

Ah, college football. Just think what fall Saturdays would be like if the boys from Rutgers and Princeton never got together on that fateful day in early November 1869. True, a lot more stuff would probably get done around the house, but still, it's nice to know that we'll never know. And so, in this edition of *The GeoSampler*, we'll take a moment to celebrate the game in all its gridiron glory. We'll look at a few football traditions that are more, let's say, unique than time-honored. We'll also delve a little deeper into the probably the most famous boring game in history. All the while, giving it the ol' college try.

HAIL THE VICTORS

Some college traditions date back over a century, like the march of the cadets before the Army-Navy game, which started in 1890. A few are more universally known, for instance the "Dotting of the i" at Ohio State. Still others take a subtle approach, such as the touching of Howard's Rock at Clemson. For us, we're more interested in those that are, well, just downright more colorful. Three of them come to mind.

For starters, every win may be a great win, but some great wins are greater than others. To the fans of Auburn, a great-great win means breaking out the toilet paper and heading to the intersection of College Street and Magnolia Avenue for a little "Rolling of Toomer's Corner." For years, the Auburn faithful would "t-p" two giant oak trees that stood there. And while start of this tradition is debated by Tiger fans to this day, according to the team's website, the inaugural "roll" happened in 1971 after 17-16 victory over arch rival Alabama—ranked #2 in the country coming into the game. Before the contest, Auburn halfback Terry Henley pledged that they would "beat the #2 out of Alabama." Cue the Charmin. Sadly, the historic trees were removed in 2013 after a Crimson Tide fan poisoned them in 2010. Fear not, though; the ritual carries on today with temporary structures folks can roll at the corner while new generation of trees are planted.

Next, while most football traditions look to inspire or celebrate, a select few aim to cleanse. Unless your team is crowned national champions, chances are its members experienced some bad mojo along the way. For the guys at Syracuse, they have a special way of purging such demons. In a ceremony that began under College Football Hall of Fame coach Dick



MacPherson (1981-1990), the players burn their cleats at the end of each season as a way to exorcise the ghosts of turnovers, penalties, losses and any other thing that might have gone wrong for them. The tradition continued under coach Paul Pasqualoni; however, temping fate, the 'Cuse's next coach, Greg Robinson, immediately discontinued the rite in 2005. Four years later, and after amassing a 10-37 record, Mr. Robinson was "fired" – bad pun and all. To appease the football gods, their next coach Doug Marrone brought back the tradition in 2009 and restored order to the Syracuse universe.

Finally, it's said that to the victor belongs the spoils. For those who fought in distant lands during ancient times, this might have meant bringing home gold. For the Seminoles of Florida State, a victory on an away field means bringing back, well, the field. During the 1962 season, Dean Coyle Moore issued a challenge to the team as they were practicing for their upcoming away game against favored Georgia at Sanford Stadium: "Bring back some sod from between the hedges at Georgia." On October 20, FSU shut out the Bulldogs 18-0. Team captain Gene McDowell then ripped up a piece of the sod, brought it back to Tallahassee and presented it to Moore at the following practice. As a symbol of the victory, Moore and head football coach Bill Peterson buried it at the practice field and the "Sod Cemetery" was born – an odd circle of life if ever there was one. To date, there are over 90 pieces of turf buried at the cemetery, each with its own grave marker, and all celebrating a road upset victory. Or a win at the University of Florida. Or a bowl victory. Or ACC Championship. Or any other excuse to conduct school-sanctioned vandalism.

"I don't know whether I prefer AstroTurf to grass. I never smoked AstroTurf."
—Joe Namath



"Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."
—Joe Theismann

"Most football players are temperamental. That's 90 percent temper and 10 percent mental."
—Doug Plank, ex-Bears safety

"I'm a light eater. As soon as it's light, I start to eat."
—Art Donovan

"He couldn't spell cat if you spotted him the C and the T."
—Cowboy's linebacker Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson on Terry Bradshaw's intellect

"I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid."
—Terry Bradshaw

"In Montana, they renamed a town after an all-time great, Joe Montana. Well, a town in Massachusetts changed their name to honor my guy Terry Bradshaw — Marblehead."
—Howie Long

"I never graduated college, but I was only there for two terms – Truman's and Eisenhower's."
—Alex Karras

"People say I'll be drafted in the first round, maybe even higher."
—Craig "Ironhead" Heyward

ENROUTE TO A ROUT

It's a part of college football lore. Say the words "Georgia Tech versus Cumberland" to a true pigskin fan and, at the very least, you'll hear "222-0". But there's more to the story and stats than just a national powerhouse having their way with a small college from central Tennessee.

First of all, if the margin of victory makes it seem like Tech was playing against nobody, you wouldn't be that far off. You see, while the game took place on October 7, 1916, Cumberland College had officially disbanded its football program in 1915. However, the schools had an existing scheduling agreement, and Tech's head coach John Heisman (yes, he of Trophy fame) insisted that teams play the game or else Cumberland would have to fork over \$3,000 (more than \$65,000 in today's dollars) for failing to show.

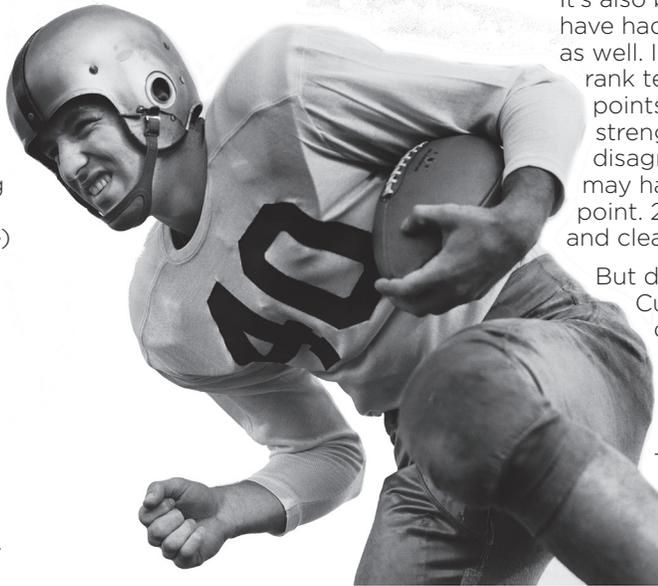
So, George E. Allen, a law student at Cumberland, was elected to serve as the team's student-manager. His first order of business was to put together a team of 14 suckers, er, volunteers that would go to Atlanta and knowingly get the snot beat out them. Now that's recruiting.

But why would Georgia Tech (nicknamed the Engineers at the time) run up the score? You'd think a team leading 126-0 at halftime would ease up a bit. Well, here is where it gets a bit sticky for poor ol' Cumberland. It turns out that the schools' baseball teams met earlier in the spring of 1916, with

the Bulldogs (Cumberland) beating the Engineers 22-0 — a game played under suspicion of Cumberland using professionals as ringers. And who was Tech's baseball coach? You guessed it, John Heisman. The Bulldogs' baseball student-manager was George E. Allen. Payback's a quarterback sack.

It's also believed that Heisman may have had a beef with the sportswriters, as well. In those days, writers would rank teams more so on how many points they scored rather than the strength of schedule. Heisman disagreed with this practice and may have run up the score to prove a point. 222-0: message received loud and clear.

But don't feel too bad for Cumberland. From the department-of-misery-loves-company, since 1884, there have been over 190 games in which a team had 100 points or more scored upon them. The last one came in 2003 with Rockford beating Trinity Bible 105-0. The last one in major college football happened in 1968: Houston 100 - Tulsa 6.



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