THERE AT THE BEGINNING 1878-1937

As the fledgling game of football took root, tiny Swarthmore played an outsized role in shaping its future.

Less than a decade after Princeton and Rutgers met in what is widely considered to be the first true game of American 'foot-ball', Swarthmore College in 1878 became just the 15th school in the nation to establish its own gridiron squad. The venture was decidedly modest at the outset; the team would play just five games in its first five seasons and would wait until 1883 to notch its first win, a 12-6 victory over future rival Haverford.

But soon thereafter, the Little Quakers began to build a reputation within the growing constellation of Eastern colleges, and by the early 1900s was competing—and sometimes winning—against traditional powerhouses like UPenn and Navy.

From 1898 to 1907, the Little Quakers ranked among the nation's best teams, a period highlighted by the extraordinary performances of Robert 'Tiny' Maxwell, a legend of the early game whose eponymous award now ranks among the highest honors in college football.

Robert "Tiny" Maxwell

By the 1930s, Swarthmore had receded from the national stage and taken its place among the second tier of football competitors, but not before becoming an enduring part of football's mythology.

***MAXWELL** was a man of many talents; he acted in Shakespeare plays and wrote a song, "Heaven Help the Working Girl," which became a national hit. He later returned to Swarthmore as an assistant coach, then went on to become a well-known football official and respected newspaper editor, tragically passing away in 1922 at the age of 38.*

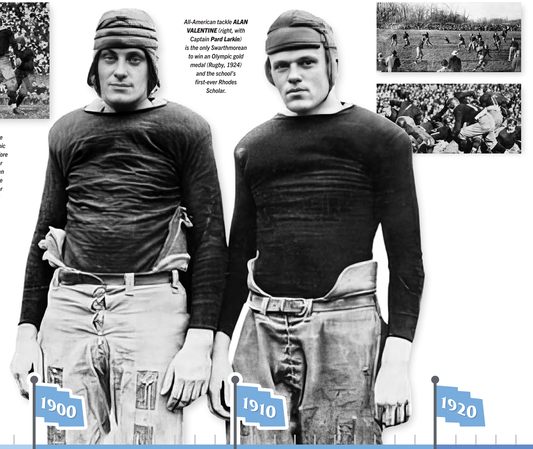
1888: the first photograph of a Swarthmore football team

One of the earliest-known images of Swarthmore football action: an 1892 inter-class scrimmage

Football's Legacy Is Built Into The Campus

Many of the most iconic buildings on campus bear the names of our most notable alumni families. Less well known is the fact that many of these benefactors were avid footballers during the program's early years.

A Philadelphia Inquirer article and game photograph from 1907 capturing the epic Swarthmore-Penn matchup, played before a capacity crowd in Philadelphia. A year after halting UPenn's 40-game unbeaten streak, Swarthmore lost a thrilling battle to its much larger opponent. The Quaker rivalry was among the most heated and newsworthy of its day.



*All-American tackle **ALAN VALENTINE** (right, with Captain **Pard Larkin**) is the only Swarthmorean to win an Olympic gold medal (Rugby, 1924) and the school's first-ever Rhodes Scholar.*

What T. Rowe Price managed before all that money

Fun fact: before founding one of the world's largest money-management firms, T. Rowe Price served as the manager of the Swarthmore football team in 1918.

1878
First Game

Swarthmore plays its first foot-ball game ever against UPenn, who tally what would be the equivalent of 123 points while holding the badly overmatched Little Quakers scoreless.

1883
First Win

After three failed attempts, Swarthmore defeats Haverford for its first-ever program victory. The team had taken the field just once in each of its first two seasons (1878-79) and had been thrashed so badly that no squad was fielded in 1880 or 1881.

1891
A 9-Win Campaign

Swarthmore racks up an impressive 9-2 record thanks to the prowess of future College Football Hall of Famer **GEORGE 'REDS' BROOKE** (below). It is the first of just two 9-win seasons in school history (the second coming in 1898).

***BROOKE** was also known for his punting prowess and is said to have coined the term 'coffin corner' to describe his deadly accurate kicks.*

1901
An Epic Four Years

From 1898 to 1901, the Little Quakers win a total of 31 games, the most victories across a four-year span in school history.

1906
The Best Quakers Prevail

On its 13th try, Swarthmore finally defeats its Quaker archrivals at Penn by a 4-0 score, breaking the larger school's 40-game winning streak.

1907
Sinking Navy's Ship

Swarthmore defeats national powerhouse Navy, 18-0. It is one of four victories for Swarthmore over the military academy, who were able to best the Little Quakers just once during their short rivalry.

1908
The Hiatus of 1908

Concerns about 'rampant professionalism' and a huge endowment offer from a football opponent prompt the administration to pause the program despite its phenomenal success over the preceding decade.

1919
Another Strong Run

From 1916 through 1919, the Little Quakers compile an impressive 23-6 record, including two victories over UPenn and a 7-1 performance in 1919. It would take 62 years for another Swarthmore team to reach the seven-win threshold.

1937
Depression Era Doldrums

Between 1930 and 1937, Swarthmore can manage no more than two wins in any season, its worst span of the new century. With Lew Elverson's arrival in 1938, the team's fortunes were about to change for the better.

***6'4" GEORGE "MOOSE" EARNSHAW** was a formidable presence on the gridiron, but it was his baseball skills that would lead him to three 20-win seasons and two World Series Championships as a pitcher for the Philadelphia A's along side the legendary Lefty Grove.*

The Elverson Era 1938-1974

Across five different decades, one determined coach guides the team's fortunes through the highs and lows.

LEW ELVERSON was already a football legend when he arrived at Swarthmore in the fall of 1937. As the captain of UPenn's Top 10-ranked team the prior year, Elverson had earned All-American honors as a member of the Quakers' famous 'Destiny Backfield' that lifted Penn to a #10 national ranking. He assumed head coaching duties at Swarthmore in 1938 and immediately reversed the team's decade-long slide with a 5-1-1 showing.

Elverson would go on to lead the Little Quakers for 32 of the next 36 seasons. During his tenure, Swarthmore recorded its only two undefeated seasons (1939 and 1966) in school history. Coach Elverson's roles at the college also included Professor of Physical Education (1937-1978), Chairman of the Physical Education Department, Head Track Coach, and Athletic Director.

In all, Lew Elverson mentored hundreds of Swarthmore football players throughout his career and influenced the lives of countless other athletes at the College.

Elverson with longtime assistant Paul Stofko

SWARTHMORE **96** Most Career Coaching Wins

SWARTHMORE **233** Most Games Coached

SWARTHMORE **1939 1966** Undefeated Seasons: **2**

Lew Elverson, circa 1938

And Now, A Word From Our... Sponsors?

Generic game programs from the 1950s, 60s and 70s prominently featured tobacco ads touting the benefits of smoking to the college set. After all, who doesn't enjoy lighting up before the Little Quakers take on the Mules?

Lew Elverson's Undefeated Twins, Born 27 Years Apart

1939		1966
6	Wins	6
0	Losses	0
1	Ties	1
140	Ponts Scored	148
36	Points Allowed	33

Lee McPhail & Dick Hall: Baseball's Famous Footballers

Lee Mcphail

Dick Hall

Before they became Swarthmore's most famous baseball alums, they were Lew Elverson's gridiron pupils. Baseball Hall of Fame member **LEE McPHAIL '40,** who would go on to major league greatness as a general manager of the New York Yankees and then President of the American League, centered for Elverson's winning 1938 team. **DICK HALL '52,** a five-sport Swarthmore athlete and two-time World Series champion, netted All-Conference and All-American honors in 1948 for his exceptional talents at wide receiver.

JON SUMMERTON (#11 above) and HOWARD LAYTON (#76 right) figured prominently in the success of the MAC championship teams of the mid-60s.

Neil Austrian: Swarthmore's NFL Legend

While no Swarthmoreans have made their mark on NFL playing fields, one remarkable ex-football player played a key role in expanding the league's popularity and its cultural impact in America.

Following his graduation, **NEIL AUSTRIAN '61**—First Team All-Conference selection and Captain of the 1960 squad--enjoyed an illustrious career as an executive leader across numerous industries, including Wall Street, advertising and television. In 1991, Austrian was appointed President of the NFL and entrusted with developing the organization's business expansion strategy. During his eight years with the league, Austrian worked closely with then-Commissioner Paul Tagliabute in overseeing numerous landmark deals that dramatically expanded the NFL's exposure and culture influence.

Despite his many business responsibilities, Neil remained deeply involved in Swarthmore as a Board of Trustees member and its Chairman from 1992 to 2000. He served as a tireless advocate for the football program and championed its cause during the most challenging times.

Neil Austrian, circa 1960

Elverson's teams in the late 60s and 70s were the first to integrate African-American players into their rosters

Elverson with wide receiver and team captain CHIP VEISE '74 in the coach's final year with the team

1938 1940 1950 1960 1970 1974

1938
The Elverson Era Begins

The small but scrappy Snyder twins

For most of the 1930s, Swarthmore could manage no more than two wins in any given season. That changed in Lew Elverson's first year as Head Coach. Ably supported by his former Penn teammate Paul Stofko, the Little Quakers turned in a 5-1-1 performance that marked an auspicious start to Elverson's four-decade leadership of the program.

1939
Undefeated Season, Act I

The 1939 football team accomplished a goal even its most storied predecessors from the early 1900s had been unable to reach: an undefeated season. Elverson's 6-0-1 squad dominated its schedule, and only a tie at Oberlin prevented the Little Quakers from achieving a perfect record.

1948
All-American Performances

DICK ESREY '50 and **REX GARY '49** formed a potent backfield duo that set multiple school records while earning All-American honors in 1948. Quarterback Gary achieved 60 percent passing accuracy while running back Esrey held the NCAA record for kickoff TD returns for more than 50 years on his way to the Swarthmore Athletics Hall of Fame.

1961-1962
Renewed Success

Back-to-back 5-2 seasons in 1961 and 1962 ended a seven-year run of losing campaigns and foreshadowed the MAC titles that would follow in the mid-60s.

1965
Champions At Last

Swarthmore captures its first-ever MAC South title in 1965 with a 5-1-1 record. Outstanding performances by Wilbur Streams, Richard Newman and Rich Yeager lead the way.

1966
Undefeated Season, Act II

Elverson's 1966 team replicated the success of his 1939 squad in eerily similar fashion, completing a dominant 6-0-1 campaign that included the school's second straight MAC South championship and a Little All-American performance by Rich Yeager.

1970
One Last Win

Beset by a decline in admitted recruits, the team struggled to a 2-6 record in 1970. A 28-18 victory against Haverford on November 21st of that year would be the squad's last taste of victory until 1975.

The Lapinski Years 1975-1984

From resurrection to renaissance, Swarthmore's surprising journey leads to unprecedented success and unexpected conflict.

When **Tom Lapinski** arrived at Swarthmore in the fall of 1975, he inherited what was arguably the worst program in college football history. Ten years later, the Swarthmore Garnet TIde were among the premiere Division III programs in the country and three-time league champions. It was an historic turnaround but one fraught with surprising challenges.

After breaking the nation's longest losing streak with a dramatic 16-12 victory over Muhlenberg in his first season, Lapinski's teams showed steady improvement over the ensuing five years, pioneering the use of data science and complex, innovative defensive schemes designed to leverage his teams' intellectual prowess. By 1981, the Garnet emerged as title contenders, posting a 7-2 record that included stunning upsets of nationally- ranked opponents Gettysburg and Western Maryland—a feat they accomplished with just 34 players on its roster.

The following three seasons brought more success, including three titles, national rankings and unprecedented media coverage. Lapinski's 30-6 record during the period stands as the highest four-year winning percentage in team history, a success that might have continued had the College not chosen to pursue a different approach to the head coaching position.

Tom Lapinski, circa 1975

SWARTHMORE **1982** Division III National Coach of the Year

SWARTHMORE **1977 1982** MAC South Coach of the Year

SWARTHMORE **1984** Centennial Coach of the Year

SWARTHMORE **#13** Highest National Ranking, Final Poll in 1984

SWARTHMORE **1981 1984** Best Four Year Winning Percentage in School History

SWARTHMORE **1982** MAC South Champions

SWARTHMORE **1983** Centennial Conference Champions

SWARTHMORE **1984** Centennial Conference Champions

The Defense That Never Rested

The defining characteristic of the Lapinski era was the swarming and stifling performance of its defenses, highlighted by an indominatable run-stopping scheme that regularly neutralized some of the best backs in the country. In fact, the 1984 squad still holds the Centennial Conference records for least rushing yards allowed per game (40.0) and total yards (152.9). This ultimately translated into Swarthmore placing 12 defenders on All-Conference squads between 1981 and 1984—the most of any team in the league.

*Defensive end **JEFF SEAGRAVES '84** (no. 42, left) earned First Team All-Conference honors in 1983 along with linebackers **DOM LEPONE '85** and **BOB TOWER '85***

TERRY LEE WHITE '80 earned First Team All-Conference honors three times, and is perhaps one of the only players in MAC history to achieve such recognition as both an offensive AND defensive player.

*1978 Co-Captain **ROB CHANG** was a mainstay of Swarthmore's strong running attack in the mid 70s*

*Five-year quarterback **STEVE MASSI '81** bridged the gap between the team's rebuilding phase in the late 70s and its ultimate success in the 1980s.*

During the Cinderella season of 1981, the team's unexpected success stirred excitement across the campus and media interest across the country. A record-setting Clothier Field crowd of 12,000+ attended the season finale against NCAA #1 Widener, and CBS and ABC national broadcasts posted score updates throughout the afternoon.

Defenders celebrate after a punt block on the final play of the game gives the Garnet a 2-0 victory to start the 1982 season.

*Linebacker **DOM LEPONE '85** was one of only two defensive players in Swarthmore history to receive three First Team All-Conference awards, adding All-American honors to his accolades in 1984.*

LAPINSKI CHARGES 'CONSPIRACY'

The Coaching Controversy

No story dominated the Lapinski era more than the ongoing conflict between the coach and select members of the faculty and administration. The team's success had amplified the differences in philosophy that existed on campus regarding the role of athletics and what some faculty members perceived as the reputational risks associated with a successful football program. Special committees—formed without Lapinski's knowledge or participation—stoked the flames of controversy further and attracted the attention of the national press, who were drawn to the 'man-bites-dog' nature of a college dissatisfied with its coach's winning ways. When Lapinski's tenure as head coach was terminated in 1985 following three consecutive champion- ships, a 30-6 record over the previous four years and an NCAA National Coach of the Year Award, many in the community saw an opposing agenda at play, one that foreshadowed controversies to come.

*The coaching situation drew national media attention, including a weeklong spoof in the popular comic strip **TANK MCNAMARA***

*Running back **ED MEEHAN '84** led his team in rushing four straight seasons, with help from offensive lineman like **BOB KLEIN '85***

*Over two seasons, quarterback **MIKE REIL '84** led his teams to a combined 15-3 record and earned Maxwell Club honors in 1983 for his outstanding performance in a last-second comeback win against Gettysburg.*

*Running back **TONY BURTON '82** was a backfield mainstay for four seasons.*

***SEAN CROWLEY '85 & BRUCE SQUIRE** helped to anchor the offensive line during multiple championship runs*

***TONY CIANCI & TONY INFANTE** (both '86), members of the nation-leading defense of 1984*

*Defensive back and kick returner **EDDIE GREENE '84** holds the school's single season and career interception records and achieved All-American status in both football and baseball. He was inducted into the Swarthmore Athletics Hall of Fame as an individual (2013) and member of the 1984 Football team (2014)*

*Quarterback **GLENN BENNETT '86** was the first Swarthmore player to earn the Centennial Conference Player of the Year award for his record-setting performance in 1984. His 17 touchdown passes that season still stands as the all-time school record.*

1975

1980

1984

1975 The End Of The Darkness

After tying the NCAA record for consecutive losses at 34, Swarthmore upsets Muhlenberg on November 13, 1975 for the team's first victory since 1970.

1976 Growing Pains

Lapinski's 1975 team featured his first set of recruits but still faced overwhelming odds and opposition numbers in scraping together a 1-7-1 record.

*Freshman **PHIL WEBER '80** joined the squad as Lapinski's first quarterback recruit*

1977 Major Progress

A 4-4-1 record heralds great improvements as the team rallies to win four of its final five games

*Co-Captain **JEFF LEINBERGER '78** arrived at Swarthmore as a running back and finished his career as an All-MAC linebacker.*

1978 Quick Start, Tough Finish.

Swarthmore's 4-5 record could easily have been 7-2, with three losses coming by a total of just six points.

*Running back **RICKY JUST '81***

1979 The Rebuild Continues

The Garnet start fast again, including a 3-0 defensive gem versus powerhouse F&M. But late-season injuries force the Garnet to settle for another 4-4-1 season.

*Wide receiver **JERRY RILEY** amassed more than 150 receptions during his four years and set numerous kick return records.*

1980 Struggling to Break Through

With a season-ending injury to senior QB Steve Massi in the season's second game, Swarthmore fights through a challenging 4-5 season.

***SAM DAVIS** follows **NEIL FISHER** around right end.*

1981 A Return To Winning Ways

Swarthmore's outmanned and outgunned squad takes Division III by surprise. In the season finale, the 7-2 Garnet fall to eventual National Champions Widener, 16-6, but their top-ranked defense keeps the Pioneer's top-rated offense out of the end zone—the only team to do so that season.

***JOE GALLO, JOE MORE** and **STEVE MASSI** (all '81) enjoy the pre-Widener pep rally*

1982 Welcome to the Media Circus

In a season characterized by both unprecedented success and controversy, Swarthmore races to an 8-0 record and an MAC South Championship before falling to Widener once again in the season finale.

LAPINSKI** and 1982 co-captains **ED PINNEY, JIM SANDERSON,** and **JOHN WALSH

1983 Another Year, Another Title

The team continues its winning ways with a strong 7-2 showing, its two losses coming by a combined total of just four points. The Garnet notch a Centennial Conference title and play their first and only game on live ABC regional television.

1984 Saving The Best For Last

In what would become Tom Lapinski's final season as head coach, Swarthmore enjoys a dominant 8-1 season that falls just a two-point conversion shy of a national playoff berth. The team still managed to pick up its third straight league title.

Seniors from the 1984 HOF squad

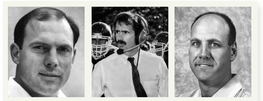
The Final Chapter 1985-2000

Beset by challenges, individual athletes still manage to deliver historic performances until the final whistle blows.

The final sixteen years of football at Swarthmore might best be characterized as a fight for survival. Following the success of the early 1980s, the team would continue to grapple with recruiting and administrative challenges that hampered its competitiveness.

Despite these obstacles, Swarthmore recorded strong showings in 1989, 1990 and 1992, a span that featured the standout performance of All-American Chip Chevalier '93, who shattered multiple school records along with his favorite receiving target, fellow All-American Josh Drake.

Following a 28-game losing streak in the late 90s, Coach Pete Alvanos' 2000 team notched a four-win campaign that provided hope of a program revival. Unfortunately, the school administration had other ideas, and with its season-ending 16-6 victory over Washington & Lee on November 11, 2000, the Swarthmore College football program had taken its final snap.

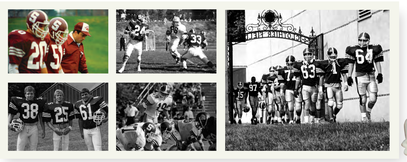


Meagher, Miran, Alvanos: Coaching Through Adversity

*The football head coaching position at Swarthmore provided many unique challenges for those chosen to lead, as Tom Lapinski learned. **FRAN MEAGHER's** tenure came on the heels of Lapinski's success, and he managed to keep the team on a competitive footing for the majority of his five seasons. His successor **KARL MIRAN** held the job for the next eight years, posting a pair of winning seasons along the way before the team's fortunes declined steeply in the late 1990s. **PETE ALVANOS** inherited a long losing streak but after two years of struggle was able to return the program to respectability with a 4-5 record. All three men persevered in an environment of relative uncertainty regarding the program's standing.*

Steve Gandia

One of just two defensive players in Swarthmore history to earn All-Conference honors three times, Gandia was a defensive force who also earned two All-American nods while setting numerous team records for sacks and tackles.

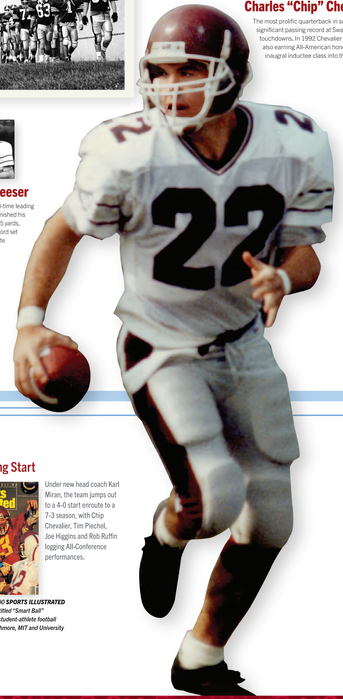


Rob Ruffin

The 6-foot-4 Ruffin amassed more than 100 tackles in each of his first three seasons and set the school record with five blocked kicks in one season. He captained the squad in his junior and senior seasons, earning All-Centennial Conference First-Team laurels at linebacker in 1989 and 1990. Ruffin is a member of the Swarthmore Athletics Hall of Fame for both his football and basketball careers.

David Reeser

Swarthmore's all-time leading rusher, Reeser finished his career with 2,205 yards, eclipsing the record set by Terry Lee White in 1979.



Charles "Chip" Chevalier

The most prolific quarterback in school history, Charles "Chip" Chevalier holds nearly every significant passing record at Swarthmore, including career records for completions, yardage and touchdowns. In 1992 Chevalier was honored as Centennial Conference Player of the Year while also earning All-American honors for his record-breaking performance. He was part of the inaugral inductee class into the Swarthmore Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012.

Josh Drake

The favorite target of Swarthmore's most accomplished quarterback, Drake set multiple school pass receiving records including career touchdown catches (19) and both the career and single season receiving yard marks. He earned All-American honors in 1992 and his 21 total career touchdowns tied the 43-year mark set by Dick Esrey in 1949.

Ken Clark

In the program's final season, Ken Clark shattered the school's single season rushing record by gaining 1,053 yards in just nine games, including a 317-yard performance that still ranks as the fourth-best in Centennial Conference history.

1985

1989
Leveling Up

The Garnet fight back to .500 with a 5-5 season that includes two razor-thin losses to Ursinus and Muhlenberg and features All-Conference performances by Rob Ruffin, Buddy McKinley, Marshall Hopper and Chris Walsh.

1990

1990
A Winning Start

Under new head coach Karl Miran, the team jumps out to a 4-0 start enroute to a 7-3 season, with Chip Chevalier, Tim Piechel, Joe Higgins and Rob Ruffin logging All-Conference performances.

*A November 1990 **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED** feature story entitled "Smart Ball" highlighted the student-athlete football players of Swarthmore, MIT and University of Chicago*

1995

1992
Air Swarthmore

The record-setting passing attack of quarterback Chip Chevalier and wide receivers Josh Drake and John Crawford lead the Garnet to a 5-3-1 mark, which would prove to be the last winning season in program history.

1996-1999
The Dry Spell

The team loses 28 straight games and 36 of 37 over a four year period, its only consolation coming in a 1998 season-opening victory against a woeful Oberlin squad in what was dubbed "The Game Somebody Had To Win."

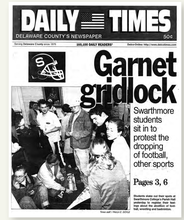
2000

2000
The Last Dance

A slow start to the season is followed by a strong finish as Pete Alvanos' promising team claws its way back to respectability with a 4-5 mark.

The Endgame

The College's decision to terminate the football program in 2000 marked the end of an emotionally charged, century-long debate about the sport's standing on campus. While several small colleges have struggled over the years with the issue of maintaining a competitive football team, many observers have noted that the debate at Swarthmore often involved the peculiar notion of cultural compatibility, with some faculty and administration members expressing concern at times about the negative reputational risks that a winning football team might have on the school's academic standing. Such assertions failed to address the ongoing stability and success of football at academically rigorous small colleges like Williams or Amherst, nor do they account for the high graduation rates, notable campus contributions, academic achievements and later professional success enjoyed by many Swarthmore footballers. The unique focus on football versus other competitive sports thus remains a singularly Swarthmorean issue that will continue to raise questions among those many proud athletes who committed so much of their time and energy to the sport on behalf of their chosen school.


DAILY TIMES
DELAWARE COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER
Garnet gridlock
Swarthmore students sit in to protest the dropping of football, other sports
Pages 3, 6