

Time Tunnel

By Archie Prescott

As the mists of time begin to part we find ourselves in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day, 1896. The newspapers and sports fans of Chicago have been whipped into a frenzy over the big college football game which will take place that afternoon in the city. The powerhouse of Michigan, accompanied by 300 rooters, has come to take on the upstarts from the University of Chicago. While Coach Amos Stagg's Chicago team sports a nice record of 13-2-1, it is the unbeaten (9-0) Michigan team, tested only in a 6-4 win over Minnesota, which caused a surging crowd to flood Spalding's Sports Store the day before in a mad scramble for the remaining tickets.

The game has shaped up as a contest between two distinct systems of football. Michigan is a team that relies on strategic offensive plays, ball control and a solid running attack. Stagg has put together a Maroon team which is totally committed to defense and utilizing the excellent kicking of Clarence Herschberger as an offensive weapon in the battle for field position. Adding to the anticipation is the fact that the game will be played indoors at the mammoth Chicago Coliseum, then located on 63rd street near Stoney Island Boulevard, on a field that is 100 yards in length. The only concerns this presents is the nearness of the seats to

the sidelines and whether the girders in the ceiling would obstruct some of the punts.

At 1:42 PM (game time) over 8,000 fans had crowded into the arena, escaping the cold rain outside, and all sides of the oval field were a mass of waving colors. "The Chicago sections were ablaze with maroon in ribbons, banners, and apparel. On the Michigan side the pale yellow and pale blue of Ann Arbor fluttered in streamers and pennants", and the noise level inside the building was tremendous. The game was a fierce struggle that disappointed no one in attendance, as Michigan attacked relentlessly while Chicago relied on defense and kicking to hold off the visitors. Herschberger kept Michigan bottled up in their end of the field through most of the first half with his beautiful punts, and on every exchange of possessions the Maroons would gain a little further advantage in position.

Late in the first half, with neither team having threatened to score Herschberger got off a nice punt that rolled out on the Michigan 3 yard line. Hogg of Michigan immediately dropped back to kick, but the Maroon's giant center Cavanaugh came roaring in to block the punt. The ball bounded loose in the end-zone, and when Hogg picked it up he was immediately tackled for the safety by Cavanaugh. It was 2-0 Chicago and bedlam rocked the Coliseum. Michigan then kicked off and Clarke returned it to the visitors 35 yard line. But the Maroon were unable to mount any attack, and so they called on Herschberger to try a drop-kick of about 40 yards. It was a beautiful boot, just making it over the cross-bar and Chicago had gained a quick 7-0 lead.



CLARENCE HERSCHBERGER
Chicago

In the second half Michigan finally tallied when Henninger blasted over for a TD, and the point-after made the score 7-6, Chicago. But the Maroon defense and kicking was not to be denied, as three times during the game they stopped Michigan drives inside their 15 yard line, with Herschberger then booming punts out of danger. Chicago had the ball at Michigan's 35 when time ran out and the noise from the Maroon rooters was deafening inside the Coliseum.

Clarence Herschberger became one of the legendary figures of Midwest football, and he would be named to Walter Camp's All-American team in 1898. He earned thirteen varsity letters in his four years at Chicago, starring in football, baseball and track, and it was claimed that he originated the spiral punt. Herschberger also was an exceptional student, excelling in mathematics, and he graduated as a Phi Beta Kappa.

Herschberger stayed on at the Midway for two years as an assistant coach, and then joined an exclusive Chicago prep school as a professor in math and physics. After a stint as coach at Lake Forest College, he became headmaster of the exclusive Lake Forest Academy in 1905. In later years Herschberger left teaching and became involved in various business and real estate ventures, the latter causing him to lose considerable money.

We take a last glimpse back at that famous day in 1896, and we see the throng of happy Chicago fans streaming out of the Coliseum onto 63rd street, as they head back through the rain to campus. We know that Amos Alonzo Stagg will bring them many more exciting football victories in the years to come. We turn and head back up the tunnel.