

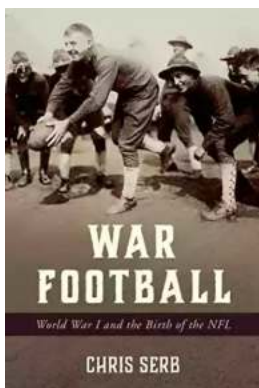
World War And The Birth Of The NFL

World War I, also known as the Great War, had a profound impact on many aspects of society, including sports. One unexpected outcome of the war was the birth of the National Football League (NFL). In this article, we will explore how the war led to the creation of the NFL and the role it played in American society during this challenging period.

The Impact of World War I

World War I was a global conflict that lasted from 1914 to 1918 and involved many countries around the world. It was one of the deadliest conflicts in history, resulting in millions of casualties. The war disrupted societies and economies, leaving many people searching for a sense of normalcy and entertainment.

At the time, the sport of football was already gaining popularity in the United States. Collegiate football was particularly popular, with large stadiums filled to capacity for games. However, the war and its aftermath would lead to significant changes in the sports landscape.



War Football: World War I and the Birth of the NFL

by Chris Serb (Kindle Edition)

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The Temporary Suspension of College Football

With the outbreak of World War I, many young men left their universities to fight in the war. This resulted in a significant decrease in the number of players available to participate in collegiate football. As a result, many universities made the difficult decision to suspend their football programs for the duration of the war.

Without college football, fans were left without their favorite sport to watch and support. This created an opportunity for professional football to gain traction and fill the void left by college football's absence.

The Creation of the American Professional Football Association

Amidst the absence of college football, several professional football teams emerged to meet the demand for the sport. In 1920, representatives from ten professional football teams gathered in Canton, Ohio, to form the American Professional Football Association (APFA), which would later become the NFL.

The APFA consisted of teams primarily from the Midwest, including the Akron Pros, Canton Bulldogs, and Cleveland Indians, among others. The league aimed to bring professional football to the forefront as a viable alternative to college football.

The Influence of World War I on the NFL's Early Success

The conditions created by World War I played a significant role in the success and growth of the NFL. Without college football, the professional league had an opportunity to showcase its talent and entertain fans who were desperately seeking a sports outlet.

Additionally, the war had changed American society in many ways, including a shift in women's roles. With men away at war, women took on jobs traditionally held by men, gaining more independence and seeking new forms of entertainment. Professional football provided an exciting and accessible option for women, thus contributing to the league's popularity.

The Post-War Renewal of College Football

After the war, college football gradually resumed. Many soldiers returning from the war enrolled in universities using their military benefits, leading to a surge in enrollment numbers. This resurgence of college football created competition for the NFL but ultimately laid the foundation for the healthy rivalry between the two leagues that exists to this day.

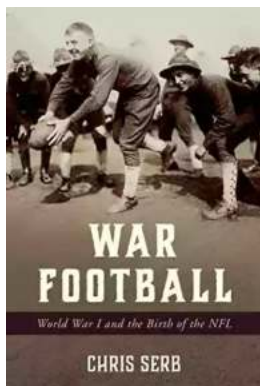
The NFL's Ongoing Legacy

Over a century later, the NFL has evolved into one of the most popular sports leagues in the world. It continues to captivate millions of fans every season and has become a significant part of American culture. The league owes its early success, in part, to the circumstances surrounding World War I and the opportunity it provided to fill the void left by the suspension of college football.

As we reflect on the birth of the NFL, it is crucial to recognize the impact that historical events such as World War I can have on shaping our society and influencing the development of our favorite sports. The war may have brought about much destruction, but it also inadvertently gave rise to a sporting phenomenon that continues to thrive today.

The birth of the NFL during World War I serves as a reminder that even during the darkest of times, people find solace and inspiration in sports. The war's impact on college football created an opportunity for professional football to rise in

popularity, leading to the creation of the NFL. The league's early success paved the way for its ongoing legacy, highlighting the importance of adaptation and resilience in the face of adversity.



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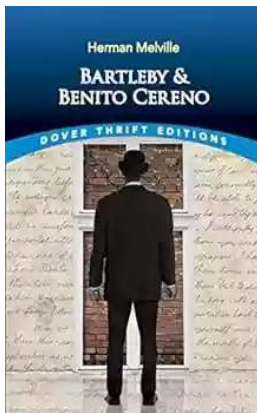


During World War I, American army camps, navy stations and marine barracks formed football's first true all-star teams, competing against each other and top colleges while raising millions of dollars for the war effort. More than fifty college football hall-of-famers, dozens of future generals, and two Medal of Honor winners would play for, coach, or promote military teams during the war, including Dwight Eisenhower, Walter Camp, and George Halas.

In War Football: World War I and the Birth of the NFL, Chris Serb recounts a fascinating chapter of military and sports history. He details three of the best but long-forgotten seasons of American football, when college amateurs mixed with blue-collar pros on the field of play. These games showed investors a lucrative market for teams of post-collegiate stars and made players realize that their football careers didn't have to end after college. Soon the barriers to

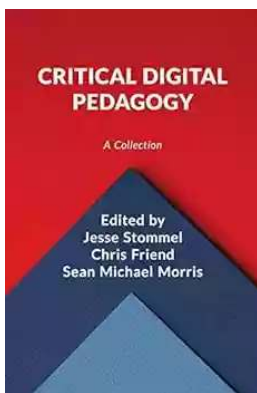
professionalism began to fall, and within two years of the Armistice the National Football League was born.

War Football explores for the first time this lost chapter of sports history and makes a direct connection between World War I and the founding of the NFL. Seven future Hall-of-Famers led the charge of more than 200 military veterans who played in, coached for, and shaped the character of the young league. Football fans, sports historians, and military historians alike will find this book a fascinating read.



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