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Author(s): Carl M. Becker

Source: *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Autumn 1999, Vol. 97, No. 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 403-443

Published by: Kentucky Historical Society

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“Beat the Tanks”: A Chronicle of the Ashland Armcos, 1925-30

by Carl M. Becker

Late in the nineteenth century, especially in the Midwest, adult males in large and small communities alike began to organize football teams that had no affiliation with academic institutions. Known as “independent” teams, their players, fully employed in various occupations, were semiprofessionals, sharing in the net receipts of each game or at the conclusion of the season.¹ By about 1915, some teams in mid-size and large cities were evolving into professional clubs, all their players receiving a stipulated amount of money for each game. The flagship among them was the Canton eleven, the Bulldogs. (Jim Thorpe, the great Indian athlete, earned \$250 a game with the Bulldogs in 1915.) Though no formal league existed then, teams claimed state and national championships by virtue of their record or victories in crucial games.

Competition among the midwestern elevens, professional and semiprofessional alike, was inchoate, even anarchic at times. Disputes attended scheduling of games, players jumped from team to team, game by game; collegians played under assumed names—ringers—for the professional and semiprofessional teams to protect their collegiate eligibility. Seeking to end such problems, the managers of twelve clubs—four in Ohio—created the American Professional Football Association in 1920.² The new league, changing its name to the

Dr. Becker is professor emeritus of history at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. His publications include *Home and Away: The Rise and Fall of Professional Football on the Banks of the Ohio, 1919-1934* (1998), from which this essay is in part derived. Unless otherwise indicated, photographs appear courtesy of the Arnold Hanners Photographic Collection, Boyd County Public Library, Ashland.

¹A good account of the conditions of play early in the twentieth century is Keith McClellan, *The Sunday Game: At the Dawn of Professional Football* (Akron, 1998), 3-37.

²For details on the organization of the Association, see Robert W. Peterson, *Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football* (New York, 1997), 67-69. Peterson has representatives from ten clubs forming the Association, but the editors of *The*

National Football League in 1922, experienced a rough shake-down cruise at the outset but gradually shed the old problems. Not until Harold "Red" Grange entered the league with the Chicago Bears in 1925, though, did professional football begin to attract a popular following. Even then the collegiate fraternity held a long-standing animus against professional football, believing that the cash nexus contaminated the game by its invitation to gambling and fixing of games and that only amateur football built strength of character and manhood.

Meanwhile, semiprofessional teams continued to play, often under the chaotic conditions that had plagued the professional clubs. Spirited rivalries developed in various sections of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan and through the Ohio Valley. Certainly, competition was vigorous in the Tri-State region, an expanse running about forty miles from Huntington in West Virginia to Portsmouth in Ohio. Among others, teams from Portsmouth, Wellston, Jackson, and Ironton in Ohio were on the field; men in Huntington and Kenova in West Virginia organized elevens; and at Ashland, Catlettsburg, and Russell in Kentucky teams joined the list.

Clearly, the Ironton Tanks were sovereigns of play in the Tri-State by 1925. Organized in 1919 largely by men returning from military service during World War I, the Tanks through five years won thirty-two games and lost but three.³ They gave Ironton, a city of about fourteen thousand, then in decline as a center of a lagging pig-iron industry, pride and redemption from economic adversity; civic leaders, taking a proprietary interest in the Tanks, portrayed the team as an instrument "advertising" the community and demonstrating its modernity and intrinsic worth.⁴ Especially giving the Tanks personality and visibility were their coach, Charlton "Shorty"

Official NFL Encyclopedia indicate that thirteen cities had representation at the meeting creating the Association. Bill Baron et al., eds., *The Official NFL Encyclopedia of Pro Football* (New York, 1982), 18.

³C. Robert Barnett, *The Spartans and the Tanks* (N. Huntingdon, Pa., 1983), 4-5; and Jack Coins, "Tanks Copped 85, Lost 17, Tied 15," *Ironton Tribune* (hereafter *IT*), October 19, 1949.

⁴See Phillip Gene Payne, "Modernity Lost: Ironton, Ohio, in Industrial and Post-Industrial America" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1994), 267.

Davies, a speedy halfback who had played behind Chic Harley at Ohio State in 1918, and William "Bill" Brooks, a hulk of a tackle who cried when play did not go well for the Tanks.

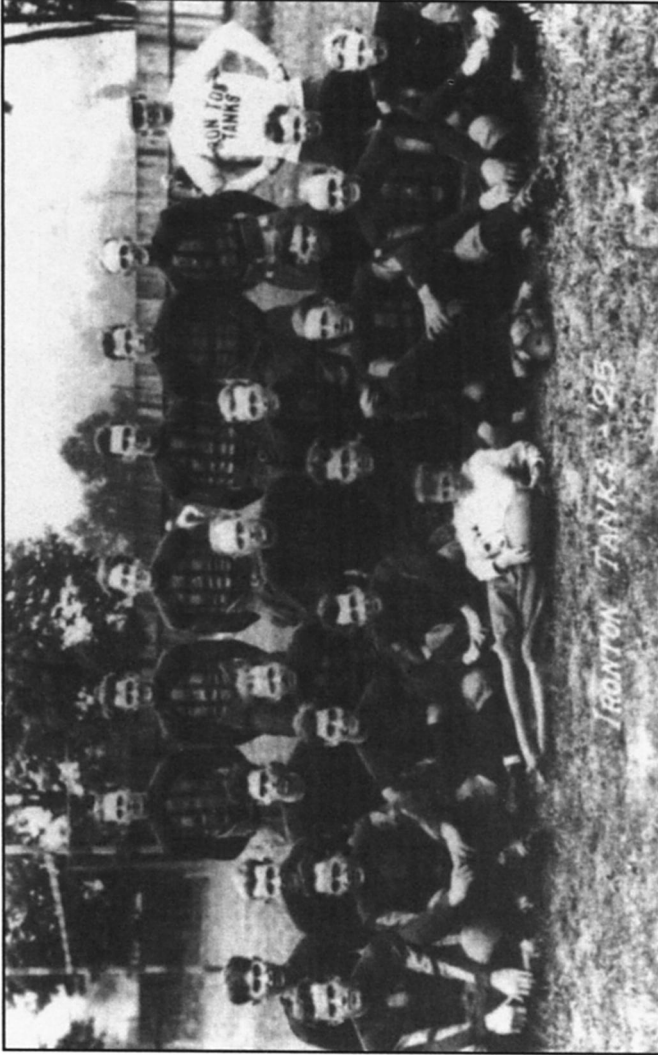
One of the three elevens defeating the Tanks was the Ashland Playhouse in 1919. Lacking support, the Playhouse did not play in 1920. Two rag-tag teams, the Tigers and Bulldogs, played as Ashland teams early in the 1920s, but neither survived beyond a season or so. On the face of it, Ashland, lying about five miles up the Ohio from Ironton in Kentucky, was capable of supporting a team. Its population, about fourteen thousand in 1920, rose rapidly early in the decade and nearly doubled by 1930. The Ashland Refining Company increased production, and the American Rolling Mill Company (Armco), headquartered in Middletown, Ohio, constructed a revolutionary steel mill in the Kentucky city in 1923, the workforce there soon numbering about twenty-five hundred. Certainly, the residents of Ashland were interested in football. They avidly followed the teams at Centre College and the University of Kentucky and gave solid support to the local high school team, the Tomcats. They took pride in the three or four local men regularly playing for the Tanks, and hundreds of fans from the city attended the Tanks' games, always composing a distinct part of the crowds that numbered two thousand and more.⁵

Under such circumstances, about a month before the season began in 1924, George Hatcher, a voluble sportswriter for the *Ashland Independent*, told his readers that the Tanks had renamed themselves the "Ashland-Ironton Tanks."⁶ Considering that Ashland gave players and patronage to the Tanks, it was, declared Hatcher, a necessary and proper step. Hatcher was attempting an appellative hijacking. At an organizational meeting, the Tanks had considered a proposal for changing their name—but only momentarily before dismissing it.⁷ They did throw Ashland a bone of sorts, designat-

⁵"Sports of all Sorts," *Ashland Daily Independent* (hereafter *AI*), September 14, 1924.

⁶"Sports of all Sorts," "Ashland-Ironton Will Be Name of This Year's Grid Eleven," *AI*, September 15, 1924.

⁷"Tanks Are 'Ironton Tanks,'" *Morning Irontonian* (hereafter *MI*), September 16, 1924.



Ironton Tribune

"Clearly, the Ironton Tanks were sovereigns of play in the Tri-State by 1925. Organized in 1919 largely by men returning from military service during World War I, the Tanks through five years won thirty-two games and lost but three."

ing a forthcoming date for a game as "Ashland Day."⁸ Hatcher, nonetheless, continued to call the Tanks the Ashland-Ironton Tanks. Fans in Ashland, whose interest in his report, he asserted, had reached the "breaking point," did not rally to his standard, and after about a month he abandoned his campaign.

Hatcher had not long to wait, though, to write about an eleven bearing the Ashland name. When it came to Ashland, Armco had a policy in place at its Middletown mill ("Armco Policies"), for cooperating with employees in organizing medical, social, educational, and recreational programs.⁹ With such a paternalistic approach, Armco sought to create a stable and productive workforce. Using the Employees Mutual Association as a conduit to workers, the company subsidized baseball, basketball, and football teams. In 1924, the Association organized a football team at Middletown, the Armco Blues, which played quite well that year. Pushed by Russell Smith, superintendent of the mill at Ashland, a hard-drinking man with a good command of four-letter words, the local association decided to create a team in 1925. With employees contributing seventy-five cents a month to the athletic program and the company a dollar for each employee, the Association had a substantial base of support for the team.¹⁰

Smith, who became manager of the team, and the Association had various ways, used separately or together, to build the team. They could recruit players from the community and workforce at the Ashland mill or from colleges and other semiprofessional elevens in the region. They could and did offer prospective players employment with the company in blue- and white-collar positions. No matter their origin, unless unusually good, players received fifty dollars a game. Obviously, the Armco people possessed advantages in re-

⁸"Brecks Strongest Teams Tanks Have Played," *MI*, October 7, 1924.

⁹For a description of "Armco Policies," see Christy Borth, *True Steel* (n.p., 1941), 239-50; Carl Becker, "George Matthew Verity," *Iron and Steel in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Bruce E. Seely (New York, 1994), 452-53.

¹⁰John McGill, *Kentucky Sports* (Lexington, 1978), 84; "People Make the Difference," *Middletown Journal* (hereafter *MJ*), July 11, 1975; author's interview with Harold Nicholson, May 23, 1995, in possession of author.

cruiting over other semiprofessional clubs.

For a moment they seemed to have a ready-made team at hand. Shorty Davies, speaking for himself and several other Tanks who suddenly had become dissatisfied with their financial terms for play in Ironton, came to them, offering to move the Tanks lock, stock, and barrel to Ashland as the Armco Tanks.¹¹

Ashland was abuzz at the news, said Hatcher:

Rumors were current in Ashland today that the famous Ironton Tanks football team will be known as the 'Ashland Armco Tanks' when the Big Red squad dons its gridiron togs for another campaign four weeks hence. It is said that the local Armco Association opened negotiations with 'Shorty' Davies . . . to purchase the entire club. John McNeal, secretary and treasurer of the Armco Association . . . promised that definite details of the matter will be announced within the next few days.¹²

The Armco men balked at the Tanks' price—twelve hundred dollars a game, the money to be divided among fifteen players.¹³ Davies accepted their offer to become the Armco coach at \$115 a game; and at least three Tanks—Clarence Poole, Bill Wardaman, and Harry Pope—agreed to play for the Armcos, though the "greater part" of the Tanks decided to remain in Ironton.¹⁴

Davies immediately became the center of a controversy in Ironton. Could he, people asked, retain his dual position as athletic director and football coach at Ironton High while coaching a rival team of the Tanks in another community? One faction argued that he had the right to make the most of his abilities, that he could retain his position. Another con-

¹¹"The Sportsman's Corner," *AI*, August 27, 1925; "Tank Question Still Pending," *MI*, August 27, 1925.

¹²Quoted in "Ashland Ready To Receive the Tanks with Open Arms," *MI*, August 25, 1925.

¹³"Ashland Armco Officials Refuse Local Tank Offer," *MI*, August 28, 1925.

¹⁴"Davies Accepts Offer to Coach Here This Year," *AI*, August 28, 1925; "Veterans of the Tank Return This Year," *Ironton Register* (hereafter *IR*), August 26, 1925; Bob Gill, *Down in the Valley: The True Story of the Ohio Valley League in the 1920s* (N. Huntingdon, Pa., 1993), 4.

tended that he was disloyal to the community and that his position at the high school was the preserve of the Tanks' coach, whoever he was. As the negative view gained support, the Ironton Board of Education asked Davies to resign his position.¹⁵ For the moment he wavered. Then Charles McCarthy, editor of the *Morning Irontonian*, declared in a lead editorial that everyone in the community "understood" that the Board had created the position for the man who led the Tanks; the Board thus made it possible for the Tanks to secure a "high class" coach.¹⁶ He saw a "perfect beauty" in the arrangement and called on Davies to choose between the position and the coaching berth at Armco. Hatcher ridiculed McCarthy's argument, asserting that Ironton High was the only high school in the nation paying professional athletes. Hearing vox populi, Davies resigned his post at Ironton. Armco then gave him a position, apparently a sinecure, in the Ashland mill. Replacing him as the high school and as the Tanks' coach was Lingrell "Sonny" Winters, a halfback who was then weighing an offer to play for the Columbus Tigers in the National Football League.

The controversy resolved, Davies and Smith turned to the task of building a team in a matter of a few weeks. The three former Tanks were already in the fold, and soon four players from the Huntington Boosters—"Bunk" McWilliams, L.L. "Gatling Gun" Gates, Tom Dandalet, and Leroy McNulty—joined them. At one time or another on the roster, which numbered sixteen or seventeen, were other men who had played collegiate or semiprofessional football or both, among them Ashby Blevins, Jim Roberts, and "Dutch" Glass from Centre; Walter Kurtzhalz, a Wilmington College man; and Homer Martin from West Virginia University. Coming from Ironton High was "Dum Dum" Koerper. Wherever they came from, Davies ran them through rigorous practices, cutting players until he believed that he had an eleven ready

¹⁵"Board of Education Requests Resignation of Shorty Davies," *IR*, September 5, 1925; "Resignation of Shorty Davies Requested by School Board," *MI*, September 5, 1925. The minutes of the Board of Education of the Ironton City School District do not refer to the request.

¹⁶"He Must Choose," *MI*, September 5, 1925.



Downtown Ashland, ca. 1926.

to play. Despite the constraints of time, the Armco people built a team seemingly capable of respectable play. Observers in Ashland were confident that the Armcos would be one of the strongest teams in the Tri-State.¹⁷

As the players practiced, Allen and other officers of the Association took a hurried and important step. Appropriating twenty-five thousand dollars from their treasury, they hired a contractor to construct a baseball and football park near the Armco mill on the west side of the city. They employed Mattie Schwab, the groundkeeper of Redland Field in Cincinnati, to lay out the field. The grandstand, a wooden structure, could accommodate about three thousand spectators. Outside the football field, they laid out a parking area for eight hundred automobiles, six diamonds for "playground ball," and a quarter-mile running track. Obviously wishing to enhance the company's image in the community, the officers announced that the local high school teams could use the facility.¹⁸

¹⁷"The Sportsman's Corner," *AI*, August 27, 1925; "Armco Candidates to Meet Tonight," *AI*, September 4, 1925.

¹⁸"Work on New Athletic Field at Armco to Get Underway Next Week," *AI*, September 4, 1925; "Work on Athletic Field Will Start Next Week," *IR*, September 5, 1925; "\$25,000 Park to Be Biggest in Tri-State," *AI*, September 6, 1925; "Armcos New Park One of Most Up-to-Date Plants in Tri-State," *AI*, September 27, 1925.

Despite the gesture of goodwill, the Armcos did not begin their first season as a team of the community, as the Tanks already were in Ironton. Rather, they were dependent on the support of a company recently arrived in the city, on the Employers Association, and on the mill workers who gave them entry into the larger population of Ashland. The local sons on the team could help tie the team to the community. Better yet, the Armcos could blur the distinction between the company and community if they played exciting and winning football.

The Armcos would have to win against many of the better teams in the Ohio Valley. Avoiding the improvisation characteristic of scheduling in semiprofessional football, Smith had fairly firm dates for games in hand before the Armcos began play. They were to meet the Boosters, Tanks, and Columbus West Side twice each and the Cincinnati Potters, the Armco Blues, and four other Columbus elevens once each. The Blues, Potters, Tanks, West Siders, and Boosters all had good records in the recent past and appeared to be strong coming into the season in 1925. Playing nine of their games at Armco Park—Smith apparently offered visiting elevens good guarantees—the Armcos seemed likely to enjoy the proverbial home-field advantage.

The Armcos, also known occasionally as the Steelers or Yellowjackets, opened play late in September against the Columbus Rochester Clothiers. About two thousand spectators, surely curious about the new team and new park (which was barely ready), sat in the grandstand. Attired in orange and black uniforms, the Armcos, using a conventional single wing offense, could not move the ball at crucial moments and lost, 3-0. Then they met the Ohio State Stoves of Columbus, reputedly a good team but obviously not, easily defeating them, 48-0.¹⁹

Optimistic after their first victory, the Armcos looked forward to playing the Columbus West Side in their next game. Then they ran into the caprice of semiprofessional

¹⁹"Columbus Downs Ashland in 'Lid Lifter,'" *AI*, September 28, 1925; "Armco Manhandles Ohio State Stoves by 48-0," *AI*, October 5, 1925.

football. A rumor began circulating a few days before the game that at least four Armcos who had once played for the Boosters—Gates, McWilliams, McNulty, and Dandalet—intended to play for their old team on Sunday—and *not* for the Armcos.²⁰ A sportswriter for the *Huntington Dispatch*, Duke Ridgley, describing Huntington as the “home of clean athletes,” gave credence to the rumor, stating that the men “POSITIVELY” would be in Boosters’ uniforms.²¹ Dismissing Ridgley’s story as nonsense, Hatcher declared that the home of good athletes was “just awakening to the fact that they have no players” and was offering “all sorts of inducements” to lure the players back to Huntington.²² At practices, McWilliams and company denied the reports, adding that they intended to remain with the Armcos for the entire season.

Ridgley was one man short of being correct. McWilliams, Gates, and McNulty did not show at Armco Park for the game against the West Siders and sent no word to Davies that they would not play. They spent Sunday afternoon playing for the Boosters. Shorn of three able players and outweighed fifteen pounds a man, the West Siders “plowing” through their defensive line, which averaged but 180 pounds, the Armcos lost 21-0.²³ Hatcher castigated the three men. Their word had seemed to make contracts with them unnecessary. But they had shown themselves unfit to participate in any athletic contest. They were miscreants exemplifying a serious fault in professional football. Because no rules governed them, players jumped from one team to another and thus dishonored the game and betrayed fans. The men had promised to play for the Armcos and then had deserted them without a word. The Armcos, Hatcher feared, might become a training center for the Boosters. He sarcastically noted that Ridgley surely did not have McWilliams, Gates, and McNulty in mind when he called Huntington the “home

²⁰“West Side Athletic Club from Columbus will oppose Armcos Sunday,” *AI*, October 9, 1925.

²¹“Diamond Dust,” *Huntington (W. Va.) Dispatch*, October 9, 1925.

²²“The Sportsman’s Corner,” *AI*, October 9, 1925.

²³“Crippled Armco Team Beaten by Columbus,” *AI*, October 12, 1925; “Howe Motors Win From Armcos 21-0,” *Ohio State Journal*, October 13, 1925.

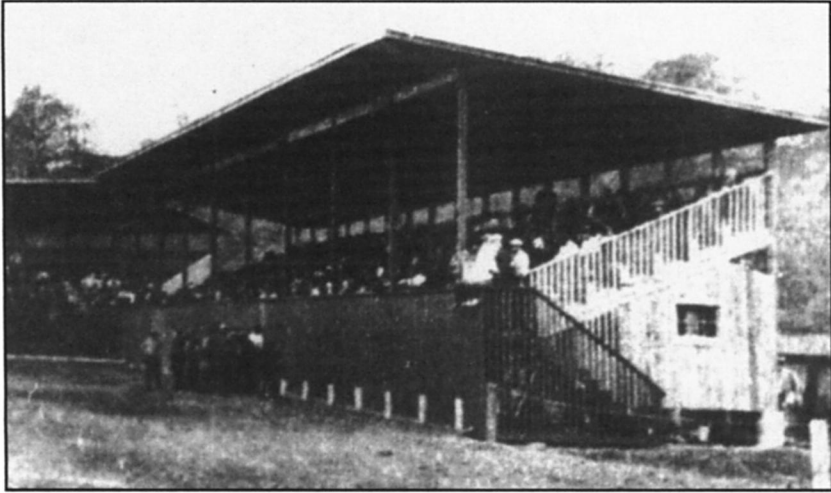
of great athletes."²⁴ Somehow patching things up with the Armcos, McWilliams returned to the team and played through the season of 1928.

In their opening games, the Armcos did not really touch the heart of the community, drawing neither praise nor reproach for their play. They had played teams not well known in Ashland and lost twice. To reach out to prospective fans, they as a new team had to win and develop a spirited rivalry with one or more elevens from cities with which Ashland had geographical and historical ties. Obviously, the Tanks in nearby Ironton satisfied such requisites. For decades, the cities had engaged in social and business intercourse, and since early in the twentieth century athletic teams from the high school and adult amateur clubs had been playing one another in baseball, football, and basketball. In their fourth game of the season, the Armcos began the competition with the Tanks that could give them a foothold in the city.

The Armcos, wishing to make their mark, prepared mightily for the game. Early in the week, Smith signed James "Red" Roberts to a contract for the remainder of the season. Roberts, weighing 225 pounds, had played as an end, tackle, and fullback for Centre College and started for the squad that defeated Harvard in 1921 in the "upset of the century." That year Walter Camp selected him for his All-American team. Signing a contract, too, was Minos Gordy, an "immense" tackle who had also played for Centre against Harvard and who had been with the Louisville Brecks in 1923, when they were a member of the National Football League.²⁵ Rumors had it that the Armcos intended to sign two other "classy" players. Sportswriters often called such signings "loading up" for a game. Unless teams exchanged eligibility lists naming men who had played in preceding games, loading-up

²⁴"The Fault with Professional Football," *AI*, October 14, 1925.

²⁵"Red Roberts in Armco Lineup for Season," *AI*, October 14, 1925; "Red Roberts and Other Stars to Play with Davies' Armco Squad at Beechwood," *IR*, October 14, 1925; "Roberts and Gordy of Centre College Fame Sign with Armco Team," *MI*, October 15, 1925; "All Americans on Armco Team," *IR*, October 17, 1925.



The grandstand at Armco Park, ca. 1925.

was an acceptable practice.

As the Armcos strengthened their roster and the game with the Tanks approached, they were gathering a measure of support in the Ashland community. At a meeting of businessmen at the Ventura Hotel, a kind of "pep" meeting, Davies spoke about his team and introduced thirteen players, including the renowned Roberts.²⁶ Several businessmen then gave short talks on the meaning of the Armcos for the community and pledged their support for them. Benjamin Forgy, president of the *Independent*, asserted that the Armcos provided the city with "advantages" in "advertising," the "biggest and best thing" for the community in twenty-five years. For T. Lee Betterton, president of a coffee company, the team represented more than material success: "The people of Ashland appreciate what Armco had done for our city in the way of clean athletics. They also appreciate the class of men the association has brought here to furnish them with high class football." Coming to the meeting from Armco headquarters, Charles Hook, vice-president of the company, sounded a similar theme as he linked football to character

²⁶"Business Men Pledge Support to Armco Team," *AI*, October 15, 1925; "Pep' Meeting Held by Armco," *IR*, October 16, 1925.

and courage. Saying that Armco employed men of such virtue, he went on to argue in a kind of non sequitur: "That is the reason we encourage athletics. But there is one thing we stress among our players and that is, to play the game squarely. We expect Armco players to win but to play the game cleanly—as far as it is possible." In that spirit, he added, the Armcos would win Sunday regardless of the score. Hatcher, wanting more than a victory in spirit, warned the Tanks of the Armcos' power, writing in his daily column "Look out Tanks! The big locomotive is coming."²⁷

Going to Beechwood Park in Ironton, the Armcos faced a team undefeated in three games, including a victory over the strong Potters of Cincinnati. The Tanks were confident but hardly nonchalant, knowing that the Kentuckians had just added two outstanding linemen to their roster. Winters put his team through hard practices, drew up new plays, and conducted blackboard drills. Davies also worked his players hard, giving attention especially to integrating Roberts and Gordy into the line. Some bettors, believing that the two men gave their team the edge over the Tanks, were willing to give 6-5 odds on the Armcos.

Fans "keyed up" for this "greatest game in the history" of the Ohio Valley. (Puffery was never in short supply before a game.) Paid attendance was 3,535, one of the largest crowds until then in the history of semiprofessional football in the valley.²⁸ Hatcher's cheerleading proved of no avail. The Armcos offered the Tanks stubborn resistance at times but fell, 21-6, in a "fast and furious" game. Ironton reporters exulted in the conduct of the Tanks off the field. Before the game, an unidentified man, presumably a gambler, handed a sheet of paper to Winters with the Armcos' signals. Immediately, Winters destroyed it, saying that "we'll beat them fair or not at all." The Tanks, displaying an admirable spirit, wholeheartedly supported his decision.

²⁷"Armco Invades Tank Stronghold This Afternoon," *AI*, October 16, 1935.

²⁸"Tanks Crush Armco Team, Start Early Drive for 21-6 Victory," *IR*, October 19, 1925.

Table 1. Armcos' Record, 1925: 4 Wins, 6 Losses, 1 Tie

Armcos	Opponent		Crowd
0	Columbus Clothiers	3	2,000
48	Ohio State Stoves	0	-
0	Columbus West Side	21	-
6	Ironton Tanks	21	3,500
6	Middletown Armcos	0	3,000
0	Ironton Tanks	9	3,500
6	Columbus Bobbs	0	-
0	Huntington Boosters	0	-
0	Huntington Boosters	7	1,500

Before encountering the Tanks again, the Armcos won two games. First, they met the West Siders, the winners in their earlier game, 21-0. With three new men on their roster, among them a "speedy halfback," the Armcos showed marked improvement from the previous meeting, winning 13-0 on a muddy field. Hatcher and the "large" crowd left Armco Park talking optimistically about beating the Tanks in the return game. Even more satisfying was the Armcos' next victory over their kinsmen, the Armco Blues of Middletown. The Blues came to Ashland undefeated, boasting a top-notch running back in Howard Wykoff. Taking "Stop Wykoff" as their battle cry, the Armcos checked him and won a "thriller," 6-0. The crowd, variously estimated from fifteen hundred to three thousand, and the Armcos savored the win over the "Main office."²⁹ But they could not do so for long—the Tanks lay directly ahead.

In the meantime, the Tanks had also won two games. With reports of loading-up whirling around them, the Tanks and Boosters met in a fierce battle. The Tanks used no new men, but the Boosters acquired a "mysterious Mr. Wilson," who was, in fact, Gale Bullman, captain of the West Virginia Wesleyan eleven in 1924. He could not halt the Tanks from

²⁹"'Stop Wykoff' is Local Battle Cry," *AI*, October 29, 1925; "Ashland Conquers Middletown in Thriller," *AI*, November 2, 1925; "Armco Blues Lose First Game in Two Years to Fast Ashland Crew," *Middletown Journal* (hereafter *MJ*), November 3, 1925; "Armco Blues Go Down to Defeat Before Armco Team in Sunday Contest," *Middletown News Signal* (hereafter *MNS*), November 2, 1925.

grinding down the Boosters, 12-0. Then the Tanks defeated the Wagner-Pirates of Columbus, one of the stronger elevens in central Ohio, 19-5.

Though the Tanks came to Armco Park undefeated in six games, imaginative Armco fans, ignoring their team's record of three wins and two losses, viewed the coming game as a "turning point" for the championship of the "area." As usual, stories surfaced about the teams' taking on new players. The most intriguing one had the Armcos talking to Jim Thorpe about playing for them. The *Register* and the *Irontonian* traced his rumored movement around Ashland, but he did not appear in an Armco uniform. Supposedly, too, the Armcos were recruiting "stars" from the Boosters, even their coach, Jim Weaver, and "high class" players from eastern colleges.³⁰ None came. Both teams were confident of victory.

Coming out of a secret practice, several Armcos boasted that "We're gonna ride through the Tanks, like Sheridan did from Winchester." The Tanks, taunting the Armcos, said that they had "kid gloved" them in the first game but now would use all their power for a decisive win. Despite a severe cold wave and a recent rainfall that turned the sod into mud, thirty-five hundred to four thousand fans attended the game. The Tanks scored on a long pass only minutes after the opening kick off. Hatcher, noting the Armcos' advantage in first downs, six to four in the first half, argued that the Steelers "out fought and out played" the Tanks until the intermission. The Tanks tacked on a field goal in the second half and won, 9-0.³¹ The Armcos made a respectable showing, nonetheless, and could realistically contemplate defeating the Tanks in 1926 if their program moved forward.

Following the game, however, rumors swirled "thick and fast" through Ashland about Davies and the Tanks. One story had the Association ready to force Davies to resign, another that the players had asked him to resign, and still

³⁰"Armcos Trying to Sign Jim Thorpe," *IR*, October 30, 1925; "Tanks to Turn Heavy Guns on Armco Team," *MI*, November 6, 1925; "Fumes," *IR*, November 3, 1925.

³¹"Tanks Triumph Over Armco Before Big Crowd," *AI*, November 9, 1925; "Tanks Slip, Slide and Fight Way to Victory," *MI*, November 10, 1925.

another that the Armcos had not practiced for two weeks before playing the Tanks and had not tried to beat them. Hatcher called all the stories "damnable rumors" and asked John McNeal, secretary-treasurer of the Association, to comment on them. Allen vehemently scotched them. True, he said, the team had not practiced "as much as it should [have]" before the Tanks' game but only because of "inclement" weather and the condition of the field. As for the gossip about the forced resignation of Davies, it was just that, a fabrication originating in Ironton, where people did not "think" much of his playing for Ashland. The Armcos, declared Allen, valued Davies and did not intend to let him go.³²

For the moment, Davies proved his value. Returning a punt fifty yards for a touchdown on a rain-swept field, he led the Armcos to a victory over the Columbus Bobbs, 6-0. Then, accompanied by about two hundred fans, the Armcos journeyed by rail to Redland Field in Cincinnati to play the Potters. Sponsored by a shoe company, the Potters were one of the strongest teams in the Greater Cincinnati Football League. The Armcos viewed victory against the Potters as one that would bolster their prestige and measure themselves against the Boosters, whom they would next play and who had recently lost to the Potters by one touchdown. Led by Virgil Perry, a running back from Miami University, the Potters overwhelmed the Armcos, 20-0. Probably to the chagrin of the Armcos, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* portrayed them as "soft pickings."³³ They could take some consolation in playing before five thousand spectators, their largest crowd of the season. As the roster proved next year, the Armco people departed Cincinnati believing that Perry was a fine player.

The Armcos then met the Boosters at Ashland. The game had a promising aspect as a showcase for a clash between redheaded men and former teammates at Centre, Red Weaver

³²"Armco to Meet Strong Bobbs Chevrolet on Local Field Today," *AI*, November 15, 1925; "Shorty Still with Armco," *MI*, November 15, 1925; "Sports-writer Tried to Quell Rumors about Shorty Davies and Armco Team," *IR*, November 17, 1925; "Damnable Rumors," *AI*, November 17, 1925.

³³"Cincinnati Swamps Ashland Armcos by 20 to 0," *AI*, November 23, 1925; "So Easy! Armco Soft Pickings," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (hereafter *CE*), November 23, 1925.

of the Boosters and Red Roberts of the Armcos. The crowd, expected to be "large," apparently was quite ordinary. Despite piling up a substantial advantage in first downs, the Armcos could not score on a muddy field, the game ending in a scoreless tie. At Huntington the following Sunday, playing before a small crowd, the Armcos again failed to score, losing 7-0 in their final game of the season.³⁴

The Armcos could look back on a season that started reasonably well and then deteriorated in a scoring drought: in their final six games, they reached the end zone only twice. They posted a record of four wins, six losses, and one tie. Their high point came in the victory over the counterparts in Middletown. But for a new team organizing at the outset of a season and playing the better semiprofessional teams in the Ohio Valley, the Armcos had played fairly well. With the Employees Association ready to foot their bills, they were not dependent on the community for support. But eventually, if they wished to become more than a plaything for the Association and the community, they had to post winning records—and beat the Tanks. They could not count on thousands of fans to come to Armco Park like the indefatigable Walter Mayo who, rain or shine, was at every game, standing as a landmark on the sidelines chewing apple-flavored gum.³⁵

In 1925, the Armco people, their decision to organize a team coming late, had had little time to prepare for play. A year later, well before the season began, they were more nearly ready, having secured a new coach, procured new players, built a schedule, and reached into the community for support.

For all the trouble that Davies had endured coming to the Armcos, he resigned as their coach in the summer of 1926. Smith, remembering the "dashing" play of Virgil Perry against the Armcos, offered him the berth. Perry accepted and almost immediately sped to Indiana to attend the Knute Rockne grid school. He returned in three weeks, saying that he had never learned as much "inside football" as he had from the

³⁴"Armco Outplays Boosters: Game Ends in Tie," *AI*, November 30, 1925; "Boosters Triumph Over Armcos by 7-0 Score," *AI*, December 7, 1925.

³⁵"Sportsman's Corner," *AI*, November 17, 1925.



Virgil Perry became coach of the Armcos in the summer of 1926. "Almost immediately, he sped to Indiana to attend the Knute Rockne grid school. He returned in three weeks, saying that he had never learned as much 'inside football' as he had from the Irish coach." Photograph from the *Armco Bulletin* 14 (September-October 1927).

Irish coach.³⁶ Then he turned his attention to practices, Rockne-like, meticulously drawing up plans for practices and more practices.

Perry had at least forty candidates at practices seeking a place on the Armcos' roster. Smith, Allen, and Perry, determined to field a "powerful" team, had scoured cities and colleges in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky for players, offering men fifty dollars a game and employment at the Armco mills.³⁷ Running practice after practice, Perry soon had a roster ready for play. Of the twenty-five men who played at one time or another in 1926, only five had been on the roster in 1925.³⁸ All but five had played for collegiate

³⁶"Perry, Armco Coach, Returns from Rockne's Grid School," *AI*, August 8, 1926.

³⁷"Sportsman's Corner," *AI*, August 4, 6, 10, 1926; "Football Season To Be Inaugurated Here in Four Weeks," *AI*, August 29, 1926.

³⁸Bob Gill, "Rosters of Ashland Armco, Portsmouth Shoe Steel, Portsmouth Presidents, Portsmouth Spartans, Ironton Tanks, 1926-1933," manuscript in author's possession.

teams—five at Miami University, three at Ohio State, two at West Virginia University, two at Marshall, and two at Centre. Giving identity to the Armcos were several men who played nearly every minute of every game: Chal Joseph and Joe Work at end and Perry at quarterback, all from Miami University; Johnny “Stud” Stuart, a halfback who had played with Chic Harley at Ohio State and had been a pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals; Walter Skidmore, a tackle out of Centre; Layne Tynes, a running back from the University of Texas; and McWilliams, a tackle without collegiate experience.

The Armcos had to have training and talent to face their schedule. As Allen remarked, the Association wanted “none but the best team . . . brought here.” Perry agreed, insisting that he would not permit the Armcos to play “set-ups” and that the fans deserved to see good teams.³⁹ Smith, business-like, had the schedule nearly in place by the opening of the season. It was a fans’ schedule. The Armcos would play their first seven games at home before going on the road for three of their last four games. They met the Potters and Tanks five times and other good teams in the Ohio Valley once.

Allen, Perry, and Smith made a concerted effort to tie the Armcos to the community. Launching a campaign to sell season tickets, they went to businessmen and civic clubs touting the coming play of the Armcos and asserting that the players were solid citizens. At a “pep” meeting, Perry spoke of a coming victory over the Tanks: “When we beat the Ironton Tanks on October 24, our success will have been assured.” At another meeting, he declared that he would lead a “football team that citizens of Ashland will be proud to claim . . . with every player working here and boosting Ashland.” After hearing Perry, volunteers for the campaign placed window stickers on automobiles around the city bearing the words “Boost Ashland Armco Football.” Forty-two sales teams took up the good work, hoping to sell two thousand tickets at eight dollars each, a thousand at the Armco

³⁹“Armco Football Eleven to be One of Strongest in Tri-State,” *AI*, August 15, 1926; “Virgil Perry, Football Coach at Armco, Speaks at Lions Club Meeting,” *AI*, September 8, 1926.

Mill and a thousand "up town." Despite Perry's assurance of victory over the Tanks, they fell short of their goal by about a thousand.⁴⁰

Table 2. Armcos' Record, 1926: 6 Wins, 3 Losses, 2 Ties

Armcos	Opponent		Crowd
6	Dayton Koors	0	3,000
30	Columbus Bobbs	0	-
13	Cincinnati Potters	0	1,500
20	Middletown Armcos	0	2,500
0	Ironton Tanks	2	5,000
20	Columbus Tigers	0	-
45	Oorang Indians	0	3,000
0	Cincinnati Potters	0	3,000
0	Ironton Tanks	7	4,500
0	Dayton Triangles	3	-
0	Cincinnati Potters	0	2,100

The Armcos opened their season with a flourish. They won their first four games against fairly good teams—the Dayton Koors, the Bobbs, the Potters, and the Blues—without yielding a point. Their offense, though sluggish at times, recorded fifty-nine points. Undoubtedly, the Armcos and their fans took pride in the four consecutive wins, but the prize that they longed for was a victory over the Tanks, their next opponent. The Tanks remained the giants in semiprofessional football in the valley, undefeated in five games, scoring 150 points and holding their opponents scoreless. The eleven able to beat them, especially one in its infancy, would wear a mantle of distinction, inside and outside the community.

The Tanks came to Ashland amid a swell of excitement. Readers of the *Tribune*, the newspaper in Ironton supplanting the *Register*, and the *Independent* were assured that the

⁴⁰"Businessmen Pledge Support to Armco Football Team," *AI*, August 30, 1926; "Virgil Perry, Football Coach at Armco, Speaks at Lions Club"; "Sales Is Open," *AI*, September 10, 1926; "Armco Practices to be Opened to Public This Afternoon," *AI*, September 12, 1926.

coming game was the “classic of the year,” the “greatest battle in the history of professional sports in the region, that Ashland was “agog with excitement,” that the crowd would number from four thousand to seven thousand, and that gamblers were wagering thousands of dollars on the outcome. Armchair quarterbacks were hard at work divining the play—the Tanks would resort to a passing game, Perry would pound the Tanks’ line in off-tackle runs. For once, few rumors circulated about loading-up.⁴¹

Unfortunately, neither eleven could display its wares. A drizzling rain before the game and a heavy downpour during the first half turned the chalk-lines into a roily sea of mud, an “oozy, slippery, gooey sticky mess.”⁴² Still, five thousand fans were in the stands. Fearing fumbles from scrimmage, the teams often punted on early downs—thirty-seven altogether—and safety men seldom tried to catch a punt, with the result that neither team received the “break” it was looking for. Midway through the second half, the Tanks broke the stalemate slightly but decisively: Olin Smith, a tackle, blocked a punt, and the Tanks scored a safety to win, 2-0.

The Armcos played three more games before meeting the Tanks again. They defeated the Columbus Tigers, then a member of the National Football League but a weak sister, 20-0. Then they met the Oorang Indians, an all-Indian eleven, the remnants of the Oorang Indians under Jim Thorpe that had played in the NFL in 1922 and 1923. The Indians were a woeful team then and even worse in 1926. The Armcos demolished them, 45-0. With three hundred fans accompanying them, the Armcos journeyed to Redland Field to meet the Potters, a “reorganized team” since the earlier meeting. Perry played the “game of his life”; but neither his Armcos nor the Potters could score points of any sort.⁴³

⁴¹“Capacity Crowd to Witness Armco-Tank Clash,” *AI*, October 19, 1926; “Interest High as Clash with Tanks Nears,” *AI*, October 20, 1926; “Ashland Hopes to Repulse Invasion of ‘Big Red’ Tanks Machine Today,” *AI*, October 24, 1926; “Tank Machine with 7 Years Experience Rules Slight Favorite to Win,” *AI*, October 21, 1926; *IT*, October 21, 24, 1926.

⁴²“The Tanks Skid to Victory Over Ashland Armcos,” *AI*, October 25, 1926; “Tanks Won Ashland Regatta by Two Lengths,” *IT*, October 25, 1926.

⁴³“Columbus Tigers Bow In Defeat Before Armcos,” *AI*, November 1, 1926; “Armco Overwhelms Oorang Indians by 45-0,” *AI*, November 8, 1926; “Cincin-

The Armcos then met the Tanks again, this time in Ironton. Both teams strengthened themselves. The Tanks took on two linemen, and the Armcos acquired Boni Petcoff, a big tackle who had played for Ohio State in 1924. Playing on a frozen turf, with four thousand fans on hand, neither team could mount an offense. But again Olin Smith became a *bête noire* for the Armcos; he pounced on an Armco fumble and ran it sixty-five yards for the touchdown, giving the Tanks the win, 7-0. The gate, \$5,204, was a record for the Tanks.⁴⁴

The Armcos then concluded their season on a disappointing note. They lost, 3-0, to the Dayton Triangles, one of the weakest teams in the NFL, and then in a hastily arranged game played a scoreless tie with the Potters.⁴⁵ They failed to score a point in their last four games. Their record, once four wins and no losses, became six wins, three losses, and two ties.

At the season-ending banquet, a love feast, the Armcos heard congratulatory words.⁴⁶ S. D. Rectanus, general manager of the Ashland mill, praised Perry and his men for their "fine spirit" and sportsmanship. Speaking for the Association, J. C. Miller declared that the season was a success despite the losses to the Tanks and a slight debt incurred by the Association. James Anderson, coach of the Ashland High team, which was claiming the mythical championship of Kentucky, revealed that he had always considered professional football a "most brutal game"; but after seeing the Armcos play, he could say that he had "never seen" better sportsmanship. Responding to the encomia, Perry praised the Association—it was a "great pleasure" to work for it—and the team—all the players had demonstrated their sportsmanship and had proved that "it isn't whether you win or

nati Furnishes Bigger Upset of Professional Season by Battering Armco to Scoreless Deadlock," *AI*, November 8, 1926; "Scoreless Tie," *CE*, November 15, 1925.

⁴⁴"Smith's 65 Yard Run After Fumble Defeats Armco," *IT*, November 22, 1926; "Tanks Conquer Armco for Second Time of Season 7-0," *AI*, November 22, 1926.

⁴⁵"Armco Bows in Defeat before Dayton Eleven in Final Game," *AI*, November 29, 1926; "Cincinnati Potters and Ashland Armcos Fight to Scoreless Tie at Redland," *AI*, December 6, 1926; "Tie Tilt," *CE*, December 6, 1926.

⁴⁶"Perry Team Praised at Annual Banquet of Armco," *AI*, December 4, 1926.

lose, it's how you play the game."

The Armcos were on solid footing as the season of 1927 opened. During the summer Perry attended a football school conducted by Glenn "Pop" Warner, the famed pioneer of the single wing and double wing formations.⁴⁷ Seeking to shape his backfield to "fit" Warner's system, he brought in Sonny Winters, the erstwhile Tanks' coach, to play quarterback and moved himself to his "natural" position as a halfback. Other new men included Frank Smith, a back from the University of Kentucky, and Red Roberts, who had played for the Armcos in 1925. According to a teammate, Roberts received \$225 a game.⁴⁸ Of the fourteen men who played in more than half of the Armcos' games in 1927, eight had been in the lineup in 1926; six were newcomers. The line, averaging 190 pounds in 1926, now was at 200 pounds. Despite some problems in finding "attractive" opponents, Smith arranged a fairly difficult schedule of eleven games, eight at home. As a means of solving scheduling problems, the Association considered entering the Armcos in a proposed midwestern league composed largely of Ohio teams but decided not to do so, saying that Ashland was not large enough to support a team in such a league.⁴⁹ Cheerleading the Armcos in the *Independent* was a new sportswriter, Brady Black.

As in 1926, the Armcos began the season winning. They rather handily dispatched the Dayton Koors, 22-6, and the Cleveland Panthers, 30-0. Then, squirting juice from Brown Mule chewing tobacco into the Blues' eyes, they defeated their kinsmen from Middletown, 16-6, in a rugged "grudge fight."⁵⁰ Next, though Black feared that the "galaxy of stars" with the Dayton Triangles would overwhelm them, the Armcos managed a scoreless tie with the NFL eleven.⁵¹

With only a tie marring their record, the Armcos lay in wait at Ashland for the Tanks. The Tanks, as usual, were playing well, having won three games and tied one. But their

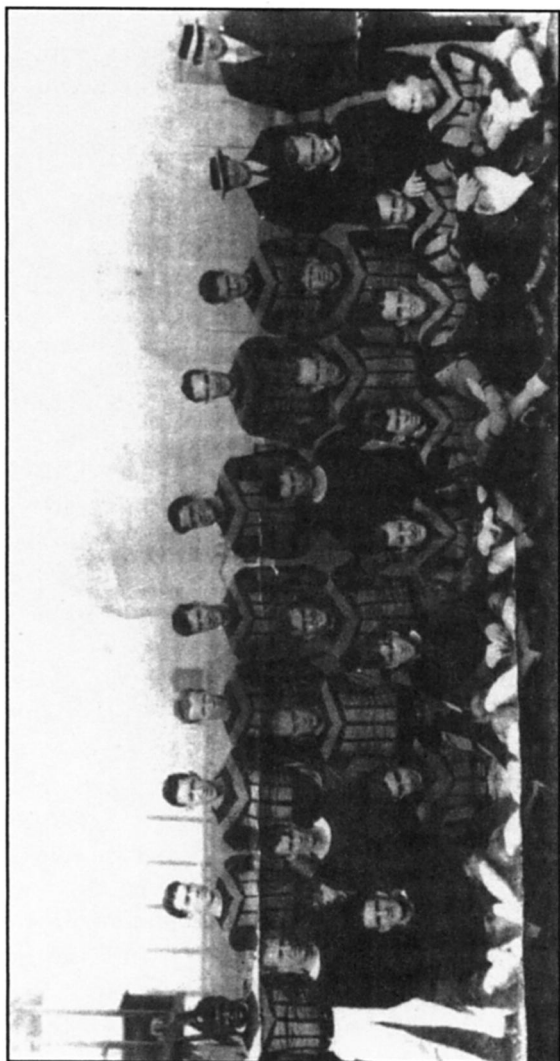
⁴⁷"Winters Quarter for Armco Eleven," *AI*, August 7, 1927; "Public Asked to View Prospects of Perry's Team," *AI*, September 5, 1927.

⁴⁸Author's interview with Louis Ware, May 23, 1995, in possession of author.

⁴⁹"Armco Not to Enter League," *AI*, September 16, 1927.

⁵⁰"Armco Takes Hard Fought Game from Middletown by 16-6 Score," *AI*, October 10, 1927.

⁵¹"Steelmakers and Dayton Triangles Battle to Scoreless Tie," *AI*, October 17, 1927.



The Armcos were on solid footing as the season of 1927 opened. During the summer Coach Perry attended a football school conducted by Glenn 'Pop' Warner, the famed pioneer of the single wing and double wing formations."

tie, coming against the Blues, a team that the Armcos had just beaten, gave the Kentuckians confidence. The rivalry between the Tanks and the Armcos had reached an intense level after two years. It was similar, said Black, to what one could find between Harvard and Yale or Army and Navy.⁵² Preparing new plays, both teams held closed practices. Scores of rumors circulated about the teams' loading-up, and the Tanks even acknowledged that they would have a new fullback in their lineup, Wallace "Doc" Elliott, who had played for Purdue and the Canton Bulldogs. Like a Baltimore & Ohio railroad table, Black noted, the Tanks' lineup was subject to change without notice.⁵³ Perry said that the Armcos would not use any new men.

The Tanks did use Elliott and two other new players, the Armcos none. Before a crowd of nearly five thousand the teams fought tooth and nail. The Armcos outgained the Tanks from scrimmage, 152 yards to 78, but could not score. Neither could the Tanks, and the game ended in a scoreless tie. Ridgley thought that the teams were as "evenly matched as straws in a broom." Still thirsting for a victory over the Tanks, the Armcos at least could claim a standoff; and their showing held promise for a win in their next game with the Tanks, three weeks hence.

Table 3. Armcos' Record, 1927: 7 Wins, 1 Loss, 3 Ties

Armcos	Opponent		Crowd
22	Dayton Koors	6	2,000
30	Cleveland Panthers	0	-
16	Middletown Armcos	6	3,000
0	Dayton Triangles	0	3,500
0	Ironton Tanks	0	4,700
7	Canton Bulldogs	0	2,000
9	Middletown Armcos	16	3,000
7	Ironton Tanks	7	3,500
6	Canton Bulldogs	0	2,000
14	Kokomo American Legion	0	-
7	Portsmouth Shoe-Steels	6	3,195

⁵²"Tanks and Armcos Holding Secret Practices for Sunday's Contest," *AI*, October 11, 1927.

⁵³"Both Tanks and Armcos Holding Secret Practices for Sunday's Contest," *AI*, October 11, 1927.

Meanwhile, the Tanks continued their winning ways. They defeated the Akron Indians and the Portsmouth Shoe-Steels, a new eleven coached by the legendary Thorpe. The Armcos did not fare so well. First they met the Canton Bulldogs. Though the celebrated Bulldogs of old in name only, the Canton eleven gave the Armcos a stiff battle before losing, 7-0.⁵⁴ Still undefeated, the Armcos traveled to Middletown, along with five hundred fans, to meet a strengthened Blues squad. Reportedly the "greatest assembly of fans" in the history of sports in Middletown, three thousand fans saw the Blues reverse their earlier loss, winning 16-9. Their star back, Abe Stuber, ran ninety-two yards for a touchdown.⁵⁵

The sheen of the season glimmering in their first loss, the Armcos still had an opportunity for distinction: to become the first Armco eleven to defeat the Tanks. Again the Tanks loaded-up while the Armcos stood pat. Interest in the game ran high in both communities, and advance ticket sales were good. At Ashland, the editor of the *Independent* reported that "Beat the Tanks" was the shibboleth of the day.⁵⁶ A "great" crowd of thirty-five hundred came to Beechwood and saw a "battle of the giants." The Armcos led, 7-0, going into the fourth quarter, but then Kermit Frecka of the Tanks ran forty-four yards for a touchdown and kicked the extra point.⁵⁷ Once more, the game ended in a tie. It was, said Ridgley, as good as one could find between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Having lost but one game, the Armcos still had a good season in sight. They then beat the Bulldogs again, 6-0. They next played the Kokomo American Legion, expecting a battle from a team that had recently defeated the Armco Blues.

⁵⁴"Steelmakers Conquer Canton Bulldogs 7-10 in Thrilling Battle," *AI*, October 31, 1927; "Bulldogs Beaten in Road Game by Lone Touchdown," *Canton Repository* (hereafter *CR*), October 31, 1927.

⁵⁵"Armco Blues Defeat Ashland 16 to 9," *MJ*, November 7, 1927; "500 Ashlanders See Local Steelmen Bow to Middletown 16-9," *AI*, November 7, 1927.

⁵⁶*AI*, November 11, 1927.

⁵⁷"Tanks and Armcos Battle to a 7-7 Tie at Beechwood Stadium," *AI*, November 14, 1927; "The Tanks-Armco Game Ends in 7-7 Tie," *IT*, November 14, 1927.



An Armco game at Armco Park, ca. 1927.

Resorting to a passing game, the Armcos won, 14-0. Now they had the opportunity to finish the season in a flourish. Coming to Ashland were the Portsmouth Shoe-Steels. Two weeks earlier, the Steels had defeated the Tanks, the first victory ever for a Portsmouth eleven over the Tanks. Managers Jack Creasy of the Steels and Smith declared that the winner could claim the championship of the Ohio Valley and the Tri-State.

The Steels loaded-up for the game, inducing four backs from the Green Bay Packers, whose season had ended, to join them. Only two, Joe "Red" Dunn and Eddie Kotal, came, the other two suffering injuries in an automobile accident on the way to Portsmouth.⁵⁸ Players from the Triangles and Blues also joined the Steels. Though declaring that he would not add players and rejecting an offer from Frecka of the Tanks to play for the Armcos, Perry did sign on one Haynes, a "giant" tackle from the Kokomo club. The Steels came to Ashland without Thorpe, who, asserting that his contract called for him to coach the Steelers in but ten games, left Portsmouth in a huff. Walter Jean, a former tackle with the Packers, replaced him.

⁵⁸"Green Bay Wis. Stars to Join Shoe-Steel for Championship Battle with Armco Team," *MI*, December 3, 1927.

Fans in both communities had their blood up for the "battle of the ages." The shoe and steel companies sponsoring the Shoe-Steels urged employees to go to Ashland; and at a "big booster" meeting at the Armco plant, hundreds of fans gathered to exhort their team with "old fashioned testimonials." Nonetheless, the crowd, thirty-two hundred, was below expectations. The Shoe-Steels came on to the field collectively in a Jacob's coat of many colors, in "uniforms that varied all the way from the Green Jerseys of the Green Bay Packers and the Blue and White of the Dayton Triangles to the Blue of the Middletown Armcos and common white shirts [of the Steels]." The game was bitterly fought. With seven minutes to play, the Steels led 6-0, but then Johnny Stuart of the Armcos ran a punt for fifty-four yards to the Steels' two yard line.⁵⁹ The Armcos scored in two plays, and Louis Ware drop-kicked the extra point for the victory, 7-6. Decades later, Ware still vividly recalled Stuart's run as the most exciting play that he ever saw in his football career.⁶⁰

With the win and the best record in their brief history—seven wins, a loss, and three ties—the Armcos claimed the championships of the Ohio Valley and the Tri-State. They had yet to defeat the Tanks, but that great victory seemed inevitable if they continued to improve. Their season-ending banquet presaged a golden future.⁶¹ About a hundred boosters gathered at the Ventura Hotel. Various company dignitaries spoke. Perry said that at the outset of the season he had great faith in the sixteen men whom he had selected for the team—and they had vindicated his judgment. The Employees Association presented gold cigarette lighters to thirteen players and three fountain pens to three men who did not smoke. The Association gave Perry a leather briefcase and a loving cup for scoring more points—forty-eight—than any other player. One booster wanted to award a silver football to the most valuable linemen, but he found no agreement on

⁵⁹"Stuart Sprints Ball with Punt to Turn Tide for Armco 7-6," *AI*, December 5, 1927.

⁶⁰Ware interview.

⁶¹"Armco Banquet Closes Season," *AI*, December 5, 1927.

the subject and finally dedicated it to the entire line.

Entering play in 1928, the Armcos could build on the success of the previous season. But they would have to compete with stronger elevens in Ironton and Portsmouth, where civic pride, a secular religion, enshrined their football teams as instruments "advertising" the communities. At Portsmouth, businessmen were building a professional team, the Spartans, and had recruited a bevy of outstanding collegiate players. The Tanks, offering prospective players employment in the public schools, were strengthening their roster. No similar view of the Armcos animated the Association or the community.

Of course, the Armco people were not resting on their oars. Learning that several players—Petcoff, Winters, and Ware among them—might not return to the team or might be available only on weekends, Smith and Perry recruited men from the higher reaches of collegiate football—from the universities of Tennessee, Alabama, and Pittsburgh and Syracuse University. Perry spent three weeks at Warner's grid school and returned to Ashland ready to adopt the "wide open" offensive formation that he had learned there from Howard Jones. Head coach at the University of Southern California, Jones had developed an intricate and rapid shift from a preliminary formation into plays from the single wing.⁶² To develop the timing and coordination required by Jones's offense, Perry summoned players to long practices, noting that they had to run "fast action" plays.

Well before the Armcos' opening game, Smith faced a problem stemming out of what appeared to be a success. Advanced sales of season tickets had reached 1,800, far surpassing the total number of 1,382 for 1927.⁶³ The number, though, may have overstated the community's interest in the Armcos. In 1927, employees in the Armco plant, about half of the men working in the city, accounted for all purchases

⁶²"Perry Taking Course at Warner's Coaching School," *AI*, July 22, 1928; "Perry to Stress Action in Armco Football Eleven," *AI*, August 21, 1928. For a brief description of Jones's offense, see Howard H. Jones and Alfred F. Werson, *Football for the Fan* (Los Angeles, 1929), 28-29.

⁶³"Armco Has Record Sale of Tickets," *AI*, August 3, 1928.

of season tickets; and in 1928 they were the buyers of all the tickets. But they may not have been buying them of their free will. Rumors circulated around Ashland that foremen in the plant were forcing workers to buy tickets and that workers believed they had to buy them. Years later, Ware recalled that the "atmosphere" in the plant was conducive to coercion.⁶⁴ Moreover, supposedly "many" employees were selling their tickets "uptown" at a discount. Worse yet, "some" workers made a partial payment for tickets, resold them, and never paid the Association in full.

Smith quickly moved against the wrongdoers. He admonished foremen not to use coercion to sell tickets and told workers that they were under no obligation to purchase them; he wanted only "true backers" to buy tickets. He had notices posted in all departments informing employees who expected to realize "no good" from the tickets or to resell them that they could obtain refunds from the Association. He also issued a warning that the Association would conduct investigations into the sale of unpaid tickets that might prove embarrassing for sellers and buyers. The Association was taking on a formidable task in an era when bootlegging was almost normal behavior.

However they obtained their tickets, Armco fans could see their Armcos play their first seven games at home before going on the road for four of their last five contests. As usual, Smith did not resort to improvisation of the schedule, having it well in place before the season began. He fashioned a schedule of old rivals, notably the Tanks and Blues, and first-time opponents in the Spartans, the Logan Wildcats, and Cincinnati Home Guards (successors to the Potters).

In their customary pattern, the Armcos opened the season with a skein of victories. Meeting the Logan Wildcats of West Virginia, an eleven composed largely of men who had played for West Virginia University, they won, 13-0, their wide-open attack yielding but two touchdowns. Officials of the Association refused to admit "many" persons, saying that those individuals were attempting to use tickets of work-

⁶⁴Ware interview.

ers who had not paid for them in full. The Armcos then defeated the strong Guards, 6-0, their "fast action" offense again proving ineffective. With Pooley Hubert, a halfback from the University of Alabama, pounding the enemy line, the Armcos next beat the Blues, 13-0. But their advantage in pounds, not the wide-open attack, asserted the *Middletown Journal*, gave them the victory.⁶⁵

Table 4. Armcos' Record, 1928: 8 Wins, 4 Losses

Armcos	Opponent		Crowd
13	Logan Wildcats	0	-
6	Cincinnati Guards	0	-
13	Middletown Armcos	0	1,500
13	Portsmouth Spartans	0	4,000
7	Dayton Triangles	10	2,500
7	Ironton Tanks	6	4,760
13	Canton Rogers Jewelers	0	-
14	Middletown Armcos	0	6,000
26	Columbus Tigers	0	-
0	Ironton Tanks	3	3,000
0	Portsmouth Spartans	19	3,000
0	Cincinnati Guards	20	7,000

Winners of three games, their goal line uncrossed, the Armcos now had to play their first really important game against the newly organized Portsmouth Spartans. Nearly all the Spartans had played collegiate football; a few had even competed professionally. The *Portsmouth Times* saw the game as a "classic" encounter that might give the victor a leg up in the battle for the Tri-State championship. Fans in Ironton, Portsmouth, and Ashland, said Black, were taking games among their teams as seriously as alumni of Yale, Harvard, and Princeton viewed their three-cornered competition. The crowd, enlarged by a thousand fans from Portsmouth, numbered over four thousand. Though the Spartans had the advantage in first downs, fifteen to ten, the Armcos won in

⁶⁵"Armco Blues Lose to Ashland," *MJ*, October 8, 1928.

a "tough" and "colorful" game, 13-0, Perry's long run in one drive proving decisive. Spartans' fans attributed their team's loss to "bad luck" and an official's "rotten decision" on an interference call. Fans in the stands, drinking and gambling, engaged in at least "fifteen scraps." Wagering "everything from their shirts to their toothbrushes," some men "resorted to fists" to resolve disputes and "kept the Armco cops busier than [a] one-armed-paper hanger with the hives."⁶⁶

The Armcos did not relish the victory long. A week later, their undefeated season ended when the Dayton Triangles came to Armco Park. Though finishing last in the NFL, losing all their seven league games, the Triangles riddled the Armcos' defense with a "sparkling overhead action" and won, 10-7. Armco fans fastened their attention on the Triangles' Earl Britton, Red Grange's running mate at the University of Illinois.⁶⁷

Seeking to ease pain and avenge injuries of old, the Armcos next faced the Tanks, unbeaten but tied twice in four games. Perry, eager to win, spirited the Armcos out-of-town in "dread secrecy" for a week's practice at an undisclosed location. Later, reporters learned that they had gone to Mt. Sterling, where they scrimmaged the local high-school team, using "hidden ball spins" and trick plays.⁶⁸ Dread secrecy paid dividends, at least on the scoreboard. Nearly five thousand fans jammed into Armco Park to see the "greatest football menu ever dished up to a public." Injured early in the game, the Tanks' new coach, Glenn Presnell, a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska and an All-American, was sidelined for most of the game. The Armcos controlled play through much of the contest, chalking up sixteen first downs to the Tanks' ten. They blocked a Tanks' attempt at an extra

⁶⁶*PI*, October 9, 12, 1928; "Steelmakers Turn Back Portsmouth 13-0 in Colorful Contest," *AI*, October 15, 1928; "As Times Man Saw Ashland-Portsmouth Grid Battle Looking over his Typewriter," *PT*, October 15, 1928; "News Carriers Weird Account of Armco-Spartan Skirmish," *AI*, October 15, 1928.

⁶⁷"Triangles Hand Steelmakers First Defeat by 10 to 7 Tally," *AI*, October 22, 1928.

⁶⁸"Perry Leaves Town with Armco Team," *AI*, October 23, 1928; "Armco Team Goes into Hiding for Sunday Game," *IT*, October 24, 1928; "Tanks Humbled, but Not Crushed in Steelmakers Win, 7-6," *IT*, October 29, 1928.

point late in the contest and won, 7-6. For the Tanks the world was turned upside down; for the Armcos the mudsill towered over the mountain. McCarthy, though offering no excuses for the Tanks, warned the Armcos that "another day was coming."⁶⁹

The day was coming in three weeks. Meanwhile, the Armcos embellished their record with three more victories. First, they won, 13-0, over a team that the *Independent* called the Canton Bulldogs. In fact, they beat the Canton Rogers Jewelers, an undefeated but second-level semiprofessional team that denominated themselves the Bulldogs as an "advertising stunt" (though their uniforms bore the name Jewelers) when playing on the road.⁷⁰ The world of semiprofessional football could be elastic. Next, accompanied by many fans, the Armcos traveled to Middletown, saw a "big parade" on Saturday night drumming up the game, and bested the Blues, 14-0, on Sunday before a huge crowd of six thousand.⁷¹ Then they easily subdued the Columbus Tigers, 26-0.

Their record now eight wins and one loss, the Armcos were at the final, crucial stretch of their season. They had to face three rugged opponents, the Tanks, the Spartans, and Guard, all on the road. At stake would be their reputation and claim to the mythical championship of the Tri-State.

They crossed the river first to play the Tanks at Beechwood. Anticipating a large crowd and alluding to incidents that occurred in the grandstand during a Tanks' game earlier in the season, McCarthy called on the police to "pitch out" men parading in the aisles "howling for attention." Black admonished "flask toters" to leave their "cut glass at home" because the "Feds would be in the stands in plain clothes."⁷² All three thousand fans could have used something to warm flesh and bone. The day was bitterly cold, the field snow-swept. Sev-

⁶⁹"Armcos Win," *IT*, October 30, 1928.

⁷⁰"Armco Faces Canton Bulldogs Here Next Sunday," *AI*, October 31, 1928; "Steelmakers Overcome Bulldogs 13-0 with Little Trouble," *AI*, November 5, 1928; "Ashland Hangs First Defeat on Rogers," *CR*, November 5, 1928.

⁷¹"Middletown Has Booster Parade," *AI*, November 9, 1928; "Ashland Outplays Armco Blues to Grab 14-0 Victory," *MNS*, November 13, 1928.

⁷²"To Renew Hostilities," *IT*, November 20, 1928; "Big Game Today," *IT*, November 25, 1928; "Armco Invades Tanks Stronghold for Clash Today," *AI*, November 25, 1928.

eral fans came to blows and involuntarily left the grandstand. They missed a closely contested game. Presnell ran well, giving the Tanks an advantage in yards gained from scrimmage, 127 to 52, and threw a pass leading to a Tanks' field goal, the only score of the day.⁷³ McCarthy reveled in the victory.

Following the loss, the Armcos traveled to Portsmouth, playing the Spartans on Thanksgiving on a soggy field before three thousand fans sitting in a drizzle. The Spartans exacted a full measure of revenge for their earlier loss to the Armcos, winning 19-0.⁷⁴ The victory was "delectable morsel for Thanksgiving," said the *Times*. Perry suffered a broken jaw. Three days later, the Armcos finished the season on a sour note, losing 20-0 to the Potters at Redland Field.⁷⁵ Their new offense scored no points in the last three games, and their record became eight wins and four losses. They made no claim to any championships but could reminisce about their victory over the Tanks.

After the game, the Employees Association gave the players a banquet at the Hotel Gibson in Cincinnati.⁷⁶ It was akin to a wake. Though all the speakers attempted to put a good face on the season, all seemed to call attention to the season-ending losses. Even as he praised the Armcos for their spirit, Frank Lane, the prominent football referee and president of the Greater Cincinnati Football League, recalled those failures. Intending to laud the Associates, he asked rhetorically whether any other organization would have fêted a team after it had lost three straight games. J. C. Miller, representing the Association, offered honeyed words of support while also noting the skein of losses. Standing for workers in the mill,

⁷³"Tanks Smother Armco Attack and Win 3-0," *IT*, November 26, 1928; "Tanks Out Class Armco in Snowstorm; Win by 3-0 Score," *AI*, November 26, 1928.

⁷⁴"Spartans Gain Sweet Revenge by Defeating Favored Ashland Armco Squad, 19 to 0," *Portsmouth (Ohio) Morning Sun*, November 30, 1928; "Delectable Morsel for Thanksgiving," *PT*, November 30, 1928; "Portsmouth Spartans Smother Steelmen," *AI*, November 30, 1928.

⁷⁵"BIG SURPRIZE Turned in by Guards," *CE*, December 3, 1928; "Armco Outplays Guard, But Lose 20-0," *AI*, December 3, 1928.

⁷⁶"Armco Banquet Held at Gibson," *AI*, December 3, 1928.

one Jim Shea spoke in the same vein. Perry darkened the mood, too, announcing that he was resigning as coach though he would remain with the team as a player. After declaring the season a success, the record eight and four an "inspiration," Smith, the toastmaster, reported that the Association had lost money on operation of the team. The players must have been happy to beat a retreat from the Gibson.

The summer of 1929 saw the officials of the Association making important decisions on the Armcos' future. They turned down an offer from the NFL owner to enter the league. Similarly, they rejected an offer to enter a proposed Ohio Valley League, other members to include the Tanks, Spartans, and Guards. They also had no interest in becoming a member of the proposed Buckeye League.⁷⁷ They set the NFL offer aside, in part, because they feared that league scheduling might result in the termination of their "keen" series with the Tanks and Spartans. Of far greater importance, though, was their view of the Armcos' role in the company and community. For them, the team did not exist to entertain or "advertise" the community, as Ironontonians often viewed the Tanks. Noted for its paternalistic policies, the Armco Company subsidized the Association as an instrument to create and sustain a contented and productive workforce. Certainly, the company did reach out to the entire community, but usually in more direct and encompassing way—for example, in providing recreational facilities for the public, in supporting a hospital, a public nursing bureau, or library. The company did not view a football team as a plaything, as some affluent NFL owners had seen their teams.

Nonetheless, the Armco people sought to field a strong team in 1929. They selected a new coach, Paul Davies, a "tall pilot" who had played at South Dakota State and who reputedly was an effective manager of men. Davies vigorously recruited new talent. At least nineteen players who were on the Armcos' roster at one time or another in 1929

⁷⁷"Ashland Offered Franchise in National Professional Football League," *AI*, July 2, 1929; "Plan Ohio Pro League for Buckeye Football," *AI*, July 25, 1929.

had not been with the team the previous year. Among them were several men who had made their mark as collegiate players and who would play well for the Armcos: Ralph Drennon, an All-Southern guard from Georgia Tech; Leo Raskowski, an All-American tackle at Ohio State; Joe Kresky, a good end from the University of Wisconsin; Loren "Tiny" Lewis, an All-Western Conference back at Northwestern; and John Niemic, a hard-running back for Notre Dame.⁷⁸

As in previous years, Smith arranged a schedule that remained fairly firm through the season. At its core were six games with the Tanks, Spartans, and Blues. First-time opponents were the Chillicothe Eagles, Fort Wayne Pyramids, Massillon Maroons, and Chicago Cardinals of the NFL. Smith did tinker with the schedule slightly more than he usually did. He cancelled the game with the Cardinals because of injuries to Armco players. Deviously or opportunistically, he replaced the Maroons with the Canton Bulldogs on short notice, obviously seeing the Bulldogs a better draw after they defeated the Cardinals and explaining that the Maroons had questionable financial backing and were of dubious strength.⁷⁹

The Armcos moved through their first four games in whirlwind fashion, defeating the Fort Wayne Pyramids, the Bulldogs, Eagles, and Blues; only the Eagles, captained by Byron Eby, a fine back from Ohio State, gave them a battle, losing 14-6. After their victory over the Bulldogs, Black pronounced the Armcos the "strongest [team] ever to represent the Steelmakers." A reporter for the *Canton Repository* called them a "powerful professional" eleven.⁸⁰

Table 5. Armcos' Record, 1929: 8 Wins, 2 Losses, 1 Tie

Armcos	Opponent		Crowd
79	Fort Wayne Pyramids	0	3,000
22	Canton Bulldogs	0	-
14	Chillicothe Eagles	6	-
34	Middletown Armcos	0	-

⁷⁸"Armco Has Fine Prospects for Great Eleven," *AI*, September 8, 1929.

⁷⁹"Canton Bulldogs Next for Ashland Armcos Football Team," *AI*, September 24, 1929.

⁸⁰"Ashland Armco Pro Eleven, Trounces Bulldogs 22-0," *CR*, September 30, 1929.

7	Ironton Tanks	2	6,200
0	Portsmouth Spartans	19	6,500
32	Kokomo American Legion	0	-
48	Cleveland Panthers	0	-
7	Ironton Tanks	0	3,500
0	Middletown Armcos	0	2,000
0	Portsmouth Spartans	19	4,000

Then the Armcos met their great rival, the Tanks. The Tanks were also unbeaten and numbered among their victories one over the Spartans in a battle of bruises, broken bones, and fights in the stands. Fans from Ashland and Ironton counted the days until the hour of the game. A record crowd, almost six thousand, gathered at Beechwood and saw the teams fight tooth and nail. Playing without Presnell, injured against the Spartans, the Tanks could not mount any offensive drives, recording only a safety. The Armcos scored a touchdown late in the fourth quarter following Niemic's long runback of a punt and won, 7-2.⁸¹ At last, they had beat the Tanks on their own field. The game marked the beginning of a disastrous downward course for the Tanks. They would score but one touchdown in their concluding five games, losing all and finishing at five wins and six losses, their worst season in history.

Still undefeated, the Armcos next played the Spartans. On paper, the Spartans were a stronger eleven than they had been in 1928, having recruited a flock of good collegians, among them Roy "Father" Lumpkin, a fullback from Georgia Tech, and Clare Randolph, an All-American tackle from Indiana University. But their early play had been spotty. After losing their opening game to the Green Bay Packers, admittedly a powerful team, they had barely beaten the Eagles, swamped the Blues and Detroit Tigers, and lost to the Tanks. They came to Armco Park ready for their assault. Before an overflow crowd of sixty-five hundred, the Spartans

⁸¹"Steelmen Defeat Tanks 7-2 at Ironton Before Huge Crowd," *AI*, October 21, 1929; "Tanks Lose 7 to 2 in Wonderful Grid Exhibition," *IT*, October 21, 1929.

"bewildered" the Armcos with their speed and "deceptive attack" and won, 19-0.⁸² On but one occasion did the Armcos threaten the Spartans' goal line; then Randolph tackled Lewis one yard short of a touchdown. The game marked a turning point for the Spartans; they won their remaining eight games, nearly all by large margins, and entered the NFL in 1930.

After the game, several Armcos went to Bunk McWilliams' house, there to drown their defeat in liberal portions of Carter Country corn squeezings. Lewis, still fuming over his failure to score from the one-yard line, turned on Raskowski, the rookie tackle, and demanded of him, "How come you stood there picking your nose and let Randolph get through?"⁸³ Then he threw the big tackle through a window.

The Armcos needed a respite after the loss and found it in their next two games. They easily defeated the Kokomo American Legion, 32-0, and the Cleveland Panthers, 48-0. Then the Tanks, choking in the dust of a scoring drought, came to Armco Park. There a muddy field, as in the first Tanks-Armco game of 1927, dictated offensive strategy. Each team, rather than risk fumbling, punted early in a series of downs and awaited a break for a scoring opportunity. On every series inside their own half of the field, the Armcos punted on first down—twenty-two times; the Tanks often punted on second and third downs—twenty times. Pinned down near their own goal line in the third quarter, the Tanks punted short. Then Lewis passed twenty-one yards to Howard Kress for a touchdown.⁸⁴ The Armcos left the field with victory, 7-0. For the first time they had defeated the Tanks twice in a season.

The Armcos then completed their season in a dismal fashion. Going to Middletown, they could not repeat their easy early-season win over the Blues; strengthened by three new players, the Blues held the Armcos to a scoreless tie in a defensive battle.⁸⁵ After the game, players from both teams

⁸²*PT*, October 28, 29, 1929.

⁸³McGill, *Kentucky Sports*, 95.

⁸⁴"Armco Defeats Tanks When Pass Receiver Eludes Backfield," *IT*, November 18, 1929; "Armco Defeats Tanks 7 to 1 on Rain Soaked Field," *AI*, November 18, 1929.

⁸⁵"Ashland and Middletown Play to a Scoreless Tie," *AI*, November 25, 1929; "Armco Blues Battle Ashland to Scoreless Tie in Great Game," *MJ*, November 25, 1929.

and officials from both mills gathered at the Manchester for a dinner. The coaches and Charles Hook addressed the guests, and all enjoyed an evening of "good fellowship."

The Armcos found no good fellowship a week later at Portsmouth. Davis and Harold Griffin, the Spartans' coach, argued over whether the Armcos could use Dick Powell, a Tanks' end. Griffin prevailed, as did his Spartans on the gridiron. The Armcos played the Spartans on fairly even terms in the first half, trailing 6-0, but the Spartans ground them down with brute power in the second half and won, 19-0.⁸⁶ Because Lewis and other Armcos had sustained injuries, Smith cancelled the scheduled game against the Chicago Cardinals.

Thus ended a bittersweet season for the Armcos. Their record of eight wins, two losses, and a tie certainly was good. They could boast of two victories over the Tanks but suffered two painful losses to the Spartans and could make no claims to mythical titles of any sort—except perhaps that of Kentucky. They disappeared, as usual, from the sports pages of the *Independent* as fans turned their attention to other sports, expecting to see them meeting the Tanks, Spartans, and other foes at Armco Park in fall 1930. If the officials of the Association reconsidered their position on the Armcos' entering leagues, the fans might even see their team playing as an NFL eleven in the fall. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the NFL in January 1930, the owners made an indirect overture to several teams, including the Armcos, to enter the league. Saying that 1929 was a remarkable year for professional football, they noted that "several individual teams of outstanding importance were developed in various sections of the country as Portsmouth and Ironton, Ohio, Ashland, Kentucky, and Memphis, Tenn."⁸⁷ And the Spartans, in fact, did enter the league that year.

At the season's end in 1929, the officers of the Association gave no indication that the Armcos might not continue play

⁸⁶*PT*, December 2, 1929; "Portsmouth Spartans Win Championship of Ohio Valley," *AI*, December 2, 1929.

⁸⁷Minutes, Executive Committee, NFL, January 25, 1930, Archives, Pro Football Hall of Fame, Canton, Ohio.

in 1930. They sounded no concern about economic conditions in the steel industry, and Armco weathered the Great Depression reasonably well, but it did see orders for steel decline as the Depression began to take root in spring 1930.

Early in July, without any forewarning, the officers announced that at the recommendation of their athletic council, they were cutting the Armco football team from the employees' recreational program.⁸⁸ Slack operations in the steel industry and the local mill, they explained, accounted for the decision. With a number of mill workers laid off—they did not specify the number—and current employees working fewer hours, sales of season tickets, they reasoned, had to fall off. The Armcos depended on support from within the Armco organization, not on public patronage, as did the Tanks and Spartans. The team was not a "paying proposition," and rather than field a mediocre eleven—composed of mediocre players commanding smaller salaries—they preferred to dissolve it and, depending on economic conditions, reorganize it another year, perhaps in 1931. In the meantime, they urged Armco workers to support the high school Tomcats and the Tanks. The Tanks were already negotiating terms with several Armco players; if they became Tanks, the old patronage of Ashland fans would cross the river.

The announcement elicited hardly a whimper of complaint from workers in the mill or residents in the community. Black lamely wrote that the fall looked like a "dim affair" without the Armco/Tanks series and said nothing more.⁸⁹ Rather incongruously, less than a week after the Armcos' demise, the company announced its intention to spend a million dollars for improvements to the local plant, with an attendant increase in employment to local labor.⁹⁰ At Ironton, the *Tribune* lamented the decision, pointing out that the Tanks had to give up two games yielding good gates and easing problems of scheduling.⁹¹

⁸⁸"Professional Football to be Discontinued by Armco This Fall," *AI*, July 9, 1930; "Ashland Armcos Will Not Put Grid Team on Field This Fall," *IT*, July 9, 1930.

⁸⁹"Free Lance Sports," *AI*, July 10, 1930.

⁹⁰"Armco Announce Expansion Plan," *AI*, July 12, 1931.

⁹¹"Ashland Armco Will Not Put Grid Team on Field This Fall," *IT*, July 9, 1930.

Clearly, the Armcos never reached into the heart of Ashland as the Tanks touched that of Ironton. A creation of a steel company, they did not originate out of the community and never became a source of pride for it as the Tanks did for Ironton. At Ironton and Portsmouth, periodically the citizenry dug into their pockets to rescue the Tanks and Spartans when they ran into financial problems or to build facilities for them. Paradoxically, because of the built-in patronage from mill workers and the larger population of Ashland—at least half more than that of Ironton—the Armcos were a better draw at home than the Tanks. For the seventeen home games from 1926 through 1929 for which reporters or team officials estimated attendance, the Armcos had crowds averaging about thirty-two hundred a game; for fifteen games, the Tanks averaged about three thousand.

Crowds in Ashland, though, never transfused the Armcos into the public memory, as they did in Ironton and Portsmouth down through the years. At Ironton the organizers of the annual Ironton Sports Day periodically honored former Tanks. On occasion, the local historical society displayed Tanks memorabilia. The public library gave space to Tanks' programs and other ephemera. Appropriately, Beechwood Stadium, where the Tanks played, became the Tanks Memorial Stadium. At Portsmouth the public library maintained a file on the Spartans. A communitywide committee chose the Shoe-Steels and Spartans as subjects for huge murals painted on the floodwalls of the city. A popular restaurant placed photographs of the Spartans on its walls. Universal Stadium became the Spartan Memorial Stadium. Meanwhile, the Armcos languished in common memory. Few materials in the public library or elsewhere marked their place or play in the community. No organization preserved their history. The park where they played, Armco Park, retained the corporation's name, without any reminder that a team named the Armcos once played there.