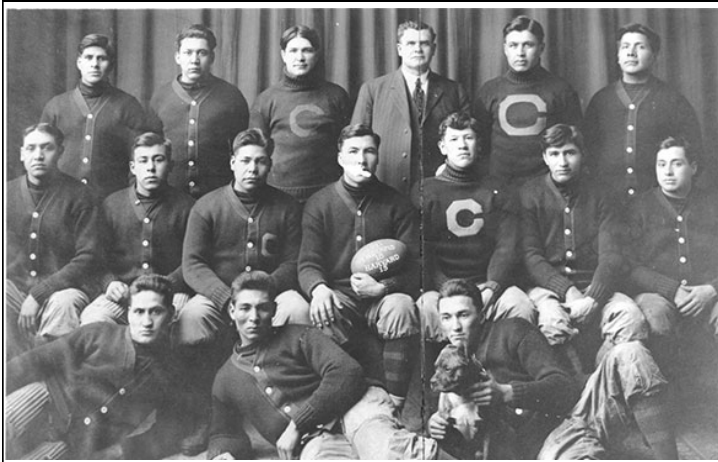


# It's the people: Legacy of 1912 Army vs. Carlisle football game endures

*Public Affairs staff report*

## Legacy of 1912 Army vs. Carlisle football game endures



*The powerhouse Army football team was dealt a defeat by the Jim Thorpe-led Carlisle Indians in a historic game more than 100 years ago. Many members of the team can be seen in this photo of the 1911 team.*

**Jim Thorpe, Dwight Eisenhower, Glenn “Pop” Warner, Omar Bradley** are iconic

names associated with athletic, military and leadership excellence. One hundred years ago, before their histories could be imagined, they met in a hard-fought football game between two highly-ranked teams on The Plain at West Point.

A write up of the contest in the New York Times captured the magnitude of the game.

“WEST POINT, Nov. 9. -- Jim Thorpe and his redoubtable band of Carlisle Indian gridiron stars invaded the plains this afternoon to match their prowess against the moleskin gladiators of Uncle Sam's Military Academy, and when the two teams crossed the parade ground in the semi-darkness of late afternoon the Cadets had been shown up as no other West Point team has been in many years.”

"The Cadets of West Point took the field on November 9, 1912, aiming to avenge their 1905 loss to Carlisle Indian School in the two schools' only previous battle," according to prominent author **Thomas Benjey**, who has published extensively about Indian School football.

The 1905 game was a surprising defeat of Army.

The 1912 game was memorable in large part because of the players involved.

“The Cadets, who had the best defense in the nation, had lost only once, to Yale 6-0,” wrote **Sally**

**Jenkins** in her book “The Real All Americans.” “With a win over Carlisle, they had a chance to be No. 1 in the year-end rankings. While the Indians had the best offense in the land, commentators suggested they had run up their extravagant scores against weaker competition. A defeat of gritty Army would end all argument and establish them as front-runners for the title of best team in the country.”



*Jim Thorpe was one of the most well-known members of the Carlisle team.*

“Ominous clouds filled the sky, and a cold wind blew across the field, making passing and punting risky businesses,” said Benjey. “Both sides’ emotions ran high as the combatants craved a victory. Carlisle arrived undefeated, the only blemish on their record a scoreless tie with Washington and Jefferson College a month earlier. Army was 3-1 with a 6-0 loss to Yale. Holding the Eli of Yale to only four first downs and a low score gave the Cadets hope for success over the Indians.”

Newspaper accounts after the game never considered its outcome in doubt, but those looking only at the scoreboard, at least for the first half, may have thought otherwise, according to Benjey. “The Indians bested the Cadets for most of the first half but didn’t score due to errant forward passes in the end zone. The turning point of the second quarter came when Carlisle fullback Stancil “Possum” Powell was expelled from the game for punching Army quarterback Vern “Nig” Prichard. The 27-yard penalty combined with Powell’s ejection dampened the Indians’ spirits. Army then moved the ball forward the remaining 27 yards with fullback Geoffrey Keyes pushing the ball across the goal line. Prichard missed the kick after the touchdown.”

Momentum shifted in the Indians’ favor on the kickoff opening the second half when All-America tackle and team captain Leland Devore jumped on Joe Guyon, who had been getting the better of him all day, getting himself thrown out of the game, according to Benjey. “Army defensive backs Dwight Eisenhower and Charles Benedict knocked each other out of the game for the rest of the quarter in a failed attempt to sideline Thorpe. The Indians scored 27 unanswered points to lick Army worse than any opponent had beaten them in many years.”

Today, the history of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School is honored in the National Landmark campus at the center of Carlisle Barracks. The Indian School photo collection of almost 1,000 rare photos is preserved by the Army Heritage and Education Center are shared online at

<http://www.ahco.army.mil/site/index.jsp>

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