



The Four Horsemen

It was more than 75 years ago that a dramatic nickname coined by a poetic sports writer and the quick-thinking actions of a clever student publicity aide transformed the Notre Dame backfield of Stuhldreher, Crowley, Miller and Layden into the most fabled quartet in college football history.

Quarterback Harry Stuhldreher, left halfback Jim Crowley, right halfback Don Miller and fullback Elmer Layden had run rampant through Irish opponents' defenses since coach Knute Rockne devised the lineup in 1922 during their sophomore season. But the foursome needed some help from Grantland Rice, a sportswriter for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, to achieve football immortality. After Notre Dame's 13-7 victory over Army on October 18, 1924, Rice penned the most famous passage in the history of sports journalism.

"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. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds this afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down upon the bewildering panoramas spread out upon the green plain below."

George Strickler, then Rockne's student publicity aide and later sports editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, made sure the name stuck. After the team arrived back in South Bend, he posed the four players, dressed in their uniforms, on the backs of four horses from a livery stable in town. The wire services picked up the now-famous photo, and the legendary status of the Four Horsemen was insured.

The 1999 season marked the 75th anniversary of the Four Horsemen's senior year and descendants of each member of that group were honored at the Notre Dame vs. Navy game on October 30, 1999.

"At the time, I didn't realize the impact it would have," Crowley said later. "But the thing just kind of mushroomed. After the splurge in the press, the sports fans of the nation got interested in us along with other sportswriters. Our record helped, too. If we'd lost a couple, I don't think we would have been remembered."

After that win over Army, Notre Dame's third straight victory of the young season, the Irish were rarely threatened the rest of the year. A 27-10 win over Stanford in the 1925 Rose Bowl gave Rockne and Notre Dame the national championship and a perfect 10-0 record.

As it usually is with legends, the Four Horsemen earned their spots in gridiron history. Although none of the four stood taller than six feet and none of the four weighed more than 162 pounds, the Four Horsemen might comprise the greatest backfield ever. As a unit, Stuhldreher, Crowley, Miller and Layden played 30 games and only lost to one team, Nebraska, twice.

Stuhldreher, a 5-7, 151-pounder from Massillon, Ohio, was a self-assured leader who not only could throw accurately but also returned punts and proved a solid blocker. He emerged as the starting signal caller four games into his sophomore season in 1922. He was often labeled cocky, feisty and ambitious, but his field generalship was unmatched.

Crowley, who came to Notre Dame in 1921 from Green Bay, Wis., stood 5-11 and weighed 162 pounds. Known as "Sleepy Jim" for his drowsy-eyed appearance, Crowley outmaneuvered many a defender with his clever, shifty ball carrying.

Miller, a native of Defiance, Ohio, followed his three brothers to Notre Dame. At 5-11, 160 pounds, Miller proved to be the team's breakaway threat. According to Rockne, Miller was the greatest open-field runner he ever coached.

Layden, the fastest of the quartet, became the Irish defensive star with his timely interceptions and also handled the punting chores. The 6-0, 162-pounder from Davenport, Iowa, boasted 10-second speed in the 100-yard dash.

After graduation, the lives of the Four Horsemen took similar paths. All began coaching careers with three of the four occupying top positions.

Layden coached at his alma mater for seven years and compiled a 47-13-3 record. He also served as athletic director at Notre Dame. After a business career in Chicago, Layden died in 1973 at the age of 70.

Crowley coached Vince Lombardi at Fordham before entering business in Cleveland. He died in 1986 at the age of 83.

Stuhldreher, who died in 1965 at the age of 63, became athletic director and football coach at Wisconsin.

Miller left coaching after four years at Georgia Tech and began practicing law in Cleveland. He was appointed U.S. District Attorney for Northern Ohio by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Miller died in 1979 at the age of 77.

All four players eventually were elected to the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame — Layden in 1951, Stuhldreher in 1958, Crowley in 1966 and Miller in 1970.

“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. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army football team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds yesterday afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down on the bewildering panoramas spread on the green plain below.

A cyclone can't be snared. It may be surrounded, but somewhere it breaks through to keep going. When the cyclone starts from South Bend, where the candle lights still gleam through the Indiana sycamores, those in the way must take to storm cellars at top speed. Yesterday the cyclone struck again, as Notre Dame beat Army 13 to 7, with a set of backfield stars that ripped and crashed through a strong Army defense with more speed and power than warring cadets could meet.”

—Grantland Rice
New York Herald Tribune
October 19, 1924



The Four Horsemen— Don Miller, Elmer Layden, Jim Crowley and Harry Stuhldreher

FOUR HORSEMEN CAREER STATS

	Rushing			Passing				Receiving			Int. Ret.		Punt Ret.		Kickoff Ret.		Scoring		
	No.	Yds.	TD	Att.	Cmp.	Yds.	TD	No.	Yds.	TD	No.	Yds.	No.	Yds.	No.	Yds.	TD	PAT	Pts.
Jim Crowley																			
1922	75	566	5	21	10	154	1	—	—	—	2	9	4	36	—	—	5	4	34
1923	88	536	4	36	13	154	1	1	44	—	4	31	—	—	4	89	4	15	39
1924	131	739	6	26	14	236	2	12	265	3	—	—	—	—	4	52	9	17	71
Totals	294	1841	15	83	37	544	4	13	309	3	6	40	4	36	8	141	18	36	144
Elmer Layden																			
1922	80	453	0	17	9	173	2	4	57	1	2	5	2	27	2	38	1	3	9
1923	102	420	5	6	3	51	—	6	78	2	3	58	1	1	6	110	7	5	47
1924	111	423	5	6	1	18	—	1	10	—	2	59	—	—	5	111	6	4	40
Totals	293	1296	10	29	13	242	2	11	145	3	7	122	3	28	13	259	14	12	96
Don Miller																			
1922	87	472	3	—	—	—	—	6	144	1	—	—	—	—	5	179	5	—	30
1923	89	689	9	—	—	—	—	9	149	1	1	—	4	69	1	15	10	—	60
1924	107	763	5	1	—	—	—	16	297	2	2	43	—	—	1	20	7	—	42
Totals	283	1933	17	1	—	—	—	31	590	4	3	43	4	66	7	214	22	—	132
Harry Stuhldreher																			
1922	26	49	5	15	8	68	3	6	95	1	—	—	28	199	1	10	6	—	36
1923	26	50	2	19	10	205	3	7	63	—	3	—	38	308	—	—	3	1	19
1924	17	19	3	33	25	471	4	5	52	—	—	—	22	194	2	13	3	1	19
Totals	69	118	10	67	43	744	10	18	210	1	3	—	88	701	3	23	12	2	74
Composite Totals	939	5188	53	180	93	1530	16	73	1254	11	19	205	99	834	31	637	*66	50	446

*Miller also scored 1 TD on a kickoff return, Layden 1 TD on an interception return and Stuhldreher 1 TD on a punt return. Statistics do not include 1925 Rose Bowl against Stanford.

Punting statistics: Layden, 112 punts for 36.4 average; Crowley, 7 punts for 38.0 average.