

# THE WEST'S FIRST NIGHT FOOTBALL GAME PLAYED IN 1904

**Gasoline Lamps Used by the Springfield Normals and the Cherokee Indians—A High Punt Starts a Fire.**

**A**FTER all, there's nothing new under the sun, or rather the moon as this is a story of the first football game after dusk.

The sights and thrills that football patrons are experiencing at the night contests is nothing new to the grid-iron followers of Springfield, Mo., the



older ones at least who saw the first night game ever played in the West in 1904. To be exact, the old Springfield normal, now the Southwest Missouri State Teachers college engaged in a skirmish with the Cherokee Indians of Talequah, I. T., in Springfield on October 17, 1904.

The playing conditions under which the game was conducted was so radically different from the new innovation in the sport world that the comparison is a bit strained. But such is the case with the electric light, the talkies, and the host of other modern inventions.

The crude lighting equipment at the old Missouri Valley park consisted of gasoline lights, the type that were used with medicine shows for years, strung over and around the field. One salient feature about the first game and the present day contest is that a white ball is used in both instances.

**Springfield the Winner.**

Not that it makes any difference to the modern day fan, but the Normal school eleven won the contest, 11 to 0, before 2,000 spectators, which is about as large a crowd as any Springfield team has played before or since that time.

Old timers around the staid Missouri town often speak of the first light contest. The progress of the painted pigskin could easily be followed in the glare and smell of the gasoline "arcs."

As the gasoline lights were suspended close to the playing field, the two teams agreed to refrain from kicking the ball in the air, but along the ground in a gangling fashion.



In the heat of the battle, one player became excited and booted the ball high in the air from a punt formation. As fate would have it, the ball struck one of the lamps which fell to the ground with a lurid flash of fire and smoke delaying the game for several minutes to say nothing of the excitement and thrill of it all.

**No Forward Passing in Game.**

Apart from the aforementioned case, there were no kicks into the flaming sky except the one by the forgetful player. Nor were there any aerial maneuverings by either team as those were the good old days of center rushes, line smashes, and more line smashes. Touchdowns counted five points and points after touchdown, one point. Twenty-minute halves constituted the playing time.

The spectators were aided in watching the game by the megaphone announcement of a gent by the name of Maxwell of the Springfield Y. M. C. A who have a play by play account of the contest, and now might be regarded as the patron saint of the present day radio announcers at sporting events.

An excerpt from an old newspaper account of the game is interesting. It follows:

For the few minutes after the Normalites kicked off to the Indians, it looked as if the Braves would take the field, for with a regular prairie rush, they went into the game and had the enemy with them. By steady gains and a 10-yard advance around right end by Payne, the Cherokees' left end, the Indians had the Normals within two feet of the goal.

Then the line held for three downs. The Indians gave over the ball, and Normal carried it up the field, out of the danger by from two to 20-yard gains, the largest one by Cherry on a fake play, until the white oval went through the posts for a touchdown under Moore.

Stinson kicked goal and the score was 7 for the Normalites. With goals changed, five downs after the Indians had caught the ball on their 20-yard line from Normal's kickoff and advanced it fifteen yards, the first half was up with the ball near center but in the locals' field.

