

ATHLETICS IN THE EARLY DAY

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Athletic programs have been part of Northern since the opening days of the school. Men's varsity football began in 1904 under the direction of William McCracken when Northern had enough male students to organize a team. In those early days bake sales provided money for equipment and uniforms. The first game was played on Saturday, October 15, 1904 against Hancock High School and ended with a score of 14 to 5 for Hancock. At the time the team was called the "Teachers" and the colors were drab green and gold.

Due to the fact of distance to similar schools and travel costs. The Northern team played high schools, YMCAs, and city teams. Then some years there were no games. It was not until 1916 that Northern played its first collegiate team – St. Norbert's College in De Pere, Wisconsin. Travel naturally was by train. It was not until after World War II that football became a sport as we know it and began to grow. The athletic field was at the County Fair grounds on Wright Street, then two fields on campus in front of and behind the Northern Community Center, then Memorial Field and finally the Superior Dome along with expanding facilities.

Men's varsity basketball began in 1906 with Charles H. Estrich the first coach. The program remained low key until 1922 when C.B. Hedgecock took over the reins as head coach. He served until 1947 with a win-loss record of 162 to 38. Until 1915 with the construction of Kaye Hall, games were played in the Peter White Annex gym. Their plain uniforms were green and gold. In 1920, "NSN" was printed on the uniforms.

Women's basketball flourished when the gymnasium addition to Peter White Hall of Science was completed in 1904. DeForest Stull, a geography teacher coached the first teams and encouraged spectators to support the team. In 1911, Grace Stafford became Northern's first full-time physical education teacher and she coached the women's basketball team. In the winter of 1912 she led the team to play in the Copper Country.

In the summer of 1915 baseball was started on campus and Northern was first represented by an organized baseball team. In 1920 the Industrial League was formed in Marquette and there was talk of organizing summer teams. President John Munson who came to Northern in 1923 was a baseball fan and with Victor Hurst as coach the team was formed. Spirits were high and new uniforms were bought. Unfortunately there was only one season because of bad weather and the fact that by the time the city teams were organized, the college was finished for the summer.

The first organized wrestling team was formed at the end of the spring term in 1926. Six wrestlers, coached C.B. Hedgcock competed for only one season. It was not until 1966 that wrestling was reinstated as a varsity sport. Over the years the wrestling team did well.

Northern students could engage in track and field when classes ended in mid-June. Organized track and field took place in 1926 and remained a varsity sport until 1971 when budgetary constraints forced the university to terminate it. Women's track and field meet at Northern was held in June 1926 when men and women competed. It was at the meet, Mary Stanek broke the world record for the

50 yard dash, but the time was not officially recorded by the Women's Athletic Association . The first women's track team was organized in 1927.

Victor Hurst was tennis coach in the 1920s. Men's varsity tennis began in the late 1940s and lasted until 1985 when budgetary constrains set in. Before becoming an official women's sport at Northern, tennis was played for recreation and intermural contests. It was a varsity sport from 1978 for two years and was reinstated in 1992.