FOOTBALL FEVER

THE BIRTH OF FOOTBALL

Football was not invented by one person or on one day. It grew from soccer and rugby games played on American college campuses in the 1800s. In 1869, Rutgers and Princeton met in a contest often called the first college football game. But with 25 players on each side and rules closer to soccer, it looked nothing like today's game.

The game began to take shape when Yale's Walter Camp stepped in. Known today as the "Father of American Football," Camp pushed for changes that broke the sport away from rugby. His ideas helped create a uniquely American game, and by the late 1800s, football was spreading to colleges and athletic clubs across the country.

LEGENDS OF THE GAME

GRIDIRON GREATS

Johnny Unitas became one of football's first great quarterbacks during his career with the Baltimore Colts. Known for his strong arm and calm style, he helped lead the Colts to an overtime victory in the famous 1958 NFL Championship Game. Vince Lombardi built a winning tradition as coach of the Green Bay Packers, leading the team to five NFL championships in the 1960s. The Super Bowl trophy was later named in his honor.

Joe Namath became a football star both on and off the field while playing quarterback for the New York Jets. Before Super Bowl III in 1969, he boldly guaranteed his team would defeat the favored Baltimore Colts. The Jets won 16–7 in one of football's most famous upsets. In the 1970s, Terry Bradshaw helped lead the Pittsburgh Steelers to four Super Bowl victories. Roger Staubach became another star of the decade, leading the Dallas Cowboys to two Super Bowl championships.

Walter Payton became one of the NFL's greatest running backs with the Chicago Bears. Nicknamed "Sweetness," he retired in 1987 as the league's all-time leading rusher. Joe Montana stayed calm under pressure while leading the San Francisco 49ers to four Super Bowl victories. Montana was named Super Bowl Most Valuable Player three times.

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MORE THAN A GAME

Football traditions stretch far beyond what happens on the field. High school games have long brought communities together under the Friday night lights, while college football is known for rivalries, fight songs, marching bands, and homecoming celebrations. From small towns to major universities, game day often becomes a gathering shared by students, families, alumni, and longtime fans.

Tailgating is another familiar part of football culture. Fans gather outside stadiums before kickoff to cook food, play games, and visit with friends. The tradition became especially popular as college and professional football grew during the 20th century. Team colors, jerseys, banners, and favorite foods have all become part of the experience for generations of football fans.

Football also became a tradition inside American homes. Thanksgiving Day games have been televised for decades, and *Monday Night Football* turned a weeknight game into a national event beginning in 1970. Families and friends gather for games throughout the season, often creating traditions of their own. Together, these customs have helped make football more than a sport and a lasting part of American culture.

BIG GAMES

Some football games have become traditions of their own. The Rose Bowl was first played in 1902 and returned as an annual game in 1916. Known as the "Granddaddy of Them All," it became one of college football's most famous bowl games.

The Army-Navy Game began in 1890 and remains one of college football's oldest rivalries. The Sugar Bowl, first played in 1935, became another major postseason tradition. These games are known for school pride, pageantry, and history.

Professional football has its own big game. The first Super Bowl was played in 1967 between the Green Bay Packers and Kansas City Chiefs. What began as a championship between rival leagues grew into one of America's biggest sporting events, watched by millions of football fans across the country.

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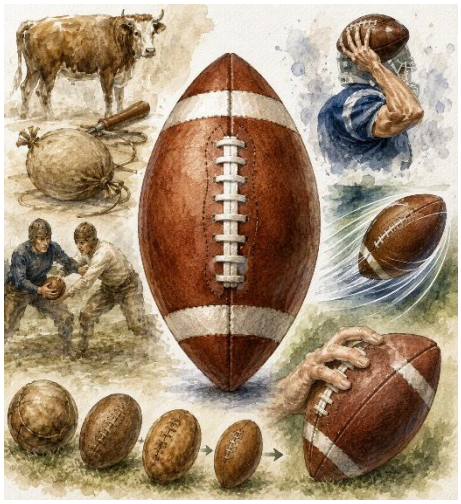
GAME DAY FACTS

THE PIGSKIN
Despite the nickname "pigskin," modern footballs are made from cowhide leather. Early footballs were made using inflated animal bladders, which may have helped inspire the name that is still used today.



WHY THE SHAPE?
A football's pointed oval shape developed partly because early balls made from animal bladders were difficult to shape evenly. Today's design also makes the ball easier to grip, throw, and carry.

THE HUDDLE
The football huddle is often credited to Paul Hubbard, a quarterback at Gallaudet University, in the 1890s. His team gathered closely so opponents could not see the hand signals used to call plays.

YELLOW LINE
The yellow first-down line seen during televised games is not actually on the field. Computer technology adds it to the broadcast so viewers at home can easily see how far the offense needs to advance.

NUMBER RULES
NFL jersey numbers are not chosen entirely at random. Certain groups of numbers are assigned to different positions, making it easier for officials, players, and fans to identify a player's role on the field.

THE COIN TOSS
Every football game begins with a coin toss to determine certain opening choices. The visiting team captain traditionally calls heads or tails before the coin lands and the game gets underway.

CHAIN GANG
The crew working along the sideline with two tall poles and a 10-yard chain is commonly called the "chain gang." The equipment can be used to measure whether the offense has gained enough yards for a first down.

END ZONES
The end zones at each end of an NFL field are 10 yards deep. Combined with the 100 yards between the goal lines, this makes the entire playing surface 120 yards long from end line to end line.

GAME BALLS
NFL footballs must meet specific standards for size, weight, and air pressure. Officials inspect each ball before the game to ensure it meets league requirements.

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P A T R I K O L P S E R C O L T R A E
Z C H A C A R D I N A L S N G I K I V
R G E R S I N G H E R A E T R A O S L
D O L P H I N S V I K I H A I N S L G
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A E M O P H I R E R A S O D O L P H I
P E S R E L E E T S M R E C H I E F S
C O L T S M A D O I B O G H E W A J M
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I C U K L V A E E B R O N J U O A S G
L E M H U K I A G I A N Y H E T P E H
A W I O L C H A R G H Y P O L E R A O

Find the 20 NFL team names hidden in the puzzle.
Words may appear across, backward, diagonal, up, or down.

BEARS
BILLS
BRONCOS
BROWNS
CARDINALS
CHARGERS
CHIEFS
COLTS
COWBOYS
DOLPHINS

EAGLES
GIANTS
JETS
LIONS
PACKERS
PATRIOTS
RAIDERS
RAMS
STEELERS
VIKINGS

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