High School sports prior the founding of the Southern California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section (CIF-SS) in 1913 had minimal rules. Schools would get together for interscholastic competition not worrying whether the contestants even were enrolled in the school, what their age was or their amateur standing. Many times the teams were coached by the players and often the few school who had coaches simply used them as chaperons to accompany the teams when they traveled. Seth Van Patten, the “Founding Father” of the CIF-SS, was typical of the early coaches:

He took a teaching position at Escondido High School and coached the football team to victories over San Diego High School in 1903 by scores of 6-5 and 5-0.

He also coached the baseball team and wanted the other schools in the county to play only high school students.

The other country schools said no so he became the star pitcher for the Escondido High School baseball team.

The following newspaper accounts show the versatility of Van Patten (teachers were often referred to as “Professors” in the early days) who not only coaches, but also officiated in the same game that he was coaching. (Thanks to Rick Smith, San Diego Sports Historian, for the articles).
ESCONDIDO WON FROM SAN DIEGO

One of the Prettiest Games of Football Ever Seen on Local Field.

Visitors Were on the Long End of a Score of 9 to 5—The Difference of Kicking a Goal and Just Missing It.

One of the cleanest and prettiest games of football ever seen at Bay View Park, was that of yesterday afternoon, between the Russ and Escondido high schools, in which the latter came off victors in more or less every respect, by a margin of 4 to 2. The only difference in the score was that Anderson for Escondido kicked an extra point, a pretty goal after the touchdown, while Dolg for the San Diego team missed the goal by the narrowest margin.

It was a good game from start to finish, free from rough language and from rough play, except for the natural roughness of the football game. All of the scoring was done in the second half. Though the first half was full of interest, it was the line-up of the two teams as published yesterday morning. The officials of the game were Dr. Elliott and E. F. Van Patten, judge and referee. Warren Gates and Ben Halvorson, linesmen, and Leo Balsdore and Byron Vallee, timers.

From the kickoff of the first half until the end of the half, the ball was almost continuously in the territory of the Escondido team, and was once up to the four yard line, but there it was lost on a fumble in a bad place, and was, by the Escondido, carried back towards the center of the field where it remained. In the first half of the game there was very little action, except running, it was a constant bucking of the line, some of it the line-making reasonable gains and at other times being held.

Hal Dolg and Fred Allen seemed to get in the way and it was the same for San Diego and Cline was most prominent among the Escondido players. In the line bucking the ball changed hands on downs several times, so evidently the men play.

During the interim between halves there was a good deal of consultation between players. Capt. Dolg had his mind made up under the grand stand, giving them a sort of curt lecture as to what to do, and how to do it, until the Grammar of the Escondido team gathered his men about him, at the score board for the same sort of a talk.

THE SECOND HALF.

In the second half of the game it was plain that both captains and men were prepared to do their best to score and to keep the others from scoring. The San Diego boys had the first opportunity. The ball was close in the middle of the field and as Dolg went through and over the line for a gain of half yards, Fred Allen followed with a gain of two more, and then Louis Miller went around the end for some eight or ten yards more. Line bucking brought more gains and Dolg finally went across the line for a touchdown. He failed to kick the goal and the score was 3 to 0.

The Escondido boys were not long in evening up the score. They allowed the kicked ball to roll out at the end of the grounds and took a kick back, but Dolg did not kick quite so far and it was Escondido's ball in San Diego territory. Cline made a slight gain, but it was not enough and Anderson fell back for a kick and made a good one almost up to the San Diego end of the field. There it was San Diego's ball, but it was not run back very far. Two downs and no gain and then Dolg tried another punt, but the ball went out of bounds to one side, and was still in San Diego territory. There was some hard line bucking by Escondido and un-fumble, but the ball was saved to the visitors by Denton.

It was the third down and some to go, when Capt. Graham seemed to take the burden on his own shoulders. He went through the line in one direction for full five yards and then again for full five yards. There was a signal for an end run, but it did not gain any ground and again Graham went through the line for several yards, finally reaching the line for a touchdown, from which Anderson kicked a very pretty goal and the score was 3 to 5 in favor of Escondido.

The next kick-off was brought in well by Anderson and a succession of line backs gained ground for Escondido until the ball was lost on a fumble. Then it was the same story for San Diego, a good many backs resulting in slight gains, each until on a false play San Diego were set back twenty-five yards, because the ball was not properly put in play. San Diego could not regain that twenty yards, nor could Escondido carry it further down the field, though the ball was in that team's possession for a time. The ball was near the center of the field when the game was finished, with Escondido winner by a point.

Prof. C. O. of the San Diego high school complimented the visiting players and Prof. Van Patten, who came down with the Escondido, spoke highly of the San Diego team. The game certainly was a good one and a clean one. The attendance was excellent, and a large party of high school girls called the San Diego yell to the boys across the field. The game was well managed, and the field was kept clear. A return game will be played, but the date has not yet been fixed.

Last evening the visitors enjoyed life in the city and will start early today by tally-ho for home.