



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

1929 — 9-0-0

► "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