

Frozen all-stars

From 1924 to 1948 Northwestern and Notre Dame met 23 times in a gridiron series that never failed to excite Midwest fans, When it was announced that former stars of the two schools would meet on Thanksgiving Day, 1930 in an all-star game, the contest naturally drew considerable interest.

The all-star game was actually going to be the opener of a Shriner's doubleheader at Chicago's Soldier Field, with the main attraction being the contest between Oregon State and West Virginia. But to many fans the main event was going to be the all-star game, and as game day arrived the Shriners had an advance sale of 60,000 tickets. The Tribune wryly commented that the alumni players "are expected to provide quite a thrill as long as they last." Unfortunately, Chicago was hit with a terrific snow storm the day before the game, and only 20,000 fans actually used their tickets to huddle in the near zero cold, snow and wintry blasts of wind that howled around Soldier Field. Because of the conditions each quarter was reduced to seven minutes, and the two all-star squads spent most of the game struggling near midfield as the "grads bounced up and down on the frozen sod like so many rubber balls."

One reporter noted that while "it was too cold and slippery to play the best football, ... several of the big stars of other years still showed that they knew some tricks of the game, with beautiful kicks and long passes that were too slippery to receive." The foremost stars of the game were Jack Elder from the 1929 Notre Dame team, and Ralph "Moon" Baker of 1926 Northwestern. Baker repeatedly boomed punts of 40-50 yards to keep the Notre Dame stars deep in their end. Other Notre Dame standouts were Hunk Anderson, Don Miller, Jack Cannon and Jack Chevigny; while for Northwestern there was Bill Calderwood, Yats Levison and Jimmy Paterson.

When the game mercifully ended the score was still 0-0. One player was quoted as saying that "the next time, if ever, we play a game under such conditions we're going to use ice skates." Despite the weather, this had been a magic moment in college football history.

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