



'A Frank, Open-hearted Gentleman'

by Bob Fulton

One can only imagine the talk generated back in 1911 when the new football coach arrived at Indiana Normal School. It must have been lively.

While controversy today swirls around the name of IUP's athletic teams, at least one Native American played a prominent role in the university's sports history.

Not because Frank Mt. Pleasant had been an All-American running back and quarterback in college or had participated in the 1908 Olympics. Not because he was a law school graduate or was regarded as an accomplished pianist. Not even because he was, at twenty-three, hardly older than his players.

Any conversation likely centered on the fact that Mt. Pleasant was a Native American.

Today it seems fitting that a university so linked with Native Americans—a school whose athletic teams are known as the Indians and whose buildings are located in a town named in honor of the area's first inhabitants—would hire someone raised on a reservation. But these were different times. In 1911, the INS faculty and students, which then numbered less than a thousand, formed a homogeneous population. Could a man born into the Tuscarora tribe fit in?

Judging from his coaching record at Indiana, Mt. Pleasant's acceptance followed on the heels of his hiring.

The Normals were a sparkling 23-4-1 during his three seasons at the helm, an .839 percentage that ranked Mt. Pleasant second all-time among the school's coaches at the beginning of the 1992 season. But it wasn't his ability so much as his affability that likely disarmed any detractors he might have encountered initially.

"As a man, Mt. Pleasant is a frank, open-hearted gentleman, quiet and courteous," notes a long-ago profile in the *Baseball Magazine*, which lauded his off-the-field demeanor as much as his various on-the-field exploits. "To meet Mt. Pleasant is to like him; to know him is to admire him; to live in the same little world with him is to appreciate his sterling qualities and his noble nature."

Mt. Pleasant, who was born in 1888 on the Tuscarora reservation just outside Niagara Falls, N.Y., came to INS via tiny Carlisle Indian School, which produced some of the nation's premier football teams just after the turn of the century. Carlisle regularly challenged the powers of the day—Pitt, Penn State, Harvard, Army, and Penn—and usually prevailed. In 1907, Mt. Pleas-

ant's last season in the Carlisle uniform, the Indians rolled past ten of their eleven foes and were ranked fifth in the nation.

The genius behind this juggernaut was one Glenn "Pop" Warner, the fourth-winningest coach (313 victories) in collegiate history and a member of the College Football Hall of Fame along with one of Mt. Pleasant's successors in the Indians' backfield, Jim Thorpe. Carlisle officials hired Warner at the then-outrageous salary of \$1,200, his mission to develop a program that would bring the school national acclaim. Mission accomplished.

"Under Warner, football became big business at Carlisle. His teams, which played most of the time on the road, taking the measure of almost every big university in the country, traveled as far as California and raised large sums of money for the school," noted Margaret Christman in the book *Champions of American Sport*.

Mt. Pleasant spent four distinguished seasons at Carlisle, earning second-team All-America honors in 1905. While he was an exceptional all-around player, he was most feared as a ball carrier. He brought defenders to their knees and spectators to their feet with an array of elusive moves that made him as difficult to grasp as a watermelon seed.

According to one early account, "To see him run with the ball is worth the price of admittance; such dodging, twisting, and squirming, and such magnificent speed! He can kick with the best, is a sure tackle, and gives an exhibition of skill and headwork rarely witnessed."

Perhaps even more impressive than Mt. Pleasant's accomplishments was his response to them.

"He is exceedingly modest in regard to his athletic ability, and if you ask him in regard to it, you will experience the famed taciturnity of the American Indian," noted the *Baseball Magazine* story.

After Mt. Pleasant gained renown on a national level in football, his track skills catapulted him onto the international scene. Only months after graduating from Carlisle, he represented the United States at the 1908 Olympic Games in London.

Mt. Pleasant leaped 22 feet, 4-1/2 inches, to finish sixth in the long jump and placed sixth in the triple jump with a 45-10 effort. He narrowly missed a medal in each event, falling 10-1/2 inches short in the triple jump. Had Mt. Pleasant not been hampered by a strained ligament, it's conceivable he could have medaled in both events.

Mt. Pleasant did gain a measure of redemption soon after the London Games, when he defeated fellow American Frank Irons, the newly crowned Olympic long jump champion, in a meet at Paris. What's more, he established a new French record in the process.

Upon his return from Europe, Mt. Pleasant entered the Dickinson School of Law, located across the street from his old classrooms at Carlisle. He graduated in 1910, played some minor league baseball in Michigan, coached briefly at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, and then was offered the job at Indiana Normal.

Whether Mt. Pleasant's arrival at INS caused a stir is unknown from this distance of eighty-one years. His first team certainly didn't: the Normals quietly plodded their way through a 5-3-1 season, a step backwards after the previous year's 6-2 record.

But at least Mt. Pleasant made a positive impression in his new post, if the following commentary by John Smith in the *Normal Herald* is any indication: "As a coach he is ideal. He is tactful but resourceful; a diplomat in handling men; pleasant and agreeable in his dealings with them, but rules with an iron hand when necessary."

The players responded enthusiastically to that approach. Soon Indiana was winning as frequently as Mt. Pleasant's old Carlisle teams. INS captured state normal school championships in 1912 and 1913 and reeled off fifteen consecutive victories in one stretch, a school record that still stands.

The 1912 season was especially remarkable. Indiana finished 9-0—the winningest perfect season in the 102-year history of IUP football—and thrashed its three normal school opponents, California (69-0), Slippery Rock (54-0), and Mansfield (40-0).

The 1913 squad was almost as invincible. Indiana shut out its first six foes before suffering a 31-7 loss to perennial nemesis Kiski, the only blot in a 9-1 season.

Mt. Pleasant moved on to West Virginia Wesleyan for the 1914 campaign. He lost his debut game to a very familiar opponent—Carlisle Indian School—but the Bobcats rebounded to finish 4-3 and claimed the unofficial state championship on the strength of wins over West Virginia and Marshall.

Mt. Pleasant coached Wesleyan again in 1915,

but WVW records don't record whether he stayed the whole season. Some time before the close of the year, he returned home to New York State because of his father's serious illness.

The details of Mt. Pleasant's life after West Virginia are as murky as the Mississippi. Until April 12, 1937,

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Left: Frank Mt. Pleasant at Indiana in his Carlisle letter sweater. Opposite: When Mt. Pleasant's teams played football, the field was on the present site of Fisher Auditorium. Note that Thomas Sutton Hall had been erected but that the north wing of John Sutton Hall had not yet been extended. The old Leonard Hall can be glimpsed through the trees of the Oak Grove.

continued on page 25

'88, M'89 to Robert Chilcott, February 29, 1992. **Patricia Alquist '88** to **John Benson '89**, June 27, 1992. **Nancy Andrasko '88** to David Wadding, January 25, 1992. **Donna Bajkowski '88** to Sean Sheedy, October 24, 1992. **Michael Cartwright '88** to **Kimberly Ault '89**, July 13, 1991. **Niamh Caherly '88** to Charles Crotty, March 28, 1992. **Michael Cranmer '88** to Deborah Roberts, June 20, 1992. **Jeannine Dillon '88** to Steve Strennen, April 11, 1992. **Wayne Franz '88** to **Amy McPherson '89**, May 9, 1992. **Louise Hathaway '88** to **Jayson Wolfgang '88**, September 21, 1991. **John Intrieri '88** to **Michelle Bright '89**, October 5, 1991. **Jean Moffo '88** to **Daniel Owens '88**, April 25, 1992. **Lynne Riedl '88** to Mark Vilella, September 14, 1991. **John Strachan '88** to Monica Dolan, September 28, 1991. **Steve Barbus '89** to **Arlene Miller '89**, July 11, 1992. **Jeffrey Bartlett '89** to **Michelle Holowsko '91**, September 19, 1992. **Sherri Boston '89** to **Jim O'Donnell '89**, December 30, 1989. **Jennifer Brader '89** to David Rairigh, October 10, 1992. **Scott Butchley '89** to **Cindee Golda '89**, August 17, 1991. **James Creese '89** to Tami Slemko, August 18, 1990. **Cheryl McCoy '89** to **Joseph Kelly '74**, April 11, 1992. **Janetta Holden '89** to **Thomas Earhart '89**, August 10, 1991. **Kelly Kennedy '89** to Robert Deemer, July 11, 1992. **Scott McQuinn '89** to **Patricia Sullivan '90**, October 19, 1991. **Michelle Morrison '89** to Rick Mason, October 17, 1992. **Anthony Snyder '89** to **Mindy Bowman '90**, December 28, 1991. **Peter Weillersbacher '89** to Carol Morris, March 10, 1990. **Brenda Will '89** to Joseph Piacentini, July 6, 1991.

90s

Karen Aigner '90 to Jeff Russell, June 27, 1992. **Tammy Bean '90** to Bryan Maher, December 28, 1991. **Kimberly Frederick '90** to James Bistline, June 1, 1991. **Barbara Martin '90** to Timothy Taylor, June 20, 1990. **Suellen Paronish '90** to **Leonard Donato '91**, August 10, 1991. **Christine Ritz '90** to **Steven Robinson '90**, July 18, 1992. **Susan Miller '91** to Eric Riddle, August 24, 1991. **Diane Santarelli '91** to George Watterson, June 20, 1992. **Laura Swartz '91** to James Frank, July 11, 1992. **Thomas Collins '92** to **Julie Greiner '92**, June 20, 1992. **Ronald Hasinger '92** to **Sylvia Smith '92**, June 6, 1992.

Deaths

1920: Helen Blanchard. **1921:** Mabel Cline Gottschalk. **1922:** Agatha Coleman Couch. **1924:** Mabel Pinney Clark. **1927:** Jessie Johnston Colgan,

Anna McCormick Hamilton, Gwendolyn Richards Shaw, Blanche Burnheimer Weiss. **1928:** Mabel Bowser Beers, Gertrude Lindquist. **1929:** Eleanor McClelland Robinson, Naomi Kehne Weitzel

1931: Cordelia Jack Ross. **1932:** Margaret Haer Musselman. **1933:** James Bartlebaugh, Marguerite Yates Rankin. **1934:** Mary Rose Houlihan Madigan. **1935:** Hazel Carroll Saxman. **1936:** Louise Surra Fernandez*, Beryl Lydick Quinn

1940: Walter Ray Wineman. **1949:** Felix Tartalone

1950: Howard "Skip" Myers. **1953:** Julius Filcik, Gretchen Tress. **1956:** Bernard "Ben" Pella. **1957:** Jane Repine. **1959:** Frederick Ernick

1960: Mabel Friedline Clenney, Charles Tamplin. **1967:** Leonard Eagleson. **1969:** Tim Kerin

1970: Amanda Clowes Hoffman. **1972:** David Cooper. **1979:** Donald Mahan

1988: James Latsko

1990: Robert Alico, Jr.

*former faculty member

Other Deaths

Donald Ballas, a faculty member in the geography and regional planning department from 1961 until his recent retirement, died August 24, 1992.

Joseph Serene, a former university trustee and trustee president and a founding member of the board of the Foundation for IUP, died August 22, 1992.

Clei "Doc" Silvey, a professor of music at Indiana for many years before retiring and moving to Arizona in 1966, died July 7, 1992.

Gentleman

continued from page 5

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that is. A hit-and-run driver killed Mt. Pleasant in Buffalo, not far from his birthplace. He didn't even live to see fifty.

Despite the brevity of his life, Mt. Pleasant packed a century's worth of achievements into it. That fact was confirmed in 1973 when he was enshrined in the American Indian Hall of Fame.

Mt. Pleasant departed INS with a record that, eight decades later, still ranks among the best in the history of the school's football program. His chief legacy is unquestionably the perfect season of 1912, for that's where the man who gained fame as an athlete demonstrated that he could also excel as a coach. Indiana won a record nine games (not until the 1968 Boardwalk Bowl team would an IUP squad duplicate that feat) and outscored its over-matched opponents 340-13.

What's ironic is that so little had been expected of the Normals, whose lack of experience seemed to portend a lack of success.

"At the beginning of the season, prospects for a good football team were very dim, as there were only three men of last year's team back," noted the 1913 *Instano*, the school yearbook. "But under Mt. Pleasant's care and guidance, a team was whipped into shape that will go down in Indiana's history as one of the greatest she ever had." 🐾

Bob Fulton's glimpses into the university's sports past for IUP Magazine have ranged throughout the twentieth century. His last story, in the Winter-Spring issue, centered on sixties' basketball great Mel Hankinson.

IUP

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