

TALKING IT OVER

BY JOE WILLIAMS

SOUTH BEND, Ind., April 4.—As the bells of the church of the Sacred Heart went the funeral dirge of Knute K. Rockne today, the man who started the famous coach on his superlative football career, first as player and then as teacher, went with them.

Jesse Harper, once guide of the gridiron destinies of Notre Dame and now a cattle raiser in Kansas, came back to the old campus on the prairie, where he often had exulted in triumph, to mourn for the man to whom he had been as a father.

"Rockne was a genius in everything he did," declared the veteran, "while he always insisted that there was no such thing as the 'Rockne system'—while he never delved in anything but his football went back to Hiram—he was the gridiron creator of all time."

"When I decided to quit at the close of the 1917 season, I went to Father Cavanaugh, the president of Notre Dame at the time, and said: 'I am through here.' Father Cavanaugh asked: 'Who is this parson?'

"I told him I had chosen Rockne. He was surprised. That man is to everyone we said, 'we can't turn this thing over to him.'

"Father Cavanaugh asked: 'Who is this parson?'

"Very well, then. If that is the case, Rockne will get the post," Father Cavanaugh replied. "I knew he would make the grade. He went on to make football an advanced game all his own. There can be no successor to Knute Rockne."

A COUPLE of years ago, in a spirit of bandage, Major Cavanaugh, coach at Fordham, said Rockne owed his system to the football Frank taught at Dartmouth. Jokingly, Cavanaugh said that he had given the game to Marks at Hanover, and Marks had carried it to Notre Dame, and to Rockne.

Rockne was very much amused over this statement, and refused to believe that it had been made in seriousness. I happened to be at Notre Dame when the subject came up in the newspapers, and Rockne laughingly said:

"Cavanaugh is wrong. Our football goes back to Adam. I learned everything I know about football. He learned his football from Alonso Stagg. I, when I was a player at Chicago, started my football with Eddie Montague, who is now in the NFL."

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"A week later Rockne's letter returned.

At the bottom was written:

"Go to hell, will you, Cav."

That ended in fun what had started out to be a serious discussion which had greater admiration for each other.

As for Rockne's getting his football from Adam, Harper disputed that. "He did things with the game that nobody ever dreamt could be done, and did them himself," said Harper.

And the bells of Sacred Heart rolled a Hosanna across the prairie and into the stadium, that Rockne with his unmatched skill, had won for Notre Dame.

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