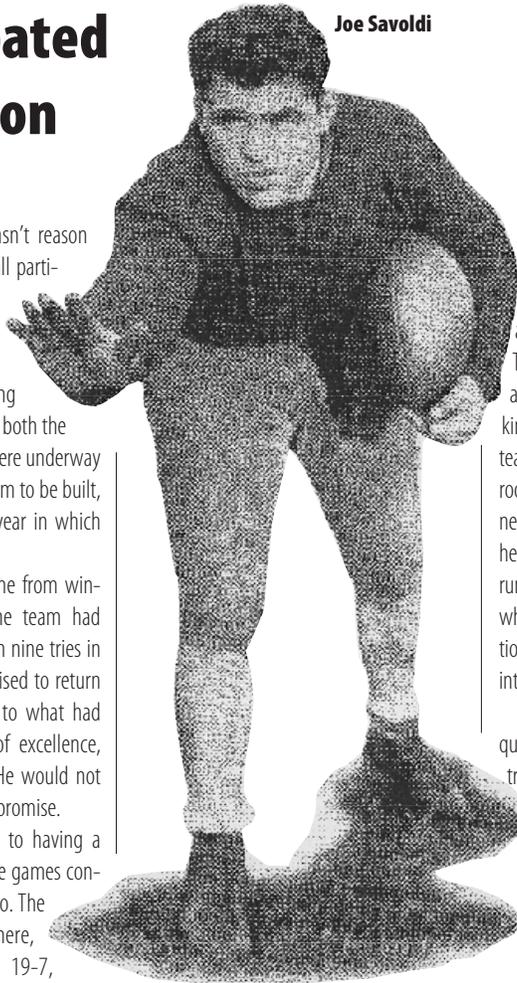


Irish Follow Lead of Elder and Savoldi To Undefeated 1929 Season



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.

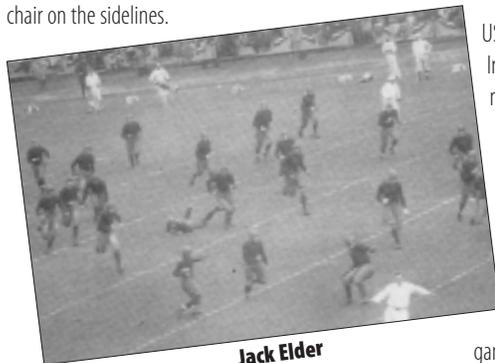
That didn't keep Notre Dame from winning, however, something the team had accomplished only five times in nine tries in 1928. Knute Rockne had promised to return Notre Dame football in 1929 to what had become its customary level of excellence, homefield advantage or not. He would not be stopped from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



Jack Elder



Paul Castner

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 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 TDs 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