
A Football As American Culture

When kids receive their first football it is a memory they never forget. The memories of passing the ball and learning to throw the perfect spiral for the first time stick with many people forever. While football as a sport is iconic, the ball itself holds so much significance. Owning a football has now become a normalized item in many American households today. A football can be seen in movies, books and advertisements everywhere, showing off a truly American feeling.

A football is more than just ball; it symbolizes the American culture as a whole. The iconic American football we play with today came from rugby, which was derived from soccer. During one of the first college games recorded in 1869 at Rutgers University, they played with a round almost soccer-like ball. A ball resembling the kind used in rugby was used about five years later. Richard Lindon, a leatherworker, eventually made a rubber version of the pig bladder, leading to the icon name of pigskin, and a pump to inflate it. After American football players saw the improvement, they soon used rubber to make their balls. As technology increased so did the American football. In 1906, the shape of the ball changed again, getting narrower and becoming longer. In the 1930s standardizing the dimensions of the ball and in 1988 another adjustment of the ball shape occurred. In the NFL rule book, it states that “footballs are 11 to 11 ¼ in. long; 28 to 28 ½ in. around lengthwise, and 21 to 21 ¼ in. around in the shorter direction.

The materials weigh 14 to 15 ounces, and the pressure must be 12 ½ to 13 ½ pounds per square inch when its rubber bladder is inflated.” (Waxman) This sizing is consistent with highschool, college, and NFL football. The process of making a football truly expresses the ideals of an American made product. All of the materials used to go into the production of a football are from American based companies and is always made by hand. The leather that is used has been from the same company, Horween Leather, since the 1920s.

First, the hide used is tanned and grated. It is then given texture, color, storted, trimmed and then shipped to the Wilson company to be fully transformed. Wilson has been making the NFL football since the 1940s. In the processes of making the football includes four panels being cut for each and every football and the seams being sewn together inside out all by hand. The ball is then turned, a bladder is added and then inflated. A specific lacing is then added, which is only seen on the American football. All the balls created are then inspected and sent to the NFL for game day. (Inside a Wilson Football Factory) Not only is it the unique design and shape of a football that makes it so recognizable, but it is how often we see this ball on a regular basis. Simply turning on ones television could lead one to seeing multiple commercials with a football in it. Most times these commercials are not even football based, but instead trying to sell something else. Also with Football being a significant part of high school and College culture, the ball is seen in flyers to promote the game and then the ball is seen every game day at these sporting events. Lastly, being brought up in a football heavy household, one sees and knows what a football from a young age, due to seeing it on their televisions every sunday. American football has a large role in society due to it being a major aspects of the sport itself.

Without the football, the game would not be anything like it is today. Not only is it a main part of Football as a whole, it helps us know the basis and beginnings of the sport we know and love today. Along with a football’s role within the sport, the ball plays a big part in people's day to

day. It is something that brings people together, passing a football around is something everyone knows and loves and provides a community, not always seen. The football is more than just the thing one toss around in their backyard in their freetime. It is the epitome of an American made item, with all of the materials being from the United States and the making of the product all being done by hand, it expresses that to a T. A football provides the idea of creating goals to possibly make it in the sport. Pushing individuals to work hard to achieve their goals of being the best at football. All of these aspirations of making it big in football could have all start just by a kid receiving their first ball.

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