

**A Guide to the  
Athletic Department, Fisk University Collection  
Papers 1932-2005**

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June 2013**

**Background Information:** For years, students requested a gymnasium before one was built in 1888. However, the objective to produce athletes did not exist for Fisk University. All training was directed towards healthy bodies that are efficient and enduring instruments for the use of well-trained minds during times of hard work and conflicts in life.

Male students of Fisk University, reportedly, organized the first Southern black Football team in 1893 or 1894 by Charles Snyder whom played high school football in Hartford, Connecticut. Snyder taught the game to Fisk men and served as captain. The early team was named after President Erastus Milo Cravath, "the Sons of Milo." Later the name became "Fisk Bulldogs."

In 1907, the team was coached by John W. Work, professor of history and Latin, and the leader of the Jubilee Singers. Sometimes the scheduled football game was played and a concert followed. By 1915, Fisk became more serious about sports. The 1910s and 1920s were the Bulldogs most successful seasons, often going undefeated. The football program eventually came to an end at Fisk University due to financial difficulties.

The Fisk University Basketball team began in 1903, and remained intramural until 1926. The Fisk basketball had consistently winning seasons though there has been a few off seasons, as argued by Richardson (1980). Today, the basketball team is still a Fisk tradition.

*A History of Fisk University 1865-1946*, authored by Joe M. Richardson is a great source on the history of the athletics department.

Today, the athletics' department's mission is as stated:

"The Athletic Department will provide a progressive environment in which members of the Fisk community can take part in competitive and or recreational opportunities while providing its student athletes with a positive environment in which to learn, live, compete and practice. The department will foster a sense of pride and loyalty in the institution among its students, alumni, and friends, serving as a rallying point for the Fisk community, and increasing private support to both the University as a whole and the Department."

**Scope and Content Note:** The Athletic Department, Fisk University Collection consists of two archival boxes (1 linear feet) focusing on the football and basketball teams. The small collection contains an abundance of newspaper clippings (printed and microfilm) displaying the outcome of various football games and reports. Also, there are thirteen basketball score books dating 1932-1945 and 1998-2005. The collection also contains a manuscript from Charles Snyder, the organizer of the first football team at Fisk University.

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Inventory

Box 1

Football

- f. 1. Newspaper Clippings -- Football Game Records 1950-1954
- 2. Newspaper Clippings -- Football Game Records (Microfilm) 1950, 1955 – February 1956
- 3. Newspaper Clippings -- Football Game Records (Microfilm) September 1956 – 1959
- 4. Reports -- Athletic Roster 1966
- 5. Writings, Manuscript -- *Football* by Charles W. Snyder 1892

Box 2

Basketball

- f. 1. Basketball Score Book -- 1932
- 2. Basketball Score Book -- 1934
- 3. Basketball Score Book -- 1939
- 4. Basketball Score Book -- 1940
- 5. Basketball Score Book -- 1941 A
- 6. Basketball Score Book -- 1941 B
- 7. Basketball Score Book -- 1945
- 8. Basketball Score Book -- 1978-1979
- 9. Basketball Score Book -- 1998-1999
- 10. Basketball Score Book -- 1999-2000
- 11. Basketball Score Book -- 2000-2001
- 12. Basketball Score Book -- 2003-2004
- 13. Basketball Score Book -- 2004-2005