MORGAN SWAN: Welcome back to Hindsight is 20/19, the podcast where we look at 250 years of Dartmouth’s history through 25 objects from the Library’s archival collections, one object per decade. I’m Morgan Swan and I’ll be your host for this episode.

Today’s object is a sepia-tinted photographic print of Dartmouth College’s 1901 varsity football team. In what is clearly a photographer’s studio, sixteen Dartmouth students stand or sit in three rows and face the camera. Their expressions are reserved and inscrutable, although a calm sense of confidence pervades the image. One of the players holds a football that bears the inscription, “1901: Dartmouth –22; Brown—0.” There’s nothing overly remarkable about the fact that Dartmouth had trounced Brown at football; the college had a reputation for being a football powerhouse in the early 20th century, and some have speculated that its athletic prowess was why the college received an invitation to join the Ivy League in the 1950s, as a way to legitimize the newly-formed group. So, the football team at Dartmouth at this time was known for its dominance.

What is extraordinary about the photograph, however, is the presence of a particular member of the team. In the back row, two from the right, stands a single African-American student. He stares directly at the camera from amid a crowd of white faces. His name is Matthew Bullock, he is a member of the class of 1904, and he is the first black student to play football at Dartmouth. This is an interesting factoid, to be sure, but there are lots of important and inspiring individuals in Dartmouth’s history. Why, then, is Bullock significant enough to be the focus of a Hindsight is 2019 podcast? For answers to this question, and others, I sat down and had a conversation with Derrick White. White is a visiting associate professor of history at Dartmouth College and a scholar of modern black history with an emphasis on intellectual, political, and sports history. He is currently working on a book titled *Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Florida A&M and the Rise and Fall of a Black College Football Dynasty*.

MS: Thank you for being here, Derrick. I am really excited, uh, to talk with you about Bullock.

Derrick White (DW): Thank you for having me.

MS: So, just if you would start by telling us a bit about Matthew Bullock. Who was he? Why is he such an influential figure?

DW: So Matt Bullock is a member of the class of 1904. He is one of... when he arrives in 1900, the fall of 1900; he is one of two [African American] students. He is the child of slaves; both his parents were slaves in North Carolina. They migrated in the 1890s to Boston, initially, and from there they moved to Everitt which is a small suburb just outside of Boston and in Everitt, Bullock went to both finished Elementary School and High School at Evert High School where he was a multi-sport star and so from there you know one of the questions I had in my research for on this book about Bullock is like how does someone get to Dartmouth, like, what is the academic trajectory? How does one get admitted? Uh, and he, you know, by migrating to Boston and going to Everitt, Everitt was one of the handful of schools in New England that one could be automatically admitted by certification. Uh, and so he did not have to take one of the exams that many of the students especially out of state students had to take. Uh, and so Everitt had a high-quality academic curriculum, uh, he did fairly well at Everitt, well enough to be admitted and so he arrives in 1900. and I thought, you know, the he's the first African American football player here at Dartmouth College and he was a fantastic player and that wasn't the only reason I was interested, right, because of his legacy as a racial pioneer, I'm interested also because he goes on to really symbolize many of the hopes and dreams of African Americans, especially that first generation born in freedom of what the possibilities of America…”

DW: In many ways, he’s one of the most important black graduates at Dartmouth. But he also is a microcosm of early 20th century sport at college athletics which in New England and the Midwest there are about three dozen African Americans who play on college teams before WWI and they all have very similar kinds of stories being these kinds of racial pioneers um facing kinds of tremendous violence on the field.

MS: Perhaps the most well known incident of violence on the field during Matthew Bullock’s time at Dartmouth occurred during a Princeton game in the fall of 1903. The Dartmouth team were refused lodging at the Princeton Inn because Bullock was with them. Then, the very next day, Bullock was seriously injured on the third play of the football game. Derrick, can you tell us a bit about the circumstances surrounding that game and why it became a national news story?  
  
MS: Princeton at the time and well into the mid-20th century was known as the southernmost Ivy, right? It was the school that had recruited primarily a lot of Southern elites and so as such the school did not have any attempts so one of the things that I talk about in my book is that, you know, forty at by early 1900s African Americans had attended Dartmouth, Yale, and Harvard. Harvard had about thirty, Dartmouth not Dartmouth, Yale had 10, Columbia and Penn had a couple, Oberlin had 120, and Princeton had 0, right? And so there's this tense that Princeton the players were accused of intentionally hurting him because he was Black and they, you know, yield all kinds of racial abitats at him after they had injured him. Now, in their defense the team said that they were supposed to take the best players so this points out that Bullock was the best player, but a faculty member here at Dartmouth decided that this was racial motivated and wrote a big article so this was in the paper that the Princeton Inn which wasn't affiliated with the school had the same name, but had refused to give them to let them stay in the hotel and then he was injured the next day on the field and so this becomes part of the story and this is a common story and I think this is why I like Matt Bullock because this is a common story that we see for a number of student athletes across the country if they, especially as these racial pioneers in college football, and so Matt Bullock becomes steps into as he joins his fraternity of these racial pioneers but at the same time has a very similar experience so there is a certain kind of closeness.

DW: So college football, by the time Matt Bullock shows up at Dartmouth, college football is the most important sport on college campuses, especially in the in New England. Um, there's a couple reasons for this. It begins to displace baseball in part because baseball has professional baseball, begins to grow at this time as well, and so the very best baseball players \*coughs\* excuse me. The very best baseball players could turn professional and there's this avenue, so college athletics is organized around this idea of amateurism and so it’s, you know, dreadfully fearful of professionalism. So baseball, because of the professional nature of the major leagues that was always there was always a lot of fear around baseball. College football had no pro-game so it was the quintessential kind of amateur game and it also fit in to this generation after the Civil War of young men who were predominantly white, who were not old enough to participate in the Civil War and so the Civil war so defining in terms of American manhood both north and south. That for the following generation they had to prove themselves and so in proving themselves football provided a kind of control of war like environment. So these young men could produce a kind of late 19 early 20th century could produce their own white manhood and white masculinity in these very elite spaces. So, for elite men who were not working class and not working on the docks and really fearing death in real kinds of ways had to prove themselves and their toughness. So, you see that there is a whole host of civic leaders most notably, Teddy Roosevelt, is probably the biggest supporter of college football believing that it was a taste of what he called the "strenuous life". Um and so for this moment that college football uh, especially in these New England colleges, was quintessentially exemplified American manhood for White middle-class elite men and I think that's an important piece, right? And it begins to spread so by the time Bullock gets here in 1900 the game has spread into the South and so we see Southern colleges reaching out to Walter Camp of Yale to ask them to help build programs. By 1890 two historically Black colleges have also implemented college football as well and also on the west coast. So, college football is spread all over the country, but the elite games, the most popular teams were still in the east. Harvard, Princeton, Yale, um were the leading teams in the country and so for a guy like Bullock and a whole host of these small number of African Americans in these elite spaces they both represented them an opportunity to step into kind of masculinity and manhood that’s not offered to many African Americans and at the same time the challenges and masculine identity that was also emerging in that moment.

MS: It sounds like Bullock was very fortunate, then, to be able first of all to attend Dartmouth at all and then to have the chance to excel in a sphere that had become a de facto proving ground for American masculinity. I know that Matt Bullock goes on to attend law school at Harvard after completing his undergraduate degree, which illustrates at least one of the ways that being at Dartmouth shaped his fortune. But I know that football also had an impact on his later life as well. Can you talk to us a bit about that?

DW: Because the spread of football, elite programs also knew more about the game, the strategies, the techniques, now the newspaper industry was telling a lot about the game and the crowd, but they weren't giving a lot of details. So Walter Camp single handedly talked a little bit about how formations and plays and all the kinds of strategies um, but reading a book and doing it are two totally different things and so there becomes a small kind of college industry from the beginning in the 1890s of former players at these elite schools in northeast primarily Yale, Harvard, but Dartmouth and other schools as well, where they would get hired at other schools uh as coaches, as consultants uh to help train and create develop football at these colleges and so Matt Bullock uh is brought in to teach while he is at law school at Harvard. He tea - he coaches at the University of Massachusetts, then, Massachusetts Agriculture College and - in doing so he becomes the first Black Head Coach in the United States, right? Um, so William Henry Louis was an assisting coach at Harvard, but Matt Bullock is the first head coach. So I've been to the UMass archives. A small amount of money, I wanna say $270 or something, for being the head coach to help pay for his tuition so he would go to classes during the week and he'd leave at some point and he'd go down and he'd help and coaching was very different in those days. So coaching was not like watching up and down the sidelines and calling plays, coaching really meant you work with the team captain, you talked about strategies, you ran a lot of the practices, and then on game day the team captain was supposed to implement these strategies 'cause the single play on football so you only got most guys played both ways unless they got hurt. Um there were no substitutions. So, to be a star was a thing so this is what it meant to coach football so he's the first coach. After he graduates from uh Harvard Law, he's hired by John Hope who is the first African American President of Morehouse College, he's a graduate of Brown, uh and John Hope hires him at Morehouse and he becomes the head football coach at Morehouse for two years.

MS: So even though he has a law degree from Harvard, his first real career opportunity was as a football coach at Morehouse. I remember you mentioning a letter that Bullock wrote in 1968, explaining why he had established a trust to benefit needy students, especially African-American boys. He said, “It was my four years at Morehouse that showed me what could be done *with* Education and what was being done all around me *without* it.” Would you talk a little about what Matthew Bullock did after Morehouse?

DW: So Matt Bullock, you know, by 1910 he's done coaching football. He takes a job at Atlanta A&M which is just outside of Huntsville where he is dean of the college and while he's in Atlanta, for those four years from 1908-1912, he's in Atlanta uh and after 1910 he passes the bar so he's actually one of -- there's a number of market on this, but I want to say less than 10 for sure maybe like 6, Black bar you know Black lawyers in the state of Georgia who had passed the bar so he is one of them. Uh and so he is in the South. He's working at these Black colleges and he only leaves the South in these Black colleges because of World War I. He returns to Boston because he wants to join and it’s at that point where he goes off to Europe and comes back to Boston and then resettles in Boston and that's where his story really takes a shift, right? Where his story moves away from the sporting world and really more this kind of civic world where he really begins to embody these ideas of racial uplift and Black middle-class service. Um and so there once he's in Boston in 1920 he's by 1920's he's president of the Urban League which had just been founded before World War II and really kind of takes off after, just before World War I and really begins to take off after World War I uh in the 1920s. So he's the president of the Boston chapter. So he's there now trying to assist families like his own who are making the migration out of the South and landing in Boston making sure they get housing, making sure they have - are able to find jobs, right? Making - navigating the kind of difficulty trade because at this point he is a Bostonian, he's a New Englander so he understands his space. As migrants are flocking into the city, uh he's helping make this transition out of the South and making sure they're able to find stable housing whether its in Roxbury or primary mostly African Americans live but in other parts of Boston as well in the suburbs Chelsea, Evert... and so I think that's part of and so he really moves into civic life after World War I so always like to think of his story as sports really related up until World war I and then World War I really shifts his focus and he becomes much more civic related and he just you know he spends the rest of his career working as a civic leader in Boston uh not only on the parole board and eventually as head/chair of the parole board but he also does a lot of other things in and around the community, in his church initially, and then also in civic organizations like his fraternity as well as the Urban League.

MS: I said earlier that he was fortunate to get to come to Dartmouth but now I'm beginning to believe that Dartmouth was fortunate to have him attend, given what an amazing, inspiring example he was and continues to be.  
  
DW: Yeah, he's great. He got an honorary. He was - in 1971 he was honorary degree from the college and so he lived long enough, you know, at the time, he was 89 years old when he comes back. Um and so I think that Dartmouth belayed you know had the opportunity to kind of honor him and I think it’s important that we acknowledge that he was one of the kind of really successful Black students here.

MS: thank you so much, Derrick, for being here, for sharing these amazing stories about Matthew Bullock's life, so glad we were fortunate enough to have you here and to learn from what you've been researching in your book on Matthew Bullock.

DW: No problem.

Hindsight is 20/19 is a production of the Dartmouth College Library and is produced as part of the celebration of Dartmouth’s 250th anniversary. This episode was written and directed by Morgan Swan, produced by Jay Satterfield, and our sound engineer was Julia Logan.