

New Documentary Celebrates ‘The Greatest Team’

The 1946-47 Notre Dame football teams achieved what might be the most incredible accomplishment in the sport’s history: In the 18 total games they played, they never trailed while winning back-to-back national titles.

Since then, our research indicates that the 1961 Alabama team under Bear Bryant was the only other unit to achieve such a feat.

Those 1946-47 teams also marked just the halfway point of another unique distinction in the post-World War II era that is unlikely to be ever matched: Four straight years of college where the graduating senior class never experienced defeat (36-0-2).

Head coach Frank Leahy’s dynasty in the 1940s is recognized by many historians, including *Sports Illustrated’s* Paul “Dr. Z” Zimmerman, as the greatest collegiate football talent ever assembled — and one that could rival any in the NFL at the time.

Forty-two Notre Dame players from the 1947 team alone were drafted, which is especially astounding when one considers that back then the 11-man units played both offense and defense. That’s like sending almost four different college teams to the NFL — plus a fourth- or fifth-team center (Art Statuto) that never won a monogram at Notre Dame, yet starred as a pro.

Pegasus Productions Inc. recently released a 65-minute documentary on the 1946-47 teams that is a must for any Notre Dame follower for its posterity. There is precious little video of Leahy found anywhere, but this documentary includes an interview with him (in color no less), in addition to approximately a dozen players from the era, among them Heisman winner John Lujack and Outland winner Bill “Moose” Fischer that especially highlights the brutal nature of the practices and the meticulous attention to detail. This includes rare practice footage of “The Gauntlet” running backs went through while being tackled by a long line of players spread across the field.

About 2.2 million military men returned from WWII in 1946 who were able to attend college on the G.I. Bill. Tremendous football talent was spread throughout the country — but none was honed into greater dominance than at Notre Dame. Their story is worth preserving forever.

— Lou Somogyi



Head coach Frank Leahy's dominant 1946-47 teams never trailed in any of the 18 games they played en route to winning a pair of national championships.

PHOTO COURTESY NOTRE DAME MEDIA RELATIONS