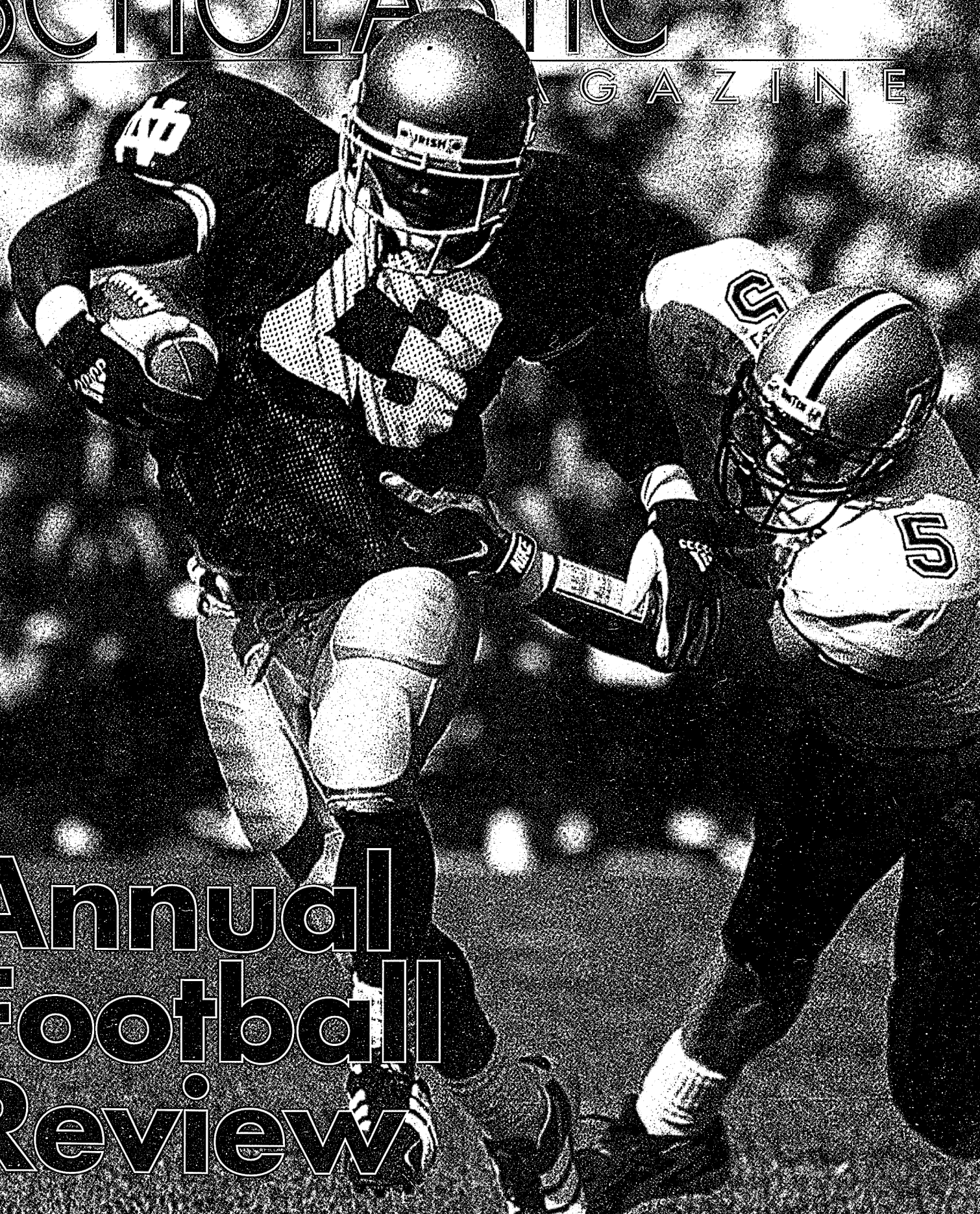


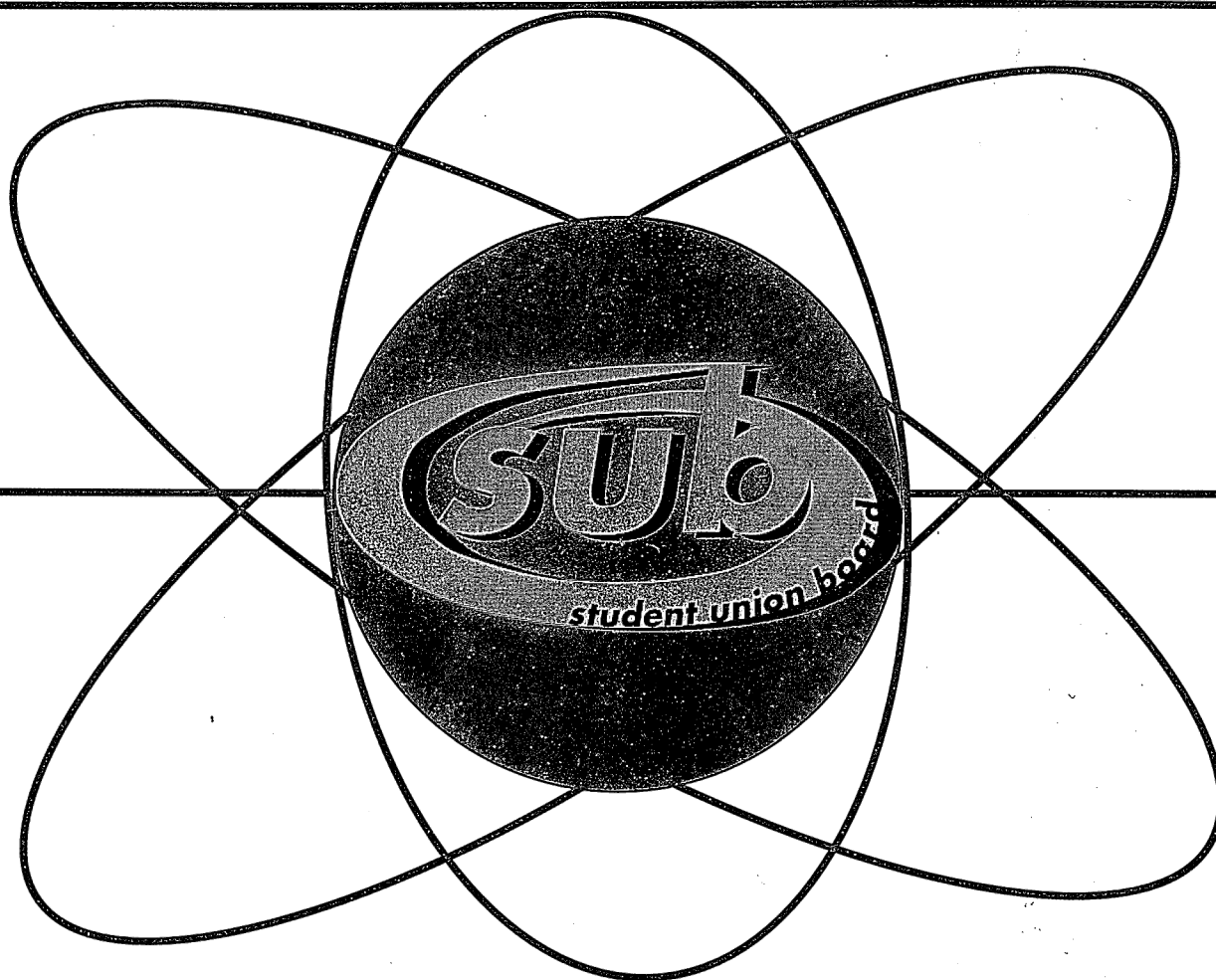
SCHOLASTIC

MAGAZINE



Annual Football Review

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME • 1998 FOOTBALL REVIEW



what did you do over break?

*While you were busy writing letters to Santa,
we here at WVFI were hard at work
preparing the station for
February's grand opening*

WVFI 640am



A Fan's Journey

On a late November afternoon in 1985, my father took me to my first college football game. The wind chill was 20 below and the freezing rain continued throughout the game. Still, I couldn't wait to get inside Beaver Stadium that day, for I was about to see the team whose name appeared on 90 percent of the shirts I wore throughout my childhood.

In their final home game of the season, Joe Paterno's Nittany Lions trounced the visitors 36-6 to complete an undefeated regular season and enter January 1 the number-one team in the land. But I didn't care about them.

The team I was there to see wore golden helmets that glistened in the sunlight even as their uniforms were splattered with mud. I couldn't take my eyes off of them. When you're little, the first thing that you notice about Notre Dame is the helmets. I was only eight years old then, but I knew the names of practically every starter on the team and couldn't believe they were right in front of me. Allen Pinkett. Steve Beuerlein. Wally Kleine. I had no feeling left in my hands or feet by then, but it didn't matter.

I made my first trip to South Bend in 1990 with my father and two of our friends. Chills ran down my spine the first time I spotted the Dome from U.S. 31. An electric pep rally featured a magical speech by Holtz and the next day, the Rocket ran a kickoff back

for a score and they upset Miami 29-20. It was the best weekend of my life.

Growing up with Lou Holtz at the helm spoiled me, like it did many Irish fans. I used to take any loss personally; I still remember locking myself in my room after Miami snapped the 23-game win streak in '89. Like every die-hard fan across the country, I expected them to win every game and whenever it didn't happen, I had strong opinions concerning why.

Three years later, I, like everyone else on this campus, received my acceptance letter and made the easy decision to attend Notre Dame. I couldn't wait to set foot in the stadium as a student and watch four seasons of Irish football unfold before my eyes. With the talent on the team, a national title was surely in the cards.

It's funny, though, that as I look back now on four years that included at least three losses a season, what I feel is not disappointment but gratitude. Considering how big a fan I was when I entered the university, it speaks volumes to say that, despite the 15 defeats, I will leave with an even greater attachment to Notre Dame football. This is solely due to the unique relationship between players and students that exist here. I am fortunate to say that some of the best friendships I have made here are with seniors on this football team. I still took the losses here hard, but for a deeper reason than a mere drop in the polls. I felt terrible because I knew just how much time and effort my friends had put into football.

It's hard to explain the bond that exists here among the players and students. The best example I can think of is what hap-

pened after the West Virginia game last season. Students at a school with 11 national championships rushed the field to celebrate with a team that was only 6-5. It's about more than wins and losses at Notre Dame.

Fans constantly ask me whenever I go home what Notre Dame is really like. Many regard it as an almost mythical place, but what makes Notre Dame special is the people, football players included. This isn't Tennessee. We didn't win the national championship this year but 80, not 24, percent of our players graduate. Doing things the right way often costs Notre Dame football games against more talented teams. But you have to stand by the players through the good and the bad. Believe me, they're worth cheering for.

Thanks

Special thanks to Pat Downes, Allison Fashek, Brian Christ, Meredith Salisbury and Christopher Hamilton whose tireless work made this issue possible. Also, thanks to Gordie Bell and our staff photographers and the *Observer* photography crew for their great shots. Thank you also to Tim Ridder for agreeing to write the Final Word. Most importantly, I'd like to thank my parents for supporting me and enabling me to attend Notre Dame.

Corey Spinelli

Sports Editor

SCHOLASTIC

M A G A Z I N E

Sports Editor
Corey C. Spinelli

Editor in Chief
W. Patrick Downes

Managing Editor
Allison C. Fashek

Associate Editor
Brian Christ

Associate Editor
Meredith W. Salisbury

News: Jacob F. Mooney, editor; James J. Pastore, assistant

Campus Life: Mary Beth Ellis, editor

Sports: Christopher E. Hamilton, assistant

Entertainment: Joseph B. Gallagher, editor; Kelly McGann, assistant

Departments: Kara S. Zuaro, editor

Layout: Heather J. Hogan, assistant; Mike Griffin, Kristi Castro

Photography: Gordon B. Bell, editor

Graphic Arts: Paul Bohensky, editor

Distribution: Michael F. Bufkin, manager

Systems: Jesus Morales, manager

Vol. 140, No. 8 • Football Review

*Disce Quasi Semper Victurus
Vive Quasi Cras Moriturus*

Published biweekly at the University of Notre Dame and printed at Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 46556. The entire contents of *Scholastic Magazine* is copyright ©1998. All rights reserved. No contents of this magazine, either in whole or in part, may be reproduced in any manner without written consent of the publisher. *Scholastic Magazine* does not assume liability for unsolicited manuscripts or material. All correspondence should be sent to *Scholastic Magazine*, LaFortune Student Center, Notre Dame, IN 46556. To be published in the next issue, letters must be received by 5:00 p.m. Monday before the issue. All letters must include the writer's name, address and phone number. All letters must be signed. Names will be withheld upon request in certain instances. *Scholastic* reserves the right to edit letters for space. The subscription rate, including the annual football review, is \$35 per year. Available back issues are \$1.50 per copy; please specify volume and number, or date. Copies of the annual football review are available at \$5 per copy. Advertising rates available on request. The opinions expressed in *Scholastic Magazine* are not necessarily those of the University of Notre Dame or the student body.

cover photo by Gordie Bell

back cover photo courtesy of Kevin Knepp

inside back photos by Gordie Bell,

except crowd shot by Brent Tadsen

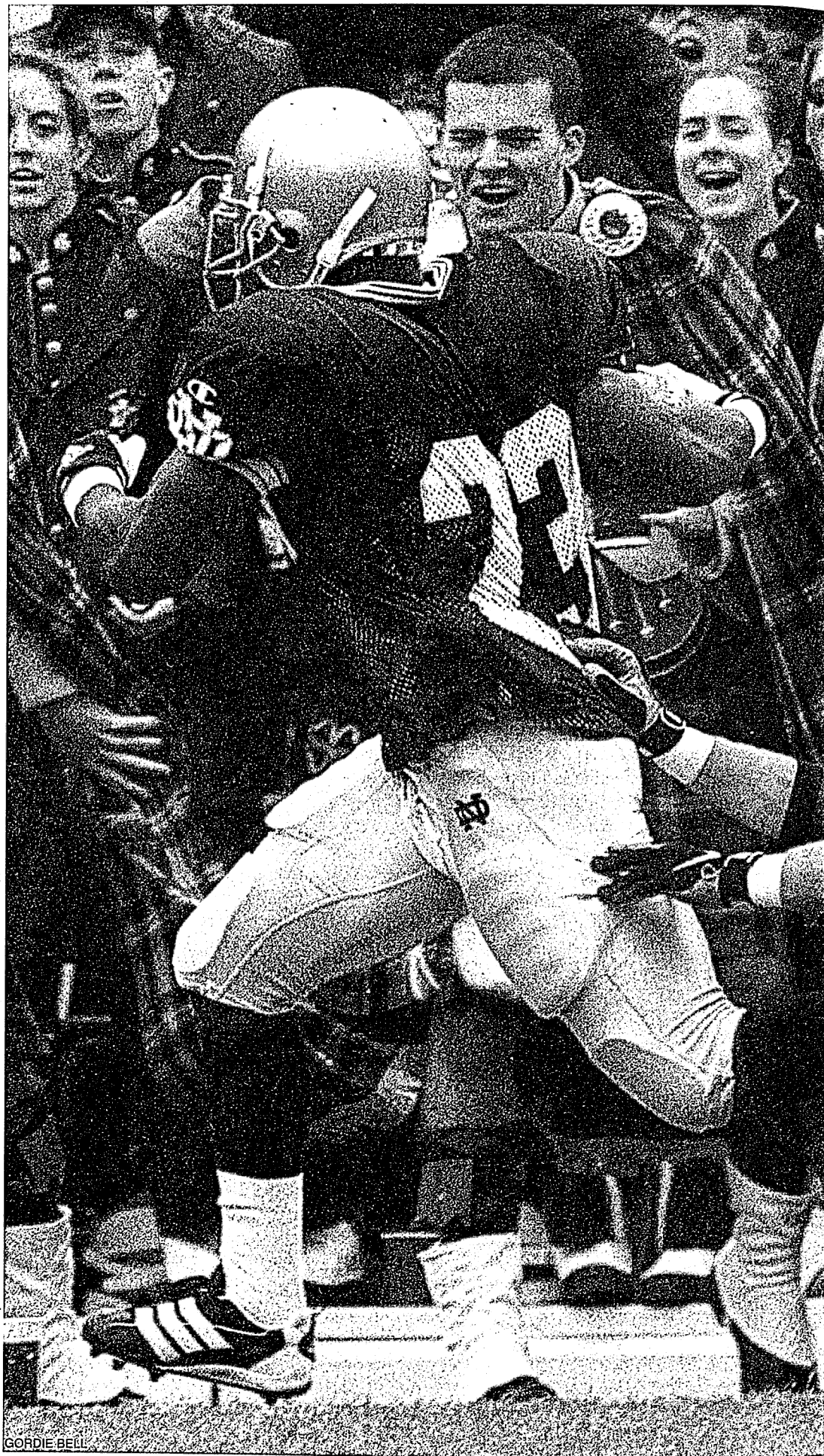
THE GAMES

Michigan	4
by Andrew Nutting	
Michigan State	8
by Brian Vernetti	
Purdue	12
by Joe Malichio	
Stanford	15
by Tom Repetto	
Arizona State	18
by Jason Petrungaro	
Army	21
by Christopher Hamilton	
Baylor	23
by Patrick Downes	
Boston College	28
by Corey Spinelli	
Navy	31
by Tom Repetto	
LSU	34
by R. Scott Panichelli	
USC	37
by Corey Spinelli	
Gator Bowl	40
by Patrick Downes	

THE FEATURES

Where They Stand	11
by Corey Spinelli	
Running down a dream	26
by Christopher Hamilton	
Heads of the Class	42
by Corey Spinelli	
All-Opponent team	46
Splinters	48
In With the New	50
by Christopher Hamilton	
Final Word	52
by Tim Ridder	

Volume 140 • Number 8



GORDIE BELL



DECLAWING THE CHAMPS

The defending national champs fell to the Irish in the season opener

by Andrew Nutting

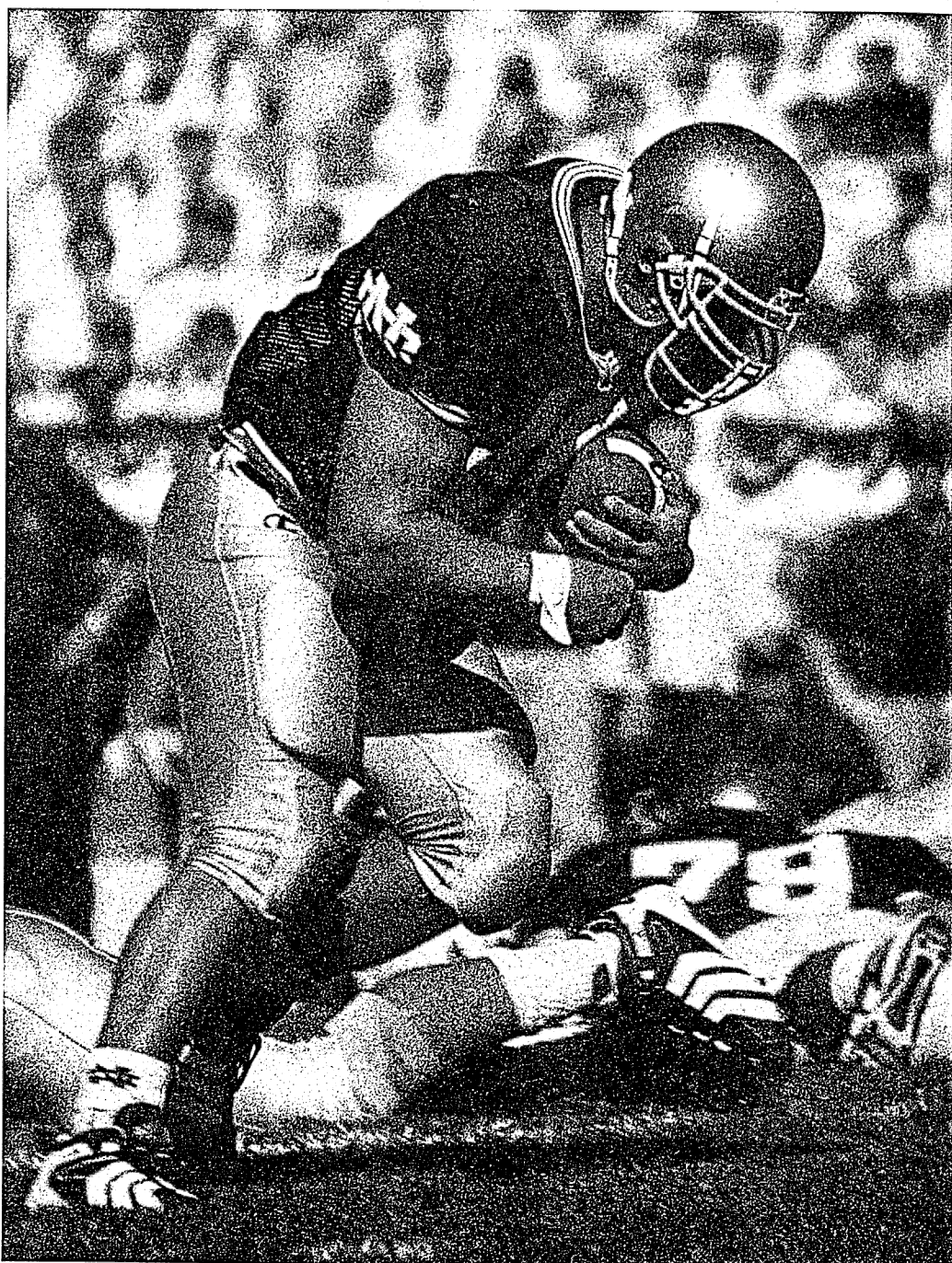
I think everyone had written Notre Dame off," said senior running back Autry Denson after the Irish smacked Michigan 36-20 to open the season. "But we knew good things were going to happen."

For the first time since the Gerry Faust regime, the Irish indeed had been written off as a national title contender. The 1997 season's bitter conclusion, a 27-9 mauling at the claws of LSU, had negated the year's biggest win. The final regular-season game had been an embarrassing one-point, last-second edging of the perennially irrelevant Hawaii Rainbow Warriors. A new quarterback handling the snaps and a second-year coach who hadn't showed any particular genius in his first season led cynics to predict a painful year.

Off-the-field events contributed to the diminution of Notre Dame's gridiron stature almost as much as on-field awkwardness. Terms like *age-discrimination lawsuit*, *Quarterback Club booster* and *cheerleader sex* peppered the nation's summer sports sections. The names Joe Moore, Kimberly Dunbar and Peeping Tom Athletes made even the most laudatory Domers and subway alumni cringe. Such external pressures, thought the naysayers, could only make a mediocre squad worse.

It didn't help matters that the Irish were lining up against the Michigan Wolverines, whose shiny 1997 national championship trophy had yet to collect dust and whose defeat of the Irish last year remained fresh in all fans' minds. The Maize and Blue returned nine starters from a defense that allowed just 9.5 points a game, featured one of the top recruiting classes in the country and had the confidence of a 10-foot-tall Philistine.

But, as Denson said, good things hap-



GORDIE BELL

pened. Not good things, actually. Great things. A combination of stalwart defensive play in the first half, brilliant second-half offensive execution and some timely Wolverine mistakes enabled the Irish to saunter off the field after the game back at the top of the world of college football.

The Irish didn't systematically destroy Michigan. Denson kicked the season off with a bang, taking the first Irish play up the middle for 58 yards before being caught at the Michigan 14. After the electrifying opening, though, the offense died. The next two plays netted minus-1 yards, and third down was wasted when, in the endzone, Malcolm Johnson dropped a pass from Jarious Jackson. Jim Sanson's 32-

yard field goal tied the game at 3-3.

In the entire first quarter, the Irish ran just five plays and held the ball for only three minutes. Denson's opening blast was more than half of the team's 114 first-half yards.

Jackson, the redshirt junior making his first start at quarterback, struggled in the first half. He missed numerous open receivers, completing only one of six attempts. His 33-yard completion to Raki Nelson did set up a second quarter field goal by Sanson, but only after Jackson badly overthrew to Johnson in the endzone.

"We felt like we didn't get enough plays to get in a rhythm," said senior tackle Mike Rosenthal of the first half. The defense, on the other hand, was on the field long enough for a full game.

The Blue and Gold's defense was not as inept as its offense in the first half and eventually let Michigan cause its own downfall through a series of missed field goals. Michigan's long

opening drive encompassed 15 plays and swallowed 5:23 off the clock, but the Wolverines were forced to settle for a 36-yard field goal after Irish defenders stopped Michigan at the 19.

Michigan's drive following Sanson's first field goal racked up another 66 yards before A'Jani Sanders dropped Justin Fargas at the ND 16, one yard short of a first down, forcing the field goal. Baker's 33 yard chip-shot attempt was wide left. Baker would miss again in the first half, coming up a few feet short of the crossbar from 43 yards in the middle of the second quarter.

"We have no excuses," said Michigan Head Coach Lloyd Carr after the game. "We had a lot of opportunities we didn't take advantage of."

Michigan finally got a few more points on the board when kicker Craig Baker was benched in favor of Jan Feely. Feely's 21-yarder capped a 54-yard Wolverine drive initiated by Travis Knight's phenomenal reception. In midair, Knight outmuscled the ball from Irish cornerback Deveron Harper, falling to the ground with pigskin in hand for a 42-yard gain.

Despite their problems, the Irish defense didn't allow a touchdown until 23 seconds remained in the first half. On second and goal from the one, Michigan's offensive line allowed enough space for quarterback Tom Brady to break the plane. The extra



GORDIE BELL

SWEET RELEASE. After a forgettable off-season for Notre Dame, the dominating performance finally gave the students something to cheer about. The student body rushed the field immediately after the game.

FULL STEAM AHEAD. Fullback Joey Goodspeed and his backfield mates pounded away at the vaunted Wolverine defense for four quarters, gaining nearly 300 yards.

point put the Irish behind 13-6 going into the half.

In the locker room, defensive coordinator Greg Mattison expressed frustration with the Irish tendency to let Brady and runningback Clarence Williams steadily drive deep into Notre Dame territory. "I told our players that it was their own fault they were on the field so long," Mattison said. "We had them in third down so many times and we didn't get off the field."

Mattison was right. In the first half, the Irish were outgained 269-114 in total yardage, ran 32 fewer plays and had possession for 10 fewer minutes. Pure fortune, not efficient football, allowed the Irish to be down by 7 instead of by as much as 28.

Runningbacks coach Desmond Robinson said, "You can look at plays and say 'almost.' We had a lot of plays in the first half that were 'almost' plays. But in the second half, we took those 'almost' plays and turned them into big plays."

That they did. The Irish scored 30 points, ran for over 200 yards and capitalized on two early Michigan turnovers in the second half. Jackson, who had rushed 5 times for 12 yards in the first half, ran 11 times for 61 in the second, showcasing the best Irish option attack since Tony Rice was behind center. He also completed three of four passes, including two for touchdowns.

"I knew number seven would play better in the second half," said head coach Bob Davie. "I've just seen him in situations before and I knew he could play better — he knew he could play better than he played."

Denson also impressed the coaches with his vigorous running game. After gar-

nering two second-half touchdowns and finishing the day with 163 yards rushing, offensive coordinator Jim Colletto said, "Autry Denson may have had his best day running the football."

Sanson's third field goal got things going for the Irish in the second half. On the ensuing kickoff, Clarence Williams had

Freshman defensive lineman Anthony Weaver stripped Ray Jackson of the ball in the backfield, and sophomore linebacker Grant Irons, jumped on the ball at the Michigan 35.

"Turnovers, then doing something with them, is a big part of the game," Colletto said.

"We had a lot of plays in the first half that were 'almost' plays. But in the second half, we took those 'almost' plays and turned them into big plays."

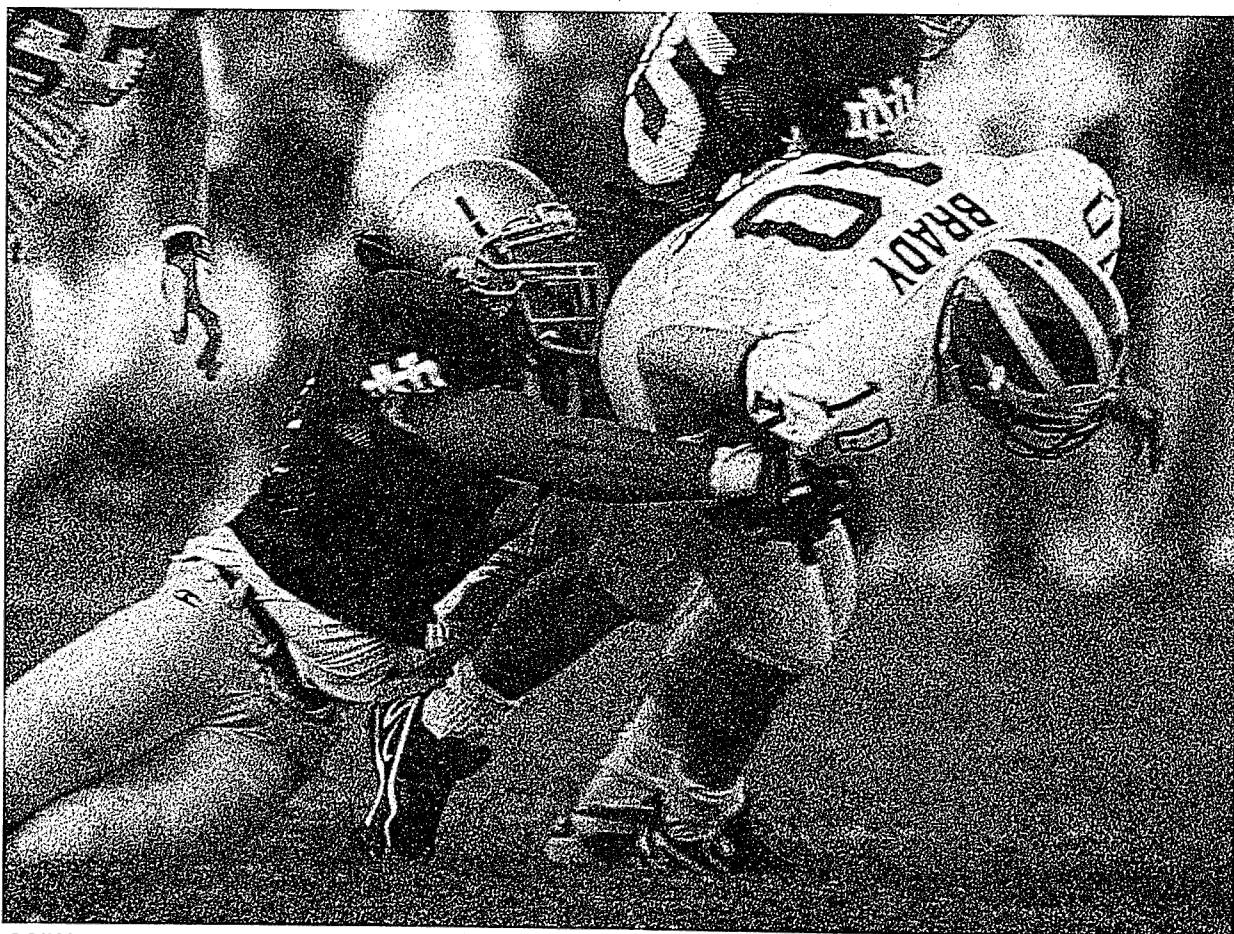
— Runningbacks Coach Desmond Robinson

gained significant yardage when he was hit by Irish cornerback Brock Williams. The ball came loose, and safety Tony Driver recovered for Notre Dame.

Williams' monster hit paid off with a four-yard touchdown pass to tight end Dan O'Leary, the first of O'Leary's career and the team's first of the 38-minute old season.

And before ushers could tell more students to remove their "Michigan Sucks" T-shirts, Notre Dame had the ball back again.

Jackson did something with it soon thereafter. First, he dropped back from the center, lost his balance and nearly fell over. Then, he recovered just in time to see two Wolverine linemen mere feet away, and uncorked an on-the-money pass to the wide-open Nelson. Jackson's Tupelo Twist earned a 6.0 for artistic impression, and Nelson's waltz into the end zone earned six points on the scoreboard. Sanson's PAT gave the Irish a 23-13 lead, one they would not relinquish.



GOING DOWN WITH A FIGHT. Michigan quarterback Tom Brady was sacked three times in the losing effort, this time by senior linebacker Kory Minor.

GORDIE BELL

Davie and the players attributed the team's improved performance in the second half not to "halftime adjustments," but to mental focus and execution. "At halftime," said Davie, "I told the kids to stay positive. I told them I don't want one negative thought or one negative word on that sideline."

Denson was equally happy about the team's second-half turnaround. After putting the game out of reach with two short fourth-quarter touchdowns, Denson said, "We made up our minds that the defense had carried us the whole first half. We just wanted to pull our weight in the second half."

The Irish resolve to play a perfect second half hadn't just been a spontaneous halftime decision, though. The summer had been dedicated to bulking up and increasing stamina after last season's disappointment. "That has been our focus since we lost in Shreveport [to LSU in the Independence Bowl] last year," said senior fullback Jamie Spencer. "We made a promise to ourselves and to each other that we were going to play 60 minutes."

New strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti had much to do with increasing the Irish's brawn. Marotti had play-

ers lifting weights and pushing vans all summer. The effects were clear when the Irish appeared stronger than the Wolverines in the trenches as the game wore on.

"Notre Dame did an outstanding job blocking us," acknowledged Carr. "I think our front line got handled."

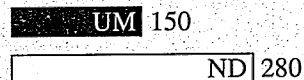
Notre Dame's defense also dominated the second half, holding Michigan scoreless until freshman Drew Henson led the visitors to a worthless touchdown with two minutes left. Linebacker Jimmy Friday also provided one of the day's biggest thrills, blocking a 40-yard field goal attempt and setting up Denson's second touchdown.

The Notre Dame student body euphorically rushed the field before time expired, and were ordered back to the sidelines so the gun could officially be sounded. Players and fans marched off the field, making the tunnel the most raucous spot in South Bend since the 1993 defeat of Florida State.

"It's called playing out of your chest," said Denson, summarizing the second-half thrashing of the defending national champs. "You play with a lot of heart and soul, and that's what we were all about today." □

GAME@ A GLANCE

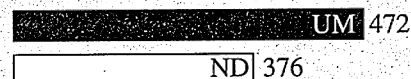
Rushing Yards



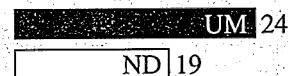
Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Michigan	3	10	0	7	— 20
Notre Dame	3	3	17	13	— 36

1st Quarter

UM: Baker 36 FG

ND: Sanson 32 FG

2nd Quarter

UM: Feely 21 FG

ND: Sanson 27 FG

3rd Quarter

ND: Sanson 32 FG

ND: O'Leary 4 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

ND: Nelson 35 pass from Jackson (Sanson kick)

4th Quarter

ND: Denson 3 run (Sanson PAT)

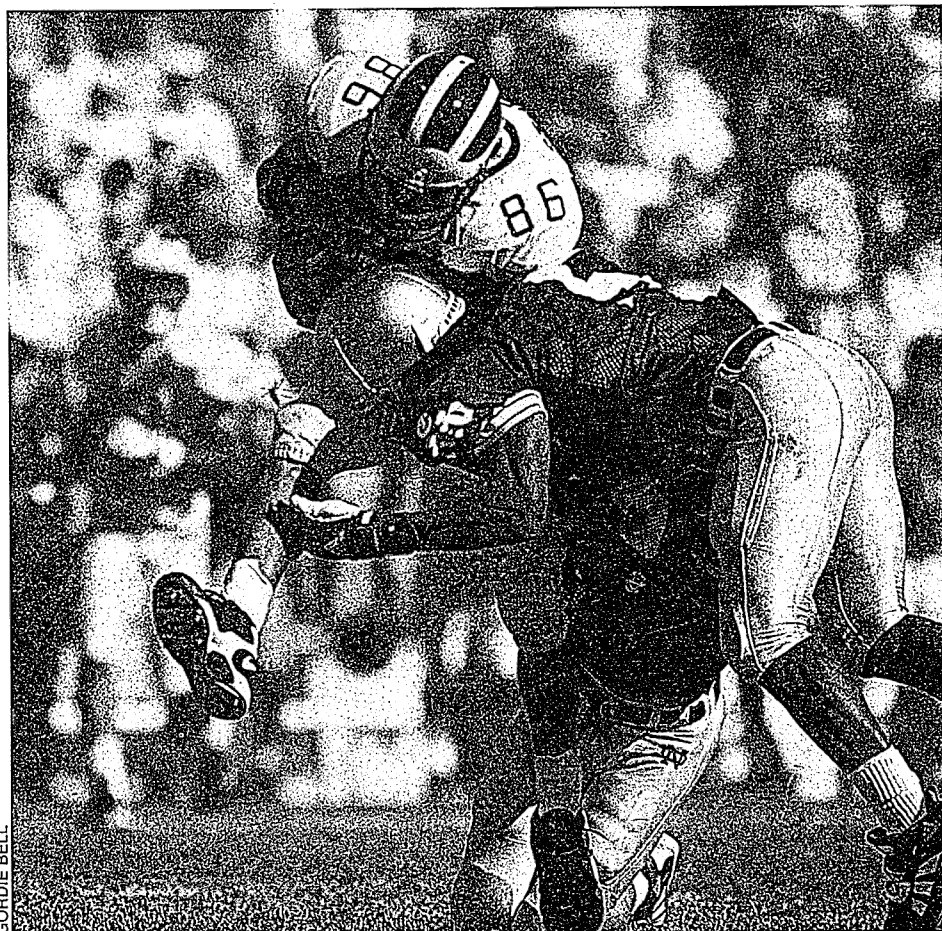
ND: Denson 1 run (Sanson PAT blocked)

UM: Tuman 8 pass from Henson (Feely PAT)

Post-game AP Rank: 10

Notes:

- The win over Michigan was just the fourth time a Notre Dame team ranked below 20th in the AP bowl beat a team in the top 5.



GORDIE BELL

UPENDING THE VICTORS. A'Jani Sanders and his teammates put an immediate end to any Wolverine hopes of defending their title.

The underdog Spartans demolished Notre Dame



FREE FALL

by Brian Verneti

OUT OF MY WAY NFL-bound Sedrick Irvin crushed the Irish for 122 yards.

GORDIE BELL

M • I • C • H • I • G • A • N S • T • A • T • E

Notre Dame football fans are growing accustomed to having their hopes for a successful season stamped out by notoriously inferior teams. After handily defeating defending co-national champion Michigan 36-20, Notre Dame fans had plenty of reason to celebrate. But it seems they didn't know when to stop. A week after the win, the Irish traveled to East Lansing, Mich., lost their concentration and motivation and were humiliated for the second year in a row by a relentless Michigan State.

Head Coach Bob Davie's boys simply weren't ready.

"There are no guarantees that if you play well one week, you'll play well the next," Davie said. The coach should be quite aware of that by now, as he has lost the second game of the year in each of his first two seasons as coach — after winning the first.

Michigan State extended this streak by thoroughly dominating on offense, defense and special teams. The final score was a 45-23 victory in favor of the Spartans.

The deciding facet of the game was undoubtedly Michigan State's unyielding special teams. Davie predicted these difficulties before the game, saying, "I think special teams will be key in this game. ... Our kickoff and punt coverage is critical. They are a really good special teams football team."

Big plays also hurt the Irish all day long. On Notre Dame's first possession, Hunter Smith's punt was blocked by Michigan State's Sean Smith and picked up by teammate Richard Newsome who ran it in for a 25-yard touchdown. "The blocked punt right off the bat — we got beat over the top three times on major, major home-run plays," Davie said. Early in the year, the punt team had trouble keeping opposing rushers away from Hunter Smith. Against Michigan, the Irish got lucky when a roughing-the-punter call negated a blocked punt.

No corrections were made for the next game, though, and the Spartans

took advantage of that. "They came through the left side and we had a mental mistake ... it's all because we didn't get our assignments down on the punt team," Special Teams Coach Urban Meyer says.

The next Irish possession ended in a punt and the Spartans capitalized again, driving 69 yards for another score. Sedrick Irvin, who accumulated 122 yards on 24 carries, gained 47 of those yards on this drive which ended in a 16-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Bill Burke to Plaxico Burress.

The Irish showed some signs of life when Jim Sanson made a 32-yard field goal following a 66-yard Notre Dame possession. But most of the gains were made only due to several Spartan penalties.

After that score, superior special teams play gave the Spartans great field position. A 30-yard kick return brought the ball to midfield, and Irvin capped the 50-yard drive with a three-yard touchdown plunge to end the first quarter scoring at 21-3.

Michigan State didn't let up in the second quarter as it doubled its point output starting with Burress' second touchdown reception, this one an 86-yard strike — the longest pass play given up in Notre Dame's history. The Spartans scored twice more before halftime, once on a 17-yard Leroy McFadden reception and again on a 23-yard intercep-

tion return by Julian Peterson.

Irish quarterback Jarious Jackson added to the poor showing by consistently over-throwing receivers. "The ball went eight miles over the guy's head," said Offensive Coordinator Jim Colletto of one such pass, "and from there it went downhill."

"We just didn't execute," Jackson added after completing only 12 of 30 passes.

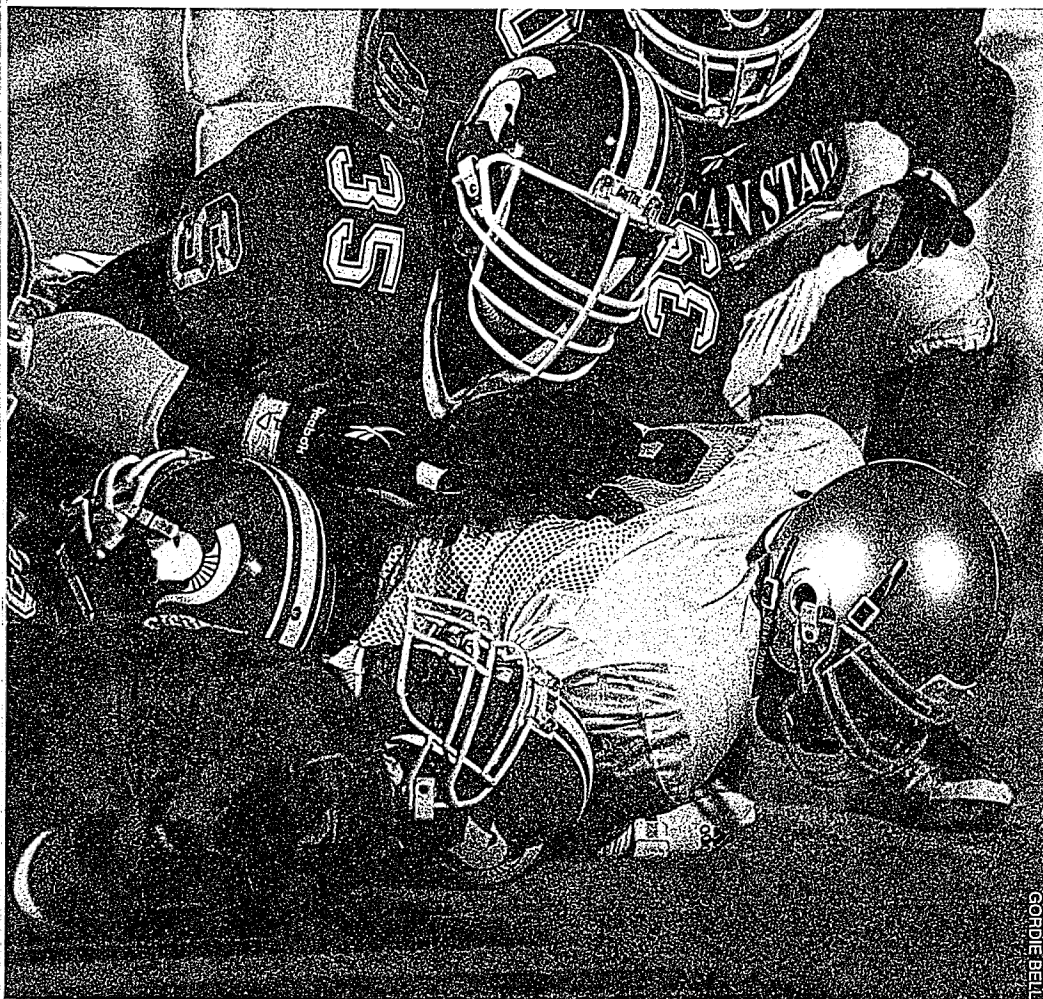
By the end of the first half, a week of celebration came to a gasping halt as the Irish found themselves down 42-3. The source of the blowout may have been a lackadaisical attitude in practice. Even though Davie told the players to enjoy their victory over Michigan only until practice began on Monday, his team lacked focus all week and continued patting each other on the back. Colletto recognized the difference in the team's effort from one week to the next. "We just didn't seem to have the same energy level. It was visible to all of us. We were saying, 'Come on, let's go, let's go,'" he said.

The Irish went into halftime with their heads down after being tossed around by the aggressive Spartan team. Winning the game was no longer likely, so the team's main goal was to improve in every facet of the game. They struck first blood in the second half on a two-yard touchdown run by Autry

NOT JUST SNEAKING BY. Spartan wide receiver Chris Strayer tries to elude an Irish defender.

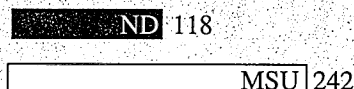


GORDIE BELL

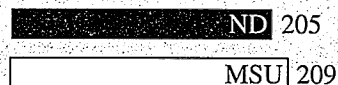


GAME@ A GLANCE

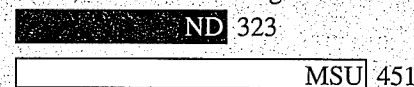
Rushing Yards



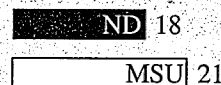
Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Notre Dame	3	0	6	14	— 23
Michigan State	21	21	0	3	— 45

SMOTHERED. Michigan State sophomore T.J. Turner (35) and a host of Spartan defenders take down an Irish ballcarrier. Notre Dame would manage just 118 yards on the ground.

Denson, which capped a 29-yard drive following a Spartan fumble. This was all the scoring seen in the third quarter as the Irish defensive adjustments proved beneficial. One of these important adjustments occurred on the defensive line. In the first half, a weak Irish front allowed Spartan quarterback Jim Burke enough time to pick out his favorite receivers time and again. Due to the ineffective play of Antwon Jones and Lance Legree, backup defensive lineman Andy Wisne was able to step in and made some big plays. Freshman quarterback Arnaz Battle was also impressive in his debut by completing his only pass attempt, a 40-yard toss to Joey Getherall, and by running for 22 yards on four carries.

The truly loyal Irish fans who kept their TVs on for the fourth quarter saw the speed of Irish defensive back Deke Cooper as he returned a fumble 96 yards for a touchdown. Following a successful two-point conversion, the Irish attempted an on-side kick that was recovered by Michigan State, and led to the Spartans' final three points.

An Irish defensive breakdown on the first

play allowed for a 29-yard scamper by Irvin. This drive culminated in a 37-yard field goal by Michigan State place kicker Paul Edinger.

Substitute players on both teams got ample playing time and Irish running back Darcey Levy scored his first career touchdown to finish scoring for the day.

The game was over before the Irish ever set foot on the field. Their inability to execute, in addition to multiple mental mistakes, showed that their week of preparation had been inadequate. "We can't justify it. It was all mental mistakes. ... We have to regroup," Jabari Holloway said about the loss.

Defender Aric Morris agreed. "We still believe we have a good team," he said. "We're not going to let this season slip away."

Simply showing up at East Lansing flashing golden helmets wasn't enough for the Irish. Davie would have to stress to his team the importance of focusing in each practice, and somehow find a way to recover from the game and face the rest of the season. □

1st Quarter

MSU: Newsome 25 blocked punt return (Edinger PAT)

MSU: Scott 16 pass from Burke (Edinger kick)

ND: Sanson 32 FG

MSU: Irvin 3 run (Edinger PAT)

2nd Quarter

MSU: Burrell 86 pass from Burke (Edinger PAT)

MSU: McFadden 17 pass from Burke (Edinger PAT)

MSU: Peterson 23 interception return (Edinger PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 2 run (Sanson kick failed)

4th Quarter

ND: Cooper 96 fumble recovery (Johnson pass from Jackson)

MSU: Edinger 37 FG

ND: Levy 3 run (Battle pass failed)

Post-game AP Rank: 23

Notes:

- The 22-point margin of loss was the largest such margin for Notre Dame since the 1991 squad lost to Penn State 35-13.

Where They Stand

Despite qualifying for '98 Coach of the Year honors and bringing the Irish to a game on New Year's Day, reviews of Bob Davie's two-year performance remain mixed

by Corey Spinelli

Never in recent history has the Notre Dame football program needed a win so badly. Disturbing public revelations about the program followed the disaster of the 1997 season, and they couldn't have come at a worse time. Bob Davie and his players insisted that the summer of discontent was not a distraction as they prepared to battle the defending champs in their home opener. But from the outside, it was hard to believe. The performance of the Irish in their runaway win seemed to vindicate the program and, at long last, its head coach. Davie deserved a great deal of credit for keeping his team focused and implementing a successful game plan. Optimists began to rationalize national title scenarios; after all, Michigan was the highest-ranked team on the schedule.

Then the bottom fell out. After a humiliating loss to a Michigan State team that would finish with six losses themselves, the questions resurfaced. Notre Dame simply wasn't ready — physically or emotionally — to play that game. Getting a team to understand that one win doesn't make a season is the head coach's responsibility, and he rightfully shouldered the blame. The question of how the coach and his boys would respond hovered over Notre Dame Stadium on September 26. The jury was out, but in the press box during half-time of the Purdue game most of the media were bracing for The Fall of '97, Take II.

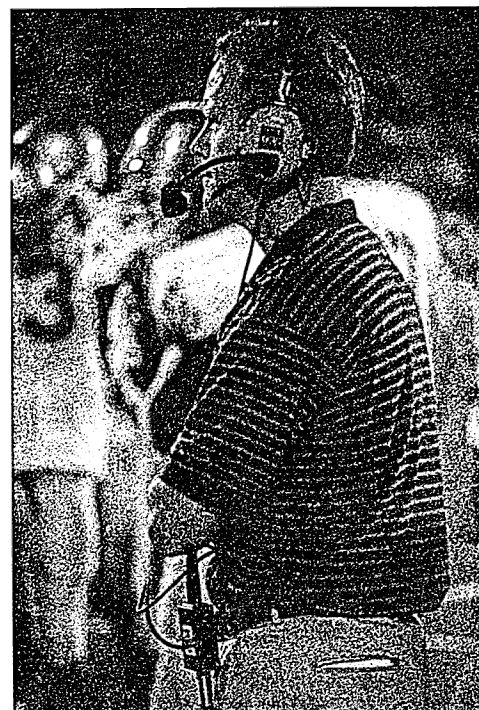
That the exact opposite happened is also a credit to Davie. His team consistently found ways to win. They won ugly, but who can recall a more exciting and, until "The Injury," a more gratifying season that began with such modest expectations? The

Irish won nine of 10 with a healthy Jackson, fell to Southern Cal without him and nearly came back to defeat a potent Georgia Tech team in the second half with a rusty and sometimes gun-shy quarterback working his way back into the top form he exhibited all season.

The progress made under Davie has been considerable. He and his staff are gaining continuity, and with another list of impressive high school seniors set to sign letters of intent, he has now proven himself an outstanding recruiter. Everything seems to be moving in the right direction.

The '98 season has now neatly been classified as the foundation upon which future successes will be built. I prefer to view it not as a beginning, however, but an end. Make no mistake about it. The leadership and play of this year's seniors are what propelled Notre Dame to within a win of finishing the regular season 10-1. This tight-knit group was Lou Holtz's final mark on Notre Dame football. Many of them came here to play for him and accomplish the ultimate goal with his guidance. His absence, along with factors beyond their control, resulted in their sub-par junior outing. Determined to end their careers on a high note, they gave a little extra in the off-season and consistently rose to the occasion in the fall. When asked to speak of their greatest influences at Notre Dame, very few mention the present coach. Instead, most mention Holtz's impact on their lives.

The seniors seem to feel slighted by what transpired on the football field in their time here. Who could blame them? On the verge of closing their careers 11-1, the rug was pulled from under their feet when one of



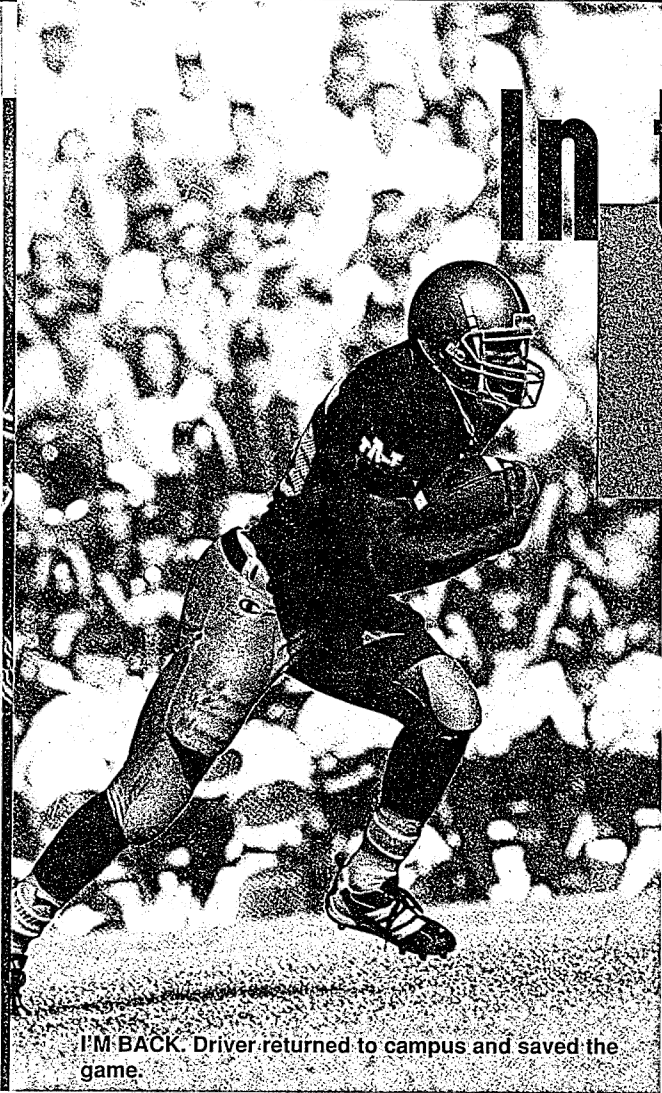
GORDIE BELL

FACING FACTS. After losing four out of their first five games under Davie, the Irish have come back to win 15 of their last 20 contests.

their best was senselessly sidelined. The belief that they should have been able to win without Jackson is mistaken. This class had overcome enough already. They had proven their mettle and, judging by the amount of open receivers in the Coliseum that night, with Jackson's presence it probably wouldn't have been close. As it is, the group that entered with so much promise now leaves as losers of their last two games.

Where does Notre Dame football go from here? Personnel-wise, they must replace four starters on the offensive line and four at linebacker. Jarious Jackson's return will be invaluable to a young offense but the schedule, featuring trips to Michigan and Tennessee, is brutal. The coaching staff is showing potential. Jim Colletto called some great games this year. Greg Mattison's defense kept the team in numerous games and created crucial turnovers, though its disappointing performance in the Gator Bowl after a month of preparation was puzzling. Davie is still learning the ropes, but February hauls will help the situation.

A key component of any successful team is the leadership the upperclassmen provide to the younger players on the squad. It separates good teams from great ones. You can't teach it, but the '98 version of the Fighting Irish had an abundance of it. If the '99 team and the ones that follow can somehow match it, appearances in New Year's Day games will once again become the norm instead of the exception. □



I'M BACK. Driver returned to campus and saved the game.

GORDIE BELL

In the DRIVER'S SEAT

Tony Driver stole the ball and the spotlight with two late-game interceptions

by Joe Malichio

Coming off the devastating Michigan State loss, many questions loomed concerning this 1998 Irish football team. Was Michigan just a fluke? Could Bob Davie's squad win big games on the road? Would this season turn out like the previous one? And worst of all — where was Tony Driver?

Two days after the debacle in East Lansing, the Notre Dame defensive back took an unexpected road trip home to see his mother, and many wondered if he would return. Driver, who had moved from tailback to free safety to strong safety, was rumored to be unhappy with the position move and with the coaches. Some speculated this was the motivation behind his departure. When he returned — just one day after he had left — the sophomore from Louisville was dumbfounded by the gossip. He said that he was just homesick and needed to see his family. Regardless of the reasons, he was back. Eleven days later he was the key player in Notre Dame's squeaker against Purdue.

With just under two minutes remaining in Notre Dame's game with the Boilermakers, and the opposition clinging to a two-point lead, Driver came up with two interceptions and snatched a victory from the Purdue squad. How improbable were the two late take-aways? For starters, Boiler quarterback Drew Brees was 24-of-33 with 261 yards at that point in the game. Notre Dame's leader in interceptions the last two years, Benny Guilbeaux, was sidelined following an injury from the Michigan State game, and most significantly, Notre Dame had not yet collected an interception that year.

The first 96 passes thrown against the Irish defense in the 1998 season were either caught by opposing receivers or had fallen incomplete. The 97th fell into Tony Driver's hands. The timing could not have been better. "I was fortunate," Driver said. "I was in the right position at the right time to make the play." After intercepting the overthrown pass forced up by Brees, the Irish strong safety scurried 37 yards down to the Purdue five. This set up Jim Sanson's winning field

goal. Several plays later, Driver sealed Notre Dame's second victory of the season with his second pick of the game. And just like that, the Irish jumped from the jaws of defeat into the arms of victory.

Through most of the contest, however, the mood on the Irish sideline was anything but festive. From the stat sheet alone, the game with Purdue appeared to be as surprisingly even a matchup as one could get. Both teams executed 69 plays on offense, Notre Dame had possession of the ball for just 44 seconds more than its adversary, the Boilers outgained the Irish by a mere two yards in total offense, and the outcome of the game was decided by a single point. Frankly, though, it was Purdue's game to win, as the Boilers dominated throughout.

For the second year in a row, Coach Joe Tiller's squad had Notre Dame players, coaches and fans pulling their hair out, as his offense once again showed how superb execution can decimate a defense. It was the crafty Purdue passing attack — dubbed "basketball on grass" by Tiller — that kept the

P • U • R • D • U • E

Irish off balance. Under the command of Brees, the Boilermakers marched 80 yards in just eight plays on their opening drive and jumped out to a 7-0 lead. The drive was highlighted by back-to-back tosses of 20-plus yards to Isaac Jones and the touchdown pass, caught by Purdue receiver Randall Lane. The pass was a controversial one, however. It appeared that Brees' pass had been picked off by Irish defensive back Brock Williams, but it was ruled a touchdown, as Lane ripped the ball out of the defender's hands. Nevertheless, as Irish head coach Bob Davie later agreed, it turned out to be the right call.

After just four plays on offense, Notre Dame put the pigskin back in the hands of the Purdue offense and the Boilermakers' second drive of the afternoon ended in similar fashion to their first one. At a critical point in the drive, the Irish were close to wrapping up Brees on a third-and-nine from the Irish 33, but he eluded the pressure and hit Lane for a huge 22-yard completion. Several plays later, Purdue's wily quarterback ran it in himself and, after a Travis Dorsch extra point, the men from West Lafayette were up 14-0. Panic grew, as visions of the loss the week before in Spartan Stadium danced in Irish heads.

In the first half the Boiler offensive attack was essentially unstoppable. Purdue's pass protection was flawless, while Notre Dame's pass coverage was rarely a factor. Brees had plenty of time to throw and the Irish missed several tackles. "Their offense is very hard to defend, but we weren't making the plays on defense and not making the tackles," Davie said. "We never consistently stopped them."

Following Purdue's second score, though, Irish quarterback Jarious Jackson and the Irish offensive attack attempted to stop the bleeding. They responded with a long 13-play drive, which ended with a 14-yard touchdown run by Autry Denson. After three plays, it looked as though the Irish were going to punt the ball away again, but Davie opted to take a chance and go for it on a short fourth-and-one.

"The way they were mov-

ing the football, I didn't want to give them the ball back," the coach explained. "We were going to try to draw them offsides and take the penalty, but then I went back and thought, 'Heck, let's go for it because right now, we can't stop 'em, and we need points.'" Jackson barely got the first down, but the Irish marched on. Faced with another fourth down at the Purdue 27, Davie

to drive down the field for their second touchdown. Notre Dame was superb on third down, converting on all three tries. Tight end Jabari Holloway snared a 10-yard pass from Jackson for the score. With only 2:54 remaining in the first half, the Irish had crept back into the game and felt more than content going into the locker room down only three points. But Purdue

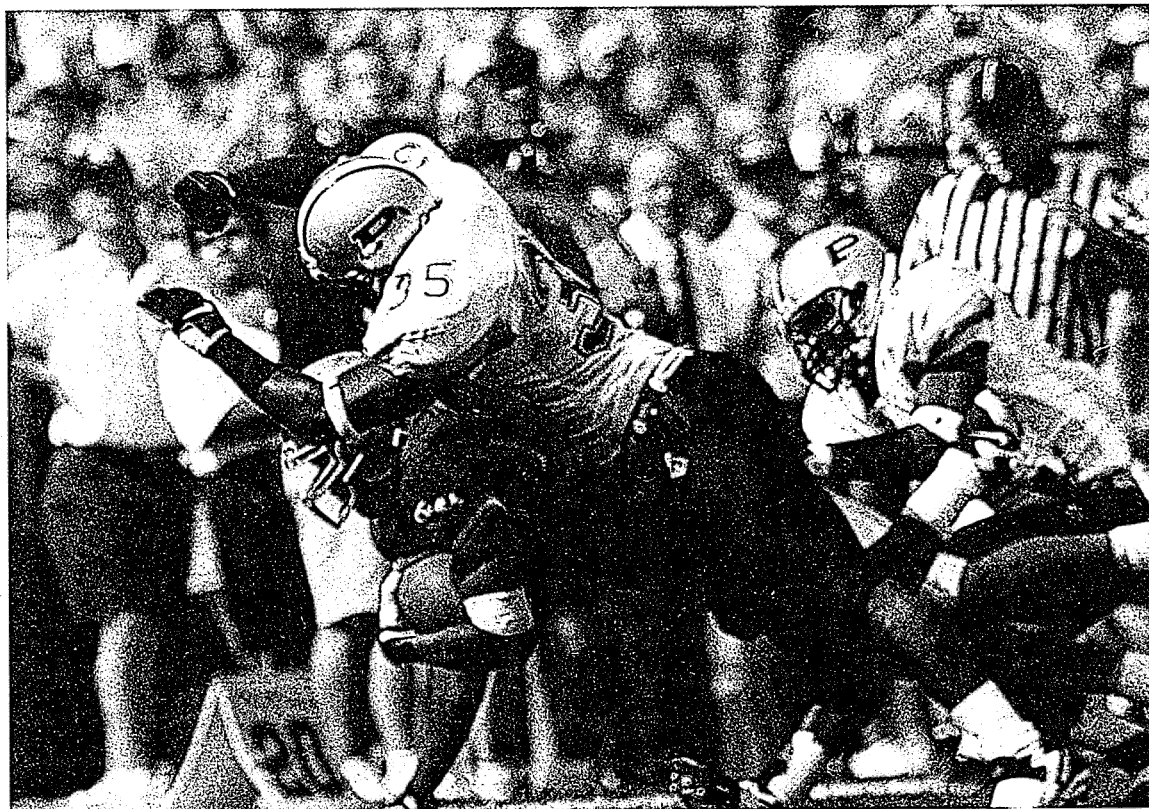
**"I was fortunate. I was in the right position at the right time to make the play."
— Tony Driver**

again elected to try his luck. This time the Irish quarterback hit wide receiver Malcolm Johnson for a 13-yard strike. It was Denson, however, who hauled the team down the field, rushing for over 50 yards en route to the score. "Autry flat out carried us in the first half," Davie said. "With the way he played, we needed to go to number 23. We had to get him the ball."

Following a Purdue field goal, the Irish successfully churned out another lengthy drive. Starting from their own 14-yard line, they used more than six and a half minutes

had other plans.

Drew Brees, in a Joe Montana-like groove, continued to direct the Purdue blitzkrieg. The Boiler quarterback completed all six passes on his team's final drive of the half, and scrambled for 10 yards himself. But Purdue's 10-point half-time lead was questionable. Irish cornerback Deveron Harper clearly jabbed the ball out of receiver Isaac Jones' hands before he got into the endzone, and as the ball rolled across the plane, free safety Deke Cooper pounced on it. After confer-



STRETCHING TO VICTORY. The Irish offense put 10 points on the board in the final 3:36 to escape with a one-point win.

GORDIE BELL

ring, the officials awarded the Boilermakers a touchdown. By halftime, Purdue had racked up some 278 yards of total offense to go along with their 24 points. Notre Dame was in need of major adjustments.

In 1997, the second half was a bad dream for the Irish, but this time the team showed why games run an hour. In the second half, Notre Dame returned to a base defense, allowing its players to be a more aggressive with their reads. The move paid off. The Irish defense limited the Purdue quarterback to just 49 yards passing and 3.3 yards per attempt for the remainder of the game.

"We were calling a lot of defenses, which were read defenses, where we were trying to stop their run on first down," explained Irish defensive coordinator Greg Mattison. "But they were throwing a lot on first down, so in the second half we were going to go out and just play base defense. When you play base defense, just straight defense and don't blitz much, then playmakers have to make plays."

After the teams traded punts to begin the third quarter, Notre Dame capitalized on a huge 51-yard pass play to Holloway on the first play of the next drive. Denson ran it in and the Irish were down just three points. Purdue gained just one yard on its next drive

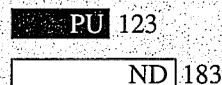
and the three-and-out gave the ball right back to Notre Dame. Jim Sanson's 45-yard bid to tie the game slid wide right and the remainder of the quarter became a defensive battle, though Purdue added a field goal to their lead near the end of the quarter.

Toward the end of the fourth quarter, the game officially became a nailbiter, as the Irish were now faced with a fourth-and-five at the Purdue 32. Jackson avoided a near sack, scurried away from the rush and fired a 15-yard bullet to Jay Johnson for the first down. On the next play he found Holloway on a slant for a touchdown and with 3:36 left, Notre Dame trailed by only two. Driver then picked off a tipped Brees pass and returned it 37 yards to the Purdue five-yard line, setting up Sanson's 17-yard field goal which gave the Irish a 31-30 lead. Driver sealed the Boilermakers' fate by intercepting his second Brees pass on Purdue's final possessions.

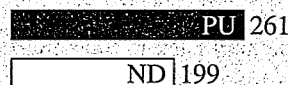
Those who doubted this team's determination after Michigan State might have looked foolish after the effort put forth against Purdue. "Our kids believe," Mattison said. "Our kids don't ever quit." With this victory, the Irish clearly showed that they never lost heart. □

GAME@ A GLANCE

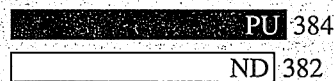
Rushing Yards



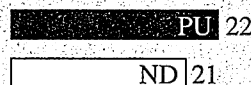
Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Purdue	14	10	3	3	— 30
Notre Dame	0	14	7	10	— 31

1st Quarter

PU: Lane 13 pass from Brees (Dorsch PAT)

PU: Brees 2 run (Dorsch PAT)

2nd Quarter

ND: Denson 14 run (Sanson PAT)

PU: Dorsch 37 FG

ND: Holloway 10 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

PU: Jones 6 pass from Brees (Dorsch PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 5 run (Sanson kick)

PU: Dorsch 40 FG

4th Quarter

PU: Dorsch 47 FG

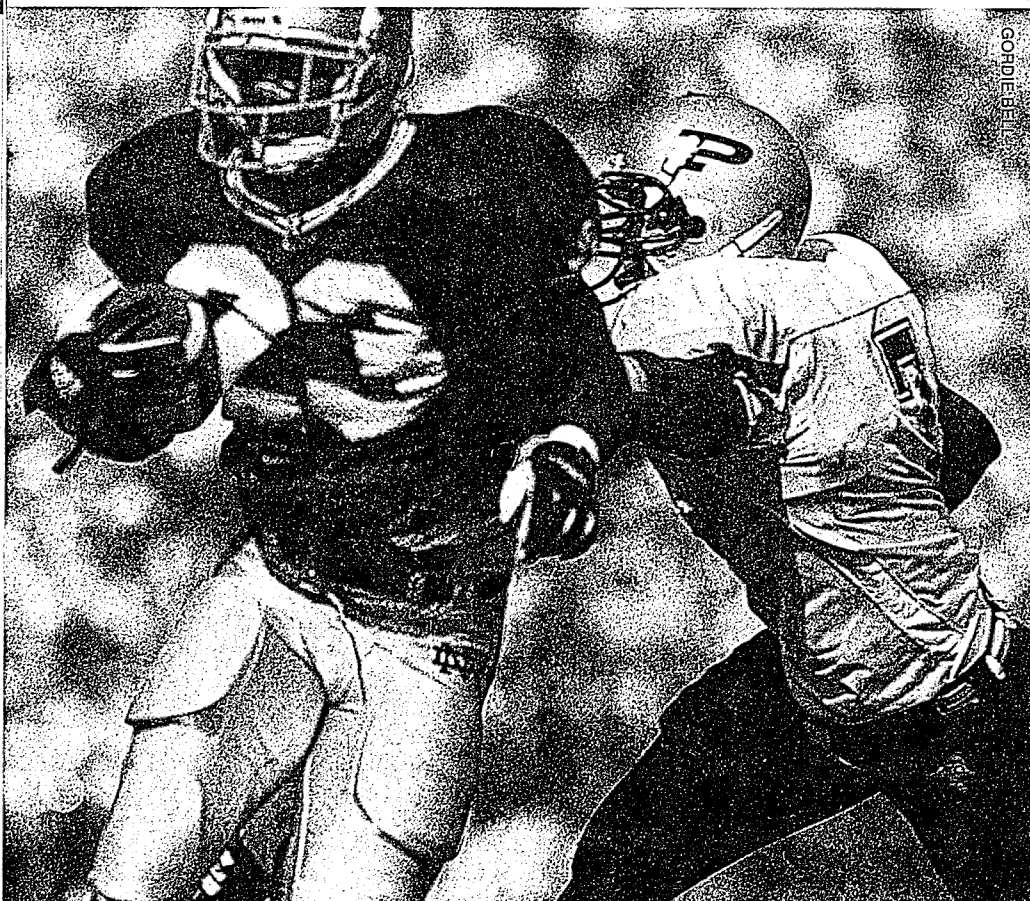
ND: Holloway 17 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

ND: Sanson 17 FG

Post-game AP Rank: 23

Notes:

- Notre Dame has an all-time record of 45-22-2 against the Boilermakers.

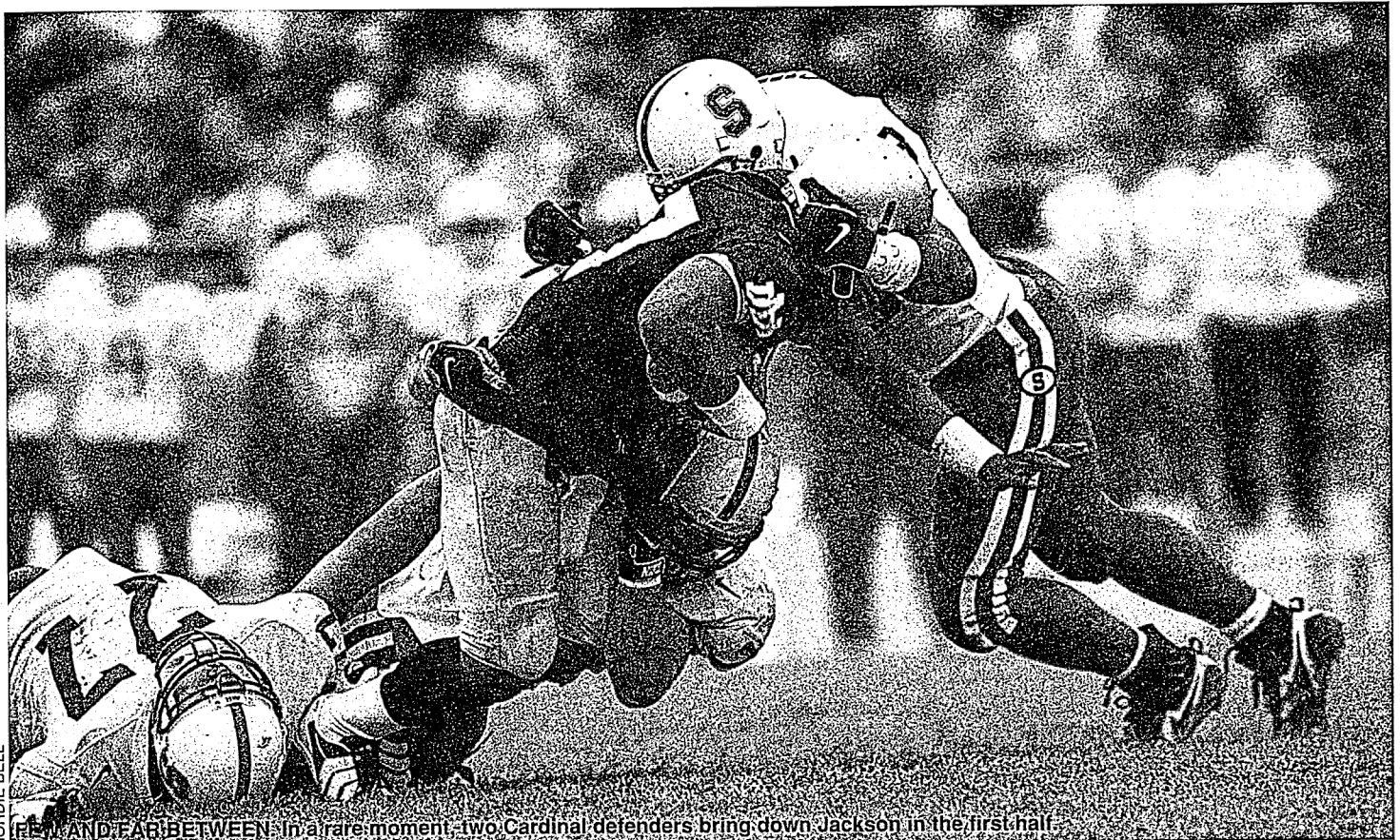


BURSTING TO DAYLIGHT. Autry Denson heads upfield en route to another stellar day. The senior finished with 158 yards on 31 carries and two touchdowns.

AROLE REVERSAL

The Cardinal got a taste of their own medicine

by Tom Repetto



GORDIE BELL

HEAVY AND FAR BETWEEN: In a rare moment, two Cardinal defenders bring down Jackson in the first half.

What a difference a year makes. Last year, Notre Dame traveled to Palo Alto, Calif., to suffer its fourth consecutive loss at the hands of the Stanford Cardinal. Stanford embarrassed the Irish with 322 yards rushing and the Stanford band insulted the school, mocking Catholics and Irish people. Notre Dame sought to avenge last year's humiliation and did so with a convincing 35-17 victory over unranked Stanford in Notre Dame Stadium.

Coming off a 31-30 thriller against Purdue, Notre Dame put the game away early and beat Stanford in convincing fashion.

Stanford was already having a disappointing season, losing the previous week to Oregon 63-28, and they dropped to 1-4 after the loss to Notre Dame.

The key to the game was the stellar play of Jarious Jackson. In his finest game yet as an Irish quarterback, Jackson ran for 100 yards and scored three touchdowns. He became the first Irish quarterback since Tony Rice to eclipse 100 yards rushing, and his three touchdowns were the most by a Notre Dame quarterback since Heisman Trophy winner Paul Hornung in 1956.

Jackson also completed 11 of his 15 passes for 163 yards. His execution and

hard-nosed running paved the way for an impressive offensive display.

"Basically, we just came into the game pretty much focused," Jackson said. "I came out today and just threw the ball like I was in practice."

The Irish started the game more effectively than in their first three games. After the opening kickoff, Autry Denson and Jackson ran through the Stanford defense to move the Irish downfield. A key play in the drive was a fourth-down completion from Jackson to Malcolm Johnson, who had an impressive seven receptions for 113 yards. The Irish took the opening drive 65 yards

S • T • A • N • F • O • R • D

and with a 22-yard touchdown run by Jackson the traditionally slow-starting Irish were ahead 7-0 just three minutes into the game.

Notre Dame scored again on its second possession. After a Stanford punt, the offense drove down to the two-yard linewith help from a long 30-yard dash by Denson. He then finished off the drive with the two-yard plunge that made the score 14-0. On the whole Denson had another strong game, gaining 88 yards on 20 carries.

Stanford, already in a 14-0 hole, was forced to rely on its passing game. But quarterback Todd Husak had trouble penetrating the Irish defense and often felt pressure in the pocket. With more than seven minutes still left in the first quarter, Deveron Harper sacked Husak and forced a fumble deep in Stanford's territory. Brad Williams recovered on the Stanford 16-yard line, to set up another scoring drive.

"I was glad that we played with more personality on defense," Davie said. "We came up with some big plays and showed some enthusiasm."

The two-play scoring drive was capped by a six-yard touchdown from senior full-back Jamie Spencer. He rushed for a career high 80 yards on 10 carries and extended the lead to 21-0.

"We knew we had to come out physical this week," Spencer said after the game. "When I got the ball, I just found my holes and went to the creases."

Down 21 points halfway through the first quarter, the Stanford offense did not give up. Husak threw short passes and advanced the team up the field. A 28-yard screen pass to wide receiver DeRonnie Pitts brought the Cardinal to the Irish 15-yard line. Notre Dame held Stanford in check after that, preventing a touchdown that would have kept Stanford in the game. Kevin Miller kicked a 25-yard field goal, and the score was 21-3 after one quarter.

The first quarter marked the return of Notre Dame's brand of run-it-down-your-throat football. The Irish dominated on the offensive line and pounded the ball with several runningbacks, a confusing variety of running plays and strong blocking. Not the least of these runningbacks was the quarterback Jarious Jackson.

"He's so good with that football," Davie said of Jackson. "He's ... what all of us thought he could improve to be."

The Irish extended their lead late in the second quarter. Spencer keyed the drive with a 37-yard scamper to the Cardinal 14-yard line. Then from seven yards out, Jack-

son scored for Notre Dame's fourth rushing touchdown of the day.

The defense held Stanford scoreless in the quarter, preserving a 28-3 halftime lead.

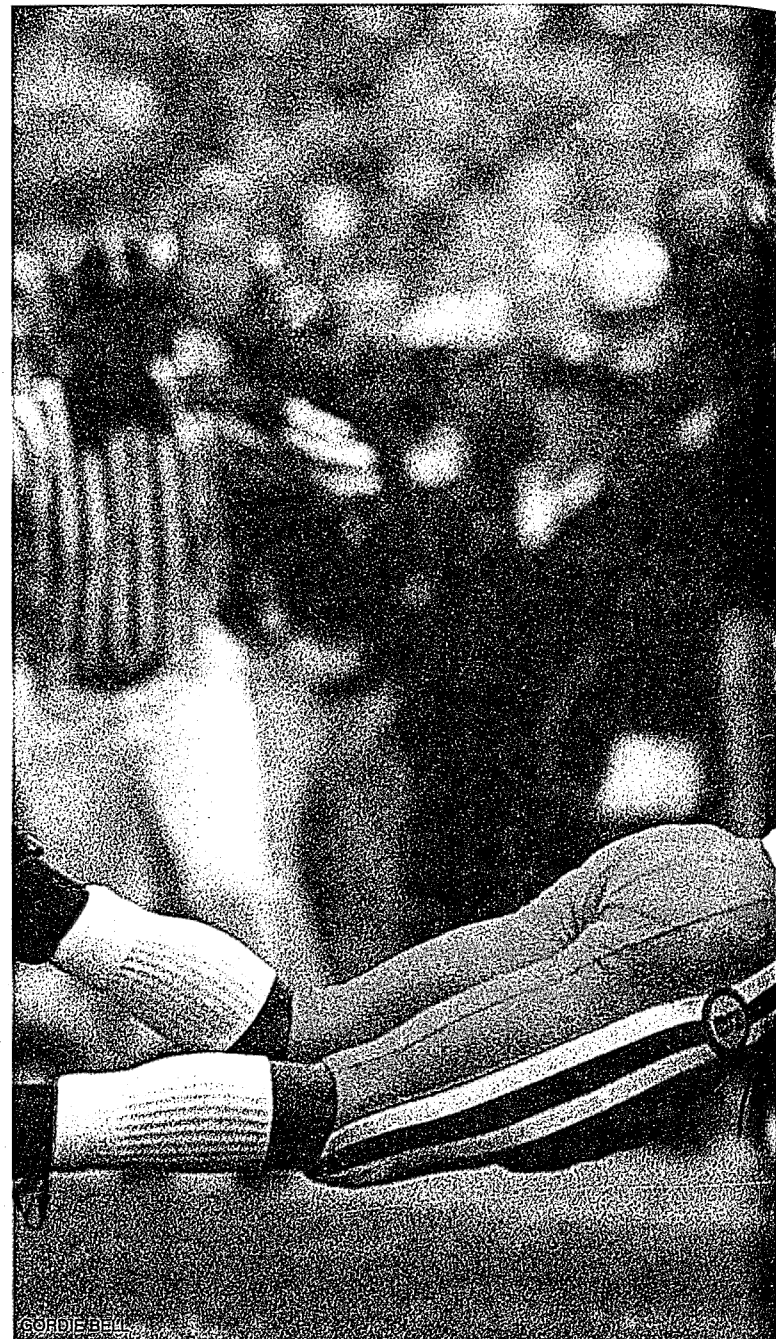
Known throughout the early part of the season as a second-half team, the Irish's first-half outburst paved the way for an easy win with a comfortable lead before the second half even began.

"Maybe we did something right in practice this week or maybe it was the extra 15 minutes," Davie said, referring to the extra 15 minutes the players were allowed to sleep before the game. Whatever the reason, the team started the game stronger than any other game during the season.

Bobbie Howard played impressively for the Notre Dame defense, leading the team with 11 tackles. Defensive backs also stepped up to stop the three-receiver and four-receiver alignments used by the Cardinal. Tony Driver played well again at strong safety, recording eight tackles, while Brock Williams made five tackles and successfully defended several passes in his first career start.

"Brock brings a lot of fire to us," Irish defensive coordinator Greg Mattison said. "You almost have to border on showboating. I would never want our kids to showboat, to taunt, but you've got to play with some emotion. If you can't play with emotion, you can't play defense."

That emotion allowed the defense to shut down a Stanford offense that one year ago racked up 514 yards against them. While the Irish were overmatched by Anthony Bookman and Mike Mitchell's 277-yard rushing tandem last year, the Irish managed to limit Stanford's rushing total to 63 yards in this year's contest.



"One of the things that helped us stop their running game is we were more aggressive," Mattison said. "It wasn't so much calling blitzes and calling defenses. We just turned it loose."

Notre Dame sealed the game in the third quarter with one of its most impressive drives of the season. Starting on their own one-yard line, the offense picked up first down after first down. After seven minutes and 10 seconds elapsed, the Irish scored with Jackson's third touchdown of the day. After eating up much of the third quarter play clock, the Irish sealed the fate of the Cardinal by going up 35-3.

The fans in Notre Dame Stadium began the wave in the third quarter, but Stanford did not roll over and die. Against a Notre



A WALK IN THE PARK. Three quick strikes by the offense gave the Irish a 21-0 lead with 7:20 left in the first quarter, leaving the Cardinal down and out.

Dame defense that tried to prevent big plays, Stanford orchestrated two fourth-quarter scoring drives. Their first touchdown drive started when Jackson's only interception of the day. Stanford, in good field position, drove 30 yards and scored on a five-yard pass from Husak to Russell Stewart.

Randy Fasani came into the game as the quarterback for the Cardinal. He marched the offense 72 yards and capped the four-minute drive with a one-yard scoring run. After the two-point conversion was completed to Dave Davis, Stanford reduced the gap in the final score to 35-17.

As the clock ticked to 0:00, there was

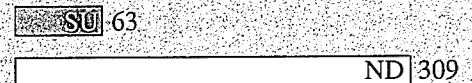
no mad rush by students onto the field. Fans stayed where they were, cheering on the Irish and signaling the return of the Irish of the past, when winning was expected, not a surprise.

Two teams went in opposite directions as a result of the game. Stanford, at 1-4, looked at the rest of the season as a rebuilding experience. Notre Dame, at 3-1 after the game, was poised to make a run at a major bowl game.

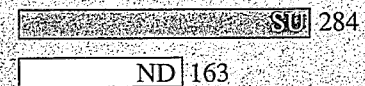
The Irish orchestrated the kind of victory that converted doubters into believers — a far cry from last year's Stanford game. □

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards



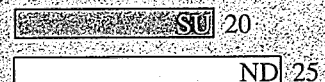
Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Stanford	3	0	0	14	— 17
Notre Dame	21	7	7	— 0	— 35

1st Quarter

ND: Jackson 22 run (Sansone PAT)
 ND: Denson 2 run (Sansone PAT)
 ND: Spencer 6 run (Sansone PAT)
 SU: Miller 25 FG

2nd Quarter

ND: Jackson 7 run (Sansone PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Jackson 5 run (Sansone PAT)

4th Quarter

SU: Stewart 5 pass from Husak (Husak pass failed)
 SU: Fasani 1 run (Davis pass)

Post-game AP Rank: 22

Notes:

• Jarious Jackson's three rushing touchdowns were the most by an Irish quarterback since Paul Horning scored three in 1956.

A POWERFUL FOOTING

The Irish shoot the lights out at ASU

by Jason Petrunaro

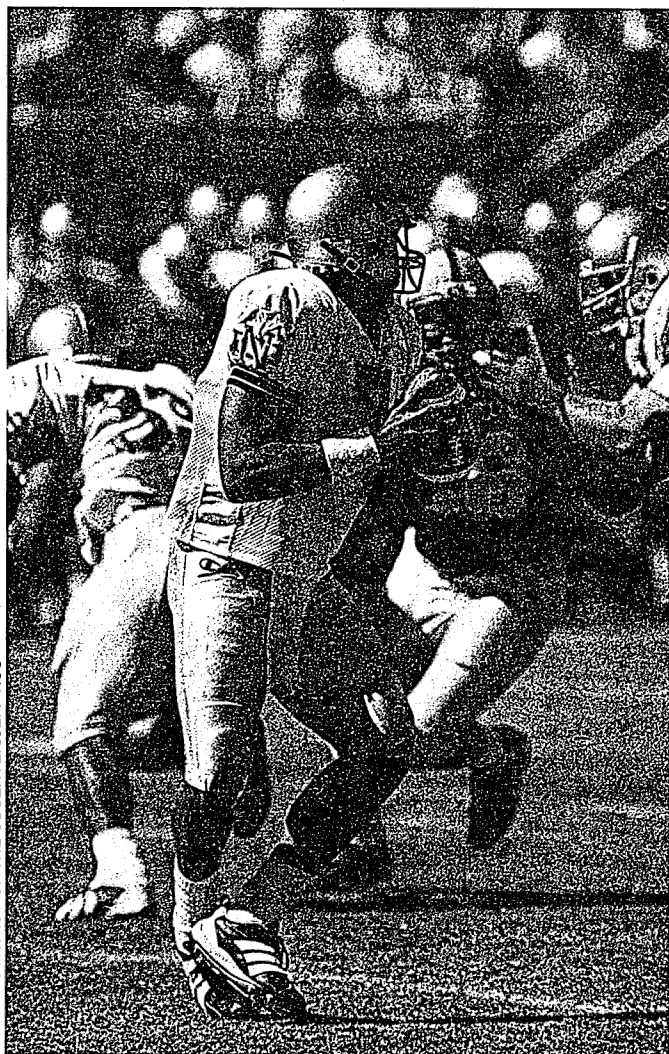


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/JEFF HSU

EASY DOES IT. Jackson led the Irish to a big win, despite passing for just 69 yards.

October 10, 1998. Out of the proverbial ashes of Sun Devil Stadium arose not a mighty phoenix, but a Notre Dame football team determined to prove its mettle on the road and show the rest of the nation that it was truly a team worthy of respect. The Irish did not need electricity. They did not need a functioning scoreboard. They did not even need ABC's coverage for most of the third quarter. Notre Dame came into town to win a football game, which it accomplished in classic form with a final score of 28-9. With an opportunistic defense and a sweltering running attack, the No. 22 Irish handed the talented Sun Devils a 2-4 record while building a respectable 4-1 record for themselves.

On the same field where Notre Dame won its most recent national championship at the Fiesta Bowl in 1989, the Irish successfully completed the first leg of a

rather trying season-opening schedule. Up to this point, Notre Dame appeared to be on a rollercoaster of sorts — both physically and emotionally. Elation from the Michigan victory was quickly replaced with utter embarrassment after Michigan State, followed by anxiety after Purdue. Finally things appeared to be leveling after two convincing victories over Stanford and now Arizona State. Not even a lack of electricity could hinder the effort put forth by the Irish on this Saturday afternoon.

The failed transformer in Sun Devil Stadium created an almost surreal setting — one that some called “Rockne-esque.” No public address system and no replays recalled images of how simply football was played back in the days of Rockne. And in a day when the Irish gained 263 of its total 332 yards on the ground, simplicity was the theme of the afternoon.

From the beginning of the contest, Arizona State committed numerous mistakes, which were capitalized on by the Irish. The Sun Devils opened with quarterback Ryan Kealy in a shotgun formation that proved grossly ineffective. Kealy proceeded to throw two interceptions in the first 17:30 of play, ending the day with a total of three interceptions, an invitation to the bench and replacement by quarterback Chad Elliot in the fourth quarter.

The first score for the Irish was set up largely due to the effort of Notre Dame linebacker Brock Williams. Williams batted a potential first-down pass from Arizona

A • R • I • Z • O • N • A S • T • A • T • E

State receiver Lenzie Jackson to kill the first Sun Devil offensive series and then proceeded to intercept Kealy on the next Sun Devil series. Williams yanked in the ball at the Irish 13 after it was thrown behind receiver Brian Forth.

Enter Jarious Jackson. The senior quarterback started the 11-play, 87-yard drive to the endzone with a huge 20-yard completion to sophomore tight end Jabari Holloway on the second play of the

drive. After rattling the Sun Devils a bit, Jackson called on senior backs Autry Denson and Jamie Spencer to hit the trenches on runs that bagged three consecutive first downs. Six runs in this first drive gained seven yards or better, and Denson earned 26 of his total 84 yards. Third-and-goal from the seven saw Jackson roll out with a looping pass to senior split-end Malcolm Johnson, who made a spectacular diving catch inside the left sideline as Arizona State's defender J'Juan Cherry arrived just a bit too late. Notre Dame 7, Arizona State 0.

While the Irish now held the lead, they were definitely losing in the field position department. Keeping Arizona State out of striking distance was crucial in this game, considering the fact that the Sun Devils had much more offensive firepower than they displayed on paper. Notre Dame's coaches have learned that the man to count on in these situations is Hunter Smith. After the first Irish touchdown, the senior punter trotted onto the field early in the second quarter and proceeded to blast the football for an astounding of 79 yards, giving the Sun Devils what could be called a less-than-desirable starting point for their offensive series. Surprisingly, Smith's 79-yarder was the third longest in Notre Dame history behind kicks of 86 and 80 yards by former players Bill Shakespeare and Elmer Layden, respec-

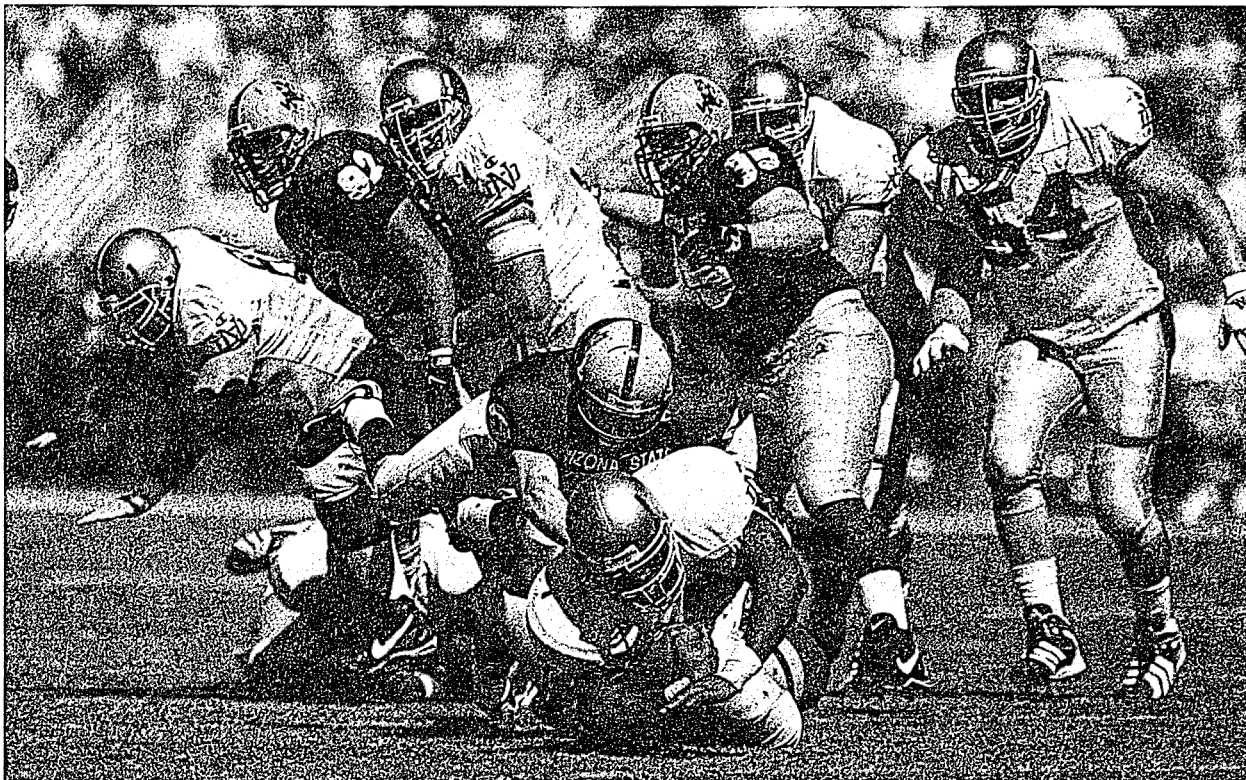


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/STAFF HSU

BEDEVILED. The Irish ground game decimated the Arizona State defense. Fullbacks Jamie Spencer and Joey Goodspeed combined for 149 yards on 14 carries.

tively. However, neither of those punts could have been as essential as Smith's, for not only did he dig the Irish out of a hole, but he also set the stage for the upcoming interception and return by A'Jani Sanders.

Bad luck continued to plague Arizona State. After his second interception in the second quarter, Kealy was back on the field faster than he could sing a verse of the Fight Song. Dropping back to pass, Kealy saw Sun Devil tailback J.R. Redmond open but threw behind him, right into the waiting arms of the ever-present senior safety and playmaker Sanders. Gathering the ball on the fly, Sanders lurched past a diving tackle attempt by Marvel Smith and burned 25 yards to the endzone to put the Irish up 14-0 with 12:27 remaining in the second quarter.

"I was a little bit surprised, but you hope for plays like that," Sanders said. "When they come, you just try to take advantage of it and I think I did pretty well."

The remainder of the first half was consumed by Arizona State's two time-eating drives, the first of which ended in a 22-yard field goal by kicker Stephen Baker. The second drive ended with Baker's missed 38-yard field goal attempt. Entering the locker room, the Irish held a respectable 14-3 lead — something they would not relinquish the entire afternoon.

The third quarter saw the same

smashmouth football and standout defensive efforts continue to demoralize the Arizona State squad and silence their fans. A 12-play, 80-yard touchdown drive saw the Irish extend their lead to a commanding 21-3 while the stadium stood without power and an eerie feeling of "football past" permeated the atmosphere. Taking a total of 6:15 to complete, this touchdown drive saw Jackson throw 30 of his 69 yards on the day. On a third-and-10 from the Irish 20, Jackson completed a 15-yard pass to senior receiver Bobby Brown. Two plays later Jackson connected with sophomore receiver Joey Getherall, and Joey Goodspeed followed that with a 20-yard romp down the field. Jackson's next pass was intercepted, but fortunately the call was negated by an offsideline call on Arizona State. The call was one of only five penalties for the Sun Devils, but it helped the Irish seal the victory. Denson scored from one yard out two plays later for the only points tallied in the third quarter.

The disgruntled and muted crowd of 73,501 shuffling out of Sun Devil Stadium after the third quarter set the stage for even more blue and gold fireworks during the fourth. In Kealy's final series of the day, Irish cornerback Deveron Harper tipped a pass which sailed into the possession of safety Deke Cooper, placing Notre Dame in Arizona State territory. After the Irish failed to capitalize on the pick, Sun Devil replace-

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards

ND 263

ASU 147

Passing Yards

ND 69

ASU 168

Total Yardage

ND 332

ASU 315

First Downs

ND 17

ASU 23

SCORING

Notre Dame	7	7	7	7	—	28
Arizona State	0	3	0	6	—	9

1st Quarter

ND: Johnson 7 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

2nd Quarter

ND: Sanders 25 interception return (Sanson PAT)

ASU: Baker 22 FG

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 1 run (Sanson PAT)

4th Quarter

ASU: Redmond 1 run (Elliot rush failed)

ND: Denson 1 run (Sanson PAT)

Post-game AP Rank: 18

Notes:

- The win over Arizona State was the 19th of 20 series openers that Notre Dame has won since 1950.

ment quarterback Chad Elliot directed a 65-yard drive that ended with Redmond's 1-yard touchdown run and a missed extra point with 10:40 left in the game to bring the tally to 21-9. The rest of the game was all Notre Dame.

Goodspeed gave credit to his last name with four rushes throughout the game for a total of 109 yards, including his explosive 60-yard breakaway run during the fourth quarter. After breaking through the Sun Devil line, throwing off cornerback Courtney Jackson at the Arizona State 25 and reaching open field, the junior fullback rumbled towards the endzone, only to be caught from behind at the Arizona State 6.

Goodspeed didn't get the points, but he did set up Denson's second 1-yard touchdown of the afternoon with 8:48 left in the game, bringing the final score to 28-9.

"I just tried to lower my shoulder and keep my feet moving," Goodspeed said. "We know that that's going to be a big play for us, because they've got to respect Jarious Jackson and Autry Denson. When it's our [fullbacks'] turn to get the ball, we just hit the hole as hard as we can." With a laugh, Goodspeed added, "I'm just not as fast as I thought, I guess."

Irish Head Coach Bob Davie said that Goodspeed's emergence had a lot to do with his battle for playing time with senior fullback Jamie Spencer, who had 10 rushes for 37 yards. "He [Goodspeed] looked like he ran hard. He had a little more juice to him," said Davie. "Competition either brings out

the best in you or the worst in you. I think it's brought out the best in Joey."

When a power transformer blew up near the end of halftime at 2:15 p.m., the Irish retook the field to find no working scoreboard. To their advantage, they never really needed to worry about the score.

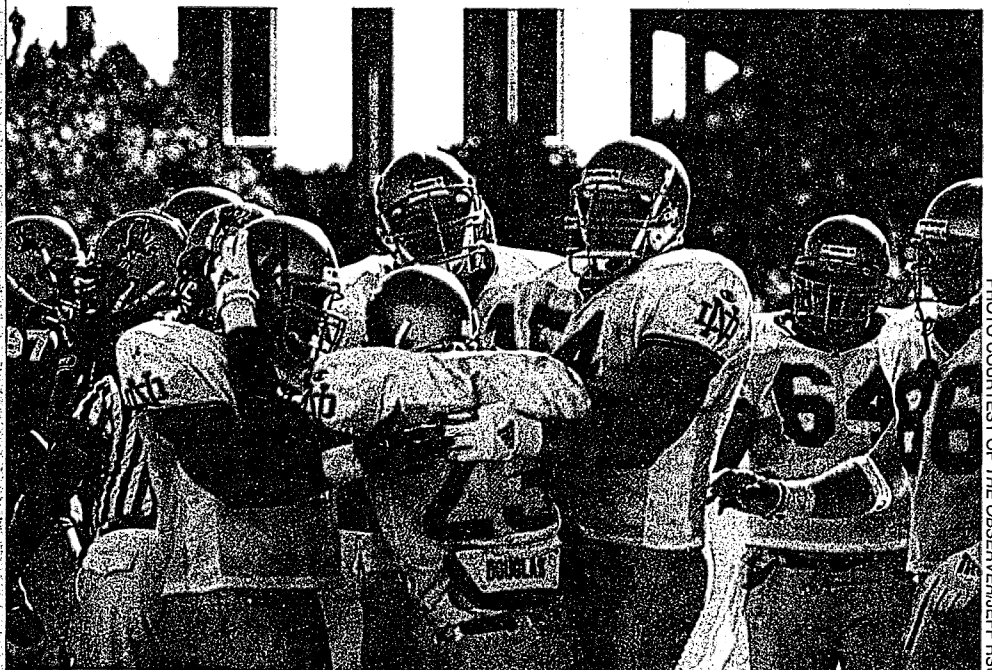
"It was definitely weird," Jarious Jackson said. "It felt a lot like practice. You're not looking at the time clock. You don't see the score. You're just playing."

In what could be called a quiet day for Jackson, the senior quarterback threw seven-of-13 for 69 yards, no interceptions and a touchdown pass. In addition, he tacked on six rushes for a total of 7 yards.

"I don't care if I get negative-19 rushing yards as long as we got more points than the opponent," said Jackson, who bruised his right shoulder the week before against Stanford but said he felt fine throughout the entire Arizona State game.

Davie needed this game. The players needed this game. To every critic who declared Notre Dame incapable of winning on the road, the team devoted this game. This initial meeting of Notre Dame and Arizona State was the 19th out of 20 series openers since 1950 that the Irish have won, which goes to show anyone that a team with heart can always pull back together for the win after facing adversity.

At this point in 1997 the Irish stood at an abysmal 1-4. In 1998 they suddenly stood at 4-1. It's pretty safe to say that is a reversal of fortune that any Irish fan would take. □



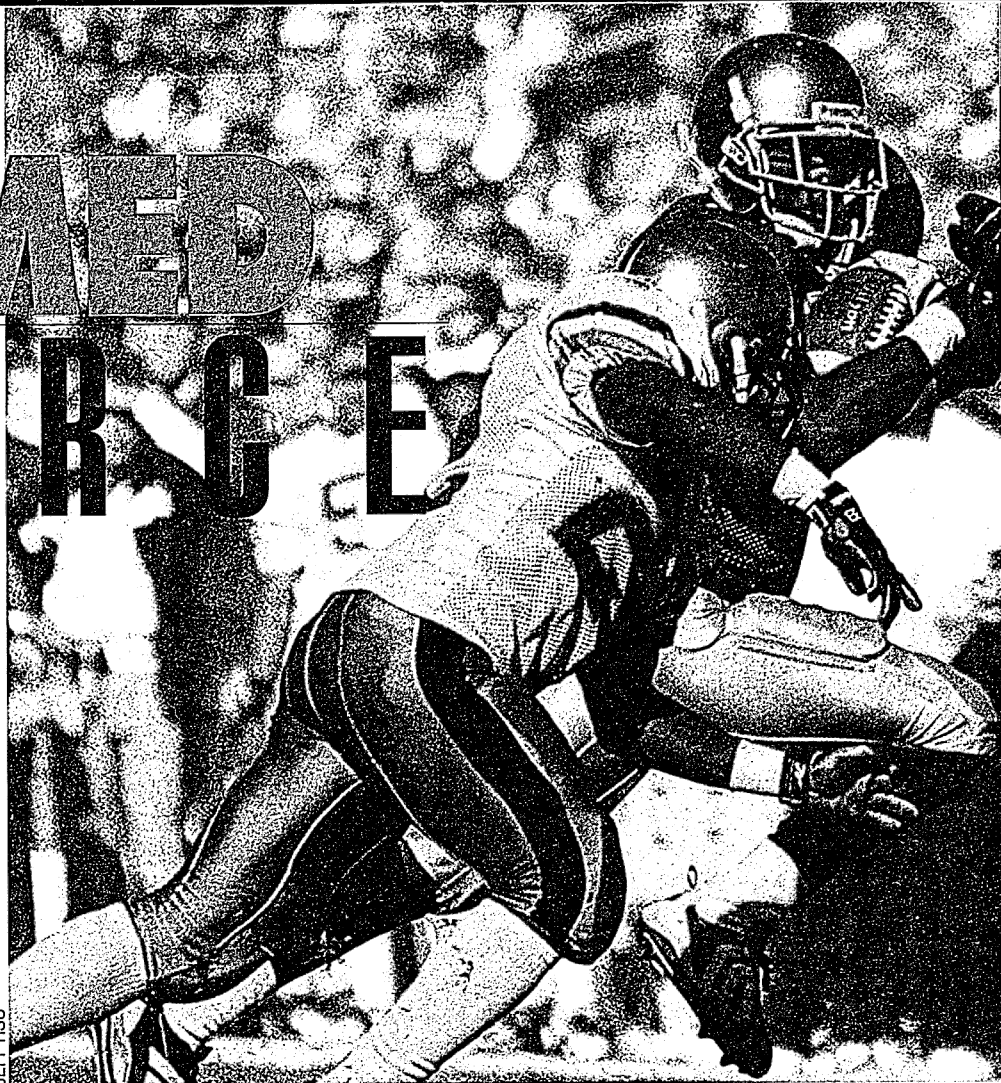
JUST TOO MUCH. Denson celebrates with the men who make the holes after scoring his second touchdown.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/JEFF HSU

ARMED FOR GEE

Army's poor record proved misleading

By Christopher Hamilton



STUFFED. The Irish had to rely on Jackson's 270 yards passing as the ground attack sputtered.

Given Notre Dame's recent struggles with the service academies, it's surprising that many Irish followers ignored Head Coach Bob Davie's worries about the Army game in the weeks leading up to the battle with the Cadets.

"One of these days, you guys are going to start believing me," said a noticeably relieved Davie at the end of the 20-17 contest, which saw the Irish improve their record to 5-1, albeit unimpressively.

"I tried to tell you guys all week what kind of game this was going to be," continued Davie. "We knew coming in this was going to be a hard-fought, tough football game to win. I must admit, I didn't think it would come down to a 48-yard field goal to win it at the end."

Although the game was sloppy by most accounts, the Irish were able to draw some positives from the victory. First, and perhaps most importantly, junior place kicker Jim Sanson showed he had bounced back from last year's forgettable campaign by

hitting a career-long, game-winning 48-yard field goal.

Another positive gleaned from the win was the impressive aerial attack led by quarterback Jarious Jackson. With tailback Autry Denson rendered ineffective by Army's aggressive defensive front, Jackson took to the air and racked up a career-high 270 yards passing. Jackson kept the Cadet secondary off-balance all afternoon, spreading the ball to six different receivers, with split end Malcolm Johnson, who accounted for six receptions for 82 yards and a touchdown, doing the brunt of the work.

Defensive play was also admirable. Army entered the contest averaging an NCAA third-best 283 rushing yards per game. The Irish defense yielded a respectable 218 yards on the ground against the Cadets and completely shut down Army's passing game, giving up a paltry 12 yards in the air. With few exceptions, Notre Dame played about as well as could be expected against Army's Wishbone/option offense.

"That's why I'm proud of these guys," said Defensive Coordinator Greg Mattison. "When you add up all the plays, they executed more positively than negatively... and that's when you have a good performance."

Although the Irish started off strong defensively, forcing the Cadets to go three and out, they were unable to find a rhythm during their first possession, and the teams traded punts. Cadet Lyle Weaver broke through the Irish line and partially blocked Hunter Smith's 10-yard punt, giving Army excellent field position at the Irish 25-yard line. Notre Dame's defense refused to give up a first down, forcing Army to settle for a 40-yard field goal by Eric Olsen.

Notre Dame answered with a score of its own on the ensuing possession to knot the score at three apiece. But the Irish offense could not help feeling a little disappointed with Sanson's 39-yard field goal after picking apart Army's defense on the drive. Notre Dame seemed destined for a touchdown but

A ● R ● M ● Y

stalled on the Army 14-yard line when it was flagged for a 15-yard facemask penalty. Notre Dame's first scoring drive was an indication of things to come, as the running game struggled and Jackson passed for an uncharacteristically high 55 yards on the drive.

After another Army punt, the Irish took over at their own 42-yard line and went to work. Jackson completed two passes on three attempts for 33 yards. Then, for the

The underdog Cadets remained competitive without attempting a single pass in the first half

first time in the game, Denson found daylight and raced 17 yards down the left sideline before being tackled by safety Kenny Rowland. On the next play, Denson danced into the end zone unscathed on a four-yard run to cap off a six-play, 58-yard drive, giving Notre Dame a 10-3 edge. The Irish drive took only 1:48.

Army's anemic offense continued to sputter and the Cadets were forced to punt for the third time. The Irish offense took over on their 36-yard line and appeared to be headed on another trip to the endzone after Jackson's dump-off pass to Denson gained 33 yards. But Notre Dame was unable to overcome a barrage of mistakes, including a one-hop pass on third down to a wide-open Joey Getherall at the Army 12-yard line. Sanson was also unable to connect on a 48-yard field goal attempt.

Led by a rushing attack powered by halfback Bobby Williams and fullback Craig Stucker, Army's offense finally came together. Both Williams and Stucker ripped through Notre Dame's defensive line with ease and enjoyed long runs. Williams finished the drive and the scoring in the first half, with an explosive three-yard jaunt through the heart of a fatigued Irish defensive line.

At halftime, with the score 10-10, Notre Dame was in an awkward position. Not only were the underdog Cadets very much in the game, but they remained competitive without attempting a single pass in the first half.

The Irish came running out of the tunnel re-energized for the second half. Wasting little time, Notre Dame's offense marched down the field effectively mixing the pass and the run. The Irish were stymied at Army's five-yard line and attempted a field goal. After a botched snap, Sanson couldn't get

the kick off, and the team suffered a five-yard loss. This failed scoring opportunity marked the first time all season the Irish did not produce points while in the "red-zone." They had scored on all 23 previous trips inside their opponents' 20-yard line.

Late in the third quarter, the Irish put together another impressive drive. With the Irish on the Army 38-yard line, Jackson hit Bobby Brown for what looked to be an easy six points. But upon reaching the one-yard

line, safety Kenny Rowland stripped the ball from Brown's outstretched hands. Johnson, who had been hustling right

behind Brown during the play, jumped on the loose ball in the end zone, and the Irish added a touchdown and took a 17-10 lead into the fourth quarter.

Army, which took over possession with a little more than a minute remaining in the third quarter, again looked to Williams and Stucker to carry the offensive load. Although the backs were not as dominating as they had been on the drive at the end of the first half, they slowly chipped away at the Irish defense. Stucker was able to capitalize on the first real Irish defensive breakdown of the game, a missed coverage assignment, and went untouched on a 19-yard touchdown romp to even the score, 17-17, with less than 10 minutes remaining.

After the teams traded punts, Notre Dame took over possession at its own 24-yard line and began what would ultimately be the game-winning drive. Jackson led the passing attack down the field, which was highlighted by a nine-yard toss to tight end Jabari Holloway and an athletic 13-yard grab by Johnson. On fourth down, with 1:06 remaining, the Irish called on Sanson to attempt a 48-yard field goal. Sanson sent his kick sailing through the uprights and put the Irish on top for good, 20-17.

The win, Notre Dame's 36th all-time against Army in the 48 match-ups between the two schools, may have been the last one over the Cadets for quite some time. There are no scheduled meetings between them in the near future, partially due to the fact that Army is constricted by its ties to Conference USA. This historic series, which inspired Grantland Rice to write his famous "The Four Horsemen" story and moved Knute Rockne to give his "win one for the Gipper" speech appears to be over for now. But it will not soon be forgotten. □

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards

ARMY 218

ND 123

Passing Yards

ARMY 12

ND 265

Total Yardage

ARMY 230

ND 388

First Downs

ARMY 12

ND 20

SCORING

Army	3	7	0	7	—	17
Notre Dame	3	7	7	3	—	20

1st Quarter

A: Olsen 40 FG

ND: Sanson 39 FG

2nd Quarter

ND: Denson 4 run (Sanson PAT)

A: Williams 3 run (Olsen PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Johnson fumble recovery (Sanson PAT)

4th Quarter

A: Stucker 19 run (Olsen PAT)

ND: Sanson 48 FG

Post-game AP Rank: 16

Notes:

- Jarious Jackson threw a career high 270 yards.

- The close call against Army was the fifth time since 1990 that the Irish have cut it close with a service academy. Of these five games, the Irish lost only one: the 1996 game against Air Force.

FRIGHT NIGHT

Halloween woke up the echoes — and some other characters

by Patrick Downes

They were all gathered together. Ghosts and goblins. Cowboys and Indians. Batman and Robin. Drag queens and the Artist formerly known as Prince. Prostitutes, pregnant nuns and Saturday Night Live's ambiguously gay duo. And they weren't at a showing of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." This was something far more interesting: Halloween in Notre Dame Stadium's student section as the Irish blasted the Baylor Bears, 27 to 3.

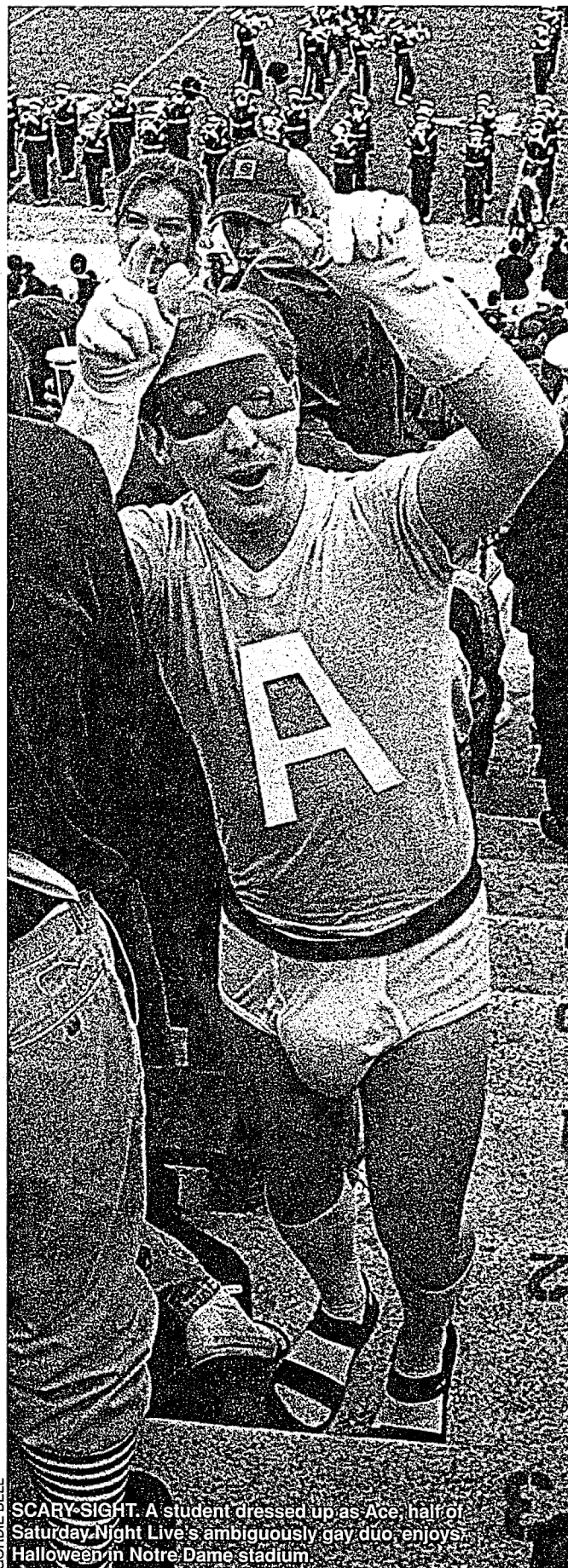
In a fashion typical of the season, Notre Dame couldn't let fright night pass without scaring the garishly be-decked crowd by turning the ball over twice and squandering several scoring opportunities. "I think we all agree that we didn't play as well as we could, but we played well enough to win, which seems to be a trademark of this team," said Head Coach Bob Davie.

Baylor started the game strongly when return man Martin Dossett took the opening kickoff 33 yards to the Baylor 43. For the next four minutes Baylor seesawed around midfield. The team from Waco, Texas, progressed to Notre Dame's 35-yard line, but several illegal procedure penalties, incomplete passes and a 14-yard sack

by senior safety Benny Guilbeaux forced Baylor to punt after nine plays — only eight yards from where they began.

On the following drive senior tailback Autry Denson made the first of two mistakes — but not before he ran for 32 yards and was brought down by his facemask. (Add another 15 yards.) The cheers were short-lived, though. On the next play, however, Denson lost just the third fumble of his career. The damage was not severe. Baylor stalled at midfield, and the Irish drove their way deep into Baylor territory. Denson had carries of 24 and 12 yards and fullbacks Jamie Spencer and Joey Goodspeed added 17 yards. The drive was stymied at the Baylor 15-yard line, and Irish kicker Jim Sanson came in to put the game's first three points on the board.

The first quarter ended soon thereafter, and the next quarter began with Denson's second big mistake. A steady drive and another Baylor facemask penalty, this time on freshman tailback Tony Fisher, brought the ball well into the Bears' territory, but again, Denson turned the ball over. This time the culprit was poor communication between the coaches in the pressbox and the play-



GORDIE BELL

SCARY-SIGHT. A student dressed up as Ace, half of Saturday Night Live's ambiguously gay duo, enjoys Halloween in Notre Dame stadium.

B • A • Y • L • O • R

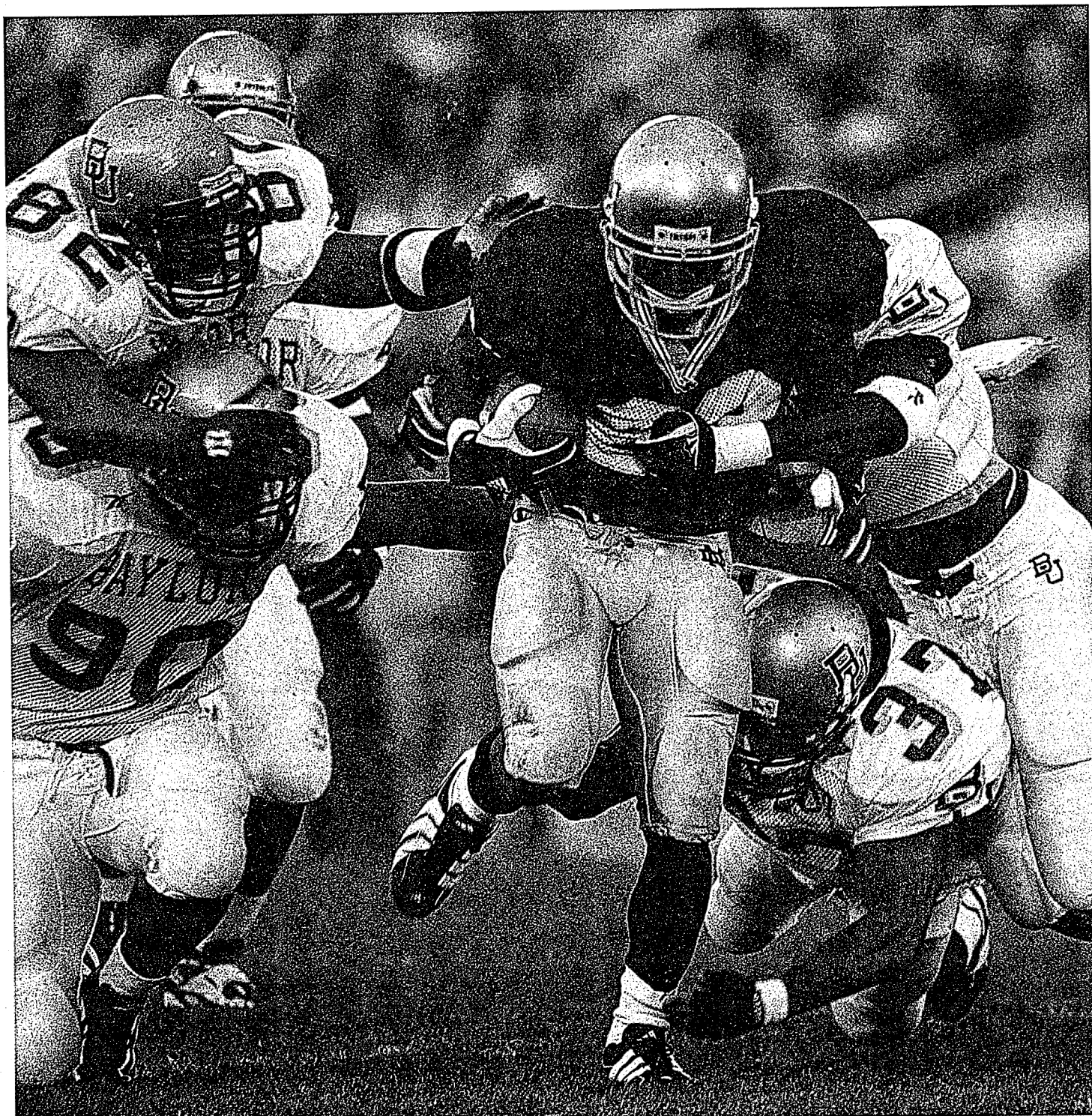
ers on the field. On third and three, senior quarterback Jarious Jackson mistakenly called a halfback pass in the huddle, and not surprisingly, Baylor's defense was in a position to pounce on the mistake. As Denson unloaded in Jackson's direction, three Baylor defenders planted themselves in the pass's path. Gary Baxter snatched the pass and returned it all the way to Notre Dame's nine-yard line, where a determined Denson finally caught up with him. Notre Dame's defense held, and Baylor was limited to a

game-tying field goal.

With the next drive, Denson started to make up for his mistakes. He carried the ball six times for 48 yards and a touchdown, well on his way to the career-high 189 yards he would tally that Halloween. "I owe all the credit to the offensive line and my fullbacks for their blocking all day," said Denson. "Those guys were getting me into the secondary almost every time." On Notre Dame's next drive, the offensive line opened up a hole big enough for Denson to sprint for 37

yards — his longest run since the Michigan game. Another rush of seven yards and a touchdown pass to Malcolm Johnson that covered 24 yards put the Irish up by a 14-point margin. "The drive of the game might have been right before halftime," said Davie, "We scored and were able to stay in rhythm."

A largely uneventful second half began with a big event. Notre Dame, long plagued by an inability to come up with big plays, came up with the longest touchdown pass since Paul Failla threw an 80-yard strike to



GANG-TACKLING. Even five Bears couldn't bring down number 23 on this day, as Denson amassed 168 of his career-high 189 rushing yards before halftime.

Derrick Mayes in 1993. This one was a 66-yard pass to Bobby Brown. After that, both defenses hunkered down for the rest of the game. Notre Dame reached Baylor territory only twice more.

On the very next offensive series the Irish were stopped after three plays in the red zone after a botched punt snap by Baylor put them there. Then in the fourth quarter, the Irish were held to a field goal after a 43-



GORDIE BELL

yard Jackson rush gave them a first down inside Baylor's five-yard line. "It was a bit frustrating offensively," Davie said.

Defensively, it was a different story. Baylor's only points came when a turnover deposited the Bears inside the Irish 10-yard line. "We tried to come out and set an example by playing hard, playing physical and running to the ball," senior co-captain Kory Minor said, "We were fortunate that people were there to make key plays that we

needed throughout the game." Minor had seven tackles on the day and fellow co-captain Bobbie Howard led the team nine.

The victory was the eighth straight home

After squashing Baylor, Notre Dame remained undefeated on Halloween Day

win for the Irish and it kept them a perfect 14-0 in Halloween games. Also, the game lifted the Irish to 6-1 as they headed into the final month of the season. But Davie was not about to let the team become complacent after the easy victory.

"After the game, we told the team to remember what you do in November," Davie said, "We have four games left, three on the road, so we are going to have to rely on everybody." □

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards

BU 33

ND 329

Passing Yards

BU 139

ND 133

Total Yardage

BU 172

ND 462

First Downs

BU 16

ND 21

SCORING

Baylor	0	3	0	0	—	3
Notre Dame	3	14	7	3	—	27

1st Quarter

ND: Sanson 32 FG

2nd Quarter

BU: Bryant 18 FG

ND: Denson 2 run (Sanson PAT)

ND: M. Johnson 24 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Brown 66 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

4th Quarter

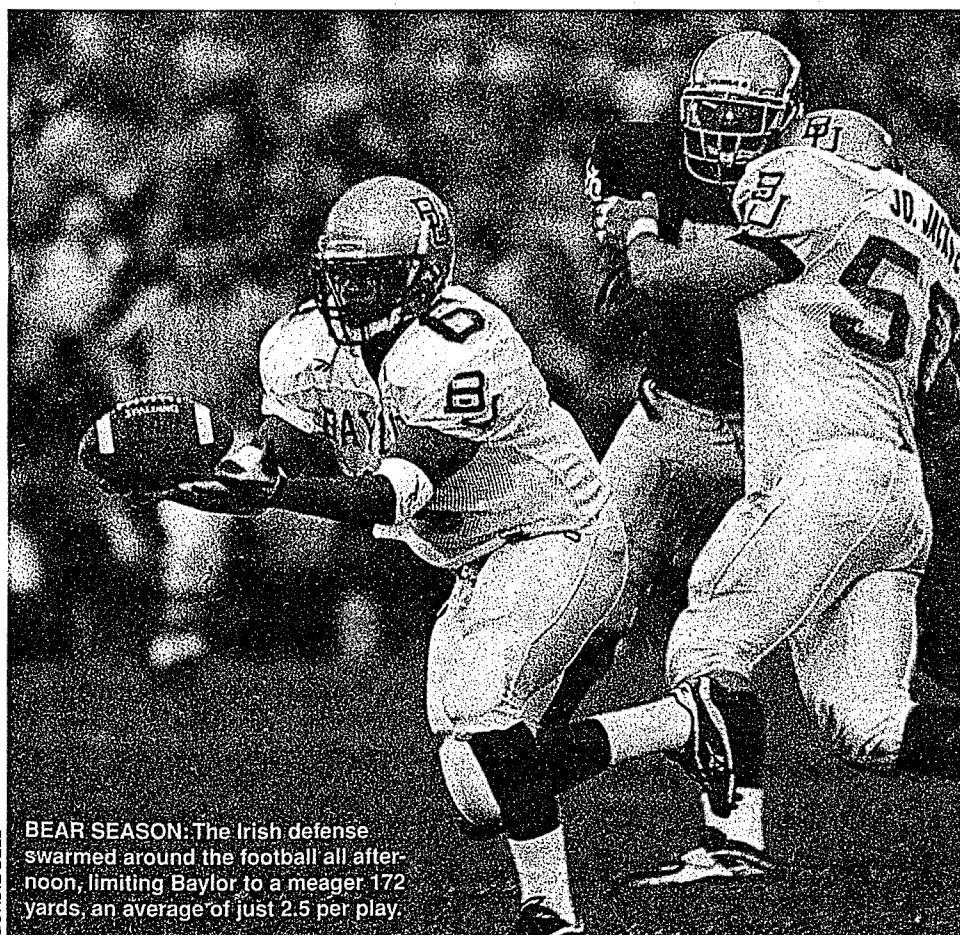
ND: Sanson 21 FG

Post-game AP Rank: 13

Notes:

- Notre Dame is 14-0 in Halloween games.

- Tailback Autry Denson rushed for a career-high 189 yards.



GORDIE BELL

BEAR SEASON: The Irish defense swarmed around the football all afternoon, limiting Baylor to a meager 172 yards, an average of just 2.5 per play.

RUNNING down a dream

Denson catapulted from the front pages to the record books by becoming Notre Dame's all-time leading rusher

by Christopher Hamilton



PETER RICHARDSON

THESE SHOES ARE MADE FOR RUNNING. In addition to his record breaking regular season, Denson rushed for 130 yards on 26 carries to go along with three touchdowns in the Gator Bowl.

The 1998 off-season found the Notre Dame Fighting Irish football program in an uncharacteristic state of disarray. College football's most storied, and arguably classiest, team sustained a severe public relations blow over the summer after an unending stream of bad publicity over some off-the-field incidents. Needless to say, it was an Irish critic's delight.

With scrutiny intensifying late into the summer and a season-opening game against defending co-national champion Michigan, it appeared the team was a straying ship that could not be righted. Notre Dame desperately needed a shot in the arm.

To the relief of the millions who don the blue and gold on football Saturdays, they would not have to wait long for senior tailback Autry Denson to provide that boost.

Exploding for a 58-yard scamper on the team's first offensive play of the year, not to mention the rest of his 162 yards and two touchdowns that afternoon against the Wolverines, Denson almost single-handedly revived the ailing Irish and put the media's attention back where it belonged: on the field.

Denson made a point of playing well in numerous big games in his three years as a starter, but if there was a defining game in his career, the Michigan contest would take top honors. Denson's 58-yard run was a career best, his 162 yards rushing was his second best (he would rush for 189 against Baylor) and it was the most rushing yards Michigan's defense yielded to a single player in 28 contests. To top it all off, his stellar performance came against a defensive unit ranked number one in the country the year before.

Throughout the rest of the 1998 campaign, he continued to post impressive numbers. Then, on November 14 against Navy, the inevitable finally happened: Denson was

crowned Notre Dame's all-time leading rusher, surpassing former Irish great Allen Pinkett. Denson would go on to set the Irish rushing mark at 4,318 yards.

The accolades rained down on Denson after he completed his final collegiate season. He was awarded second team All-American status by the Associated Press and was an honorable mention All-American selection by Football News. Denson also went on to win his third consecutive Notre Dame National Monogram Club MVP award, which by team vote recognizes the squad's most valuable player.

"He's a guy you somewhat take for granted," reflected Head Coach Bob Davie. "That's because he shows up every day with such a positive attitude and that raises the level of the people around him."

Considering his tremendous success at tailback, it is hard to imagine that Notre Dame originally recruited him to bolster its secondary. "I thought he'd be one heck of a defensive back," said Davie, who was the defensive coordinator when the Irish were courting Denson out of high school. "I was excited because we were getting a kid who was a great athlete out of high school, who we were committed to playing on defense."

Denson was by no means a "sure-fire" recruit for the Irish, as he had at one time favored playing for in-state powerhouse Florida State. But after visiting Notre Dame on his recruiting trip, he became convinced that Notre Dame was definitely where he wanted to be.

"They [the coaching staff] always talk about Notre Dame being a 40-year decision as opposed to being a four-year decision," said Denson, explaining his change of heart. "My heart, at first, told me to go to Florida State. But my favorite school wasn't the best school for me and my interests." And so Denson chose to attend Notre Dame, even though he was not expected to compete at tailback, his preferred position.

But the star runningback hailing from Nova High School in Davie, Fla., could not be kept out of the offensive backfield, and he switched permanently from cornerback to tailback after the first game of the season. The change proved brilliant as he showed himself to be a capable backup to senior Randy Kinder by finishing his inaugural season with 695 yards rushing and eight touchdowns.

Over the next three seasons, Denson established himself as Notre Dame's primary threat on offense, rushing for over 1,000 yards in each of those years.

But just as impressive as his statistics during his time at Notre Dame was the manner in which he conducted himself. He took a workman-like approach to the game without the arrogance found in many of today's top-flight college tailbacks. "I've never seen him get caught up in the hype," Davie said. "He's all about football and he's not a whole lot about the off-the-field things and the hype that comes with that. And that's what I respect the most about him. He isn't full of himself. He's very humble."

ing record] in the first half, but he also fumbled in the first half. At halftime he was just devastated because he fumbled and it hurt our team. He was much more concerned about that fumble than he was about breaking that record. And I think that says a lot about him."

Speaking of the all-time rushing mark, Denson says the record has not 'sunk in.' "Honestly, it really hasn't hit me yet," said Denson. "It's one of those things that after your playing days [professional and colle-



MR. DURABILITY. Despite his size, the strong tailback played in 47 consecutive games during his career en route to the record books.

Davie also praised Denson's leadership skills, even though the tailback is not known for being extremely vocal. "The number one thing about Autry Denson is that he's a leader by example because he loves to play so much, loves to compete," Davie said. "That is always the best sign of a leader. From a locker room standpoint, he doesn't talk a whole lot, he's not necessarily a 'rah-rah' kind of guy. But he goes out there every day and competes hard and I know he has the respect of everyone in this program." Davie has always been impressed with Denson's team-oriented nature. "He's a guy that came in and first played a position that he necessarily didn't want to play," said Davie. "But he played it."

"Everything is 'team first' to him," Davie continued. He broke [Allen Pinkett's rush-

giate] are over, you'll be able to look back at and appreciate more."

But Denson will take a lot more from Notre Dame than just his record. He'll take with him the experience needed to embark on a career in the NFL. "I'll remember the time with the guys more than anything. Football has a big influence on your life, but it plays a small part on who you are. ... Doing things in the community, spending time with my teammates and being around the people on campus are the things I'll remember the most about Notre Dame."

How does Denson hope people remember his career at Notre Dame? "I think the biggest compliment anyone could give me is to say that I gave my all during my time here."

Something which every Irish follower realizes is a huge understatement. □

CLOUD BURST

by Corey Spinelli

A goal line stand saves the Irish from the Eagles

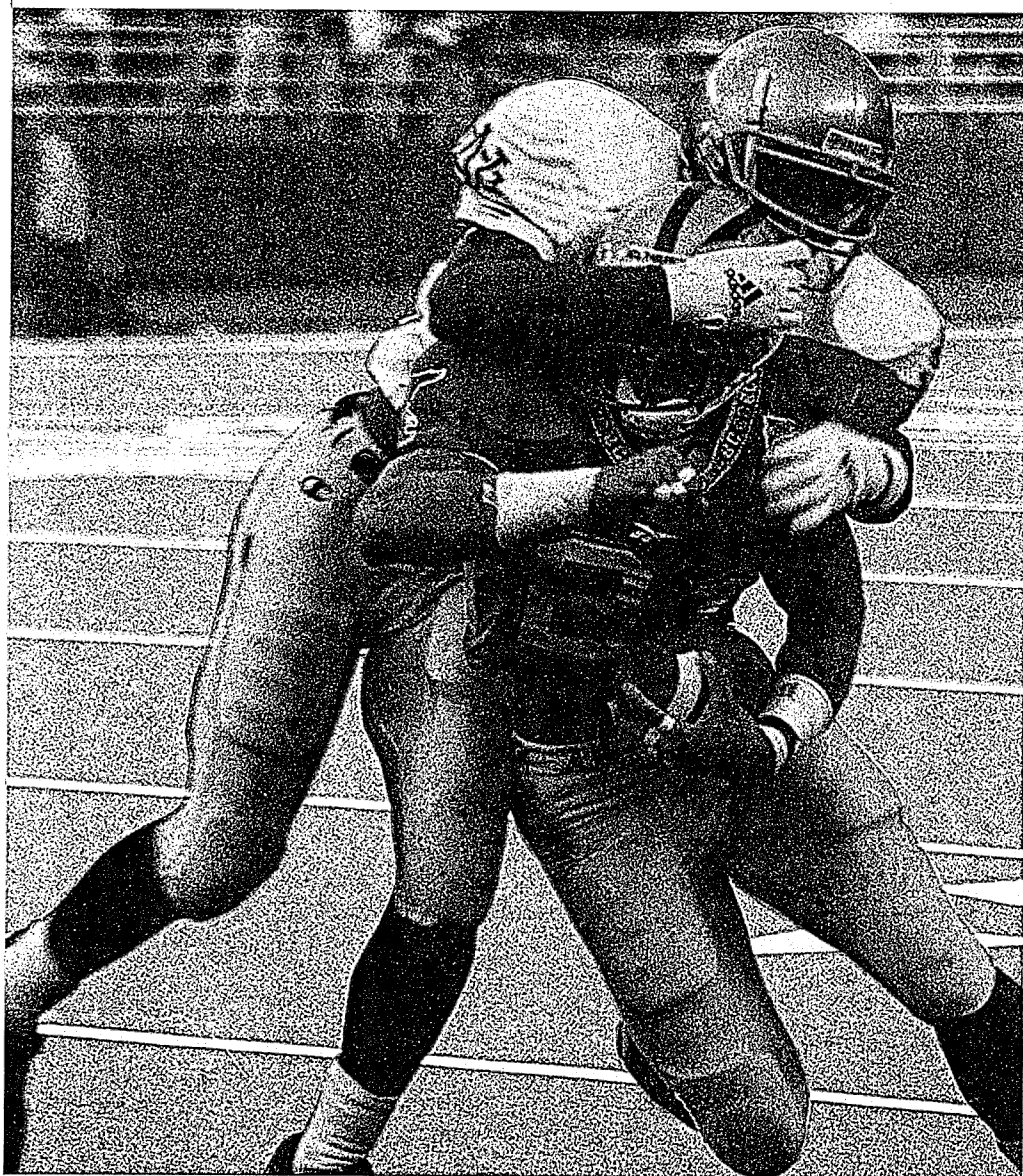


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/IEEE HSI

CLIPPED WINGS. Though Tony Driver stopped Cloud on this play, the first-team All-American racked up 143 rushing yards on the ground.

In a normal year, a top-20, 6-1 Notre Dame squad facing a struggling 3-5 team is little reason for worry among the Irish faithful. The Michigan State, Purdue and Army games, however, taught followers of Head Coach Bob Davie's second unit that no Saturday on the fall calendar could be taken for granted. The November 14 visit to Chesnut Hill, Mass., proved no different. Like the game in East Lansing, Mich., a hungry team featuring an outstanding tailback looked to throw a wrench in the Irish's postseason possibilities.

After watching points pile up on the scoreboard for four quarters, the 44,500 ticketholders in Alumni Stadium witnessed the unlikeliest finish imaginable in a contest where the offenses combined to amass nearly 900 yards in total offense. With 1:07 remaining in the game, the Boston College offense stood on the Irish four yard line with four chances to enter the endzone and take a one-point lead with little time left on the clock. Until that point in the game, Eagle All-American tailback Mike Cloud had shredded a porous Notre Dame defense for 140 yards and one touchdown on 24 carries. The situation appeared so bleak for the Irish that CBS commentator Sean McDonough suggested that Davie allow the Eagles to score immediately and give Jarious Jackson a few seconds to try and answer back. But if hope had run out, somebody forgot to tell the 11 defenders wearing the blue and gold. In the final minute of play, the Irish defense rose to the occasion, stuffing Cloud four consecutive times, securing Notre Dame's seventh victory and providing the most

B • O • S • T • O • N C • O • L • L • E • G • E

memorable finish to a '98 game.

Notre Dame took the opening kickoff and marched 69 yards on 11 plays for a touchdown. Jackson's passing efficiency highlighted the drive. Number seven completed two crucial third down attempts — a 13-yarder to fullback Jamie Spencer on third-and-10 from the Irish 31 and an 11-yard strike to receiver Malcolm Johnson on third-and-three. He followed with a 19-yard toss to Johnson and a 12-yard run that led to a short-yardage score by Autry Denson.

After holding the Eagle offense, the Irish traveled 44 yards to the home team's 36, with a 23-yard Jackson-to-Johnson pass that gave Notre Dame prime field possession. The drive stalled, however, as another toss to Johnson fell incomplete. After a Hunter Smith punt, the momentum swung to Boston College as quarterback Scott Mutryn began a dismantling of the Irish secondary that would continue for four quarters. Mutryn completed an 18-yard pass to Cloud on a third-and-10 and later connected on a 51-yard bomb to Jermaine Walker. After an 11-yard touchdown scamper by Cloud, the game was knotted at seven.

The Irish quickly responded with an impressive drive of their own. The six-play, 64-yard jaunt opened with a 27-yard run by Denson and featured another third down conversion when Jackson's 20-yard throw found Johnson at the Eagle 18. A holding penalty brought the ball back to the 28, but a perfect pass across the middle split two Boston College defenders and lodged between the legs of sophomore wideout Joey Getherall for six points. Jim Sanson's extra point put the visitors ahead 14-7 early in the second quarter.

The lead proved to be short lived, as the Eagle offense continued to exploit sophomore corner Brock Williams for large chunks of yardage. Mutryn answered the Irish score with a 57-yard drive that culminated in a 23-yard touchdown pass to Anthony DiCosmo on a play where Williams face-guarded the receiver in the endzone and failed to play the ball. After holding the Irish, the Eagles put three more points on the board before the half courtesy of a 43-yard John Match field goal. The kick was set up when Williams once again failed to play the ball on a Mutryn toss to Walker in the endzone. The cornerback was flagged for pass interference on Walker and Match split the up-rights to give Head Coach Bob O'Brien's squad a 17-14 halftime lead.

True to form, the Irish continued their third-quarter domination of the Eagles by

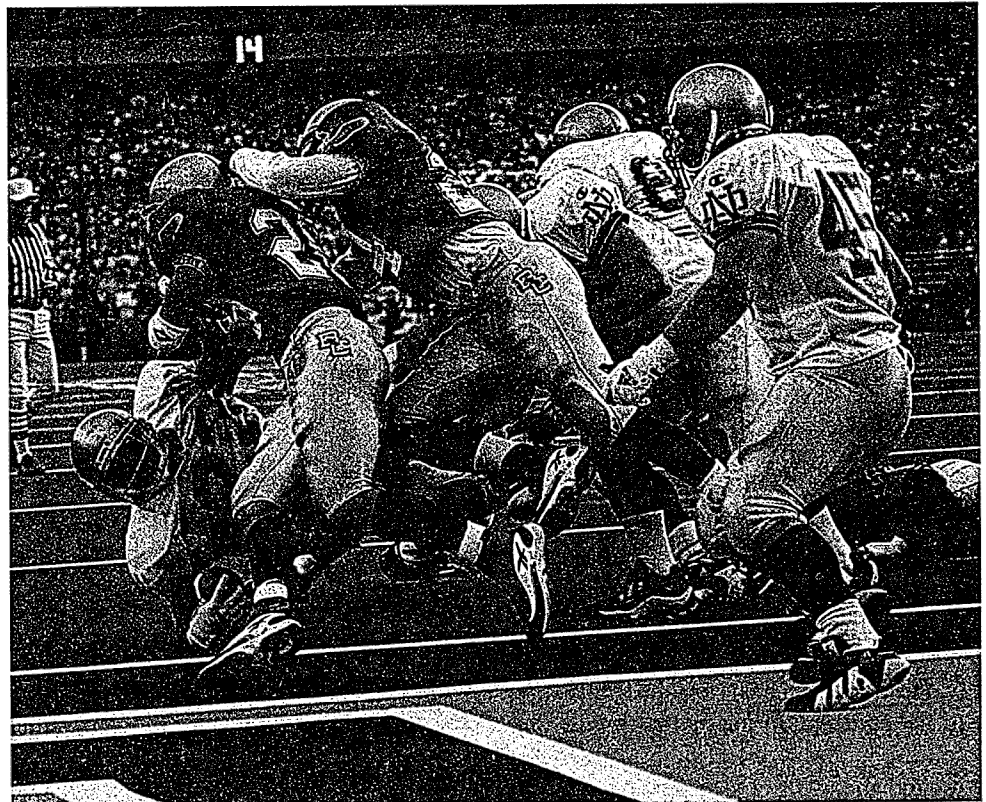
outscored the underdogs 10-0. After holding the Eagles, the Irish relied on the blocking of the offensive line and the legs of Denson and Spencer in a 45-yard march that resulted in a 31-yard Sanson field goal. Denson had runs of nine, 11 and 13 yards and Spencer added a 10-yard carry on the drive. The anchor of the Irish defense then made one of his countless big plays to set up the next Irish score. After safety Benny Guilbeaux batted a dropped Mutryn pass, captain Bobbie Howard snatched the pigskin out of the air and returned the interception to the Eagle 11. Yet another, in a season of big third-down conversions, followed when Jarious Jackson hit — you guessed it — Johnson on a perfectly executed 8-yard tiptoe catch for the touchdown. Notre Dame entered the fourth quarter with the ball, the momentum, a 24-17 lead and major bowl hopes on the line. No one could possibly have guessed the lengths required to preserve the latter.

Immediately after starting fullback Spencer was injured and removed from the game, Joey Goodspeed entered and promptly fumbled at the Irish 41. Match's second field goal of the day pulled the Eagles within four points with 12:33 left to play. The Boston College defense then raised their intensity and forced the Irish to face a desperate third-and-22 at their own five yard-

line. The next play defined the impact that Jackson has on a football game. Flushed from the pocket in his own endzone, the senior scrambled, stepped up as protection collapsed around him, and launched the football 70 yards downfield to a wide open Johnson, who hauled in the laser for a 68-yard gain. Four plays later, Denson found the opposite endzone on a two-yard run and Notre Dame led by 11 with 9:23 left in the game.

The Eagles answered with a 9-play, 68-yard scoring drive of their own that used up only 3:25. Mutryn ran 15 yards for a first down on a third-and-12 and completed passes of 11 and 28 yards to DiCosmo before finding him again on a 6-yard touchdown toss. Ty Goode intercepted the conversion attempt and the Irish lead was trimmed to 31-26 with 5:54 left. The Irish went three-and-out, punted and Boston College had the ball back at their 23 with plenty of time to mount a game-winning drive. On a second-and-26 at their own 30, Mutryn found Dennis Harding for 25 yards. The phenomenal Cloud then took the third-and-one carry 15 yards to the Irish 30. A 26-yard reception down the middle by tight-end Rob Tardio left the Eagles with a first-and-goal on the Notre Dame four with 1:07 remaining.

The first of the five critical instances that



THE WHITE STRIPE. Although Autry Denson didn't break the plane of this carry, his counterpart's failure to do the same on four tries prevented the huge upset.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/JEFF HSU

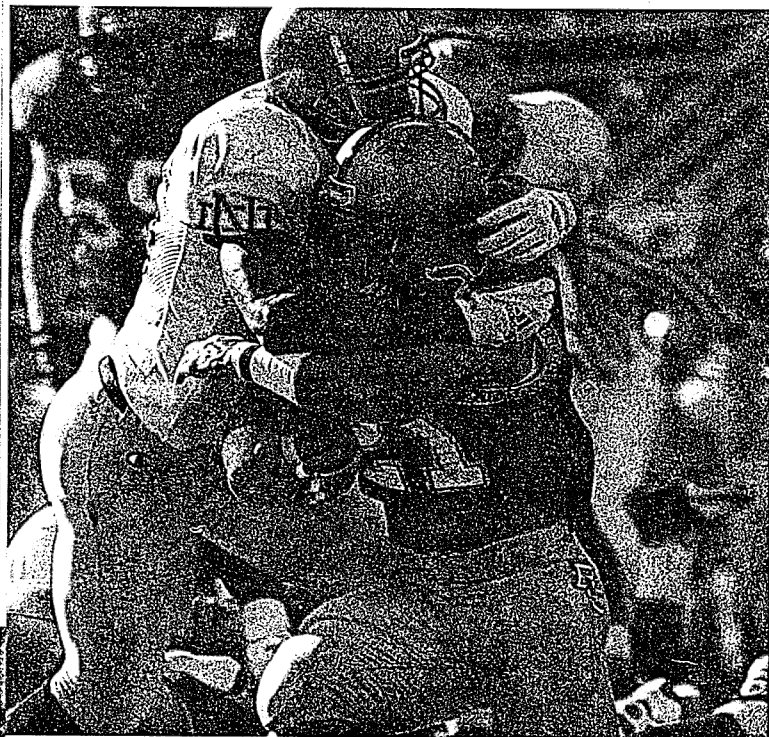


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/IEFF HSU

BEAR HUG. Tony Driver wrapped up Mike Cloud on this play. The runningback would score only once, failing to score a second time as the clock ran out.

led to the Irish's heroics came when a Boston College wide receiver lined up uncovered by a Notre Dame defense that had only 10 men on the field. As O'Brien frantically tried to get Mutryn to notice his open man, senior Guilbeaux astutely called the Irish's final timeout right before the ball was snapped, preventing an automatic score. On first down it appeared that Cloud could walk through a hole that had opened, but Howard immediately closed it and planted the tailback at the two on the next play. The Irish inside linebacker once again slammed Cloud to the turf at the one yardline. On third down, without any timeouts remaining, hopes of a follow up score by Notre Dame were dashed. With the clock rolling inside of 20 seconds and the tension building, it became disturbingly apparent for Irish fans that Boston College would now have to be held twice from three feet away for Notre Dame to escape with a win.

The AP First-Team All-American tailback plunged into the line for the third consecutive time, and it appeared that, finally, he was in. But nose guard Antwon Jones had undercut the Eagle center, allowing inside linebacker Jimmy Friday to meet Cloud literally an inch from the white stripe of the endzone. In the battle of wills that followed, Friday miraculously stood his ground and, with 11 seconds on the clock, the Irish were somehow still alive.

O'Brien called his final timeout and both

the whole issue was would they run the football or not, and the decision was to go all out goal-line defense, come after them and challenge them to throw it," Davie said.

As the crowd noise reached deafening levels, Mutryn handed the ball to Cloud with the game's outcome hanging in the balance. Cloud picked his hole over the inside left tackle but junior safety Deke Cooper, instructed to disregard the pass and play the inside run, darted through the opening and triumphantly slammed the Eagle behind the line of scrimmage. The amazing stand was complete.

The Eagles and their fans, for all their posturing about the growing rivalry between the two teams, dropped to a measly 3-6 on the year and 2-7 against Notre Dame in the last 10 years, (including four straight losses). The Irish left Boston that Saturday 7-1, three wins away from entering January as a top-10 team playing in a major bowl.

"I don't know how we did it," said defensive lineman Brad Williams, "It goes all the way back to January and all the hard work we put in. It showed today that we have more heart than them. They played a great game, but we got it done at the end." After winning narrowly against Purdue, Army and now Boston College, the sense that someone was looking over the Irish permeated the team. "We definitely think that there's something special going on," Denson said. "Good teams find a way to win." □

teams gathered on their respective sidelines in an emotional moment. Trying to take advantage of an offensive line that averages 6-5, 302 pounds, the Boston College coach decided to put the ball in the hands of his star for a fourth time. "He's my best guy and he's the guy that has to take it in when it counts," O'Brien said. Davie and defensive coordinator Greg Mattison figured the Irish's best shot was to stack the line and make Mutryn throw. "In the back of my mind, I thought they might run the bootleg, but

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards

ND 173

BC 173

Passing Yards

ND 210

BC 318

Total Yardage

ND 383

BC 491

First Downs

ND 19

BC 26

SCORING

Notre Dame	7	7	10	7	31
Boston College	7	10	0	9	26

1st Quarter

ND: Denson 1 run (Smith PAT)

BC: Cloud 11 run (Match PAT)

2nd Quarter

ND: Getherall 28 pass from Jackson (Smith PAT)

BC: DiCosmo 23 pass from Mutryn (Match PAT)

BC: Match 43 FG

3rd Quarter

ND: Sanson 31 FG

ND: M. Johnson 8 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

4th Quarter

BC: Match 35 FG

ND: Denson 2 run (Sanson PAT)

Post-game AP Rank: 12

Notes:

• Notre Dame has beaten Boston College four consecutive times.

RUSHING

AHEAD

Denson broke the career rushing record in Notre Dame's victory over Navy.

by Tom Repetto

Notre Dame entered Jack Kent Cooke Stadium making a statement about the resurgence of a dominating football program.

They left the stadium making history.

With a 30-0 victory over the Midshipmen of Navy, Notre Dame recorded its first shutout in nearly two years, jumped into the top 10 for the first time since defeating Michigan and improved its record to 8-1. Yet the biggest story of the game was the record-setting performance by Irish tailback Autry Denson. Early in the second quarter, Denson broke Allen Pinkett's Notre Dame record for the most yards rushing in a career.

At the end of a game in which he rushed for 107 yards, Autry had a career total of 4,192 yards rushing. The 100-yard rushing performance also broke Pinkett's record of twenty one 100-yard games.

"I told our team to let it sink in for a while that this is the all-time leading rusher at Notre Dame," Davie said. "That's a pretty big statement."

Denson did not realize he had the record until someone informed him on the sidelines. After that, Denson proceeded to thank each offensive lineman. "I congratulated them all," Denson said. "The greatest thing about this record is it's a team goal. Only because of the team do I have it."

Denson may have stolen the show, but Notre Dame's defense also made a huge statement in shutting down the nation's leading rushing offense. Navy rushed for only 137 yards, fumbled six times and committed four turnovers. Quarterback Brian



LEADING THE WAY: Blocks from teammates such as Jamie Spencer helped Autry Denson (running behind the block) to break Allen Pinkett's rushing record.

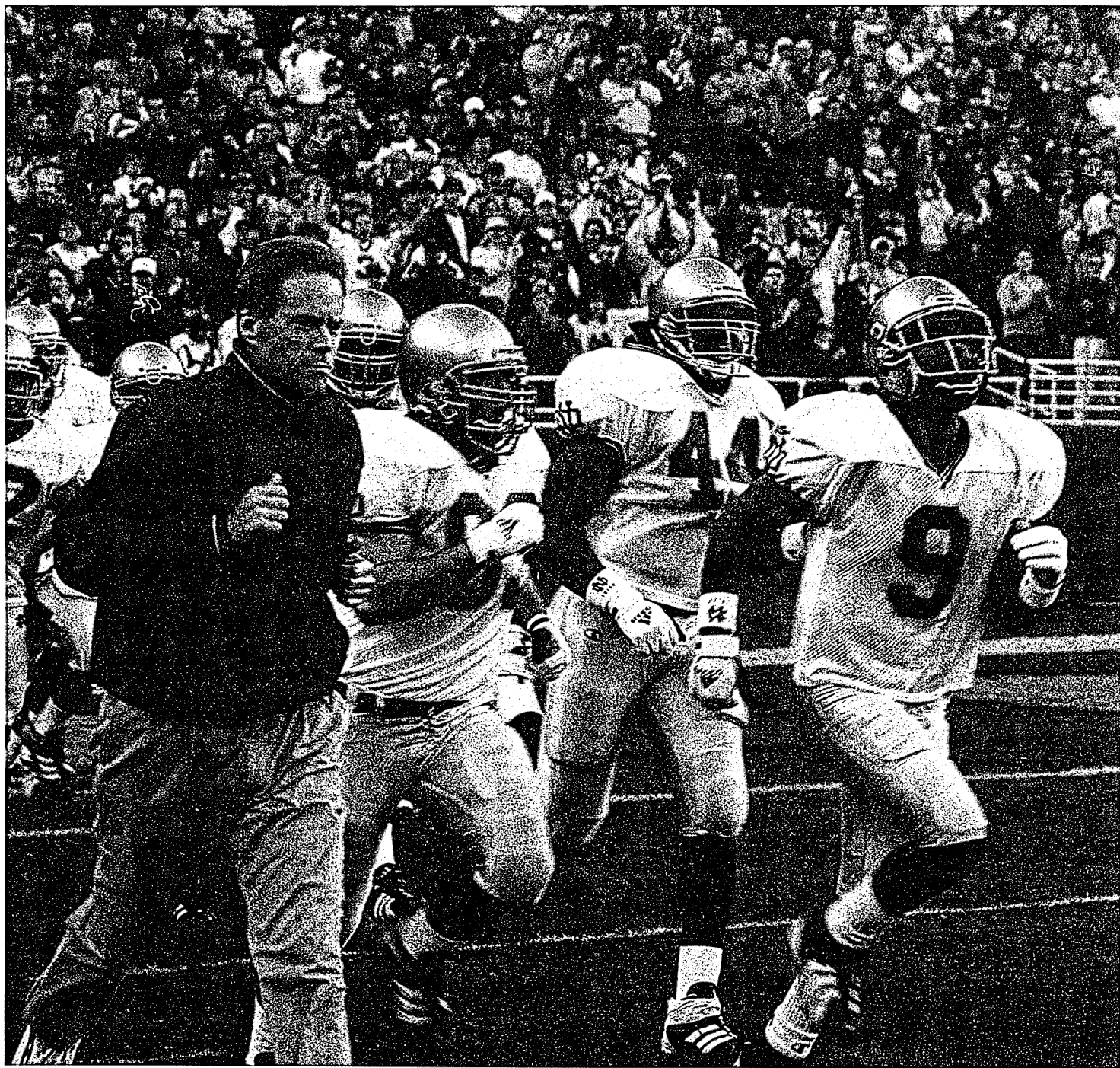
Broadwater had trouble running the option against a disciplined Irish defense. Head Coach Bob Davie recognized the significance of this feat. "Anytime you shut a team out it's a huge accomplishment," Davie

said, "especially a Wishbone team."

The Irish started out well on offense, too. After Notre Dame and Navy both opened with unsuccessful drives, Notre Dame drove 63 yards on 13 plays to lead 7-0 in the first

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/LIZ LANG

N A V Y



A PACKED HOUSE. Head Coach Bob Davie and players (from left to right) Jamie Spencer, Grant Irons and Raki Nelson rush onto the field at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium. The contest between Notre Dame and Navy was the first sellout at the two-year-old stadium.

quarter. Jarious Jackson completed passes to Joey Getherall, and fullback Jamie Spencer ran the ball with authority. On third-and-eight, Jackson made a screen pass to Spencer, who rumbled away for 10 yards and a first down. Spencer capped off the drive with a 4-yard touchdown run, his second of the year.

Penalties hurt the Irish in the scoring drive and throughout the game. The team was penalized nine times for 87 yards, many of the calls going against the offensive line for holding. "It got ridiculous there," senior

tackle Mike Rosenthal said. "They were all called by one official. Sometimes they let you play. Tonight, they weren't letting us play."

In the second quarter, the Irish marched on another long scoring drive. Early in the drive, Autry Denson made his record-breaking run, a short draw that gained a few yards where most other backs would have been stopped behind the line of scrimmage. After penalties pushed Notre Dame back to its own nine yard-line, Jarious Jackson ran 33 yards to pick up a critical first down. The

Irish offense continued to march down the field behind Denson's rushing. Jackson completed a pass to Malcolm Johnson, putting the offense in the red zone. Soon after, Denson finished off the long drive with an 8-yard scoring run that made the score 14-0.

Before halftime, Navy started to show signs of desperation. Broadwater pitched the ball to wingback Steve Holley on a reverse, and Holley tossed the ball downfield for a 14-yard trick play. Navy's drive was stopped, however, when on fourth down, senior Benny Guilbeaux made a spectacular

one-handed interception. Navy's closest scoring chance the entire game was a second-quarter drive that ended in a missed field goal from 39 yards out.

Irish quarterback Jarious Jackson continued to provide consistently good play at the quarterback position. He completed his first 12 passes, two shy of the Notre Dame record for consecutive passes completed. Against the third-worst passing defense in Division I-A, Jackson passed for 159 yards and a touchdown while rushing for 61 more yards. Regarding the 12 straight completions, Jackson said, "I was so wrapped up in what was going on that I didn't notice there were so many in a row. I just wanted to keep the offense moving."

After halftime, Notre Dame continued the third-quarter dominance that had been one of the hallmarks of the 1998 squad. Ten minutes into the half, the offense went 62 yards on seven plays. Raki Nelson caught an 18-yard pass from Jackson which brought the Irish to the Navy 18-yard line. On the next play, Denson ran 18 yards for his second touchdown of the game, and the Irish led 20 to 0 when the extra point sailed wide right.

Later in the quarter, Navy was forced to punt the ball away. Getherall received the punt and ran 68 yards before being tackled at the Navy 20. Getherall's longest punt return of the season set the Irish up for a quick scoring drive as Jackson connected with Johnson on a 16-yard touchdown pass.

"I told our team to let it sink in for a while that this is the all-time leading rusher at Notre Dame. That's a pretty big statement."
— Bob Davie

With the score 27-0 going into the final quarter, Notre Dame was en route to a significant victory.

The defense held Navy scoreless for one more quarter as the Irish won 30-0. The Irish defense was especially impressive on fourth downs, as Notre Dame stopped Navy on three pivotal fourth down plays. Guilbeaux's interception in the first half and linebacker Jimmy Friday's fourth-down tackle midway through the third quarter gave the Irish defense the momentum that helped complete the shutout.

The linebacking core was especially dominant against Navy's offense. Bobbie Howard continued to play well as he led the team with nine tackles. Kory Minor added five tackles, including one for a loss.

Grant Irons' forced fumble with three minutes left in the first half was a big play in maintaining the Irish momentum. It was also a big play for Irons, who has missed the last three games due to an injured nerve in his shoulder. "I was determined to get back," Irons said. "I wanted to be a part of this, especially with our defense really coming on."

"I give credit to Coach Mattison for our defensive showing," said defensive tackle Brad Williams. "He had us lined up right in the proper schemes. This was definitely one of our better games."

Mattison gave the credit to his players. "They did what the coaches told them to do, what we taught them to do," he said. "I'm proud of these kids."

The victory was Notre Dame's 35th consecutive win over Navy, the longest such streak in NCAA history. After 1997's close victory by the Irish, Navy coach Charlie Weatherbie was thoroughly impressed with this year's Notre Dame squad. "This was the best team we have played all year," Weatherbie said. "They are playing with a different attitude this year."

With the historical feats and stellar plays, Notre Dame moved itself closer to a major bowl game. Ranked 10th in the AP, ESPN

and the all-important BCS rankings, Notre Dame put itself in prime position to go to a major postseason game for the first time since it lost to Florida State in the 1996 Orange Bowl. However, games against LSU and USC would test the strength of the team.

This game could be remembered for the dominating Irish defense and their overwhelming victory. But mostly, it will be remembered as the game in which the most prolific rusher in Notre Dame history etched his name in the record books. □

GAME@ A GLANCE

Rushing Yards

ND 243

NAVY 137

Passing Yards

ND 159

NAVY 102

Total Yardage

ND 402

NAVY 239

First Downs

ND 21

NAVY 13

SCORING

Notre Dame	7	7	13	3	—	30
Navy	0	0	0	0	—	0

1st Quarter

ND: Spencer 4 run (Sanson PAT)

2nd Quarter

ND: Denson 8 run (Sanson PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 18 run (PAT failed)

ND: M. Johnson 16 pass from Jackson (Sanson PAT)

4th Quarter

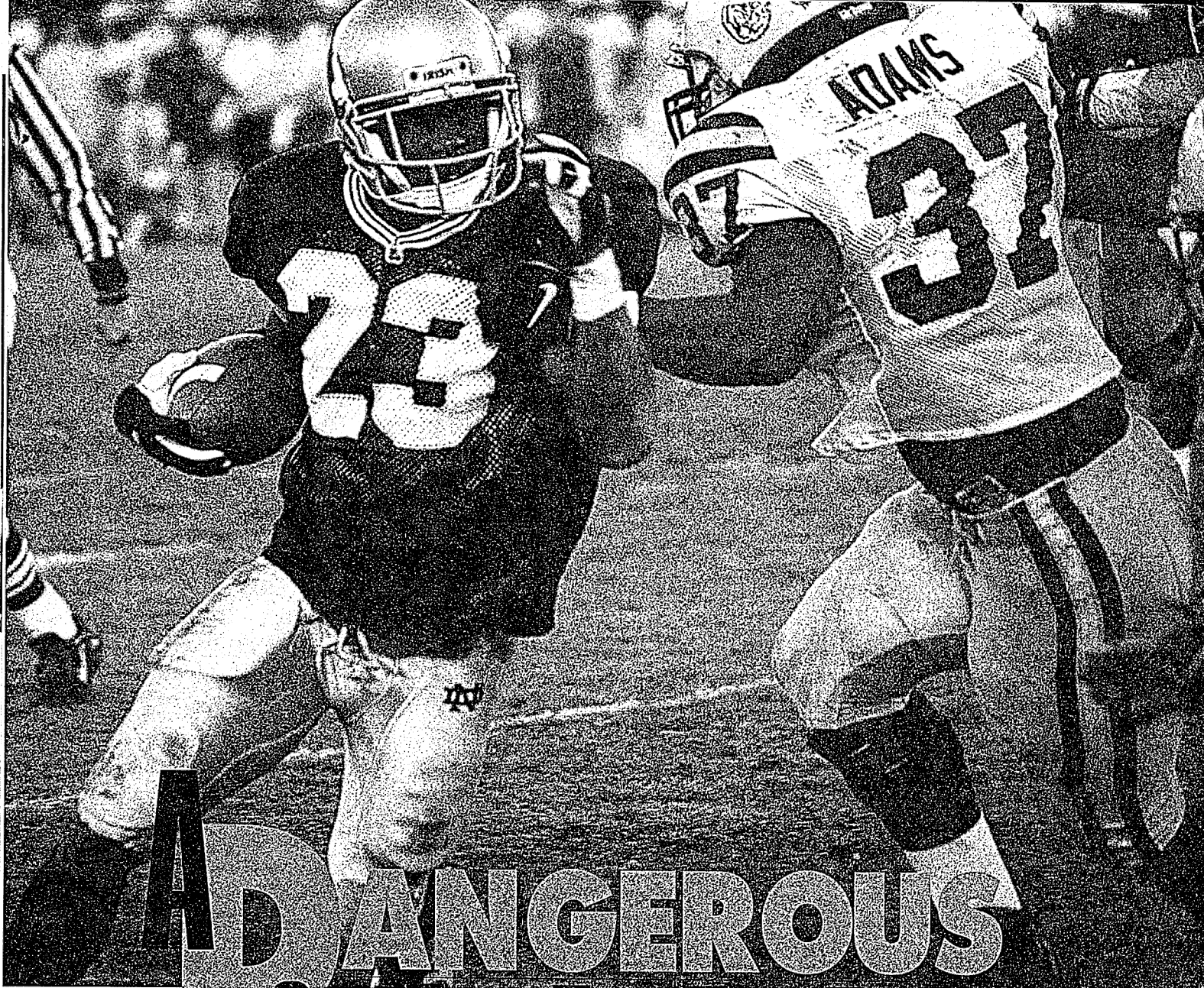
ND: Sanson 37 FG

Post-game AP Rank: 10

Notes:

- Autry Denson broke Notre Dame's career rushing record, formerly held by Allen Pinkett.

- This game marked Notre Dame's 35th consecutive victory over Navy.



GORDIE BELL

SO DANGEROUS TO SAFETY

The Irish came away with a big win and a big loss

by R. Scott Panichelli

There were tears in the Notre Dame locker room following the thrilling 39-36 victory over the LSU Tigers. One could say tears of joy were in order. It was the final home game of many players' careers, the culmination of the first unde-

feated home season since 1989, another notch in an eight-game winning streak and a victory in a game with three defensive touchdowns, three missed field goals and four failed extra points. The tears, however, were tears of sadness. In a game where the

Irish rallied from a late 34-20 deficit, they lost the services of quarterback Jarious Jackson. The senior dropped back to take a safety while running down the clock when he injured his knee. So many things went right in the game for the Irish, including two

touchdowns by the defense, a career day for Jackson and a last-minute offensive drive. But it's the tragic play that occurred with a mere three seconds left that Irish fans will remember.

Things didn't start off well for the Irish, either. In the opening drive of the game, Jackson's first pass attempt was picked off by LSU safety Mark Roman and returned 53 yards for a touchdown. "We had practiced the coverage. I broke on the ball and it was there and I was able to make the play," Roman said. Despite the setback, Jackson stormed back. He drove the Irish down and with 9:53 left in the first quarter pitched to freshman David Givens on the option right. Givens finished the job with a 22-yard scamper into the endzone.

LSU started off the second quarter by scoring a touchdown after 27 seconds. A six-minute drive ended when All-American running back Kevin Faulk scored from one yard. The extra point was blocked and the Irish were down by six. But on the following possession the team was forced to punt, the defense making the next touchdown for the Irish. Faulk fumbled on the ensuing drive and senior rush end Lamont Bryant ran the ball 13 yards for a touchdown. The Irish grabbed their first lead on Jim Sanson's extra point but it proved to be short-lived.

On the following kickoff, Faulk showed why he is regarded as one of the best football players in the country. In an awesome display of speed, he ran through the kickoff team for an 88-yard touchdown. It was the first kickoff return for a score against a Notre Dame team since 1977. When asked about his mindset immediately following the fumble and right before the return, he said, "I was thinking the same things as I always do. I'm not the type of person to get down on myself. I want the ball and I know when I get it I can make the play." To compensate for the failed PAT, the Tigers went for two and quarterback Herb Tyler ran it successfully. These were the last points of the half, with the Irish down by seven.

"We had trouble stopping LSU in the first half," Coach Bob Davie said. "We moved the ball but didn't take advantage of our opportunities. We told the team not to panic after we got down. I was really proud of how we came back after the opening touchdown."

The third quarter saw each team gain 13 points. The Irish struck first when senior tailback Autry Denson capped off a drive with a three-yard run into the endzone. The kick by Sanson, however, failed. The next couple of minutes belonged to the Tigers, in

particular quarterback Tyler and wide receiver Abram Booty.

Just 1:28 after Denson's score, Tyler connected with Booty for a 27-yard touchdown pass, but again the kick failed. Tyler and Booty then struck again. A mere two minutes later, an 18-yard pass (and a rare converted point-after attempt) sent the Tigers up by a score of 34-20. The 14-point margin with just a quarter-and-a-half left against a tough SEC defense nearly put the game out of reach. But the Irish fought back.

The third quarter scoring closed with an Irish touchdown. Jackson led a quick 78-yard drive down the field which culminated in an eight-yard pass to wide receiver Malcolm Johnson for six points. Johnson capped off his banner fifth year by becoming the first Irish wide receiver to score in six successive games. More importantly, the score put the Irish down by seven as the fourth quarter began.

The final quarter of the last home game of the season proved to be one of the most exciting in recent history. The Tigers started by driving methodically downfield. They were on their way to another score, inside the Irish red zone, when Irish linebacker Bobbie Howard picked off a Tyler pass and

ran it 89 yards for a touchdown. The return by Howard was the longest interception return for a touchdown since 1975. "I was in the right place at the right time," Howard said. "I have to thank Tony Driver for his block on Herb Tyler. Without the block, I probably would have not made it to the endzone." Sanson missed the extra point, though, and the Irish were down by one.

On the ensuing drive, the Tigers threatened again. The Irish defense stiffened, and LSU was stopped at the Irish 35. Jackson took over and marched down the field with runs of 14 and 12 yards and completions of 24 and 17 yards. With less than two minutes left, the Irish were inside the LSU red zone. On a third and six from the 10, Jackson dropped back and hit Raki Nelson on the game-winning touchdown with just 1:27 left in the game. "Every week, it's a new player who makes big plays," the wide receiver said. This week it happened to be Nelson, who was recuperating from an early season ankle injury. The two-point conversion failed but the Irish were up 39-34. The lead would stick.

After losing quarterback Tyler to a pulled left hamstring, the Tigers were forced to play their last drive with back-up Craig

Something Fishy

Despite the number of nail-biters the football team played this season, Notre Dame students proved they needed yet another way to entertain themselves during games. It's common knowledge that seniors have long held a tradition of throwing marshmallows at each other across the student section during halftime in a harmless manner. But this season the tradition took a turn for the disgusting.

Several games into the season students began hurling dead animals, including a fish, an octopus and a frog. The frog reportedly lacerated the face of a 10-year-old girl and another non-student suffered a facial contusion in the fray. But the most serious problems were caused by students trying to run from the flying objects, which also included cans and marshmallows weighted with pennies and golf tees. "People were just jumping off the stands out of the way, which is a very serious safety hazard," said Chuck Hurley, assistant director of Notre Dame Security/Police.

This was not the first time security took an interest in the actions of overly enthusiastic fans this season. In September the alcohol committee of the Campus Life Council began examining the football ticket distribution system. The investigation arose from concerns expressed by the athletic department and campus security over alcohol consumption and the safety of students during the 5 a.m. rush, when people began dangerously crowding the ticket window.

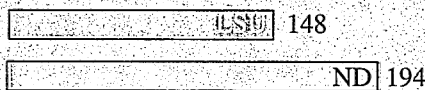
Following the Baylor game, the administration stepped up preventative measures, forcing students to enter the stadium for the LSU game through Gate E and performing searches for contraband. The university threatened to confiscate the tickets of anyone caught in the act, warning that they might have to forfeit alumni ticket privileges as well.

The threats were an effective temporary solution and the punishments were never enacted, since most students showed up at the LSU game empty-handed. But one can only wonder what those crazy kids will come up with next year.

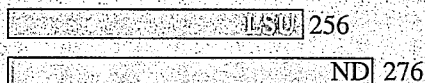
— Allison Fashek

GAME@ A GLANCE

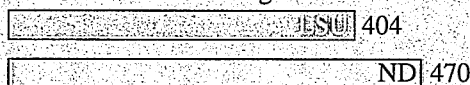
Rushing Yards



Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

LSU	7	14	13	2	—	36
Notre Dame	7	7	13	12	—	39

1st Quarter

LSU: Roman 53 interception return (Chauvin PAT)

ND: Givens 22 run (Sansone PAT)

2nd Quarter

LSU: Faulk 1 run (kick blocked)

ND: Bryant 13 fumble recovery (Sansone PAT)

LSU: Faulk 88 kickoff return (Tyler rush)

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 3 run (kick failed)

LSU: Booty 27 pass from Tyler (kick blocked)

LSU: Booty 18 pass from Tyler (Boyd PAT)

ND: M. Johnson 8 pass from Jackson (Sansone PAT)

4th Quarter

ND: Howard 89 interception return (kick blocked)

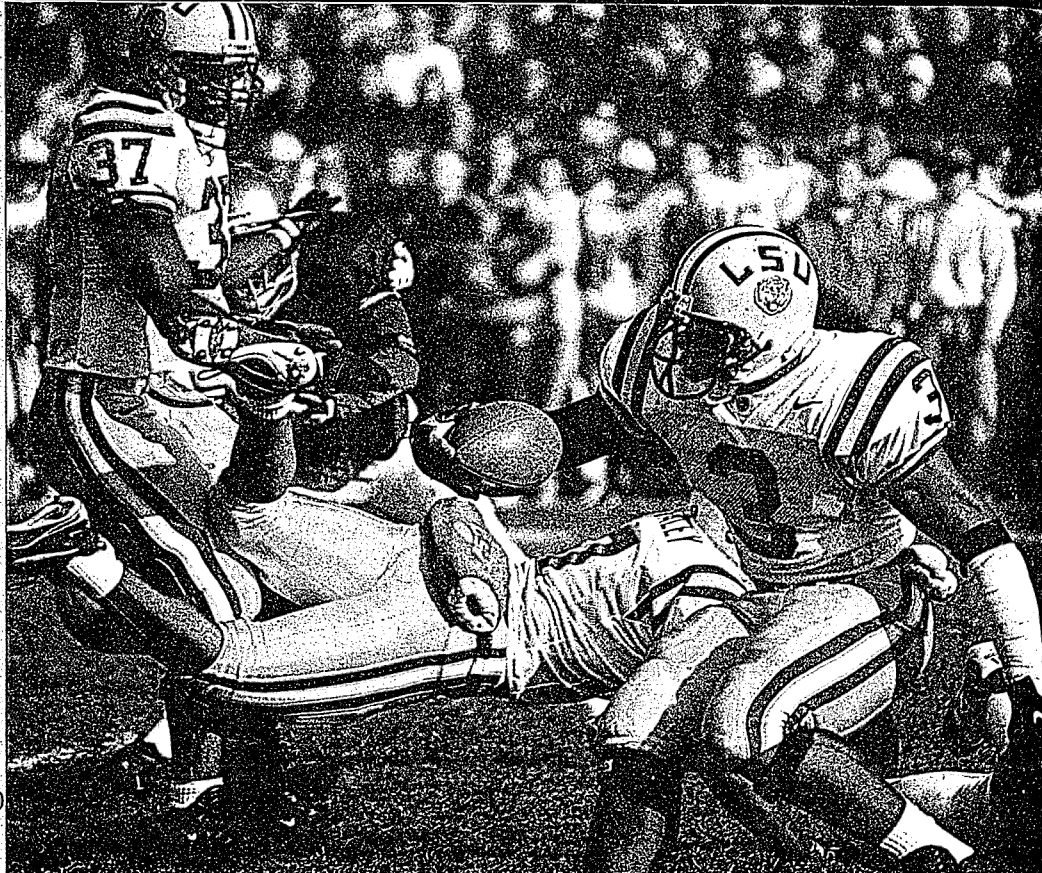
ND: Nelson 10 pass from Jackson (pass failed)

LSU: Team safety

Post-game AP Rank: 9

Notes:

•Kevin Faulk's 88-yard kickoff return was the first kickoff return for a score against the Irish since 1977.



GORDIE BELL

FAULK ATTACK. LSU's Kevin Faulk finished the day with 108 yards on the ground and an 88-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.

Nall. He drove LSU deep into Irish territory, but was unable to come up with any points. On third down, Nall nearly connected with Booty in the endzone but the ball fell incomplete. "Craig threw a great pass," Booty said. "It was supposed to be a post route. It went off the tip of my fingers. I just wasn't able to bring it in." On fourth down from the 31 with eight yards to go for a first down, Nall threw an incomplete pass under immense pressure from freshman lineman Anthony Weaver. "It's the way the team plays," Weaver said. "We play until the end of the game." With 25 seconds left, Notre Dame got the ball back. With less than half a minute left and the Irish up by five, the game seemed to be over.

Davie determined that the risk of a fumble was too great to try a hand-off, so for three consecutive plays he had Jackson take a knee. Each time, LSU responded with an immediate timeout, the last coming with eight seconds to play. Davie's plan was that Jackson would take the snap and use as much time as possible while taking a safety. "I was supposed to run out of the endzone," Jackson said. "But I looked up for one second to see where everybody was coming from, and a guy just pretty much blindsided me. He ... hit me down on my knee at an angle." The hit was made by two defenders, Arnold Miller, a senior linebacker, and Clarence LeBlanc, a strong

safety. "What we really wanted Jarious to do was go to the end line, use as much time, and hopefully the game would be over," Davie said. "But... because we actually had someone who didn't line up correctly, we weren't able to do that. It was unfortunate. In my mind it wasn't so much the plan as it was the execution." Jackson ran off five seconds and took a safety but was badly injured in the process. He departed, not knowing that he had a torn MCL and would be out nearly a month.

The Irish were up 39-36 and had a free kick. Senior Hunter Smith squibbed the kick and the Tigers pounced on it. Nall threw a "Hail Mary" pass with no time on the clock from the Irish 46 that fell incomplete, sealing the victory.

On paper the game seemed perfect. Denson rushed for 80 yards. The defense held Faulk to just 108 yards on 31 carries. But it was Jackson who was most impressive with a career-high 276 yards passing. His career day included eight-of-10 passing on third down for 184 yards and he also ran for 80 yards on 21 carries. Jackson engineered the game-winning fourth quarter drive that sealed the victory. It was a banner day for the senior, who rose to the challenge against a fast and furious SEC defense. But it ended with torn ligaments and an uncertain future for an Irish offense that had a date with archrival USC just seven days away. □

SHORT HANDS

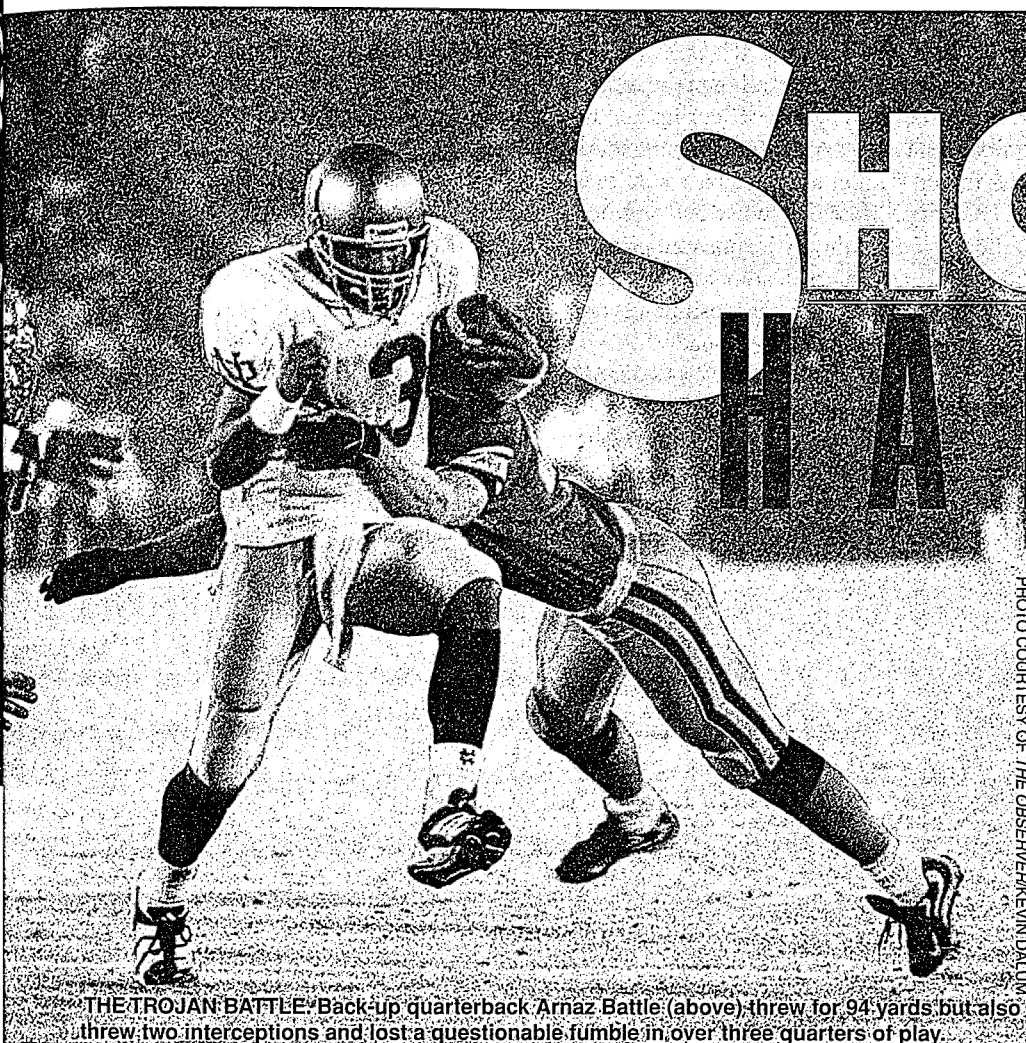


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/KEVIN DALY

THE TROJAN BATTLE Back-up quarterback Arnaz Battle (above) threw for 94 yards but also threw two interceptions and lost a questionable fumble in over three quarters of play.

Irish losses were too great to overcome

by Corey Spinelli

For all intents and purposes, the outcome of Notre Dame's season finale against traditional rival Southern California and, ultimately, any hope of a Bowl Championship bid, was decided a week earlier in the south endzone of Notre Dame Stadium. Bob Davie's unique approach to running out the clock versus LSU, regardless of its intent, failed miserably. Under orders to kill the remaining eight seconds left in the game by running around in the endzone before stepping out of bounds for a safety, quarterback Jarious Jackson was senselessly left in a position to be blindsided by a Tiger defender while trying to follow his coach's directions. Instead of basking in the glow of his classmates final home victory, the infamous torn MCL forced the invaluable senior to limp through the tunnel to the locker room. The triumphant cheers in a raucous crowd quickly gave way to a foreboding silence.

In the week leading up to the game that

would determine the 9-1 Irish's postseason destination, the team's worst fears became reality. Jackson was lost for at least a month, and any hopes of a win on the west coast rested on the inexperienced shoulders of quarterbacks Arnaz Battle and Eric Chappell, who had thrown a grand total of one pass each in their careers. It didn't take an expert to forecast problems on the horizon for the Irish. Common sense dictates that the Trojans would stack nine defenders in the box, stifling Notre Dame's running game and daring the green arms of a third-string junior and a freshman (sporting a newly healed broken collarbone) to beat them. Without their field general, the 9-1 Irish found themselves nine-and-a-half point underdogs to the 7-4 home team.

Though Notre Dame battled the odds in nearly every contest on the slate and had emerged victorious nine of 10 times, this game was different. No one had ever accused this bunch of being a dominating force. Leadership, heart and togetherness

played as important a role as raw talent did in their success. More importantly, the offense simply depended on Jackson as a two-way threat due to his mobility, strong arm and accuracy, to constantly keep defenses on their heels. Winning without his presence would require 60 minutes of outstanding defense and the Irish quarterbacks to complete passes down the field to open up the running game. It didn't happen.

The Notre Dame defense left everything it had on the field, holding the Trojan offense, which enjoyed favorable field position throughout the game, to only 10 points. They allowed just 314 yards on 74 plays and caused two turnovers. It just wasn't enough, as Battle and Chappell weren't ready to play in a road game with such large implications. The duo threw four interceptions and completed just seven passes in 22 attempts. Chappell, who started the game because, as a junior, he had 24 more months than Battle to acclimate himself with the Irish system and the college game, threw two picks in his

first three attempts, and was promptly yanked in favor of the highly-touted freshman. The Irish didn't complete a pass until under five minutes were left in the third quarter. After the final zero flashed on the clock, the Trojan defense pitched the first shutout of an Irish squad since 1987, when a 10th-ranked Irish team dropped a 24-0 decision to the number-two Miami Hurricanes in the Orange Bowl.

In the first half, Greg Mattison's troops stopped Southern Cal quarterback Carson Palmer and his teammates on all seven of their possessions. On the Trojan's first possession, freshman phenom Tony Weaver blasted through the line to dump tailback Petros Papadakis for a loss on fourth-and-one from the Irish 43. Two of Chappell's only three throws headed directly into coverage and landed squarely in the numbers of USC defenders, but the Notre Dame defense came up with two huge stops on both Trojan possessions. The first started at the Irish 24, but was thwarted by a Lamont Bryant sack that pushed the USC offense back to the 30 and ended when Adam Abrams missed a 47-yard field goal. The crew from the Coliseum then marched to the Irish 29, only to commit a false start on a fourth-and-two that forced a punt. On the Trojans' next possession, Southern Cal pushed to the Notre Dame 28, only to falter courtesy of a Jimmy Friday sack and a Ty Goode interception. Since television replays failed to identify the culprit, a seemingly phantom block in the back call negated

Goode's lengthy return that would have set the Irish offense up inside the USC 15.

A more costly blown call then prevented Notre Dame from their best scoring opportunity of the night. After an A'Jani Sanders blitz forced Palmer to rush a pass that linebacker Kory Minor intercepted and returned to the Trojan 14, the Irish appeared primed to break the scoreless deadlock. In Battle's first series of the game, the freshman faced a second-and-12 from the 16, made a strong run on an option play and carried two USC defenders with him past the first down marker to the three-yard line. Without the benefit of instant replay, the naked eye could see that Battle's knees were clearly down before the ball was wrenched from his

hands on a hit by linebacker Zeke Moreno. Instead of first-and-goal from nine feet out, however, the officials incorrectly ruled that number three lost control of the football before his knees hit the grass. The mistaken call turned the ball over to the Trojans at their 29 and the first half ended as it had begun, 0-0.

The Irish's third quarter domination during the bulk of the season slowed in the LSU game and ended in the Coliseum. After outscoring their opponents by an astounding 81-3 in their first nine games, the Tigers put 13 on the board in the third and the Trojans posted their eventual total of 10 in that quarter. Joey Getherall returned the second-half kickoff to the Southern Cal 40,



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/KEVIN DALUM

ALL TOO FAMILIAR: Jabari Holloway watches yet another Irish pass fall to the turf in the futile comeback attempt.

but after three plays the Irish lost five yards and a 42-yard Hunter Smith punt gave first-year coach Paul Hackett's team the ball at their own two. Any momentum that Getherall's return had given the Irish quickly evaporated when Palmer found standout receiver R. Jay Soward on third-and-10 from the two for a 44-yard pickup. They didn't score on that possession but, after forcing the stagnant Irish offense three-and-out, USC started their lone touchdown scoring drive at the Trojan 36. The 5 play, 64-yard jaunt opened with a 25-yard pass to Soward and followed with Chad Morton carries of 11 and 21 yards before Palmer took it in on a naked bootleg from two yards out. After Notre Dame punted after three

two Arnaz Battle interceptions and two turnovers on downs sealed the Irish's fate.

The magical run of eight games ended that night on a wet field under a cloudy sky far from South Bend. It ended helplessly, under circumstances that shouldn't have been. The team played hard and the defense played more than well enough to win. But the void created by Jackson's absence was simply too great for inexperienced players at the most critical position on the field to fill. A one-dimensional Irish squad is no match for any defense. It's simple math; seven men (the offensive line, tight end and fullback) cannot block nine defenders.

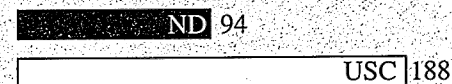
Mattison's praise of his defense summed up the heartbreaking loss. "I'm really proud

GAME@ A GLANCE

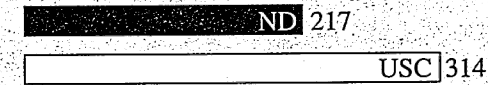
Rushing Yards



Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Notre Dame	0	0	0	0	—	0
USC	0	0	10	0	—	10

3rd Quarter

USC: Palmer 2 run (Abrams PAT)
USC: Abrams 23 FG

Post-game AP Rank: 16

Notes:

- Notre Dame had not been shut out since the 1987 Orange Bowl, which they lost 24-0 to Miami.

THREE IN A ROW: Junior R. Jay Soward enjoyed his third consecutive victory over USC's biggest rivals.

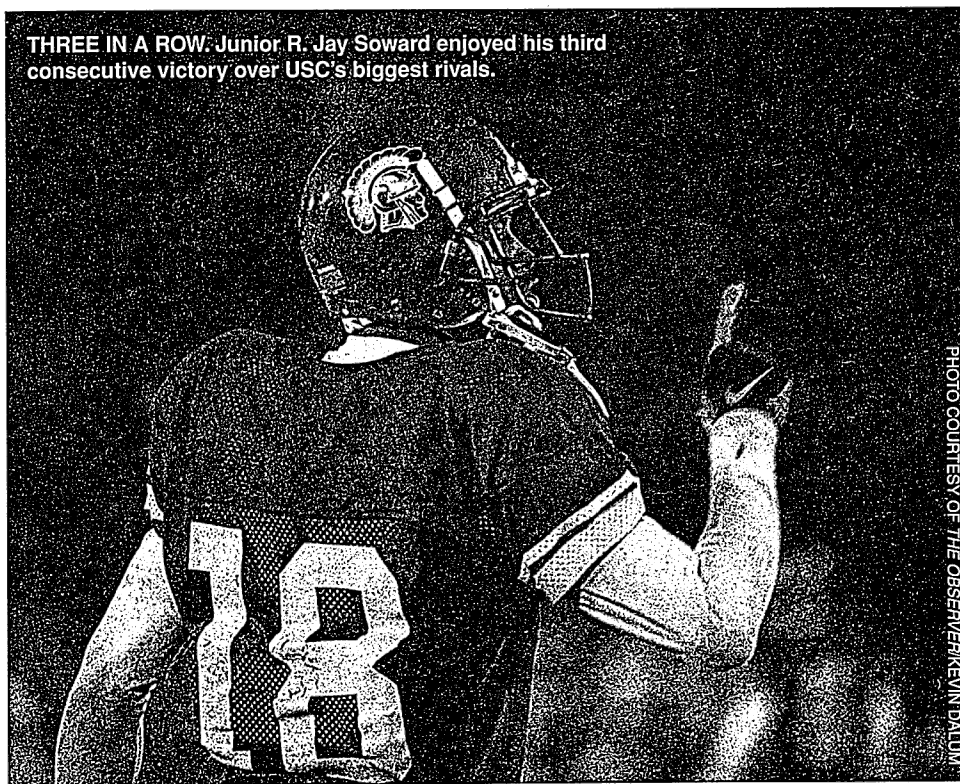


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER/KEVIN DALUM

plays for the third straight time in the quarter (the offense amassed a total of zero yards on these possessions), the Trojans began their second scoring possession at the Irish 42. A pass interference call and a 19-yard Morton run later, Southern Cal enjoyed a first-and-goal from the visitors' eight. The defense again stiffened, and USC had to settle for a 23-yard Abrams kick that, with 5:04 left in the third quarter, would be the game's final score.

Notre Dame's defense held the Trojans on all four of their fourth quarter possessions, but the offense just could not answer the bell. Jim Colletto's unit gained 157 of their 214 yards in the final 20 minutes, but

of our kids," he said. "We really battled and so did our offense. We're a team. We won as a team this year and we lose as a team."

Davie offered similar thoughts. "I'm proud of our football team and I'm proud of the character of our football team," he said. "We played hard, but we certainly didn't play well enough to win. The reason we lost is we didn't play well enough and we didn't execute well enough."

That may indeed be the case, but the reason they didn't play or execute well enough was the glaring absence left on the field by the man standing in street clothes on the Notre Dame sideline with a large brace on his right knee. □

CROCODILE TEARS

Georgia Tech's squad outran an Irish rally in the second half

by Patrick Downes

Michael Jordan has repeatedly proven that it's not the shoes. And after facing Georgia Tech in the Gator Bowl, the Irish have proven that it's not the shirts, either. Notre Dame donned green

jerseys for the game — the first time they have done so in four years — and lost in Jacksonville, Fla., 35-28.

Despite several emotional big-game victories with the jerseys, two consecutive green-clad losses (the other in the 1995

Fiesta Bowl) have muted any psychological advantage that the green jerseys might have provided. According to Head Coach Bob him, some seniors, including Jarious Jackson and Autry Denson, had asked Davie for the opportunity to wear them. "It was about

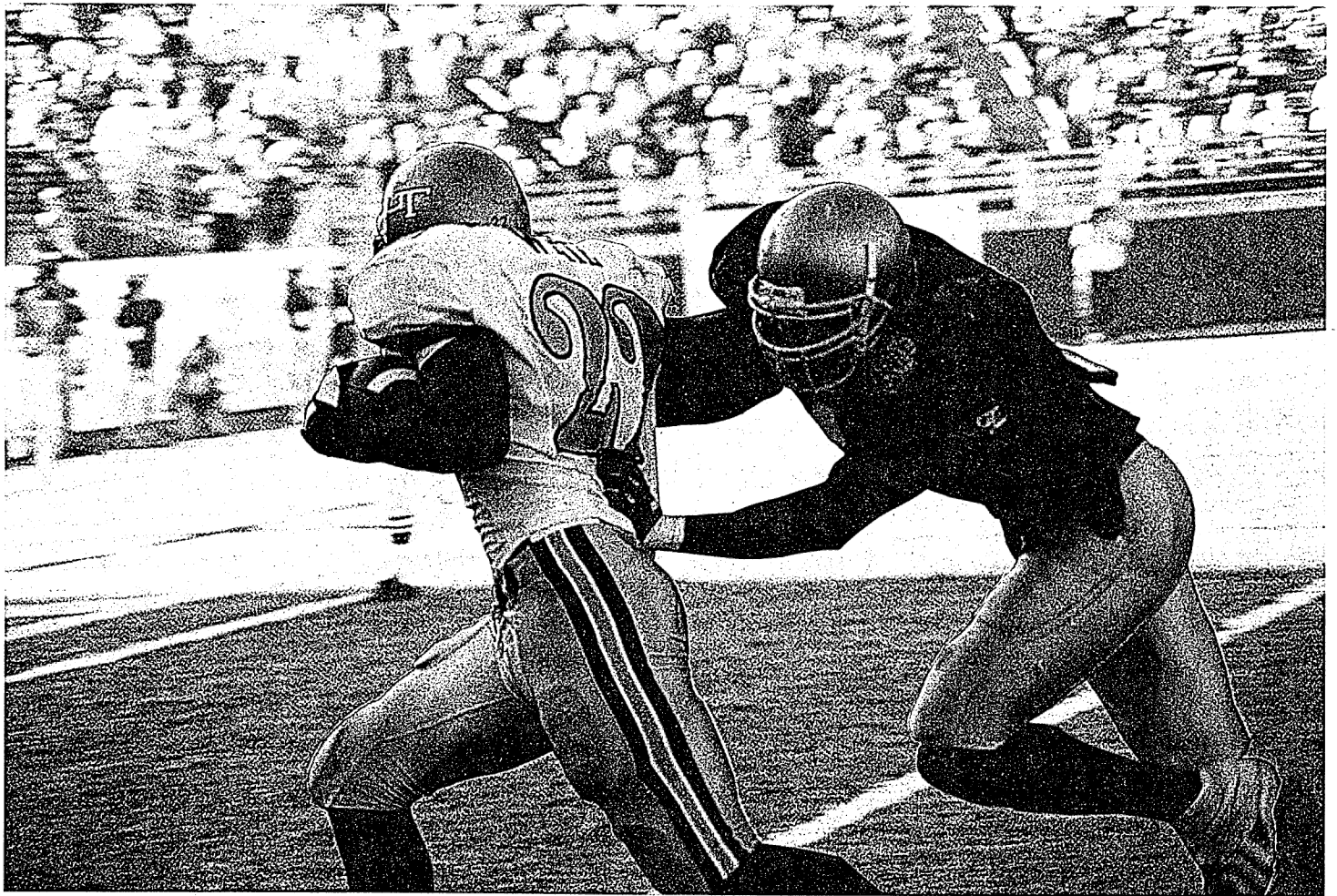


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER KEVIN DALUM

RUNNING AWAY WITH IT. Even with their rarely-worn green jerseys, in the end, Notre Dame proved too slow for Dez White and the Ramblin' Wreck's speedy offense.

G • A • T • O • R B • O • W • L

a bunch of seniors who wanted to do it and hadn't had a chance to do it," said Davie. "I'd make the same decision again because of these kids."

Whatever the intention, the jerseys (with a little help from some inspired second-half offensive play) almost saw another luck-of-the-Irish comeback.

Down 21-7 at the half, Notre Dame — and senior tailback Autry Denson — came out charging. Denson, Notre Dame's all-time leading rusher, scored three touchdowns and amassed 130 yards at the Gator Bowl, gaining 59 of those yards (and one touchdown) on the opening drive of the second half. The Irish started the half on their own 20-yard line, and Denson immediately rumbled for a 19-yard gain. He followed that run with rushes of 3, 11, 5 and 15. Quarterback Jackson completed an eight-yard pass to Malcolm Johnson and added two nine-yard runs of his own before Denson finished the drive with a one-yard touchdown.

And the spark was not extinguished. Georgia Tech senior Kofi Smith caught the ensuing kickoff but sophomore Tony Driver snatched the ball out of his arms, putting Notre Dame at Tech's 26-yard line. Three plays later the Irish sat on second and three from the four-yard line. Here the Yellow Jacket defense held tight — for a little while. It took five more plays (including a fourth-down conversion) for Jackson to score on a 2-yard option scamper. Smith would make up for his earlier mistake by blocking the point-after attempt, keeping the Irish one point behind.

Georgia Tech gathered some momentum from the error for its next drive. With their typical offensive efficiency, the Yellow Jackets marched to the Notre Dame 38, when a sack by senior linebacker Bobbie Howard set them back to the 44. Undaunted, Georgia Tech quarterback Joe Hamilton unloaded on the next play and hit Jacksonville native Dez White for a 44-yard touchdown pass. The extra point was good, and the Ramblin' Wreck was up 28 to 20.

The Irish were not finished, though. Jackson and the offense responded with a poise that typified their critical late-game drives throughout the season. Despite a poor field position after the kickoff, Denson's 15-yard rush on the second play began the drive with authority.

A pass to junior tight end Jabari Holloway, an eight-yard quarterback draw and a 27-yard toss to junior split end Jay Johnson put the Irish at the Georgia Tech 28. Here the

Yellow Jacket defense held the Irish to fourth down, and forced an incomplete pass. But when a Georgia Tech defensive lineman flipped Jackson off of his back after the play, a personal foul gave the Irish 15 yards, a first down and a chance to stay in the game. Georgia Tech Head Coach George O'Leary was livid at the penalty. "I can understand why he [the referee] called it," said the coach, "just not at that time." The Irish took advantage of the penalty — and tied the game — with a 1-yard touchdown run by Denson and a two-point conversion pass completed right down the middle to senior receiver Bobby Brown.

But the shootout continued on the very next drive. Gator Bowl Co-MVP Joe Hamilton hit the other MVP, Dez White, for a 55-yard touchdown strike — his second of the day. These were the final points of the afternoon. "When you give up big plays and allow teams to drive on you, you're not going to win games," said Davie. He added, "At some point you have to stop them. We just never did."

Though the Irish made a game of it in the second half, the first was another story. Georgia Tech's team speed and an offense that changed formations constantly kept the Irish defense off guard. "It was kind of like hitting a knuckleball," said Davie of the Ramblin' Wreck's dizzying array of offensive formations.

After trading punts to start the game, Georgia Tech got the scoring started with an 87-yard drive that included a healthy mix of passing (four passes, 59 yards) and rushing (seven rushes, 28 yards). The Irish answered that drive with a 33-yard strike to Brown and four rushes, two to fullback Jamie Spencer and two to Denson, who scored from nine yards out.

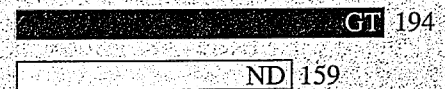
The rest of the half belonged to Georgia Tech. Two drawn-out 10 play drives left the Irish down 21 to 7. Offensively the Irish also struggled in the first half. Jackson's knee, injured at the end of the LSU game, was clearly not 100 percent, as the quarterback often avoided running the ball and suffered two first-half sacks.

Davie couldn't help being disappointed at the loss. "This game is particularly tough because ... these seniors will leave here without having [won 10 games] and without having won a bowl game," he said.

But the coach was grateful for the seniors' contribution. "They [the seniors] are part of this foundation that I think we have. Even though they are not going to be here, they're going to be a part of it," he said. □

GAME@ A GLANCE

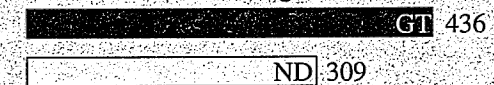
Rushing Yards



Passing Yards



Total Yardage



First Downs



SCORING

Georgia Tech	7	14	7	7	— 35
Notre Dame	7	0	13	8	— 28

1st Quarter

GT: Hamilton 5 pass from Burns (Chambers PAT)

ND: Denson 9 run (Sansone PAT)

2nd Quarter

GT: P. Rogers 3 run (Chambers PAT)

GT: Sheridan 9 pass from Hamilton (Chambers PAT)

3rd Quarter

ND: Denson 1 run (Sansone PAT)

ND: Jackson 2 run (kick failed)

GT: White 44 pass from Hamilton (Chambers PAT)

4th Quarter

ND: Denson 1 run (Brown catch)

GT: White 55 pass from Hamilton (Chambers PAT)

Post-game AP Rank: 22

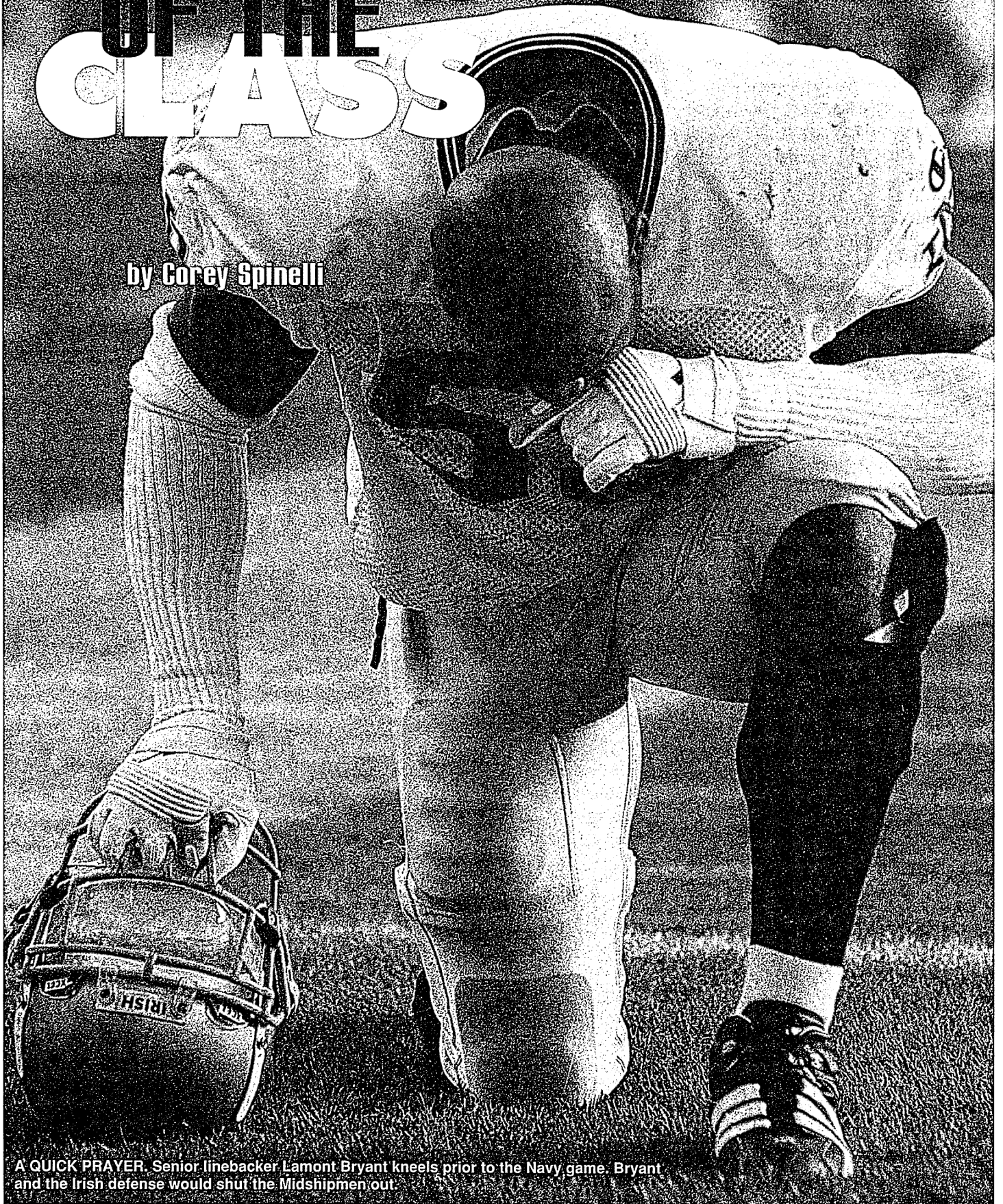
Notes:

•Notre Dame has not won a bowl game since beating Texas A & M 24-21 in the 1994 Cotton Bowl.

HEADS OF THE CLASS

The class of 1999 was remarkably close

by Corey Spinelli



A QUICK PRAYER. Senior linebacker Lamont Bryant kneels prior to the Navy game. Bryant and the Irish defense would shut the Midshipmen out.

AMANDA BAUER

Look in any of the gameday programs sold outside the Stadium on football Saturdays and you will see this year's seniors cast in an ugly light. The group whose efforts have received nothing but praise from men like Father Malloy to George Steinbrenner have less-than-flattering head shots inside. The pictures were taken in August of 1996 and feature the freshly shaved heads of most of the 23 rookies who had just arrived in South Bend. Oddly enough, the act symbolized the beginning of the bonds of friendship that, four years later, are now unbreakable.

"We knew that the seniors were going to do it eventually, so we just did it ourselves," fullback Jamie Spencer says. Coach Lou Holtz had decided to move the Irish's fall camp to Culver Military Academy, and workouts were grueling. These weeks served as the first of many trying times that the heavily lauded recruiting class would endure in their years at Notre Dame. "We had to stick

future, we'd always be there for each other."

The pact would serve them well during their often tumultuous stay under the gaze of the hottest spotlight in college sports. The '95 freshman unit included multiple *USA Today* First-Team All-Americans, and every member of the group arrived with suitcases full of accolades. This was the group that was supposed to bring Holtz his second official national championship. In their four years, however, the team would never escape a September undefeated and they would lose Lou Holtz, the man who recruited them, after only three semesters. How they dealt with losses both on and off the field, how they endured a season with six losses and how they rededicated themselves and found success in their final year is what enabled each one of the remaining members of the Class of '99 to triumphantly walk off their home turf for the last time with their golden helmets held high.

In '95, a veteran-laden squad led the Irish through a 9-2 regular season and into the Orange Bowl. Few members of the class saw

"There has never been a group of young men who have represented this university, who have shown more heart, more dedication, who have worked harder, who have been more successful and will continue to be successful as they move forward."

— Rev. E. William Beauchamp C.S.C.

together as a class, because, being freshmen, we were at the bottom rungs of the ladder," Spencer says. "It might seem weird, but we gelled together instantly, and even though we came in from all over the country, it was as if we had known each other for a long time. We leaned on each other, learned together and suffered together during that time, and decided that no matter what happened in the

action that season, but those that did made an immediate impact. Kory Minor started every game, Hunter Smith handled the punting duties, Bobbie Howard successfully filled in at linebacker in only the second game of the season and a newly-converted tailback named Autry Denson showed flashes of brilliance with the football in his hands.

THE PLAYERS

In February of 1995, these 25 high school seniors signed letters of intent to play for Notre Dame. Here's a brief look at what became of the group touted by many recruiting analysts as one of the greatest hauls in modern college football history.

Bobby Brown: two-year starter, led Irish in receptions in '97 with 45 for 543 yards and six touchdowns, followed with 13 catches for 286 yards and one score this year in Notre Dame's more run-oriented attack. Eligible for fifth year.

Lamont Bryant: two-year starter, aggressive pass rusher has tallied 146 tackles, 13 tackles for losses and 6.5 sacks in his career. Eligible for fifth year.

John Cerasani: blocking oriented tight-end dismissed from the university after his sophomore season, now plays under Gary Barnett at Northwestern.

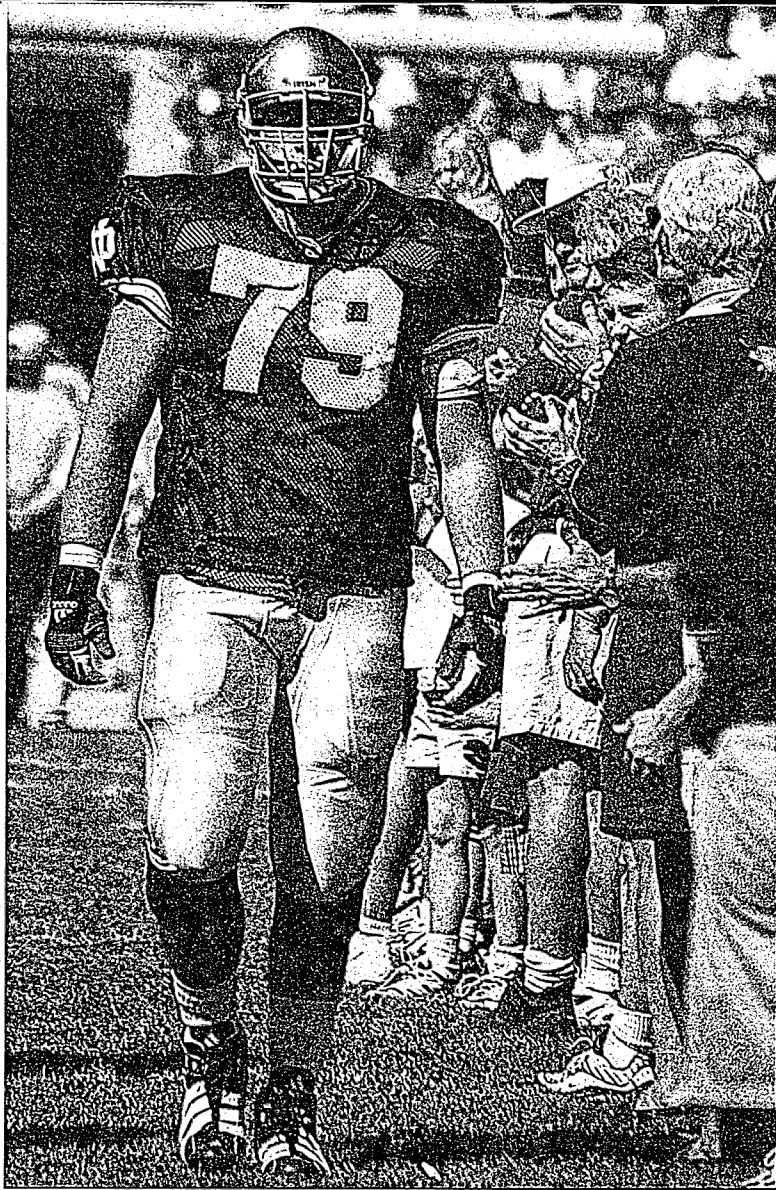
Autry Denson: Notre Dame's franchise player for three years. AP Second Team All-

American in '98. With 4,318 yards, is the all-time leading rusher in the history of the school. Enough said.

Jimmy Friday: two-year starter led Irish with 105 tackles last season and finished with 78 this year. Made unforgettable goal line hit on Mike Cloud to help preserve '98 victory over BC.

Benny Guilbeaux: heady, physical safety who helped stabilize the Irish secondary in his three years as starter. Made 172 tackles in career and led Notre Dame in interceptions in both his sophomore and junior seasons before a torn MCL against Michigan State shortened his senior campaign by five games.

continued on next page



GORDIE BELL

ROSIE. Mike Rosenthal, Rosie to his friends and teammates, will likely exit the tunnels of NFL stadiums next year.

In '96 expectations were high, but an early season loss to the Ohio State Buckeyes thwarted any title hopes before the leaves had even fallen from the trees on campus. An embarrassing loss in the stadium to Air Force and a collapse in the Coliseum against Southern Cal ended the season before December. The Irish finished 8-3, and instead of playing in a major bowl, stayed home for the holidays. Even more damaging to the psyche of the then-sophomore class was the departure of the man many of them had come to Notre Dame to play for. "Coach Holtz was the main reason we came here," Spencer says. "We saw a stable situation at the top and a program that had been extremely successful for his entire career. He drew us close to him, and made better players and better people out of all of us."

The question of how to deal with the shakeup in the coaching department was foremost on the minds of the players as they returned from Christmas break. Rumors of multiple transfers permeated the campus. "We all got together and talked about what to do," Spencer says. "A few players pointed out the fact that we had unfinished business to take care of, and everyone agreed that we'd remain here as a class and stick it out."

The 7-6 season that followed under the first year of Bob Davie's reign resulted from a variety of factors. Adapting to a new coaching staff, key injuries at crucial positions, a glaring lack of contributors in the '98 senior class and an early season aversion to establishing the running game resulted in a shocking 1-4 start. Notre Dame would win six of its final eight to set a foundation for the following season.

"We realized that this was now our last shot at achieving our goals," Spencer says. "People were pointing a lot of fingers at why we didn't win in '98, but it ultimately came down to us putting in the work and going out and doing the job on the football field. We recommitted ourselves all over again and followed Coach Marotti's strength program. The sky was the limit to what we could achieve, so we all put in the maximum hours in the off-season to prepare us for the fall."

As if the losses in their junior year weren't bad enough, their program was pelted with criticism from all over the country as they

THE PLAYERS

continued from previous page

Bobbie Howard: made a total of 36 tackles his first two seasons and anchored the defense for his final two. Irish lost four of five games he missed with a knee injury and won 15 of 20 he played in over his junior and senior seasons. The '98 captain with a penchant for the big play finished his career with 241 tackles, including 114 as a senior.

Kevin Kopka: made 27 of 29 extra points and six of 11 field goals as a freshman before being slowed by recurring knee injuries that forced him to retire in '97.

James Jackson: denied admission due to poor SAT, then attended prep school to improve test scores but once again failed to qualify at Notre Dame. Received extensive action at tailback in '97 and '98 with the Miami Hurricanes and figures to inherit the starting role in '99.

Jarious Jackson: patiently waited for three years and excelled through the air and the ground as a senior. Threw for 1,740 yards and 13 touchdowns and completed 55.3 percent of his passes. Irish's second-leading rusher with 441 yards and three touchdowns. If an inexperienced line can protect him in '99, will once again shine at the helm of the offense.

Antwon Jones: after losing battles to start at nose guard for two years, started three games and made 23 tackles in 109 minutes of action in '99. Eligible for fifth year.

Shelton Jordan: transferred to Southern University and then Lambuth (Tenn.) after seeing limited action in his first three seasons.

Kory Minor: four-year starter, made 243 tackles and tallied 22.5 sacks and 21 tackles for losses in stellar career. The '98 captain played an eye-popping total of 1,061 minutes for the Irish.

Randy Moss: denied admission, thrown out of Florida State and bolted Marshall last year for the NFL. The '98 Offensive Rookie of the Year and Pro Bowl selection looks like the best receiver to hit the league since Jerry Rice.

prepared to battle the defending national champion Michigan Wolverines in their home opener. An age discrimination suit brought against Davie and the university by former offensive line coach Joe Moore made the program's dirty laundry public. Then, a convict named Kim Dunbar was linked to the program and charged with giving valuable gifts to a number of Irish players, both former and current.

With 15 seniors slated as starters as the season opened, it was readily apparent that the success of the '98 Fighting Irish rested squarely on the collective shoulders of the class with the great expectations. In their first chance to display their determination to the country, they shocked everyone but themselves and trounced the Maize and Blue. "We worked too long and hard in the off-season not to succeed," Spencer says. "Everyone had assumed that the summer incidents had bothered us, but that was never the case. We were clearly focused on our goals and expected to beat Michigan."

Following a loss the next week in East Lansing, critics wondered if a repeat of '97 was in store, when the Irish won their home opener, stumbled the next week and dropped from the rankings not long after. The seniors would not let it happen. Before Jarious Jackson's injury, the Irish won eight consecutive games, pulling them within one win of both the top 10 and a possible Bowl Championship bid. In other words, they returned Notre Dame to national prominence.

"We had a successful season, exceeded expectations and laid the foundation for the future," Spencer says. "Our freshman year, the starters left everything out on the field, and we did that this season." Their coach agrees. "These seniors were unselfish," Davie said.

"They didn't concern themselves with personal recognition. They didn't worry about all-star teams, they didn't spend a whole lot of time thinking about the NFL draft or the combine. This is truly a special senior class, and a pleasure to be around."

At the 79th annual football banquet, Executive Vice President Rev. E. William Beauchamp took Davie's sentiments a step further. "We have had 100-some football teams at Notre Dame," Beauchamp said. "There have been national championships and seasons marked by greatness. But I can say that there has never been a group of young men who have represented this university, who have shown more heart, more dedication, who have worked harder, who have been more successful and will continue to be successful as they move forward."

And how do the Irish seniors feel about their time spent wearing the Blue and Gold? "Admittedly, it is disappointing that we didn't win a national championship after all that we expected to achieve here," Spencer says. "But Notre Dame makes you a man, it teaches you how to be accountable for yourself. We all could have gone to the schools with the glitz and the glamour and an easier chance at a ring, but the ring doesn't do anything for you when you hit the real world. I'd rather go 9-3 with a degree and the experience of Notre Dame."

"As for my teammates, I'll remember being around quality people every day," Spencer says. "I'll remember guys with genuine intentions, different personalities with the same goal in common. We always put the team first, and as a result, there is a bond there that is unbreakable." □

"We leaned on each other, learned together and suffered together during that time, and decided that no matter what happened in the future, we'd always be there for each other."

— Jamie Spencer

Alex Mueller: forced to retire due to neck injuries that continually plagued the offensive guard at Notre Dame.

Tim Ridder: top-notch offensive lineman who started all 11 games and logged 235 minutes as a senior. Played in every game for the Irish as a junior and sophomore, but 10 minutes of action as a freshman robbed him of a fifth year of eligibility.

Mike Rosenthal: '98 captain and AP Second-Team All American, four-year monogram winner started 34 games and played a whopping 913 minutes in his career. Should enjoy a long and prosperous stay in the NFL.

A'Jani Sanders: hard-hitting safety led the team in interceptions this year with three. A great senior year featured 57 tackles, boosting his career total to 133. Three-year contributor is eligible for a fifth year.

Hunter Smith: four-year punter also handled kickoffs in '98. Boasts a 41.2 yard career average on 174 punts, including the longest kick at Notre Dame in 63 years, a 79-yarder against Arizona State.

Jamie Spencer: the fullback ran for 185 yards and two touch-

downs on 32 carries and caught six passes for 54 yards and a score in four games after Marc Edwards' knee injury in '96. Lou Holtz's departure greatly reduced his touches, as he carried only 78 times in his final two years under Jim Colletto. Started all 12 games as a senior.

Shannon Stephens: forced to retire after his junior season due to leg injuries after limited contributions in his career.

Mario Strayhorn: played sparingly in three years and transferred to Western Kentucky after his junior season.

Joe Thomas: never could break into the starting lineup at linebacker, and contributed mainly on special teams in his career. Eligible for fifth year.

John Wagner: played just two and a half minutes in four years after suffering a major knee injury.

Jerry Wisne: strong offensive lineman played 580 minutes and started 22 consecutive games his final two seasons before being sidelined with a knee injury against Navy.

— Corey Spinelli

The All-Opponent Team

Scholastic chooses the players that performed best against the Irish

by Corey Spinelli

Most Valuable Player

Kevin Faulk, LSU

The Tigers' Mr. Everything darted for 108 yards, a touchdown on the ground and ran a kickoff back 88-yards to paydirt. The AP First-Team All-American's quickness and big play ability opened up the passing game for Herb Tyler and kept the Tigers in the November shootout for four quarters.

Coaches

Head Coach:

Bob Sutton, Army

Michigan State's Nick Saban is the obvious choice, but he had more talent, faced a thin Irish defense, had the home field advantage and benefited from Jackson's shaky performance in his first road start. In contrast,

Sutton kept an undermanned squad in the game until its final seconds and did so inside Notre Dame Stadium.

Offensive Coordinator:

Ralph Friedgen, Georgia Tech

Took advantage of his month to prepare and basically moved the ball at will against Greg Mattison's troops. The Yellow Jackets continually kept the Irish off balance, running for 194 yards and throwing for another 242 while scoring five touchdowns on the day.

Defensive Coordinator:

Chris Cosh, Michigan State

The Spartan defense absolutely dominated the line of scrimmage against a top-notch Irish offensive front. Their pressure early on disrupted Jackson and forced him to make some rare bad decisions.

Runningbacks:

Mike Cloud, Boston College

The AP First-Team All-American ran for 143 yards on 28 carries, one score and caught three passes for 14 yards in the near miss.

Sedrick Irvin, Michigan State

The repeat All-Opponent offender scurried for 122 yards and one touchdown on 24 carries in the rout. The junior's early entrance to the NFL will surely save Greg Mattison some sleepless nights next September.

Wide Receivers:

Anthony DiCosmo, Boston College

His eight catches for 140 yards included two touchdowns. The Eagle continually made the Irish secondary look bad in their attempts to cover him.

Dez White, Georgia Tech

The Biletnikoff Award semifinalist hauled in two touchdown throws from Joe Hamilton and totaled 129 yards on four catches in the Jackets' victory.

Tight Ends:

Jerame Tuman, Michigan

The highly-decorated Wolverine senior and probable high NFL pick caught two balls and scored one touchdown in the season opener.

Offensive Linemen:

Grey Ruegamer, Arizona State

Second-Team All-American lineman was one of the few consistent bright spots in a dismal Sun Devil season.

Jon Jansen, Michigan

Consensus First-Team All-American and Big Ten Offensive Lineman of the Year turned in a typically solid performance.

WHOOPING IT UP: USC linebacker Chris Claiborne picked off Eric Chappell's first pass and celebrated after the game.

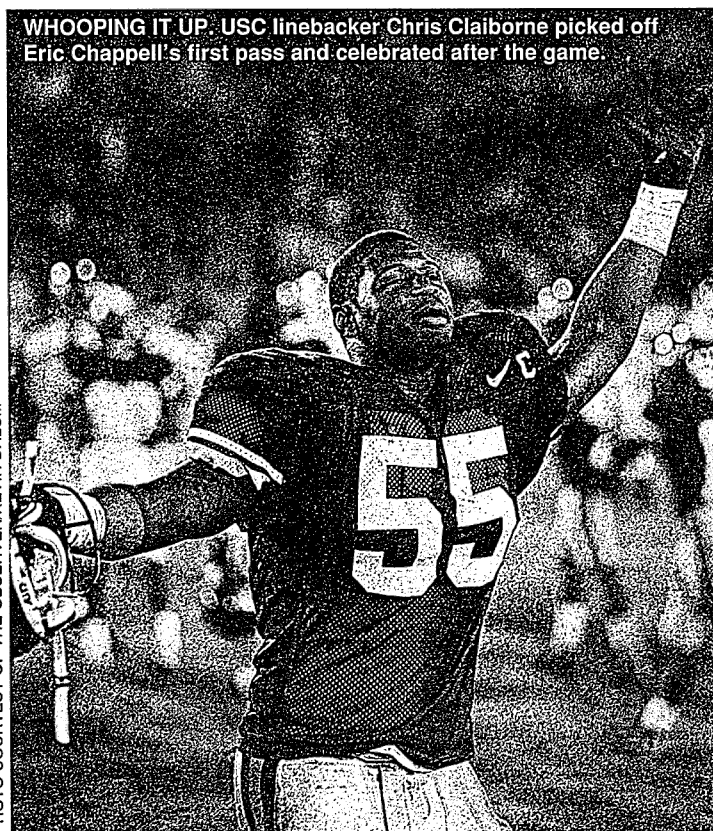


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OBSERVER KEVIN DALUM

Doug Brzezinski, Boston College
Eagle All-America and First-team Big East performer helped clear the way for Cloud's big afternoon.

Casey Jensen, Michigan State
The 6-7, 297 pound junior helped keep the Irish front off of quarterback Bill Burke all night and let Irvin prance up and down the field for four quarters.

Craig Page, Georgia Tech
The nation's top center and Outland Trophy finalist ended his collegiate career in style by helping to pave the way for the Jacket win.

Place-kicker:
Travis Dorsch, Purdue
Split the uprights three times in three tries, making kicks from 37, 40 and 47 yards.

Punter:
Rodney Williams, Georgia Tech
First-team ACC punter had little chance to display his leg in the offensive showcase, but his three kicks pinned the Irish deep in their own territory.

Defense

Defensive Linemen:
Chris Hovan, Boston College
Before kickoff, the Eagle carefully applied his face paint, went out and wreaked havoc in the Irish backfield.

Anthony McFarland, LSU
One of the nation's best nose guards turned in another stellar performance against the Irish, pressuring Jackson all afternoon and tallying four tackles, including one for a loss.

Robaire Smith, Michigan State
The giant Spartan was injured in the trouncing of the Irish, but not until the game was out of reach. His early pressuring of Jackson precipitated Notre Dame's demise.

Linebackers:
Chris Claiborne, USC
The Trojan defender and Butkus Award finalist picked off one pass and made 12 tackles in the victory.

Sam Sword, Michigan
The Wolverine All-American has solidified the middle of the Michigan defense for the past two seasons.



GORDIE BELL

DOUBLE DUTY. Sedrick Irvin stays a safe distance from junior Lee Lafayette. The Michigan State tailback is one of two repeat performers on the All-Opponent team. The other is Michigan linebacker Sam Sword.

Jesse Tarpin, Georgia Tech
Second-team all-ACC performer totaled nine sacks and 13 other tackles for losses this year and continually pressured Jackson.

Lyle Weaver, Army
The sophomore made six tackles and was a main reason the undersized unit held the Irish rushing attack to just 133 on the ground.

Cornerbacks:
Daylon McCutcheon, USC
A semifinalist for the Jim Thorpe Award, the Trojan blanketed Notre Dame receivers all night in the Irish's loss.

Jason Bostic, Georgia Tech
The Jacket senior ended his career on a high note by breaking up several Jackson passes in the second half of the Gator Bowl win.

Safety:
Mark Roman, LSU
The free safety returned a Jackson interception 53 yards for a touchdown and led the Tiger defense with nine tackles on the day.

Mitchell Freeman, Arizona State
"Fright Night", the hard-hitting first-team Pac 10 safety notched seven tackles against the Irish, including one for a loss. □

Splinters from the Press Box

RESULTS AND ATTENDANCE

Sept. 5	MICHIGAN	W	36-20	80,012
Sept. 12	at Mich. St.	L	23-45	74,267
Sept. 26	PURDUE	W	31-30	80,012
Oct. 3	STANFORD	W	35-17	80,012
Oct. 10	at Arizona St.	W	28-9	73,501
Oct. 24	ARMY	W	20-17	80,012
Oct. 31	BAYLOR	W	27-3	80,012
Nov. 7	at BC	W	31-26	44,500
Nov. 14	at Navy	W	30-0	78,844
Nov. 21	LSU	W	39-36	80,012
Nov. 28	at USC	L	10-0	90,069

Jan. 1 G. Tech* L 35-28 70,791
 * Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, Fla.

TEAM STATISTICS	ND	OPP
FIRST DOWNS	217	220
Rushing	118	103
Passing	85	97
Penalty	14	20
3rd Down Conv.	44%	40%
4th Down Conv.	35%	33%
TOTAL PLAYS	721	775
TOTAL NET YARDS	4207	3819
Avg. per play	5.8	4.9
Avg. per game	382.5	347.2
RUSHING YARDAGE	2338	1560
Avg. per rush	4.6	3.5
Avg. per game	212.5	141.8
Rushing TDs	22	10
PASSING YARDAGE	1869	2259
Attempts	214	330
Completions	113	193
Interceptions	11	12
Percentage	53%	58%
Avg. per catch	16.5	11.7
Avg. per game	169.9	205.4
Passing TDs	13	11
FUMBLES-LOST	18-7	19-13
PENALTIES-YARDS	78-731	64-541
TIME OF POSS.	30:18	29:42

SCORE BY QTR.	1	2	3	4	Tot.
NOTRE DAME	61	73	94	72	300
OPPONENTS	58	78	26	51	213

PUNT RETURNS	No	Yds	Avg	TD	LP
Getherall, J.	20	157	7.8	0	68
Denson, A.	4	40	10.0	0	13
Total	24	197	8.2	0	68
Opponents	16	170	10.6	0	25

— PATs —

SCORING	TD	FG	Kick	Run	Rec	Pts
Denson, A.	15	—	—	—	—	90
Sanson, J.	—	11-15	31-36	—	—	64
Johnson, M.	6	—	—	—	1	38
Jackson, J.	3	—	—	—	—	18
Holloway, J.	2	—	—	—	—	12
Nelson, R.	2	—	—	—	—	12
Spencer, J.	2	—	—	—	—	12
Givens, D.	1	—	—	—	—	6
Sanders, A.	1	—	—	—	—	6
Bryant, L.	1	—	—	—	—	6
Howard, B.	1	—	—	—	—	6
Total	39	11-15	31-36	—	1	300
Opponents	25	13-24	18-20	—	—	213

RUSHING	Att	Yds	Avg	/G	TD	LP
Denson, A.	251	1274	4.7	106.9	15	58
Jackson, J.	113	576	3.9	44.1	3	43
Spencer, J.	54	260	4.7	23.3	2	37
Goodspeed	29	205	7.0	18.4	0	60
Fisher, T.	18	75	4.2	8.3	0	12
Battle, A.	13	62	4.1	13.3	0	14
Chapell, E.	9	45	5.0	5.1	0	8
Givens, D.	4	35	6.5	2.4	1	22
Murray, J.	6	21	3.5	2.6	0	7
Levy, D.	6	20	3.3	2.9	1	5
Total	507	2597	4.6	212.5	22	60
Opponents	445	1904	3.5	141.8	10	58

PASSING	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD	Int	LP
Jackson, J.	104	188	1740	13	6	68
Battle, A.	8	20	134	0	2	40
Chapell, E.	0	4	0	0	2	0
Total	113	214	1869	13	11	68
Opponents	193	330	2259	11	12	86

PUNTING	No	Yds	Avg	Long	Blkd
Smith, H.	42	1750	41.7	79	1
Total	42	1750	41.7	79	1
Opponents	46	1820	39.6	62	0

INT. RET.	No	Yds	Avg	TD	LP
Sanders, A.	3	29	9.7	1	25
Driver, T.	2	54	27.0	0	37
Howard, B.	2	100	50.0	1	89
Cooper, D.	1	34	34.0	0	34
Guilbeaux, B.	1	0	0.0	0	0
Minor, K.	1	7	7.0	0	7

INT. RET.	No	Yds	Avg	TD	LP
Total	12	261	21.8	2	89
Opponents	11	189	17.2	2	59

RECEIVING	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Johnson, M.	43	692	16.1	6	68
Holloway, J.	15	262	17.5	2	51
Brown, B.	13	286	22.0	1	66
Getherall, J.	13	197	15.2	1	40
Nelson, R.	11	217	19.7	2	35
Denson, A.	6	81	13.5	33	0
Johnson, J.	4	69	17.3	0	29
Spencer, J.	4	38	9.5	0	13
O'Leary, D.	3	32	10.7	1	16
Sanson, J.	1	-5.0	-5.0	0	0
Total	113	1869	16.5	13	68

KICK RET.	No	Yds	Avg	TD	LP
Driver, T.	23	512	22.3	0	40
Levy, D.	7	163	23.3	0	52
Getherall, J.	4	43	10.8	0	21
Givens, D.	2	21	10.5	0	11
Payne, D.	1	0	0.0	0	0
Hebert, J.	1	13	13.0	0	13
Goodspeed, J.	1	14	14.0	0	14
Total	39	766	19.6	0	52
Opponents	45	862	19.2	1	88

TACKLES: Howard 118, Friday 79, Cooper 78, Driver 60, Minor 60, Sanders 58, Bryant 49, Harper 48, Bro. Williams 40, Guilbeaux 38, Goode 35, Legree 33, Bra. Williams 33, Irons 32, Weaver 28, Denman 28, Ferrer 26, Jones 25, Thomas 15, Scott 13, Nicks 10, Lafayette 9, Harrison 8, Israel 7, Boiman 6, Ching 5, H. Smith 5, A. Wisne 4, Holmes 4, J. Smith 3, Howard 3, Chappell 2, Jackson 1, Spencer 1, Goodspeed 1, Denson 1, Dykes 1, Owens 1, Petitgout 1.

SACKS: Minor 5-29, Bryant 4-28, Denman 3-26, Harper 3-26, Ferrer 2-13, Brad Williams 2-7, Weaver 2-4, Friday 1-12, Howard 1-8, Irons 1-10, Jones 1-11, Harrison 1-10, Scott 1-0.

continued at top of next column

Honors and Awards

FS Deke Cooper

- Compaq National Defensive Play of the Week vs. Boston College

TB Autry Denson

- Notre Dame National Monogram Club MVP Award
 - Chosen to participate in the Senior Bowl
 - AP Second Team All-American
 - Doak Walker Award semifinalist
 - *Football News* Honorable Mention All-American

SS Benny Guilbeaux

- Chosen to participate in the Hula Bowl

LB Bobbie Howard

- Nick Pietrosante Award (given to player who best personifies the characteristics of courage, loyalty, teamwork, dedication and pride)
 - Notre Dame Club of St. Joseph Valley Knute Rockne Student-Athlete Award

- USA-Florida postseason game and Hula Bowl participant

WR Malcolm Johnson

- Chosen to participate in the USA-Florida postseason game

LB Kory Minor

- Chosen to participate in the Senior Bowl

OT Luke Petitgout

- Chosen to participate in the Senior Bowl

OG Tim Ridder

- State Farm/Mutual Radio Student-Athlete of the Year

OT Mike Rosenthal

- Walter Camp First Team All-American
 - AP Second Team All-American
- *Football News* Second Team All-American
- Notre Dame Lineman of the Year Award
- Chosen to participate in the Senior Bowl

P Hunter Smith

- Chosen to participate in the USA-Florida postseason game

DE Anthony Weaver

- *Football News* National All-Freshman team

OG Jerry Wisne

- Chosen to participate in the Senior Bowl



TOOTING THEIR HORNS. The band's medley of swing tunes was selected as the best halftime show.

GORDIE BELL

All-Scholastic Honors

Offensive Players of the Year:

Autry Denson and Jarious Jackson

Defensive Player of the Year: Bobbie Howard

Special Teams Player of the Year: Hunter Smith

Assistant Coach of the Year:

Strength and Conditioning Coach Mick Marotti

Offensive Most-Underrated: Jamie Spencer

Defensive Most-Underrated: A'Jani Sanders

Offensive Most-Improved: Malcolm Johnson

Defensive Most-Improved: Lamont Bryant

Most Potential Offense: David Givens

Most Potential Defense: Tony Weaver

Freshman of the Year: Tony Weaver

Sophomore of the Year: Jabari Holloway

Junior of the Year: Brad Williams

Lifetime Achievement for Rooting Against Notre Dame for His Entire Broadcasting Career: Keith Jackson

Offensive Play of the Year: The 1-1 Irish trailed Purdue 30-21 with less than five minutes to play on their home field. Facing a fourth and five at Purdue's 32, Jackson found Jay

Johnson for a 15-yard gain. The play led to a touchdown and the Irish later won 31-30. If the offense didn't convert that play, they would have fallen to 1-2 and we might have seen a repeat of last year. Instead the play gave the team confidence, swung the momentum and set the tone for multiple late-game conversions by the offense all season.

Defensive Play of the Year: Jimmy Friday's back-breaking third-down stop of Mike Cloud an inch shy of the goal line with the game's outcome hanging in the balance.

Best Play-Call of the Year: Jackson's 35-yard touchdown pass to Raki Nelson in the third quarter of the Michigan game. The first play after a Wolverine fumble gave the Irish a 23-13 lead, deviated from the typically conservative attack and finally showed that Jim Colletto was willing to take chances at key moments of a game.

Worst Play-Call of the Year: The infamous safety.

Career Achievement Award for Wearing a Great Uniform

Each Week: Benny Guilbeaux

Worst-Looking Uniform on the Team Award: Antwon Jones

Best Halftime Band Show: Swing

In With the New

Irish Coach Bob Davie attempts to build a legacy with another solid recruiting class

by Christopher Hamilton

While Irish fans grimace as Head Coach Bob Davie repeats that Notre Dame is not a national championship-caliber team just yet, they can at least find solace in his impressive recruiting hauls, which look to put the Irish back among college football's upper-echelon teams. This year's effort is no different.

The experts are already proclaiming that Notre Dame is well on its way to having a top-five recruiting class, as the Irish have already received verbal commitments from 15 of the best players in the country. Notre Dame will probably allocate four to six more scholarships by February 3, when recruits are first officially allowed to sign letters of intent.

The following is a look at the 15 individuals who have already pledged their allegiance to Notre Dame's class of 2003, leading recruiting services such as PrepAmerica to declare Notre Dame as having the third-best batch of recruits in the nation.

But first, a word of warning. While the recruiting rankings offer a source of encouragement, they should not be taken as gospel. It seems that every year Notre Dame welcomes a top-10 recruiting class, yet the Irish have failed to finish in the top 10 of the AP poll for the past five seasons. Some blame this perceived "overrating" of Notre Dame's incoming classes on the recruiting services' shameless attempt to help boost magazine sales.

Regardless, Irish supporters cannot help but feel excited about Davie's first two recruiting classes, and there is good reason to believe that his third go around will yield similar results.

DEFENSE

Headlining this year's recruiting haul is free safety and *USA Today* first-team prep All-American **Gerome Sapp**. The Houston native, who chose the Irish over Texas, is

widely considered the best defensive back in the country and will likely contribute in the secondary next year. The soon-to-be Eagle Scout is noted for his extremely physical playing style and tremendous speed.

"It's where I really wanted to go," Sapp said, explaining why he chose Notre Dame instead of Texas. "It was a tough decision. ... I just felt more comfortable with Notre Dame. I feel it is where my heart is."

Joining Sapp in the defensive backfield are **Glenn Earl** and **Jason Beckstrom**. Although they are less heralded than Sapp, both will fill crucial holes in the Irish secondary.

Earl, a first-team all-state selection from Naperville, Ill., provides a unique combination of height and speed at the cornerback position, something the Irish have not seen for some time. He may also try out for wide receiver in the fall, a position he played in high school as well. Beckstrom, who hails from Jenks, Okla., was also recruited as a cornerback. Like Earl, he offers blistering speed, running the 100-meter in 10.48 seconds.

Notre Dame's effort to enhance its defen-

sive line proved successful after it landed commitments from two of the position's brightest prospects, namely **Jim Molinaro** and **Cedric Hilliard**.

Hilliard, an Arlington, Texas native, received *USA Today* first-team All-America honors after having a banner senior year. In fact, Hilliard was such a dominating force on the line that he was constantly double-

teamed through his senior year. Also expected to be a force along the defensive front in future years is Molinaro. The SuperPrep recruiting service lists him as the best defensive lineman in Pennsylvania and the 29th overall best player in the country, but there is some speculation that the 6'8", 245-pounder from Bethlehem, Pa., will develop into an offensive lineman.

Linebackers joining the fold so far are **Justin Thomas** and **Pat Ryan**. Named the 1998 Oklahoma Defensive Player of the Year, Thomas looks to add to the already talented Irish linebacker corps. Ryan, from Billings, Mont., was a powerful presence on his high school team, guiding Billings West High to back-to-back state championships. During those years, Ryan was named the best player in the state. In his senior year he was credited with 194 tackles, 11 sacks and causing nine fumbles.

OFFENSE

This year Notre Dame is mainly targeting linemen on the offensive side of the ball, already receiving commitments from four

highly sought-after players: **Sean Milligan**, **Brennan Curtin**, **Neal Ambron** and **Ryan Gillis**. Hailing from Norcross, Ga., Milligan is perhaps the most highly touted of this group, earning *USA Today* All-America second team honors.

Curtin, who has a massive 6'8", 305-pound frame, is considered to be one of the top linemen from the Sunshine state. Spurn-

"There was some pressure for me to stay in state. ... But I had to go with my heart. And my heart said Notre Dame."

— Gerome Sapp

ing offers from Ohio State, Michigan and in-state Florida, Curtin committed to the Irish last June. Close in size to Curtin is the 6'8", 270-pound Neal Ambron. The Littleton, Colo. native, who seemed to be on every major program's wish list, is regarded as the best lineman from his state. Gillis, who is considered one of the top four

ginia, was named the state's player of the year as a junior. Boasting explosive speed, Yura rushed for 2,548 yards on 277 carries (for an average of 9.2 yards per carry) in addition to 49 touchdowns. Because the versatile player has also been a defensive back, Yura may still give him a look at that position in the fall.

year he punted 39 times for a remarkable 48-yard average, which includes boots of 68, 61 and 60 yards. The *USA Today* first teamer is also a formidable place kicker with a state record 59-yard field goal as a sophomore.

Hildbold, from Fairfax, Virginia, is a star in his own right. It has been reported that of

Notre Dame is well on its way to having a top-five recruiting class, as the Irish have already received verbal commitments from 15 of the best players in the country.

center prospects in the country, completes the quartet. Gillis helped lead national power DeMatha High School to a 12-0 record.

The recent commitment of Gary Godsey means the Irish will have no shortage of talented tight ends in 1999, with Dan O'Leary, Jabari Holloway, and John Owens on the squad. A huge target at 6'8", Godsey is praised for his athletic ability.

The only other player on offense to commit to the Irish so far is runningback Chris Yura. Yura, from Morgantown, West Vir-

SPECIAL TEAMS

With punter Hunter Smith graduating and place kicker Jim Sanson entering his final year of eligibility next year, Notre Dame sought heir-apparents. Nick Setta and Joey Hildbold will easily combine to form the best incoming haul of kickers of any team in the nation.

Setta, from Lockport, Ill., is generally regarded as the top kicking prospect in the country, and his statistics explain why. This

Hildbold's 37 kickoffs this year, 21 resulted in touchbacks and 10 ended up on either the one or two yard-line. Considered a top five kicking prospect, Hildbold also holds a 40-yard punting average.

Of course, the Irish are also in the the hunt for a number of recruits at almost every other position, including quarterback, runningback and wide receiver. But no matter what happens, with the Class of 2003 the third-year Irish coach is adding to his foundation for the future. □

THE 10TH ANNUAL
NOTRE DAME

STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

FRIDAY & SATURDAY 7:30 & 9:45PM
JANUARY 22 & 23
\$3 ADMISSION SNITE MUSEUM OF ART
SPECIAL ENCORE SHOWING MONDAY JAN.25 7:30 PM

PRESENTED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION, AND THEATRE
www.nd.edu/~cothweb



"All right, this is my last idea.. There's these two girls. ...and it's their first communion. ...well anyway, It's a horror film!"

Tickets on sale at LaFortune
six tickets per ID

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

by Tim Ridder

Before coming to this university I figured I would eventually leave with the memories of many great games, my mind littered with stories to tell my children. But years from now, if you ask me to recollect the games of the 1998 season — the win over Michigan, the comeback against Purdue,

the goal-line stand against Boston College, remaining undefeated at home and finishing 9-3 — I know that these memories will be faint compared to the memo-

ries of the friends I have made over the past four years.

For us seniors, as for most, it has been a rough ride. Freshman year we came in and had a 16-day football camp at Camp Culver. At the time it seemed about as close to hell as we could get. There were no air conditioners, just heat and humidity. Arriving on campus we had to fight stereotypes about our academic abilities as well as the insecurity every freshman feels.

Sophomore year we started off in decent shape, but we soon had another “learning experience” due to a major change in the coaching staff. It was the end of an era. Lou Holtz became an icon of the past, and Bob Davie the coach of the present. We faced a year full of transition. Coaches had to gain the trust of one another and the players had to learn to trust a new

staff. It was almost like being freshmen all over again. We were placed in an unfamiliar environment with brand-new faces telling us they knew what the hell they were talking about. Because being 7-6 at Notre Dame is unacceptable to most, pressure mounted on all sides. The trying times continued over the past winter and summer when the conditioning program tested our limits as individuals and purposely put strains on the team to draw us closer together. We reached our limits and did come closer together.

The only constant in the transition of the last four years is the strength of character of the individuals in this class and those younger than us. This past season was a reward for the great people with whom I have grown. We were in it for each other, and that is all that mattered. Michigan and Michigan State both could have made our season, but the strength of this team did not allow either the big win or the big loss to faze us. Throughout this season you could say we were lucky, but luck has a tendency to be created by those who believe. We won at Boston College because those who mattered believed it would happen. In the last couple of games we had a few problems which were out of our control, but we fought as hard as we could to succeed. We did not win them all, but we still had a successful season.

9-3 is still a sub-par year according to those who write about and enjoy criticizing every intricate aspect of our program. But those who claim to know so much actually know little about us because this is the best Notre Dame team I have ever been around. Nine wins and three losses will end up being some meaningless number when I look back on this season. All that truly matters are the people who made a difference in helping this team succeed. □

We were in it for each other, and that is all that mattered. Michigan and Michigan State both could have made our season, but the strength of this team did not allow either the big win or the big loss to faze us.

Tim Ridder is a senior who started all 12 games for Notre Dame at offensive guard this season. He is also the recipient of the State Farm/Westwood One Student-Athlete of the Year Award.



HERE
COME
THE

NOTRE DAME
BEAT THE
CHAMPS!



