



# Perfect Rivals: Notre Dame, Miami, and the Battle for the Soul of College Football

*Jeff Carroll*

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## **Perfect Rivals: Notre Dame, Miami, and the Battle for the Soul of College Football** Jeff Carroll

College football is a sport of rivalries—and no two teams were ever more perfectly matched than the Miami Hurricanes and the Notre Dame Fighting Irish. In *Perfect Rivals*, award-winning sportswriter Jeff Carroll takes us inside the locker rooms and onto the gridiron, as two storied programs with very different cultures battle for national supremacy, school pride, and the soul of the game itself.

Beginning with the Hurricanes' nationally televised 58–7 pasting of the Irish at the Orange Bowl in November 1985, the two teams faced each other five times over a six-year span. The last three of those games had national championship implications, as a resurgent Notre Dame sought to reclaim its historic preeminence against a faster, mouthier, more talented Miami squad notorious for trash-talking opponents, stalking out of pregame buffets, and wearing military fatigues on the team plane. The games were marked by heartbreaking finishes, disputed plays, and nasty onfield brawls. Adding fuel to the fire was a controversial slogan created by a Notre Dame student and picked up by the press—"Catholics vs. Convicts"—which served to heighten the cultural (and, some would say, racial) tension between the opposing schools.

Carroll's fast-paced, up-close-and-personal narrative centers on a handful of colorful characters on both sides of the rivalry: the coaches, from dapper Jimmy Johnson to punctilious Lou Holtz, and the players, including Miami's Steve Walsh, a quiet Midwesterner and one-time Holtz recruit who defied the freewheeling Miami stereotype, and devout Baptist Tony Rice, only the second black quarterback in Notre Dame history, who defined the rivalry and decided the contests.

Filled with you-are-there depictions of game action and insights drawn from Carroll's unfettered access to many of the major figures involved, **Perfect Rivals** is a vivid re-creation of one of the most entertaining eras in the history of college football.

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