

NOTRE DAME

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The late Dan Devine led Notre Dame to its tenth consensus national championship in 1977.

National Championships

The national championship team in college football generally is considered to be the top-rated squad in the final rankings issued each year by the poll of sportswriters and broadcasters (Associated Press) and the poll of coaches (United Press International through 1990, *USA Today/CNN* since 1991-1996, *USA Today/ESPN* since 1997).

Since the AP began certifying the winner of its national crown in 1936, Notre Dame has won more national championships than any other team in the country. The Irish have won eight titles (1943-46-47-49-66-73-77-88) — with Oklahoma second on the list with seven.

The coaches' poll has voted a national champion since 1950. Notre Dame has won three UPI titles (1966-77-88) during that period. Only USC and Oklahoma with five each have won more. The UPI poll was taken following the end of the regular season each year until the 1974 season when the coaches first waited until the bowl games were conducted to issue their final rankings.

The Football Writers Association of America has presented the Grantland Rice Award since 1954, with Notre Dame earning the trophy in 1966, '73, '77 and '88. The National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame has presented the MacArthur Bowl to its national champion since 1959. Notre Dame has won it on five occasions — 1964, '66 (tie with Michigan State), '73, '77 and '88.

A variety of other rating systems have been recognized over the years in attempting to determine the top team in college football each season.

Notre Dame generally is considered to have earned 11 consensus national titles (1924-29-30-43-46-47-49-66-73-77-88). But there have been 19 seasons in which Notre Dame has qualified as a national champion from at least one legitimate poll, with all teams receiving national championship mention and their individual selectors noted.

Here are Notre Dame's 11 consensus seasons:

Year	Team	Record	Coach	Selector
1924	Notre Dame	10-0	Knute Rockne	Bill, DS, Helms, Boand, FR, Houl, NCF, Poling
	Pennsylvania	9-1-1	Lou Young	Davis
1929	Notre Dame	9-0	Knute Rockne	Bill, DS, Dunkel, Boand, Helms, FR, NCF, Poling
	Pittsburgh	9-1	Jock Sutherland	Davis
	USC	10-2	Howard Jones	Houlgate
1930	Notre Dame	10-0	Knute Rockne	All but FR, tie for Davis
	Alabama	10-0	Wallace Wade	Davis (tie), FR
1943	Notre Dame	9-1	Frank Leahy	Unanimous
1946	Notre Dame	8-0-1	Frank Leahy	AP, Berry, Bill, Dunkel, LS, Devold, NCF, Helms (tie), Boand (tie), Poling(tie)
	Army	9-0-1	Red Blaik	Houlgate, FR, Boand (tie), Helms (tie), Poling (tie)
	Georgia	11-0	Wally Butts	WS
1947	Notre Dame	9-0	Frank Leahy	AP, WS, Helms (tie)
	Michigan	10-0	Fritz Crisler	Berry, Bill, Dunkel, LS, Houlgate, Helms (tie), Boand, FR, Devold, NCF, Poling
1949	Notre Dame	10-0	Frank Leahy	All but FR, Bill
	Oklahoma	11-0	Bud Wilkinson	FR, Bill
1966	Notre Dame	9-0-1	Ara Parseghian	AP, UPI, FWAA, Poling (tie), Dunkel, LS, Devold, FN, Matthews, Bill, NCF, Sag., NFFHF (tie), Helms (tie)
	Alabama	11-0	Paul "Bear" Bryant	Berry
	Michigan State	9-0-1	Duffy Daugherty	FR, Helms (tie), NFFHF (tie), Poling (tie)
1973	Notre Dame	11-0	Ara Parseghian	AP, FWAA, NFFHF, Helms, FN, NCF (tie)
	Alabama	10-1	Bear Bryant	UPI, Berry
	Oklahoma	10-0-1	Barry Switzer	Bill, Dunkel, FR, Devold
	Michigan	10-0-1	Glenn "Bo" Schembechler	NCF (tie), Poling (tie)

Year	Team	Record	Coach	Selector
	Ohio State	10-0-1	Woody Hayes	FACT, NCF (tie), Poling (tie), Sag.
1977	Notre Dame	11-1	Dan Devine	All but Berry, FACT (tie), FR (tie)
	Alabama	11-1	Paul "Bear" Bryant	FR (tie)
	Arkansas	11-1	Lou Holtz	FACT (tie)
	Texas	11-1	Fred Akers	Berry, FACT (tie)
1988	Notre Dame	12-0	Lou Holtz	All but Berry, Sag.
	Miami (Fla.)	11-1	Dennis Erickson	Berry, Sag.

Here are the other 10 seasons Notre Dame received some mention:

1919	Harvard	9-0-1	Bob Fisher	Unanimous
	Notre Dame	9-0	Knute Rockne	Davis (tie), NCF (tie)
	Illinois	6-1	Bob Zuppke	Davis (tie), FR (tie), Boand
	Texas A&M	10-0	D.X. Bible	NCF (tie)
1920	California	9-0	Andy Smith	Helms, FR, Houl., NCF
	Notre Dame	9-0	Knute Rockne	Davis (tie)
	Princeton	6-0-1	Bill Roper	Davis (tie), Boand (tie)
	Harvard	8-0-1	Robert Fisher	Boand (tie)
1927	Illinois	7-0-1	Bob Zuppke	DS, Davis, Helms, NCF
	Yale	7-1	T.A.D. Jones	FR
	Notre Dame	7-1-1	Knute Rockne	Houl.
	Georgia	9-1	George Woodruff	Boand, Poling
1938	Tennessee	11-0	Bob Neyland	Bill, Dunkel, LS, Boand, Houl., FR, Poling, Sag.
	TCU	11-0	Dutch Meyer	AP, WS, Helms, NCF
	Notre Dame	8-1	Elmer Layden	DS
1953	Notre Dame	9-0-1	Frank Leahy	All but AP, UP, FRI, INS, Berry
	Maryland	10-1	Jim Tatum	AP, UPI, INS
	Oklahoma	9-1-1	Bud Wilkinson	FR, Berry
1964	Alabama	10-1	Bear Bryant	AP, UPI, LS, Berry
	Arkansas	11-0	Frank Broyles	Bill, FWAA, Helms, FR, NCF, Poling
	Notre Dame	9-1	Ara Parseghian	NFFHF, Devold, FN, Sag.
	Michigan	9-1	Bump Elliott	Dunkel
1967	USC	10-1	John McKay	All but Dunkel, LS, Poling
	Notre Dame	8-2	Ara Parseghian	Dunkel
	Tennessee	9-2	Doug Dickey	LS
	Oklahoma	10-1	Chuck Fairbanks	Poling
1970	Nebraska	11-0-1	Bob Devaney	AP, Bill, FWAA, Dunkel, Helms, FR, Devold, FN, FACT (tie), NCF
	Texas	10-1	Darrell Royal	Berry, UPI, LS, NFFHF (tie), FACT (tie)
	Ohio State	9-1	Woody Hayes	NFFHF (tie)
	Notre Dame	10-1	Ara Parseghian	FACT (tie), Matthews, Sag.
	Arizona State	11-0	Frank Kush	Pol
1989	Miami (Fla.)	11-1	Dennis Erickson	All but Bill, Berry, FACT (tie), Sag.
	Notre Dame	12-1	Lou Holtz	Berry, FACT (tie), Sag.
	Florida State	10-2	Bobby Bowden	Bill
1993	Florida State	12-1	Bobby Bowden	All but NCF, Matthews
	Auburn	11-0	Terry Bowden	NCF (tie)
	Nebraska	11-1	Tom Osborne	NCF (tie)
	Notre Dame	11-1	Lou Holtz	Matthews, NCF (tie)

RATING SYSTEMS

- ALD** Alderson System (1994-current); a mathematical rating system based strictly on a point value system reflecting competition as well as won-lost record. Developed by Bob Alderson of Muldrow, Okla.
- AP** Associated Press (1936-current); the first major nationwide poll for ranking college football teams is voted on by sportswriters and broadcasters. It is probably the most well-known and widely circulated among all of history's polls.
- Berry** Berryman System (1990-present); a mathematically based power rating system based on a quality point rating formula developed by Carl P. Berryman of Washington, D.C. Predated national champions from 1940-1989.
- Bill** Billingsley Report (1970-current); a mathematically based power rating system developed by Richard Billingsley of Nashville, Tenn. His work is published annually as the Billingsley Report through his own company, the College Football Research Center. Predated national champions from 1869-1970.
- Boand** Boand System (1930-1960); known as the Azzi Ratem System developed by William Boand of Tucson, Ariz. He moved to Chicago in 1932. Appeared in many newspapers as well as *Illustrated Football Annual* (1932-42) and weekly in *Football News* (1942-44, 1951-60). Predated national champions from 1919-1929.
- Davis** Parke H. Davis Ratings (1933); a noted college football historian, Parke H. Davis, went back and named the championship teams from the 1869 through the 1932 season. He also named a national champion at the conclusion of the 1933 season. Interestingly, the years 1869-75 were identified by Davis as the Pioneer Period; the years 1876-93 were called the period of American Intercollegiate Football Association, and the years 1894-1933 were referred to as the Period of Rules Committees and Conferences.
- DeVold** DeVold System (1939-current); a mathematical rating system developed by Harry DeVold from Minneapolis, a former football player at Cornell. He eventually settled in the Detroit area and worked in the real estate business. The ratings have appeared in *The Football News* since 1962. Predated national champions from 1939-1944.
- DS** Dickinson System (1924-40); a mathematical point system devised by Frank Dickinson, a professor of economics at the University of Illinois. Dickinson divided teams into two categories, those that had a higher than .500 winning percentage and those below. Dickinson mentioned his method in class one day and the Daily Illini sports editor featured a story which came to the attention of Chicago clothing manufacturer Jack Rissman, who decided he would like to use Dickinson's ratings to select the top team in the Big Ten each year so that he could present a trophy to the winner. When Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne heard about this, he invited both the professor and the clothing manufacturer to lunch at South Bend and said, "Why don't you make it a national trophy that Notre Dame will have a chance to win?" Never one to miss out on a good thing, Rockne also persuaded Dickinson and Rissman to predate the whole thing a couple of years so that the 1924 Irish — the Four Horsemen team — could be the first official, system-rated national champion.
- The annual Dickinson ratings were emblematic of the national championship and the basis for awarding the Rissman Trophy and the Knute K. Rockne Intercollegiate Memorial Trophy. Notre Dame gained permanent possession of the Rissman Trophy after its third victory in 1930. Minnesota retired the Rockne Trophy after winning it for a third time in 1940. Subsequently, the Associated Press annual national champions were awarded the Williams Trophy and the Rev. J. Hugh O'Donnell Trophy. In 1947, Notre Dame retired the Williams Trophy (named after Henry A. Williams, Minnesota coach, and sponsored by the M Club of Minnesota). In 1956, Oklahoma retired the O'Donnell Trophy (named for Notre Dame's president and sponsored by Notre Dame alumni). Beginning with the 1957 season, the award was known as the AP Trophy, and since 1983 the award has been known as the Paul "Bear" Bryant Trophy.
- Dunkel** Dunkel System (1929-current); a power index rating system devised by Dick Dunkel, Sr. (1929-71); from 1972 by Dick Dunkel Jr.
- FACT** FACT (1968-current); a computerized mathematical ranking system developed by David Rothman of Hawthorne, Calif. FACT is the Foundation for the Analysis of Competitions and Tournaments and began selecting a national champion in 1968.
- FN** *Football News* (1958-current); weekly poll of its staff writers has named a national champion since 1958.
- FR** College Football Researchers Association (1919-current); founded by Anthony Cusher of Reeder, N.D., and Robert Kirlin of Spokane, Wash. Announced its champion in its monthly bulletin and No. 1 team determined by top-10 vote of membership on a point system. Predated national champions from 1919-1981.

- FWAA** Football Writers Association of America (1954-current); the No. 1 team of the year is determined by a five-man panel representing the nation's football writers. The national championship team receives the Grantland Rice Award.
- INS** International News Service (1952-57); a poll conducted for six years by members of the International News Service (INS) before merger with United Press in 1958.
- Helms** First Interstate Bank Athletic Foundation (1883-1982); originally known by this name from 1936-69 and established by the founding sponsor, Paul J. Helms, a Los Angeles sportsman and philanthropist. After Helms' death in 1957, United Savings and Loan Association became its benefactor during 1970-72. A merger of United Savings and Citizen Savings was completed in 1973, and the Athletic Foundation became known as Citizen Savings Athletic Foundation. In 1982, First Interstate Bank assumed responsibility for its final rankings. In 1941, Bill Schroeder, managing editor of the Helms Athletic Foundation retroactively selected the national football champions for the period beginning in 1883 (the first year of a scoring system) through 1941. Thereafter, Schroeder, who died in 1988, then chose, with the assistance of the Hall board, the annual national champion after the bowl games.
- Houl.** Houlgate System (1927-58); a mathematical rating system developed by Deke Houlgate of Los Angeles, Calif. His ratings were syndicated in newspapers and published in *Illustrated Football* and *Football Thesaurus* (1946-58).
- LS** Litkenhous System (1934-1976); a "difference-by-score" method syndicated by Fred Litkenhous and his brother Edward.
- Matthews** Matthews Grid Ratings (1966-present); a mathematical rating system developed by college mathematics professor Herman Matthews of Middlesboro, Ky. Has appeared in newspapers and *The Football News*.
- NCF** National Championship Foundation (1869-present); established by Mike Riter of Germantown, N.Y. Issues an annual report. Predated national champions from 1869-1979.
- NYT** *New York Times* (1979-current); a mathematical rating system introduced by the newspaper.
- NFFHF** National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame (1959-current); the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame named its first national champion in 1959. Headquartered in Larchmont, N.Y., the present National Football Foundation was established in 1954 to promote amateur athletics in America. The national champion was awarded the MacArthur Bowl from 1959-90. In 1991 and 1992, the NFF/HOF joined United Press International to award the MacArthur Bowl, and in 1993 the NFF/HOF joined with *USA Today* to present the Sears MacArthur Bowl.
- Poling** Poling System (1924-84); a mathematical rating system for college football teams developed by Richard Poling from Mansfield, Ohio, a former football player at Ohio Wesleyan. Poling's football ratings were published annually in the *Football Review Supplement* and in various newspapers. Predated national champions from 1924-34.
- Sag** Sagarin Ratings (1978-current); a mathematical rating system developed by Jeff Sagarin of Bloomington, Ind., a 1970 MIT mathematics graduate. Runs annually in *USA Today*. Predated national champions in 1938, 1956-77.
- SI** *Sports Illustrated* (1981-present); voted on annually by a committee of writers representing various regions of the country for this nationally circulated magazine.
- TSN** *The Sporting News* (1975-current); chosen by editorial staff.
- USA** *USA Today*/ESPN (1982-current); introduced a weekly poll of sportswriters in 1982 and ranked the top 25 teams in the nation with a point system. The poll results are featured in *USA Today*, a national newspaper, and ESPN, a national cable television network. Took over as the coaches' poll in 1991. *USA Today* also formed a coalition with the National Football Foundation in 1993 to name the MacArthur Bowl national champion. Poll was co-sponsored by the Cable News Network, another national cable television network, through 1996.
- UPI** United Press International (1950-96); in 1950, the United Press news service began its full poll of football coaches (replaced as coaches' poll after 1990 season). When the United Press merged with the International News Service in 1958, it became known as United Press International. The weekly UPI rankings were featured in newspapers, radio and television nationwide. UPI and the National Football Foundation formed a coalition for 1991 and 1992 to name the MacArthur Bowl national champion.
- WS** Williamson System (1932-63); system of syndicated power ratings chosen by Paul Williamson of New Orleans, a geologist and member of the Sugar Bowl committee.

Sources: Robert A. Rosiek, *Dearborn Heights, Mich.*; *The National Championship Foundation, Germantown, N.Y.*

Four Horsemen Help Notre Dame and Knute Rockne Enjoy Ride To First National Championship

The 1924 Notre Dame football team will always be known best for New York Herald Tribune sportswriter Grantland Rice's account of the Notre Dame vs. Army game played October 18 at the Polo Grounds in New York: "Outlined against a blue-gray October sky, the Four Horsemen rode again.

"In dramatic lore they are known as famine, pestilence, destruction, and death. These are only aliases. Their real names are Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley, and Layden. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds this afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down on the bewildering panorama spread out on the green plain below."

Quarterback Harry Stuhldreher, fullback Elmer Layden, and halfbacks Jim Crowley and Don Miller were the cornerstone of a team considered one of the best in college football history.

The Fighting Irish won the Army game 13-7, as the Four Horsemen played magnificently. Miller rushed for 148 yards, Crowley for 102 and Layden for 60, while Stuhldreher orchestrated the offense masterfully from the quarterback position. It was the third victory of the season for the Irish, it came against a foe considered the toughest on the schedule, and it spurred the Irish on to a perfect 10-0 season and the school's first recognized national championship.

Rice's account led to near-mythic status for the Irish backfield, but the Seven Mules, who did the blocking, and the Shock Troops, who were perhaps the best second string in the

game, played indispensable roles, too. Each week in 1924, seventh-year Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne started his second stringers, his Shock Troops.

When Rockne felt his Shock Troops had done their job, he brought in the Four Horsemen and the Seven Mules, a group so good "that the Holy Ghost couldn't have broken into that lineup," said Harry O'Boyle, a kicker and reserve halfback on the Shock Troops. Center Adam Walsh was the heart of the Seven Mules, a group that also included ends Ed Hunsinger and Chuck Collins, tackles Rip Miller and Joe Bach, and guards Noble Kizer and John Wiebel. Walsh characterized the win over Army with a late interception—which he made with two broken hands.

The combination of the Shock Troops, the Seven Mules, and the Four Horsemen worked 10 times in 10 tries in 1924 against a national schedule that took the Irish to New York, Princeton, N.J., Madison, Wis., Soldier Field in Chicago, and Pittsburgh during the regular season while giving them only four home games. In addition, at the end of the season, Rockne was able to convince the University administration to permit the football team to travel to California to play Stanford in the Rose Bowl, where the Irish clinched the Helms Athletic Foundation's national championship with a 27-10 victory.

In the Rose Bowl—Notre Dame's only bowl appearance until the team began making regular bowl trips with the 1970 Cotton Bowl—the Irish were faced with stopping an undefeated, once-tied Stanford team that included

1924 — 10-0-0

- On the gridiron fields of football fame,
Ride the four great horsemen of Notre Dame,
From Princeton East to Nebraska West
They have charged through the lines of the country's best
"They shall not pass," the Army cried,
But nothing could stop the horsemen's ride
On to victory and immortal fame
Still rise the four great horsemen of Notre Dame.
—Pittsburgh Gazette Times

- "There's a kick in Notre Dame; not alone in Notre Dame football, but in every effort, every endeavor, every activity that its men undertake. It is a training camp for more than famous backfields, mighty captains, invincible Horsemen. There's where the kick is — in the knowledge that America's acclaimed champions of the gridiron are the representatives of an ideal that works, and will work for all time to come, like a strong leaven in our national soul — the ideal of manliness, sportmanship, chivalry, of friendly rivalry and inspiring competition."
—Charles Phillips



- "Sing a song of Notre Dame,
Shout their praises wide.
Tell of Crowley's sturdy might,
Sing of Layden's stride.
Spread the news
of Miller's speed,
Speak of Walsh's game,
Fighters of the bulldog breed,
Here's to Notre Dame."
— Ford C. Frick

legendary coach Pop Warner and quarterback Ernie Nevers. Rockne was concerned his players might not be ready physically for the heat of the West Coast, so he arranged for a slow, cross-country train trip that included stops in Louisiana, Texas and Arizona so players would have time to adjust to warmer, more demanding weather.

It worked, as Elmer Layden scored Notre Dame's first touchdown on a three-yard run and returned interceptions of Nevers' passes 78 and 70 yards for two more touchdowns. The Irish took advantage of eight Stanford turnovers and made a critical goal-line

stand in the fourth quarter to come up with the 17-point win.

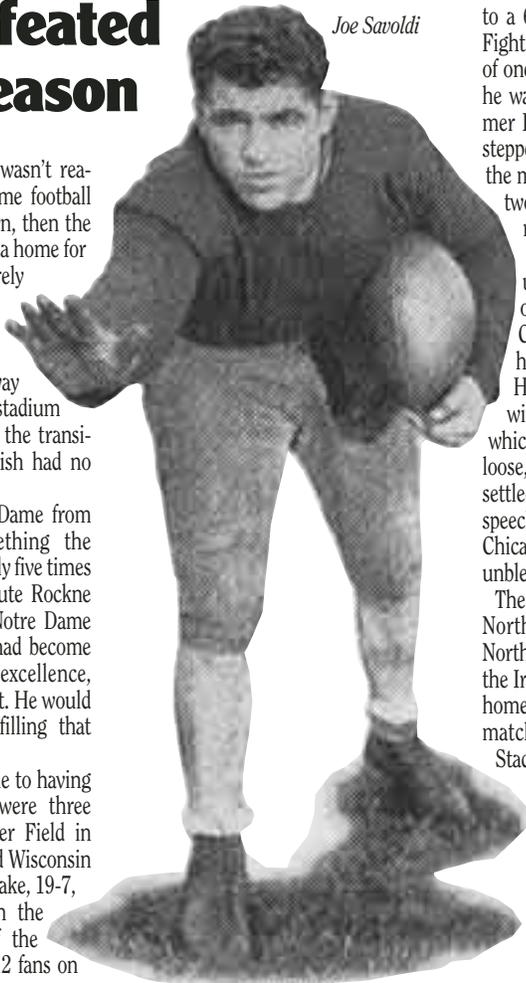
"That would always be my favorite team," Rockne once said. "I think I sensed that the backfield was a product of destiny. At times they caused me a certain amount of pain and exasperation, but mainly they brought me great joy."

— Willie Shearer



Irish Follow Lead of Elder and Savoldi To Undefeated 1929 Season

Joe Savoldi



If the Great Depression wasn't reason enough for Notre Dame football partisans to be a little down, then the fact the Irish were without a home for the 1929 season was surely enough to bring some anxiety into the minds of both the team and its followers. Plans were underway at Notre Dame for a new stadium to be built, and 1929 was the transition year in which the Irish had no home.

That didn't keep Notre Dame from winning, however, something the team had accomplished only five times in nine tries in 1928. Knute Rockne had promised to return Notre Dame football in 1929 to what had become its customary level of excellence, homefield advantage or not. He would not be stopped from fulfilling that promise.

The closest the Irish came to having a home game in 1929 were three games contested at Soldier Field in Chicago. The Irish defeated Wisconsin there, 19-0, October 19, Drake, 19-7, November 9, and USC in the most important game of the year, 13-12, before 112, 912 fans on November 16.

The lack of home turf was not the only major difficulty of the 1929 season for Notre Dame. The team's legendary coach was in battle with phlebitis, which doctors said stood a 50-50 chance of taking Rockne's life if he tried to coach that season. But coach the team he did, through one dramatic victory after another, either by telephone from a hospital bed or from a wheelchair on the sidelines.

Rockne's leg problems began during the following week and the announcement was made that he would not

accompany the team on its trip to Baltimore to face Navy. Line coach Tom Lieb took over for Rockne that day, as the Irish won 14-7. But back in South Bend, doctor's orders couldn't keep Rock away from practice at Cartier Field, where he set up his command post in his car and used a loudspeaker to direct activities.

By the time the USC contest rolled around, the Irish were 6-0, and recognized as one of the top teams in the nation. Running back Joe Savoldi had earned acclaim in the Wisconsin game with dazzling touchdown runs of 71 and 40 yards, and he provided the only score of the game in Notre Dame's 7-0 win at Carnegie Tech October 26.

When the Irish faced USC at Soldier Field November 16, Rockne's status was

as bad as ever, but the team needed him. The Notre Dame-USC tradition was already a great one, and the first half foretold the kind of game everyone expected, with the teams battling to a 6-6 tie. In the locker room, the Fighting Irish were in desperate need of one of Rock's famous speeches, but he was nowhere to be found. So former Irish running back Paul Castner stepped up to do what he could, and in the middle of his oration, who should two Irish managers wheel into the room but Rockne himself.

He was in great pain and had undergone quite a strain — not only from making the trip to Chicago but also from watching his team struggle in the first half. He gave an impassioned speech with what strength he had, during which a blood clot in one leg broke loose, passed through his heart and settled safely in the other leg. His speech worked, as the Irish escaped Chicago with a 13-12 win and an unblemished 7-0 record.

The Irish still had traditional foes Northwestern and Army left. Northwestern fell relatively easy, as the Irish posted a win on the Wildcats' home field. But the November 30 matchup with Army at Yankee Stadium proved to be a real battle.

The game was played on turf that was frozen solid, and neither team was able to accomplish anything. It was eight degrees at gametime and a biting wind cut across the field as



Paul Castner

the players dashed out for the opening kickoff.

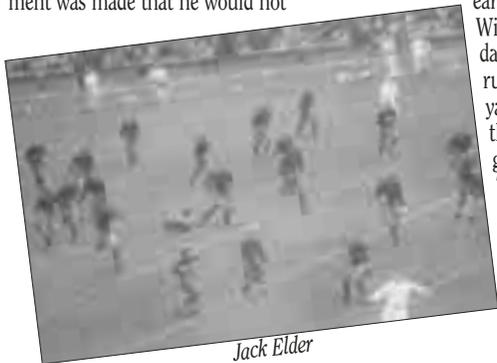
The first quarter was scoreless, but in the second period Army drove deep into Irish territory. When Red Cagle lofted a pass for his end, Carl Carlmark, it looked like a certain score for the Cadets. But Notre Dame's Jack Elder came out of nowhere to snatch the ball away. He took it 93 yards for the game's only touchdown. The extra point was added to make it 7-0 Irish, and that's the way it stayed.

Notre Dame was 9-0 and the season was over. The team had survived without a home, Rockne had survived his illness and Notre Dame had its second national championship.

—Willie Shearer

1929 — 9-0-0

- "Yeah, fair, just fair."
— Knute Rockne on the prospects of his 1929 team
- "Keep on going, Joe! Don't stop when you are tackled! Keep those legs going! Don't stop even when you are on the ground with half of the other team on top of you. Keep on going until you can't wiggle a toe! Don't stop till the referee takes the ball from you. Keep on going, keep on going!"
— Assistant Coach Jack Chevigny to Joe Savoldi, who scored two of three touchdowns against Wisconsin
- "Notre Dame football is, apparently, too much in demand to allow any appreciable let-up in the matter of booking straight high-grade attractions through the season. Rockne tries hard to say no to the various schedule-makers who want Notre Dame on their cards, but they all want the Irish so intensely that it's hard to turn 'em down. Besides, Rock's natural tendency is to 'Take em all on!'"
— John W. Stahr in his "Lookin' On" column



Jack Elder



Another National Championship Finds A Home In Notre Dame Stadium

Brand new stadium, same old result— another national championship for the Notre Dame football team.

The 1930 football season marked the opening of Notre Dame Stadium, just another in the long line of Knute Rockne masterpieces, only this was a football stadium instead of a team. With typical meticulousness, he had supervised every minute detail of the construction of the stadium.

In addition, Rockne had for the first time a full-time equipment manager, a trainer, a doctor who traveled with the team, a business manager, several secretaries, a staff to handle the complex sale and distribution of tickets. On top of all that, Rockne was healthy again. The doctors at the Mayo Clinic had given him a thorough going-over from head to foot during the offseason and had given him a clean bill of health.

All the Rock had to do was coach, and what a job he did.

On October 4, 1920, the Fighting Irish opened their season in the imposing new stadium — an impressive amphitheatre of dull red brick trimmed with limestone. Rockne had the original sod from Cartier Field transplanted just for good measure.

The Irish christened the good earth with a 20-14 win over Southern Methodist. The stadium was officially dedicated the following week, as Notre Dame trounced Navy, 26-2. In the

third week of the season, Notre Dame played its third straight home game, defeating Carnegie Tech, 21-6, to cap off a successful first homestand.

Preseason prognosticators across the country considered the 1930 Notre Dame team to be Rockne's strongest yet. Rockne had said as much himself prior to the start of the season, and he had good reason for such high expectations. Frank Carideo, Marchy Schwartz, Marty Brill, and Jumpin' Joe Savoldi made up a latter day version of the Four Horsemen in the backfield, and all of them earned All-America status on one team or another for that season. The Fighting Irish were not only stocked with an explosive collection of running backs, but the team also sported a tremendous crew of linemen. Center Tommy Yarr, guards Nordy Hoffman and Brent Metzger, tackles Joe Kurth and Al Culver, and end Tom Conley all made All-America teams either that season or the following one.

The Irish left home three times in the fourth through eighth weeks of the season but continued to roll. Notre Dame traveled to Pitt and beat the Panthers, 35-19. A 27-0 romp over Indiana followed, before the Irish visited a 60-20 walloping on the Quakers of Pennsylvania. Marty Brill, who had transferred to Notre Dame from Pennsylvania, played the greatest game of his career that day, breaking

loose for three touchdowns on runs of 45, 52 and 65 yards.

The Notre Dame winning streak stood at 15 games over two seasons, and it quickly grew to 17 as the Irish sprinted past Drake and Northwestern. All that remained between Notre Dame and another national title were games against Army and USC.

On a November 29 afternoon that saw rain and sleet turn Soldier Field into a swamp, the Cadets and the Irish squared off, and it appeared that neither team was going to budge. Near the end of the game, however, Schwartz broke loose for a 54-yard scoring run. The all-important extra point gave the Irish a 7-0 lead. Army scored quickly thereafter, though, on a blocked punt, and it appeared that things would be knotted up. But Notre Dame blocked the extra point, and that's the way it ended.

To finish off the season, Rockne used all his psychological expertise in a ploy that helped the Irish get ready for USC. Injuries during the season left the team with only one healthy fullback, Dan Hanley. So Rock decided to turn Bucky O'Connor, a second-team halfback, into a first-string fullback.

However, in practice, Rock had O'Connor and Hanley trade jerseys, and not a single soul suspected anything unusual.

When the game got underway, Notre Dame had one of the speediest fullbacks the Trojan defense had ever seen. O'Connor scored two touchdowns, including one on an 80-yard dash, and the Irish dominated the favored home team to the tune of 27-0.

It was a fitting script to what turned out to be Rockne's final game as the Notre Dame head football coach. The team won its second consecutive national championship, and the following winter Rockne died in a plane crash in Kansas.

— Willie Shearer

1930 — 10-0-0

- "I asked them, before the game, to do the best they could and they played perfectly. A coach can't ask more than that."

— Knute Rockne on his team's performance against USC

- "The 1930 backfield has plenty of the guile and also the heft and the bone and sinew to smash on when guile won't do. When they have to, those boys simply tramp them down."

— Knute Rockne

Irish March to 9-1 Mark and Fourth Consensus National Championship Behind Heisman Winner Angelo Bertelli and Frank Leahy's T-Formation

At the beginning of the 1943 season many experts called Notre Dame's schedule its most difficult in school history. The Irish faced seven teams that season that were ranked among the nation's top 13 teams in the final Associated Press Poll.

Frank Leahy's squad only had two returning starters from the '42 squad that finished 7-2-2. To make matters worse, seven of the 10 games in '43 were on the road.

The Irish were still in the early stages of adjusting to the T-formation, which Leahy installed the season before, moving away from the traditional Notre Dame "Box Formation." The new offense enabled the '43 team to score 340 points, 156 more than the season before. The T-formation also led to the emergence of Angelo Bertelli, who moved from tailback to quarterback to lead the Irish offense.

Bertelli led the Irish to a 6-0 start as the team outscored its opponents 261-31. Included in that stretch were key victories over second-ranked Michigan and third-ranked Navy.

A record crowd of 85,688 witnessed the 35-12 Irish win in Ann Arbor. Bertelli was brilliant, completing five of eight passes for two touchdowns while All-America running back Creighton Miller averaged 16 yards per play against Michigan.

Led by Bertelli and All-America tackle Jim White, both of whom finished in the top 10 in the Heisman balloting

that year, the Irish rolled to a 50-0 victory over Wisconsin and a 47-0 bashing of Illinois following the win over Michigan, to extend their record to 5-0.

Those wins were followed by a colossal matchup between top-ranked Notre Dame and third-ranked Navy in Cleveland. The Irish cruised to a 33-6 win but lost their quarterback. The Marine Corps called Bertelli into service with four games left in the season.

Leahy called on a sophomore to be Bertelli's replacement in the following week's game against Army, the third-ranked team in the country that week.

All Bertelli's replacement did was throw for two touchdowns, run for another and intercept a pass to lead the Irish to a 26-0 win. A new star was born—the incomparable John Lujack.

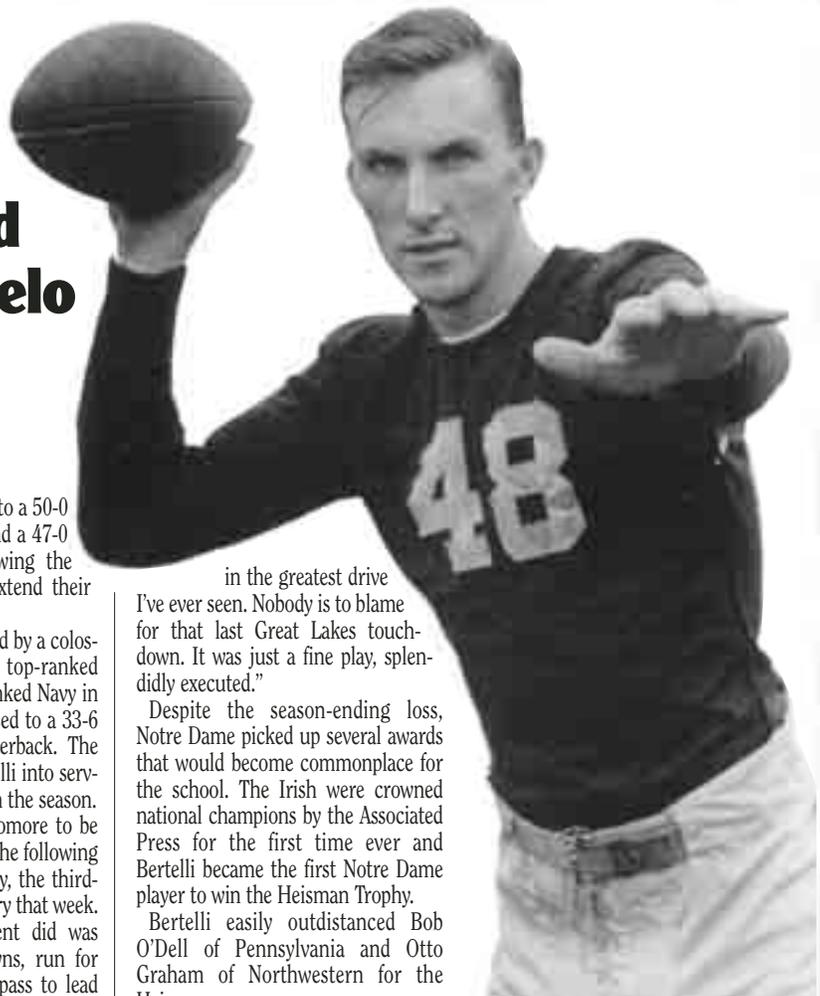
With Lujack calling the signals, the Irish defeated two more top ten teams in the following two weeks, Northwestern and Iowa Pre-Flight.

All that stood between Leahy's first undefeated and untied season was Great Lakes, a team the Irish had tied in their two previous meetings during the 1918 and 1942 seasons.

Notre Dame scored first but trailed 12-7 late in the fourth quarter. Miller capped off an 80-yard drive with a touchdown to put the Irish ahead 14-12 with 1:05 to play.

With 33 seconds remaining, Great Lakes quarterback Steve Lach connected on a 46-yard pass to Paul Anderson, who fielded the ball at the six-yard line and then went into the end zone for the game-winning score, ruining Notre Dame's perfect season.

After the game, Leahy told his team, "You're still champions to me, boys. You fought your hearts out every inch of the way



in the greatest drive I've ever seen. Nobody is to blame for that last Great Lakes touchdown. It was just a fine play, splendidly executed."

Despite the season-ending loss, Notre Dame picked up several awards that would become commonplace for the school. The Irish were crowned national champions by the Associated Press for the first time ever and Bertelli became the first Notre Dame player to win the Heisman Trophy.

Bertelli easily outdistanced Bob O'Dell of Pennsylvania and Otto Graham of Northwestern for the Heisman.

— Jeff Spelman

1943 — 9-1-0

- "They had speed, power and deception in their attack, and they looked like one of the best teams I have seen in years."
— Georgia Tech Coach Bill Alexander
- "Even the business manager was calling friends and asking if they had an extra ticket. Not even the scalpers had any; you couldn't buy one from them for love nor money for the simple reason that they didn't have any."
— Jim Costin, *South Bend Tribune* sports editor
- "It would be most ungracious for me to say that the 1943 team, which I coach, was better than the 1929 team on which I played. What would my old teammates think of me if I said such a thing? There is honor and glory enough for all Notre Dame teams, winning or losing, and I, for one, refuse to be drawn into any arguments over which was the 'best' Notre Dame team. They are all great in my book. But, it would be unfair for me and most unkind to my present players, however, if I did not give them the credit they so richly deserve."
— Irish head coach Frank Leahy



Creighton Miller

Leahy Returns From Service to Lead Irish To First of Four Consecutive Undefeated Seasons

World War II had finally ended and the United States was ready to think about something more pleasant than international conflict for a change — like Notre Dame football. The year was 1946, the coach was hard-driving Frank Leahy and it was the beginning of a dynasty for Notre Dame football.

In 1943, Leahy had guided the Fighting Irish to their first wire-service national championship, and fourth overall, behind Heisman Trophy winner Angelo Bertelli and future Heisman winner John Lujack. World War II took many football players from college, including Bertelli in the middle of his Heisman campaign in '43, but many returned to the gridiron after the war ended, including Lujack, who would go on to win the Heisman in 1947.

For the players who returned to Notre Dame in '46, losing a college football game was not to be one of their post-war experiences. From 1946 to 1949, Notre Dame went 36-0-2 and won three national championships in one of the most successful four-year periods in college football history.

The 1946 season started it all. Halfback Terry Brennan and linemen Bill Walsh, Bill Fischer, and John Mastrangelo were among the group of returnees from the previous season. There were several new faces who came to Notre Dame after Navy hitch-hikes had interrupted their respective careers at Holy Cross and Texas A&M. There were also players for whom the war had postponed college football, like end Jim Martin and running back Emil (Red) Sitko, and there were freshmen like Leon Hart. Returning to Notre Dame along with Lujack were veterans such as tackle Zygmunt (Ziggy) Czarowski, end Jack Zilly, and fullback Jim Mello. Even Leahy was coming back to Notre Dame after a couple years in the service.

Leahy was a perfectionist and strict

disciplinarian, and enduring his practices wasn't much more fun than being a soldier. But it sure produced results. The Irish usually had two separate platoons ready for each game, and often the first string didn't play much



more than half the game. On the football field, the Irish had strength in numbers, and Leahy fought a war of attrition.

The season began with the Irish routing their first five opponents — Illinois, which went on to win the Western (now Big Ten) conference championship, Pittsburgh, Purdue, Iowa, and Navy before facing top-ranked Army. Coached by the great Earl (Red) Blaik and featuring Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis in the backfield, Army had won two straight national championships and 25 straight games, including two defeats of Notre Dame in the previous two seasons by a combined score of 107-0.

The showdown was set for November 9 in Yankee Stadium where 74,121 fans turned out to see a 0-0 tie. Notre Dame advanced to the Army four-yard line in the second quarter for the game's deepest scoring threat, but the Cadets held on downs. Blanchard broke into the clear once and appeared to be headed for a score, but an open-field tackle by Lujack saved the Irish from defeat.

Army retained its top ranking in the Associated Press poll after the game. But the Irish walloped their final three opponents by a combined score of 94-6 and were named national champions in the final poll of the season. When the smoke cleared, the Irish found themselves the nation's statistical leaders in total offense (441.3 yards per game), rushing offense (340.1 yards per game), total defense (141.7 yards per game) and scoring defense (2.7 points per game) and had allowed only Illinois, Purdue, Iowa, and USC to score points against them. For the season, Notre Dame outscored its opponents 271 to 24 in nine games.

It was only the beginning.
— Willie Shearer

1946 — 8-0-1

- “Prayers work better when the players are big.”

— Frank Leahy on the cover of *Time* magazine Oct. 14, 1946

- “I have told our players that they can expect the same thing (losing a game) to happen to them at any time if they let down or get to believing they are the champions after playing only one game.”

— Frank Leahy

- “Fifty-nine and forty-eight, this is the year we retaliate!”

— impromptu battle cry fashioned by the squad for the 1944 and 1945 losses to Army

- “You know, we started to plan for the national championship when spring practice opened last April. I told the boys that I thought we could make it, but that it would take hard work and lots of it; long, tire-some hours of sweat and toil on the practice field. The players dug in right from the start and gave everything they had and were rewarded with the national championship.”

— Frank Leahy

Dominating '47 Squad Runs to Perfect Record As Heisman Winner Lujack Heads List Of All-Stars

In any discussion of college football's greatest teams, one team that always comes to mind is the 1947 Notre Dame squad. The Irish never trailed in any game that year and compiled a 9-0 record, their first unblemished record in 17 years.



Larry Coutre

Notre Dame held its opponents to under six points a game while averaging over 32 points. Only one team — Northwestern — scored more than one touchdown against the Irish that year. But maybe the most impressive note about the squad is that it sent 42 players to professional football.

The mainstays on that team included consensus All-Americans George Connor, Bill Fischer and John Lujack, who won the Heisman Trophy that year. The team also included future Heisman winner Leon Hart and the man who later succeeded Leahy as head coach of the Irish, Terry Brennan.

The Irish began the season with six turnovers against Pittsburgh, but Lujack scored three times to lead Notre Dame to an easy 40-6 win. Leahy's squad stumbled a little bit in the next game, too, but came out ahead of Purdue, 22-7.

Notre Dame then exploded for three consecutive shutouts over Nebraska (31-0), Iowa (21-0) and Navy (27-0). The win over the Cornhuskers avenged a 17-0 loss that Knute Rockne's 1925 squad suffered to Nebraska, the last time the two

schools had met.

Following three impressive shutouts, the Irish faced Army, a team that had become such a fierce rival in previous years that the series was discontinued for 10 years after the 1947 game. The two teams battled to a 0-0 tie in 1946 in one of the most famous games in Notre Dame history.

Notre Dame entered the game as the top-ranked team in the country while Army was rated eighth. The Irish struck first when Brennan broke loose for a 97-yard kickoff return. Notre Dame built a 20-0 lead before Army finally scored. The Irish won 27-7 before a record crowd of 59,171 at Notre Dame Stadium.

The next week was the only close game of the year. Northwestern became the only team in 1947 to come within two touchdowns of the Irish as Notre Dame won 26-19.

The Irish ended the season with a 59-6 thrashing of Tulane and an impressive 38-7 win over third-ranked Southern California. When the final national polls came out, Notre Dame was No. 1 for the second straight year.

Just how good was this '47 team? Well, consider that several of the first string players that year (such as Brennan) didn't even try out for pro-

fessional football but opted to coach instead.

The great '47 squad also included six players who were elected into the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame — Lujack, Connor, Hart, Fischer, Sitko and Ziggy Czarobski. And to top that off, their coach, Frank Leahy, wound up the second winningest coach in college history just behind his mentor, Knute Rockne.

The Boston Herald called the '47 Irish team, "the greatest Notre Dame squad of all time. Its third string could whip most varsities."

The immortal sportswriter Grantland Rice added after the final game of the season, "There no longer is any doubt as to the best team in college football, it happens to be Notre Dame. College football never before has known a team so big, so fast and so experienced."

His words may still hold true today.
— Willie Shearer

1947 — 9-0-0

- "Yes, if they let us use the two-team system — two teams at one time."

— Tulane coach Henry Frank when asked if his squad had a chance to upset Notre Dame.

- "A team that won't be beat can't be beat. That's the story of the Army-Notre Dame scoreless battle in Yankee Stadium."

— Bill Corum,
New York Herald-American

- "A new Notre Dame football comet soared over the gridiron of Memorial Stadium this afternoon and crushed Illinois' championship hopes into dying embers, 26-6. It is a comet which promises to grow in brilliance as the season progresses and eventually light up the gridiron picture with victories over Navy, Army, Northwestern and Southern California for an undisputed national title."

— Gene Kessler,
Chicago Times

- "Be a fighter, gents. Not only out there on the football field, but out in life as well."

— Irish coach Frank Leahy



Leon Hart



Emil Sitko

Irish Exceed All Expectations With Third Title Under Leahy

November 15, 1945 ranks as one of the most important dates in Notre Dame football history. Check the record books, though, and you won't find one of the greatest games in Irish history played on that day.

November 15, 1945, was a Thursday, not a Saturday, and that was the day Lieutenant Frank Leahy was discharged from the Navy. He returned to Notre Dame campus, signed a 10-year contract, and began what was to be one of the most successful four-year runs in college football history.

The 1946 and 1947 seasons brought national championships to Notre Dame. The 9-0-1 1948 team was runner-up to Michigan. But a national championship in 1949 would allow Notre Dame to close the decade in magnificent style.

And that is exactly what happened. Notre Dame went 10-0 which made for a four-year mark of 36-0-2. End Leon Hart won the Heisman Trophy and Leahy had his fourth championship and the school's seventh.

Before the season, however, nobody expected a championship team to emerge from the South Bend campus. The Irish needed somebody to emerge as a leader and attention was focused on Leon Hart, already recognized as the finest end in the college game, along with Emil Sitko, Larry Coutre and co-captain Jim Martin. But most observers agreed that the Fighting Irish would need more than that.

Soon enough, they got it. In the sixth game of the season, against Michigan State on November 5, quarterback Bob Williams stepped to the fore. He led the top-ranked Irish to a 34-21

victory over the 10th-ranked Spartans in a game at East Lansing that the press thought would knock Notre Dame from its lofty perch atop collegiate football.

Williams continued to shine in subsequent games. He was at his daring best the following week in a game versus North Carolina played at Yankee Stadium. Leahy had given Williams instructions that he was never to pass the football on the fourth down situation on their own 19-yard line with the score tied 6-6 in the second quarter. He couldn't help himself. Knowing that if he failed he'd have to head to the nearest exit to avoid Leahy, the self-assured Williams completed an 18-yard pass to Larry Coutre for an Irish first down. Notre Dame went on to a 42-6 win, and Williams soon became recognized as the nation's best quarterback.

The Irish eased through their final two home games, rolling over Iowa,

28-7, and 17th ranked Southern Cal, 32-0. All that remained was what was sure to be an easy win over Southern Methodist in Dallas. SMU would be without its top player, 1948 Heisman winner Doak Walker, and the nation

had virtually conceded the national championship to Notre Dame.

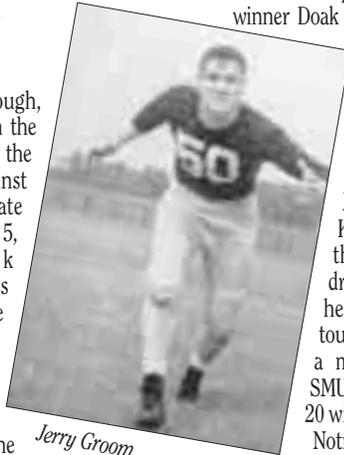
Notre Dame jumped to an early lead before Mustang running back Kyle Rote came to life in the steady afternoon drizzle. Running at will, he scored two quick touchdowns and thanks to a missed extra point by SMU, the score was tied at 20 with seven minutes to go.

Notre Dame's back was to the wall for the first time all season, and the offense rose to the occasion. In blitzkrieg fashion, the Irish simply pushed SMU straight back into its own endzone with 10 determined rushes that covered 54 yards and put Notre Dame up by a touchdown, 27-20.

The drive was so quick, however, that SMU still had time to score. But in the shadow of the Notre Dame goal post, when Rote tried to pass for the tying touchdown, Notre Dame's Jerry Groom made a game-saving interception.

It was the final play of the game and of a decade that saw Frank Leahy lead the Fighting Irish to three national championships in four years.

—Willie Shearer



Jerry Groom

1949 — 10-0-0

- "We'll have the worst team Notre Dame has ever had."
— Leahy in April of 1949

- "Of course, I suppose I am always sort of a pessimist."
— Frank Leahy

- "It's the greatest college team I've ever seen."
— Red Grange

- "We shall always want Notre Dame men to play to win so long as there is a Notre Dame ... to win cleanly according to the rules ... because Notre Dame men are reared here on the campus in this spirit and because they exemplify this spirit all over the world, they are the envy of the nation."
— Rev. John J. Cavanaugh, C.S.C.

- "From the first ringing impact of kuckle upon nose ... Saturday's No. 1 spectacle was as one-sided as an election in Moscow."
— Walter Stewart,

Memphis Commercial Appeal
on the Tulane game

- "Make mistakes against the average team and you're in trouble. Make mistakes against Notre Dame and it's suicide ... even a perfect team couldn't have turned back this great Irish squad."
— Braven Dwyer, *Los Angeles Times*



Bob Lally and Jim Mutscheller stop SMU's Kyle Rote just short of the tying tally.

Irish Win National Championship At Start of Notre Dame's Era of Ara

Coach Ara Parseghian, in his third season at Notre Dame, made a difficult decision at the start of the 1966 season, picking sophomore Terry Hanratty as his starting quarterback over classmate Coley O'Brien, yet the decision proved without a doubt to be the correct one. Hanratty and split end Jim Seymour, also a sophomore, turned out to be one of the best passing combinations Notre Dame fans have ever seen.

The two had begun working together during the previous winter, developing their timing, moves, and patterns so they would know each other's habits inside out when the 1966 season began. Seymour was a good bet to take over one of the end positions that was being vacated after the '65 season, but Hanratty had no such assurances of whether or not he would be the number-one quarterback.

Fortunately for Hanratty, Parseghian decided to balance an already steady running game, manned by Nick Eddy, Larry Conjar and Rocky Bleier, with the passing talent of Hanratty.

The decision bore fruit in the first game of the season, as Hanratty and Seymour hooked up 13 times for 276 yards, Notre Dame records for receptions and yards, and three touchdowns, which tied a school record. The Irish defeated Rose Bowl-bound Purdue that day, 26-14 in South Bend.

Notre Dame traveled to Northwestern for the second game of the season and won, 35-7. The Irish defense gave up its last points for the next three games and showed the kind of stiffness that ensured Notre Dame would never be out of any contest. Notre Dame returned home for the next two games and defeated Army and North Carolina by a combined score of 67-0, setting the stage for a showdown with Oklahoma.

Notre Dame traveled to Norman for what was supposed to be anybody's ballgame. The game was billed as a matchup between the small, quick, strong Sooners and the big, slow Irish. But Oklahoma was out of its depth. Although the Irish lost Seymour to an ankle injury that would cost him two games, the Fighting Irish rolled to a 38-0 victory and their third straight shutout of the young season.

Notre Dame pounded its next three opponents—Navy, Pittsburgh, and Duke, giving up only one score, a touchdown to Navy. Meanwhile, the offense was hitting on all cylinders,

racking up 31 points versus the Midshipmen, 40 against Pitt, and a whopping 64 against the Blue Devils.

The game of the century took place on November 19 when number-one ranked Notre Dame traveled to East Lansing, Mich., to play second-ranked Michigan State for all the marbles.

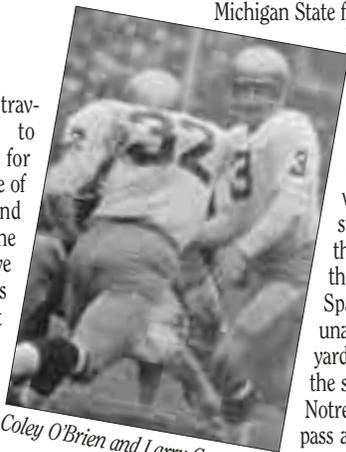
Notre Dame fell behind 10-0 in the second quarter, but O'Brien, who had been diagnosed with diabetes only a few weeks earlier and was still adjusting, brought the Irish back to tie in the second half. The Spartan offense was unable to net a single yard running the ball in the second half, and when Notre Dame intercepted a pass and returned it to the Spartan 18-yard line in the

fourth quarter, it looked like Notre Dame's chance to win. But three plays and minus-six yards later left the Irish with a 41-yard field goal attempt, which sailed wide to the right.

Notre Dame had the ball again on its own 30 with 1:24 left in the game. But rather than gamble with passes deep in their own territory, the Irish attempted to run the ball out of danger. The game was a 10-10 tie.

The Irish held on to their top ranking and traveled to Los Angeles to play Rose Bowl-bound USC. The Irish tore the Trojans apart, 51-0, posting the team's sixth shutout in 10 games and ensuring another unanimous number-one selection for the national championship.

— Willie Shearer



Coley O'Brien and Larry Conjar

1966 — 9-0-1

- “There’s pressure in every coaching job, but winning makes it a lot easier to accept. Fortunately, we have been winning. But like one fan told me, we’re with you Ara, win or tie. You notice he didn’t say anything about losing.”

— Ara Parseghian

- “Man, those cats hit and stick to you. That game was rough.”

— Bubba Smith, Michigan State defensive end

- “Sure I do. Absolutely. I have no qualms about it, but ... there’s not enough difference between No. 1 and No. 2 to say that whoever wins, it could be an upset.”

— Ara responding to a question about entering the MSU-ND game as the number-one team

- “I knew there was going to be a winner and a loser, and I thought we were going to win. I never thought about a tie. The last thing Duffy Daughtery or I wanted was a tie.”

— Ara Parseghian

- “The Super Bowl was not as big as that Michigan State-Notre Dame game.”

— Captain Jim Lynch, who also played in Super Bowl IV, remarks on the MSU-ND game 25 years later



Rocky Bleier and Don Gmitter clear the path for Nick Eddy en route to a 26-14 Irish win over eighth-ranked Purdue.

Clements and Talented Irish Backfield Clinch Title With Sugar Bowl Win Over No. 1 Tide

Every college football season seems to have its own game of the century, but the 1973 matchup between Notre Dame and Alabama was special. It came in the Sugar Bowl, and it was to be a dream game.

Two undefeated, highly-ranked teams with long and storied gridiron traditions were set to battle for the national championship.

The prognosticators' predictions rang true as the Fighting Irish emerged 24-23 victors over the Crimson Tide of Alabama in a thriller that saw the lead change hands six times.

Bob Thomas, who had missed two earlier attempts in the game, kicked a 19-yard field goal with 4:26 remaining to give the Irish and coach Ara Parseghian the one-point triumph over top-rated Alabama. The win clinched Notre Dame's sixth wire-service national championship and ninth overall as the Irish finished the season with a perfect 11-0 record.

The balanced Irish attack was keyed by four backs who gained over 300 yards apiece: fullback Wayne Bullock (752), halfback Art Best (700), halfback Eric Penick (586) and quarterback Tom Clements (360). It was one of the fastest backfields Notre Dame had ever assembled, as Penick had 9.5

speed in the 100-yard dash, while Best checked in at 9.7.

The Irish were ranked in the eighth spot with wins over Rice and Army, setting the stage for what everyone considered to be Notre Dame's first real test of the year, a home battle with sixth-ranked USC.

The Trojans came to town riding a 23-game unbeaten streak, and Notre Dame was full of memories of the previous season's clash, which saw running back Anthony Davis romp for six touchdowns in a 45-23 Trojan win.

Squib kicks were the solution to the problem of Davis returning kicks, and a fired up defense held him to just 55 yards on 19 carries. Quite simply, the day belonged to Notre Dame, as Penick ran for 118 yards, 50 more than the entire USC squad. The Irish pulled off a 23-14 win and jumped to fifth in the polls.

Notre Dame cruised through the remainder of the schedule. Navy was an easy victim, 44-7, and 20th-ranked Pittsburgh played the docile host to the Irish and fell 31-10. The Irish finished off Parseghian's first perfect regular season with a 48-15 win over Air Force and a 44-0 whitewashing of Miami at the Orange Bowl.

The stage was set for the contest between number-one Alabama and

1973 — 11-0-0

- "It was the kind of game you could sink your teeth into."
— Bear Bryant on the 'Bama-Notre Dame Sugar Bowl
- "I really thought it was going to be intercepted."
— Irish quarterback Tom Clements on his 38-yard pass out of the end zone to help Irish run out the clock against Alabama in the Sugar Bowl
- "This was not only a great game for Notre Dame, it was a great game for college football."
— Ara Parseghian after the Alabama game
- "I just remember breaking free . I can't remember anything else."
— Eric Penick commenting on his 85-yard touchdown that gave Notre Dame its first victory over USC since 1966
- "How does it feel? It feels like the end of four long waiting years. It feels like the top of the world. And only one thing could possibly beat this — 11-0."
— Brad Doherty after the Miami win

third-ranked Notre Dame that seemed to deserve every phrase of its high-powered buildup. The Irish opened the contest with a superb defensive effort that held the Tide without a yard in the first period as Notre Dame took a 6-0 lead. Alabama's thoroughbred backs made it out of the starting gate in the second period, however. They produced three long drives that resulted in a pair of touchdowns, the first of which put the Tide up 7-6.

Early in the fourth quarter, the game took a wild turn with three turnovers in 90 seconds. Alabama took charge and put in its own version of the razzle-dazzle.

With the ball on the Notre Dame 25, quarterback Richard Todd handed off to halfback Mike Strock, then raced to

the sidelines where he took a return pass from Strock and went in for the score.

But Alabama missed the conversion try and the Tide had only a slim two-point lead.

Notre Dame then marched 79 yards in 11 plays. Strong runs by Hunter, Penick and Clements and a 30-yard pass from Clements to Dave Casper carried the drive to the Alabama 15-yard line. The Irish got to the three, but couldn't get any closer before the call went to Thomas. His kick was true, the game belonged to the Irish, and so did the national championship.

— *Willie Shearer*



Quarterback Tom Clements throws out of the end zone to Robin Weber to seal a victory over Alabama in the Sugar Bowl.

Then There Were None — Irish Defeat Top-Ranked, Unbeaten Texas For '77 Title

Who could forget the cover of Sports Illustrated the week after Notre Dame had defeated Texas 38-10 in the 1978 Cotton Bowl? A fierce Terry Eurick was pictured fighting through a hole in the offensive line, the caption reading, "The Irish Wake the Echoes." On the inside, "Shakin' Down the Thunder" was the title of an article about how Notre Dame's victory over the previously-unbeaten Longhorns was enough to vault the Irish from fifth to first in the wire-service polls and give the University its seventh wire service national championship and 10th overall.

The theme for that January 2 in Dallas could have been "and then there were none." For there was not one unbeaten team remaining after the Irish had knocked Texas from its No. 1 ranking.

Third-year Irish coach Dan Devine made sure his charges were ready to take care of America's last undefeated team. An unrelenting defense was the reason why. The defense featured 1976 Outland Trophy winner Ross Browner



Vagas Ferguson

at one end and Willie Fry at the other, supported by a tough, mobile group of linebackers headed by All-American Bob Golic. The Irish forced six Texas turnovers in the Cotton Bowl, and an opportunistic offense capitalized on five of them. Notre Dame's devastating strength in the trenches roped up Texas' Heisman Trophy winner Earl Campbell. He managed a tough 116 yards on 29 carries.

Notre Dame's defensive strength came as no surprise in 1977, and it was the primary reason the Irish were near the top of the polls in the preseason rankings. But it was an unexpected

boost from the offense that gave Notre Dame the national championship in 1977. Quarterback Joe Montana and running back Jerome Heavens both rebounded on offense, teaming with All-America tight end Ken MacAfee, who led the team in receiving for the third straight year.

The offense came on strong in 1977 as Montana threw for over 1,600 yards and 11 touchdowns and Heavens led the team with 994 rushing yards. Montana earned a reputation as "The Comeback Kid" with performances like the one he had in the third game of the season when, in his first appearance in over a year, he engineered the Irish to 17 fourth-quarter points in Notre Dame's come-from-behind 31-24 win at Purdue. Later in the season, the Irish traveled to Death Valley to play the 15th-ranked Clemson Tigers, and Montana scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns to bring the Irish to a 21-17 win.

Heavens was healthy again in 1977 and he joined the explosive Vagas Ferguson behind Montana. Heavens proved himself fully recovered with 136 yards against Michigan State and followed his outburst against the Spartans with a Notre Dame-record 200 yards rushing versus Army. Two weeks later he went for 100 against Navy.

But the key regular season win came in a mid-season 49-19 thrashing of fifth-ranked USC in Notre Dame Stadium. In that one, the Irish warmed up in their usual blue jerseys, only to emerge in green just prior to kickoff. That triumph helped wipe out the memory of Notre Dame's second-game road loss, a 20-13 defeat at Ole Miss that proved its sole '77 blemish.

The Irish ran out to a 24-10 halftime lead in the Cotton Bowl and then added touchdowns in each of the final quarters for an overwhelming 28-point victory. Few questioned who was number one.

Notre Dame leapfrogged over the four teams ranked ahead of it to grab the nation's top position.

The Irish did, indeed, wake the echoes and shake down the thunder.

— Willie Shearer

1977 — 11-1-0

- "Pressure comes from within the family. There's no pressure hanging over our heads. We've got this guarded optimism."

— Irish head coach

Dan Devine during the preseason

- "You have to remember that defenses are made on the football field, not in the preseason polls, not in newspaper or magazine articles and not at press conferences."

— Irish captain
Willie Fry

- "I don't like to say it was easy, but ... well, the way we played today, we could have dominated any line in the country."

— Irish offensive tackle Tim Foley on the Irish win over Texas

- "We earned it on the field. We played number one and we beat them."

— Irish head coach
Dan Devine

- "At least the team that beat us was a good one. Everyone can't say that."

— Texas coach Fred
Akers



Terry Eurick romped for two touchdowns and caught a 12-yard pass to set up a Vagas Ferguson score in the Irish win over top-ranked and previously unbeaten Texas in the '78 Cotton Bowl.

Hold-Your-Breath Season Ends Perfectly With National Title In Fiesta Bowl

It wasn't long after Lou Holtz's arrival as head football coach at Notre Dame that he opined that the Irish couldn't expect to be a great team until they were great on defense.

That prophesy came true for Holtz and the Irish in 1988 - ironically, just a year after Notre Dame's Tim Brown had captured the Heisman Trophy. But with his departure came a revitalization of the defense, led by senior defensive end Frank Stams, junior linebacker Michael Stonebreaker, sophomore defensive tackle Chris Zorich and senior linebacker Wes Pritchett, all of whom merited some sort of All-America honors. They were supported by cornerback Todd Lyght, linebacker Ned Bolcar and defensive tackle Jeff Alm, who went on to earn that same All-America acclaim a year later.

The end result was a consensus national championship for the Irish in 1988, thanks to a perfect 12-0 campaign. The title came in Holtz's third season as Irish head coach, much as Frank Leahy, Ara Parseghian and Dan Devine before him had claimed national crowns in their respective third seasons as Irish head coach. It came thanks to riveting regular-season triumphs over Michigan, Miami and USC — and it ultimately featured wins over teams ranked first, second and third in the polls when they faced Notre Dame.

When the 13th-ranked Irish debuted against ninth-rated Michigan in Notre Dame Stadium, Holtz knew his youthful offense would be tested, particularly with a green group of receivers featuring Ricky Watters at flanker in a switch from tailback, plus rookies Derek Brown and Raghil Ismail. His concern was borne out when Notre Dame did not score a touchdown from scrimmage.

But Watters returned a Michigan punt 81 yards for a touchdown, and unheralded walk-on kicker Reggie Ho knocked through four field goals, twice bringing the Irish from behind including the game winner with 1:13 remaining. A field goal miss from 48 yards as time expired by the Wolverines earned Notre Dame a 19-17 opening victory.

Four wins later, the fourth-rated

Irish welcomed top-ranked Miami and its 36-game regular-season unbeaten streak to Notre Dame Stadium. The streak bit the dust that day by a 31-30 count, as Notre Dame forced seven Hurricane turnovers and made use of a bevy of heroes, lastly Pat Terrell, who knocked down Miami quarterback Steve Walsh's two-point conversion pass with 45 seconds remaining.

Terrell previously ran an interception back 60 yards for a score, Stams forced two Walsh fumbles, recovered another and tipped the pass Terrell intercepted — and quarterback Tony Rice threw for a career-high 195 yards. The Irish took the lead for good midway through the third period after thwarting a fake punt by Miami and then held on down the stretch. Though Walsh threw for 424 yards, the stingy Irish front line limited the 'Canes to 57 rushing yards.

The season finale found the 10-0 and top-ranked Irish underdogs against second-rated and also unbeaten USC

in the Los Angeles Coliseum. Again, it was defense that dominated for Notre Dame in a 27-10 victory. Stams had nine tackles, two and a half sacks and fumble recovery and made life miserable for Trojan standout Rodney Peete.

Cornerback Stan Smagala ran an interception back 64 yards for a 20-7 halftime lead after Rice had skirted left end for 65 yards for the first points of the game.

The Irish prevailed despite going 29 minutes in the second and third periods combined without a first down — and in spite of the fact leading rusher Tony Brooks and leading receiver Watters, both sophomores, were suspended the day before the game.

Notre Dame met third-ranked and unbeaten West Virginia in the Fiesta Bowl in hopes of claiming the championship — and the Irish rode early leads of 16-0 and 23-3 to an eventual 34-21 victory banking on another staunch defensive effort.

Rice ran for 75 yards and completed seven throws for 213 more yards. Meanwhile, Stams had two sacks on his way to the defensive MVP award, and the Irish dominated a heralded Mountaineer offensive line that had been one of the main reasons West Virginia had never trailed in a game all season. The more physical Notre Dame team knocked quarterback Major Harris out of the contest early due to a bruised shoulder and limited the potent Mountaineer ground game to 108 yards.

Holtz's final pronouncement: "This team will go down as a great football team because nobody proved otherwise."



Frank Stams



Tony Rice

1988 — 12-0-0

- "If you look at it on paper, there is no justification for Notre Dame to be rated in the top 20."
— Irish head coach Lou Holtz in the preseason
- "If we are number one, I don't care who is number two."
— Irish coach Lou Holtz
- "I was so tired, I was wondering if we'd ever get off the field."
— Defensive End Frank Stams after the USC game
- "I think this team is underrated even if we are No. 1. I've read articles that people have sent to me all year saying we were lucky against this team or that. Our football team is prettier than I am, but that's about it. We don't play pretty all the time, but we sure play together as a team."
— Irish coach Lou Holtz
- "The poll is great and it creates a tremendous amount of interest. But I only pay attention to the last one. It's amazing. Here we are number one and I'm scared to death of a team that hasn't won a game."
— Irish coach Lou Holtz
- "I'm exactly the same today as when I woke up yesterday. The players are the same, we're not bigger. We're not stronger. We're not faster. We're not going to change our uniforms. If you start worrying about No. 1 and try to defend it, the pressure would be tremendous."
— Irish coach Lou Holtz
- "Winning the national championship was never in my thoughts. I have been asked the question did I ever dream about winning the national championship.
"Yeah, you dream about it, but I never really thought that it would happen to me. I never thought I would coach a national championship team. It still hasn't sunk in on me yet."
— Irish coach Lou Holtz
- "We're going on a mission this year, a couple of weeks of sacrifice for something that we're going to be able to enjoy and celebrate the rest of our lives. That's a small price to pay."
— Senior tailback Mark Green