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**In Search of the Notre Dame Experience:  
Catholic College Football 1919-1930**

The decade of the 1920s produced many transformations within the sport of college football – one of the most significant being the growth of the game on Catholic university campuses. Spurred on by the increasing prestige and popularity garnered by Notre Dame in the years immediately after World War I, many Catholic schools hoped to emulate some degree of that success and, for some, there was the dream of becoming the second Notre Dame within the world of college football. While a number of Catholic colleges trace their football origins back to the 1890s only a few had actually joined Notre Dame in playing major college schedules prior to World War I. Having noticed Notre Dame's growing football prestige in the seasons prior to America's involvement in the war, many Catholic universities were prepared to expand their own gridiron programs when college football returned to normalcy in 1919. With Knute Rockne as head coach, Notre Dame continued to gain widespread national sporting attention as it fielded powerhouse teams through the early years of the 1920s. This growing success served to encourage many Catholic universities to pattern their football programs after Rockne's.

This paper will address the extent of the Notre Dame network's influence upon the football programs of other Catholic universities while also examining the question of how the Carnegie Report's debate over football's abuses and over-emphasis was reflected in the experience of the Catholic schools. It will also review the Catholic schools' relationships with the general public – including experiences related to American Catholicism. Catholic university football, other than the program at Notre Dame, has remained relatively unexplored by sport historians prior to this time. This paper will add to our understanding of Catholic college football by examining the influences upon its development during the sport's greatest period of transformation. Also of significance for sport history will be the relationship between college football and the assimilation efforts of Roman Catholics.

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