

Michigan Every Day

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Nov. 19, 1966
MSU vs. Notre Dame in "Game of the Century"

When the two football powerhouse teams met for what was dubbed the "Game of the Century", Michigan State University (MSU) and Notre Dame played for the national championship. Even though that title was on the line, the rules allowed the game to end in a tie.

The Nov. 19, 1966 game ended with a score of 10-10 at Spartan Stadium before an overflow of crowd of more than 80,000 fans.

For MSU loyalists, the game became controversial. Some noted some problems with the game, discovered after careful examination of game tape: In one instance, a Spartan defenseman was ruled offside by a referee. That call negated a fumble recovery by MSU and allowed the Irish to kick the tying field goal.

Also, officials overturned another fumble recovery in the final seconds of the game that would have given the Spartans good field positions and a chance to win the game. Finally, Notre Dame won the national championship through the UPI coaches poll, even though Ara Parseghian, the team's coach, did not go for the win but instead let the clock wind down when his team had the ball in the final seconds of the game.

Spartan Bubba Smith, who would go on to become a star in the NFL, called Notre Dame "a bunch of sissies."

Notre Dame went on to the Rose Bowl despite the tie. MSU had played in the Rose Bowl the year before but at the time the Big Ten had a rule that barred teams from playing in the title game for two consecutive years. Notre Dame beat the University of Southern California for the championship.

Nonetheless, the MSU-Notre Dame contest made the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in the lead-up to the game because both schools were undefeated. It was also a diversion from the war in Vietnam and the social unrest affecting the country.

The game was part of a golden age of Spartan football, which in the decades that followed faltered from its one-time perch on national prominence.