian Football League and Baseball Hall of Famer, would undoubtedly have taken home the trophy had they decided to play the final game.

The University of Toronto in 1920 again won the top award and then it was the turn of the tricolour of Queen's under the leadership of the late Billy Hughes. With Frank "Pep" Leadley and the late Harry Batstone, the Golden Gaels ran a consecutive string of 26 victories from 1922 to 1925 including three consecutive Grey Cups in 1922, 1923 and 1924.

1924 Marked the last time a university team was to win the Grey Cup and the Intercollegiate Union formally withdrew from Grey Cup competition in 1934.

The rapid development of commercial sport did not, however, sound the demise of college ball but directed intercollegiate officials to concentrate on internal growth.

The Western Intercollegiate Rugby Football Union was formed in 1927 comprised of the universities of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the Hardy Cup was put up for competition.

The league was never strictly intercollegiate until 1967. Since 1927, some university teams had competed against senior and professional teams within their respective provinces while others aligned themselves with leagues south of the border because of the economics of travel.



In 1967, with the initiation of the C.I.A.U. National Championship series, the University of Calgary joined the four charter members of the union to form the Western Intercollegiate Football League. From a shaky start and due primarily to the constant prodding and pushing of Dean Maury Van Vliet, through the years, the W.I.F.L. finished strong to participate in six and win four national championships since 1967.

The University of Western Ontario in 1929 joined Queen's,

Toronto and McGill to form the Senior Intercollegiate Football League and in 1934 the Intermediate Intercollegiate Football Union was formed to provide competition for those other schools such as Ottawa, Royal Military College, Bishop's and Loyola who were not eligible for membership in the Senior League.

As the number of teams continued to develop in Central Canada, there appeared a succession of leagues and conferences until the present day where eleven teams from Ontario and three from Quebec have combined to form one league with two geographic divisions of seven teams each.

During the 40's and 50's, the names of Metras and Tindall were synonymous with intercollegiate football. Metras, the coach at Western, retired in 1969 after thirty years with a career record of 106-76-11, while Tindall -- tied with Metras for games won -- commenced his 28th season at Queen's with 106-74-2 record. In addition to the coaches the legendary Joe Krol, Russ Jackson and Ron Stewart were all products of that era. Krol later became a one-man wrecking crew for the Toronto Argonauts, while Jackson and Stewart teamed up to lead the powerful Ottawa Rough Riders of the '60s.

St. Mary's at Dalhousie in September of 1947 marked the inaugural of Atlantic Intercollegiate Football but it was not until 1965 that the Bluenose Intercollegiate Football Conference was formed.

More than any other single person, Don Loney at St. Francis Xavier University, who from 1957 to 1973 garnered ten Atlantic university crowns and a national championship, was primarily responsible for the growth and development of intercollegiate football in the Maritimes. Gus MacFarlane at Mount Allison and Bob Hayes at St. Mary's as well as people like Rick Black and Jim Foley have also helped to put Atlantic university football in the public eye.

This centennial year, 26 teams in four divisions coast-to-coast will be competing for the Vanier Cup, emblematic of Canadian Intercollegiate Football supremacy.

Initiated in 1965 as an invitational event, the Canadian College Bowl became the National Championship game in 1967 and since that time has contributed more than \$70,000 to the Canadian Save the Children Fund.