

Lou Holtz Dies at 89: How Faith Shaped the Life of a Notre Dame Football Legend

College football icon Lou Holtz, remembered both for his championship coaching career and his outspoken Catholic faith, has died at the age of 89.

Holtz passed away Mar. 4, 2026, in Orlando, Florida, surrounded by family. His family confirmed the news through the athletic department at University of Notre Dame, the school where he achieved his greatest success and cemented his legacy as one of the most respected figures in college football history. In a statement, Holtz's family shared how he, "is remembered for his enduring values of faith, family, service, and an unwavering belief in the potential of others."

Earlier this year, reports indicated that Holtz had entered hospice care.

Over a coaching career that spanned more than three decades, Holtz became known for his ability to rebuild struggling programs and turn them into winners. His overall college coaching record stood at 249–132–7, placing him among the most accomplished coaches in the sport.

Holtz's coaching journey included stops at William & Mary, North Carolina State, Arkansas, Minnesota and South Carolina. He also briefly coached in the NFL with the New York Jets. Yet it was at Notre Dame where Holtz's name became permanently etched into college football history.

When he arrived in South Bend in 1986, the storied program was struggling to regain its dominance. Within two seasons, Holtz orchestrated one of the greatest turnarounds in the sport. In 1988, Notre Dame completed a perfect 12–0 season and captured

the national championship, a victory that remains one of the most celebrated moments in the school's football tradition.

Holtz coached the Fighting Irish from 1986 through 1996, finishing his Notre Dame tenure with a remarkable 100–30–2 record. His teams became known for discipline, preparation and resilience—qualities Holtz consistently emphasized as foundational principles both on and off the field.

Beyond football, Holtz was widely known for speaking openly about his Catholic faith. Throughout his career and into retirement, he frequently shared how faith, character and family shaped his life and leadership.



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According to EWTN, Holtz previously shared with the National Catholic Register about how Catholicism, and nuns in particular, helped direct the course of his life.

"...they encouraged you always to make sure that God is the focus of your life, and they didn't allow you to do anything except to the very best of your ability," Holtz stated.

He also discussed the power of prayer, noting: "God does answer your prayers, but it's not always in the way you expect...[He] knows what's best for us, though, so there's no need to worry when things don't go how we originally wanted them to go."

He also shared that he went to church as a way to "honor Jesus Christ."

Holtz was also committed to his family, being married to his wife, Beth, for nearly 60 years until her death in 2020. Together they raised four children, including Skip Holtz, who followed his father into the coaching profession.

Following his retirement from coaching, Holtz remained a prominent voice in the sports world. He worked for years as a college football analyst on ESPN and became a sought-after motivational speaker, sharing lessons on leadership, perseverance and faith with audiences across the country.

In 2008, Holtz was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame, recognizing his extraordinary impact on the game. More recently, in 2020, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Lou Holtz leaves behind a legacy defined not only by football excellence but also by his enduring commitment to faith, family and leadership—values that guided him both on the sidelines and throughout his life.

Prepared by Charisma Media Staff.