

KNUTE ROCKNE

Knute Rockne had not yet gained his greatest fame when he arrived in Massillon with Notre Dame teammate Gus Dorias in 1915.

Quarterback Dorias and end Rockne had just completed their Notre Dame careers when they joined the Massillon Pro Tigers.

Two years earlier the two had worked at Cedar Point, an amuse-

ment park in Sandusky, Ohio, and developed their passing game while working as lifeguards on the beach.

They made the forward pass a viable part of the game when they returned to school. In Notre Dame's 35-13 win over Army in 1913 the duo's aerial performance is considered by many to have brought the forward pass into vogue.



Rockne played for and coached the Massillon Pro Tigers.

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A CENTURY OF HEROES

Rockne and Dorias brought the forward pass to pro football from 1915-1917 when they led the Tigers to the championship in 1915.

Canton, who shared the title with Massillon in 1915, was led by the great Jim Thorpe, who was just three years removed from his famous performance in the 1912 Olympics where he won the decathlon. It was at the Olympics that King Gustav V of Sweden told Thorpe, "You sir, are the greatest athlete in the world."

"Knut Rockne used to tell this story himself," said Luther Emery, the longtime Massillon sportswriter.

"Jim Thorpe came around Rockne's end. Rockne played defensive end and later on coached the Tigers.

"Rockne was never a big fella. Thorpe ran with his

knees high, almost hitting his chin. They played at the driving park where the Meadows Plaza is now. That was a football field at the time. Rockne tackled Thorpe. Thorpe said, 'You better let Big Jim run.' He came around Rockne's end again and knocked Rockne out. Rockne woke up on the sidelines."

Rockne was named head coach at Notre Dame in 1918, becoming one of the most famous college coaches of all-time. In 13 years as Notre Dame's head coach, Rockne fashioned a 105-12-5 record. Notre Dame won five national championships under Rockne.

Rockne was in his prime, at age 43, when he died in a plane crash on March 31, 1931.