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## New Book Chronicles The Four Horsemen of Notre Dame *Loyal Sons Follows 1924 Championship from Coast to Coast*

It's been more than eight decades since sportswriter Grantland Rice described a 1924 Notre Dame-Army football game with the words, "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."

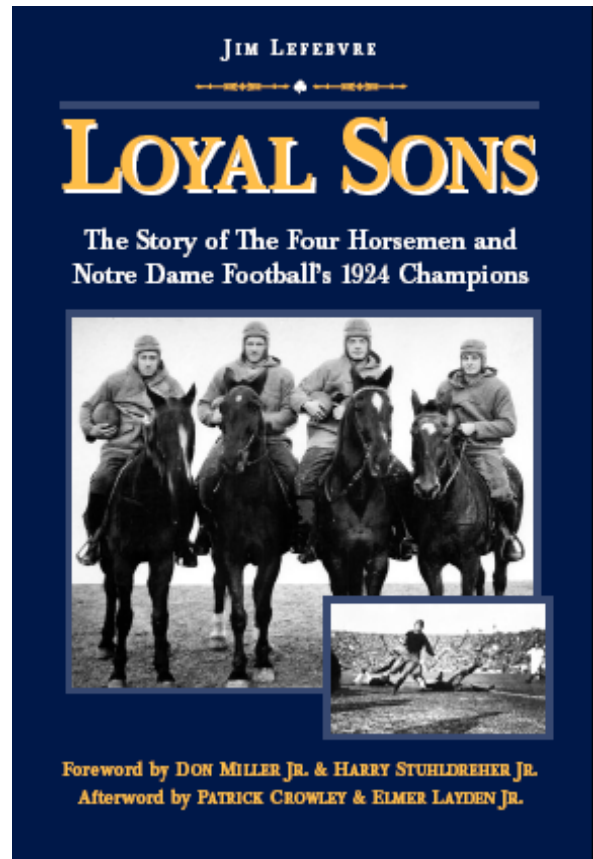
Rice's article and the subsequent publicity photo helped create one of the most recognizable images in American sports iconography. Yet, until now, the story of The Four Horsemen and their 1924 Notre Dame team had never been told in book-length form. The recent release of *Loyal Sons: The Story of The Four Horsemen and Notre Dame Football's 1924 Champions* changes that.

In *Loyal Sons*, author Jim Lefebvre chronicles the dreams, hard work, setbacks, challenges, serendipitous timing, motivation, and spirit that resulted in an undefeated season and Notre Dame's first national championship.

The book follows Knute Rockne's team as it dazzles opponents and draws record crowds from New York to Chicago and finally at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. The team's attitude and performance fuel the rapid rise of Notre Dame's fame as the Fighting Irish become a source of intense pride for Catholics across the United States.

*Loyal Sons* is a must-read for college football fans, especially those who cherish the Notre Dame program and its remarkable history.

**Note to News Media:** Author Jim Lefebvre is available for interviews through ACTA Sports. Please call (847) 676-2282. Talking points can be found on page 2.



### LOYAL SONS The Story of the Four Horsemen and Notre Dame Football's 1924 Champions

By Jim Lefebvre

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**JIM LEFEBVRE** is an award-winning journalist and sports historian. He is the founder and publisher of *Forever Irish*, the online magazine celebrating the heritage of Notre Dame football. Visit this site at [www.NDFootballHistory.com](http://www.NDFootballHistory.com).



*Loyal Sons* is available from booksellers nationwide, or from ACTA Sports at (800) 397-2282 or [www.actasports.com](http://www.actasports.com).

Aspects of Notre Dame football and life in the 1920s described in *Loyal Sons: The Story of Notre Dame Football's 1924 Champions* include:

- **Players came from humble backgrounds.** The 22 seniors on the 1924 Notre Dame team were representative of the school's student body—overwhelmingly Catholic, from predominantly middle-class or working-class families across the Midwest and beyond, and no strangers to hard work. They came without promises, and worked their way up through the freshman team, onto the varsity, and finally into key roles. They played a game they loved, and enjoyed it for its own sake. The thought of pro ball was almost non-existent. And, as freshmen in 1921, they saw how the lure of the pro game caused problems for several upperclassmen.
- **Anti-Catholic sentiment.** Notre Dame football—like many immigrant Americans—faced its share of intolerance in the early 1920s. Trips to Atlanta, Georgia, and Lincoln, Nebraska, were marred by anti-Catholic taunts. In 1924, the Ku Klux Klan boasted a membership of nearly 30 percent of all white males in Indiana, and a Klan rally in May 1924 in South Bend had created negative publicity for Notre Dame. To counteract this, Father John O'Hara, CSC, saw the great potential to promote the values of Catholic education through the team's success on the field. The book describes the rapid rise of Notre Dame's "connection to the masses" as the team became a source of intense pride for Catholics in America.
- **A truly national, rigorous schedule.** Notre Dame fans are familiar with Grantland Rice's famous description—and the subsequent photo of the Four Horsemen—after Notre Dame's defeat of Army on October 18, 1924. Often overlooked is the daunting schedule the Irish played that season. In addition to back-to-back trips to face Eastern stalwarts Army and Princeton, the Fighting Irish faced powers from the South (Georgia Tech), Midwest (Wisconsin and Northwestern), Plains (Nebraska), and finally Far West (Stanford). Any loss would have rendered the accomplishments of The Four Horsemen as suspect or ordinary. *Loyal Sons* provides thoroughly researched game-by-game descriptions that paint in vivid detail the opponent, the atmosphere and the importance of each game.
- **Notre Dame football becomes an "event."** Today's sold-out Notre Dame Stadium, national following, and television contract all have their roots in the success of this 1924 team—the first in college football history to play games in New York City, Chicago and southern California in the same season. Everywhere the Irish played, they were big news, and record crowds followed. In 1924, Notre Dame home football games became "events," featuring Friday night pep rallies, fans streaming in via train from all over the country, and townspeople opening their homes to host the crowds that overflowed the hotels of South Bend.
- **The explosion of radio spreads the story.** The early 1920s were a time of unabashed enthusiasm, when anything seemed possible. Train travel was still the most popular way to travel, yet the automobile was a growing phenomenon. Newspapers were at their heyday, and radio burst on the scene and grew exponentially. Radio technology was soon used to meet the growing appetite for sports, and some of the earliest major sports broadcasts were Notre Dame football games. The Irish's epic battle with Stanford in the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1925, can be considered the first "coast-to-coast" broadcast of a sporting event.
- **Rockne's innovative style of play.** Knute Rockne's 1924 team excelled at executing his "Notre Dame Shift," a series of movements prior to the snap of the ball that confused opponents and opened up a myriad of possibilities for each play. That and the use of the "shock troops" showcased Rockne's pioneering style. An entire second string unit started most games, keeping the Notre Dame regulars on the sideline for most or all of the first quarter. There the first team and Rockne studied the opponents' plays and strategies. When the regulars entered the game, they were fresh, while the other team had lost some of its steam going up against the Irish subs. There was a distinct psychological advantage as the first-string Irish took the field.
- **A bowl trip to beat all others.** Notre Dame's trip to meet Stanford in Pasadena became a three-week odyssey that showcased the Irish to a growing legion of fans. In Memphis, New Orleans, Houston, Tucson, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, and other stops, the Irish were feted by ND alums, local Knights of Columbus councils, and thousands of followers eager to glimpse the "wonder team" from the small men's school in northern Indiana.