

College Sports in the 19th Century

In the early 1800s, American colleges were serious places. Students were in college to learn and recreation was of no concern to professors. There were no school-organized sports. Students created their own games but sometimes vandalized property, pulled pranks, and even assaulted teachers. As part of a national physical movement in the 1830s, gymnastic activities, such as the rings or pommel horse, were introduced on campus to burn off energy.

Beginning in the 1850s, the “muscular Christianity” movement felt physical strength was as important as intelligence and faith. This was embraced by New England colleges. The first athletic contest between colleges was a Harvard–Yale rowing race in 1852.



A bat-and-ball game played behind Hobart's South Main Street buildings around 1870. It may have been baseball or an earlier game such as wicket or rounders.



Founded in 1837, Mount Holyoke College for women embraced physical exercise from the beginning. While calisthenics looked too much like dancing for strict Christians, gymnastics with Indian clubs (shown here) was okay.



The Hobart boat house (1877-1910) was home to “The Hobart Navy,” four- and six-oared boats that were raced by three fraternities. In the 1890s a college team competed intercollegiately, then was dissolved.

The modern man expects to hear not of metaphysical concepts but of physical biceps. Let me, as a nineteenth century (or in the spirit of a twentieth century) College President, assure you that “the boys” are muscular christians, and that athletics “boom” among us.

April 9, 1890 address in New York City by Hobart President E.N. Potter.

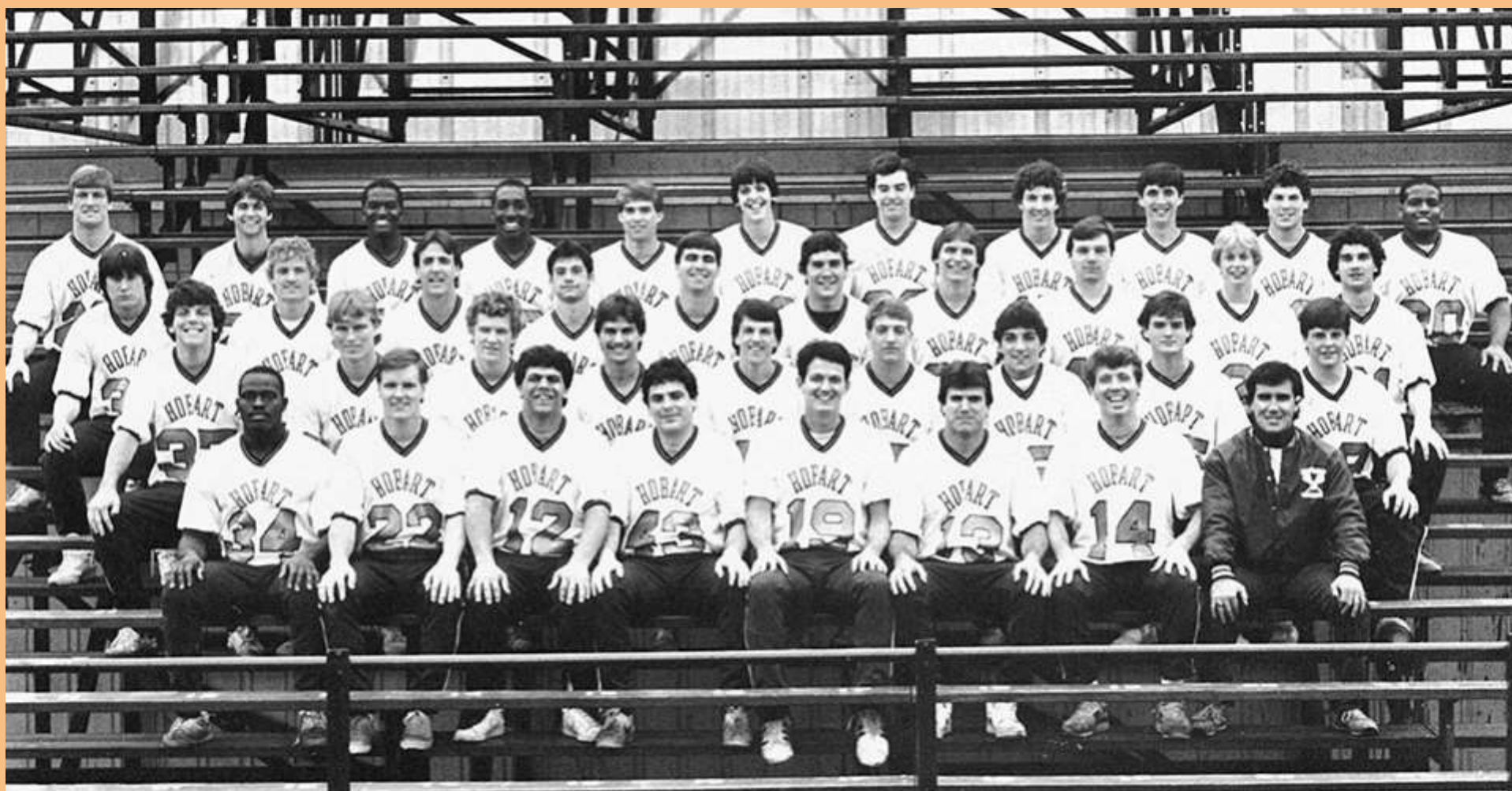


This stone carving at Princeton University shows the historical struggle between academics and college sports.

That Championship Season

In America, championship teams draw attention to their colleges from both potential students and athletes. National titles can attract financial support from proud alumni. As a small college, HWS profits less from athletic success than major universities. However, the experiences last a lifetime for the athletes and the schools.

Combined, Hobart and William Smith have won 23 national championships. William Smith has one individual swimming title, and Hobart crew have won three times. Competing against other community colleges, FLCC has won many New York regional championships.



In winning 16 national lacrosse championships, Hobart won twelve years in a row (1980-1991). Photo of 1985 championship team.



Revived in 1982, the Hobart rowing team gained a full-time coach in 1990. Statesmen have won gold medals at the Intercollegiate Rowing Association Regatta in 1993, 1994, and 2003.



Since 1987, the Herons have played 29 times in the NCAA tournament, reached 10 Final Fours, played in four national title games, and won two championships. Photo of 1988 national championship.



After an undefeated 2008 season, FLCC women's soccer was the first team in college history to be named number one in the National Junior Collegiate Athletic Association.



William Smith field hockey has won national championships in 1992, 1997, and 2000. Photo of 2000 national championship.

Tim- berrr: Logging Sports at FLCC

In the 1970s, many four-year colleges in the Northeast had well-established woodsmen teams. In 1974, the FLCC Woodsmen Club competed in its first meet at Dartmouth College. Today, FLCC is the only two-year college competing against four-year universities in the Northeast. Now an official team in the college's athletic program, the Lakers boast the most wins out of any participating timber sports team: 20 men's division and 14 women's division championships.



Competitions are divided into singles, doubles, triples, and team events. The college has three six-person teams: male, female, and co-ed (also known as Jack-and-Jill).

The FLCC Logging Sports team hosts home meets at Marty Dodge Woodsmen Field, under coach and former team member Ryan Staychock '95. Dodge was the team founder and coach for 37 years.



Many of the events involve sawing wood with one- or two-person saws or chainsaws, and are judged for speed and accuracy of cut. An assistant sprays lubricant on the saw to keep it from binding.



Events are based on traditional logging and woodsmen skills like fire building, canoeing, and log rolling. Birling (shown here) evolved from when loggers had to walk across floating logs without falling.



Various team members have gone on to be professional lumberjacks, including Dave Jewett '89, a three-time winner of the Lumberjack World Championships all-around title. In 1994 Christine VanGee '87 won the first officially recognized women's underhand chopping championships, and appeared on "The Tonight Show" with Jay Leno. 1978 team photo.

For the Love of the Game: Club and Intramural Sports

Like many colleges in the United States, HWS and FFLC offer intramural sports. Intramurals allow students to compete against each other in friendly competition, whereas club sports compete against other schools. Intramurals and clubs let students participate in a variety of sports. They provide an option for students who may not want or be able to join varsity sports, or who want to engage in co-ed teams. These teams allow more students to become involved in a school’s athletic program, fostering a balance between academics and activity.



HWS students have played intramural sports for many years. During the 1935-1936 academic year, 87% of Hobart students participated in intramurals.



Making use of the colder climate, HWS boasts an alpine ski team which practices and competes at nearby Bristol Mountain.



Intramurals have provided an opportunity for students to play sports that they may not have access to otherwise, such as cricket or fencing. *(Photos courtesy of Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Archives and Special Collections, Geneva, NY.)*

FLCC intramurals: basketball, floor hockey, soccer, tennis, flag football

HWS intramurals: basketball, floor hockey, soccer, tennis, badminton, table tennis, spikeball, volleyball, softball, dodgeball

HWS club sports: alpine ski, baseball, equestrian, fencing, ice hockey, lacrosse, rugby, soccer, track and field, tennis, ultimate frisbee, volleyball



Current HWS club sports include both men’s and women’s rugby and an equestrian team. *Photos courtesy of Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Archives and Special Collections, Geneva, NY.)*

William Smith Herons

Beginning in 1908 with William Smith College’s first class, physical education was part of studies. Women were taught basketball, baseball, volleyball, and marching and dancing. Interclass tournaments were played in basketball, field hockey, and tennis. Intercollegiate competition was discouraged, but “play days” with mixed teams (players from different colleges) were acceptable as social events.

In the late 1960s William Smith had varsity teams in lacrosse and sailing, followed by swimming and basketball in the early 1970s. Although their budget lagged behind Hobart, William Smith teams quickly had winning seasons.



The college teams were called “Smithies” but Smith College used the same name. In 1981 the winning submission in a naming contest came from two field hockey players after a heron flew over their practice field.

“Once at a ‘Play Day’ an observer remarked, ‘Isn’t it nice to see the dear girls playing without any desire to win.’ Utter rot.”
– Marcia Winn, Director of Athletics



Swimmer Vibeke Hopkinson '83 was the first William Smith athlete or team to win a national championship. She won individual NCAA titles in the 50-yard and 100-yard backstroke as a senior.



Together, professors Marcia Winn (left, 1930-1967) and Janet Seeley (1932-1971) introduced intercollegiate athletic competition with area women's colleges when such competition was considered "unladylike" and even "unhealthy" by some college officials. William Smith’s Winn-Seeley gymnasium is named in their honor.



Heron lacrosse teams have advanced to nine Final Fours, placing second five times.



Since 1997, rowing teams have made it to the national championships 13 times.