

By Archie Prescott

As I'm descending through the mist at the end of the tunnel the unmistakable sounds of a military band, followed by the mammoth roar of the fans, assaults my very being. Looking around I find myself standing in the top row of a stadium that looks vaguely familiar.

As my gaze takes in the football field below there's no doubt in my mind who we're about to see play. The military band is proceeding down the field and it's followed by none other than the "Long Gray Line" of Cadets from West Point. Hurriedly I buy a program from a passing vendor, and look at the cover that says we're in Philadelphia's Franklin Field to see the Army-Navy game. The date is November 25, 1911.

The Cadets of West Point are followed into the stadium by the Midshipmen of the Naval Academy, every man carrying a megaphone, and from the moment they reach their seats an unbelievable level of bedlam begins unceasingly from the entire stadium. The noise increases as the two teams take the field. Army comes in with a record of 6-0-1, while Navy has a mark of 5-0-3.

With a stiff wind blowing into their faces, Army kicks off and the game is underway. After one play Navy's Jack Dalton, hero of the 1910 game, booms a punt and the Cadets get the ball on their own 25 yard line. Army, running from the short punt formation, begins a march but is stopped at midfield. On the exchange of punts Army is backed up deep in its own end, and while the Cadets are on the offense most of the first quarter, Dalton's punting for Navy keeps Army backed up.

As the second quarter begins Army receives yet another Dalton punt at midfield. On the first play Army's star running back Jeff Keyes races around left end for 18 yards to Navy's 32, and the Corps of Cadets are in an uproar. But the Navy defense stiffens, and the field goal try by Keyes from the 35 yard line is long enough but wide of the mark.

A short time later Navy takes a punt from Keyes at its own 20 yard line. Up to this point Navy has not made a single first down, having contented themselves with a defensive punting game, but now they open up their attack. After a 15 yard penalty against Army, Dalton and Nichols rip thru the tackles on a pair of runs that total another 30 yards, and suddenly Navy is threatening as the Midshipmen are going wild.

Dalton and McReavy, behind great blocking, pound out another ten yards to the Army 25, but here the Cadets rise up and halt the march. Navy lines up for a field goal try, and off a perfect snap, Gilchrist spots it on the 32 yard line and Dalton booms it straight thru the uprights to give Navy a 3-0 lead as the noise in the stadium becomes nearly unbearable.

As the second half begins, the defenses continue to dominate the action,

and the punting duel between Dalton and Keyes continues. On one kick, backed by the wind, Dalton booms a 65 yard punt, but Army continues to attack. Keyes just misses a 38 yard field goal, and a short time later the Army star races a punt back 30 yards to the Navy 38, but again the Navy defense holds.

In the fourth quarter Keyes continues to play brilliantly for Army, but he lacks the blocking needed to break loose or to sustain a long march. With nothing to lose Army tries a passing game but fails to complete any of the attempts. The game has been a stubborn battle with plenty of hard tackling, and when the gun sounds Navy has escaped with the precious 3-0 victory.

As the game ends the Midshipmen of Navy swarm down out of the stands and march around the field behind its band over to the Army side, where they raise tremendous cheers to the silent Cadets. Then the Navy men form a circle around the entire field and, at a signal, charge into the middle where they continue an unbelievable amount of cheering.

As I stand on the top row of Franklin Field in the gathering gloom and chill and watch the frenzy down on the field, I think of all the great and future-great men that are here today in the stadium. I could tell them how, in little more than six years, they would be thrust into the first of the world-wide conflicts that will be contested far from here and be far more serious. It's too bad that life can't always be as exciting and carefree as football and the celebrating cadets we see down there on the field. We turn and head back up the tunnel.