

Deaf Athletes' Contributions to the World of Sports

Deaf people claim two important contributions to the world of sports, both difficult to authenticate: the baseball umpire's hand count and the football huddle.

William E. Hoy, the deaf baseball outfielder for the Cincinnati Reds and Washington Senators claims that he was the reason for the hand count. He could not hear the call so umpires began raising their arm to indicate a strike and it soon caught on.

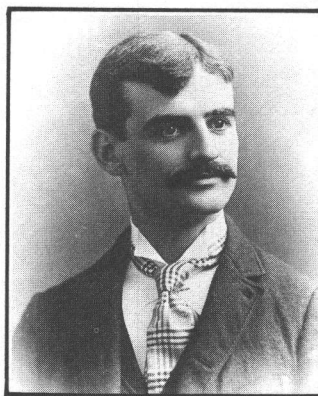
The evolution of the football huddle is difficult to trace but Paul D. Hubbard claims credit for its invention and many persons think he deserves the credit. The huddle was a necessary and natural evolution for a deaf football team because it was necessary for the deaf players to hide their signals from the scrub team they practiced against and from the deaf opponents they played. Hubbard was a quarterback on the 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1895 Gallaudet football teams. He captained the 1893 and 1895 teams and was nicknamed the "Eel" by other coaches. Gallaudet had begun playing the sport earlier but did not officially field a team until 1883.

Dr. I. H. Baker's encyclopedic *Football: Facts and Figures* states that the first football huddle was used by the University of Georgia in a game with Auburn in 1896. Baker bases the statement on information from Fuzzy Woodruff's account of the game in his *History of Southern Football*, written 32 years after the event. Hubbard was playing football before then.

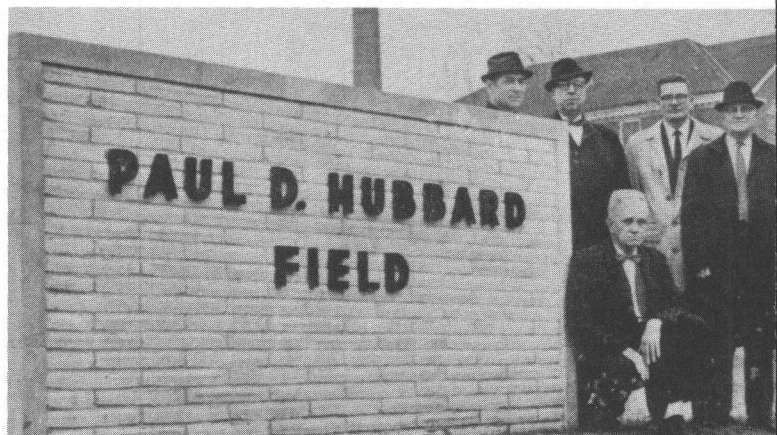
Logic for the invention of the huddle is on the side of deaf players, unfortunately there is no printed documentation. William J. Marra and Stanley Ferguson of Kansas knew Hubbard personally and both recall Hubbard telling them that he had invented the huddle. He claimed that he had invented the huddle while playing at Gallaudet College.

Any deaf athlete individually or a number of deaf athletes welded together as a team have through the years built up a tradition based upon the excellent competitive principles so well followed by all true sportsmen. Whether on the football gridiron, the baseball diamond, the basketball court, the track, the bowling alley, or in the natatorium, these hard driving competitors, whether in victory or defeat, have shown always the stuff of true manliness and the spirit of unflinching sportsmanship.

—HADLEY W. SMITH, EDITOR
THE OHIO CHRONICLE (1950)



Paul D. Hubbard



The marker identifying Hubbard Field was a gift of the Kansas Association of the Deaf.

Hubbard was a member of the Gallaudet College class of 1896 but he did not graduate. In a letter to him from his college classmate Herbert C. Merrill written March 6, 1942 is reference to the huddle. It reads: "The item ascribes the origin of the football "huddle" to you. It must have been during the time that the College had that "scrub" team that made all the teams around Washington, including the Naval Academy, look silly." The letter is in the William J. Marra Museum at the Kansas School for the Deaf, in Olathe.

On learning that the athletic field at the Kansas School had been officially named the Paul D. Hubbard Field, J. Frederick Meagher, the columnist wrote: "Congrats, Eel; am using your dope [in his column] with pride and joy. Hope to huddle on Hubbard Field with you someday."

In his September 1946 column in *The Frat* Meagher noted: "But Zuppke [an Illinois College coach] admits he took it from an un-named deaf football team he saw somewhere."

One final point. As many Gallaudet graduates left

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