

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.

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



Larry Coutre

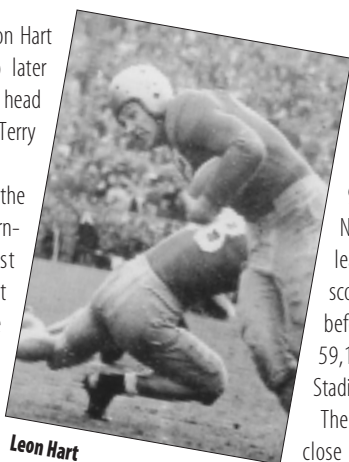
Heisman winner Leon Hart and the man who later succeeded Leahy as head coach of the Irish, Terry Brennan.

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-



Leon Hart

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 professional 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 sports writer

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 Frnka when asked if his squad had a chance to upset Notre Dame.

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

— Irish coach Frank Leahy



Emil Sitko